

RENUNCIATION IN ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS  
OF  
RENUNCIATION IN ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

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### Scope and Contents

The aim of this dissertation is to present a systematic exposition of Renunciation (Saṁnyāsa) as a philosophico-religious category within Indian tradition with special reference to Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkarācārya. This study dealing with the implications of renunciation in its personal and social dimensions is so all-embracing as to touch almost every popular spiritual conviction of the Indian mind and it overlaps almost every province of Indian philosophy. I have tried to justify this category as a spiritual technique systematically worked out and developed by Advaitins particularly Śaṅkara with a view to classifying and systematizing values in terms of the different forms which renunciation and its object may be found to assume. This dissertation also highlights not only lives of the enlightened persons but also principles of human behaviour in the Indian tradition implicitly clarifying thereby such concepts as dharma (socio-religious duties), the good life, obligation and responsibility etc.

In elucidating these concepts within the Advaitic ideal of renunciation, we are driven to conclude that this theory is not confined to the spiritual dimension of life representing the concept of Mokṣa (Release or Freedom) but is also the ground upon which a coherent and positive social philosophy can be raised. The attempt seems worth making in view of profound misunderstandings pertaining to the spirit of Indian philosophy in this respect especially Advaita Vedānta. The author believes that Advaita Vedānta, seemingly the most unworldly, is itself capable of generating social thought of a positive kind. The principle of renunciation is central to providing social



order not irrelevant to such a task. This investigation seemed to me to be of special significance especially in the context of the present situation when renunciation has acquired an image of moral irresponsibility and hence has fallen into disrepute. To such critics I humbly give a Berkeleyian reply: "in such things we ought to think with the learned and speak with the vulgar.", and contrariwise -- not quoting Berkeley -- we must avoid thinking with the vulgar but speak with the learned.

This effort is to think with the great acārya (Śaṅkara) and some of his eminent followers with a view to clearing up misunderstandings about the matter prevailing among those who have not had the opportunity or even patience to examine the renunciation questions from the holistic perspective which those learned teachers have sought to inculcate.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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he cannot fail to mention Professors N.K. Devaraja, A.L. Basham, D.D. Vadekar and R.K. Tripathi.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Nature, Scope and Limitation

This study on the philosophico-religious category of Renunciation (in Sanskrit Samvāsa) in its personal and social dimensions grew out of my keen desire to dwell upon the essentials of Indian spirit and culture after previously studying some fundamental features of contemporary Western philosophy, lying largely and perhaps significantly in the interested behavioural patterns of the individual and society. What I have in mind in the present dissertation is not "another" interpretation of Indian philosophical systems particularly the Advaita Vedānta but first and foremost a kind of reconstruction, the centrality and significance of which centre around the principle of Renunciation, giving rise to the personal dimension of life representing the concept of Freedom (mokṣa) but at the same time containing a background for a social philosophy, which we have called the social dimension of Renunciation. The attempt seems worth making in view of the divergencies that have marked the interpretations of the Vedāntic thought in this respect in our time.

Much has been written about the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara but vast controversies still remain concerning the significance of Renunciation especially in its social sphere, for which we can hold none responsible except the subtle metaphysical structure of the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta itself

as it is largely concerned with the problem of Ultimate Reality, i.e. Nirguna Brahman with its implied belief in the doctrines of māyā and karma-saṁnyāsa (Action-renunciation) having its basis in Jñāna (metaphysical knowledge) for the realization of Brahman. It is on this account that Śaṅkara was criticized by a number of later thinkers for advocating the principle of saṁnyāsa (Renunciation) at the cost of the Hindu social structure based on the karma-yoga (Action-theory) and Puruṣārtha (ultimate ends of life), which have their roots in the ideal of lokasaṁgraha (world-solidarity) throughout the Indian religious tradition.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever may be the central thrust of the Advaita Vedānta, an analysis and description of the religious trends of the society in which Śaṅkara formulated his thesis on Vedāntic lines and of his organization of the mathas (religious institutions) along with his extensive journeys throughout the country as the apostle of the Vedānta, preaching it not only among the elite but the masses, give strong indications of social relevance of his philosophy. In the present enquiry an effort is being made to show the possibilities of understanding not only the individual freedom but the meaning and function

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<sup>1</sup>Among the opponents, Rāmānuja, Dayānand Sarasvatī and B.G. Tilak could be mentioned. See K. Satchidananda Murty, The Indian Spirit (Waltair: Andhra University Press, 1965). Rahula Sankrityāyana and M.N. Roy who are apparently Marxists oppose Renunciation but to my mind, they have not themselves deviated much from the Hindu tradition. See M.N. Roy, New Orientations and also Beyond Communism (Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, n.d.).

of society as well within the framework of Renunciation, fully taking into account the scepticism regarding its credibility.<sup>2</sup> But here it must be borne in mind that a justification of the social dimension of the Advaita Vedānta has to proceed along the lines of its metaphysical conviction with regard to Ultimate Being which makes everything else significant.

It is unfortunate that not much work has been done to explore the social dimension<sup>3</sup> of Śaṅkara's Vedānta, although there is no dearth of writing on the metaphysical aspect of it. The nature and characteristics of Renunciation in Advaita Vedānta and the analysis of hypothesis involved in greater details, as brought out in the present inquiry, have made the author

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<sup>2</sup> Many scholars find this attitude as "world and life negating". See Albert Schweitzer, Indian Thought and Its Development (Bombay, 1960) S.J. Samartha, The Hindu View of History, Classical and Modern (Banglore, 1959) and B.G. Gokhale, Indian Thought Through the Ages: A Study of Some Dominant Concepts (Bombay, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> I believe that a positive world philosophy orientated towards a constructive action theory can be fully in accord with the Vedantic metaphysics of Brahman and Freedom, perhaps in fact, be even drawn from it. In actual fact, we find the explanation of that potentiality has been achieved only exceptionally rather than in rule. The reason why the Advaita has not flourished as a common philosophy -- the inadequacy of the Vedānta is partially right but to blame the theory itself is not justified.

To act positively on the basis of a positive ethics or philosophy of action would be easier for the generality of mankind than to base one's positive action on sheer freedom. To this extent the Vedānta may not have acted as a sufficient impulsion to accomplish all the positive things that we have come today to expect from philosophy.



aware of its social aspect in harmony with Indian spiritual tradition.

The limitation of this study which it must be pointed out here, is that no attempt is made to present either a textual exposition or a systematic explanation of Śaṅkara's doctrine as such, or any part of the Advaita philosophy, although the Advaita Vedānta has been directly or indirectly taken to be the ground of consideration throughout. Rather an effort is being made to perceive the meaning of Renunciation implied in Indian philosophical writings, in modern terms. The author is aware of the complexity of the problem and also of the danger he is exposed to in carrying the problem too far afield as that might result in some distortion of the teachings of the great ācāryas. In such matters, however, one is always to be guided by the maxims "Let Understanding be the Law", and "Life be the Goal".

There are ascetic trends in the Roman Catholic Monasticism and in the this - worldly renunciation of Protestantism but they could not be brought into the purview of this study, although the author is aware of their importance. The reason for omitting them is the limitation of the scope of this undertaking as already indicated. The typologies of Renunciation outside the Indian spiritual world are extremely useful in understanding the present problem in general but they are so rather for a comparative study than for a work such as this which has express limitations. But the fact that the

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<sup>4</sup>It is noteworthy that most of the contemporary leaders who had great impact on Indian society directly or indirectly belonged to the ascetic tradition of the Advaita Vedānta. See Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, The Modernity of Tradition (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 216-244.

problem and its significance have been noted, and these could engross our attention for some later task. On the Buddhistic side, we could not achieve much either except the occasional references to it whenever and wherever they have been found relevant to the theme of the present work. The ascetic element in Jainism and its orientations to life in contradistinction to those of the 'Brāhmanic' and 'Buddhistic' is really a vast subject and was, therefore, deliberately excluded, except partially, from the present undertaking in the hope of a future opportunity.

In defining and understanding the nature of renunciation within its personal and social frameworks, the writer's purpose throughout is twofold. Firstly, I will investigate those passages of the Prasthāna-traya (the Upanisads, the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Vedānta-sūtras) which predominantly support the monistic doctrine of Śaṅkara with clear implications for Samnyāsa, which I have found, at the metaphysical level, indetical with Jñāna and therefore realization of Brahman. There has also been a concern equally important to refute the claims of the ritualistic Mīmāṃsā (Karma-Mīmāṃsā) with which no compromise could be possible at the level of ultimate spiritual experience, viz. self-realization. It has been done with the Advaitic conviction, that, however important the doctrine of karma may be, which according to the ritualistic Mīmāṃsakas is the sole and central thesis of the Veda, it cannot explicate Brahman whose realization is the ultimate aim of the Advaita Vedānta. There is a dominant tendency on the part of Śaṅkara to lean more towards darśana (Philosophy) than dharma (Religion), not by abnegating the role of dharma but by making it subservient to the philosophical

understanding of the structure of Reality.<sup>5</sup> The significance of this aspect of the problem has been thoroughly examined by presenting a detailed discussion on (a) Various Motifs of Renunciation, (b) Typologies of Renunciation, (c) the metaphysical foundations of Renunciation and (d) the Personal Dimension of Renunciation.

Secondly, I will examine the social dimension of renunciation which has been worked out from the following points of view: (a) the ultimate goal of Advaitic philosophy as representing a system of hopefulness. This is predominantly rooted in the Vedāntic structure of Reality in contradistinction to the nihilistic implications of Buddhism. To quote Professor M. Hiriyanna:

The ascendancy at one stage belonged conspicuously to Buddhism, and it seemed as if it had once for all gained the upper hand. But finally the Vedānta triumphed... The Vedānta may accordingly be taken to represent the consummation of Indian thought and in it we may truly look for the highest type of Indian ideal...On the

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<sup>5</sup>The sole task of darśan for the Advaita is understanding and realization of Brahman in its indeterminate form (Nirguṇa Brahman). But the goal that philosophy aims at cannot be accomplished without the religious means which in general represent the way in which we react to the ultimate problems of existence. These means must correspond to the result of self-realization. This correspondence between the philosophical goal and religious means cannot take place in a socio-ethical vacuum. Renunciation in the Advaita Vedānta is specifically a religious means which after accomplishing its spiritual task at the plane of Jñāna assumes a very positive nature and profoundly enriches the social dimension. It is important to extricate the Vedāntic method and understand its significance.

practical side, the triumph of the Vedānta has meant the triumph of the positive ideal of life. This is shown not only by the social basis of the ethical discipline which the Vedānta as the orthodox doctrine commends but also by its conception of the highest good which consists... not in isolating the self from the environment as it does for heterodox schools but in overcoming the opposition between the two by identifying the interests of the self with those of the whole. Both ideals alike involve the cultivation of complete detachment; but the detachment in the case of the Vedānta is of a higher and finer type.<sup>6</sup>

(b) The Institutionalization of Renunciation. The highlight of this is the organization of the Matha (religious centre) Parīṣad (the group of renunciants) and the Samnyāsa (Renunciation) for the guidance of mankind on the principles of love, fellowship and harmony. We will examine the roles of reformation Samnyāsins (Renunciants) within the framework of the social aspect of Renunciation.

(c) The acceptance of the importance of the concepts of Īśvara (God), Deva (god), Avatāra (Incarnation) and Gurū (spiritual teacher) for the purification of mind and the purity of conduct, and

(d) The recognition of the Varnāśramadharmā as various ingredients for the self-realization.

Here what is important to note is that according to our interpretation, all these perspectives are fundamentally rooted in the structure of Jñāna towards the dawn of which they ultimately lead the seeker (the Sādḥaka) through the fulfilment of his obligations in a unique way, viz. renunciatory

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<sup>6</sup>M. Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy (7th ed.; London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968), pp. 26-26.

way. This point is of the greatest importance for the social life as it rests on controlling and overcoming anxieties and conflicts of life. The approach accounts for the pragmatic, humanistic and religious aspects of Indian philosophy. Some of the reformation movements within the social framework of Renunciation have also been discussed. These movements are more or less on the traditionalistic line of Śaṅkara himself who assigned a unified purpose to philosophy not by isolating it from the tradition but by directly confronting the tradition to make it a harmonious whole (samyagadarśanam) both at the individual and social levels.

As regards the question of the Indian tradition, we have found that Renunciation cannot be disposed of as a sporadic or random historical phenomenon. It is rather a continuous religious phenomenon which has throughout been subjected to serious appraisal to meet the spiritual need of the society. Whenever it has resulted in stagnancy, externalism or formalism, it has been re-examined and reformulated in order to provide the rigour and vitality to this principle. Renunciation was conceived and expounded by the ācāryas not only as a system to be posited but as a life to be lived. In this sense it serves the same purpose which philosophy serves in India. No doubt, the rationale of Renunciation has differed among parts of the Indian tradition but no system of thought in India could completely divorce itself from ascetic morality with the exception of the Caravāka.

#### The Method

Methodologically, this work is descriptive as far as it represents

the Advaitic tradition of Śaṅkara. A good deal of attention has been given to those trends of thought which exhibit a monistic tendency and an effort has been made to assess their significance within the Advaitic context of Renunciation. The assumption that modernity and tradition are radically contradictory rests on a misdiagnosis of the tradition. Our concern here is to accord priority to the tradition of Renunciation in the study of the Indian social structure and the problem of modernization by exploring the internal variations and hidden potentialities of Renunciation. The method is also evaluative with an emphasis on the practical aspect of Renunciation which has been inculcated until very recent times. If the reforms took place in Indian society, they were spontaneous, directly coming out of the spiritual experience of renunciants who are exemplary for the society.<sup>7</sup> The reformers of India have been spiritual leaders first and reformers later.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> na me pārthā'sti kartavyam tṛṣṇu lokesukincana  
nānavāptamavāptavyam varta evā ca Karmāṇi

(O Partha, there is left no duty in the three worlds for me; nor is there any not - acquired to acquire; yet, I am performing action.) Bhagavad-Gītā, chap. III, 22 - (trans. mine).

<sup>8</sup> "In the light of this it is easy to see why Gandhi was such a successful innovator, universally acceptable to India. For he first and foremost represented and achieved the 'ascetic' ideal and he united that with the dharma of politics so that it was felt that his politics was selfless and not directed to personal aggrandizement." S.J. Tambiah, "Buddhism and This-worldly Activity", Modern Asian Studies, 7, 1. (1973), p.16.

Life and Work of Śaṅkara

In matters of historical nature often we have to work under severe limitation not knowing all the facts about Indian philosophers' life and their works. Philosophical writers in India avoid giving any details about themselves simply because they take it to be a futile task due to realization, in the words of Professor M. Hiriyanna, "that they grow from a soil that is ready-made for them and breathe an intellectual atmosphere which is not of their own making."<sup>9</sup> It was perhaps a result of a deep sense of egolessness and humility which they possessed. Śaṅkara's life is no exception to this fact. What can be said about it is conjectural but there are some evidences to establish the fact that he lived about 700 or 800 A.D. K.T. Telang attempted to place him in between the 6th and 7th Century A.D.<sup>10</sup> A.B. Keith thinks that Śaṅkara "may have been born in 788 and may have died or become a saṁnyāsin in 820 and at any rate, worked in c. 800 A.D."<sup>11</sup> According to the Āryavidyā-sudhākara:

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<sup>9</sup>Hiriyāna, Indian Philosophy, p.14.

<sup>10</sup>Indian Antiquary, XVI, (1887), p41f. Also see S.S.S. Sastrī, The Life and Teachings of Sankaracharya (3rd ed.; Madras: G.A. Natesan and Co., n.d.).

<sup>11</sup>A.B. Keith, History of Sanskrit Literature (Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1962), p. 148.

After this science of the highest spirit has suffered diminution through the sway of Kali age, it was supplied with a new force by the illustrious Śaṅkarācārya, in that he composed luminous and profound commentaries and the like of great compass to the Brahmasutras the upanisads and the Bhagavadgīta and other scriptures which handed down the teaching of Brahman...The birth of Śaṅkara from the wife of Śivaguruśarman happened in the territory of Kerala in the Village of Kaladī after the 845th year of the end of vikramārk (Vikramāditya) had gone by.<sup>12</sup>

The above passage describes not only the life of Śaṅkara but also his mission to revive the Vedāntic spirit. The period in question is especially important because, on the one hand, of the dominance of several anti-Vedāntic systems, particularly Buddhism and also Jainism and on the other the prevalence of various conflicting accounts of the Brahmanical systems, making it very difficult to ascertain the real character of Indian philosophy. Professor S. Radhakrishnan summarizes Śaṅkara's life and personality as follows:

The life of Śaṅkara makes a strong impression of contraries. He is a philosopher and a poet, a savant and a saint, a mystic and a religious reformer. Such diverse gifts did he possess that different images present themselves, if we try to recall his personality. One sees him in youth on fire with intellectual ambition, a stiff and intrepid debater; another regards him as a shrewd political genius, attempting to impress on the people a sense of unity; for a third, he is a calm philosopher engaged in the single effort to expose the contradiction of life and thought with an unmatched incisiveness; for a fourth, he is a mystic who declares that we are all greater than we know. There have been few minds more universal than him.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Paul Deussen, The System of Vedānta, Trans. Charles Johnston (Banāres: Motilal Banarasi Dass, 1972), p.36.

<sup>13</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, 2 Vols, (New York: The Macmillan Company; London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1923), II, 450.



At a much earlier date Bādarāyana in his Vedānta-sūtras and more recently Gāudapāda in his Māṇḍūkya-Kārikas had drawn our attention to the ministic nature of the essence of Indian philosophy. Śaṅkara has paid his homage to Gaudapāda whom he calls paramaguru (teachers' teacher). The most important contribution of Śaṅkara lies in his commentaries (Bhāṣyas) on the Vedānta-Sūtras of Bādarāyana wherein he establishes, with relentless logic, the doctrine of the Vivartavāda (the world as unreal manifestation of Brahman) but this doctrine, as we would see is not nihilistic or negative, contrary to common opinion. His commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā provides an elaborate discussion on the principle of the karma-saṁnyāsa (action-renunciation) although it has been done with the acceptance of the efficacy of karma-phala-tyāga (renunciation of the fruits of action or niskāma karma-yoga). It is well known that Śaṅkara also wrote extensive commentaries on the principal upanisads, i.e., Īśa, Śvetāśvatara, Kena, Praśna, Kaṭha, Mundaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chāndogya and Brahadāraṇyaka.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the most popular works ascribed to Śaṅkara, in addition to these bhāṣyas are the Upadeśasāhasrī the Ātmabodha and the Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi.

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<sup>14</sup>See Paul Deussen, The Philosophy of the Upanisads (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1966), p.29.

Some popular hymns to the various forms of Godhead have also been attributed to him: Dakṣināmūrti Stotra, Haramide Stotra, Ānandalahari and Saundaryalahari.<sup>15</sup> The last one has not been accepted as a work of Śaṅkara by Dr Belavalkar.<sup>16</sup> He thinks that some of the minor works like Aparokṣānubhūti, Upadeśasāhasrī, Pancakaranāprakriyā and Śatślokī have been written by Śaṅkara.<sup>17</sup>

#### Later Work on the Advaita Vedānta

Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta was further explained particularly with respect to the theme under consideration by his foremost disciple, Suresvara, author of several works including Naiṣkarmya-Siddhi which in substance propounds the theories of Jñāna and Samnyāsa. At a later stage, however, with respect to his metaphysical teaching, Śaṅkara's writings gave rise to two streams of interpretations, one represented by the Vivarana school developed by Padmapāda in his pañca-pādikā, and the other represented by the Bhāmātī school of Vācaspati Miśra. In course of time, numerous books were written to explain the various aspects of the Advaita Vedānta. Some of them are: the Brahmavidyā-bharaṇa of Advaitānanda, the Samkṣepa-Śarīraka of Sarva-Jnātman, the Iṣṭa-Siddhi of Vimuktātman, the Nyāya-Makaranda of Ānandabodha, the Panca-daśī and the Jivan-Mukti-Viveka of Vidyāranya, the Siddhānta-leṣa-saṅgraha of Appaya Dīksita, the Vedānta-Paribhāṣā of Dharma-raja, the Vedānta-Sara of Sadānanda,

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<sup>15</sup> Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, II, 450.

<sup>16</sup> Sastri, The Life and Teachings, p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

the Khandana-Khandakhādyā of Śrīharsa and the Advaita-Siddhi of Madhusūdan Saravatī.

### The Central Theme of the Advaita Vedānta

All of them agree with the central thesis of the Advaita Vedānta that Brahman, One's innermost Self, is the Ultimate Reality with which the individual Self is essentially identical. The Cosmos is located within this identity as being neither different nor indifferent but indescribable (anirvacanīya) from it. Any perception of difference or plurality in the Reality is attributed to avidyā (ignorance) which can be eliminated by Jñāna which goes hand in hand with Samnyāsa (Renunciation).

To know the non-dual Reality by identity with it is the end of the metaphysical quest. In fact, a fore-knowledge of it based on the scriptural texts (śruti) and a fore-intuition are also the beginning of that quest, it being impossible under any other condition. Renunciation or Samnyāsa is thus both the extension into the realm of practical living, and at the same time the means to the realization (Sādhana) of this already established identity. Thus Renunciation becomes the only valid way of living in harmony with the metaphysical identity of the individual Self with the Supreme Brahman. So far from robbing life of its values, it rather re-establishes them on a new foundation for spiritual life.

Renunciation as such cannot be defined independently by itself. Such an approach to Renunciation is not Advaitic. This may very well be a key difference between the Advaitic standpoint and any other including perhaps, the Buddhistic. In fact, it is nothing of itself. It is to

repeat what is said above, only an extension of knowledge into the realm of practical living. It is life being grasped by knowledge, leaving no other alternative. This is true of individual life as well as the life of society as a whole. At the same time it also acts as the only means to the realization of what has been given through theoretical fore-knowledge.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>For further details see J.G. Arapura, Religion as Anxiety and Tranquillity (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1972), pp. 100-107.

## CHAPTER ONE

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### Introduction

A long controversy, which still persists, concerns the origin and development of the idea and institution of Renunciation in India. The present chapter is an attempt to the Understanding of Renunciation as a unique expression of the Indian spiritual consciousness. It is my contention here that Samnyāsa, which is linked with asceticism and monastic organization, is the most fundamental trait of the Indian religious spirit which Indian philosophy and religion as a whole developed and hence is part of the whole of Indian culture. Asceticism was largely concerned with the man who sought spiritual realization, the Sādhaka (also described as muni or yati in the Rgveda), as he is called in the later technical language, his undertaking being directed to the quest for a direct contact with Reality or anubhava (spiritual experience). Monastic organization, on the other hand, was an aspect of institutional life of society. Bearing this in mind, it can be asserted here that Renunciation belongs to the common spirit of all Indian religions, including Buddhism and Jainism. Sureśvara, the foremost disciple of Śaṅkara, remarks that, though systems of thought including Buddhism may differ in their metaphysical orientations, they are all unanimous on teaching

Renunciation.<sup>1</sup>

The phenomenon of Renunciation in the whole of Indian tradition, is not based on the positivistic, anti-religious or anti-metaphysical outlook as might be the case with some of the ethical or humanistic traditions but it is an inseparable part of the eschaton of Moksa (Freedom) itself.<sup>2</sup> Since the Understanding of the Ultimate reality and Freedom differs from system to system, the rationale of Renunciation is bound to differ and it would be a grave injustice not to take into account the multi-dimensional nature of Renunciation. In fact, some scholars have interpreted this phenomenon without proper regard to this point. Indian philosophy, therefore, has resulted in simplifications, which are, moreover, inferred from a limited body of data. Conclusions based on such study need further revision and construction. Eleanor Roosevelt's following impressions of India state a widespread view:

...Prime Minister Nehru is trying to develop a democracy that, though perhaps not exactly like ours, will ensure all the people personal freedom. But if an accompanying material prosperity is also to be achieved -- and the government will not be successful unless it can demonstrate certain progress on the material side -- considerable

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<sup>1</sup>Sureśvara, Vārtika on Śaṅkara's Brhadāraṇyakopaniśadbhāṣya, ed. K.S. Agase with Anandagiri's Śāstraprakāśikā (Poona: Anandasrama Sanskrit Series, 16, 1892-94), pp.513-15.

<sup>2</sup>See, B.G. Tilak, Gītā Rahasya, trans. Bhalchandra Sitaram Suthankar (2nd ed.; Poona: Lokamanya Tilak Mandir, 1965), pp. 665-714.

education and re-education of the people will be necessary. For a belief in the virtue of renunciation is not an incentive to hard work for material gain; but only hard work by all the people is going to bring any real betterment of their living conditions. Somehow a spiritual incentive, a substitute for renunciation, will have to be found...My own feeling is that with their religious and cultural background something different will be required to spark in them the conviction that the modern struggle of a highly technologically developed state is worthwhile.<sup>3</sup>

Leaving the details of this remark to be considered in the following chapters, we may add here that the present survey of the growth and development of Renunciation throughout the Indian tradition and its various motifs shows some of the peculiarities of the idea and the institution of Renunciation which refuse to be dogmatically classified into a rigid category of life-world negation.<sup>4</sup>

#### Nature of Renunciation

It should be pointed out that the term 'Renunciation' (Saṃnyāsa) has different shades of meaning emphasized by different writers. Most of them have understood the term to mean isolation from, and indifference to

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<sup>3</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, India and the Awakening East (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), pp. 196-202.

<sup>4</sup> The bulk of research done by Milton Singer happily supports some of my convictions. See "Cultural Values in India's Economic Development", -- The Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Vol. 305, (Agrarian Societies in Transition, 1956), pp.81-91; "Review of Max Weber's Religion of India", American Anthropology, LXIII, 1961 and "Religion and Social Change in India: The Max Weber's Thesis, Phase Three", Economic Development and Cultural Change, Vol. 14, 1965-66, pp. 497-505. Also see, Thomas R. Metcalf, Modern India: An Interpretative Anthology (London: The Macmillan Company, 1971), pp. 588-607.

the world. Commenting on the genesis of the Roman Catholic asceticism, J.L. Mackenzie points out: "The flight from the world was religiously motivated; it was an effort to achieve a closer communion with God by abandoning human society and human comforts."<sup>5</sup> A.J. Toynbee's observation on the Desert Hermits is as follows: "Turning their backs on the wickedness of the world, they sought redemption by the infliction of suffering on themselves".<sup>6</sup> Hence Renunciation has been taken to mean "the form of religious life led by those, who having separated themselves entirely from the world, live in solitude."<sup>7</sup>

In the Indian (Vedānta) tradition Renunciation has also been similarly defined. Thus while explaining the meaning of Saṃyāsa according to Vidyāraṇya, the author of the great manual on Renunciation, the Jīvan-Mukti-Viveka, Pandit S.S. Sastri observes as follows:

The path of liberation, according to Vidyaranya, is indicated in one word -- Renunciation...Vidyaranya would not understand it in any but the formal orthodox sense in which the Rsis of yore (Hindu Seers) principally employed it. Have no concern bodily or mental, direct or indirect, with the world, live in entire isolation,

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<sup>5</sup> J.L. Mackenzie, The Roman Catholic Church (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p.89.

<sup>6</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, "The Desert Hermits", Horizon, 12, 2 (Spring, 1970), p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> F. Carnoy, "Monasticism", in James Hastings, ed., Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), VIII, 781.



so to speak, and wear the orthodox insignia of the order -- this is Samyasa, according to Vidyaranya.<sup>8</sup>

The question, however, remains, how a life of entire isolation and indifference can ever be the end of existence, not to talk of Freedom? How can such a long tradition of Renunciation gain as much ground as it did throughout the Indian religious tradition on the basis of isolation? How can a Vedic religion, which Śaṅkara re-established, be possible on the sheer principle of indifference? Professor J.G. Arapura anticipates these while making the following statement: "Actually, the real reason for Śaṅkara's criticism of two systems, viz., the Sāṅkhya dualistic realism and Buddhist subjective idealism (Yogācāra) is their inability to account for liberation. These may be singled out precisely because they are diametrically opposite and because their views, if adhered to, will destroy rational grounds of experience as well as the possibility of the world."<sup>9</sup> B.G. Tilak also refutes this theory of isolation as the central theme of the Vedānta of Śaṅkara.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Sri Vidyaranya, Jīvan-Mukti Viveka or The Path to Liberation-in-This-Life, eds. and trans. Pandit S. Subrahmanya Sastri and T.R. Srinivasa Ayyangar (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1935), p.X.

<sup>9</sup> J.G. Arapura, "Māyā and the Discourse About Brahman", in M. Sprung, ed., Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta (Dordrecht, Holland: Reidel, 1973), p.110.

<sup>10</sup> "Buddhistic and Sāṅkhya asceticism is outside the purview of the Vedas and false; and as the path of Renunciation enunciated by me is consistent, with the Vedic religion it is true." (Chan. Saṁ. Bhā, 2, 23, 1) Tilak, Gīta Rahasya, p.764

In the light of the above observations, I am inclined to suggest that the pattern of Renunciation in the Vedānta has a different implication from what has been suggested by various scholars in terms of isolation or indifference.

Two quite different conceptions mingle in the history of asceticism. One of these preserves the original meaning of discipline of the body for some ultimate purpose, as when William James urges sacrifice to God and duty as the means of training the will. The other conception distrusts the body altogether. Asceticism has then as its function not the training but the destroying of the body or the negation of its importance.<sup>11</sup>

What is especially noteworthy here is that the Vedānta, while agreeing with other systems pertaining to the significance of Renunciation, assigns a different reason for it. Early Buddhism might have succumbed to the temptation of unconditional and absolute Renunciation because of its different metaphysical outlook but the Vedānta would go against its nature if it sets up a doctrine of Renunciation independently of the Brāhmanical society and ethos from which it evolved. The objective of Renunciation is to provide opportunity for the progressive development of the various aspects of human personality with reference to which along the social ideal can be attained. As M. Winternitz remarks: "It is in their opinion to be approached only from the point of view of the āśrama theory, according to which the Āryan has first to pass the state of brahmacārin, the student

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<sup>11</sup>T.C. Hall, "Asceticism", in James Hastings, ed., Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1909), II, 63.

of the Veda, and of the householder (grhapati) who founds family, offers sacrifices and honours the Brahmanas, before he is allowed to retire as a hermit or an ascetic".<sup>12</sup>

Here one might argue that the āśrama discipline was relaxed in later times as is the case with the Advaita Vedānta but it is to be remembered that even the Vedānta could not dispose of the importance of brahmacarya (student life) and perhaps the early Renunciation was a theoretical exception and not a general practice. A recent article of E. Skorpen in the Philosophy East and West states:

But in Hinduism from greater antiquity another pattern of worldly withdrawal has also existed, quite different from the predominant Western or the Buddhist approach. This sprang from the Hindu conception of the four natural stages of life which after early childhood are those of student (brahmacārin), householder (grhastā), forest hermit (vānaprasthā) and homeless mendicant (Saṁnyāsīn). On this pattern renunciation is the act not of people in religious communities who have not undergone secular experience and responsibility but of individuals who have -- a difference of some note.<sup>13</sup>

Neither the West nor Buddhism offered the kind of scheme of life on the pattern of Hinduism as reflected in the Brahmanical āśramas or in the Padimas of Jainism.

Taking into account the different emphasis we have laid on the

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<sup>12</sup> M. Winternitz, 'Ascetic Literature in Ancient India', Calcutta University Review, October (1923), p.3.

<sup>13</sup> Erling Skorpen, 'The Philosophy of Renunciation East and West', Philosophy East and West, July (1971), p. 284.

nature of Renunciation, a working definition should be such that it includes the motifs of various traditions and yet be relevant to the Indian context in general. In its most characteristic sense, Renunciation would indicate a spiritual attitude having no superficial concern, direct or indirect, with the world as it forces itself mechanically and blindly upon us, for what characterizes the superficial structure of the world is its wrongness embodied in its relative and dependent status, too finite and too imperfect, to help achieve the tranquillity of mind, which once realized, transforms the nature of universe so radically (to the extent of its disappearance, as if) that the world becomes an arena for the discharge of motiveless activity at the religious plane, free from all anxieties born of egotism and self-aggrandizement. The present definition implies three elements:

(a) Renunciation aims at the denial and transcendence of the universe and the obligations associated with it only when the latter is approached independently of any Reality behind it. This is the world at its surface and therefore it does not attract the Indian spiritual thought which is based on reflection and self-culture. Hence the importance of brahmacarya.

(b) The superficial structure of the universe is not denied dogmatically. Behind it is the strong support of Śruti (revelation), based on the understanding of each and every school which has its own cosmology, and

(c) Renunciation unfolds the meaning of existence by eliminating egoism (ahamkāra) which constitutes human conditioning and keeps oneself divided from the rest of the universe. It aims at the complete eradication of all obstacles, stemming from the gulf between the object and subject as if they

were independent and autonomous.

These characteristics differ slightly in various traditions but the underlying theme of Renunciation remains the same. It stands primarily for the self-culture which is essential for the social culture, finally culminating in the realization of the harmonious whole where all the conflicts completely disappear and the man becomes virtuous by nature.<sup>14</sup> But in order to justify the present standpoint with regard to the nature of Renunciation, let us turn to the Brāhmanical schools to ascertain as to what extent, this approach is plausible.

(a) The Vedas:

Without going into the controversy whether the Vedas represent a philosophy, system of philosophy, mythology or cosmogony, our aim is to see the elements of Renunciation which the Vedic thinkers supplied for subsequent thought so much so that Indian philosophy could never cut itself off from the general structure of Renunciation, tacitly implied or imperfectly conceived by the Vedas.

If the argument presented above is valid, it follows that in the R̥gvedic times, the doctrine of renunciation was not unknown. There are

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<sup>14</sup> Utpannātmapr̥bodhasya tvādvēsttatvādyo Guṇah,

a yatnato bhavatyasya na tu sādhanarupinah. Naiskarmyasiddhi, IV.69

"In a person of Self-Knowledge virtues like non-hatred establish themselves without any effort on his part. They are not of the nature of means to him."  
See Sri suresvaracarya, Naiskarmyasiddhi, Trans. S.S. Raghavachar (Mysore: University of Mysore, 1965); p. 172.

also some evidences which prove that the Vedic thinkers also knew and promulgated the institutional aspect of Renunciation, refusing the claims of those scholars who think that Buddhism actually introduced Renunciation into Indian religions as it was absent in the Vedic thought.<sup>15</sup> It should be noted here that when the Buddha himself renounced the world, there are evidences to provide the existence of the renunciants as is seen in the "Legend of the Four Signs".<sup>16</sup> The legendary status of these signs might be disputed but the renunciation on the part of Siddhārtha cannot be regarded as original or without precedent.<sup>17</sup>

But the renunciation doctrine as we find in the Rgveda is markedly different from the one we find in the Buddhism in the sense that the former also incorporates such ideals as those of brahmacārin<sup>18</sup>, grhapati,<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> E.J. Thomas, The Life of Buddha as Legend and History (New York: Barnes and Nobles, 1927), pp. 58-59.

<sup>16</sup> The four signs (Nimittee) are conceived in the Buddhist legends as guiding signs for the Renunciation of the Buddha. These are the sight of an old man, a sick man, a dead man and a wandering monk (Bhikkhu). The fourth one is significant in this connection although its scientific status has been doubted. However, the legends clearly show the presence of monk even before Buddhism was originated. See S. Dutt, Buddhist Monks and Monasteries in India (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1962), P.36.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>18</sup> Rgveda, X.109.5. The word 'brahmacārin' occurs only once in the Rgveda.

<sup>19</sup> J.A.B. Keith, The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanisads (Vol. I) (Delhi: Motilal Banarasi Dass, 1970), pp. 358-63.

muni (ascetic)<sup>20</sup> and Yati<sup>21</sup> (saṁnyāsin)<sup>22</sup>. The ascetics are called 'vātarasāna'<sup>23</sup> (it stands for nakedness, "one having only the wind of air for one's waist-girdle.) The word 'Sramana' which became very favourite with Buddhism has been used in the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka<sup>24</sup> which belongs to the Yajurveda.

