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Critical Analysis on Self- Samkara and Ramanuja: A Preamble

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ABSTRACT

The concept of a personal, perfect, loving God is central to Visistadvaita. The human spirit is separate from the Supreme Spirit since love requires a connection between a lover and the loved. Every soul is born into a material body according to its karma. Bondage is the confinement of the soul to this body, and liberation is the complete dissociation of the soul from the body. Ignorance is the source of karma, which in turn causes bondage. As a result of karmas, the soul becomes identified with a specific body, senses, mind, and life. As a result, the soul becomes attached to the world, and its repeated births are caused by this attachment. To break free from samsara, the soul must eliminate its karmic obstacles; it must cleanse itself of the dross and dust of karma that has somehow encircled it. This can be achieved through a harmonious combination of action and knowledge. In this article, critical analysis on self- samkara and ramanuja: a preamble has been discussed.

Keywords: *Self, Samkara, Ramanuja.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the six orthodox (astika) schools of Indian philosophy is Vedanta. Veda (knowledge) and anta (end or conclusion) are tatpuruṣa compounds that combine to form the word Vedanta. The term Vedanta means "the end of the Vedas or the doctrines set forth in the closing chapters of the Vedas, which are the Upanishads." It is Hinduism's foundation. Vedantic thought included Vedic philosophy, hymns, and cosmology. The Brahma-Sutra is the sutra form in which Vedavyasa wrote the Vedanta philosophy. Because it discusses the embodiment of the unconditioned self, Samkaracarya's commentary on the Brahma-Sutra is known as Sariraka-Bhasya. There are four chapters in the Vedanta-Sutra. The first chapter covers the theory of Brahman and its relationship to the world. The second chapter covers the arguments of other systems against this viewpoint. The third chapter covers the techniques for achieving Brahma-vidya. The fourth chapter covers the outcomes of Brahma-vidya. In order to organize the Upanisadic teachings into a logical philosophy, Badarayana created the Brahma-Sutras. There are many different interpretations of the Vedanta-



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Sutras' aphorisms due to their cryptic presentation, which has resulted in the growth of Vedanta sub-schools. The Vedanta, often referred to as a single school, actually comprises four sub-schools: the Dvaita of Madhvacarya, the Visistadvaita of Ramanujacarya, the Suddhadvaita of Vallabhacarya, and the Kevaladvaita or Advaita of Samkaracarya. Three of these four schools hold that the Paramapurusa, the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the world, is real. According to the Dvaita school, each individual soul (Jiva) is a reflection of God, or a pratibimba, that is under His authority and dependent upon Him.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON SELF- SAMKARA AND RAMANUJA

The three texts that form the foundation of Vedanta are the Bhagavad-Gita, the Upanisads, and the Brahma-Sutra. The core of Vedanta is the idea of Brahman, the ultimate reality, transcendent, eternal, self-existent, and superior spirit that is the divine foundation of all being. The Vedantins also support the idea of God, or Isvara. The primary distinction between these many sub-schools is how they depict the close connection between the three ideas of Isvara or Brahman (God), Jagat (the world or the universe), and Jiva (individual soul).

The greatest and best-known Vedic system is Advaita. Advaita means "not two" or "dvaita" in Sanskrit, while Vedanta means "the end of knowledge" (Veda = knowledge, anta = finish). Just because something is "not two" doesn't mean there isn't "one." So, yes, there aren't two. An attempt at a harmonic interpretation of the Upanishads. In Advaita philosophy, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Upanishads, and the Brahma-Sutras are the three main texts. The Upanishads contain the body of Vedic knowledge, the Gita its central text, and the Sutras their elucidation of philosophical principles. The primary tenet of the non-dualistic, monistic Advaita school of thought is that there is no separation between the individual (atman) and the universe (Brahman).

Although the earliest historical advocate of Advaita Vedanta was Gaudapada, who was the teacher of Samkara's guru Gobinda Bhagavatpada, it was Adi Samkara who officially established its beliefs. The Advaita school is sometimes called a school of philosophy and other times called a school of religion. Thus, it seems to incorporate elements of both. Some outside observers feel that Advaita represents the zenith of all religious philosophy, not only Hindu philosophy. For example, Satprakashananda, a follower of Vivekananda, argues that Vedanta is not a religion but rather the universal basis of all religions.