The following remark of Professor G.S. Ghurye is very significant:

The fact that in the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka (II,7) Rsis are said to have existed in former times, who were not described, as a little later they came to be, as either 'Samnyasins' or 'Parivrajakas' but as 'sramanas', that is those who were 'endeavouring', is significant. It should be noted that even in the Bṛhadaranyakopaniṣad, which cannot be much later than the Taittiriya Aranyaka, at one place (IV,3,22), occur the terms 'Sramana' and 'Tapasa'. The passage in question describes the nature of the high stage of perfection...Sayanacarya explains the word Sramana in this passage to mean Parivrajaka, ascetic, that is one who has entered the fourth of the four regular 'āśramas'. He takes the term 'tapas' to stand for 'vanaprastha', the third of the four 'āśramas'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 'Muni' means one who meditates or reflects. In the Rgveda (X,136,2.) these 'munis' are described as vātarasāna keśin (long haired, Keśin) and naked (vātarasāna), a sign of total renunciation. Indra is said "to be the friend of munis" Rgveda VIII.3.5. \*

Munayo vātarasānah bisanṅa vaste mala  
Vatasyānudhrājim yanti yad devāso aviksatah Rgveda, X.135.2.

<sup>21</sup> Rgveda VIII.3.9 and 6.18.

<sup>22</sup> Rgveda X.72.7 "Yad devā Yatayo yathā bhuvanānyabinavata" (when, O ye gods, like yatis, ye caused all existing things to grow.) Yati has been explained in terms of the saṁnyāsin.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., X.136.2.

<sup>24</sup> Tai. Āra., 11.7.

<sup>25</sup> G.S. Ghurye, Indian Sadhus (2nd ed.; Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1964) p. 12.

In the light of the above observation, the Śramana-Brahmana controversy which denotes the two different systems of Buddhism and Brahmanism loses its significance. The remark of Dr D.R. Bhandarkar that Śramanas are non-Brahmanic or non-Vedic also falls to the ground.<sup>26</sup> In the Pātika Sutta, the Buddha himself has mentioned Śramanas and Brahmanas belonging to the Brahmanical period. If Śramanas belonged to the pre-Buddhistic period including the Vedic period, it cannot be said that the ascetic order was the creation of Buddhism and references to the effect can be found in Buddhism itself.<sup>27</sup> Apart from Śramanas, even the 'yatis' (meaning to control) constituted a separate class of ascetics who cherished independent views and did not believe in the Vedic ritualism. They belonged to the fourth āśrama of the śaṁnyāsa.<sup>28</sup> Professor H.D. Sharma establishes the same fact:

The vātaraśana of the Rgveda, who by the time of Aranyakas took the title of Śramana were the earliest dissenters from the orthodox Vedic religion. They are the same as the yatis... This Śramana is the atyāśramin of the Śvetāśvataropaniṣad (vi.21). Most probably it was before the rise of Buddhism<sup>29</sup> that the old three āśramas were expanded into four...

<sup>26</sup> D.R. Bhandaskar, Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture (Bombay, 1940), p. 53.

<sup>27</sup> Dīgha-nikāya, III. 28. "Santi Bhaggavaṅk Samana-Brahmaṇa Issara-kuttam Brahma-Kuttam acaṛiyakam aggannam pannapenti".

<sup>28</sup> Ghurye, Indian Sadhus, p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> H.D. Sharma, "History of Brahmanical Asceticism", Poona Orientalist, Vol. III, No.4, (January, 1939), p. 43.



It is certainly true that a systematic exposition of either the theoretical structure of Renunciation or the practical aspect of it, viz., āśrama theory could not be legitimately expected in the Vedas, but in the background of the above discussion, it is clear that the Vedas themselves had some incipient ideas about the renunciation both in its individual setting as well as social or institutional.

Renunciation was introduced in the Vedas, unlike Buddhism, with reference to an āśrama theory. Besides these references, we have clear indication of religious mendicancy as an institution of the Brāhmanical society in the Brahadāraṇyaka.<sup>30</sup> The view of S. Dutt that the institution of religious mendicancy was quite foreign to the Vedic Āryan society, signifying that it came from outside, namely, Buddhism, does not seem to be tenable.<sup>31</sup> The chief reason assigned by Dutt is that the 'yatis' were not accepted as āryans after discarding the sacrifices and Vedic rituals. But in our opinion, the saṁnyāsa as reflected in the lives of yatis is beyond all these superficial considerations and represents the peak of the spiritual life. Paul Deussen's following remark is very helpful: "Henceforth meditation alone is to serve as sacrificial cord and knowledge as the lock of hair, the timeless Ātman is to be both sacred thread and lock

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<sup>30</sup>IV.3.22.

<sup>31</sup>S.Dutt, Early Buddhist Monachism (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1960), pp. 60-63.

of hair for him who has renounced the world."<sup>32</sup> On account of this it is difficult to agree with Dutt who thinks that: "the Vedas contemplate man's life in one stage only, that of the pious and dutiful householder. The Vedas look to no beyond".<sup>33</sup> Professor B. Barua agreeing with the view of Rhys Davids remarks that:

The Bhiksu order of homeless persons evolved originally from the brahmacārins (mentioned in the Rgveda once in 2.109) who did not enter upon the stage of householders. ...the śramanas...broke away from past traditions, revolted against the older Vedic system of sacrifice and self-mortification or dissented from the later form of Brāhmanic religion...The revolt showed itself in every possible manner. For example, the śramanas...listened to nothing except their own conscience.<sup>34</sup>

The following conclusions may be arrived at regarding the position of Renunciation in the Vedas:

- (a) Contrary to the common belief that the Vedas do not entail the doctrine of Renunciation, we have found that the Vedas provided incentives to the later development of Indian thought pertaining to the phenomenon of Renunciation. In this sense the Vedas constitute the unbroken continuity of the tradition of Renunciation.
- (b) We also discovered that the renunciation as an institution is not the creation of Buddhism. It is an ideal which has a long history and can be

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<sup>32</sup> Deussen, The Philosophy of the Upanisads, p.124ff.

<sup>33</sup> Dutt, Early Buddhist Monachism, pp. 376-377.

<sup>34</sup> B.M. Barua, A History of Pre-Buddhistic Indian Philosophy (1st ed.; Calcutta; Calcutta University Press, 1921), p. 242.

discovered in the Vedas themselves.

(c) We also noted that Renunciation does not take place in a socio-religious vacuum but it originates from life and centres around life. Only the perspective into which it views life is different from that of the common morality.

(d) Another point which we indicated as a very important one was the prevalence of the four āśramas in the Vedic times. It gave rise to the two streams of thought, one represented by the smṛtis dealing with the gradual progression towards the Samnyāsa and the other represented by the Advaita Vedānta that one may proceed from the state of brahmacārin to that of the Samnyasin, and finally,

(e) By introducing the concepts of renunciation and Jñāna without systematically unfolding them, the Vedas provided guidelines for the future development of thought about Reality and Renunciation for which alternative solutions were provided within and outside the tradition.

The evidences, however meagre, brought out so far from the Vedas show where the seeds of Renunciation lay which eventually blossomed out in the Upanisads.

Although the Vedas are more oriented to this worldliness than the upanisads and the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara, it is a fact that the general outlook of the Veda was accommodated with the Vedāntic spirit on the basis of the positive ideal of the former in which the Indian philosophy and religion were predominantly rooted. In this sense only the Vedas can be regarded as the source of all later thinking.

The Upanisads<sup>35</sup>

In the previous section we noticed the implicit tendency of the Vedas towards linking Renunciation with Jñāna and providing an institutional basis to Renunciation. Because of a prominent place assigned to sacrifices and rituals in the Vedic scheme of life, the philosophy of Renunciation which appeared strongly in the tradition could not be carried further. Because of the denial of ritualism and the Vedic sacrifices by the Yatis who constituted a group of renunciants, it would be correct to hold that exclusive emphasis laid on ritualism caused some confusions between religious and ritualistic values, giving rise to a trend in philosophy which shifted from the external and formal characteristics of ritualism to the inwardness of religious experience.<sup>36</sup> In my judgment, this constitutes the real significance of the upanisadic thought on the subject. They assign

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<sup>35</sup>The word 'upanisad' etymologically means 'sitting' (Sad) near by (Upa) devotedly (ni)'. The teachings of the upanisads are regarded as a mystery (rahasye) for which only deserving candidates are qualified. The number of the upanisads are over two hundred. However, those texts on which Śaṅkara has commented are accepted generally as genuinely older ones and ascribed to the pre-Buddhistic period of 700-550 B.C. These Upanisads are also called Śrutis. See R.D. Ranade, A Constructive Survey of Upanisadic Philosophy (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1926), pp. 179-180. The thirteen principal ones of the Muktika Cannon have been arranged in the following chronological order by the above author: Br Up., Chan. Up., Īsa Up., Kena Up., Aiti. Up., Taitt. Up., Kau. Up., Katha Up., Mun Up., Svet. Up., Pra. Up., Mai. Up., Man. Up. Ibid., p.13.

<sup>36</sup>S.N. Dasgupta, Hindu Mysticism (New York: Federick Udgar Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 41-42.

a somewhat different status to Renunciation by relating it more closely with Jñāna, i.e. Brahma-Jñāna and yet without divorcing themselves from the tradition.<sup>37</sup>

There is a view of Renunciation according to which it is a meditative act where contemplation plays a very vital role. Here the emphasis is purely inward rather than outward. The Brhadāranyaka gives a clear example of this. It attaches a different significance to the principle of the Asvamedhayajna (the horse-sacrifice) and transforms it into a contemplative form of Renunciation, according to which everything is to be sacrificed for spiritual autonomy.<sup>38</sup> Here the universe takes the place of horse to be offered for spiritual progress and realization. The same upanisad attaches a very positively interior orientation to what has been described as outward in the Veda: "Having become calm, subdued, quiet, patiently enduring and collected, one should see the Self in Self".<sup>39</sup> Commenting on the above passage Paul Deussen

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<sup>37</sup> George Thibaut, trans., The Vedānta-Sūtras (with the commentary by Śankarācārya) pt. I. (Delhi: Motilal Banarasi Dass, 1968), p. CIV "...most probably they are to be viewed not as creation of any individual mind, but as the gradual outcome of speculations carried by generations of Vedic theologians".

<sup>38</sup> Br. Up. III.4.1. See, Deussen, The System of the Vedānta, p. 8f.

<sup>39</sup> Br. Up. IV.4.23. "Śānto dānta uparatas titiksuh samāhito bhūtvā atmany evatmanam pasyati". See S. Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., New York: Humanities Press Inc. 1969), p. 280.

remarks that the Vedic study, sacrifice, alms, penance, fasting are the more outward (vāhya) but tranquillity, self-restraint, renunciation, patience concentration are the inward means to knowledge,<sup>40</sup> while emphasizing the role of renunciation as linked with Jñāna, the Br. Up. further asserts: "Men knowing Brahman, give up the desire for sons and wealth and prosperity and become almsmen".<sup>41</sup>

The above passages regard Renunciation as a consequence of the Brahma-Jñāna as also a means of attaining it. These two positions brought out together in the Upanisads show the continuity of the Vedic tradition. As we would see that Śaṅkara's theory of Karma-Saṁnyāsa (action-renunciation), brought into line with Jñāna for its culmination in Self-knowledge has its basis in the Vedas. Renunciation, therefore, is not a negative act but the real culmination of the spiritual progress. There is no sense, therefore, in interpreting Renunciation as something of a negative character.

It, therefore, becomes obviously an urgent matter to examine the question of Renunciation as a religious attitude towards vyāvahārika satya (empirical truth) where the latter does not stand cancelled or negated but is transformed and transcended. This question can be examined theoretically from the standpoint of the Vedāntic analysis of Reality on the one hand, and

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<sup>40</sup> Deussen, The System of the Vedānta, p. 411.

<sup>41</sup> Br. Up. III.5.1. "etaṁ vai tam ātmanāṁ viditvā, brāhmanah putraisānāyās ca vittaisānāyās ca lokaisānāyās ca vyutthāya, atha bhiksācāryaṁ caranti."

by considering the role of the āśramas (stages of life) at the institutional level, on the other. I submit that these questions are predominantly rooted in the Vedic tradition itself.

The fundamental doctrine of all the principal Upaniṣads is hard to discuss and decide here, but in the light of Śaṅkara's commentaries on the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta-Sūtras, there seems to be ground for believing that a diversity of opinion on this subject could not possibly arise.<sup>42</sup> This becomes more so because of the revealed nature of the Upaniṣads as a part of the Vedas in a literal sense. "Verily, this whole world is Brahman" "...this my Ātman in my inmost heart is this Brahman".<sup>43</sup>

The understanding of this ultimate principle called Brahman and Ātman as the substratum or ground of Self and no-Self is based on the principle of Unity which Renunciation unveils in terms of Jñāna. The Mahāvākyas "I am Brahman", "That thou art" can only be understood in key of Renunciation which takes a very positive turn by isolating itself from everything other than the Ground which is Brahman. But the isolation from everything else should not be taken in a negative sense as everything is Brahman. Only in this context, neti neti (not this, not this) which describes the nature of

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<sup>42</sup>Thibaut, The Vedānta Sūtras, 1.1.4, pp. 22-46. See Cha. Up. VI, 2, 1, Ait. Ara. II.4, 1.1., Br. Up. II.5., 19 and Mun. Up., II.2, 11.

<sup>43</sup>Cha. Up. VIII.1.2. "atha yad idam asmin brahma pure daharam pundarikam vesma...tad va va vijijuāsitavyam". See Radhakrishnan's note, The Principal Upaniṣads, p. 49.

Brahman helps the Sādhaka to reach the realms of Īśvara, known as Saprapanca Brahman (Cosmic Brahman) by transcending the limitations of the diversity of the Universe. This we have called the cosmic Renunciation. If it is the ideal of God that is the central point of attention, the world of varieties and limitations will be transcended as the existence of the world independently of God is inconceivable at the religious level of existence. The Chāndogya beautifully states: "Verily, this whole world is Brahman, from which he comes forth, without which he will be dissolved and in which he breathes. Tranquil one should meditate on it. Now verily, a person consists of purpose. According to the purpose a person has in this world, so does he become on departing hence. So let him frame for himself a purpose".<sup>44</sup>

That is precisely the acosmic Renunciation where God is replaced by the philosophic realization of God in terms of one's identity with the whole. The views as presented here are the same and if there is any difference, it is because of the differences in the standpoint from which the Absolute has been looked at. One of the Upanisads supports this contention: "To him he said: that which is the sound Āum, O Satyakāma, is verily the higher and the lower Brahman. Therefore, with this support alone does the wise man reach the one or the other."<sup>45</sup> Professor Haripad Chakraborti of Calcutta

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<sup>44</sup> Cha. Up., III.14.3. Mai. Up. IV.6: 'Sarvaṁ Khalv idam brahma'. Maitri Up. IV.6. says 'brahma khalv idam vava Sarvaṁ: Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads, p. 391.

<sup>45</sup> Pra. Up., V.2: 'etad vai, satyakāma param cāparam ca brahma yad aumkārāḥ tasmad vidvan etenaivāyatanenaikartaram anveti'. See Mun. Up. I.1.6.



says:

Śaṅkara draws our attention to the importance of Samnyāsa which may be said to be of two classes. One class is meant to be the means of true knowledge which every seeker aims at and the second class is resorted to by the man who has already had the vision of Truth and who desires to relish the blissful state of liberation even while living (Jīvan-Mukti).<sup>46</sup>

These two types of Renunciation are nothing but the cosmic and acosmic along with the cosmic and acosmic nature of Reality. The advaitin's insistence on Renunciation stems from his metaphysics but his efforts to accommodate Vedic philosophy of action in its cosmic form is certainly of no mean significance. The discipline of Karma-yoga<sup>47</sup> is a step towards the acosmic renunciation. J.C. Oman observes:

By the Hindu speculative theologians asceticism with a view to the repression of animal passions is regarded as means to the purification of mind, such purgation being an essential condition for the attainment of a complete knowledge of Brahman with its attendant freedom from Samsāra, i.e. embodied existence.<sup>48</sup>

The knowledge of the Supreme Reality, called Brahman and Ātman is conceived as the highest spiritual attainment and Samnyāsa is the key to unlock

<sup>46</sup> Haripada Chakraborti, Asceticism in Ancient India (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1973), p. 19.

<sup>47</sup> Mun. Up. 2.2.8., Br. Up. IV.4.5.

<sup>48</sup> J.C. Oman, The Mystics, Ascetics and Saints of India (London: T.F. Unwin, 1905), p. 9.

the door.<sup>49</sup> These Samnyāsins are known in the Upaniṣads as 'knowers of Brahman'.

#### Renunciation in its Institutional Setting

Later Upaniṣads, referred to earlier, view the life of Samnyāsa as a kind of consummation to which man should progress. This position assigns a status to Renunciation in the scheme of life (called āśramas). It is a continuation of the implicitly conceived Vedic norm of life and therefore rooted in the Vedas. The Chāndogya mentions the first two stages, namely, the brahmacārin and Grhastha and also speaks of tāpas as the third branch of duty and contrasts these three branches with the position of man who stands established in Brahman.<sup>50</sup> 'The passage names', says Paul Deussen, 'only three āśramas, recognizes their values, but contrasts with all three the "abiding steadfast in Brahman"; and this last is subsequently developed into the fourth āśrama.'<sup>51</sup> The fourth stage was exalted above the three āśramas, atyāśramin, as it is said in the Śvetāśvatara: "By the power of austerity and grace of God, the wise Śvetāśvatara in proper manner spoke about Brahman, the Supreme, the pure, to the advanced ascetics

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<sup>49</sup> Kaivalyopaniṣad, 2 -- na karmanā na prajayā dhanena tyāgenaiken amrtatvaṁ anaśuh. (trans. -- Not by work, not by offspring or wealth; only by Renunciation does one see the life eternal), Radhakrishnan, p. 927.

<sup>50</sup> Cha Up., II.23.1.

<sup>51</sup> Deussen, The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads, pp. 60-61.

what is pleasing to the company of seers".<sup>52</sup> It is important to remember here that generally the stage of the Paramahansa (the highest stage of the spiritual person, known as Jīvan-mukta) is not represented by men who may not have undergone the Karmayoga and its duties and responsibilities imposed by the Vedic culture. The Dharmaśāstras to which we come later highlight this development to which even the Vedānta is not an exception. The Vedānta with Jñāna carried its own social implications. The Samnyāsa is not formal or an external mode of living but an enlightened outlook. In fact, the several passages of the Upanisads confirm this. We hear of king Brhadratha who surrendered his kingdom, retires to the forest and gives himself up to the most painful mortification, gazing pointedly at the sun and standing with arms erect and yet he is obliged to confess -- 'I am not acquainted with the Ātman'.<sup>53</sup>

Considered accordingly, the Vedāntic renunciation does not demand what is impossible and therefore the ascetic life was made an essential part of the brāhmanical religious system.<sup>54</sup> The dominant tendency of Indian religious thought still lies in the principle of Jñāna-Karma-

<sup>52</sup> Sve. Up., VI.21, Trans. -- Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads, p. 749.

<sup>53</sup> Mait. Up., I.2.

<sup>54</sup> M. Winternitz, History of Indian Literature, trans. S. Ketkar (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, (1927), 1963, 233

Sammuchaya (Union of Knowledge-Action theory)<sup>55</sup> and in my judgment even the Advaita Vedānta and the Upanisads do not appear to take an extreme view of denying the Sādhanā as instrumental to not only the socio-religious life but also for self-realization. Swami Madhavananda remarks:

According to the Vedānta, there is no actual change in the Self, which is by nature pure and perfect. It is ignorance or avidyā that has covered its vision, so to say and it appears as limited and subject to change. Now this ignorance is embedded in the mind, and when the mind is thoroughly purified through Sādhanā or discipline the glory of the Ātman manifests itself.<sup>54</sup>

And here it must be noted the āśrama life embodies a system of vital social values, ethical principles, ends of life and ideals of conduct for structuring the life of society, founded on the Āryan tradition. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka asserts it: "On that path goes whoever knows Brahman and who has done holy works, as prescribed for the āśramas and obtained splendour."<sup>57</sup> While commenting on the Śruti, Śaṅkara makes it clear that the duties of āśramas is useful for the realization of Self.<sup>58</sup> The Bhagavad-Gītā characterizes the ideal of Renunciation by exhortation to inculcate:

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<sup>55</sup>Tilak, Gītā-Rahasya, p. 500.

<sup>56</sup>Swami Madhavananda, trans., Vivekachūḍāmaṇī of Sankarācārya (Calcutta: Advaitā Ashrama, 1970), Śloka, 169, p. 65.

<sup>57</sup>IV.4.9. esa panthā brahmaṇā hānuvittah tenaiti brahmavit punyakrt taijasā Ca.

<sup>58</sup>Thibaut, The Vedānta Sūtras, Pt. II, III.4.39, pp. 316-17. He quotes Smṛti 'Let a Brahmana stay not one day even outside the āśrama, having stayed outside for a year he goes to utter ruin'.

humility, sincerity, non-violence, forbearance, simplicity, devotion to the teacher, cleanliness, perseverance, self-conquest, aversion to sense objects, freedom from egotism ...equanimity in happiness and misery, devotion to God, love of solitude, pursuit of self-knowledge and the vigilant awareness of the final end.<sup>59</sup>

The āśrama like dharma, according to the Vedānta has a cosmic and a metacosmic aspect and these two aspects are closely interlinked as we shall see more fully later.<sup>60</sup> N.K. Brahma's following remark is very pertinent to this point:

Instead of denying that the Vedānta really describes a stage beyond the sphere of morality, we have to point out that as the Vedāntic experience, implying a transcendence of moral distinctions, comes after the severest moral discipline, which can, in no case be excused, but is regarded as essential and compulsory, it cannot justly be charged with ignoring or neglecting the development of moral side of our nature. The Vedānta only points out that there is something to be achieved even beyond the highest moral progress and reveals to us the nature of transcendent spiritual experience.<sup>60</sup>

Saṁnyāsa culminates in the transcendent spiritual experience according to which the world becomes a sacred world and the ideal of righteousness to which the Saṁnyāsin willingly corresponds is the ideal of God-man. Saṁnyāsa therefore is a sanctifying principle at the cosmic level and a sanctified principle at the metacosmic.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Bhagavad-Gītā, XIII.7-11. Cf Swami Jagedananda, trans., Upadeśasāhasrī of Sri Śaṅkarācārya (Mylanpore, Madras: Sri Rāmakrishna Matha, 1961), 1-5.

<sup>60</sup> N.K. Brahma, Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd., 1932), pp. 115-116.

<sup>61</sup> Chā. Up. Śaṅkara bhāṣya. II.23.1. See G.N. Jha, trans., The Chandogya Upanisad: A Treatise on Vedānta Philosophy Translated into English with the commentary of Śaṅkara (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1942), pp. 103-114.

The Various Motifs of Renunciation and Their Implications

1. Tapas (Austerity)

The word 'tapas' etymologically means heat coming from the root 'tap', to get heated. In the Vedic cosmology and cosmogony, it occurs in connection with the creative activity of Prajāpati.<sup>62</sup> There is another hymn which speaks of seven seers who attained a direct vision of truth by means of tapas.<sup>63</sup> Through 'tapas', says another Rgvedic hymn, a poet (kavi) can see the old creations of the fathers.<sup>64</sup> In the Atharvaveda, ekavrātya as Mahēdeva is said to have stood erect, for a whole year.<sup>65</sup> Tapas is a major theme on the Brahmanas like Satapatha and Tandya.

It is interesting to note that some of the Upanisads do accept the importance of tapas but mostly as a means to self-realization. The Chāndogya-Upanisad, for example, accepts tapas as an attempt for self-realization and assigns it a greater status than Yajña (sacrifice) which has also been accepted as equivalent to tapas.<sup>66</sup> Another Upanisad asserts that

<sup>62</sup> Tai. Āra. speaks of Prajāpati's penance and its subsequent result. II.7 and also I.23.

<sup>63</sup> Deva etasyām-avadanta pūrve sapta Rsayas tāpase ye niseduh bhīmā jāyā brāhmannasyopanītā durdham dadhāti parame vyoman Rgveda, X.109.4.

<sup>64</sup> A.B. Keith, Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanisads, pp. 210, 300, 437, 442-43.

<sup>65</sup> Atharvaveda, XV,1,3; 3,1.

<sup>66</sup> Cha. Up., II.23.

Brāhmins desired to know Brahman through austerity.<sup>67</sup> The Katha Upaniṣad thinks that the knowers of Brahman (brahmavids) are qualified as 'Pancāgnayah' (going round the five fires, a sign of austerity) and trināciketaḥ (keeping a rigorous yājurvedic vow).<sup>68</sup> Several other Upaniṣads<sup>69</sup> recognize the importance of tapas only as a technique of self-realization and strangely enough, nowhere it has been taken for the acquisition of occult powers which played a very dominant role in the Vedas.

The tapas in the pre-Upaniṣadic times was perhaps closer to the external mode of living and had therefore a limited bearing on the inward experience which became very central in the Upaniṣads. It is only on this line of thinking that we can appreciate the disbelief of yājñavalkya in tapas in his preference of the Jñāna of Brahman.<sup>70</sup> Even the Mundaka Upaniṣad rates tapas lower to Jñāna.<sup>71</sup> The tāpasas (ascetics who practised tapas) do not figure large in the Jābāla Upaniṣad either. The Bhagavadgītā does not favour severe austerity and insisted on the disinterested action as the true spiritual path:

Though the religion of works...leads the devotee to the region of the Devas and the like, still, when practised in the spirit of complete devotion to the Lord and without

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<sup>67</sup> Br. Up., IV, 4,22.

<sup>68</sup> Katha Up., 1,3,1.

<sup>69</sup> Mun. Up., I,1,8-9; I,2,II;II,1,7 and III,1,5; II,6; III,1-5; Sve. Up., VI,21 and Mai. Up., IV,3.

<sup>70</sup> Br. Up., III,8.10.

<sup>71</sup> Mun. Up., III,2,3-6.

regard to the (immediate) results, it conduces to the purity of mind (Sattva-Suddhi). The man whose mind is pure is competent to tread the path of knowledge, and to him comes knowledge, and thus (indirectly) the religion of works forms also a means to the Supreme bliss.<sup>72</sup>

## 2. Brahmacarya (Celibacy)

Śankarāchārya while giving the advaitic exposition of the Brahmasūtra recommended Jñāna for Self-realization and reduced the exaggerated significance of austerity by incorporating it in life of the Brahmacārin: "Hiṁ Brāhmanas seek to know by the study of the Veda, by sacrifice, by gifts, by penance, by fasting."<sup>73</sup> Similarly the following passage of the Chāndogya says that what people call sacrifice that is really brahmacarya. Sacrifice, Vedic studies, austerities etc. are means of knowledge and therefore belong to the stage of Brahmacarya (student life).<sup>74</sup> The katha Upanisad says: "That word which all the Vedas record which all penances proclaim, desiring which men live as religious students, that Word I tell thee briefly, it is om".<sup>75</sup> The Chāndogya Upanisad mentions Brahmacarya as one of the pillars for righteousness and also a state that insures Brahma-realization.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>A. Mahadeva Satri, trans., The Bhagavad-Gītā With the Commentary of Śri Śankarāchārya (Madras: V. Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons, 1961), p. 6.

<sup>73</sup>Br. Up., IV-4.22.

<sup>74</sup>Chān. Up., VIII, 5, 1.

<sup>75</sup>Katha Up., I, 2, 15.

<sup>76</sup>Chān. Up., II.23.1.



Here it must be remembered that Brahmacarya was accepted not for a life of austerity but as a means to the acquisition of knowledge. The institution of Naisthika Brahmacāri (confirmed or life-long celibate) is fairly ancient, references to which are found in the Brahadāraṇyaka.<sup>77</sup> According to Manu "If he (the student) should like to live in the family of his preceptor for life, he should continue to serve him with diligence till he leaves his body."<sup>78</sup> In another passage of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, sacrifice, the sacrificed, the 'Satrayana' or relay of sacrifices, silence, austerity of fasting and retirement to forest are all one for one identified with the stage of brahmacarya; and it is declared that Self-realization brought about by brahmacarya is not perishable.<sup>79</sup> References should also be made to the Katha, the Praśna, and the Mundaka for the significance of Brahmacarya.<sup>80</sup>

While pointing out the significance of brahmacarya, Ghurye points out:

'Brahmacarya', not only as an aspect of austerity but owing to its detachment from life, also as an opportunity for the persistent pursuit of knowledge, came to replace mere

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<sup>77</sup> IV,2,1; 4,22; III.5.

<sup>78</sup> Manu, II.243.

<sup>79</sup> VIII,5; 4,3.

<sup>80</sup> Katha Up., 1,2,15; Praśna Up., 1,9 and Mundaka, III.1,5.

physical penance as a mode of spiritual endeavour. The need for moral qualities in this endeavour could not long remain Undiscovered. We therefore find the moral qualities of faith and truth given equal weight along with austerity, knowledge and brahmacarya.<sup>81</sup>

For the Advaita Vedānta, the state of brahmacarya was regarded essential for the cultivation of virtues, disciplines of mind and metaphysical knowledge, which if arisen due to the grace of the teacher would automatically culminate in the Samnyāsa. "Knowing this the people of old did not wish for offspring, what shall we do with offspring, they said, we who have this Self and this world." and again: "But when all has become the Self of him, wherewith should he see another, wherewith he smell another."<sup>82</sup>

In passing, it must be remarked here that the life of brahmacarya and the principle of austerity are found to exercise a positive action of the highest importance over the religious and moral nature of the individual, although apparently they might give the impression of being systems of abstentions. Man's capacity to compel the environment and society depends upon the degree of his self-perfection, the extent to which he has purged himself of egotism, Self-interest and prepared himself by Self-discipline. He is always under constant self-appraisal and would not hesitate to retreat to fasting and other austerities to renew the purity which might give him new strength.

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<sup>81</sup>G.S. Ghurye, Indian Sadhus, pp. 25-26.

<sup>82</sup>Br. Up., IV.4.22; IV.3.4; III.9.26 and IV.5.15.

A brahmacāri has tremendous confidence in himself which creates a phenomenon, called "charisma" which is based on the purity of life, constant vigilance and ceaseless application of his realization to the solution of the problem.

Brahmacarya here does not mean simply physical control. It means much more. An impure thought is breach of brahmacarya and so is Self-deception. The Manusmṛti states: "But when one among all the organs slips away from control, thereby a man's wisdom slips away from him, even as the water flows through the one open foot of a water-carrier's skin".<sup>83</sup>

Śaṅkara was himself a 'naisthika brahmacāri'. His revitalizing and organizing capacity was tremendous. In addition to enunciating the monistic philosophy, he created a vigorous revival and philosophical zeal among Hindu scholars. Morris Carstairs' recent findings on the implications of austerity support the present standpoint. By austerity and ritual control man can accumulate substantial life-force to controlling the environment.<sup>84</sup> Even traditional Hindu political thought exhibits the important tendency of inner control and principle of detachment for keeping the serenity of mind: "A king...who is voluptuous, partial and deceitful will be destroyed, even through the unjust punishments which he inflicts...Punishment cannot be inflicted justly by one...addicted to sensual pleasure."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Georg Buhler, The Laws of Manu, in F. Max Muller, ed., The Sacred Books of the East (Oxford: The Clarendon Press 1886), XXV, 48.

<sup>84</sup> Morris Carstairs, The Twice Born: A study of a Community of High Caste Hindus (London, 1957), p. 86.

<sup>85</sup> Georg Buhler, The Laws of Manu, p. 220.

### 3. Upavāsa (Fasting)

Fasting generally means total abstinence from food and drink but usually it stands for light diet of restricted order. The Taittirīya Sāmhita refers to three types of fasting, (a) living on food available in the village, (b) living on food available in the forest and (c) total fasting.<sup>86</sup>

It is interesting to note that some of the Upanisads and smṛti s assign a different meaning to fasting. The Brhadāranyaka Upanisad, for example, links fasting with tapas as a means to the Self-realization.<sup>87</sup> The Mahābhārata adds some more positive qualities for cultivation in the process of fasting which is not only tapas but also non-violence, truthfulness, freedom from cruelty, restraint and compassion.<sup>88</sup>

The Advaita Vedānta does accept the necessity of fasting for Self-purification but it does not go to the extreme of starvation. It is also quite strict regarding the type of food one should eat. The remark of Ghurye on fasting is worth noting:

Dasanamis observe the fasts of the 11th of the bright half of the lunar months of Āsāḍha and Kartika and the Krishna's 8th of the dark half of Sravana as well as Sivarātri, the 14th of the dark half of the lunar month Magha, as fasts. The first three are Vaishnava fasts and the fourth alone is Saiva. Anantacaturdasī, the 14th of the bright half of Sravana, Dasara, the 10th

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<sup>86</sup> P.V. Kane, History of Dharmasāstra, 4 Vols. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute 1930-53), IV, p. 52. Cf. Tai.S. I.6.7.3-4.

<sup>87</sup> Br. Up., IV.4.22. of Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads, p. 279.

<sup>88</sup> Sāntiparva, 323. 17. Also Kane, History of Dharmasastras, IV, 54.

of the bright half of Āsvin, Dipāvali, the 15th of the dark half of Kārtika, and Dattajayanti, the 15th of the bright half of Phalgun are observed as festivals, as among the lay Hindus.<sup>89</sup>

Fasting is another characteristic of renunciation which is still prevalent in Indian society. It is usually meant for the purification of mind or imposition of expiatory suffering for the wrongs done by oneself. This kind of fasting might turn into a powerful kind called dharna (a protest through fasting) at the house of the alleged oppressor and it is based on self-control and non-violent resistance. Even today in India, the best way of expressing protest is to abstain from meals.

#### Yajña (Sacrifice)

Among the various motifs of renunciation, sacrifice is one of the most difficult. In the Vedas a dominant place is assigned to sacrifices whose efficacy has never been doubted. It is regarded as a debt (ṛna) which constitutes the duty of every man towards gods and sages of old who preserved and transmitted the heritage of culture, towards the departed father and forefather (Pitri) and towards the guests and the race which is to be met by living a householder's life and begetting sons. The meaning or motive behind the sacrifice has been interpreted differently occasionally. Its performance is taken necessarily for the material gain but, in fact, it could have the sense of discharging an obligation to the gods as is usually

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<sup>89</sup> Ghurye, Indian Sadhus, p. 96.

the case with the performance of sacrifice to Prajāpati, the creator par excellence. Secondly, it might also serve the purpose of seeking the company of gods who are supposed to be present in Unmanifest form at the time of sacrifice. Thirdly, the performance of sacrifice also aims at the attainment of heaven (svarga), as pointed out by A.B. Keith: "the sacrifice is the ship which bears the sacrificer to that world...From another point of view the sacrificer mounts to the heaven: he does this by the special mode of recitation adopted."<sup>90</sup> Fourthly, the sacrificial performance also helps the seeker to live a life of truthfulness, Chastity, Self-restraint, fellowship and benevolence. It is based on a deep sense of shareability of what one possesses with others, including gods and departed souls.<sup>91</sup>

Whatever may be the shortcomings<sup>92</sup> of this type of ritualistic practice, it certainly serves a great role from the perspective of renunciation which got classified further in the Upaniṣadic time. It is based on the belief that there is a power or powers beyond the phenomenal world, resulting in the transcendence of the limitations of the phenomenal world on the part of the sacrificer. It also serves a very important religious function. It touches upon the relationship between man and gods -- gods are not

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<sup>90</sup> A.B. Keith, Religious and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanisads, II, 461.