According to Advaita Vedanta, Brahman is the highest reality. In the end, Brahman has no qualities at all. It lacks duality and is beyond human comprehension. Brahman defies explanation as it necessitates difference. Brahman cannot be detached from anyone. All mental discourse is unable to approach Brahman, according to the Taittiriya Upanisad. This ultimate Brahman of Samkara is nirguna, meaning "without the gunas"; nirakara, meaning "formless"; nirvisesa, meaning "without



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attributes"; and niskriya, meaning "without activity." Absolute monist philosophers like Spinoza and Bradley struggle to make sense of plurality in a universe where Brahman, the only reality, is singular and unchanging. To explain the universe and put an end to this strangeness, Samkara refers to the Upanishads' word maya.

The state of being naive or deluded, or maya, is what causes one to make a mistake or believe a falsehood. An error occurs when one thing is mistaken for another. We also show a multiverse in which Brahman is the one and only truth. Lack of knowledge causes this delusion or visual error (avidya). Brahman explains that maya is the power to create illusions. Brahman is unaffected by or tricked by its might. As ignorant spectators, we see an illusion when a magician doubles the value of a single coin, yet the magician himself knows full well that he is incapable of doing such feats. Similarly, Brahman creates the appearance of the world through maya while remaining unaffected. (Cassam, Q., 2021).

Brahman is awareness in its purest form. Maya Brahman takes the form of qualified Saguna Brahman or Isvara, the Triple Goddess who creates, preserves, and destroys the universe. Brahman is the very essence of the maya-manifesting universe. Samkara says that Brahman's role as the universe's creator is true only if one takes the world as it appears from an empirical perspective. Those who hold the transcendental view deny the existence of a Creator and the reality of the cosmos.

Swans are often considered symbols of Advaita Vedanta. The word for swan in Sanskrit is hamsa. "The big swans," or paramahamsas, are the highest-ranking gurus in the Advaita school of thought. "I am that" (hamsa) is an alternate form of the word "soham," meaning ultimate enlightenment. Swans represent Advaita Vedanta because of the many ways in which they are similar to the Advaitin. Just as a swan whose feathers remain untarnished by water, a free Advaitin resides in a world full of maya without being impacted by its illusion. It is also stated that swans in Indian mythology can tell the difference between water and milk. Additionally, the Advaitins differentiate between the atman, which is eternal, and the world, which is not. Just like milk and water appear mixed together, the atman, or Brahman, is found in the world but can't be fully understood without the Advaitin idea of nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka, which means knowing the difference between what lasts forever and what doesn't. As a result, the jivanmukta, who attains liberation upon recognizing Brahman, is symbolized by the swan.

Brahman is the only reality; the world and other realities are illusions made by ignorant beings. This teaching, which relentlessly follows the logic of monism in the Upanisads, upholds the non-dual nature of Brahman. There is no one like the self; there is nothing like it anywhere else. (Sethy, D. K., 2021).



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The physical form is transient; as a result, one's sense of identity is distinct from their physical form. Despite this physical shift, the T will remain the same; consciousness will also remain constant. It would have evolved with the body's aging if the self and body were identical, which they aren't. The physical form is thus distinct from the identity.

Equally unrelated to the ego is the sensory organ. Although our sense organs are unique, there has only ever been one I. If there was a single self that encompassed all of the sense organs, then there wouldn't have been any distinction between them.

Mind and brain are not the same as self; I say it again. The intellect, or mind, is a representation of the many functions of the internal organ, or antahkarana, that receives and organizes data from the senses; it is this organ that acts as a knowledge agent. The self, however, cannot act as a knowing agent, in contrast to the antahkarana. The very act of being a knowledge agent subjects the self to change, rendering it unreal, as reality is immutable.

Simply said, the self is being-awareness-bliss according to Vedanta. In Vedic philosophy, the concepts "being," "consciousness," and "bliss" are employed to characterize the self. But instead of limiting the self, these words show what it really is. Advaita Vedanta adherents do not view being, consciousness, and enjoyment as constituting the self. Rather than being traits of the self, these expressions just serve to identify it. The self is distinct from all other things in the universe. This object does not include any attributes. There is no predicate here; it simply exists as "being." It is the Brahman. Being, consciousness, and happiness are unrelated. Directly addressing oneself, they do so. They express themselves completely on their own. Despite their varied interpretations and applications, these adjectives share a common sense of meaning. (Andersen, M.B., 2020).