<sup>91</sup> Kevalagho bhavati Kevalādī. (He that eats by himself will keep his sin to himself). Rgveda, X.11.6.

<sup>92</sup> Some scholars think that too much of emphasis laid on sacrifices resulted in a sort of neglect of ethical ideas and gave rise to the practice of judging goodness by the standard of ritualistic correctness. For details see Hiriyanna, Indian Philosophy p. 46.

or axiologically other from man but his friends and partners. This has a tremendous positive value for the growth and development of renunciation later.<sup>93</sup> Showing the positive and contributing aspect of ritualism in terms of renunciation, Professor M. Hiriyanna remarks:

Even systems which do not first appear to countenance it are, as a little reflection will show, really favourable to it. Thus ritualism with its promise of prosperity in a world to come actually result in complete Self-denial so far as this world is concerned, because the fruit of the deeds it prescribes is to be reaped not here, but elsewhere and amidst conditions totally different from those of the present life. The principle of detachment implicit in such doctrines was...rendered explicit, and even the ulterior motive of Self-love which is involved in striving for reward hereafter was eliminated by the Gītā with its teaching of disinterested action.<sup>94</sup>

It is undoubtedly true that the Upaniṣads tried to purge the sacrifices of their external and ritualistic significance but it would be wrong to say that they completely cut themselves off from the Brāhmanic tradition. Some of the Upaniṣads like Brhadāranyaka<sup>95</sup> and Chāndogya depreciate<sup>96</sup> the sacrifices and even condemn them but the normal view of the Upaniṣads is not quite against the performance of sacrifices. The

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<sup>93</sup> Some aspects of this problem have been discussed by Rudolph Roth in Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. iii, pp. 331-347. Also E.W. Hopkins, Ethics of India (New Haven, 1924), pp. 44, 61-62.

<sup>94</sup> Hiriyanna, Indian Philosophy p. 22.

<sup>95</sup> iii, 9.6, 21.

<sup>96</sup> i.10-12; IV.1-3.

sacrifice, however, is relegated to a secondary status which only helps man to reach the world of the Fathers, whence he would come back to the world after the exhaustion of his merit.<sup>97</sup> But some of the upanisads assign some importance to the performance of sacrifices.<sup>98</sup>

The whole of the smrtis more or less assign a role for the performance of sacrifices in the spiritual scheme of life. The attitude of Advaita Vedānta to this question appears to be one of synthesis. In fact, it cannot make a compromise with the sacrifice and renunciation at the Paramārthika (Transcendental) level of spiritual experience but as regards the instrumental value of sacrifice for the dawn of gnosis and renunciation, it assigns it an inferior place along with other upanisads referred to.

#### Jñāna (Metaphysical Knowledge)

By Jñāna in general we do not mean here the viññāna (discursive knowledge) or Vṛtti element of the internal organ which is the characteristic of Jīva (individual soul) as immanent in the antah-karana (internal organ or mind); the vṛtti element is relational and therefore contingent. As opposed to it, Jñāna is consciousness as such and therefore eternal, being intrinsically Brahman itself, which seems to be associated with empirical knowledge but is really untouched by it. All empirical knowledge is from

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., V.10.3; Praśna Up. 1.9; Mun. Up., 1.2.10.

<sup>98</sup> Katha Up., 1.17; III.2; Mai. Up. 1.1.



its very nature directed to external things and therefore turned away from absolute consciousness and consequentially manifests the latter as something different from what it is essentially. This process really accounts for the multiplicities and diversities of the world which constitute the source of anxieties, according to Advaita Vedānta. Renunciation as linked with the uncovering of Jñāna results in turning the concern of man away from external things to his essential inner nature by accomplishing which everything else is accomplished. Jñāna and renunciation take place simultaneously as one of the Upanisads say: "Verily, after they have found this soul, the Brahmanas cease from desiring children, from desiring possessions, from desiring the world, and wander about as beggars".<sup>99</sup> Śaṅkara bases his whole philosophy on this foundation. He quotes the following texts to support the above contention: "The knower of Brahman attains freedom from all fear."<sup>100</sup>

"When all desires occupying his heart, fall off entirely, then indeed, does the mortal become immortal."<sup>101</sup> Here it may be asserted that the monistic philosophy of Śaṅkara cannot justify its claim without ascertaining the role of Jñāna for the release from bondage which results from misapprehension,

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<sup>99</sup> Br. Up., 3.5.1; 4,4,22.

<sup>100</sup> Tai. Up., II.4: Yato vāco nivartante, aprāpya manasā Saha, ānandam brahmano vidvan, na bibheti kadācana. Also Syēt. Up., III.8. (There is no way to salvation except through knowledge.)

<sup>101</sup> Br. Up., 4,4.7: Yadā Sarve pramucyante Kāma yé sya hr̥di śritāḥ, atha martyomr̥to bhavati, atra brahma samasnut.

giving rise to attachment (rāga), aversion (dvesa) and delusion (moha). Contrariwise, when misapprehension is destroyed by right knowledge, defects of existence are completely destroyed. This is followed by the destruction of attachment (Pravṛtti) with the consequence of renunciation. The bondage that Jñāna and Samnyāsā are called upon to destroy is usually ascribed to Self's false association with the body, senses and the world etc. It is for this reason that Self-knowledge which leads to the destruction of ahaṁkāra (possible only on the basis of right knowledge and renunciation) has been rated to be of the highest value. This position has been established by denying any attributes to Self because if the attributes are real, they cannot be destroyed either by Jñāna or renunciation. For example, if agentship is real or natural to Self, it would make release impossible and so is the case with the question of suffering.<sup>102</sup>

Considered accordingly, what right knowledge and renunciation remove is the presentations and creations of avidyā (nescience) and not the real objects.<sup>103</sup> In other words, right knowledge and renunciation resolve not-self into the Self, and nothing but the Self or Brahman is real. Śaṅkara establishes his position not by positing Brahman against Prakṛti as the

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<sup>102</sup> Br. Up., III.7,23; IV.5.15; IV.3,21-32. For details see Thibaut, The Vedānta Sūtras, II, 2:3,40 and 2.2.10.

<sup>103</sup> See S.Ś. Sastri and R.C. Kunhan, eds. and trans. The Bhamati of Vacaspati: on Sankara's Brahmasutrabhāṣya (Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House 1933), pp. 134-40.

Sāṃkhya-Yoga does because in the latter case the aloofness and withdrawal of the Self from the not-Self will be real and categorically negative, but by positing the only reality of the Self and denying only the separate existence of the not-Self apart from Self which gives very positive significance to Jñāna and renunciation. Jñāna and renunciation in this sense are nothing but a positive feeling -- if one may say so -- of a vast expansion of the spiritual horizon which is essentially and eternally there, but in need of realization. It will be wrong to say that in the Advaita Vedānta, the not-Self is ignored and unfelt because no amount of reasoning can convince one of this. In fact, Brahman is the Ground of everything and knowledge and renunciation simply unveil the nature of the ground which constitutes liberation.

For the Advaitins, mokṣa is not negative withdrawal from a real universe but is only correction of our vision of the nature of the world. Put simply, the Vedānta only spiritualizes the conception about the world and does not negate the world and therefore it should not be taken for the negation of the world but only for the transformation of the conception -- the conception that Brahman is alone real and there is nothing within or without it as Brahman does not consist of parts and so far as this realization is lacking, the spiritual progress is in danger. Here Vedānta makes an obvious advance over the Sāṃkhya which takes Puruṣa in isolation from Prkṛti which is real. Brahma observes:

Hence if we thoroughly understand this Vedāntic conception of transcendence, we are not at all entitled to raise the question that so often seems to puzzle us, viz., what becomes of the world or of the body of Jñānain, after liberation is attained? The answer is plain and the reason evident. Nothing happens to the world: the world remains what it was an eternal anirvacaniya; only the previous erroneous conception of it as real is now supplanted and corrected...<sup>104</sup>

In view of the Advaitins, the wholesale pessimism and negativism is by no means characteristic of renunciation. Pointing out the significance of the Vedānta for experience, the world and language, Professor J.G. Arapura points out:

Actually the real reason for Śaṅkara's criticism of two systems, viz., the Sāṅkhya dualistic realism and Buddhist (Yogacāra) subjective idealism is their inability to account for liberation. These may be singled out precisely because they are diametrically opposite and because their views, if adhered to, will destroy rational grounds of experience as well as the possibility of a world.<sup>105</sup>

The Vedānta continues the Vedic tradition along its metaphysical lines, although the genius of the Advaita Vedānta is slightly different from the Rgveda. In the Rgveda, despite the fact that the renunciation doctrine has been recognized and explained, the Jñāna doctrine is not

<sup>104</sup> Brahma, Hindu Śādhana, p. 192.

<sup>105</sup> Sprung, The Problem of Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta, p. 110

metaphysically linked with it. The Vedānta by accepting two truths reconciles some of the issues which the Vedic tradition posed before it.

Professor M. Sprung suggests that:

The Indians have two truths as a philosophical problem because they do not sunder faith and reason, but embrace all questions -- including what in the West would be 'religious' questions -- within the reach of philosophical thought. Hence religious experience and insight thrust forward the problem of two truths indefeasibly. In the West, because for the greater part we have held our religious faith to be of a different order than our philosophical convictions, we have had little need to see things in terms of two truths: we are content with one truth and one faith.<sup>106</sup>

Without going into the further details of what Professor Sprung says, it could be safely said that at least for the Vedānta, the above statement is relevant. Vedānta exhibits a significant tendency of assessing the tradition and assigning it an adequate status. The Saṁnyāsa, for example is within the tradition as well as beyond it and so is Brahman.

#### Conclusion

In foregoing discussions, the central concern of the author, was to establish the following facts regarding Renunciation:

(a) Renunciation (saṁnyāsa) constitutes the essence of Indian philosophical and religious traditions and as such it is linked with Jñāna which is the sole means of Self-realization in the Vedāntic tradition. This aim has been gradually established by bringing out the Jñāna element as supplementary

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

to Karma element. In this sense alone, Śāṅkara claims the supremacy of Karma-Saṁnyāsa over other means. The main purpose of Renunciation along with that of Jñāna is a complete eradication of egoism which is absolutely necessary if man is to be free. This will only be possible when man has completely risen above his conditioned status.

(b) Moral and spiritual disciplines are to be cultivated in order to realize Jñāna. The emphasis has throughout been shown to lie in the inward experience that gives rise to the intuition of the metaphysical unity. This tendency might aim at transcending morality as commonly understood. Instead of trying to repel that change, I have tried to discuss the nature and scope of morality in the Indian scheme of spiritual life.

(c) Renunciation is not a negative ideal as it primarily derives from a positive ideal of life. There are some traditions in which the phenomenon of Renunciation has acquired a negative flavour but those traditions have always been re-evaluated in the light of the positive standard of the Indian mind and in my judgment they have not been very influential in Indian tradition. We have discussed some the the typologies of Renunciation in the following chapter.

(d) We have also tried to examine the various motifs of Renunciation and their implications for the understanding of human existence. What we have emphasized is that all these motifs represent various applications of Renunciation. The cosmic and a-cosmic ideals of Renunciation establish the same fact, i.e. the understanding of human existence in a spiritual context of life.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TYOLOGY OF RENUNCIATION

It will now be necessary for us to look into the typology of Renunciation in the Indian philosophical systems. So far we have largely been concerned with the nature of Renunciation in the Vedas, the Upanisads and the Brahma-Sūtras. Of all the meanings that the word 'Renunciation' assumes in those philosophical works, the most explicit is that which refers to the phenomenon of Renunciation as a means of spiritual progress as well as the state of him who had the Brahma-Jñāna -- the Brahmasamstha. The latter stage is, obviously, defined as an advance beyond the stages of life but it has also been noticed that even the Vedānta did not overlook the importance of Sādhanā (disciplines) and the socio-religious aspects of Renunciation which have been linked with the tradition in general. The rationale of such a Vedāntic Renunciation lies in its philosophical conception of Reality to which the religious implications of Renunciation have been subordinated, may it be study, sacrifice, fasting, ritual, morality, dharma etc. The purpose of all this is to do away with the dispersion and automatism that characterize profane existence.

#### Nature and Importance of the Smṛti in the Context of Renunciation

The question we are confronted with in this section is the nature of Renunciation which constitutes the subject matter of the Smṛtis or secondary

scriptures. The word 'smṛti'<sup>1</sup> is very elastic and includes a variety of work such as the Itihāsas, the Purānas, the Āgamas, the Darśanas and popular literatures. It is impossible to discuss the doctrine of Renunciation in all these smṛtis but certainly disregard of the Dharma-Sāstra of Manu and the Mahābhārata whose compilation is attributed to Vyāsa and particularly the Bhagavad-Gītā which forms the most important part of the Mahābhārata, will rather be inappropriate in such a dissertation as the present one. This study will hopefully provide some guidelines for the forthcoming discussion on the social dimension of Renunciation.

Here one point must be made clear. The tension between Jñāna and Karma, between the state of brahmasamstha and dharma has always been very forceful in every branch of the Vedāntic tradition. It defies any satisfactory solution. Although attempts have been made to establish a harmony between the two, the solutions provided in this direction are still open to controversies.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, the Dharmaśāstras and the Gītā have

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<sup>1</sup>"Smṛti is a generic term applied to orthodox non-Vedic works in contradistinction to Sṛuti, so that the Dharma-śāstras fall within the purview of Smṛti. Smṛti again is synonymous with Dharma-sastras. (dharmasāstram tu vai smṛtiḥ)". S.C. Banerjee, Dharma-Sutras: A Study in their origin and Development (Calcutta: Punthi-Pustak, 1962), pp. 4-5. These Smṛtis are also known as 'Smarta-sūtra', 'Samayacarika-dharma'. The precise meanings of these terms are debatable. Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>The very realization of righteousness leads one to an essential involvement in society and history. The Liberation, on the other hand, leads one in different direction -- it is Being itself that is central point of attention. In the Dharmaśāstras and the Gītā a solution has been provided in terms of the socio-religious philosophy. The former concentrates on the Varnāśramadharmā and the latter on Niskāmakarma for the welfare of mankind. The common conclusions of the Dharmaśāstras however, based on values, in their attempt to link them with the concept of liberation, has not always been successful. The Gītā, on the other hand, by setting out to explain the metaphysical nature of Freedom has not been able to do the fuller justice to righteousness.



tried to deal with the problem very elaborately and perhaps their conclusions are of far-reaching significance. With the purpose of elucidating this problem further, we have presented a typology of Renunciation taking also into account other religious systems such as Jainism, Buddhism and the Ājīvakas. Some of the religious sects within the Hindu tradition have also been briefly noticed simply because they presented a serious threat to the ideal of the Vedāntic Renunciation.

"Hinduism, however, has always been mindful of the needs of all who have belonged to its fold", observes J.N. Farquhar, "and also the needs of the various sides of human nature, and it has not failed to provide practical guidance to man".<sup>3</sup> In the light of the above observation, we will examine these typologies irrespective of whether or not in the history of Indian philosophical thought, the above ideal has been reached. The Vedāntic thinkers are very clear on this point. Any endeavour lower than Jñāna and attendant on it Saṁnyāsa, cannot break the wheel of Karma although it may help the soul to achieve a state which can facilitate self-realization. It is on this account that the Vedāntic tradition in general has assigned a place to the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā as preparation of ground for the development of the uttara-Mīmāṃsā (Vedānta), in which the ideals of yaṅna (ritual sacrifice) and Svarga (heaven) have been subordinated to

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<sup>3</sup>J.N. Farquhar and H.D. Griswold, The Religious Quest of India (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), p. 119.

those of mokṣa and saṁnyāsa.

A similar trend of thought will be noticed within the fold of the smṛti itself which has always been highly esteemed by most of the commentators of the Vedānta, including Śaṅkara himself, as is evident by their commentaries on the Bhagavad-Gītā. This important shift of emphasis could never have been possible on a complete dissociation from the dharma which is rooted in the socio-religious philosophy arising out of the Vedas. Whether this transition is complete or incomplete will be examined later. The presence of such a fact is in itself very important especially in the face of allegations of other-worldliness against Indian philosophy. We noticed such a trend of thought earlier while dealing with the Vedas, the Upaniṣads and the Brahma-sūtras.

Despite the fact that the Smṛtis depend on the Vedas for their authority,<sup>4</sup> their overwhelming importance in the Indian tradition is undeniable. They have exercised a great influence on socio-religious life

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<sup>4</sup>"In as much as these smṛtis have emanated from human authors, and are not eternal like Vedas, their authority cannot be self-sufficient. The smṛtis of Manu and others are dependent upon the memory of their authors, and memory depends for its authority on the truthfulness of its source. Consequently the authority of not a single smṛti can be held to be self-sufficient like that of the Veda; and yet in as much as we find them accepted as authoritative by an unbroken line of respectable persons learned in the Veda we cannot reject them as absolutely untrustworthy. Tantravartika" see S. Radhakrishnan, Religion and Society (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1969), p. 109f. cf. sastradipika, 1.3.4.

including the secular and political aspects (Rāja-dharma and Vyavahāra dharma).<sup>5</sup> Without going into the historical origin of these smṛtis which P.V. Kane proposes between 300-100 B.C.<sup>6</sup>, it will be correct to say that these treatises were written as supplements to the highly metaphysical conceptions of the Upaniṣads. It might be also assumed that the prevalence of Buddhism as anti-Brahmanism must have attracted the authors of Dharmasūtras to re-evaluate the Vedic tradition.<sup>7</sup> This task was found necessary not because of the long interval between the Vedas and the smṛtis but primarily due to the different emphasis laid on the central theme of the Veda by subsequent systems of thought, viz. Vedānta and the Sāṅkhya.<sup>8</sup> The emergence

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<sup>5</sup>M. Winternitz's remark that the smṛtis are simply concerned with 'rules and regulations of duties of castes and the stages of life', obviously does not cover the all-comprehensive nature of the smṛtis. See Winternitz, History of Indian Literature, I, 275.

<sup>6</sup>Kane, History of Dharmasāstras, I, 59.

<sup>7</sup>The age of the Dharmasāstras is also known as the brāhmanical renaissance. It harks back to the Vedas which are regarded as the depository of the Āryan tradition. The greatest contribution of these treatises lies in their institutionalization of Renunciation on the Vedic lines. This constitutes an important difference from the Buddhist concept of Renunciation.

<sup>8</sup>See K. Motawani, Manu Dharma Śāstra (Madras: Ganish and Co. Private Ltd., 1958), p. 27.

of some of the theistic schools such as the Śaiva and the Bhāgavata and of the epics the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata also indicates a strongly felt need to supplement the rigorous monism of the Upaniṣads with its stress on Jñāna and saṃnyāsa.<sup>9</sup>

But strangely enough, their treatment of the phenomenon of Renunciation, shows the continuity of the syncretic nature of the Indian tradition, originating from the Vedas. The doctrine of Renunciation in these treatises has been assigned a task to make the Vedic past serve the Hindu spirit in a way appropriate to the demands of socio-religious living. Due to the rise of the heretic schools, this was felt to be the most important. This adoption, however, certainly testifies to the tenacious continuity of the Vedic tradition. Only on this ground we propose to regard the Renunciation of the Dharmaśāstras as being typologically different from Renunciation in the Upaniṣads. The doctrine of Renunciation in the Upaniṣads and the Brahma-sūtras are fundamentally gnoseological in type whereas those in the Dharmaśāstras or bhakti-śāstras (devotional literatures) are socio-religious and devotional in type.

In the Dharma-śāstras, we find a detailed analysis of Renunciation

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<sup>9</sup>R.C. Majumdar, H.C. Raychaudhari and K. Datta, An Advanced History of India (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1963), pp. 8, 403-404.

in innumerable places.<sup>10</sup> But the salient features of Renunciation contain elements of vitality such as to contribute directly and effectively towards building a human social order. Gautam, for example, does not approve of direct entrance from the student life to the ascetic life and seems to favour the first three āśramas more than that of the fourth one.<sup>11</sup> The Āpastamba states that "he who lives in all these four according to the rules of law, without allowing himself to be disturbed by anything, attains salvation."<sup>12</sup> The Yājñavalkya prescribes rules for admission to the last two stages and thinks that only after the life of a householder the next two stages should be followed.<sup>13</sup> Manu believes in the gradual progression towards the Samnyāsa. Mokṣa according to Manu becomes the ultimate concern of man after he has undergone Vedic studies, procreated sons, performed sacrifices and cleared off all his debts to the sages, pitṛs and the gods.<sup>14</sup> Kautilya

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<sup>10</sup> Dharma-sūtra of Gautama, III, 10-24. Āpastamba-dharmasūtra, II. 9.21.7-20, Baudhayana-dharma-sutra, II.6.21-27, II.10. Manusmṛti, VI. 33-86, Kurmapurāna, uttarardha, ch. XXVIII. Agnipurāna, 161. See Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, II-II. 930-970.

<sup>11</sup> Dharmasūtra of Gautama, 3.1; 3.2.

<sup>12</sup> tesu sarvesu yathopadesam avyagre vartamānaḥ ksemam gacchati. Āpastamba dharmasutra II.9.21-22.

<sup>13</sup> suta-vinyasta patnikastayā vānugato vanam vānaprastho brahmachāri sāgñih sopāsano vrajat. Yājñavalkya III.45.

<sup>14</sup> āśramād-āśramam gatvā (from one āśrama to another), Manusmṛti, VI.34.

puts the householder's life at the top and forbids one to enter the order of asceticism without having discharged his duties to his family and society at large.<sup>15</sup> The Yama, Samkha and Likhita also follow the principles laid down by Manu and Kautilya. There is a little doubt that the dharmasāstras are unanimous in their preference of the stage of the householder. Asceticism has been accepted by all of them but they think that it should be entered after discharging one's obligations belonging to the first three stages of life.<sup>16</sup>

The task set by the dharmasāstras is to produce a type of human personality that is dedicated to self-integration and a progressive social order; the standpoint adopted is both social and religious. In this sense it may be asserted here that, social morality in these treatises never emancipated itself from the religious goal of life, Moksa, for which samnyāsa was the highest and the final. This religious world-view, however, could not strictly be identified with the higher, philosophically oriented outlook of the Vedānta. This position can further be clarified by seeing their dominant tendency towards social standpoint over and above the Jñāna and samnyāsa -- the latter, however dominated the Vedāntic philosophy.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "Kṛta-varnāśrama-sthitih", Kautilya, II.1.

<sup>16</sup> S. Chattopadhyaya, Social Life in Ancient India (Calcutta, 1946), pp. 136-145.

<sup>17</sup> N.K. Devaraja, The Mind and Spirit of India (Delhi: Motilal BanarasiDass, 1967), pp. 140-142.

But the general impression of the dharmāsāstras shows that the grhastha (householder) and Saṁnyāsa were not at variance with each other but rather complementary. Sri Aurobindo sums up the above ideal:

All these aspects of the Dharma were closely linked up together in progressive unity. Thus for example, each of the four orders had its own social function and ethics, but also an ideal rule and everyman by observing his Dharma and turning his actions Godwards could grow out of it into the spiritual freedom. But behind all Dharma and ethics was put, not only as a safeguard but as a light, a religious sanction, a reminder of the continuity of life and of man's long pilgrimage through many births, a reminder of the gods and plans beyond and of the Divine, and above it all the vision of a last stage of perfect comprehension and unity of divine transcendence.<sup>18</sup>

The difference between the Vedāntic Renunciation and that of the Renunciation in the Dharmāsāstras lies in the fact that, while for the former renunciation was the name given to the highest spiritual knowledge (Brahmasaṁstha) in the midst of intuitive experience and revelatory knowledge, for the latter, (and in this way similar to that of the Vedic thinking), it was taken to be one of the stages of life which must be attained after completing all obligations belonging to the first three stages of life. This was essential for the Dharmāsāstras in order to attain the prosperity (abhyudaya) as well as eternal happiness (nihsreyas). The Vedānta accepts this contention and does not challenge their efficacy in helping the seeker

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<sup>18</sup> Sri Aurobindo, Foundations of Indian Culture (Pondichery: Aurobindo Ashrama, 1953), p. 190.

towards the dawn of Jñāna. Only in this sense, we find a harmonious blending of the whole tradition in the Vedānta. According to the Vedānta, dharma associated with the various stages of life does purify the mind, and the knowledge of self is only manifested in such a mind.

On the whole, it seems that the second stage of life, i.e. grhastha was considered to be very important in the dharmaśāstras and the last one, namely Saīnyāsa, was taken to be the culmination of life where mokṣa is realized. For the Vedānta, on the other hand, the first state, i.e. the brahmacarya was regarded essential for the cultivation of virtues, discipline of mind, and for Jñāna and therefore essential for Freedom.

#### Renunciation in the Mahābhārata

The significant difference between the Vedic literature and the Mahābhārata lies in the fact that the ascetic practices in the former have not been directly related to social practices and institutions except casually, whereas in the Mahābhārata, the sense of disillusionment and detachment has been expressed with regard to the worldly activities but the fulfilment of obligations of various stages of life, has nevertheless, been recommended. In the Sāntiparva, Yudhisthira expresses his pessimistic sentiments even regarding the victory in the war: "Having caused the beloved son of Subhadra, and the sons of Draupadi, to be killed, this victory that I have



gained, is no better than defeat."<sup>19</sup> Yudhisthira's scepticism led him to contemplate renunciation but was however, held back by consideration of his duty as a warrior about which Narada admonished him. Further it is interesting to note the following sentiments of Yudhisthira in favour of Renunciation:

Abandoning the pleasures and the conduct of uncultivated, practising rigorous penance, depending on fruits and roots for living I shall wander around in the company of animals in the forest...giving myself unconcerned with blame and praise, expecting nothing, attached to nothing, being above the conflicting emotions, without possessions... with a face ever cheerful and with senses thoroughly controlled.<sup>20</sup>

A sentiment similar to Yudhisthira's is expressed in the Valmiki Ramāyana at the place where Sugriva says: "Now, O Prince Rama, I, the bearer of evil life, seeing the queen weep so bitterly and citizens crying in the

<sup>19</sup> saubhadraṃ draupadeyaṅsca ghātāyitvā sutānpriyaṅ jayoayamajayākāro bhagavanprtibhātīme.Śāntiparva, 1.15.  
R.C. Sastri Kinjawadekar, ed., Sriman Mahābhārata (Poona: Chitrashala Press, 1932), V, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Caraṃ bhaisyaṃ munirmundah sapayisye kalevaraṃ paṅsubhih samabhicchannah sunyāgaravapratisrayah vrchamulaniketo vā tyaktasarvapriyāpriyah na śocanna prhrsyaṅscha tulyāni ndatmasanstuti nirāsinirmamo bhūtvā nirdvando nisparigrahaḥ.Śāntiparva, IX,14-17.  
Ibid., p. 13.

agony of pain, feel a deep aversion towards the worldly pleasure."<sup>21</sup>

The sentiments expressed by Yudhisthira take a philosophical turn when Jñāna is given the supreme place in the scheme of asceticism as is evident from the following: "Through tapas, one attains the high, through understanding one reaches the height of excellence; the wise man, O Arjuna, achieves happiness through Renunciation".<sup>22</sup> In the present passage we see the intermingling of the Vedic and Vedāntic trends of thought. The latter has been fully expounded in the Mokṣadharmā section of the Śāntiparva but generally speaking, at no stage a total renunciation has been approved at the cost of obligations of the individual. The Mokṣadharmā which represents here and there the tendency of 'other-worldliness' is not reconcilable with the general trends of the Mahābhārata, but the co-existence of irreconcilables is not unusual in the Mahābhārata.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Yathāpṛtijnātamidam narendre kṛtam tvaya drstaphalam cakarma  
mamādyā bhogesu narendraputra mano nivṛt tam sah jiviten  
asyam mahisyām tu bhṛsām rudatvam pureca vikroṣati dukhatapte  
hateagraje samsayitemgāde ca na Ramrajye ramate mano me.  
Vālmiki Ramāyana IV.24.4-5 See K.C. Sastrigal and V.H. Sastri, eds.,  
Srimadvālmikīrāmāyana (Mylapore, Madras: The M.L.J. Press, 1958), p. 457.

<sup>22</sup> tapasā mahadāpnoti buddhyā vai vindate mahat,  
tyāgen subhamāpnoti sada Kunteya tatvavit, Santiparva, XIX.26.  
See Kinjawadekar, Mahabharata, V, 32.

<sup>23</sup> Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, I, 404.

The dejection we encounter in Yuthisthira in the Sāntiparva is similar to that of Arjuna in the Bhagavad-Gītā: "O Kṛṣṇa, I don't want victory nor kingdom and pleasures. What for kingdom or pleasure or even life."<sup>24</sup> Kṛṣṇa's exhortation to Arjuna for work reminds us of the vanaparva of the Mahābhārata where Draupadi disapproved of Yudhisthira's intention of total renunciation.<sup>25</sup> The teachings that actions must be performed in the light of one's religious duties which appear in the Tulādhāra-Jājala dialogue in the Sāntiparva,<sup>26</sup> the Brahmīn-Hunter conversation in the vanaparva<sup>27</sup> and the Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna dialogue in the Gītā<sup>28</sup> are not about action in the pragmatic sense. Actions are rooted in the religious structure of society. This ideal has been elaborately discussed in the Gītā. The real

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<sup>24</sup> na kānc̄he vijayam kṛṣṇa na ca rājyam sukhānica  
kiṃ no rajyen govinda kiṃ bhogaijjiviten va Gītā, 1.32.  
Tilak, Gītā Rahasya, p. 861.

<sup>25</sup> anarthāḥ sanśayavasthā sidhyante muktasanśayah  
dhira narah karmarate nanu nihsanśayah kvacit: Vanaparva 32.43  
Kinjawadekar, Mahābhārata, II, 58.

<sup>26</sup> Sāntiparva, 260-63, Ibid., pp. 487-98.

<sup>27</sup> Vanaparva, 206-215.

tyāga (renunciation) consists in not discarding actions but desire for the fruits of actions.<sup>29</sup>

The Dharmasāstras, the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad-Gītā, it should be remembered here, are not isolated works preaching the philosophy of action as opposed to the ideal of Renunciation. Their dominant tendencies exhibit the ideals they have in view, namely God-realization and the social-solidarity (Lokasamgraha). Both the ideals are fundamentally based on the principle of Renunciation. God in the Hindu-tradition is not free from this dharma under which he himself works for the social-solidarity and the social-solidarity being based on the transcendental order, leads man beyond egoism and the idea of multiplicity. This attitude is fundamentally religious. It is based on the development of the Self which transcends its psycho-physical nature and works in the realm of ultimate meanings. The procedure by which these meanings are enacted in the Vedāntic and smṛti traditions might slightly differ but the goal is the same: preservation and transmission of a transcendent and universal order. Kṛṣṇa points

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<sup>29</sup> Hiriyanna remarks: "While it does not abandon activity, it provides the spirit of renunciation. It commends a strenuous life, and yet gives no room for the play of selfish impulses. Thus it discards neither ideal, but by combining them refines and ennobles both. That particular attitude of soul which renunciation signifies still remains; only it ceases to look askance at action. In other words the Gītā teaching stands not for renunciation of action but renunciation in action." Hiriyanna, Indian Philosophy, p. 121

out the same fact in the Gītā when he talks about the Purātanah Yogah (ancient Yoga) which is not an innovation as it has already been taught to Vivasvat who revealed it to Manu who transmitted it to Īkṣvāku.<sup>30</sup> The Vedānta establishes the same order in terms of Jñāna and saṁnyāsa whereas the smṛti preserves the same tradition in term of dharma. Both the principles bridge the gulf between samsāra and mokṣa. Both of them alike do not snatch away the value of either individual or society or their interrelationship but transform them to such an extent that they become sacred. In such a religious phenomenon, the individual, society and the relationship between the two do not remain at the 'private' level but still preserves the identity, perhaps a better identity, by radically extending them at the level of the generality of mankind. This is perhaps the most revolutionary trait of the Indian tradition in general. The Karnaparva of the Mahābhārata puts it "The term 'dharma' originates from the root 'dhṛ', i.e. to hold or uphold and all human beings are held together by dharma. That by which the holding together takes place is dharma."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> imaṁ vivasvate yogam proktavānahamavyayam  
vivasvānmanave prāh Manurīksākaveabravīta  
sa evāyam mayā tēdya yogah proktam purātanah  
bhaktosī me sakhā ce'ti rahasyam hyetaduttamam. Bhagavad-Gītā, IV.1-3.

<sup>31</sup> dhāranād dharmamityāhūr dharmo dhārayate prajāh  
yat syād dhārana sanyuktam sa dharme eti niscyati Karnaparva,  
 69.58. See Kinjawadekar, Mahabharata, IV, 128.

The ideal of Brahman represents the same truth, which virtually holds everything together as it is the Ground of everything. One of the Upanisads beautifully points out: "one who dwelling in the earth is distinct from the earth, whom the earth knows not, whose body the earth is, who rules the earth from within, he is thy soul, the inner guide, the immortal".<sup>32</sup>

Let us turn to some other types of Renunciation in the Indian religious tradition to see more clearly their differences.

#### Renunciation in Jainism

We need not embark upon the history of Renunciation in Jainism. To do so would be to go far beyond the scope of the present undertaking. But it is important to show the salient features of Renunciation in Jainism in order to see more clearly its differences from those of Buddhism, Ajīvikism and the Vedānta. It is curious to note that though Jainism is a religious system parallel to Buddhism independent of Brāhmanism, it resembles both in several respects, particularly in the matter of Renunciation. It is on this account that scholars like E.W. Hopkins regard it as "a theological mean between Brāhmanism and Buddhism."<sup>33</sup> Whatever may be

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<sup>32</sup> Yah prthivyām tisthan prthivyā'antarāh yam  
prthivi na Veda, Yasya prthivi sarīram, Yah  
prthivim antaro yamayati, esa ta atmantaryamy amrtah. Br. Up.  
III.7.3. Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads, p. 225.

<sup>33</sup> Hopkins. Religions of India, p. 283.

the controversy over this question, it is a fact that Renunciation in Jainism has certainly been influenced by the Brāhmanic tradition and has in itself exercised a great influence on at least early Buddhism.<sup>34</sup>

Pointing out the importance of this historical phenomenon, H. Jacobi remarks: "The records of the Buddhists and Jainas about the Philosophical ideas current at the time of the Buddha and Mahāvīra, meagre though they may be, are of the greatest importance to the historian of the epoch. For they show us the ground on which, and the materials with which a religious reformer had to build up his system".<sup>35</sup> The philosophical and religious speculations of Jainism pertaining to the nature of Renunciation is of a special interest to us because it helped the later Vedāntic thinkers correct some of the shortcomings into which these anti-Brahmanical systems had fallen. In addition to Jainism and Buddhism some of the anti-Vedic and anti-brāhmanic teachers who prevailed during that time are: Purāna Kassapa, Mākhali Gosāla, Ājita Kesa-Kambala, Pakudha-Kaccāyana and Sanjaya Belatthaputta.<sup>36</sup> The general religious atmosphere of the time predominantly

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<sup>34</sup>For some aspects of this problem see H. Jacobi Jain Sūtras, in F. Max Muller, ed; Sacred Books of the East (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1884), XXII, Introduction.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. XXVII.

<sup>36</sup>Benimadhava Barua, A History of Pre-Buddhistic Philosophy (2nd ed.; Delhi: Motilal BanarasiDass, 1970), p. 189.

consisted of the ascetic life or the life of hermits and wanderers.

T.W. Rhys Davids points out:

In the forests adjoining the settlements the disciples of the various schools, living a hermit life, occupied themselves, according to the various tendencies of the schools to which they belonged, either in meditation or in sacrificial rites, or in practices of self-torture, or in repeating over themselves, and teaching to their pupils, the Sūttas containing the tenets of their school. Much time was spent in gathering fruits and roots for their sustenance...And there was difference of opinion, and of practice, as to the comparative importance attached to the learning of texts.<sup>37</sup>

It might be remarked here that the Brāhmanical system had given rise to several reactions against its central themes, i.e. Yajña, Mantras (hymns), Brahman-Ātman, Brāhman, Veda-Jñāna etc. but there was hardly any controversy regarding the significance of Renunciation (Samnyāsa). But the way in which it was understood and absorbed is of considerable significance in assessing its differences from the Vedāntic tradition.

One of the most striking features of Jainism is its uncompromisingly rigorous self-discipline which distinguishes itself from the Brahmanic tradition. The Uttarādhyaṇa-Sūtra recommends even the mortification of the sage by following the religious practices like Avamodarika (taking the least articles of food), bhīksācharya (severe modes of begging), Rasatyāga

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<sup>37</sup> T.W. Rhys Davids, Buddhist India (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), p. 159.



(abstention from nourishing food), Kāyakleṣa (self-torturing practices) and Pratisamtiṇata (restraints of senses, passions and activities).<sup>38</sup>

Professor N. Tatia remarks: "The Jainas, like other exponents of asceticism, endorse suicide in case the body fails to fulfil the demands of the spirit. of course, 'suicide' is a misnomer for this kind of death. It is only an abandonment of the body unable to help the spirit in its progress...If life helps progress of the spirit, it is to be preserved. If by courting death spiritual fall can be checked, it is welcome."<sup>39</sup> The Bhagavati-Sūtra speaks of the two types of Renunciation (Vyutsarga), namely, dravya-vyutsarga (renunciation of physical objects like society, articles of food and drink) and bhāvavyutsarga (renunciation of four passions, four forms of life and eight Karma-prakṛtis).<sup>40</sup> A Jain yati, named Skandaka is said to have undergone the vow of continuous fast. His body was reduced to a skeleton but he gained spiritual power (tapateja). At last he resolved to give up his body by the Samlekhanā tapa with the permission of his teacher, Mahāvīra and he courted death.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Uttarādhyayana-Sūtra, XXXVI, 249-54; XXI, 4-6.

<sup>39</sup> Nathmal Tatia, Studies in Jain Philosophy (Banares: Jain Cultural Research Society, 1951), pp. 20-21.

<sup>40</sup> Abhayadeva, ed., Bhagavati-Sūtra (Bombay: Agamodaya Samiti, 1921), p. 128b.

This ideal of rigorous asceticism is peculiarly Jain, and even early Buddhism which repudiated the individual soul as a permanent reality did not succumb to this temptation of self-mortification, although it was qualified to do so. The ideal of Renunciation bears a somewhat different significance for Buddhism. In the Kassapa-Sīhanāda-Sutta, the Buddha does not approve of self-mortification or penance. He rates the inner-discipline, self-victory, charity and freedom from superstitions and automatism very highly.<sup>42</sup> In the Udumbarikā Sīhanāda Suttanta, the Buddha condemns those paribbājakas who have fallen in love with mere asceticism.<sup>43</sup> Here is the apparent distinction between Buddhism and Jainism. Buddhism very clearly denounces the ascetic extravagances of Jainism. There is nevertheless, one characteristic common between both these systems: both of them recommend unconditional and categorical renunciation. Buddhism supports it because it finds life full of suffering without any abiding principle underlying it. Jainism, on the other hand, believes that the Jīva (soul) loses its infinite peace, faith, intelligence and power because of its union with matter and Karma which constitute saṃsāra. Man's personality, for Jainism, consists in its dual nature, i.e. spiritual and material. The course, therefore, open for an ascetic is, to subdue completely the latter

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<sup>42</sup> T.W. Rhys Davids, trans. Dīgha-nikāya (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1899), I, 234ff.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., III, 43ff, III, 39ff.

so as to help the Jīva to return to its inherent glory. This leads to a complete shaking off from Samsāra and Karma. The rationale of renunciation in both these traditions lies in their life-negating attitude which is further confirmed by their acceptance of the individualistic approach to the religious experience. The final condition for both of them alike is one of inactivity, although it is a life of peace and knowledge. But at any rate, it defeats its own ideal; it results in an arhata-darśana or arhata ideal. The state of supreme isolation which is the characteristic of Jainism and early Buddhism is represented by the Tirthaṅkara and Arhata alike. This spiritual attitude of "isolated, exclusive, alone" lacks in social dimension which is fully brought out in the Vedāntic renunciation.

The fundamental difference between the Vedāntic renunciation and Jain renunciation lies in the fact that in the Vedānta it is essential to fulfil the religious duties (dharma) which are clearly prescribed by the Vedāntic tradition. These duties are taken to be helpful for cleansing the mind. Karmas have been assigned a significant purpose, provided they are performed with proper discipline and training. The samsāra and dharma alike do not create any serious obstacle as they have been brought under the supervision of a transcendental power -- the Highest Being, as "God" who serves as a ladder for the spiritual progression. In the Vedāntic tradition, renunciation is not merely formal and negative. Renunciation is an enlightened attitude which neither increases nor decreases with the association with either the samsāra or karma. Pointing out the significance of this Vedāntic perspective, H. Zimmer remarks:

The horizon of sensual experience (sthūla) and the domain of inner spiritual event (sukṣma) have both been surpassed. The perfected saint feels himself possessed of an illimited, far-reaching, all-pervading insight...not...of the Jainas and Ajivakas, but an infallible intuition about things as they occur in everyday situations, or as they are brought to the attention of the saint, the enlightened teacher, in the questions and problems posed to him by the children of the world. This wonderful purity is the most obvious worldly manifestation in him of the fact that he is in perfect harmony with his own Self, unshaken by the gales of passions, uninhibited by the usual limiting qualifications..."<sup>44</sup>

It will suffice to remark here that the Vedānta does not take Jīva (Self) as infinite in number, unlike Jainism. By accepting one ultimate Reality, i.e. Brahman, the Vedānta does not isolate each of the individual from the generality and universality of the spiritual experience but makes it a part and parcel of it. The realization of this unity is the task of renunciation. Renunciation, therefore, in the Vedānta, achieves enormously more than that of the renunciation in Jainism. Renunciation, in the latter, achieves the purity of the Jīva whereas in the Vedānta, it realizes the whole, beyond which nothing remains. This is a tremendous positive ideal which could be as much this-worldly as other-worldly. Renunciation in Jainism which exhibits an other-worldly nature has finally been overcome. This shows the constant awareness of the positive ideal that the Vedānta has in mind.

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<sup>44</sup> Heinrich Zimmer, Philosophies of India, ed., Joseph Campbell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 452-53.

Renunciation in the Ājīvakas

Next to Jainism, Ājīvikism poses a major threat for the Vedāntic ideal of renunciation. The founder of this religious sect was Maskarin (Mankhali in the Jain-Prākṛt and Makkhali in Pāli) Gosāla. The word 'Maskarin' means one who carries a bamboo-staff (maskara).<sup>45</sup> A Maskarin is also explained as Ekadandin. According to Patanjali, it indicates wandering ascetics who denied the freedom of will.<sup>46</sup> Maskarin Gosala is considered to be the founder of the religious sect, known as Ājīvaka, although according to the Bhagavatī sūtra, he was the twenty-fourth tīrthāṅkara and not the founder of the school. Unfortunately we do not know anything about his predecessors. It is also very difficult to decide the meaning of the term 'Ājīvaka' which has been interpreted differently by various scholars. A.F.R. Hornley explains the word Ājīva as "mode of life, or profession, or people".<sup>47</sup> This is also the meaning given to this term in the Sanskrit-English Dictionary of Williams Monnier. As we pointed out earlier, the Ājīvaka school existed at the time of the Buddha and Mahāvīra and according

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<sup>45</sup> Pāṇinī's Grammar, VI.1.154.

<sup>46</sup> A.F.R. Hornley, "Ājīvikas", in James Hastings, ed., Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1908), I, 289.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

to G. Buhler, its existence is quite certain by third century B.C.<sup>48</sup>

What concerns us most here is the anti-moralistic and fatalistic doctrine of the Ājīvakas with which the renunciation doctrine came to be linked in the tradition. Since we do not possess any writings of the Ājīvakas we have to content ourselves with some the the citations in books by its opponents. The Buddha criticized the system of Gosala for preaching 'living in incontinency' (abrahmacharyavāsa).<sup>49</sup> The Jain text Uvāsagāsāo condemns this school for holding that "there is no such thing as exertion or labour or power or energy or human strength; all things are unalterably fixed."<sup>50</sup> The Vāyupurāna speaks of the Ājīvaka as undesirable and unrighteous people who caused a great confusion of varna and āśrama.<sup>51</sup> It also describes it as propounding a theory which lacks in character and moral living.<sup>52</sup> The Ājīvaka's theory of self-torturing asceticism and the

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<sup>48</sup>G. Buhler, "The Barabar and Nagarjun Hill Cave Inscriptions of Asoka and Dasaratha," The Indian Antiquary, XX, pp. 36lff.

<sup>49</sup>Majjima Nikāya, 1.541.

<sup>50</sup>Uvāsagadasāo, 1.97.115.

<sup>51</sup>Adharmikā janaste vai ājivā vihitāh suraih Varnāsrāh sankarikāh kārū-silpi janas.Vayupurana, 69.285.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 69.288-89.

practice of severe penances as ways to Release have also been mentioned in a Tamil text, called, civannana-cittiyār.<sup>53</sup> The Ājīvakas are known for their asceticism for acquiring the magical powers. A.L. Basham suggests that Gosala himself was a magician.<sup>54</sup> They have been described as naked, begging their food and sometimes deliberately starving to death.<sup>55</sup> The Buddhists doubt their asceticism and think that the Ājīvakas were sensualists and filled with worldliness.<sup>56</sup> Jainism puts forward several objections to them for incurring the sins of immorality, sexuality and drunkenness in order to get artificial pleasure.<sup>57</sup>

The Cardinal doctrine of this school is its belief in niyati (fatalism). It leaves no scope for spiritual endeavour. A.L. Basham thinks that even Jainism and Buddhism shared its belief in fatalism<sup>58</sup> but it is very difficult to find evidences to this fact. The logical conclusion of the fatalistic belief has been summed up by H. Zimmer:

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<sup>53</sup> M. Mudaliyar, ed., Civannana-Cittiyār (Madras, 1936), I, 255.

<sup>54</sup> A.L. Basham, History and Doctrines of the Ājīvakas (London: Luzac, 1951), p. 60.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 127ff.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>57</sup> Jacobi, Jain Sutras, p. 245.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 27ff.

For the Ājīvaka doctrine that no amount of moral or ascetic exertion would shorten the series of rebirths offered no hope for a speedy release from the fields of ignorance through saintly exercises. On the contrary, a vast and comprehensive review of all the kingdoms and departments of nature let it appear that each life-monad was to pass, in a series of precisely eighty-four thousand births, through the whole gamut of the varieties of being, starting among the elemental atoms of ether, air, fire, water and earth...each birth being linked to the others in conformity to a precise and minutely graduated order of evolution. All the life-monads in the universe were passing labouriously along this one inevitable way.<sup>59</sup>

Now it is easy to see the religious predicament of the high religious tradition in the face of the heretical movements. It is a fact that the Ājīvaka sect was opposed strongly by the Buddha and Mahāvīra alike.<sup>60</sup> The main reason for the opposition was their staunch belief in the law of Karma and the necessity of Moksa or Nirvāna which were reduced to a status of sheer possibility in the Ājīvakas. It is a distinctive mark of the main stream of Indian thought that anything antagonistic to the philosophy of hopefulness was rejected in the long run. A philosophy or religion that fails to inspire a moral and spiritual quest could not flourish for a long

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<sup>59</sup> Zimmer, Philosophies of India, p. 265.

<sup>60</sup> I. W. Blyth, Barth's trans; Anuguttara Nikaya (London, 1922), p. 265. The Buddha denms it for being completely disastrous. And probably the death of Gosala was caused by Mahāvīra's criticism.



time. Renunciation or asceticism, if divorced from the characteristic mode of life and unable to contribute to the unveiling of the glory of life was regarded as sheer waste of time, a merely outward and formal activity.

But here a very important question arises: Was Jainism able to provide a satisfactory substitute for life? This is a very puzzling question which we have already partly answered. One of the texts of Jainism says: "Jīva and non-jīva together constitute the universe. If they are separate nothing more is required. If they are united, as they are found in the world, the stoppage and the gradual and then final destruction of the union are the only possible ways of considering them."<sup>61</sup> If this is really Freedom, we are tempted to counter that this freedom might be anything but freedom as understood by the Vedānta. If Renunciation is directed to annihilation of the universe, it is bereft of all implications which are central to it. The sacredness of the universe which originates in the Veda on account of the sacred marriage of Father Heaven and Mother Earth<sup>62</sup> marks a very characteristic development of an early Vedic religion. The blending of the individual world and the cosmic world, resulting in a unique type of synthesis, besides showing that Reality is one, is a Vedāntic,

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<sup>61</sup>Tattvārthādhigama-Sūtra, II,7.

<sup>62</sup>Cf. Rgveda, 1.89.10.

doctrine of very positive significance. The Chāndogya Upanisad<sup>63</sup> indicates it when it asserts that the world has emerged from the One and that that One is one's own self; yet it is not his private or closed self that can explain the Universe but his self as one with the Universal Self. When we consider the nature of renunciation as linked with Jñāna for the understanding of the Universal Self which the Vedānta is consistently pointing out, renunciation acquires an entirely different meaning. The Universe is not a bloodless shell which holds life but itself a living reality, completely pervaded by Ātman as revealing the entire universe.<sup>64</sup> This perspective is outside the purview of either the Jainas or the Ājīvakas. Now the only hope would seem to be the theistic schools. Let us see how they assess renunciation in their spiritual schemes of life and if they are any better than the schools we have examined.

#### Renunciation Among the Theistic Sects

Regarding the theistic implications of renunciation we will turn to some of the sects which are taken to be prevalent at the time of Śaṅkara.

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<sup>63</sup>Ch. Up., V.24.1-2: sa ya idam avidvān agni-hotram juhōti, yathāṅgārān apohya bhasamāni juhuyāt tadrk tat syat atha ya etad evam vidvān agni-hotram juhōti, tasya sarvesu lokesu sarvesu bhutesu atmasu hutam bhavati. Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads, p. 444.

<sup>64</sup>Br. Up., II.412: sa yathā saindhava-khilya udaka prāsta udakam evānu-viliyeta na hāsyā udgrahanayeva syat, yato yatas tv ādadita lavanam eva, evam vā ara idam mahad bhūtam anantam apāram vijnāna, ghana eva, etebhyo bhutebhyah samuthaya, tāny evānuvinasyati, na pretya samynāsti, eti are bhavāmi, iti hovaca yājñavalkyah. Ibid., p. 200.

From the literature of the time we come to know that their religious doctrines and practices were criticized from the standpoint of Vedānta. The reason for these criticisms in the light of Vedāntic understanding of theistic religions will be examined later. Saṅkara mentions the Mahēśvaras who are most probably the same as Pāśupatas.<sup>65</sup> Vācaspati Miśra grouped these Mahēśvaras into the four, namely, śaivas, Pāśupatas, Kāpālikas and Kāruṅika-Siddhāntins.<sup>66</sup> R.G. Bhandarkar thinks that the Kāthaka-Siddhāntins are none other than the Kāruka-Siddhāntins.<sup>67</sup> Rāmaṇuja does not make any difference between these sects which represent the doctrine of Pāśupati. In his opinion, these sects are against the Vedic tradition because they make a distinction between the instrumental and material cause (nimittopādānāyorbhedam) and regard Pāśupati as the instrumental cause.<sup>68</sup> It should be noted here that the Maitri Upaniṣad also points to the existence of these sects which distracted the believers in the Veda by their false arguments.<sup>69</sup> The Mahābhārata also mentions the Pāśupatas as one

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<sup>65</sup>Thibaut, Vedānta-Sūtras, II, 435.

<sup>66</sup>Bala Sāstrī, ed., Bhāmatī (Calcutta; Bibliotheca Indica, No. 83, 1880), II.2.37.

<sup>67</sup>R.G. Bhandarkar, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems (Strasbourg: K.J. Trubner 1913), p. 121.

<sup>68</sup>P.B. Anangācārya, ed., Srībhāṣya on Brahmasūtra (Conjeevaram, 1956). II.2.35-37.

<sup>69</sup>Mai. Up., VII.8. See Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upaniṣads, p. 855.

of the five schools of religious doctrines.<sup>70</sup> R.G. Bhandarkar places its origin about 2nd century B.C.<sup>71</sup>

Some of the traditional biographies of Śaṅkara give us information about Śaṅkara's encounter with the Buddhists, Jains, Pāśupatas and Kāpālikas as being some of his rivals. The most important and perhaps the earliest of these biographies are Śaṅkara-vijaya, attributed to Ānandagiri and the Śaṅkara-dīq̄vijaya ascribed to Mādhvācārya (also known as Vidyāranya).<sup>72</sup>

The legends mentioned in these biographies are mainly three:

- (a) Śaṅkara's encounter with a treacherous Kāpālika named Ugra-Bhairava.
- (b) Śaṅkara's battle with the militant Krakaca of Karnāṭaka and
- (c) Śaṅkara's debate with the hedonist Unmatta-Bhairava.

It is difficult to say whether the Vaiṣṇava ascetics also existed at that time and whether Śaṅkara had any encounter with them, although prevalence of Vaiṣṇavism in the south cannot be doubted. The cult must have spread but there is no evidence to show at what time it was introduced there. The Ālvars, the Saura sects and the Tāmil Śaivite saints have also been mentioned at the time of Śaṅkara in his biographies. The sects, we are informed by Bhandarkar have very hostile relations with the Buddhists

<sup>70</sup> Sāntiparva, Ch. 348. V.64.

<sup>71</sup> Bhandarkar, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism etc., p. 117.

<sup>72</sup> The Śaṅkara-Vivaya has been edited by Tarkapanchanan and the Śaṅkara-dīq̄vijaya with Dhanapatisuri's Dindima commentary is Ānandāsrama edition.

and Jainas.

Instead of going into the details of their doctrines, let us examine the reasons why Śaṅkara opposed these theistic sects, despite the fact that they were not opposed to Brahmanism as such and were also ascetic in their life-orientation. Regarding their Brahmanical nature, S.N. Dasgupta points out:

The Pāsupata system as represented in this work is a Brahmanical system. For it is only Brahmins who could be initiated to the Pāsupata doctrines but at the same time it seems to break off from Brahmanism in a variety of ways. It does not recommend any of the Brahmanical rites but it initiates some new rites and new ways of life which are not so common in the Brahmanical circle. It keeps some slender contact with Brahmanism by introducing the meditation on the syllable om. But as regards many other rituals it seems to be entirely non-vedic.<sup>73</sup>

Their extremely ascetic nature is expressed in the words of Madhava's Śaṅkara-digvijya:

After they had been thus repudiated, the various groups (varnas) -- Kapālikas, Carvakas, Saugatas, Ksapanakas, Jainas and Baudhas -- reappeared in another town... His body was covered with ashes from a funeral pyre; his neck was ringed with a garland of human skulls; (three horizontal) streaks of lamp-black were drawn across his forehead; all his hair was fashioned into a top-knot (Jata-Juta); his waistband and loincloth were made from a tiger skin; a skull-bowl adorned his left hand; his right hand held a loudly ringing bell (ghanta)

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<sup>73</sup> S.N. Dasgupta, History of Indian Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), V, 142-43.

and he was chatting repeatedly. O sambhu Bhairava!  
Aho, Kalisa!<sup>74</sup>

The classic description of these ascetics is followed by a hedonistic tendency of a Cārvāka type. In the Mālatīmādhava of Bhavabhūti, the Kapalikas evoke terror (bhaya), horror (bibhatsa) and disgust (Juquptsā). Villaninous Kāpālika ascetics have been discussed by several Sanskrit dramatists and none of them had any sympathy with them.<sup>75</sup> They have also been shown as having magical powers command over villanous women with supernatural powers, etc.

In the matter of propitiation, they differed from most of the theistic religions. They believed in animal and human sacrifices. "If he (Siva) does not receive worship with liquor and blood-smeared lotus which are human heads", mentions Mādhava, "how can he attain joy when his body is embraced by the lotus eyed Uma".<sup>76</sup>

The theological and ritualistic dominance in these sects reduced the nature of philosophy to a secondary status. The doctrine of renunciation (Saṁnyāsa) has been taken in its very external form which appears to be

<sup>74</sup> xv.28.

<sup>75</sup> Keith, The Sanskrit Drama, p. 254.

<sup>76</sup> Mādhavācārya, Saṅkar-Vijay, XI.11. See Basham, History and Doctrines of the Ajivakas, p. 114.

superficial. 'For he who is despised, lies happy, freed of all attachment'.<sup>77</sup>

And again:

He should appear as though mad, like a pauper, his body covered with filth letting his beard, nails and hair grow long, without any bodily care. Hereby he becomes cut off from the respectable castes and conditions of men, and the power of passionless detachment is produced.<sup>78</sup>

Associated with the above concept is equally a picture of God as terrifying as it has been presented. Therefore the severe attack of Saṅkara on these sects should not surprise us.

#### Renunciation in Buddhism

We propose now to discuss the Buddhist attitude towards renunciation because Buddhism in its original form belongs with other Indian traditions in respect of ideas pertaining to Renunciation which is aimed at freedom from the cycle of Karma-Saṁsāra. What interests us most here is the examination of such a religious system like Buddhism, advocating renunciation despite the fact that it has no place either for the individual soul or the universal soul. Here there is nothing like essential, permanent Reality: everything is subject to the continuous flux -- "no kernel which remains when the husk has been removed; there is nothing but husk. Nor is there any

<sup>77</sup> B.H.H. Ingalls, "Cynics and Pasupatas: The Seeking of Dishonour", Harvard Theological Review, LV, p. 236.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

kernel hidden away behind the phenomenon of the world."<sup>79</sup> The rationale of Renunciation, therefore, in Buddhism does not derive from the quest for or realization of Brahman or Īsvara but elimination of suffering (dukkha), recognized as the greatest evil, having its source in the desire for existence. Pointing out the place of dukkha in Buddhism, Gunaratne remarks:

The word 'dukkha' must awaken in our minds not only thoughts of pain and distress, but also all those thoughts about the unsatisfactory and illusory nature of the things of this world, their unsubstantiality, their failure to satisfy completely, and their inevitable ending in disappointment, sorrow and disharmony. Dukkha consists of that state of unbalance that continued agitation and disturbance...Perhaps the word 'disharmony' can be regarded as the closest equivalent of dukkha.<sup>80</sup>

On the question of dukkha, there is hardly any disagreement in the Indian philosophical system. Also there is unanimity on the question of release from dukkha. All the systems agree that there is a state which is possible to attain and that state is free from suffering. Renunciation is indispensable for reaching the state of freedom, whether it is called Mokṣa, Kaivalya or Nirvāna. By associating the concept of impermanence (aniccā, anitya) with Renunciation, Buddhism reversed the traditional teaching of

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<sup>79</sup>Farquhar, The Religious Quest of India, p. 105.

<sup>80</sup>V.F. Gunaratne, The Significance of the Four Noble Truths (Kandy: B.P.S., 1968), p. 8.



Brahmanism which directed the principle of saṃnyāsa towards uncovering of the permanent (nitya)Self (ātman). If all things in the world are transient and unsubstantial, our spiritual endeavours are sheer waste. But to say so would be a kind of injustice to the spirit of Buddhism. For it admits that nothing that we do disappears without leaving its consequences behind, but can such a doctrine be reconciled with the denial of an enduring self? Paul Deussen hints at the same problem when he says: 'This karman must have in every case an individual bearer and that is what the upanisads call ātman and what the Buddhists inconsistently deny.'<sup>81</sup> Without denying the spiritual contribution of Buddhism, it seems clear to us that the metaphysical considerations centering around the denial of Ultimate Reality, label Buddhism as very pessimistic and negative. The doctrine of unsubstantiality and temporality when pushed further by Nāgārjuna established pure and simple illusoriness of all phenomena.<sup>82</sup> Since a general principle of Reality in Buddhism was apparently suspended, Renunciation could not serve a very positive function. One thing stands clear that for the Vedānta, the direction was provided by Sruti (Revelation) but Buddhism in the absence of it found it difficult to provide a direction to philosophy

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<sup>81</sup> Paul Deussen, India Antiquary, (1900), p. 398.

<sup>82</sup> Śaṅkara, on this account, does not find any need for serious refutation of this doctrine. It stands self-refuted. See Thibaut, The Vedānta Sūtras, II, 427. Even Jainism finds Nāgārjuna's philosophy nihilistic.

at least for some time.

The philosophy of Bhūta-tathatā of Āsvaghōṣa marks a clear departure from pure phenomenism to monistic idealism. Āsvaghōṣa admitted one permanent reality from which he sought to derive everything else. S.N. Dasgupta remarks: "Āsvaghōṣa seems to combine these two ideas into the doctrine that there is a reality which he calls the mere thatness, of which it is not possible to make any kind of affirmation or negation; and following the footsteps of the Upaniṣads, he describes it as forming the essential nature of the soul."<sup>83</sup> The term 'tathatā' (suchness) here means "oneness of all things" which can be realized by Jñāna and saṃnyāsa which remove the functioning of avidyā. Avidyā serves as a positive entity in the sense of false knowledge in the same way as the world serves as a positive entity in the sense of false knowledge. Jñāna and even saṃnyāsa cannot work in a vacuum. The contribution of Āsvaghōṣa lies in providing a structure to Buddhism which enriched the social dimension; the dimension which was otherwise lacking in the early Buddhism.<sup>84</sup> This phase of thought had its further repercussions. Buddhism seems to have adopted almost the same pattern of Renunciation, namely cosmic and acosmic with its implications for faith,

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<sup>83</sup> S.N. Dasgupta, Indian Idealism (Cambridge: The University Press, 1933), p. 90.

<sup>84</sup> B.G. Tilak thinks that this transformation in the Mahāyāna Buddhism could only be possible because of the impact of the Gītā. He cites several internal and external evidences to prove this thesis. See Gīta Rahasya, pp. 801-815.

devotion etc. Śāntideva, for example, incorporates 'faith' into Buddhism.<sup>85</sup>

We have so far spoken about the main traditions of renunciation, which, though they manifest some common characteristics, are yet different in fundamental respects. We have endeavoured, throughout, to show, directly or indirectly, that in spite of certain ascetic extravagances (which can be legitimately expected in such a vast tradition), there is a dominant tendency towards a positive reconstruction of the doctrine of renunciation, which has been, strangely enough, shared by all. I do not mean to imply that it has never acquired a negative or life-denying tendency but I want to assert here that this tendency has always been resisted and could not be allowed to flourish without dissensions within the given tradition or outside it. We have noticed the sharp reaction by Buddhism and Jainism alike against the Ājīvakism. We have also noticed the criticisms levelled against each other by the Buddhists and Jainas. We have examined, though very briefly, the transformation within the Buddhist tradition itself -- the transformation which is essential for keeping the religion alive. This phenomenon is equally true for Brāhmanism. In my opinion no tradition

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<sup>85</sup> Sradhā-mūlam drdhikṛtya bodhaucāryā matirdhā. Śāntideva's śikṣāsamuccaya. See, Cecil Bendall and Rouse, eds., Śāntideva's śikṣāsamuccaya (London, 1922), p.2.

has undergone such a degree of modifications as Brahmanism has. And perhaps no tradition has aroused such a vast controversy, appreciation and condemnation as Brahmanism has. It was criticized not only by those systems which were outside that tradition but also by the tradition itself. Yet it is understandable that the rationale of renunciation differed from system to system but it is curious enough that no system could ever emancipate itself from the phenomenon of renunciation. It is not as simple as it appears to be. The goal that is reached in the Indian tradition, in general, is through renunciation which is characterized, on the one hand, by Jñāna and the metaphysical structure, on the other. The spiritual history of India indicates that whenever the power of the ideal of renunciation weakened and the pursuit of Jñāna and Ultimate Reality were undertaken in disregard of it, there has occurred a noticeable decline in philosophic thought as well as deterioration in the fabric of religion. And contrariwise, whenever the spirit of renunciation revived itself, the foundations were always Jñāna and the discovery of its metaphysical ground. I have, obviously in mind, the spread of the mahāyāna Buddhism and the Vedānta. It is impossible for historians, to speak with certainty as to which of these the positive ideal of Renunciation belongs. It seems it belongs to both of them equally. In this respect as well as in other respects there seems to be a constant overlapping of these two traditions.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATION OF RENUNCIATION

##### Problem of Self-knowledge

In the previous chapter we briefly referred to the fact that Renunciation in the Vedānta has its root in the metaphysical structure of Reality and Jñāna. Although these two elements are common to all Indian thought nowhere have they been so forcefully brought out as in the Vedānta. The Vedānta may accordingly be taken to represent the consummation of Indian thought. On the theoretical side, it is based on the Upanisadic doctrine of Brahman, which is to be approached only through jñāna or gnosis, and on the practical side, the pursuit of mokṣa as the final culmination of saṁnyāsa. These two characteristics also signify the fact that the Vedānta is neither a pure intellectualism nor a simple moralism. To understand either Brahman or Samnyāsa in the ordinary logical and ethical sense will be a grave injustice to the spirit of the Vedānta.<sup>1</sup> But it should be

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<sup>1</sup>"The logical faculty of thought (if I may be allowed such an expression)," says S.N. Dasgupta, "always seeks to break up the immediacy of anything that is given, into differences, and then guided by any particular kind of interest to pick up any of these and unite them with other entities, similarly broken up and abstracted from other unities. When our experiences remain as mere immediacies, or felt wholes of the moment, they remain shut within ourselves; conceived as such, these are isolated facts which can seldom be connected up with one another. Each felt whole stands alone by itself." S.N. Dasgupta, Philosophical Essays (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1941), p. 71. Morality, in the same way, it might be added, however much it may widen our outlook, keeps us divided from the rest of mankind. The essential duality of the moral world can only be transcended by a man who is truly free. This can only be possible when he rises above the anthropocentric view and establishes his identity with the Reality, based on the Vedantic ideal of human unity.

equally remembered here that these are the means of attaining the final ideal. In other words, the value and validity of experience, action and morality can be legitimately accepted within Vedānta so far as they seek to interpret and help the spiritual goal of life but they cannot be regarded as substitutes for it. What is sufficient is the self-knowledge backed by revelation (śruti). J.G. Arapura's following statement is closely related to the subject under consideration:

Transcendent self-knowledge and revelation constitute the two Archimedean points in religion's own epistemology. Undoubtedly, even Buddhism as religion -- which it is -- is based on these two, a matter that can be convincingly demonstrated by a correct study of the sources of authoritative knowledge in the Buddhist texts...that the Upanisads present the most perfectly consistent and by far the most thoroughly developed doctrines of the Self and Self-knowledge is indisputable. (Buddhism must be understood as representing the diverse side of these doctrines, and in the last resort as making them more meaningful by challenging them to their ultimate foundations and hence radicalizing them). And a goodly position of these famous sacred texts are about these. Because of its wholly transcendent character, knowledge of the self can be appropriated, it is argued by Yājñavalkya, the greatest of its spokesmen, only negatively as neti neti (not this, not this). The highest expression of this line of thought is found in the greatest Upanisadic text of all which says tat tvam asi (That art Thou). But such a knowledge, it is also said elsewhere, does not come except through revelation, as stated in the Katha Upanisad (I.2.23): "This self cannot be attained by instruction nor by intellectual power, nor even through much hearing. It is to be attained only by the one whom he (the Self) chooses. To such a one the Self reveals its own nature?"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Arapura, Religion as Anxiety and Tranquillity, p. 38.

The present chapter confines itself to the understanding of this Self-knowledge and its implications for Renunciation. If the knowledge (Jñāna) of Brahman in the Vedānta necessarily culminates in Renunciation, it should not imply, as has been throughout pointed out, the denial of all given reality as this denial is anything but Vedāntic. The denial of 'givenness', a priori, rests upon a reality behind the self-descrepant givenness. Viewed in this light, Brahman only appears as the world. It is the original of which the world (the givenness), as S. Radhakrishnan puts it, may be regarded as "translation at the plane of space-time."<sup>3</sup> It is in the sense that Saṅkara's philosophy can be differentiated from the Sūnyavāda of Nāgārjuna. Here the remark of Hiriyanna may be noted:

If according to the Mādhyaṃika it is impossible for thought to rest in the relative, it is equally impossible for it according to Saṅkara, to rest in absolute nothing. To use the terminology of the Upanisads, the Advaita denies "names" and "forms", but not that which appears under their guise, or as an old writer has observed, while the Advaitin negates only distinction (bheda), the Mādhyaṃika negates it as well as the distincts (bhidyamāna).

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<sup>3</sup>Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, II, 570.

<sup>4</sup>Hiriyanna, Indian Philosophy, p. 373. Also, Nāsatovidyate bhāvo nabhāvo vidyate satah /ubhayarapi dr̥stontah tvānayoṣtattvadarsibhih//

Bhagavad-Gita, II.16.

Bhagavad-Gītā Saṅkarabhāṣya: tadāsatve sarvābhāva prasanga iticetna. Yadavisaya budhir na vyabhīcāfati tat sat, yadvisaya vy-bhīcarati tat asat. See Mahadeva Sastry, The Bhagavad-Gita, pp. 34-37.

The Advaitic acceptance of Reality behind the empirical phenomena -- the Reality which is utterly ungiven, i.e., as self-luminous (svayamprabhā) is an immediate certainty, denial of which is sheer impossibility as the denial in itself postulates it.<sup>5</sup> Knowledge, according to the Vedānta is foundational and is the necessary condition of all existence. Vidyāranya, the author of the Pañcadāsī also postulates such a knowledge (samvid) as a necessary precondition of all existence.<sup>6</sup> As a necessary pre-condition of all existence, this knowledge (Jñāna) is called advitīyam (without a second) and amṛtam (immortal). Because of its non-duality, it forms an absolute unity.

For where there is duality as it were, there one smells another, there one hears another, there one speaks to another, there one thinks of another, there one understands another. Where verily, everything has become the Self when by what and whom should one smell, then by what and whom should one see, then by what and whom should one hear, then by what and to whom should one speak, then by what and on whom should one think, then by what and whom should one understand? By what should one know that by which all this is known? By what my dear, should one know the knower?

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<sup>5</sup> Sarvo hi ātmāstitvam pratīyēti na nāhamasmiti. Yadi hi nātāmāstitva prasiddhiḥ syat sarvo loko nāhamasmiti prīyāt. George Thibaut, Vedānta Sūtras, I, 9-15.

<sup>6</sup> See Hariprasad Shastri, trans; Pañcadāsī: A Treatise on Advaita Metaphysics of Swami Vidyāranya (London: Shanti Sadam, 1956), p.9. For a good introduction see Abhedananda, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Pañcadāsī (Calcutta, 1948).

<sup>7</sup> Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads, p. 201.



The above passage metaphysically indicates that there can be no object of knowledge without Jñāna and Jñāna which is pre-condition of every-thing cannot be an object of knowledge -- a contention that establishes the view that Jñāna (Caitanya) is the prius of reality. Śaṅkara in his commentary on Kenopaniṣad calls it nirupādhika (unconditional) and the essence of Ātman.<sup>8</sup> He bases his philosophy on the soteriological function of knowledge: "Save for that, nothing is worth knowing".<sup>9</sup> "Knowledge here is transformed into a meditation", remarks M. Eliade, and metaphysics becomes soteriology. In India not even "logic" is without a soteriological function in its beginnings. Manu uses the term ānvīksiki ("science of controversy" logic) as an equivalent to ātma-vidyā ("knowledge of the soul" ātman) -- that is, to metaphysics."<sup>10</sup>

The one legitimate conclusion that follows from the above discussion is that the self-knowledge which is soteriological in the Vedānta, is transcendent to thought and that it cannot be conceived in terms of the empirical. But it should not mean that empirical knowledge in the Vedānta is discarded.