The concept of being and consciousness are synonymous. According to Advaita Vedanta, all objects of knowledge are false, and this would fall under that category if true. There is an identical relationship between being and consciousness. It loses its truth value the moment it becomes independent of reality. Consciousness, being, and joy are also closely related.

The self is both consciousness and awareness. Samkara disagrees with the Visistadvaita and Nyaya-Vaisesika schools of thought, which maintain that awareness is a property of the self. Being aware of one's own existence is distinct from being a thing in and of itself. The relationship between the material and its qualities must be one of identity, difference, or identity and difference, according to Samkara. Becoming inherently separate from the self precludes consciousness from becoming a property of the substantive self. Claiming that one is a feature of the other when they are identical is also meaningless. Additionally, no two objects may be identical and yet distinct from one another. As a result, the ego and consciousness are the same. Being aware manifests itself. There is no way for any other kind of awareness to emerge. This understanding of our own vulnerabilities is not an inherent part of our identity. It describes one's very "being."



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The self is bliss, but we don't know it when we're awake or asleep. There it feels both joy and pain. When things are going badly for the self, it feels bad, and when things are going well, it feels good. One may question the veracity of the claim that the self is intrinsically happy. The response is that the self seems sense-bound when waking and image-tied when dreaming, respectively, and neither state allows it to appear in its purest form. When the self incorrectly identifies with the antahkarana, it takes on its traits. Things have a profound effect on the ego because they transform antahkarana into pleasure and pain. This clarifies why the self goes through periods of pleasure and misery independently. Even while awake, it is conceivable to prove that the self is happy. When a man is in excruciating pain, he looks for relief from that pain, not from life. The need for continuity within the self is constant. But since joy is the one genuine desire, the ideal self is one who is blissful. A person's happiness or contentment might be inferred just from the fact that they love themselves. (Jonkers, P., 2020).

Man loves his wife, children, money, and other goods, but not for what they are; rather, he loves them for what they can do for him. "The self is the source of all joy," Yajnavalkya informs Maitreyi during a conversation. They are supplementary items that are utilized for one's own amusement. Thus, it is proved without a reasonable doubt that contentment is the core of identity. Realizing one's inherent joy is the result of liberation from captivity brought about by realizing one's union with Brahman.

Samkara argues that knowing oneself is impossible via rational reasoning alone. We are only as smart as our data allows us to be. The ultimate truth is too complex for us to fully understand. We can't see beyond this planet. Brahman, sometimes called atman, is this truth. It defies explanation since it is incomprehensible to humans. Reality is unconditional from this point of view. The jiva and atman are differentiated by Samkara. The atman is the entity that exists in relation to the body and all the other kinds of conscious phenomena. As soon as the atman's reflection hits avidya (ignorance), it becomes jiva, a sentient being with a body and awareness. It is believed by every jiva that he has his own unique atman, or jivatman. Jiva is only valid at the most practical level. In the transcendental realm, Brahman is the sole genuine atman. Jiva is the one who does (karta), loves (bhokta), and knows (jnata). It reaps the benefits and suffers the consequences of its actions, both good and bad. Therefore, bondage and transmigration pose a threat to it. When a limited self-gains access to authentic information, it is liberated.

Atman is self-proven; this much is certain. It is a consciousness that permeates all places and times. Subject and object are not concepts that apply to the atman. That's all there is to it. No one can say that the DTM is an enthusiast or doer. Neither good nor bad can compare to it. It does not change and does not do anything. Birth and death have no effect on it. I can go on forever. There is nothing else that can split it or lengthen it. It permeates all things. It permeates all things. Atman is known as



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Paramatman. This is the pinnacle of souls. The term Paramatman is used to describe the essence of the universe. There is no higher principle or ultimate reality than the Supreme Spirit. The individual soul resides in each of the five kosas, or coverings. The sensory organs and the physical body form the annamaya-kosa, or bodily sheath. Within the physical body's protective covering resides the pranamaya-kosa, or vital sheath, composed of the life-giving energy. Within the vital sheath is the manomaya-kosa, also known as the mental sheath, which contains the mind at its core. Within the mental sheath lies the vijnanamaya-kosa, or intellect sheath, which is based on the intellect. Within the intellect-sheath is the anandamaya-kosa, or joyful sheath, made up of bliss and unadulterated awareness. The five sheaths constitute the objective component. After the objective part is taken out, what remains is the witness of the sheaths. It is that witness who embodies the real self, which is nothing more than pure awareness. Causes that do not exist cannot be the reason. Individual souls should transcend all five koshas by merging with the Supreme Soul through meditation. The Supreme Soul is outside of the kosas. Emancipation or freedom will not be achieved till then.