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<sup>8</sup> M. Hiriyanna, trans., Śaṅkaracārya's Kenopaniṣadbhāṣya (Srirangam, 1915) p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> etad jneyam nityam evātmasamsthān nātaḥ param veditavyam  
hi Kincit. -- Svet. Up. 1.12. Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads, p. 716.

<sup>10</sup> M. Eliade, Yoga: Immortality and Freedom, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p.13.

As indicated earlier, empirical knowledge would be impossible without there being infinite consciousness at the back of it. Therefore every knowledge presupposes self-knowledge without exhausting it. To put it simply, such knowledge serves to reveal, though partially, the metaphysical knowledge but does not represent it. And exactly is the same case with regard to the empirical things. In other words, the whole complex of knowledge and phenomenal existents is based on the delusive structure of vṛtti-jñāna (reason) which because of its inherent procedure understands the unconditioned as conditioned and equates the empirical with the metaphysical.<sup>11</sup> The Vedānta rejects this confusion and in doing so, it does not reject or displace anything but only the misconception about it. The rejection of this confusion is done for soteriological reasons because every empirical knowledge, whether of the universe, society, morality or ethics, in the form in which it is experienced by us, is due to the lack of self-knowledge which results in

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<sup>11</sup>"There are these two principles, the principle of revelation and all that which is revealed by it; it alone is real and in the highest and truest sense. It is absolute in the sense that there is no growth, decay, evolution or change in it, and it is perfectly complete in itself. It is infinite in the sense that no finite can form part of it, though through it all finitude is being constantly revealed. It is all-pervading in the sense that no spatial or temporal limits can be said to affect it in any way, though all these are being constantly revealed by it. It is neither in my head nor in my body nor in the space before me; but yet there is nowhere that it is not. It has sometimes been designated as the "Self" or ātman, but only in the sense of denoting its nature as the supreme essence and transcendent reality of all -- the Brahman." Dasgupta, History of Indian Philosophy, II, 16.

isolating the realm of experience from its basis, i.e., Brahman and mistaking the 'isolation' or 'abstraction' for the real. The Jñāna that is capable of removing this metaphysical error, is the very nature of the self but appears to have been forgotten for the time being. The task of saṁnyāsa lies in installing the forgotten self-knowledge. The task is accomplished not by isolating the world from its source or renouncing it (as is the case with some of the religious systems as discussed earlier). All that is needed is the removal of the self-ignorance (ātma-ajñāna) through its contrary (ātman-jñāna).

The reasons for taking this position are two-fold: firstly, the Vedānta is not a negative doctrine which is throughout evident in its metaphysical structure. In fact, it is a reaction against any negative philosophy or religion, whether heterodox or orthodox. Wherever the Vedānta explains Brahman in negative terms, it is done, directly or indirectly, along with the positive ones, like Aham brahma asmi (I am brahman), tat tvam asi (That thou art). The meanings of these statements again do not lie outside the realm of experience nor are they completely axiologically other to it, as we will examine in the life of the Jīvan-mukta (enlightened in life time). The Brahma-Jñāna (Self-knowledge) constitutes the whole of experience, either on the subject or object side. It is only with reference to this spiritual experience that the Vedānta constitutes the consummation of the integral experience. J.G. Arapura's following remark substantiates it:

Integral experience is the fulness of mystical intuition, reason and feeling. It is visualized as the completion of all of them, in their togetherness and integrity. As such it is religious experience in the highest and completest sense. It is the fulfilment of mysticism. Now there are

three aspects in this fulfilment and completion of mysticism by integral experience. (1) In the place of mystical intuition, we have the whole of a person's powers, including mystical intuition organized around it. (2) In the place of the Absolute Beyond, we have the Absolute conceived as the unity of the Beyond and the universe. (3) In the place of objectivity or otherness, we have the integrity of subject and object. All these are really aspects of the problem of transcendence and immanence.<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, if the metaphysical foundation of the Vedānta is based on the positive ideal of the integral experience of Brahman, the understanding of the principle of renunciation as a sole means of the realization of such a unity, must be positive. In the absence of this approach, it would rather defeat its own ideal. Needless to say, a resistance against the negative ideal of renunciation is the central motif of the Dharmasāstra, the Mahāyāna Buddhism and the Vedānta. In the Vedānta directly and in the Mahāyāna Buddhism perhaps indirectly, it was found necessary to understand the Ultimate Reality and Renunciation not by isolating them from the universe but by making them the ground or substratum (pratiṣṭhā) of the universe.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> J.G. Arapura, Radhakrishnan and Integral Experience (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1966), p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> tathāgato yatsvabhāvas tatsvabhāvam idaṃ jagat. Mk. XXII.16 quoted by Murti, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism, p. 233.

Also vidyāpi sarvesam satyādīpadānam lakṣyam ekam eva nirvīśam brahma, tathāpi nivarttaniyamsadhikena na padāntaravaiyarthyaṃ. See T.R.V. Murti, "The Two Definitions of Brahman in Advaita" K.C. Bhattacharya Memorial Volume (Amalner, 1958), p. 150.

The spiritual technique of renunciation was directed to this central point of making the renunciants the "support" of the universe. Here the philosophical attitude is generated purely by jñāna (metaphysical knowledge). Śaṅkara has throughout made this point very clear.<sup>14</sup> Renunciation, therefore is not withdrawal in the ordinary sense. Strictly speaking, it is withdrawal from the imperfect aspect of the world which constitutes the profane existence by means of Jñāna, by already participating in a mode of sanctified existence of which we are assured by the Śruti (revelation). In the absence of this assurance, the categorical and unconditional renunciation could have been possible which is certainly not the case with the Vedānta. The unity ideal which is the express motif of the Vedānta itself is opposed to the negative ideal of renunciation. The ideal of renunciation is central to the realization of a positive nature of inexpressible happiness. In a word, it is participation in Brahman. Let us more closely examine the implications of the māyā doctrine in the Advaita Vedānta to see whether there can be any illusion without a basis in Reality or substratum (sadadhīsthāna).

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<sup>14</sup>"Without our participation in the Divine" remarks S. Radhakrishnan, "neither knowledge of God nor love of God is possible...To know this Self and made this knowledge effective in human life has been the aim of man, according to the Vedānta System." S. Radhakrishnan, trans., The Brahma Sūtra. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1960), p. 126.

Māyā, Brahman and Saṁnyāsa

The ontological position of the Advaita Vedānta has been indicated in dealing with the problem of Self-knowledge. The object of right knowledge is Brahman who is the integral part of one's nature. Renunciation, therefore, metaphysically speaking, is not the renunciation of one's real nature, as something that is real cannot be renounced or abandoned. What is being renounced or abandoned is ignorance (avidyā). The fact that avidyā is a power inherent in the Brahman shows that it is dependent thereon. In other words, avidyā itself belongs to Brahman, as only a conscious being capable of knowledge can be ignorant.<sup>15</sup> Understood accordingly, renunciation at the individual level, is only the correction or the error-removing form of the individual and in a sense is even a technique to preserve the glory and purity of the individual. Manu remarks: "If he keeps both his organs and his consciousness under subjection, he can attain his goal without tormenting his body."<sup>16</sup> One of the Upanisads says: "The knots in the heart are cut asunder, all doubts are completely eliminated, all forms fade away, when one sees the ātman."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> saktir ity ātma-para-tantratayā ātmanah sarva kāryopādānasya nirodhrtvam. See Prakasatman, Pañca-pādikā-vivarana (Banaras: the Vizianagram Sanskrit Series, 1892), p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Buhler The Laws of Manu, p. 48.

<sup>17</sup> bhidiate hrdaya granthis chidyante sarva-samsayāḥ kṣīyante cāsya karmanī tasmin drṣte parāvare.  
Mun. Up. II. 2.9.

Renunciation does not mean, therefore, lack of constant vigilance and retirement into the barren life of isolation but perfecting oneself by subduing those impressions and desires of life which are life-negating by strong personal effort. "He who is free from self-sense, whose understanding is not sullied, though he slays these people, he slays not nor is he bound (by his actions)".<sup>18</sup> And further, "But a man of disciplined mind, who moves among the objects of sense, with the senses under control and free from attachment and aversion, he attains purity of spirit."<sup>19</sup>

It is well to remember in this connection that, according to the Vedāta, ajñāna or nescience exists in the pure self which is its locus. The cessation of ajñāna is not the cessation of the self and therefore it will be wrong to say that ajñāna is mere misconception or wrong notion (viparyaya of Nagarjuna). Here it is a positive power (avidyā-sakti). Brahman with its avidyā is regarded as the material cause of the world (avidyā-sahita-brahmopādānam).<sup>20</sup> Jñāna, therefore, aims at the proper

<sup>18</sup>Yasya nā'hamkrto bhāvo buddhir Yasya na lipyate hatvā' pi sa imām lokan na hanti na nibadhyati.

Gita, XVIII, 17.

S. Radhakrishna, The Bhagavatgītā (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1948) p. 357.

<sup>19</sup>rāgadvesaviyutais tu visayān indriyais caran ātmavasyair vidheyātma prasadam abhigacchati.

Gita, II. 64. Ibid., 126.

<sup>20</sup>Appaya Diksita, Siddhānta-leṣa (The Vizianagaram Sanskrit Series, 1890), p. 12.

discrimination between Brahman and ajñāna, hence the exhortation that one shall have an initial sense of discrimination of the eternal one and non-eternal (nityānityavastu-viveka).<sup>21a</sup> Avidyā or ajñāna is not simple absence of knowledge, a mere state of privation. It is what masquerades as knowledge of the Real, while in itself it is but ignorance. It is an appearance (mithyā), neither unreal nor again real. It is associated with the Self in the form of sub-conscious impressions (vāsanās) and apotheosised as the congenital feeling of I-ness (vāsanā-ahamkāra-sahitam). When Jñāna removes ajñāna, the latter is said to be cancelled as such (bādha) by which is implied that it is transformed. The 'falsity' of its claim, its "bluff" is called off and pure knowledge that stands underlying it, illumining it, emerges to the surface. Such an interpretation is quite in keeping with the general trend of the Vedāntic thought according to which the world is not negated at the dawn of knowledge. It is simply re-interpreted as Brahman. This position also has its implication for renunciation. Renunciation, being grounded in the Jñāna, should not be taken for the rejection of the world but for the re-interpretation of it. If this position is not taken into consideration then the Upanisadic assertion that the Brahman is the ground of the world loses its significance. If Brahman is only real and interprets the world as the cause of it, the world is unreal in the sense of the absence of knowledge and not wrong knowledge. If the world is taken in the latter sense, it cannot be

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<sup>21a</sup> Sāṅkara's Comm., Brahma-sūtras, 1.1.1. 'It is useful to note here that Sāṅkara uses the term 'nitya' as a synonym of sat or satya and anitya, as its opposite. The point is that it is the same manner of 'opposition' (virodha) that the terms Jñāna and ajñāna too should be understood. For details also see Swami Madhvananda, trans., The Vivekacudāmani of Sri Sāṅkarāchārya (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1970), Sloka, 19, p.7.



associated with Brahman. But the world as absence of knowledge indicates the limitation of Brahman due to certain impositions. When these impositions are removed by Jñāna, the world is realized as identical with Brahman. A right realization of aham brahmā asmi or tat tvam asi dispels only falsity of knowledge and is of greater significance than dispelling the world-existence. It is easy to see that this view of ajñāna has a positive significance and does not ignore the philosophical understanding of the phenomenal world which is not an object of the Jñāna-abhāva but mithyā-Jñāna. The world is not merely a subjective sensation or false idea but it has a status which can be further enriched by removing avidyā associated with it in the scheme of the metaphysical knowledge in order to realize its original purity. It must be noted, however, that Saṅkara's own writings do not always give a clue to this type of understanding and there are many passages which are explicitly against our interpretation but the general tendency of his thought cannot be quite irrelevant to the approach under consideration. "We cannot define Brahman" says T.R.V. Murti, "except as the reality of the world, or as what the world is mistaken for. The nature of the mistake and the way to remove it is therefore necessarily a preliminary part for the quest of Brahman ...It is literally an uncovering or unmasking process. Self-realization is a case of gaining depth without adding to our stock of knowledge (apḥeyānupādeya). Brahman-knowledge is insight, not information."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Murti, Bhattacharya Memorial Volume, p. 137.

The doctrine of Māyā has been developed to account for the cosmic implications of Advaita Vedānta. In this sense Māyā is often referred to a Prakṛti (cosmic world), but its significance and unity rest on Brahman and in this sense it is different from the Prakṛti of the Sāṃkhya. The sole object of explaining the cosmic world in this manner is to provide it a significant status for realization of Brahman.<sup>22</sup>

The remark of J.G. Arapura substantiates the above consideration:

Māyā theory has implications for several things, mainly experience, the world and language. The original motivation in articulating the theory was to rationalise these implications by making them cohere with the fundamental metaphysical position of Advaita Vedānta... But then such a rational post script has been necessary not only for theoretical considerations but for existential ones as well. It must never be lost sight of that the Vedānta, like most other Indian systems, is not only philosophy, but also religion.<sup>23</sup>

The existential and religious implications of the Māyā doctrine as suggested by Arapura can be clearly linked with the Saṃnyāsa doctrine of the Advaita Vedānta. In order to understand this position more clearly, let

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<sup>22</sup>Brahmaṇo jagadākārapariṇāmiṇī vādi yacchrūyate tadabrahmadarsanopāyatvenaivaviniyujyate. Brahmasūtra Śaṅkarabhāṣya. Cf. M.S. Bakre, ed., Brahmasūtrabhāṣya, with Ratnaprabha, the Bhamati and Nyāyanirṇaya (Bombay: Nirṇayasāgara Press, 1934), p. 381.

<sup>23</sup>J.G. Arapura, "Māyā and the Discourse about Brahman" in Sprung, ed., The Problem of Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta, p. 110.

us turn to the metaphysical mechanism of Māyā in Advaita Vedānta. Pointing out the origin of Māyā, R.D. Ranade remarks: /

There are, on the whole, three different theories which try to account for the doctrine of Māyā, as found in Śaṅkara and later writers, in different ways. According to the first, the doctrine of Māyā is mere fabrication of the fertile genius of Śaṅkara; according to the second, the doctrine of Māyā as found in Śaṅkara is to be traced entirely to the influence of the Śūnyavāda of the Buddhists; according to the third Śaṅkara's doctrine of Māyā is to be found already full-fledged in the Upanisads, of which he is merely an exponent.<sup>24</sup>

Without going into the details of the controversy, it seems correct to hold that Śaṅkara being the exponent of the Upanisads, developed this doctrine further. The Ground, i.e., Brahman of the Universe as covered by the beginningless Māyā, has been discussed by the Īśa Upanisad.<sup>25</sup> Some of the Upanisads, like the Brhadāranyaka<sup>26</sup> and the Śvetāśvatara<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ranade, A Constructive Survey of Upanisadic Philosophy, p. 162

<sup>25</sup> hīranmayena pātrena satvāsyaāpihitam mukham tat tvam pūṣan apāvṛṇu satyadharmaya dṛṣṭayo. (The face of truth is covered with a golden disc. Unveilit, O Pusan, so that I who love the truth may see it.) Īśa Up. 18. Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads, p. 577.

<sup>26</sup> Asato mā sad gamaya, tamaso mā jyotirgamay mṛtyormā-mṛtaṁ gamaya. Br. Up. 1.3.28.

<sup>27</sup> "What is perishable is the Pradhāna (primary matter). What is immortal and imperishable is Hara (the Lord). Over both the perishable and the soul, the one God rules. By meditating on Him, by uniting with Him, by reflecting on His being more and more, there is complete cessation from the illusion of the world." Svet. Up. I.10. Radhakrishnan, p. 715.

point out that significance of God in the cessation of Māyā.

Māyā, therefore is the power of God and it is of a positive nature which assigns a degree of reality to the cosmic world. The Advaitic writers from Saṅkara onwards have maintained the empirical reality of the world. This has been possible by approaching the problem of the Ultimate Reality fundamentally from two standpoints, i.e., svarūpalakṣana (essential standpoint) and tatasthalakṣana (accidental point of view).<sup>28</sup>

The Vedāntic stand on the two definitions of Brahman and their roles in the Advaitic metaphysics is of a great significance. For this reason, any attempt to discard the spirit of advaitism on the basis of its condemnation of the world as false without properly understanding it, is

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<sup>28</sup> tatra lakṣaṇam dvividham svarūpalakṣaṇam tatasthalakṣanaḥ iti. See S.S. Sastri, ed., Vedāntaparibhāṣā of Dharmaraja (Madras: The Adyar Library, 1942), p. 114.

Saṅkara falls back on the authority of the Upanisads which describe the absolute as acosmic (nisprapañca) and cosmic (saprapañca). See Br. Up. III, viii, and Ch. Up. III. xiv. According to Saṅkara, these two approaches have also been taken by Bādarāyana in the Vedānta Sūtras (III.ii.ii). These views, namely, svarūpalakṣana (acosmic) and tatasthalakṣana (cosmic) are about the same Reality, and the apparent distinction between the two is due to the difference in standpoint.

sheer injustice to this system of thought. This explains why Samkara attaches so much significance to the tatasthalaksana according to which Brahman is the cause (kāraṇa) of the origin, sustenance and destruction of the world.<sup>29</sup> The Vedānta clearly establishes the fact that God alone is the cause of the world and refutes the theories of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Sāṃkhya. What assigns reality to this world is Īśvara who is a truth of the greatest spiritual significance. Śaṅkara seeks the support of the Upaniṣads in order to explain that the Nirguṇa (acosmic) and saguṇa (cosmic) Brahman are not two Brahmans but only one as viewed from the two standpoints. T.R.V. Murti elucidates:

As in the case of the Absolute, the doctrine of two truths also is liable to misinterpretation. There are not two different spheres or sets of objects to which they apply. There would then be no point in calling one samvṛti and the other paramārtha; the two might be different, but one would not be less real than the other. The difference is in the manner of our apprehension: one is the tattva which is the object of right knowledge and the other is the object of false knowledge. In fact, there is only one Truth -- the paramārtha-satyā, as there is only one real -- the Absolute. The other samvṛtisatyā, is truth so-called in common parlance, it is totally false from the absolute standpoint.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Janmādyasyayātaḥ - Vedānta Sūtra, 1.1.2. See Thibaut, The Vedānta Sūtra, I, 15-22.

<sup>30</sup> T.R.V. Murti, "Samvṛti and Paramārtha", in Sprung, ed., The Problem of Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta, p. 19.

The purpose of the Māyā theory is to enable the sādhaka to unveil the nature of absolute truth, though unknown and believed not to be knowable but as demanding to be known. The realization of truth, as we pointed out earlier necessarily implies the grace of Īsvara and dedication to him. The acceptance of God in Advaita presupposes renunciation of worldly life (the life of pragmatic utility). "For the aparāvidyā", says Rudolf Otto, "Śaṅkara is a passionate theist. If he was the greatest teacher of his time, the restorer of the pure Vedāntic doctrine, the antagonist and destroyer of sects, false teacher and mistaken philosophers -- particularly the Buddhists -- he was this in the name of Brahman whose foremost and fundamental definition reads thus: Brahman is that from which the origin, continuance and dissolution of the world comes. That is, he is a world creating, world-sustaining and world-dissolving God."<sup>31</sup>

From the above standpoint, it may be said here that Śaṅkara's contribution lies in the fact that while agreeing fully that Jñāna alone can bring liberation, he has recognized the significance of actions and duties of the orders of life as helpful for the dawn of knowledge. Here the ultimate model is Īsvara.<sup>32</sup> Our awareness of God as Lord, lifts our spiritual life

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<sup>31</sup> Rudolf Otto, Mysticism East and West, trans. E.L. Bracey and R.C. Payne (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 123-24.

<sup>32</sup> "viहितatvāccāśramakarmapi" (and duties of the Āśrama are to be performed), and again "sahakaritven ca" (duties are to be performed as a means to knowledge. Cf. Swami Viveśvaranand, ed., Brahma-sūtras (Mayavati, Almora: Advaita Ashrama, 1948), pp. 434-35. But here it should be noted that these actions are not for the attainment of svarga (heaven).

above the worldly life. God for Śaṅkara is at the same time a savior God; the saving knowledge comes through his grace. This theological basis of the Advaita Vedānta implies the abjuration of the ego-centric will. The will of man, in the terminology of the Gītā is to be a sacrifice in the will of God.<sup>33</sup> In the denial of the self-will based on the metaphysical conviction of God as antaryāmin (immanent) raises the seeker above the perplexities and anxieties of life. This ideal looks to be negative at its face value but it aims at the realization of the company of God in the scheme of spiritual life.<sup>34</sup>

Here it might be asked whether the denial of self-will and dedication of everything to God might mean indifference to action. But it has been made very clear by the Gītā and the Vedānta, as we pointed out earlier that one must perform one's allotted work but renounce its fruits. In other words, one must remain detached and do one's work. Renunciation of fruit does not mean indifference to the result of action as it is based on the

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<sup>33</sup> mayi sarvāni karmāni sannyasyādhyātmacetasā, nirasīrnirmarma bñutvā yuddhasva bigatjvarah. ye me matamidam nityāmanutisthanti mānavah sradhdhāvantonaśūyanto mucyate tepi karmabñih.

Gītā, Ch. III. 30-31.

Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavadgita, pp. 144-45.

<sup>34</sup> matkarmakṛmatparamo madbhaktah sangavarjitah nirvairah sarvabhūtesu yah sa mameti pāndavah.

Gītā XI-55

promise from God that "He who renounces reaps a thousand fold" or "na me bhaktah pranasyati" (my devotee will stand protected).<sup>35</sup>

Having shown the status and the purpose of Īśvara in the Advaita Vedānta from tatastha point of view, we shall examine the nature of the world which is a fact that no body can deny. We will also see the meaning of renunciation pertaining to the world. To begin with, the world is beginningless in time.<sup>36</sup> A beautiful hymn of the Rgveda confirms the above.

Who knows for certain? Who shall here declare it? Whence was it born, and whence came this creation? The gods were born after this world's creation: then who can know from whence it has arisen; and whether he has or has not produced it: he who surveys it in the highest heaven He only knows, or perhaps even he may not know.<sup>37</sup>

In its acceptance of the beginninglessness of the world along with the eternal Īśvara, the Vedānta has safeguarded not only the purity of Īśvara but also the responsibility of the jīvas. The jīvas have been freed from the limitations of fatalism or predestination. They are responsible for their actions and nothing but their actions. This position also affirms

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<sup>35</sup> See Mahadev Desai, ed., The Gospel of Selfless Action or the Gītā According to Gandhi (Ahmedabad, 1946), pp. 120-128.

<sup>36</sup> na karmāvibhāgād iticennānāditvāt; upapadyati cāpy upalabhyati ca. See Radhakrishnan, The Brahma-sutras, p. 364.

<sup>37</sup> S. Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, eds., A Source Book in Indian Philosophy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1917), pp. 23-24.



that the world is not the creation of the human mind. It has its own status. It is on this account that Śaṅkara has attacked the Vijñānavādins (Buddhist idealists) who denied the existence of the external objects independent of a beginningless stream of cognitions.<sup>38</sup> The empirical world of objects is again differentiated from the dream objects (Prātibhāsika satya). Only the latter is sublated in the waking experience, not the objects of the empirical world.<sup>39</sup> These arguments suffice to show that Śaṅkara does not deny the existence of the empirical world, contrary to common opinion. The world has been accepted as providing opportunities for the spiritual fulfilment through the four ends of life (catvāri puruṣārthāni), viz., dharmā, artha, kāma and mokṣa. It is a world, as

<sup>38</sup> Śaṅkara criticizes on the following grounds:

Upalabhyati hi pratipratyayam bahyo'rthah stambhah kudyam, ghaṭah paṭa iti (the eternal thing cannot be denied as it is cognized in every act of knowledge).

Vedānta Sūtras, II.11.28.

Upalabdhyatireko'pi balād arthasyābhyupagantavyah upalalidher eva. nahi kasciḍ upalabdhim eva stambhah kudyam cety upalabhante. Upalabdhyiṣay-tvenaiva tu stambha-kudyādin sarve laukika upalabhanti. (the cognizing act cannot be the object cognized and how can a comparison be made with an object which is non-existent).

Ibid., see also II.ii.29.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., II.2, 28-29.

said by one of the Upaniṣads, which arose from bliss, is sustained by bliss and is destined to return to bliss.<sup>40</sup> The world has been compared by the Gītā with the eternal asvattha whose roots are above and branches below.<sup>41</sup> A.G. KrishnaWarrier explains the advaitic implication of this point: "The aim of Advaita Vedānta is to point the way upwards. Thus this world which seems to divide us from God will appear as the bridge which connects and gives a passage into him. Forming the tatasthalakṣaṇa of Brahman, the world in Advaita fulfils its sole purpose by awakening us to the truth that is Brahman".<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup>- anando brahmeti vyajnanāt, ānandād' hy eva khalva imāni bhūtāni jāyante, anandena jātāni jivanti, ānandam prāyanty abhisamviśanti.  
Tai. Up. III.6.1.

<sup>41</sup>Urdhvamūlamadhah sākhamasvattham prāhuravyayam chandāpsi yasya parnāni yastam veda sa vedaviṣṭa.  
Gītā, XV.1.

J.G. Arapura in his learned article "The Upside Down Tree of the Bhagavadgītā" Ch. XV, Numen, Vol. XXVII (forthcoming, April, 1975) draws the following conclusion from the asvattha tree of the Gītā: (1) "The Upside-down tree is no new innovation, its inverted position having been there from the genesis of the concept in the Vedas as representing, no doubt, clear anticipation of an ontology of the cosmos (rather than cosmology), re-appearing in the Gītā, the Katha and the Mahābhārata (Anugītā), expressing essentially what has been vastly more elaborately set forth in the Vedānta philosophy in subsequent times. (2) The ontology of the cosmos is something which goes hand in hand with a particular kind of self-knowledge, a wisdom by means of which as a sword is alone able to deal with the world: knowledge is also detachment -- hence asangasastreṇa drdhāna (Gītā) or Jñāna paramāsinā (Anugītā).

<sup>42</sup> A.G. KrishnaWarrier, The Concept of Mukti in Advaita Vedānta (Madras: University of Madras, 1961), p. 370.

In the light of the above discussion, we can further substantiate the view, we referred to earlier that avidyā (with which the world has been equated) is not unreal in the ordinary sense of the term. Here the word "avidyā" does not stand for its complete negation or denial (asat) or 'sat' (Reality) but being opposite of knowledge, it is indescribable (anirvacanīya).<sup>43</sup> Put simply, whatever truth the world has is because of Brahman: It does not have any substantial status independently of Brahman.<sup>44</sup> Avidyā as opposite of knowledge, is founded in the Brahman, the only real, the Real of the Real (satyasya satyam) and therefore it cannot be completely a false knowledge. The experienced world of phenomena which for any philosophical or religious system cannot remain unexplained, can only be explained not by explaining it away as false knowledge but establishing its status in the structure of Jñāna. The Advaita Vedānta is not an exception to it. The recognition of Brahman in the form of Īśvara from the tatasthalakṣaṇa has been posited by Śaṅkara to overcome the above impasse.<sup>45</sup> The full significance of this position becomes very clear when

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<sup>43</sup> aphanavavacano' nirvacanīyatāvacaṇasca. Ibid., p. 380.

<sup>44</sup> T.R.V. Murti states: "This position means that in every experience there is the real thing-in-itself, which is given; it serves as the passive substratum for the superimposition of thought-categories (i.e., difference, change, particularity). The empirical world of appearance is real, but as Brahman...only the knowledge of Brahman is pure knowledge." See Murti, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism, p. 315.

<sup>45</sup> Vedānta Sūtra, 1.1.12; Br. Up., II.3.6, III.8.8., IV.5.15; Ch. Up., 24.1, and Tai. Up. II.3.6.

we accept the Advaitic position that God is Real in relation to the phenomenal world. The Reality of God is itself in danger when the phenomenal world is discarded as avidyā in the sense of being false. The realization of Brahman progresses from truth to truth or from the lesser truth to the higher truth. The phenomenal world, if taken to be false (mithyā) in the ordinary sense of the term, cannot point to God. It points to God in order to transcend its limitations which are real and in need of removal. This cannot be explained by taking the world as false. The world is not negated even at the stage of the God-directed will and God-centred love. It is in this sense that Śaṅkara declares that the personal love of God is the central theme of the Gītā.<sup>46</sup>

The same spirit runs in Śaṅkara's commentary where the realization of freedom has been attributed to the grace of God. The following verse of the Gītā is to be noted: "He who has known Nārāyaṇa, the receiver of all sacrifice and all penance, both as their instigator and their end, who benefits all beings without reward, who dwells in the heart and controls all works, and their fruits, who witnesses all thoughts -- he attains sānti, the cessation of all saṁsāra."<sup>47</sup> The Īśvara of the Gītā explains and justifies

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<sup>46</sup> na 'ham vedair na tapasā na dānena na ce 'jyayā sakya evamvidho draṣṭum dr̥stavān asi mām yathā. bhaktyā tv anyayā śakya aham evamvidho 'rjuna jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca paramtapa.

Gītā, XI, 53-54.  
Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavadgītā, pp. 288-289.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 294-95.

religion and the morality of svadharma. This religion directly leads to liberation as it is conducive to purity of the mind (sattva-suddhi).<sup>48</sup>

The underlying spirit of Renunciation does not call for the giving up of the empirical world altogether. Rather it certainly rests on a kind of harmonious relationship between the empirical world and the spiritual reality without which it loses its significance. Philosophy, for the Advaitins, is an attempt to look at things not as they appear, but as they really are; it is an elaborate explanation of the relationship between ultimate reality and the phenomenal world. The world has been treated not apart from reality but along with reality, viewed either from the svarūpalakṣaṇa or tatasthalakṣaṇa. Renunciation does not imply a mere escape from the world as it would defeat the very ideal of Vedāntic philosophy. What is most important here to note is not the value or significance of the world per se but the self-culture and spiritual insight of the renunciants who look at things. Renunciation, in its ultimate analysis, is an attitude or better, an enlightened attitude which helps man to face the world without exhausting himself within the world. A renunciant does not cease to act but all the activities remain as it were cancelled in his relation to the unbroken awareness of integral experience. In other words,

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<sup>48</sup> brahmanyādḥāya karmāni saṅgam tyaktvā karoti yah. lipyate na sa papen padmapatramivambhasa. (He who does actions, offering them to Brahman, abandoning attachment, is not tainted by sin as a lotus leaf by water.) Gītā V. 10.

the world stands renounced as different from the vision of self; it cannot catch hold of him or delude him.<sup>49</sup> Here the gulf between the phenomenal world and the ground it embodies is abolished; the world is truth as Brahman has come to realization.<sup>50</sup> The renunciant functions in the temporal world with the consciousness of a timeless infinite. "He has trikaladrsti, an intuition of time in which past, present and future exist together in the self-knowledge and self-power of the Eternal. He is no more a victim of time."<sup>51</sup>

On the basis of what we have said above, renunciation does not exclude a life of activity for others' purposes. Śaṅkara, for example, has clearly admitted that the Jñānin (renunciant) may engage in actions for the purpose of teaching other, having no purpose to be attained for himself.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> R.B. Singh, The Vedānta of Śaṅkara (Jaipur: Bharat Publishing House, 1949), pp. 293-94.

<sup>50</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, Great Indians (Bombay: Hind Kitaps, 1949) p. 88.

<sup>51</sup> Janaka and Aśvapati have been mentioned as the knowers of the Self in the Br. Up. (III.1.1) and Ch. Up. (V. II.5).

<sup>52</sup> svaprayo janābhāvāt lokasaṅgrahārtham pūrvavat karmāni pravṛtto'pi. Śaṅkara's Commentary on Bhagavadgīta, IV, 20.

Vidyāranya also states that an enlightened person can work for others (parecchā).<sup>53</sup> But it is a fact that there are several references in the Vedānta which clearly assert the irreconcilability between karma and saṁnyāsa. The present section will deal with the metaphysical structure of this issue.

### Karma, Jñāna and Saṁnyāsa

The main emphasis of the Vedas was on Karma although evidences of the importance attached to asceticism and renunciation are implicit there. The Karma-Mīmāṁsakas pursue the philosophy of action further and take it to be the main purport of the Vedas.<sup>54</sup> The term 'karma' is primarily used for sacrifice but in a general sense it includes all actions, physical or mental, but for the Vedāntins, mental actions such as meditation (dhyāna) and reflection (vicāra) are to be excluded from the list of karmas. They prescribe only those mental actions in the vividisā saṁnyāsa (renunciation of the seeker) and exclude other actions. But even Saṁkara accepts the purificatory function of karmas without which the spiritual attainment is regarded as impossible.<sup>55</sup> The Vedānta does not go further than that, but restricts the role of karma to the purificatory level.<sup>56</sup> The reason why

<sup>53</sup> See Hari Prasad Sastri, Pancadasī, p. 37.

<sup>54</sup> A.B. Keith, The Karma-Mīmāṁsā (London, Calcutta, 1921), p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> na hi acalato suddhirasti - Bhāṣya on Ch. Up. See Brahma, Hindu Sadhana, p. 91.

<sup>56</sup> vividisuḥ khalu yukta ekāgratayā sravanamanane kartumutsāhate, tato 'sya tattvamasiti vakyānnirviciḥ kitsajñānamutpādyate. na ca nirvici-kitsam tattva masiti vakyarthamavadhaḥ rayatah karmanya dhikaro 'sti yena bhavanāyam va bhavānakārye. va saksātkaḥ barmanamupayayah tēna vṛtti rūpasaksātkaḥ karyaḥ pavarge barmanamupayogo durannirasto veditavyaḥ.

karma has been excluded from the higher level of knowledge by the Vedāntins is its incompatibility with Jñāna. Jñāna means tattva-jñāna which is opposed to action because the latter cannot function independently of the world of multiplicities or the realm of ignorance. But here again Śaṅkara excludes only those actions which are brought about by desires of fruits and not bodily activities. If this interpretation is correct, Śaṅkara stands for advocating Karmas for the purification of the mind which once accomplished with the dawn of metaphysical knowledge, desire-impelled actions automatically stop and man at this stage performs virtuous action by his nature. Put in other words, Jñāna and Karmas are compatible before the realization of Jñāna even according to Śaṅkara and when Jñāna has been reached, the enlightened person becomes example for the society and lives a life of self-denial or complete asceticism which does not have its root in action but in metaphysical knowledge. Śaṅkara indirectly hints at this idea,<sup>57</sup> although its development takes place in the Gītā which propounds the culmination of action in knowledge where action is not negated but enriched and ennobled.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> apeksatē ca vidyā sarvānyāśramakarmāni nātyanta-manapeksaiva.. utpanna hi vidyā phalasiddhim prati na kincidanyadapeksati utpattim prati, tu apeksate.

Brahmasūtra Śaṅkarabhāṣya, III.4.26.

<sup>58</sup> Gatasangasya muktasya jñānavasthitacetasaḥ, yañayācarataḥ karma samagraḥ praviśiyataḥ.

Gītā IV. 23.

Also tatviddhi pranipātena pariprasneṇa sevayā upadeksyanti te jñānam jñāninastattvadarsinaḥ.

Gītā. IV. 34.