The three sarira that make up the jiva are the gross (sthula-sarira), subtle (suksha-sarira), and causal (karana-sarira), as this view explains it. The causative body of jiva is ajnana, sometimes called avidya. In the subtle body, also called suksha-sarlra or linga-sarlra, there are seventeen parts, including the intellect, the mind, the five vital forms, the five sense organs, and the five action organs. The pancikarana, or five material constituents, provide the basis of the jiva's distinctive physical frame, which is its gross body. While awake, the self, or visva, possesses both subtle and gross bodies. During the dream stage, it has a subtle body known as taijasa, and during the profound sleep stage, it has a casual body known as prajna. The eternal self-resides in all three of these time dimensions: the past, the present, and the future. Because it is kutastha, or unchangeable, it will not change over time. Its inherent character as unadulterated wisdom and joy render it essentially impervious to enslavement and suffering. The self is vibhu, or everywhere at once; it is not bounded by time or place. Neither intermediate nor atomic in size is it. If one's sense of self were atomic, it would be impossible for the quality of awareness to permeate every part of the body and cause a pervasive sensation. However, consciousness is perceived by the entire body. Selfhood, then, is not atomic. Its size also does not qualify as intermediate. It would be destroyed if it were true, yet all the scriptures say it will last forever. Atman is extremely nuanced and unadulterated, as was already said. The atman is illuminated by the light of its own consciousness. In its pristine and unadulterated form, the intellect resembles the atman. As a result, those who lack knowledge tend to conflate the mind with the atman. They put the reflector and reflection on top of the reflected object. The second an external object is thought to be the atman; a domino effect begins. With each superimposition operation, a new superimposition occurs in the series. Samkara teaches that this world is only relative to reality (vyavaharika satta). Brahman is unaltered regardless of the circumstances or actions of any one person or universe. Brahman does not change and remains everlasting. The mysterious force, or



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sakti, or maya, allows Brahman to become the world's cause. Similar to how the force of fire cannot be separated from fire, it is impossible to tell it apart from Him. Samkara argues that liberation is attainable in this life. What we mean by this is jivanmukti, or liberation achieved while one is still alive. A "jivanmukta" is a man who, while physically present in this world, is able to rise above all duality, distinction, and ambition. Although the jivanmukta is physically present, he ceases to identify with his physical form. When one has complete understanding of Brahman, they experience embodied liberation. But the corpse doesn't go up in smoke right away. In the face of Brahman's flawless comprehension, nothing can stand but the unseen forces of karma that have built up throughout this life. The zenith of human existence, known as videhamukti (bodyless liberation), occurs when a person lets go of their unpleasant physical form and, having fulfilled all of their karmic obligations, is no longer eligible for reincarnation. With its bonds severed, the liberated soul becomes indistinguishable from everyone else. In addition to liberation from reincarnation and karma, it attains bliss and tranquility. It destroys the karma that has built up and prevents it from building up further. Discovering the truth of Vedanta does not eliminate the power of strongly held ideas in this material world. The only way to gradually eliminate them is to consistently meditate on the truth and live in line with it. Upon achieving liberation, the teacher who has realized Brahman or achieved Brahma-jñāna says to the seeker, "Thou art Brahman," when erroneous beliefs fade away and trust in the Vedic truths solidifies. Then, after much contemplation, he comes to an immediate realization of the truth as "Aharn Brahmasmi," or "I am the Brahman." In this way, the self becomes conscious of its oneness with Brahman. A self-aware subject and a self-luminous substance, the self is a paradox in and of itself. It appears without prior knowledge and is self-conscious about it. The substance of dharmabhutajnana is what can enlarge and contract. The self-aware knows not only the things themselves but also the objects through which their own knowledge manifests. The object may display knowledge, but it cannot know anything on its own. There is knowledge for oneself. The self is unique among entities in that it can know both itself and its object, even if it can only reveal itself through knowledge and not the object itself. (Kathuria, R., 2019).