In the absence of such an understanding, the whole positive implication of the Īśvara ideal in the Vedānta falls to the ground and Saṅkara would have no justification for forwarding a case for the avatāra (incarnation) or even the Jīvanamukta. Vidyāranya in his Jīvanamuktiviveka explicitly asserts that Jñāna does not dispel all actions: "It is not to be thought, however, that for a person whose mind is free from all desires, all actions must cease, nor that the operations of the bodily organs such as the eyes, etc. or mental operations need be absent."<sup>59</sup> All that Saṅkara meant by the incompatibility between Jñāna and Karma was simply that once a person is enlightened all the limitations of the Karmas which divide oneself from the rest of mankind are burnt to ashes and karmas are reduced to actions in the ordinary narrow sense. In fact, in his commentary on the Gītā, he clearly affirms this when he says that "a Jñānin does nothing, even doing everything because of his realization of the Self as non-doer."<sup>60</sup> This spirit of egolessness, as we asserted earlier, is the characteristic of renunciation.

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<sup>59</sup> na ca nirvāsanamanaskasya Jīvanhetuvyavahāro lupyeta śankaniyam kim caksurādīvyavahārasya lopah kim va mānasavyavahārasya.

Vidyāranya, Jīvana-muktiviveka, p. 79.

<sup>60</sup> tyaktvā karmaphalāṅgah nityatripto nixārayah karmanyabhipravritto'pi naiva kincitkaroti sah. (niskriyātmadarsananasampannatvat naiva kincit karoti sah).

Gītā IV. 20.

also

Madhusudana Sarasvati commenting on the Gītā, V.8, also holds the same view when he says: Yasmat sarvavyapāresvapyatmano' Kartrtvameva paśyati atah kurvannapi na lipyate iti yuktamevoktam. Brahma, Hindu Sadhana, p. 103.

The actions of the Jñānin, Śaṅkara rightly holds, is not of the ordinary type because every action suffers with one or another kind of egoism. It is absolutely unmotivated action which springs from inner realization. It is impossible to make a judgement about it on the purely psychological level of existence, where ordinary mortality reigns. Only in this sense, renunciation transcends morality. Once a person has perfected himself, he becomes his own light and transcends all the injunctions of the scriptures.<sup>61</sup>

Nothing remains to be satisfied after realising Brahman. The significance of moral and spiritual discipline aims at actual realization of the immediate experience of the unity of existence which can only be attained by transcending our actual experience of difference and multiplicity. Since the Absolute is devoid of distinctions whether homogeneous (sajātīya), heterogeneous (vijātīya) or inherent (svagata), the spiritual life is total, integral and undivided life and yet devoid of anxiety whether of a practical or religious nature. In the pursuit of pure Brahman one is summoned to go beyond even Īśvara, precisely because Īśvara himself, as personal God, is nevertheless the transcendental and universal Ego although that hypothesis is due to his being the cosmic manifestation of pure Brahman. This is the stage "beyond good and evil" Rudolf Otto beautifully presents it in the following paragraph:

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<sup>61</sup> avidyavadvisayānyeva pratyaksādīni pramānāni śāstrāṇi .....  
Introduction to Śaṅkara's Comm. on the Brahma-Sūtra.

yāvaddehātma vijñānam bādhyate na pramānataḥ, pramānyam  
karmaśāstrānam tavadevopalabhyate.  
quoted from N.K. Brahma, Hindu Sadhana, p. 114.

When I came out of God, that is, into multiplicity then all things proclaimed: "There is a God" (the personal God, creator or things). Now this cannot make me blessed, for hereby I realize myself as creature (Kārya, Kaladesanimitta). But in the breaking through (i.e., through all limitations, in samyadarsanam) I am more than all creatures, I am neither God nor creature: I am that which I was and shall remain, now and for evermore, (the atman as nitya mukta and nitya siddha.) There I receive a thrust which carries me above all angels (as the mukta is above all devas and their heavens). By this sudden thrust I become so sick that God (Īsvara) is not sufficient for me, so far as he is only God and all His divine works. For in this breaking through I perceive that God and I are in common. There I am what I was. There I neither increase nor decrease... there God is received into the soul.<sup>62</sup>

It appears to us that any attempt to show the irreconcilability between Karma and Jñāna is futile and as we have shown earlier that Śaṅkara has been unfortunately greatly misunderstood with regard to this problem. It should be clearly understood, however, that Śaṅkara was himself a great Karmayogin and it seems to be inconsistent to hold that Jñāna dispels action. In fact, the Jñānin has greater responsibility towards society and its obligations than ignorant people. Moreover, if the world forms no 'other' to Brahman, a complete withdrawal from the world is not understandable. If the world were 'other' from Brahman in the state of Jñāna as is the case with the Sāṅkhya, a life of inactivity or escapism might be justified. Therefore, it seems right to hold that when Śaṅkara talks about the diametric-

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<sup>62</sup> Otto, Mysticism, pp. 31-32.

ally opposed nature of Jñāna and Karma, he implies only those Karmas which are not backed by Jñāna. Since the Jñāna transforms the whole perspective of man, reality and the universe, the Karmas should not be excluded from this enormous transformation. At the stage of enlightenment, everything remains as they are except the attitude of man which constitutes his philosophy or, broadly speaking, his way of life.

Secondly, if the Vedānta holds the doctrine of cosmic purpose which Īśvara himself serves, there is no inconsistency in regarding the Jivanmuktas to serve the cosmic purpose without their interest being involved in such a purpose. Even those schools of thought, i.e., the Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika which do not accept the ideal of the Jivan-mukta, have accepted the role of the enlightened person in the cosmic purpose.<sup>63</sup> It seems to be unjustified to hold that the Vedānta can deny such a role. It is from this standpoint that the Gītā says: "He who finds Karma in akarma, and akarma in karma, is intelligent and united to the Divine, and the doer of all actions."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> - - Rāmanuja accepts the need for renunciation and self-suppression whatever course of discipline a man may follow. It is not belief in permanent self that matters in service but eradication of selfishness which is the enemy of true life.

<sup>64</sup> karmanyakarma yah pasyedakarmani ca karma yah, sa buddhimānmanusyesu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarma kṛta.

Gītā, IV. 18.

The problem regarding the status of the Karma, Jñāna and saṁnyāsa have evoked a good deal of controversy in the history of Indian thought. It is not an easy task to arrive at a general conclusion regarding their status. In light of what we have said, however, it might be emphasized that Brahman, when viewed from the empirical point of view, sub specie temporis, will encourage the cultivation of all those values which are necessary for the spiritual progress of man. But to reach the absolute truth, the Jñānayoga has been recognized the path par excellence, which has also been regarded as saṁnyāsa mārga. The Jñāna-mārga or Samnyāsamārga represents the philosophical ideal of the Vedānta whereas the former where Īśvara reigns supreme is the religious ideal. These two ideals are not opposed to each other. They should be taken as supplementary. What the ideal of Brahman at the cosmic or empirical level accomplishes, the same is the case with Brahman at the a cosmic or transcendental level. Both uplift the motive beyond the ordinary calculation of interests and in this sense are renunciatory in their perspectives. Both are not opposed to action except that for the former, action is based on devotion or dedication to God and also to the world-solidarity, which are the explicit purpose of God, while for the latter action is transformed into knowledge resulting in the complete transformation of man to such an extent that he becomes virtuous by nature.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PERSONAL DIMENSION OF RENUNCIATION

#### Meaning and Significance

In this chapter we will concentrate on the personal dimension of Renunciation which constitutes the climax of spiritual consciousness. The study of the Vedānta is based on, and directed primarily to, the understanding of the absolute freedom. It can only be accomplished by being devoid of all passions which constitute human conditioning. As has been observed before, the secret of self-knowledge consists in becoming aware of absolute freedom which is also being indicated by other Sādhanas (discipline) like Karmayoga, bhaktiyoga etc. If self-knowledge represents the personal dimension of renunciation, it should not be understood, however, that it does not have any implication for the cosmic purpose. The Vedānta in so far as it is rooted in the Vedas has altogether a different message and can deal with it more positively on the metaphysical foundation of Brahman. The personal dimension of renunciation simply shows the self-perfection of the sādhaka himself, which is a fundamental requisite for being of any service to mankind. The discipline of self-knowledge through renunciation, however, serves the purpose of man's freeing himself from the superficialities of life (life at its surface value) by being spiritually aware of Reality concealed in the phenomenal world demanding to be known. This consciousness which is

termed 'religious' is central to the understanding of Indian philosophy of life and views on life not only after death but even at a time when man is yet alive. The nature of man as understood and believed in this context of religious consciousness having its bearings on the spiritual living of a man in Indian society in general and in an age of that society in particular is what we call the personal dimension of renunciation. The full-fledged theory of the subtle elements of the term 'personal' used in modern scholarship in a specific way is not applicable to our use of the term, the few glimmerings of which we find in the Upanisads.<sup>1</sup>

The richness of the Vedāntic speculation on this question has no doubt been due to the persistent belief of Indian philosophers that a correct knowledge of the 'person' or 'personal' provides only remedy for anxieties and sufferings of human existence. Self-knowledge, accordingly, occupied the highest place in such a scheme of thinking. J.G. Arapura while discussing the real purpose of a comparative study of religion has emphasized

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<sup>1</sup> na tatra caksur gacchati na vāg gacchati no manah  
na vidmo na viṅnānimo yathaitad anuśisyate. Kena Up. 1.3.

(There the eye goes not, speech goes not, nor the mind; we know not, we understand not, how one can teach this) See Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads p. 582. Also na dr̥ster draṣṭāram pasyeh nā sruter srotāram sr̥nyah, na mater mantāram manvithah na viṅnātāram viṅnānīyah esa ta ātmā sarvāntarah ato' nyad ārtam. Br Up., III.4.2. (You cannot see the seer of seeing, you cannot hear the hearer of hearing, you cannot think the thinker of thinking, you cannot understand the understander of understanding. He is your self which is in all things. Everything else is of evil).

Ibid., p. 220.

the importance of this topic: "It is clear", he remarks, "that nothing partial, piecemeal or occasional could serve this goal. If religion is considered just a phenomenon among phenomena then it would hardly warrant philosophical study. As the call of philosophy is to study necessary rather than accidental things, religion has to be so interpreted as to fall within the former category, and it will automatically do so if its indispensibility for self-knowledge can be demonstrated".<sup>2</sup>

The personal dimension of renunciation consists in the indispensibility of 'self-knowledge'. The profounder the realization of this 'self-knowledge', the deeper is its significance for the correct appreciation of what Arapura calls the "Indian sphere of spirit." Of all the subjects of philosophical discourses that have occupied the Indian mind, that of the self-knowledge along with renunciation occupies the most prominent place. Political organizations, social institutions, religio-ethical life, all have been reflected upon with this perspective which in its turn has passed through certain adjustments in order to make itself more suited to the understanding of the multifarious aspects of complex civilization throughout the Indian philosophical development.

It is an undeniable fact that the emphasis on the personal dimension

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<sup>2</sup>Arapura, Religion as Anxiety and Tranquillity, p. 7.



of spiritual experience has been central to Indian thought but some of the systems have falsely taken it for the acquisition of supernatural powers.<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon might constitute an interesting topic for discussion especially with reference to renunciation but it has been excluded simply because it cannot strictly be called 'spiritual' or 'personal' and hence condemned by the Buddha, Patanjali, Śaṅkara and Rāmakrishna.<sup>4</sup> Vidyāranya, the author of the Jīvan-Mukti-Viveka condemns the occult powers attained by renunciants and appreciates the knowers of the Brahman:

The mind of one who has attained gnosis, does not attach itself to any particular thing; for, ever content and with his self in a state of supreme tranquillity, he rests himself in the Atman alone. Wonders, such as floating in the air, have often been performed by persons, who have acquired remarkable powers by the practice of

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<sup>3</sup> Such as Hatha-yoga-pādīpikā and various tāntric techniques like satacakranirupāṇā and pādukā-pancaka and cases like piśācasiddhi and Vetālsiddhi, all lay emphasis on the supernatural powers. The powers attained through tapas and various ascetic exercises have been recognized in the Veda but in the Upanisads and the Advaita Vedānta they are absent to a large extent.

<sup>4</sup> Yoga-Sūtra, II, 15-55: "By giving up even these powers comes the destruction of the very seed of evil which leads to Kaivalya. The saving knowledge is that knowledge of discrimination which simultaneously covers all objects, in all their variations." See G.N. Jha, trans., Yoga-darsan (Bombay: Theosophical Publication, 1907). "But in the case of one who practises the best course of the discipline of devotion to me obtains my grace, these attainments are mere obstacles and waste of time." Gītā, XV.13. "Beware of these powers and desire them not...for occult powers increase man's egotism and this makes him forgetful of God." F. Max Müller, Ramakrishna: His Life and Saying (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1951), pp. 129-30.

incantations, penance and trance! What is there extraordinary in them? There is only one special feature to be noticed in the man of gnosis, which he does not share in common with ignorant men, viz., a detached and pure mind, due to the giving up of desire in all things whatever.<sup>5</sup>

The Dhammapāda, likewise, lays great emphasis on the religious experience, the steadiness of thought, tranquillity of mind and perfect knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore the problem which needs investigation is not the acquisition of the occult powers but the life of the renunciants who are established in Brahman. Knowledge (Jñāna) and renunciation (saṁnyāsa) are complementary in the sense that Jñāna which is needed for the realization of ultimate goal in life culminates in direct practical life of renunciation. It is on this account that Saṁkara regards only the Jñānin to be a saṁnyāsin. The attainment of the goal of life, according to Saṁkara, signifies nothing more than perfecting the means to it. That is to say that the end here is not external to the means but is only the means stabilized.<sup>7</sup> Pointing out the significance of the identity between Jñāna and saṁnyāsa, which we have

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<sup>5</sup> Jñānasya kasminścidapyeṣā bhavatyatisāye na dhīh  
nityatrptah praśantatmā sa ātmanyeva tisthati.  
mantra siddhaistapah siddhairyogasiddhaiśca bhūriśah  
krtamākāśayanadi tatra kā syadapūrvata.  
eka eva viśeso'sya na samo mūdabuddhibhīh  
sarvatrāstha parityāgānnirāgamanalam manah. Jīvan-Mukti-Viveka,  
p. 142.

<sup>6</sup> F. Max Müller, ed. and trans., The Dhammapāda (Delhi: Motilal Banarasi Dass, 1968), pp. 23-30.

<sup>7</sup> In his commentary on the Gītā, Saṁkara says that immediate freedom accrues to those renunciants who have attained the samyagadarśana. Samyagdarśana nisthanām sannyāsinām sadyomuktiruktā. See The Bhagavad-Gītā, p. 163.

discussed earlier, M. Hiriyanna remarks:

This gives us a clue as regards the kind of life which a knower leads and enables us thereby to grasp the exact meaning of moksa. We have mentioned two aids to the attainment of the goal. Pursuing the good and acquiring the knowledge of true self. Corresponding to these the life of the knower, broadly speaking, will be characterized by two features. In the first place, it will be entirely free from the tyranny of the egoistic self, and therefore also free from the feverish activity for gratifying personal desires, which can never be completely gratified. In the second place it will be marked by an unshakable conviction in the unity of all, and consequently by love for others -- love for them not as equals but as essentially one with oneself.<sup>8</sup>

The link between Jñāna and saṁnyāsa in the Vedāntic tradition attains its complete maturity in the life of the Jīvan-mukta (those who are liberated in this life). Before we deal with the ideal of the Jīvan-mukti, one point must be clarified here. The personal dimension of renunciation is different from the devotional dimension of renunciation. The former culminates in the liberation here and now whereas the latter believes in the Videha-mukti (liberation after death).

#### Personal and Devotional Contrasted

As we have noticed in the monistic system of thought, it is the realization of the identity between the personal or individual self and the ultimate self or Brahman that constitutes liberation. The devotional aspect

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<sup>8</sup> M. Hiriyanna, "Philosophy of Values", in Haridas Bhattacharya, ed., The Cultural Heritage of India (Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Mission, 1969), II, 652-653.

of renunciation, no doubt, covers the freedom from egotism (ahamkāra) in one's complete dedication to Īśvara as supreme reality but its transformation into the service of Īśvara (Kainkarya) and also humanity, makes Īśvara and humanity exterior to oneself.<sup>9</sup> The Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified monism) of Rāmaṇuja attaches so much importance to prapatti (self-surrender) that it seems essential even at the final stage. The Advaita Vedānta accepts the loving or devotional contemplation of Īśvara but at a preparatory stage and not at the final stage simply because the distinction between the Lord and creature which is unsurmountable in the Viśiṣṭādvaita stands as an obstacle in the ideal of unity. This distinction would result in a freedom in the hypothetical hereafter as this distinction can never be annulled, making the ideal of Jīvan-mukti impossible. At the pāramārthika level (transcendental), the Vedānta cannot tolerate any distinction, even the distinction between existence and knowledge, implied by discursive thought. The theory of self-suppression on the part of the bhakta (devotee) in the Viśiṣṭādvaita is quite understandable but by adding another personality to Reality to which the devotee is subservient as a creature, it creates an unbridgeable gulf between the two. Liberation for such a system of thought can only be described in terms of divine vision and experience of God which is not believed

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<sup>9</sup> For details see C.D. Sharma, Indian Philosophy: A Critical Survey. (American ed: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1962), pp. 355-359.

to arise until after the end of life.

Man's aim, according to the Vedānta, is not attainment of the ideal outside the scope of his present life but as one of the Upanisads beautifully puts it, "When all the desires the heart harbours are gone, man becomes immortal and reaches Brahman here."<sup>10</sup> But here it should be remembered that even those systems of thought which do not believe in the Jīvan-mukti ideal, clearly recognize the possibility of complete transformation of man's attitude towards the world which can be attained within this life. According to all of them, the evils and sufferings linked with samsāra carry with them the seeds of their own destruction; they exist only for those who are ignorant not only of the real but also of the good. R.P. Singh has maintained this position very strongly and thinks that the traditional assessment of Śaṅkara's philosophy fails to do it full justice precisely because it has ignored "the great truth that Śaṅkara's is a philosophy of values primarily and not an existential system. He concerns himself with the problem of Appearance and Reality only to bring out the value side of the universe. For him the truth of the universe is constituted by the value it possesses."<sup>11</sup> The world is the appearance of Brahman. Whatever reality the world has is

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<sup>10</sup> Yadā sarve pramucyante kāmā ye'sya hrđi śritāḥ  
atha martyo'mrto bhavati atra brahma samaśnute. Katha Up. II.3.14.

<sup>11</sup> Singh, The Vedānta of Śaṅkara, p. 11.

derived from Brahman. When isolated from Brahman, it becomes false. The finite individual is to be in constant touch with the infinite and thus to live not the isolated existence. This partaking of the Infinite is what we mean by the word 'personal dimension', called Brahmasadbhāva (existing in Brahman) or Brahmasamstha.<sup>12</sup> The Vedāntaparibhāsa of Dharmaraja puts it like this: "Thus, therefore, release results from Brahman-knowledge; and that (release) consists in the removal of evil and the attainment of the unsurpassable Brahman-bliss; hence is established that fruit."<sup>13</sup> The central motif of the upanisads lies in the discovery of Ātman and the method prescribed for the realization of Ātman not only as the real but also the good. Everything is good because of the Self: "Verily, not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear but for the sake of the self is the husband dear. Verily, not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear but for the sake of the self is the wife dear...verily, the Self, Maitreyi, is to be seen, to be heard, to be reflected on, to be meditated upon; when, verily the Self is seen, heard, reflected on and known, then all this is known."<sup>14</sup> For the

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<sup>12</sup> Uttamo brahmasadbhāva dhyānabhāvastu madhyamah  
stōtirjapo'dhamo bhāvo bahihpūjādhamādhamā. Mahānirvāna Tantra,  
XIV, 122.

<sup>13</sup> tadevaṁ brahmajñānānmokṣaḥ  
sa canarthanivrttirniratisayabrahmanandāvaptiśca  
iti siddham prayojanam. Vedāntaparibhāsa IX.56,

<sup>14</sup> na vā are patyuh kāmāya patih priyo bhavati  
ātmanas tu kāmāya patih priyo bhavati; na va are jayāyai kāmāy  
Jayā priyā bhavati, ātmanas tu kāmāy jayā priyā bhavati...ātma vā are  
drstavyah srotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsītavyah maitreyi, ātmani khalv are  
drste, srute, mate vijñate, idam sarvam viditam. Br Up. IV.5.6.

matter under discussion, references could be made to the story of Virocana and Indra in the Chāndogya, the dialogue between Ajātasatru and Bālaki in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka, the conversation between Sanatakumāra and Nārada in the Chāndogya and Naciketa and Yama in the Katha. The approach in these Upanisads is completely personal not in the ordinary or psychological sense but in the sense of renunciation in terms of transcending the mind and its limitations in order to reach the innermost (antarhrdaya) reality.

The state of Brahman is higher than mind (manas). No amount of psychological or intellectual equipment can enable us to apprehend the reality.<sup>15</sup> A clear distinction is drawn between aparā and parā vidyā. It is by becoming manas that Brahman transforms itself into the thought-activity. The purpose of the personal dimension of renunciation is to help the dawn of knowledge (Jñāna) by (a) the dissolution of the mind (manonāśa) and (b) the obliteration of latent desires (Vāsanāksaya).

#### The Dissolution of the Mind (manonāśa)

By the term 'manonāśa' is meant the cessation of the waves or modifications of the mind, called citta-vṛttis. It is the same as in Patanjali's Yoga system which gives the definition of yoga as cittavṛttinirodhah (yoga as the suppression of the modifications of mind).<sup>16</sup> M. Eliade divided these modalities of mind into three sections, namely, (a) errors and illusions

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<sup>15</sup> naisā tarkena matirāpaneyā -- Katha Up., 1.2.9.

<sup>16</sup> yoga-sūtras, 1.2. For details see J.H. Woods, The Yoga System of Patanjali (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard Oriental Series, 1927), pp. 8-12.

(dreams, hallucinations, errors in perceptions, confusions etc.);

(b) the sum total of normal psychological experience (everything felt, perceived or thought by the nonadept, by him who does not practise yoga);

(c) the parapsychological experience brought out by the Yogic technique, and of course, accessible only to adepts.<sup>17</sup> The Advaitic position regarding the psychic apparatus is similar to the Sāṅkhya-Yoga except with the difference that unlike the latter, the psychic apparatus is dealt with as ultimately belonging to Brahman. The Jīva as designated by antahkarana (internal sense organ), undergoing all empirical experiences within the psychophysical realm of existence, is nothing but Brahman, associated with Upādhis or adjuncts, due to which alone, Brahman appears as Īśvara, Samsāra and Jīva. The agency of the Jīva is accidental and not essential. And because it is linked with the modifications of the mind which presents thought in terms of thinker and doer, the agency is an act of superimposition, adhyāsa, on account of which he identifies himself with the doer. The idea of 'doer' (kartā) gives rise to egoism. The dissolution of the mind, in my judgment, has been prescribed by the Advaita Vedānta for freeing the mind from the egoism of being 'doer' (kartā) which creates a widespread gulf between rights and obligations, putting rights above the obligations by linking the former with the notion of the 'doer'. By making the individuality

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<sup>17</sup> Eliade, Yoga, p. 36.



as simply provisional, the Vedānta transcends the limitations of egoism (ahamkāra). Here the consciousness of the obligations still continues but there is no awareness, whatsoever of one's rights. Once the conflict between rights and duties disappears, the renunciants still discharge their obligations but not at the plane of common morality. Buddhism accomplishes the same purpose by denying the idea of the individual self as permanent entity. The Vedānta, on the other hand, does not deny the provisional status of individuality but by including the dissolution of mind as one of the functions of renunciation, merges it finally in the Universal self. Even those systems of thought which accept the independence or ultimacy of the individual self like the Viśistādvaita, Jainism and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, do accept the denial of egoism. The denial of egoism, for the Vedānta serves a very positive ideal of life when it turns towards the fellowship of all living beings as oneself. The dissolution of the mind, therefore, should not be taken to imply passivity. The emphasis is laid on the cultivation of an attitude that gives rise to the discharge of one's obligations without the awareness of one's rights. Since the force of rights no longer acts, he has nothing to fear, for his acts no longer have any consequences for him. Only in this sense, the following statement of the Taittirīya Upaniṣad should be taken: "He is not troubled by thoughts like these: Have I not done the right? Have I done the wrong".<sup>18</sup> Such statements

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<sup>18</sup> etaṁ he vā va na tapati, kiṁ ahaṁ sādhu nākaravam  
kiṁ ahaṁ pāpam akaravam iti, Tai. Up. II. 9-1.

should not be taken in the sense of irresponsibility or negligence of duty.<sup>19</sup> Renunciation denies the assertion of rights but not devotion to duties. Renunciation is first and foremost an attitude and then anything else.

The Obliteration of Latent Desires (Vāsanākṣaya)

Latent desires of vāsanas here mean that which generate mental impressions, such as anger, jealousy, covetousness etc. As long as these vāsanas are not destroyed, the dissolution of mind (egoism) cannot take place. Latent desires have been explained as follows:

Latent desires may be described as that hankering after things, which gain such mastery over the mind, as to preclude even enquiring into their antecedents and consequents. He at once becomes that which he identifies himself with, by force of strong and deep attachment and loses, o strong armed one! memory of every other thing in the act. The man thus subdued by vāsanā, keeping his eye on anything whatever, is deluded into believing it as the real thing; owing to loss of control due to the powerful influence of vāsanā, the object (thus perceived) gives up its real form. Thus does one with beclouded eye, perceive everything quite in this deluded fashion, like one under the influence of a strong intoxicant.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> yogayukto bisuddhātma bijitatma jitendriyah  
sarvabhūtātma bhūtātma kurvannapi na lipsyate.

(The Yogi who has cleansed himself, has gained mastery over his mind and all his senses, who has become one with the Ātman in all creation, although he acts he remains unaffected). See Desai, The Gita According to Gandhi, p. 216.

<sup>20</sup> Sastri, Jīvan-mukti-viveka of Vidyāranya, p. 70.

These vāsanās create tremendous difficulties for the renunciants. They are elusive in nature, difficult to control. In psychological terms, they may be regarded as constituting the subconscious which is difficult to extinguish.<sup>21</sup> Unless they are completely controlled, they always lead the sādhaka towards phalatr̥snā (thirst for fruits) and therefore to the egoistic direction. The Vedānta believes that the subconscious can be dominated by asceticism and conquered through metaphysical knowledge. One of the smṛtis describes the characteristic of an ascetic: "He is verily the typical ascetic, whose hands and feet are not restive, whose eyes and tongue are not restless; control of these is the true mark of an adept."<sup>22</sup> Pointing out another technique of controlling the vāsanā, the Gītā says: "Having restrained them all, he should sit harmonised, with Me as his supreme goal; for, whose senses are mastered, of him the understanding is well-poised. Therefore, O mighty armed! Whose senses are all completely restrained from the objects of senses, of him the understanding is well-poised."<sup>23</sup> The control over vāsanā which can be accomplished through Upāsana (devotion) as explained by the Gītā, can further be strengthened by turning to Jñāna -- the highest form

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<sup>21</sup> pūrvabhyastu prayatnebhyo bisamo'yaṁ hi sanmatah  
duhsādho vāsanatyāgaḥ sumerumulanadapi. Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>22</sup> na pānīpadacapalō na netracapalo yatih  
na ca vakcapalāścaivamiti sistasy loksanaṁ. Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>23</sup> Bhagavad Gītā, II.60, 67.

of Upāsanā: "What is there here? What is It in Itself? What is It made of? Who are you? Who am I? What are these worlds? Pray explain this to me at once." "All this is Cit (simple Gnosis); all this is Cit in itself; all this is made of Cit; thou art Cit and so am I; nay these worlds too are all Cit. In short the whole world is Cit."<sup>24</sup> It should not be thought, however, that one whose mind is devoid of all vāsanās, will have no connection with the world. Even Janaka is described as an enlightened person, who never ceased acting for the society. "I desire not what I have not; I care not to part from what I have; I stand in the Eternal Self in me; let that be mine, which has been mine." Thus taking thought, Janaka addressed himself, without the least attachment (to results), to what ever came up in the course of duty, even like the sun running his diurnal course. He relates himself not with the future, nor with what has gone by, he lives the present out with a smiling heart."<sup>25</sup>

If the obliteration of vāsanās is regarded as absolutely important for a saṁnyāsin in the Vedānta, it is for an ideal of a free life of a true saṁnyāsin. The Jñāna that is capable of effecting it should be a genuine

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<sup>24</sup> Jīvan-mukti-viveka, pp. 104-105.

<sup>25</sup> nābhivanchāmyasanprāptam sanprāptam na tyajāmyaham  
svastha ātmani tisthāmi yanmamāsti tadastu me.  
iti sancitya janako yathāprāptakriyāmasau.  
asaktah kartumuttasthau dinam dinapatiryatha  
bhavisyannānusandhatte natitam cintayatyasau  
vartamananimesam tu hasannevanuvartate. Ibid., p. 81.

mystical perception or self-knowledge (sāksāt-kāra) based on the principle of one's identity with Brahman,

In a sense, it may be said here that the dissolution of the mind (manonāsa), obliteration of latent desires (vāsanākṣaya) and the dawn of Jñāna (ātma-sāksāt-kāra) are not isolated spiritual techniques in the Vedānta. They constitute the whole spiritual life. The life of a renunciant is regarded as a life of enlightenment and complete perfection because of the removal of all the obstacles constituting the human bondage. In his commentary on the Mundaka Upaniṣad, Saṅkara regards the Samnyāsin as completely entitled to Brahma-Jñāna which yields mokṣa.<sup>26</sup> A saṁnyāsin who has perfected his mind enough so that it seems as an instrument of sāksāt-kāra has a distinguished place in the Vedānta. An impure mind cannot intuit the Self, the renunciants are example of purity of mind. Understood accordingly, renunciation is a pure attitude of mind (agryābuddhi), and not an escape from life.

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<sup>26</sup> vedānta-vijnāna suniścitarthāḥ samnyāsa-yogād yatayah śuddhaśattvah  
te brahma-lokesu parāntakāle paramrtāḥ parimucyanti sarve.  
 Mun. Up. II.2.6. In his commentary on this verse Saṅkara quotes:-  
śakunināṁ ivakāṣe jāle varīcarasya ca  
padam yathā na drśyeta tathā Jnanavatam gatih. Radhakrishnan,  
Bhagavadgītā, p. 691.

Jīvanmukti or Deliverance in this Life

The personal dimension of renunciation which is introvertedness (antamukhi) aims at diverting the mind from the objective world (by subduing and eliminating modifications of the mind in the manonāsa and controlling over vāsanās in the vāsanāksaya) to Ātman alone. The Katha Upanisad directs us to look to our inner self with our eyes turned inwards.<sup>27</sup> The Bṛhadāraṇṭaka says: "He should devote himself to the world which is only the Ātman; his acts never fail him, who so devotes himself."<sup>28</sup> The Vedānta holds that the realization of this ātma-loka constitutes freedom or deliverance. It is neither product of anything nor reducible to anything other than itself. Uncaused, unproduced, it is eternal, infinite and irrepressible. Everything else is false. The knowledge of it as Reality alone is freedom. Śaṅkara's definition of freedom is as follows: "That which is absolutely real, immutable, eternal, all penetrating like ākāśa, exempt from all change, ever-satisfied, impartite, self-luminous; in which neither good nor evil nor effect, nor past, nor present, nor future has any place -- this incorporeal state is called freedom."<sup>29</sup> It is clear that

<sup>27</sup> Katha Up. II.4.1 and Gītā V.13.

<sup>28</sup> yo ha vā asmāḷlokaṭsvaṃ lokamadrstvā praiti sa anamavidito na bhunakti. ātmanameva lokamupāsita sa ya ātmanameva lokāmupaste na hasya Karma kṣiyate.

Jivan-mukti-viveka, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> idaṃtu pāramārthikam kūtaṣṭhanityam vyomavatsa-  
rvavyāpīsarvavikriyārahitam nityatrptam nira-  
vayavam syamjyotiḥsvabhavam, yatra dharmā-  
dharmāu sahakāryena kalatrayam ca nopayar-  
tete; tadetadaśariratvam moksakhyam. Sankarabhāṣya. See Bakre,  
Brahmasutrābhāṣya, pp. 73-74.

freedom (moksa) for Śaṅkara is ontologically the same as Brahma-Jñāna.<sup>30</sup>

Renunciation is the gradual elimination of everything other than Brahman and finally in the state of Jñāna, the elimination of the concept of Brahman itself. What remains absolutely unshaken is the fore-knowledge of Brahman and by renunciation, diversity and the multiplicity of the world, superimposed on Reality, is completely eliminated. It must never be forgotten that the overriding concern of renunciation as a philosophical attitude is the supreme Reality itself and so far as this concern is dominant, a renunciant does not lose himself in either the world or ego but finds in this world and ego an indication of transcendence which takes him beyond. Viewed from this point of view, Arapura's term of 'tranquillity' can be equally applied to the phenomenon of renunciation: "In the Indian spiritual sphere determined by the Veda, Vedānta and Buddhism" says J.G. Arapura, "whereas anxiety has always been recognized as the source of all human striving most of all in religion, Reality begins where anxiety is terminated. It has been the belief that anxiety itself is the denial of reality since it is the character of the phenomenal world of becoming, to be both contained within its bound, false as they are, and eventually burnt up along with the world. Anxiety must be totally forbidden to distort and

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<sup>30</sup> brahmaivahi muktyāvasthā -- Ibid., p. 823.

prevent man's perception of Reality, which can mediate itself only in the mode of tranquillity."<sup>31</sup> He further continues: "We can speak without exaggeration or distortion what is common to Buddhism, Jainism and various systems of Hindu religion. To put it simply, it concerns a state of being, of abiding, which transcends the anxiety-laden world of becoming. And that state is tranquillity. The Upanisadic seers, the Vedānta teachers, the Mahābhārata, the Bhagavadgītā, the Buddha and Mahāvīra are all basically agreed on this."<sup>32</sup>

In order to see the real nature of this structure of renunciation, let us see the state of the Jīvan-mukta, described by other epithets such as sthita-prajña (one whose mind is entirely steady), Bhagavad-bhakta (one who is devoted to God), gunātīta (one beyond the three properties, i.e. sattva, rajas and tamas), the Brāhmana (one who has realized the Brahman), Brahmasamstha (one who is established in Brahman) and Ati-varnāsramin (one beyond the four varnas and four āśramas). Vidyāranya defines the state of the Jīvan-mukta: "He is the true Jīvan-mukta, for whom the phenomenal world, wherein he moves and acts, ceases to exist, leaving alone the all-pervading Eternal Noumenon".<sup>33</sup> Renunciation by those who have realized the

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<sup>31</sup> Arapura, Religion as Anxiety and Tranquillity, p. 77.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> yathāsthitaṁ yasya vyavahāravato'pi ca  
astam gatam sthitam vyoma sa Jivan-mukta ucyate.  
Jivan-mukti-viveka, p. 16.



supreme truth is called the renunciation-of-the-enlightened (vidvat-saṁnyāsa). This state is different from the renunciation-of-the seeker (vividisā-saṁnyāsa) which takes place only after the dissolution of the body, also known as videha-mukti. The Vedānta accepts both the ideals but lays more emphasis on the enlightenment 'here and now' in this life -- the realization of Consciousness, freed from all conditionings and temporality. This is known as the stage of vyutthāna or reversion to common life and here one does not relinquish all activities as we have seen earlier. But since egoism has vanished, activities do not emerge from lay experience but by immediate or direct intuition of the Absolute, technically known as vidvadānubhava.<sup>34</sup> Bondage consists in those functions of mind which are characterized by feelings of pleasure and pain, concomitant with action and enjoyment but after freedom has been attained through renunciation, all functions of mind have already been neutralized by cultivation of the universal love -- "who sees all beings in himself and himself in all beings -- he will dislike none."<sup>35</sup> Or as the Gītā puts it "He harms not Self by self".<sup>36</sup> The foundation of the renunciation of the enlightened, therefore, is the

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<sup>34</sup> Thibaut, The Vedānta-Sūtras, p. 357. Also see Sastri, Pancadasi: A Treatise on Advaita Metaphysics by Swami Vidyananda, pp. 98-99.

<sup>35</sup> yas tu sarvāni bhūtāni ātmany evānupasyati sarvabhūtesu catmanam tato na vijugupsate. Īsa Up. 6.

<sup>36</sup> na hinasty ātamā 'tmanam, Gītā, XIII.28. See Sastri, The Bhagavad-Gītā, pp. 370-72.

knowledge of truth (bodha) and in lack of it, even perfect vairāgya (renunciation) is superfluous. As long as the egoism persists, vairāgya is incomplete. Renunciation in its broad implication is not only the renunciation of desires but renunciation of the desires of renunciation as well. The foundation of it is Jñāna which transforms the life of the Jīvan-mukta to such an extent that what is unnatural behaviour for others becomes natural for him. Enlightened men differ in their behaviour from the ignorants.<sup>37</sup>

The best way to illustrate the life of an enlightened person is to look at the life of a saint. He is a bridge so to say between the earthly and supra-earthly, the temporal and eternal. It was pointed out that if the relation between the one and the other were that of otherness, the ideal of the Jīvan-mukti would be an impossibility and so the deliverance. The Vedānta presents a scheme of spirituality (ādhyātmavāda) which bases itself on a complete mingling between cosmic interest and the individual interest, between means and the end. The function of renunciation in the life of the enlightened person is to annihilate the gulf between the two which divides him from the rest of the mankind. It is to create a new attitude towards mankind. A man who is united within can only unite the world and not a man

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<sup>37</sup> ya nīśa sarvabhūtānāṃ tasyāṃ jāgarti sanyamī  
yasyāṃ jāgrati bhūtāni sā nīśa paśyato muneh. Gītā. II.69.

who is divided. It should be clearly noted however, that for the Vedānta, this transformation of the attitude of the enlightened person is not an achievement but purely a realization. It is the very nature of the Self which happens to have been forgotten. This position again strengthens the spirit of renunciation. The enlightened person is not doing any mercy to mankind and as long as he suffers with this attitude he is not enlightened. As we pointed out earlier, this is his natural way (svabhāva). We can hardly speak of renunciation as a means in an ordinary sense for achieving the enlightened nature. Only in this sense, we have spoken of renunciation at the cosmic level, as equivalent to Brahman-Jñāna. A renunciant in the Vedānta is one who is Brahma-saṁstha. It is contention of the Vedānta that freedom is possible by renunciation alone. The paths advocated by other systems can at best lead to the purification of mind. Renunciation in its final meaning, therefore, is nothing but self-knowledge (ātma-bodhi). Śaṅkara while commenting on the Gītā calls the mukta as Jñāna-vijñāni (a man of knowledge).<sup>38</sup> Manu describes the stages of saintliness in the following way:

that action which is performed with a view to obtaining something here or hereafter is called pravṛtta, that action is nivṛtta which is done without attachment

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<sup>38</sup> Jñānavijñānatrptā, Gītā, VI-8. See Sastrī, The Bhagavad-Gītā, p. 188.

and with insight or knowledge. Following the first course of action (in accordance with dharma) man attains similarity to gods; pursuing disinterested activity, he transcends the five elements. He who sees the Ātman in all existents, and all the existents in the Ātman, such a person, sacrificing to the self (alone), attains identity with the self-luminous Brahman.<sup>39</sup>

The Bhagavad-Gītā describes this state as follows:

O son of Pritha, when a man puts away all cravings of the mind, and is satisfied in the Self through (the joy of) self, then he is called stable of mind. The sage whose mind remains untroubled in sorrows, who is free of desires amid pleasure, and from whom passion, fear and anger have passed away, is called of stable mind. He who is without attachment to anything and meeting with good and evil, neither rejoices nor complains, his mind is said to be firmly settled. He who withdraws the senses from the objects of the senses on all sides as tortoise draws in its limbs (into the shell) -- his mind has become firmly set...enjoying the various sense objects with the senses under control and free from attachment and aversion, the man with mastery over himself attains composure of mind...He who having given up all desires without attachment and egoism, attains peace.<sup>40</sup>

The life of a renunciant (akāmayamāna) is described in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka:

"And now of him who desires not -- He who is without desire, free from desire, whose desires are stilled, whose desire is the Self, his vital breaths do not depart, but Brahman is he and into Brahman is he resolved."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Buhler, The Laws of Manu, XII.89-91.

<sup>40</sup> Bhagavad-Gītā, II.55-58, 64-65 and 69-72.

<sup>41</sup> iti nu kāmayamānah; athakāmayamāh, yo'kāmo niskāma āpta-kāma ātmā-kamah, na tasya prāna utkrānti, brahmaiva san brahmāpyeti. Br. Up., IV.4,6.

The Paramahamsopanisad has described at great length the renunciation of the enlightened. The parama-hamsa, it might be remarked, is one who knows the essence of truth in this world and therefore it is equivalent to the Jīvan-mukta. The state of the parama-hamsa has been differentiated from the state of the hamsa, who knows the essence of truth in that world (the world of gods or pitrs). Both are the ascetics (saṁnyāsins) but the Parama-hamsa is completely enlightened and is a man of self-knowledge. "The curiosity of the parama-hamsa", remarks Sri Vidyāranya, "is not aroused by all this wondrous panorama, as he knows fully well that these powers of the Self-that-is-all-consciousness manifest themselves in diverse ways."<sup>42</sup> The Samnyāsa Upanisad also discusses in details the life of the ascetic who forsakes the world for the life of Jnāna.<sup>43</sup> In many works of the Dharmasāstras, we find a detailed discussion on the types of renunciants. The Mahābhārata, for example, categorizes them in four types, namely, Kuticaka, Bahūdaka, Hamsa and Paramahamsa, each later one being superior to each preceding one.<sup>44</sup> The Kuticaka resides in a secluded hermitage. The

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<sup>42</sup> cidātman imā itthaṁ prasphurantīh śaktayah ityasyāścaryajālesu nabhyudeti kutūhalaṁ. Jīvan-mukti viveka, p. 140.

<sup>43</sup> T.R.C. Dikshit, The Samnyāsa Upanisad (Madras: The Adyar Library, 1929). A very good commentary on the Parama-hamsopanisad is included by Vidyāranya in the Jīvan-Mukti-Viveka, pp. 188-222.

<sup>44</sup> caturvidhā bhiksvaste kuticakabahūdakau hamsah paramahamsasca yō yah paścātsottamah -- Anusāsanaparva, 141-68. See Kinjawadekar, Sriman Mahābhārata (Anusāsanaparva), pp. 280-331.

The bahūdaka goes from one sacred place to another. The hamsa flies like a swan to the seventh heaven. The paramahamsa enjoys liberation in this very life. Saṅkara has mostly discussed the life of the paramahamsa. The paramahamsa is again, either the seeker after knowledge (Jijnāsu) or the enlightened (Jnānin), also known as vividīṣā-saṁnyāsa (renunciation of the seeker) and vidvat-saṁnyāsa (renunciation of the enlightened). The vividīṣā-saṁnyāsa represents the cosmic ideal of renunciation which comes about by the strong desire for knowledge generated in the proper manner and includes the performance of religious duties, devotion to God, renunciation of the desire-impelled action, the performance of the duties associated with the varnāśrama etc. The latter type, i.e. vidvat-saṁnyāsa is pure life of jñāna or self-knowledge and therefore it represents the acosmic ideal of renunciation which is a life of complete and absolute freedom. For the former, morality still holds good, but for the latter, it does not apply.

Now the question arises: why Saṅkara, who strictly followed the saṁnyāsa-mārga or Jñāna-mārga, did accept vividīṣā saṁnyāsa as preliminary to the vidvat-saṁnyāsa? The answer to this question has great significance for the understanding of the personal dimension of renunciation. For the Vedānta, there is no separation between metaphysics and ethics. It has been repeatedly said that Saṅkara's concept of the Absolute, being the source and essence of everything, leaves and discards nothing when viewed from the point of view of Reality which is the highest value at the same

time. The inclusion of the cosmic ideal of renunciation along with the a cosmic takes into account the whole structure of Indian thought in an organic form. Without entering into the metaphysical differences on this issue, as they are vast, it may be pointed out here that the concept of freedom has been worked out better in those systems of thought where the divorce of metaphysics from eithics has not taken place.<sup>45</sup> The vidvat-Saṁnyāsa, which is largely a metaphysical end of life gets always nourished with the ideals as set forth in the vividisā-saṁnyāsa which represents a cosmic ideal.

#### Status of Ethics in the Life of the Jīvan-Mukta

One important question which arises in this connection is the status of ethics and morality at the stage of enlightenment. In the Taittiriya Upanisad, it has been said: "He (referring to a person who has realized Brahman) is not troubled by thoughts like these: "Have I not done the right? Have I done the wrong?"<sup>46</sup> Again in the Āpastamba dharma-sūtra, an ascetic who has realized Brahman is regarded beyond all vidhi (injunctions) and nisedha (prohibition), that he is above the ordinary rules about truthfulness or falsehood.<sup>47</sup> We have in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka: "This is the eternal greatness of the man who realizes Brahman that by the actions he does, he does

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See T.M.P. Mahadevan, "Can There be Ethics without Metaphysics", in Proceedings of the Indian Philosophical Congress, 1952, pp. 284-97.

<sup>46</sup>Tai. Up., II.9.

<sup>47</sup>Āpastamba dharma-sūtra, II.9-21.

not add to it or detract from it. Therefore one should only know the real nature of that greatness, he on knowing Brahman is not affected by any evil action.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the Chāndogya says: "Just as water does not cling to the lotus leaf, so evil deed does not cling to one who knows it."<sup>49</sup> The Jābālopaniṣad describes renunciants as beyond the pairs of dharma and adharma, satya and asatya and sauca and asauca.<sup>50</sup> Similarly in his commentary on the Vedānta sūtras, Saṅkara thinks that obligations exist only for those who falsely imagine the Self to be connected with the body, but for those renunciants who have realized Self, no obligations exist.<sup>51</sup>

All these passages assert that when mokṣa has been attained, a stage has been reached where morality has no longer any meaning. The ethical is transcended. The common laws of morality are significant only so far as one is striving for perfection but for one who has reached it, morality becomes meaningless. The Vedānta lays great stress on moral virtues only so far as self-realization is still in progress. According to Paul Deussen, morality does help the sādhaka but it is only auxiliary to the attainment of Jñāna, in as much as the man who leads a life of holy works is not overpowered

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<sup>48</sup> For details see Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upaniṣads, p. 280.

<sup>49</sup> yathā puskara palasa āpo na śliṣyante, evam evaṁ-vidi pāpam karma na śliṣyata iti. Ch. Up., IV.XIV.3.

<sup>50</sup> Jābala-Upaniṣad, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Thibaut, Vedānta Sūtras, pp. 66-68.



by afflictions such as passions etc. Morality, therefore, according to him, serves two purposes: (a) as outward means (bāhya sādhanā) of knowledge (Vedic study, sacrifice, alms, penance, fasting) and (b) the closer means (tranquillity, self-restraint, renunciation, patience, concentration etc.). But he thinks that renunciation or asceticism is still higher to morality.<sup>52</sup>

As we already noticed Saṅkara attaches supreme importance to renunciation because it alone is free from predicates of egoism. Through the annihilation of it, the very notion of moral obligations vanishes. The contrast between good and evil, rights and duties is automatically transcended after the annihilation of egoism and realization of Jñāna. In other words, by reaching the total renunciation of personal interest, the essential duality of the moral world is transcended. Even at the initial stage of the cosmic renunciation, the morality is transcended in the sense that the renunciants care only for his duties and not rights (common morality implies both). At the latter stage, i.e., devotional stage, when the seeker serves as an instrument of Īśvara, the awareness of duties also disappears. At the highest stage of self-realization, when every being becomes one's own self, there is nothing left for the world of morality. Here there is no duality between the subject and object as it

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<sup>52</sup> Deussen, The Systems of the Vedānta, p. 411.

is the stage of complete non-duality. By extending one's self to the extent of the whole of sentient creation, man reaches a point beyond the isolation from the rest of the creation. This point is really the consummation of the entire structure of morality which serves the highest type of human ideal. B.G. Tilak remarks: "That man whose pure reason (Vyavasāyitmikā buddhi) has become capable of realizing the identity that 'there is only one ātman in all created things...it is impossible that he should commit any sin or any action obstructive of release."<sup>53</sup> Śaṅkara also says that laws dictating what is proper and improper do not apply to persons who have gone beyond the three constituents (nīstraiḡunye pathi vicarataṃ ko vidhiḡ ko nisedhaḡ). "A man" syas Gītā, "who has totally lost the feeling of individuation (ahaṃkāra) is untouched by sin or merit". All sense of utility, personal aggrandizement and craving cease completely. This state of freedom in the deepest and widest sense of the term, is the self-expression of the spirit. It is the state of self-guarding gnosis, absence of discord, cessation of pain and misery and the genesis of supreme bliss. The Jñānin who is a saṃnyāsin is not at the stage of the realization of virtues which all moralities aim at. He is revealing virtues. Renunciation, therefore, included ethics in order to transcend it. This is the stage of complete freedom where all doubts vanish completely.

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<sup>53</sup> Tilak, Gītā Rahasya, pp. 511-512.

Authority Bearing Testimony to Jīvan-Mukti  
(svarūpasiddhiprayojanam)

It may be asked here that the state of freedom to be reached by saṁnyāsa and Jñāna is a mere ideal, very difficult to be brought about and accomplished. In other words, it may be thought that the ideal of Jīvan-Mukti (moksa in one's life time), being difficult to realize, is merely speculative, based on faith and not philosophy. These doubts have been raised regarding moksa as well as saṁnyāsa. Our answer to these questions is that there is hardly any scope for thinking like this in the Vedānta. No doubt, the both of them, i.e. moksa and saṁnyāsa are the highest ideals of life, nevertheless, they have been presented with constant awareness of a positive standard with which the Advaita Vedānta was throughout occupied. What is important to note here is that these are the ideals not for the life beyond or 'life hereafter' but a progression to be reached within the span of this life. Even those systems of thought which do not believe in the ideal of the Jīvan-mukti, clearly recognize the possibility of a stage of life, here and now, which is tranquil, serene and free of anxieties. This state of existence, alone marks according to all, the culmination of philosophic culture. Renunciation is central to the realization of such a state of life. A necessary corollary to such a view is that these ideals have been based on a detailed course of practical discipline which must be undergone in the midst of society for each and every system. It is, however, a fact that all these disciplines to a large extent are based on the transformation of mind arising from the gross side of human nature but this again is nourished

by an implicit fore-knowledge of a state of mind which is pure and refined. In absence of such realization, supported by 'śruti', any urge towards an enlightened state cannot be sustained. In other words, the Vedānta starts with the certainty of a pure state of Being and the necessity of accomplishing that state. Such an ideal was already very influential as we have examined in great detail. By accepting this ideal within the limits of human experience and in the necessity of being explored and realized further, the Vedānta refuses to be dogmatic in eschatological sense of the term. Here it might be argued that the ideal of videha-mukti (deliverance after death) which has been accepted even by Śaṅkara, refutes the present contention but in our opinion the retention of the videha-mukti does not present any threat to the Vedāntic ideal. In contrary, the Vedānta again harmonises the tradition.

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<sup>54</sup>Videhamukti (Freedom after death) is the deliverance of the Self from avidya (avidyastamayomokṣah) with the implied belief to ward off future embodiment. This position of Advaita is different from those of the Nyāya-vaīśeṣika and viśistadvaita which believe in Freedom after death. For Śaṅkara, freedom is a state of fearlessness (abhayam) as is renunciation in the final analysis. This has also been called sadyomukti (immediate deliverance). By accepting these two stages, Śaṅkara attempts a synthesis between Vedic and upanishadic thought and avoids the extreme position of suggesting mokṣa as a dogma in an eschatological sense. Vidyāranya also cites several references from the śruti and smṛti to establish this contention. See Jīvan-mukti-viveka, pp. 122-139 and Śaṅkara's bhāṣya on the Katha Up. II.3.14, (ihaivavidyākr̥takamakarmabandhanairvimuktiḥ).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SOCIAL DIMENSION OF RENUNCIATION

#### Problems and controversies

The central problem of this chapter is whether man's realization of Ultimate Reality for which renunciation is essential, could influence or shape the social dimension of life. In other words, can personal dimension of renunciation culminating in self-knowledge cope with the complexities and ambiguities of life which it manifestly tries to transcend by realising the depth of Reality in terms of one's own self? The task here is to examine whether the doctrine of renunciation is compatible with social progress in general or antagonistic to it. Can Vedānta provide some guidelines for a combination of personal dimension of renunciation and a social activism based on positive this-worldly conduct" Are there not directions in the doctrine of renunciation itself which could be profitably re-shaped and re-interpreted to serve as a positive foundation for a harmonious functioning of society? Needless to say these questions have provoked a host of controversies which by and large are understandable as reflecting the fact that the traditional religious values based on salvation are hard to combine with this-worldliness, as ordinarily understood. Let me say at the outset that I value all these controversies as they have stimulated many scholars for re-interpretation of Indian thought and many thoughtful Indians for a re-appraisal of their

own religious tradition, but to say that the Vedāntic spirit of renunciation was irrelevant to 'inner-worldly life conduct' and value orientations seems rather to represent hypothetical projections on the Vedānta. The world-view with reference to which the doctrine of renunciation was explained and examined in the Vedānta exhibits its institutional setting in which it was most generally conceived and acted out. My contention as expressed throughout the previous sections is that the problem of renunciation emerges from the understanding of the transcendent that the phenomena reveal particularly as they are related to the former for issuing of any meanings whatsoever and are abstractions apart from their ground, viz., Brahman. The seeker of truth cannot find a path that issues upon salvational experience apart from this world, not by exhausting himself in it but by discovering meaning in it, the realization of which is itself freedom. The aid of such a philosophical conviction is sought in order to understand the ideal sphere of existence not by abnegating the world, society or human relationship but by harmoniously establishing them in the structure of Reality. It is possible to make a plausible case on the basis of this Vedāntic metaphysics that it generates a sense of sacred sanction for the discharge of one's obligations and responsibilities in all spheres of life, provided they are not antagonistic to the ultimate spiritual fulfilment.

What is important in this context to note is that the entire structure of the world and society, if understood in the right perspective, is a device to help the seeker towards the spiritual experience. It is by no means intelligible why this religious belief and philosophical attitude

should be taken to be opposed to the ethics of everyday life and activities. Hans Mol's observation on commitment as one of the mechanisms of the sacralization process, gives support to the above contention. He observes:

A specific identity or definition of reality or any of the other mechanisms of sacralization remain relevant in modern societies as well. All this has important implications for motivations. What one does or what one thinks one ought to do depends on the way one interprets situations. The system of meaning in which one moves has a built-in, hierarchical arrangement of priorities. The choices one makes amongst many alternatives are decisively influenced by one's assumptions about and commitments to, one's own, one's group's or one's society's identity... Weber paid little attention to commitment as the critical factor in the explanation of motivation...The basic antithesis between rationalism and commitment, however, remains peripheral in Weber's work.<sup>1</sup>

In light of the above observation, let us examine the relationship between Reality, Renunciation and commitment in order to see more clearly whether these factors as viewed by Vedānta can strengthen and sacralize systems of meaning to which it was committed. It will also be interesting to see whether renunciation is contrary to the ideal of commitment within the structure of the Vedāntic concept of Reality. Without prejudging the issue, we will also examine whether undercommitment or uncommitment has been central to some other doctrines of renunciation operating under different metaphysical structures.

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Mol, Sacralization of Identity, Manuscript (McMaster University, Hamilton, 1974), pp. 278-279.

Reality, Renunciation and Commitment

The main point in regard to Brahman as the Reality according to Vedānta is to determine whether its realization through renunciation is opposite to the spirit of commitment or helpful to it. I want to show here that the Vedāntic philosophy of renunciation is not a major obstacle to the ideal of commitment but that in fact it is helpful to it.<sup>2</sup> It is capable of providing the spiritual incentives and disciplines necessary for the growth of society without losing sight of the traditional values. Possibly we can consider some of the dominant views on the question of duties and right behaviour which manifest the principle of commitment but are still renunciatory in their implications. W. Norman Brown observes:

Particular application of the idea of duty appears as early as in the Rig Veda. There it starts with the notion that our cosmos contains two opposing forces: that of ordered operation, progress, and harmonious cooperation of the parts; and that of disorder, chaos, destruction.

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<sup>2</sup>For an opposite view, it is hardly necessary to suggest three main scholars' works, namely, Max Weber, The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism, trans. and eds., H.H. Gerth and D. Martindale (Ill: Glencoe, 1958) and much controversial book, The Protestant Ethic and the spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1958); Sweitzer, Indian Thought and its Development, and David McClelland, The Achieving Society (New Jersey: Princeton, 1961). Max Weber's following remark is worth noting: "it could not have occurred to a Hindu to see the economic success he had attained in his calling as a sign of his salvation." The Religion of India, p. 326. David McClelland remarks: "Hinduism explicitly teaches that concern with earthly achievement is a snare and delusion." The Achieving Society, p. 357.



The universe in which we live is held to operate under a code or set of principles to keep it going, and this code, this body of cosmic truth or order, has the name satya or rta. But disorder, anti-order, known as antra, is ever beating at our universe, tending to disrupt or destroy it. To keep our universe operating smoothly, every being in it has a function... If he fails in performing it, to that extent the operation of the universe is impaired. The word for this individual function is vrata (Rv.9.112), and so important is the concept that in the post-Vedic times the word comes to mean a solemn, religious vow, to be undertaken with great seriousness and observed with unflagging zeal.<sup>3</sup>

The correspondence between the individual and cosmic order in the service of the social order (rta) in the Rg Veda is accomplished through rituals and sacrifices. What follows from this axiom is an identification between the social order and the order of the ritual. The main purpose of the rituals and sacrifices is explicitly to enhance and promote the cosmic order. The domestic sacrifice, for example, addressed to Varuna (the chief god of the social order) is meant for the protection of the social order. The ideal comprehends the preservation of the race and the conservation of the culture. "Sacrifice is a form of commitment" says Hans Mol, "which reinforces a system of meaning or identity by clarifying priorities. On the social or group level sacrifice upstages those beliefs and values (expressed, for instance, in favouring or reconciling gods) which strengthen the society or group...Yet sacrifice

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<sup>3</sup>W. Norman Brown, Man in the Universe (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966) pp. 10-11.

also involves an act of abnegation and submission by the sacrificer (p. 100). Hubert and Mauss suggest that personal renunciation nourishes social forces and redresses equilibria that have been upset."<sup>4</sup>

It might be pointed out, however, that the Vedic religion also manifested some opposition between the social order and individual salvation to which we have referred at several places but these oppositions have never resulted in the denial of the cosmic order through renunciation. Since the Reality is at the back of cosmic order which is a continuous eternal process, it is the aim of religion to harness this process in the service of the cosmic order which is instrumental to the individual freedom. Stephen A. Tylor remarks: "The orthodox Sanskritic tradition has always sought to harness it to the social order, and all unorthodox traditions have originally attempted to make it serve as a means to individual freedom, to use it as a means to escape from the mutable to the immutable."<sup>5</sup> In the Vedāntic tradition, let us add, this escape is not as radical as in the unorthodox traditions. It is, however, a fact that the individual is not a datum of society but from the point of view of the cosmic order and cosmic ideal, he is not totally free from society. The individual, in other words, fulfils two roles and both these roles are complementary to each other: As a part of the cosmic order, he is instrumental to it and as being essentially Brahman, he is free from it. These two trends of

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<sup>4</sup> Hans Mol, Manuscript, pp. 291-292.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen A. Tylor, India: An Anthropological Perspective (California: Goddyear Publishing Company, Inc., 1973), p.23.

thought seem to be mutually exclusive but I want to suggest here that the doctrine of renunciation which attempts a reconciliation between the two aspects, enriches itself by participating in the cosmic order without being overthrown by it. Put philosophically, Jñāna, radically expressed in saṁnyāsa, resolves the duality between the two as said in the Mahāvākyas. The Vedāntic ideal of renunciation does not overthrow the realm of values and commitment. In its effort to examine the cosmic ideal as put forward by the Vedas, it does not repudiate the Vedas but accommodates them. It may be granted here that this accommodation may not be very explicit in the Upaniṣads but it is difficult to deny its overwhelming importance in the Advaita Vedānta. As we have pointed out in the typology of renunciation, that this adjustment was found necessary due to the direct threat to the positive ideal of renunciation as posed by some uncompromisingly ascetic trends of thought. This transformation brought out far-reaching changes in the structure of Indian society. In the recent years, we find a re-thinking of Vedāntic ideal on this pattern of thought on the basis of which some of the strictures against the spirit of the Indian thought in general, the Advaita Vedānta in particular can be challenged. What I want to suggest here is that the cosmic ideal of the Advaita Vedānta (representing the cosmic order linked with dharmā) and the acosmic ideal (representing mokṣa and saṁnyāsa) are not contradictory life-orientations but complementary to each other. To be in the world is to be bound to the cosmic order, its obligations and commitment and to be Brahman is again to participate in Brahman as a free individual. Many Indian scholars on India show the same spirit in these

matters which are not foreign to the Vedāntic ideals.<sup>6</sup> Milton

Singer's following remark is very relevant to our point under consideration:

On prima facie grounds, one could make a pretty plausible case for the thesis that Hindu metaphysics could produce just those kinds of "character" and "character traits" which Weber regarded as necessary for a modern industrial society; a belief in an orderly universe subject to deterministic laws; the ability to anticipate a course of events and to behave accordingly, with the possibility of control based on knowledge; a strong sense of responsibility for one's actions and their consequences, and a capacity to organize one's life under a systematic methodical discipline which will maximize the goals one has set oneself. It is also plausible to argue, as I have elsewhere, that these secular character traits are given a religious and transcendental sanction, not unlike that of a Protestant ethic, in the Bhagavat Gītā and in other Hindu scriptures. And there is evidence, as I have suggested for the actual existence of devout Hindus who manifest these traits in different roles and occupations -- business, industry, farming, government, education, religion and elsewhere.

Perhaps I should balance my discussion of the above possibilities in the Vedānta by highlighting the spirit of renunciation as a sanctifying principle in every sphere of life. As I pointed out earlier, morality or religion in itself is of no interest to the Vedānta. It must be developed and fulfilled only with reference to the metaphysical orientations of life. In other words, business, economics, farming or industry, morality

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<sup>6</sup> Examples, Ravindra Nath Tagore, The Religion of Man (London: Allen and Unwin 1931); S. Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life (London: Allen and Unwin, 1927) and V. Raghaven, "Some Leading Ideas of Hindu Thought", The Vedānta Kesari (Madras, Feb., 1955).

<sup>7</sup> Singer, "Religion and Social Change in India: A Max Weber Thesis, phase three", Economic Development and Cultural Change, p. 501. Also see Milton Singer, "The Great Tradition in a Metropolitan City: Madras", Traditional India: Structure and Change. (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1959).

and religion, pursued by individuals for their own benefits, cannot have the metaphysical sanction but at the same time they cannot be denied of their legitimate status on pragmatic grounds. The Vedānta does not lose sight of the differences between the pragmatic truth and the metaphysical validity of that pragmatic truth. The pragmatic truth must be brought forward in order to serve the collectivity in a spirit of renunciation. A direction towards the fulfilment of this ideal is again made metaphysically valid by denying the 'objective' status of the collectivity and bringing it at par with oneself. Whether this spiritual recipe for the pragmatic truth is likely to materialize or not, is another matter. What I am saying here is that the Vedāntic concept of Reality, instead of being taken as an obstacle in the ideal of commitment, may be taken as a further extension of the notion of commitment, which in turn disapproves of egoism, narrow-mindedness, greed, acquisitiveness, domination and exploitation. The Vedānta, in other words, is not by any means, inconsistent with values and behaviour or dynamic social activism, provided they are carried out in inwardly detached spirit and with disinterested motives. The detached spirit (renunciation) is a way of purifying the commitment without undermining it in any way.

One point must be clarified here. From what we have stated so far, regarding the disinterested motive or detached spirit, it should not be taken that the Vedānta recommends a life without purpose. It should rather mean here a life of 'disinterested interest' only so far as it turns our mind from appropriating the results of our actions, rather than actions themselves. This attitude does not minimize the importance of responsibility which I think remains at its maximum. What remains at

the back of obligation and responsibility, according to the Vedāntic ideal of renunciation, is not only disregard of the fruits and consequences of the actions, but also conception of being kartā (doer) and bhoktā (enjoyer). In this wider sense, it takes as its essential basis the pure activities (śuddha karmāṇi) which are natural to man and no view of life can disregard them. The course of natural activity is endangered only when it lacks the ideal of renunciation and is utilized for selfish ends. Renunciation, therefore, eliminates anxieties, doubts and despondency, which dominate over natural activity. The way to do it is not by resorting to the life of loneliness but realizing the nature of oneself which is the central theme of the Vedānta. Only in this sense, we have described renunciation as an enlightened attitude.

#### Institutionalization of Renunciation

The role assigned to the phenomenon of renunciation from the point of view of the commitment to discharge one's obligations without the idea of recompense, acquires enormous social vitality when viewed from the institutional perspective. The treatment of renunciation remains incomplete without taking this dimension into account. Renunciation as an individual practice gets modified when it is institutionalized and functions as an aspect of social organization in general. This is a very important religious phenomenon for understanding the social dimension of renunciation. It refutes, on the one hand, that it is a complete withdrawal, which cannot obviously be an institution, and on the other, which is equally

important, it refutes the theory that renunciation cannot be applied to the people universally. Taken in a broad sense, renunciation as an institution here means the life of the people, united for a specific purpose, which as the religion of the entire society, takes place as a kind of sociological corrective. This aspect of renunciation is very crucial, especially for a tradition like Vedānta which does not have any founder as such. The renunciants, therefore, serve the purpose of preserving and transmitting the sanātana-dharma, as being renowned for their self-control and spiritual discipline, and perpetuating a spirit of renunciation in the society which is traditionally committed to such an ideal. In order to examine these questions in more details, let us turn to the philosophy of renunciation as practised in the Hindu society in general and the Matha (religious centre) in particular. Let me say at the outset that Paul Deussen's interpretation of renunciation as an institution as recognized in the teaching of the Upanisads has been strictly followed by me.<sup>8</sup> In a sense, as I discussed earlier, this institutional aspect was implicitly recognized in the Vedas. The Vedāntic explanation of the Matha is entirely on the Vedic and Upanisadic lines and not on the Buddhist lines as suggested by Sukumar Dutt.<sup>9</sup> The reasons for this contention will be further examined later.

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<sup>8</sup> Deussen, The Philosophy of the Upanisads, pp. 411-412.

<sup>9</sup> Dutt, Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India, pp. 45-47.

Renunciation as the Basis of the Hindu Society: A Study of the Four Āsramas.

The word 'āśrama' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'śrama' and therefore it means 'to exert oneself'. The āśramas are four in number, namely, (1) the brahmacarya (student life), (2) the gṛhastha (the householder's life), (3) the vānaprastha (the retired life and (4) the saṁnyāsa (life of complete renunciation). Without going into the controversy whether in the beginning (Vedic and Upanisadic times) there were only three āśramas or four āśramas<sup>10</sup> which has been briefly discussed before, I would like to examine here the importance of the saṁnyāsa as an institution in the Indian tradition and particularly in the Vedānta and the widespread controversy over the transition from one stage to the other. It will also be interesting to see and examine the extent to which renunciation conditions each and every āśrama.

Pointing out the relevance of an ascetic life for social solidarity, E. Durkheim says:

It is even a good thing that the ascetic ideal be incarnated eminently in certain persons whose speciality, so to speak, it is to represent, almost with excess, this aspect of the ritual life, for they are like so many living models, inciting to effort. Such is the historic role of great ascetics. When their deeds and acts are analysed in detail, one asks himself what end they can have.

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<sup>10</sup> P.M. Modi, "Development of the System of Āsramas", Proceedings and Translation of the Seventh All Indian Oriental Conference (Baroda, 1935), pp. 316-16.



He is struck by the fact that there is something excessive in the disdain they profess for all that ordinarily impassions men. But these exaggerations are necessary to sustain among the believers as sufficient disgust for an easy life and common pleasures. It is necessary that an elite put the end too high, if the crowd is not to put it too low. It is necessary that some exaggerate, if the average is to remain at a fitting level.<sup>11</sup>

The kind of disdain and disgust, Durkheim is linking with asceticism, might be reduced to its minimal when asceticism emerges from the real conviction of the realization of higher self-fulfillment. In other words, a society in which renunciation is prescribed as a duty for the sake of greater self-realization, asceticism or renunciation becomes a part of life and need not be generated from a disgust or disdain of the worldly life. This might be also due to the fundamental recognition of the Vedānta that there is no clear-cut distinction between the secular and the sacred. By bridging the gulf between the two world-views, renunciation takes place as a matter of course and transforms the secular into the sacred and vice versa. Renunciation emerging from despair, disgust or doubt, as the Gītā puts it, is attachment (rāga), not detachment (vairāgya) and shows the weakness of heart (hrdayadaurvalyam).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Emile Durkheim, Elementary Forms of Religious Life (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p. 355.

<sup>12</sup> Klaibyaṁ mā sma gamah pārtha nai'tal tvay upadyate ksudram hrdayadaurbalyam tyaktvo 'ttistha paramtapa.

Gita II.3.

Renunciation generating from disgust has been regarded by Viçyaryana as of a dull type.<sup>13</sup>

Renunciation is a real force of life and is a well-known phenomenon of Indian life even today. Milton Singer's following remark shows the significance of the point:

The theme of the king or rich man who gives up everything for the sake of a spiritual principle is very common in Indian literature. The characterisation of this theme in the stories of Rama, the Pandavas, Harischandra, are almost universally known and beloved by Indians everywhere. And it is not only the mighty and rich who are expected to renounce, for in the traditional Indian theory of the stages of life, the householder who has discharged his responsibilities to his family should renounce his possessions and eventually all family ties to become a sannyasi or holy man who lives on alms."<sup>14</sup>

Without denying the importance of this phenomenon in the Indian tradition, questions may still be asked pertaining to its relevance to the economic growth in India. Most of the scholars have held the traditional value system of India (including that of renunciation) responsible for the lack of economic growth.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> putradāradhanādīnām nāse tatkālikī mathi dhiksansāramitidrksyā-dvirakttermandata hi sa.

Jīvan-mukti viveka, p.1.

<sup>14</sup> Singer, "Cultural Values in India's Economic Development": The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 305 (1956), 81-91.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Kusum Nair, Blossoms in the Dust (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), pp. 192-193; Vera Anstey, The Economic Development of India (third ed.; London: Longman Green and Company, 1936), p. 17; Abe Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, ed., Henry K. Beauchamp (third ed.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1906), pp. 96-97 and Charles Trevelyan, On the Education of the People of India (London, 1838), pp. 83-84. (All the above scholars are of the opinion that the religious tenets and practices of Hinduism have stood as greatest obstacles in the economic advancement of India.) For a general survey of this problem, see V. Mishra, Hinduism and Economic Growth (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1962).

F.M. Cornford correctly points out that most of the controversies which arise in the philosophical discussions are largely based on ordinary assumptions which philosophers do not care to expound as they are taken for granted or are obvious.<sup>16</sup> When we think of such matters as economic growth of society, it is useless on the part of the philosophers to expound its necessity as it is left for sensitive readers to deduce it from the world-views of those philosophers. Most of the critics of the Vedāntic theory of saṁnyāsa have failed to link the economic growth with the āśrama theory, culminating in saṁnyāsa as the highest ideal of life. Albert Schweitzer's well known remark needs hardly any introduction. He thinks that the āśrama theory inconsistently relates 'affirmation' of life with the 'negation' through saṁnyāsa,<sup>17</sup> and equates it with a 'do-nothing' kind of attitude of the renunciates.

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<sup>16</sup>"If we look beneath the surface of philosophic discussion, we find that its course is largely governed by assumptions that are seldom or never mentioned...because it is taken for granted as obvious...when we try to recover the outlook so framed and limited, we shall distort the picture if we unconsciously substitute our own perspectives for theirs." F.M. Cornford, The Laws of Motion in Ancient Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), p. 12.

<sup>17</sup>Schweitzer, Indian Thought and its Development, pp. 39-40.

Schweitzer wrongly takes the word 'renunciation' in a very limited and distorted sense and thinks it is against everything which is 'positive', in the way he understands it. I would like to show here very briefly that even the saṁnyāsa can provide great incentives for such activities like economic development and progress of the society in its own way.

The life of saṁnyāsa, it is needless to deny, helps a smooth transfer of the property within the family and provides an incentive for the hard work to the next generation. The property, thus acquired, serves a better purpose than a property acquired for self-aggrandizement. This tendency of life, when combined with other incentives can result in a voluntary re-distribution of the wealth without any grievance or bitterness. The sampattidāna (donation of the property), introduced by Vinoba Bhave is based on the ideal of renunciation -- "There is one thing which we will demonstrate through sampattidāna: that non-possession is a source for social good. We have long known that non-possession brings about individual purification. We have to realize that it can also serve as powerful means of social well-being. We have to prove that it is not only spiritually efficacious but it can help us in constructing better and richer worldly life...The people of India would understand this idea more speedily than others. It is not difficult for people here to perceive that we as people are all one. The reason is our seers have taught the ideal to us from very ancient times till today."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Vinoba Bhave, "The Kingdom of Benevolence through Dana", in K. Satchidananda Murty, ed. Readings in Indian History, Philosophy and Politics (London: George Allen and Unwin (td.)) 1967, pp. 189-194.

Elucidating the same ideal further, he points out: "I do not beg it. I would have begged, had I been asking for it for myself...They still ask me why I am going about begging for alms. They do not know that the great Saṅkarācārya has defined dāna as danam samvibhāgah, i.e., equitable distribution...Finally in their service, they should give up all and voluntarily sacrifice everything."<sup>19</sup> The ancient authorities Bhava is referring to are the authorities of the Veda, Upanisad, Buddhism, and Saṅkara. The Rg Veda affirms that 'He that eats by himself will keep his sin to himself.'<sup>20</sup> The broader implication of this principle has been worked out in the life of the Matha, whose property belongs to the Matha as collectivity. The Vedānta insofar as it does away with all sense of belongingness to the individual would lend support to an effort to dissolve private property. In this sense, it is easy to see that the Vedāntic concept of renunciation, being rooted in the highest truth, is not irrelevant to the deliverance of mankind from economic problems which belong to the realm of the 'lower truth' (vyāvahārika satya). The ethic of economic activity, in other words, is somehow to be united with the ideal of self-abnegation at the individual and cosmic levels. The ideal of Vinoba Bhave was obviously, Mahatmā Gandhi, who is not known only for his asceticism but also his inner-worldly asceticism.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>20</sup> 'Kevalāgho bhavāh kevalādi', Rg Veda 117.6. Also adham sa kevalam bhukte yah pacatyatmakāranāt. Yajyasistānamhyetat satāmānam vidhiyate.

Manusmṛti, III.118.

Renunciation of the fruits, for Gandhi, does not imply indifference either towards action or the proper understanding of the result of action: "In regard to every action one must know the result that is expected to follow, the means thereto and the capacity for it. He who is being thus equipped, is without desire for the result, and is yet wholly engrossed in the due fulfilment of the task before him, is said to have renounced the fruits of actions."<sup>21</sup> Gāndhi applies this interpretation of the Gītā to economic life:

The common belief is that the religion is always opposed to material good. One cannot act religiously in mercantile and such other matters. There is no place for religion in such pursuits; religion is only for attainment of salvation... In my opinion the author of the Gītā has dispelled this delusion... Thus according to the Gītā, all acts that are incapable of being performed without attachment are taboo. This golden rule saves mankind from many pitfalls... murder, lying, dissoluteness and the like must be regarded as sinful and therefore taboo. Man's life thus becomes simple and from that simpleness springs peace.<sup>22</sup>

Gāndhi gives a different turn to the ideal of sacrifice (yajña) which means an act of service (body-labour in service of others). Sacrifice is also the service of the gods and this can only be accomplished by sharing everything with others. He who does not do it is verily a thief.<sup>23</sup> But this ideal of sharing everything with others, according

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<sup>21</sup> Desai, The Gospel of Selfless Action or the Gītā according to Gandhi, p. 131

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>23</sup> Istān bhogān hi vo devā dāsyante yajñabhāvitāh tair dattān apradāyai 'bhyo yo bhukte stena eva sah.

Gītā, III.12.

to Gāndhi rests on disciplined behaviour which is essential for the modern society:

Man must reduce his daily conduct to mechanical regularity and precision, but he must do so intelligently...one has but to withdraw the Self, withdraw attachment to fruit from all action, and then not only mechanical precision but security from all wear and tear will be ensured.<sup>24</sup>

It can be easily seen here that the theory of body-labour (kāya-karma) becomes a yajña (sacrifice), when performed selflessly for others. What Gāndhi is trying to suggest here is that the philosophy of renunciation is not an obstacle in the economic development of the society but it is capable of generating a 'this-worldly asceticism' without dissociating itself from the Vedāntic metaphysical structure.

In the light of the above discussion, such belief as "it could not have occurred to a Hindu to prize the rational transformation of the world in accordance with matter-of-fact considerations and to undertake such transformation as an act of obedience to a divine will,"<sup>25</sup> seems to be unjustified. The Rudolphs observe here: "The disposition to work, save and rationally allocate time and resources in order to realize given goals is not necessarily modern. It appears, for example, among religious orders, both East and West, where self-control and asceticism in the service of spiritual ends find expression."<sup>26</sup> The fundamental difference between

<sup>24</sup> Desai The Gospel of Selfless Action or the Gīta According to Gandhi, pp. 182-183.

<sup>25</sup> Max Weber, The Religion of India, p. 326.

<sup>26</sup> Rudolphs, The Modernity of Tradition, pp. 219-220.

the classical and modern approaches to the understanding of these issues lies in the fact that for the classicists it was the essence of religion that determined other considerations whereas for the moderns, other considerations in terms of functions and consequences, determine the essence of religion. For the Vedānta and neo-Vedantins in India, essence and consequences are inseparable but it is the essence that bestows and everything else just receives. Religion is the phenomenon not reducible to faulty rationality of individual emotional trauma.

The philosophical basis of renunciation is the spirit of human unity which requires as its pre-requisite the discharge of one's obligations as a man towards all living beings. Gandhi says:

To be true to such religion, one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of all life. Realization of truth is impossible without a complete merging of oneself in, and in identification with, this limitless ocean of life. Hence, for me, there is no escape from social service, there is no happiness on earth beyond and apart from it. Social service here must be taken to include every department of life. In this scheme, there is nothing low and nothing high. For all is one, though we seem to be many.<sup>27</sup>

Such an approach can only remove the isolationism and escapism. To call the doctrine of renunciation a philosophy of isolationism or escapism is a strange ironical fact.

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<sup>27</sup> S. Radhakrishnan and J.H. Muirhead, eds., Contemporary Indian Philosophy (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1936), p. 18.



Śaṅkara and the founding of the Mathas.

Now we shall return to the problem of another phenomenon of institutionalization of renunciation in the form of several religious centres known as the Mathas, as well as the religious communities known as the Parisads. The following discussion treats institutionalization precisely from the Advaitic perspective of renunciation without taking into account the various types of it in the Indian religious tradition. It is unfortunate that no work, as far as we know, has been done in this general area. The necessity of the institutionalization of renunciation in the Vedānta emerged from the conviction of its promulgation to others as an unbroken Indian religious tradition. The reinforcement of such an ideal is a continuing one and is grounded on the conviction that the basis of it is real and can not only strengthen the spiritual experience of the committed individuals but also foster the unity of society on the foundation of the ideal of renunciation. Renunciation, therefore, becomes a mode of community life, or more broadly speaking, a community act. According to tradition, Śaṅkara founded these religious centres for the purpose of revitalizing the thought. If this were true — that is if tradition is right — it would be highly significant. Śaṅkara is said to have divided India into four zones in order to cover the whole country and established a matha in each one, viz., Jyoti at Badri in the North, Saradāpīṭha at Dvāravatī in the West, Govardhana at the Puri in the East and Śringerī in the South. He also organized the saṁnyāsins into ten orders.

as Daśanamis, namely, (1) Giri (hill), (2) Purī (city), (3) Bhāratī (learning), (4) Vana (wood), (5) Āranya (forest), (6) Parvata (mountain), (7) Sāgara (ocean), (8) Tirtha (temple), (9) Āsrama (hermitage) and (10) Sarasvati (true knowledge), forming the suffixes to the names taken by monks of these orders.<sup>28</sup> All these names of the ascetics are very significant and stand for such positive virtues as serenity, communion with parabrahman (Godhead), learning, steadfast knowledge as stable as a mountain, truth as wide and deep as the ocean, etc. It seems that they were samnyāsins in the sense of the Brahma-samstha (established in Brahman).

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<sup>28</sup> Trivenī-saṅgame tīrthe tat-tvam-asyādilksane, snāyāt tattvarthabhaven tirthanāmā sa uchyate āsrama-grahane praudhah asapasavivarjitah yatayāta - vinirmuktah etad āsrama laksanam suramya nirjane dese vāsam nityam karoti yah, āsā pasavinirmukta vana-nāmā sa uchyate., aranye samsthita nityam anandam nandane vana tyaktvā sarvam idam visvam aranyam laksanamkila. vāso girivare nityam Gīta-bhāsyā hi tatparah, gambhīrachala vuddhischa girināma sa uchate. vāset parvatamulesu praudho yo dhyāna tatparah sārāsaram vijanati parvatāh parikīrtitāh. vāset sāgara gambhīre dhanaratna pari-grahāh, māryādaschānalānghanena sāgarāh parikīrtitāh. sarvajanāvāso nityam sarvavādī kavīsvarah, sāmsāra-sāgare sarābhījño yo sa sarasvatī. vidyābhārena sampurnah sarvabharam parityāiet, dukhabharam na jānāti Bhāratī parikīrtitāh. Jñāna-tattvena sampurnah purna tattve pade sthītāh parabrahma rato nityam purināma sa uchyate.

Mathamnaya, quoted by Chakraborty, Asceticism in Ancient India, pp. 179-80.

Saṅkara is said to have consolidated and organized these Mathas bringing them under regular discipline, still known as mahānūśāsāna (great discipline.) "The plaintiff of the matha", he is quoted to have said, "should be pure, expert in Vedic love and proficient in yoga and all śāstrās and should have his senses controlled. Such a man should sit as the head of a matha as my representative. Otherwise, if anyone becomes seated, he should be dislodged."<sup>29</sup> The duties of these head include their travelling around for preaching to the people, keeping in direct touch<sup>1</sup> with the people, counselling and maintaining the order of the varnāśramadharmā.<sup>30</sup> All the riches of the Matha should be invested for the propagation of the dharmā. The head of the matha must be indifferent to the property of the matha like the lotus-leaf and fix his mind on Brahman.<sup>31</sup> The heads might be permitted to

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<sup>29</sup> sucirjitendriyo veda vedāṅgādi visāradah yojanāh sarvasāstrānām sa madāsthanam apnu ukta laksana sampannah syacchen matapithabhag bhavet, anyathā rūdha pithopi nigraharho manīsinam.

Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>30</sup> sva sva rāstra pratīsthyai samcārah suvidhīyatām, mathe tu niyata vāsā acaryasya na yujyate. varnāśrama sadācāra asamābhirye prasadhītaḥ, rakṣanīyastu evaite sve sve bhage yathavidhiḥ.

Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Kelalaṁ dharmam uddīśya vibhavo brahmacetasām, vihitascopakārāya padma pātra nayam vrajet.

Ibid.

live in the style of a king or god.<sup>32</sup>

It is our contention here that these mathas serve a very important function as an agency of hope, courage and strength to the people in face of difficulties. These centres were created to provide an example and inspiration to the society by those ascetics who "exemplify in an exaggerated form the inhibition of natural drives, and such inhibition is a prerequisite for the conduct of all social life."<sup>33</sup> There is a continual and vital relationship between the matha and the society which calls for the members of the matha to be active in society. This fact is of great significance in assessing their relation to society. They do not lack the community basis and in fact it is difficult to notice their complete separateness from the society and their values and also their involvement in them in a disinterested manner.<sup>34</sup> This ideal seems

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<sup>32</sup> deva-rājopachārāmsca yathāvad-anupālayet.

Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> See G. Obeyesekere, "The Great Tradition and the Little in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism", Journal of Asian Studies, Ann Arbor, Vol. 21(2) 1963, pp. 139-53

<sup>34</sup> It may be noted here that the saṃnyāsins of these mathas are not required like the Baudha bhikkhus or Jain sādhus to remain at one place during the four months of the rainy season. If they go on their wanderings, they are generally expected not to stay at one place for more than three days.

to be based on the concept of the avatāra (incarnation) which the Vedāntins value very highly. It could be argued that one of the consequences of this religious situation is that the door remains wide open for the saṁnyāsins to legitimate and sanction even some of the socio-political activities which might otherwise remain outside their spiritual realm. In the history of the Indian religious thought such occurrences are not rare. B.M. Barua's following remarks are worthy of noting:

..it shows that although with the wanderers in general the subject of constant and habitual discussion comprised all social and political questions and though the discussion of philosophical problems was but a hobby, so to speak, they were not altogether indifferent to the great spiritual striving which was going on in the country all round, side by side with its intellectual and material progress. <sup>35</sup>

The present formulation is quite in consonance with the general belief of the Vedānta that Reality cannot be worked out in rigid isolation from other values and institutions, Since the mathas are the centres for the cultivation of the ultimate value which can also legitimate other values and institutions, their isolation from the established authorities and power structures can hardly be justified. It is very curious to note that in the Indian religious setting the relationship between the religious authority and other social structures has never ended in failure, In fact, this close relationship between the ultimate sanction of religion as exemplified in the lives of the saṁnyāsins and functionally necessary

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<sup>35</sup> Barua, A History of Pre-Buddhistic Indian Philosophy, p. 349,

values of the society have continued to exercise a great influence on the Hindu life even today. The present analysis provides an element of corrective to a wide spread belief on the part of some of the scholars who hold that the other-worldly interpretation is antagonistic to an activist and this-worldly one. Whether this or another interpretation is valid depends on the appreciation of the meanings with which they are infused and purposes to which they are relevant. In fact, those meanings can equally be harnessed for the purpose of resolving the modern predicaments.

Another very important function served by those mathas is the work of sanskritization of the culture.<sup>36</sup> According to M.N. Srinivas, "Sanskritization is the process by which a "low" Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, rituals, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high caste, and frequently, "twice-born" caste."<sup>37</sup> It should be carefully noted here that the life of mathas as established by Saṅkara does not suffer from any of this kind of limitation. A saṅnyasin is above the caste system and also above the rituals and customs:

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<sup>36</sup> I have borrowed this word from M.N. Srinivas, Social Change in Modern India (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

"...from the knowledge of oneness of the supreme ātman and his own self, all sense of distinction between the two, stands destroyed; -- that is the daily austerity."<sup>38</sup> In the life of the matha, where Jnana is regarded supreme, there is no distinction between one caste and the other at that stage. In the light of this observation, it can be said that the mathas provide an opportunity for such sanskritization. When Śaṅkara in his commentary on Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad says that only the Brāhmana can be entitled to the state of samnyāsin, he is not speaking in terms of the caste system but in terms of one who is a brahmasaṁtha (established in Brahman). He presupposes the acquisition of Jnana on the part of the Brāhmanas. In this sense, it might equally apply to those who possess such qualities, like satyakama, for example, who was not aware of his strata in the society and was found suitable for spiritual fulfilment.<sup>39</sup> These mathas stood for the propagation and

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<sup>38</sup> Jivan mukti-Viveka, p. 207. idam brahma, idam ksatram, ime lokah, ime devah, imani bhūtāni, idam sarvam yad ayam ātmā. Br. Up. II.4.6. The Upadeśasahasri describes the same ideal. Cf. Jagadanand, The Upadeśasahasri of Sri Sankarā chārya, pp. 80-89.

<sup>39</sup> paramahansa-pārvrajyaṁ pratipadya bhikṣā caryāṁ caranti bhikṣartham caranam bhikṣacaryāṁ caranti tyaktvā smṛtam lingam kevalam āsrama-matra saranānam Jivana sadhanam parivrajya vyanjabam. śaṅkara. Br. Up. III.5.1.

realization of the Advaita Vedānta. There was hardly any scope for making a distinction between one caste or the other. Even though a sūdra, if you do good you become a Brāhmin.<sup>40</sup>

Another important contribution of renunciation as an institution is the formation of the pariṣad (group of the saṁnyāsins) for the guidance of mankind. The reason why only renunciants were allowed to form such a group becomes obvious in the light of our previous observations. Such persons are the renunciants to whom the reference is made in the Taittiriya Upāṇisad: "Then, if there is in you any doubts regarding any deeds, any doubt regarding any conduct, you should behave yourself in such matters, as the Brāhmanas there (who are) competent to judge, devoted (to good deeds), not led by other, not harsh, lovers of virtue would behave in such cases."<sup>41</sup> In Manu and Parāśara, the importance of the pariṣad has been equally emphasized.

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<sup>40</sup> ebhistu karmabhir devīsubhair ā caritais tathā sūdro  
brāhmanatam yati vaiśyah ksatriyatam vrajet.  
Quoted by S. Radhakrishnan, Religion and Society, p. 131.

<sup>41</sup> atha yadī te karma-vicikitsā vā vṛtta vicikitsā  
va syat ye tatra brāhmanas sammarśinah  
yuktā ayuktah aluksā dharmā kamās syuh  
yathā te tatra varteran tathā tatra vartethāh.



The Parāsara thinks that a parisad should ordinarily consist of a hundred wise Brāhmanas but at the time of crisis, only one Brāhmana who is wise can serve as a parisad.<sup>42</sup> One of the smrtis thinks that the opinion of such a wise person is as good as the authority of the Veda.<sup>43</sup> S. Radhakrishnan remarks: "Only those who are disciplined, compassionate to all living beings, learned in the Vedas and methods of logical inference, practical-minded (desakālavibhāyājnah) and of stainless character, have the power to legislate for the community."<sup>44</sup> Śaṅkara in his bhāṣya on the Bṛhadāraṇyaka remarks:

It is therefore that in coming to a decision on a subtle point of dharma, it is desirable to have a parisad working and especially distinguished person (he means śaṅnyasins) is wanted (to give a lead) as stated in the rule, a parisad should consist of not less than ten persons or of three or of one (specially distinguished).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> munīnām ātmavidyānām dviyānām yaynayājīnām vedavratesu snātānām eki'pi parisad bhavet.

Parāsara, VIII.3.

<sup>43</sup> samayasāpi sādhanām pramanam vedavad bhavet. dharmaynah samayah pramanam.

Quoted by S. Radhakrishna, Religion and Society, p. 111.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>45</sup> For details, see Kane, History of Dharmasāstras, II-II, 435-37.

The Angrasa confirms the same standpoint that a single person who is the best among ascetics, possessing knowledge of the Self may form a parisad and declare what a proper rule is on a point of doubt.<sup>46</sup>

A person who has been regarded as qualified to form a parisad is a person of utmost self-purification, without attachment to the fruits of his actions. He is an instrument for the cosmic purpose. Such a person has also been referred to a Gurū (spiritual teacher) whose rank is equal to the rank of Īsvara.<sup>47</sup> The Saṁnyāsin here is the perfected man of self-realization who is free from all binding

<sup>46</sup> Yatīnam satyatapasā Jnānavijnānacetasam sirouratena  
snatanamikopi parisadbhaveta.  
Ibid., p. 969.


<sup>47</sup> acāryavān puruso veda (one who has a teacher knows.)  
Ch. Up. VI. XIV.2. Samkara thinks that only by a help of a teacher who knows the Self, one can know the sat. See Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads, p. 464. See Nancy W. Ross, Three Ways of Asian Wisdom, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1969, p. 27.

Cf. Īsvaro guruvātmētimurtibhedabhagine, vyomavad vyāptadehāyadaksina-  
murtaye nama; yasya deva parābhaktiryathā deva tathāgurū. Sve. Up.  
VI.23.

In the above passage devotion to God and teacher is shown as highly significant. Madhusūdan Sarasvati, the author of Advaitasiddhi, shows great reverence to the Avatara ideal and Guru ideal. See Ganganath Jha, trans., Advaitasiddhi of Madhusudan Sarasvati in Indian Thought. Vol. 10, (1917). R.D. Karmaskar, trans., Vedāntakalpalatika (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962), verses 69 and 50. These verses assert the importance of teachers for the elimination of avidyā.

activities. The avatāra in Indian religious tradition is exemplary and is one who has self-realization but comes down to the world out of his own free will in order to guide and protect the world. Pure love based on Jñāna is the root of the service which the renunciants have inculcated in their method of the self-abnegation. The old and honoured traditions of Gurū and avatāra still persist and derive their implications from the ideal of renunciation.

In the light of the above discussion, it may be pointed out that renunciation has taken precedence over almost all thought in India. In a sense, religious thought of India is renunciation orientated thought which found its fulfilment in every activity -- individual, social and even political and economic. It is quite true that even in modern India, this tradition has its obvious impact. Yet it must be kept in mind that the tradition of renunciation is a very complex one. It is necessary to approach this subject with extreme care in order to avoid jumping to wrong conclusions pertaining to its nature.



### CONCLUSION

In concluding this inquiry, I would like to make a few observations on some of the new perspectives from which the phenomenon of renunciation has been looked at in contemporary philosophical thought in India. Of all the systems of Indian philosophy, the Vedānta has the largest following in contemporary India. However, the exponents of this system are so different in their opinions that their views are not likely to find a common ground. But it is encouraging to note that there is an increasing tendency among them to view the Vedāntic philosophy as world-affirming, activistic and value-centred even though their approaches to the raison d'etre of the Vedānta are different. Our concern here is to indicate their opinions in the light of our undertaking and see the extent to which they could be helpful in the further understanding of this problem. There is, however, an obvious limitation here. Some of these thinkers are not academic philosophers but spiritual leaders and mystics, making it difficult to understand precisely the general trends of their thought.

Some of these thinkers have contributed directly towards the ideal and discipline of renunciation on religious lines. Their writings and speeches are marked with fervent zeal and commitment to the socio-religious implications of renunciation. They have been sannyāsins of high order and their impact on Indian society and culture has been forceful and beneficial. It would

be difficult to place them within either the new or old society, although their teachings and conduct have traditional orientations. They harnessed the traditional ideal of renunciation to the requirements and purposes of modern society. Renunciation for them served as a potential for this-worldly activism and cultural transformation. I do not see any reason for not accepting their contributions to the society on the model of renunciation. Men with their spiritual concerns might be supposed to manifest no interest in mundane activities. Yet far from this, these saṁnyasins succeeded in building organizations and religious institutions which played a very vital role in the modernization of India. Inspirations for such tasks came to them from renunciation and asceticism which they found equally efficacious for individual salvation as well as salvation of the people of which they were representatives.

Without entering into details of their contributions, I will briefly indicate some of the directions they provided to the further understanding of renunciation. They accepted Samnyāsa as an institution (āśrama) oriented towards religio-social activities. The task they set to examine and accomplish were social issues, interpersonal relations, growth of the individual personality and creativity, a sense of unity, self-esteem and the cultivation and preservation of a unique sense of identity in terms of Indian values and meanings. The most striking feature of these architects of modern India was their resuscitation of the style of a saṁnyāsin who was not stranger to his own people. They had nothing to fear from him and

he had nothing to take from them. Yet his status was irreconcilable with any kind of escapism or isolationism. His attitude is not of that of a simple spectator watching a show. He participates in the human drama with a personal detachment. To the extent he is attached, to that extent he is precluded from participation. Renunciation, for them was a renunciation of attachment in the interest of efficient and genuine participation. In a sense, renunciation for them was a disinterested interestedness. In the light of this it is easy to see why Vivekānanda, Swāmī Rama Tīrtha, and Mahātmā Gāndhī were such successful innovators universally acceptable to India. They all fought against 'isolated individualism' and took renunciation as a guiding principle in opposing such a misconstrued notion. This strong sense of purpose based on the 'ascetic' ideal generated an atmosphere of hopefulness and strength which served to a considerable extent to create a nationwide revival. The life of activism, thus derived, became the expression of the spiritual order which took precedence over all petty considerations. This is only an interest of a higher order, but is interest any way. In the contemporary Indian philosophical context, I would call it the institutional theory of renunciation, supported largely and predominantly by the Vedāntic ideal as discussed in previous chapters.

Renunciation in its philosophical setting was strengthened by some of the modern philosophers in terms of Self-knowledge (ātma-Jñāna), a deeper insight into one's own Self through the realization of the Supreme Spirit or eternal consciousness. The thinkers of the institutional type

look into philosophy from the religio-social perspective but for the philosophers of this category, religion and social philosophy must stimulate the philosophical spirit. But it must be remembered, however, that despite the differences in their approaches, the ideal for both of them is the same, namely, a state of absolute peace (sāntim nirvānaparamā), infinite bliss (sukhamātyantikam), complete equanimity (nirdosam samam), undisturbed intellect (sthīrabuddhirasammūḍha), Self-control (antah-nirodha), fearlessness (abhaya). These states are desired here and now and not after death, here in this life while moving and doing actions (ihaviva brahmaiva san brahma apyeti na śarīrapātāduttarakālam). It is the reason why philosophy in India was never hampered by religious thought. They served the cause in joint partnership and stood for the inculcation of the spirit of renunciation either aiming at Self-knowledge or God-realization.

It should be carefully noted here that renunciation has a very positive value whether it aims at Self-Knowledge (ātman-Jñāna) or God-realization (brahma-saṁsarpasam). From the former standpoint, renunciation speaks to us of an experience which coincides with Reality, i.e. Brahman. In this sense, it unfolds itself along with the proper understanding of the structure of consciousness. J.G. Arapura regards it as the further extension of Jñāna or consciousness which is all-inclusive and eternally present. To apply it here, one can deduce that differences in philosophies, and even philosophical interpretations are coordinated with the differences in the understanding of consciousness. It should then appear that the first

task to do is to understand consciousness. In respect of the problem of consciousness, Advaita Vedānta provides a clear unitary perspective. The doctrine of renunciation, therefore, so far as it is also linked with the proper understanding of the world, must depend totally on the philosophy of consciousness. Only in this way, I regard it as a total way of life in Advaita Vedānta. Unlike asceticism, pure and simple, it is not by any means unrelated to thought. Rather it becomes even an instrument or device of thought. It is constantly fed and sustained by the understanding of the nature of consciousness. This is unique to Vedānta. Renunciation, therefore as an adjunct to thought does not either deny the world or doubt the world but simply modifies or radically changes our view of the world which is in 'existence'. But our interest is radically transformed in process of bringing the world with reference to what it is and not what it appears to be. In other words, a saṁnyāsin who is brahmasaṁsthā abandons the naive attitude towards the world as a given reality independently of Brahman and in doing so he does not abandon the world.

There is no question of shifting the world from being something to being nothing as it is impossible even according to the Vedāntic metaphysics. What is to be shifted is the attitude regarding the world and all the activities associated with it. This means that man is involved with the world even before the dawn of Jñāna and after the dawn of it but the way he was involved and is involved is different. In the state of ajñāna his involvement reflected a sense of "I-ness" (ahamkāra). In the state of Jñāna,



his involvement is meaningless in the sense that his "I-ness" is meaningless. The realization that ahamkāra is meaningless adds a full dimension of meaning to it which it never lacked but appeared to have been forgotten because of the vāsanās and ajñāna. With the fall of "I-ness", his involvement with the world on the basis of "I-ness" also falls to the ground but it does not remain in nothingness. The whole process is simultaneously attendant on the realization of Reality which transforms the nature of man to such an extent that it can be regarded as his re-birth. It is this relentless search of meaning that the advaitins try to discover through renunciation which has been shown to be linked with Self-knowledge. Put simply, once ahamkāra is burnt to ashes by the fire of knowledge, it is simultaneously accompanied by a further extension of the consciousness within which man establishes his greater identity. With this positive awareness (if I am permitted to say so), the world serves as an arena for discharging free and unmotivated activity as there is nothing left (with the elimination of ahamkāra) outside to generate any motive or self-seeking activity. At this stage, the individual as well as the world is sanctified on the basis of its radical extension within the general scheme of Reality. What was so far artificial becomes spontaneous. This is perhaps a far greater gain than the loss of the so-called individuality. By disowning oneself, as Kalidāsa puts in his Mālavikāgnimitra, one owns the whole world.

The contemporary philosophy occupied with such problem reflects a tendency of thought which I call the philosophical theory of renunciation. It may be regarded to be theoretical understanding of renunciation though in

the final analysis it cannot be distinguished from the institutional theory of renunciation. A coherent study of the one would inevitably imply the other and both of them are equally important for the understanding of the personal and social dimensions of renunciation. They are held as distinct only in a theoretical sense.

In the contemporary Indian philosophical thought on the subject of the world, B.G. Tilak has attracted a good deal of attention. Renunciation, for him, is not the renunciation of action but renunciation of the fruits of action which he regards as the central theme of the Gītā. He complains against Saṅkara that the Advaita Vedānta explains away the life of the disinterested activism by assigning it a secondary status for the purification of mind (citta-suddhi). The disinterested action, for Tilak, is itself sufficient for the realization of freedom (Mokṣa). He interprets Saṅkara as propounding a philosophy of non-action, or cessation from action on the part of the Jñānin or saṅnyāsin. He forgets that Saṅkara does not take action in an ordinary sense of the term. By non-performance of action or Karma-saṅnyāsa, the advaitins only mean that the Brahma-vid or Brahmasaṁstha acts but automatically or spontaneously without any strain or struggle, due to the realization of the cosmic consciousness outside of which nothing remains. He does not struggle to be virtuous but becomes virtuous by nature. Tilak overlooks the advaitins' distinction between the vividisa-saṅnyāsa (renunciation of the seeker) and vidvat-saṅnyāsa (renunciation of the enlightened), a distinction I have dwelt upon at length before. Saṅkara would accept everything, Tilak says in favour of the Karmayogin at the former level

but at the latter level, the actions that are being performed by the saṁnyāsins are not the actions which Tilak has in mind but still they are actions of the free individual. The desire for the non-performance of action, because all actions imply distractions, will be a bondage for the advaitins, no less than a desire for performance. Tilak applauds the ideal of lokasaṁgraha and thinks that Saṁkara denies that ideal. Saṁkara does not deny that ideal either at cosmic or acosmic level. At the cosmic level, it is accompanied by the sāttvika Karma on the model of Īsvara. On the acosmic level which does not have any trace of desire (saṁkalpa), it is automatically accomplished. Tilak refuses to go beyond the sāttvika Karma, which is the realm of ethics. For Saṁkara ethics must be established on the metaphysical foundation which does not deny the former but simply enriches it. This aspect of the problem which has found explicit expression in the contemporary Indian thought is what I call the activist theory of renunciation. This again is a part of the Vedāntic concept of renunciation but not the whole of it.

The framework of reference which this dissertation attempted to set forth requires a different perspective to look into the development and consequences of the phenomenon of renunciation. Renunciation has emerged not merely as a 'theory' or 'thinking in a vacuum' but as a religio-philosophical thought which gradually developed into a kind of institution with its implications for overall transformation of life.

In the view which has been presented here, one may say, that renunciation provides one of the possible ways to identify oneself with the Reality but not the only way as has been asserted by Advaita Vedānta. An

equally tenable view is that men who live by renunciation are partially choosing a different world, and therefore do not fully belong to this world. One's identity with the Reality, which necessarily implies casting off of one's individuality, can be substituted by other sets of values which are differently derived and perhaps oriented to a different world-view. This type of thinking comes not only from outside the tradition but from the tradition itself. Acceptance or rejection of any position is governed to a large extent by the values one is willing to embrace and perhaps there is hardly any controversy over this question. In other words, men committed to different set of values, may not hold renunciation as a universally acceptable valid way. They might find stronger support for devotion, worship, action, mythology, belief in this world alone and so on. We are not denying the existence of such tendencies of thought. What we are denying is the possibility of any system of broader commitment which is not at the same time sustained and pervaded by an urgent inculcation of the spirit of renunciation. The outstanding example of this is to be found in India throughout its religio-philosophical development. It would be wrong to think that the Vedānta denied any positive ideal of life through renunciation. It simply provided a metaphysical urge for a radical extension of such an ideal.

This problem has been tackled, in its ultimate analysis, not in isolation of one's Self from the whole but also removing any opposition whatsoever between the two. This we have called the acosmic ideal of the Vedānta represented by the vidvat-samnyāsa (renunciation of the enlightened).

But we have shown clearly that this ultimate ideal does not exist in a vacuum. It must be sustained by the cosmic ideal of renunciation represented by Vividiṣā-saṁnyāsa (renunciation of the seeker) where God is the spiritual model for the sādhaka. Renunciation, therefore is a very complex phenomenon and shapes the destiny of man in the holistic view of life. It cannot be brushed aside as a life-negating principle which was consistently assailed and denied by the advaitins; the falsity of which Saṁkara was realizing every moment, not excluding the moment in which he was engaged in all kinds of creativity. Scholars who have misunderstood and misinterpreted Saṁkara are not only those who could show some patience in understanding the Vedānta but unfortunately even those who falsely think that they belong to the Vedāntic tradition. The main point of issue for these thinkers is Saṁkara's denial of the compatibility, between i.e. simultaneous presence of Jñāna and Karma. They have understood it and misunderstood it. By the term, 'action' Saṁkara means artificial action, generating all kinds of egoism, and not spontaneous action or free action which does not bind the individual and also does not hinder the growth and advancement of the society. The action of the latter type is spiritual action sustained by Jñāna which we have found as equivalent to renunciation (saṁnyāsa). The real problem for the Advaitins does not lie in acceptance or denial of action; it does not interest a philosopher to deny what common sense assumes. The advaitins' task is to provide an explanation which significantly lies in the transforming aspect of actions by Jñāna. The same pattern of thought is equally true with regard to the world. Renunciation consists

essentially in transforming the nature of man and the universe -- a transformation whose accomplishment consists in manifesting or letting the true nature of them emerge to the surface.

The central thrust of the present thesis, as has been shown, lies in a proper understanding of the meaning and scope of renunciation in Advaita Vedānta. Renunciation, is by no means a philosophy of pessimism, escapism or a formal and external type of asceticism. The whole objective of renunciation, its entire raison d'etre, is Jñāna (saving knowledge) which again is not a dull quietism or isolationism but an enlightened attitude towards life, society and the world and, in fact, every activity in society and the world. If Advaita Vedānta attaches the highest importance to renunciation, it did so because of its conviction that the ideal of renunciation alone can sanctify human interests whether individual, social, ethical, religious or spiritual. Whenever, renunciation exhibited any exclusive other-worldly direction, anti-moralism, fatalism, individualism, pre-determinism, and the like, the Vedānta tradition sharply reacted against those tendencies. The positive standard of the Vedānta tradition deeply and scrutinizingly thought over these life-negating attitudes in order to free society from disintegration and decay. The unbroken continuity of this tradition until today speaks for itself. If it stops short or fails to develop its true spirit, it is a serious crisis and needs close scrutiny not only into itself but the whole structure of life.

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