A person's sense of self-identity is fundamental to their identity. No need to strive for independence would exist if this were not the case. Both the bound and free states of the soul preserve its jnata, its nature as a knowing subject. An additional active agent, or karta, is the self. Since it is the object of its activity, the soul bears the consequences of its deeds. This is why this is the case. Having the power to act is not necessarily indicative of really doing so. As long as karma keeps them attached to bodies, their actions are mainly predictable. However, once they are free, their will alone can fulfil their wishes (samkalpad eva). A person's fundamental qualities do not include consciousness and knowledge. Yes, it is correct. A person's knowledge is their whole being. Essence is the most basic and irreplaceable quality of knowledge. Knowledge remains and is always one's own, even in trancelike states or deep sleep. When we are sound asleep, we don't wake up since we don't have



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anything important to say. Knowledge, in essence, is both infinite and pervasive. Because karmas conceal the self's knowledge, it can only act in a restricted manner while enslaved. Upon attaining liberation, the ego becomes all-encompassing as all karmas are eradicated and knowledge is unimpeded. When a liberated soul's dharma bhutajnana is returned to its original condition and karmic obstacles are removed, it gains omniscience. Therefore, despite its atomic size, the soul possesses limitless knowledge. The self assumes the roles of drasta (seer), karta (doer), and bhokta (enjoyer) when it identifies with a psycho-physical body and participates in material pursuits, relishing the joy. Both bhoktrtva (the power of delight) and karttrtva (the power of agency) are created in the empirical condition and are not intrinsic to the actual self. In its actual, eternal, transcendental form, the self is not an actor nor a consumer. Avyakta is another name for the self because it is imperceptible to the senses. It is called acintya, which means "unimaginable," since it defies definition by the discursive mind but may be understood by the mind that has been cleansed via sravana, manana, and nididhyasana. (Li, R., 2018).

The individual self, according to Ramanuja, is all-pervasive because it is so subtle that it can penetrate all substances, both conscious and unconscious. It can't be infinite, as it's a part of Brahman, the one and only thing with infinite potential. Since it is not limitless, in Ramanuja's opinion, it is atomic, or infinitely small. The soul is like a physical thing composed of parts: it can be easily destroyed if it lacks even one of the three dimensions necessary for its existence—the medium dimension. In addition, if it weren't atomic, it couldn't exit the body when it died and enter the womb of another creature for the next birth. A soul is thus an atom. Although the self is atomic, its dharmabhutajnana, or attributive knowledge, can permeate the entire body, much like a drop of sandalwood paste scents the entire body. As a result, the self is not limited to a certain location when experiencing pleasure or pain. Ramanuja makes reference to three types of souls. The first category consists of limitless eternal souls, also known as nitya mukta. Living in Vaikuntha (heaven), they are undamaged by karma and are constantly surrounded by God. Sesa and Garuda are two examples of beings with everlasting souls. The second category includes ethereal beings that were enslaved in the past but were liberated through dedication, action, and understanding (mukta). The third category consists of bound souls, or baddha, who are constantly reborn and circling the earth. Superhuman, human, animal, and stationary/immobile spirits are the four types of travelers in samsara. (Dimkov, P.R., 2020).

Divine sovereignty and human freedom are two of Ramanuja's central concerns in his worldview, which he uses to great effect. No soul can exist apart from God; God creates good and evil, gives souls bodies, gives them agency over those bodies, and decides whether they are free or enslaved. It is not God's fault that people are in agony and suffering; rather, it is man's responsibility because he has the power to do good or evil. It would seem that human free will limits God's absoluteness. Having free will means that spirits can do things that go against God's plan. No god can be truly



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absolute if he is bound to follow the rules of karma in everything he does. To sidestep this issue, Ramanuja says that God is ultimately to blame for everyone's actions. But since God's character is revealed via the rules that control his deeds, this cannot be Calvinism. Instead of allowing the soul to do good or evil acts according to his whims, God exhibits his consistency of nature by acting in line with the rule of karma. If the law of karma exists apart from God, then the absoluteness of God is brought into question. Someone has misunderstood the Hindu view of God if they say that karma philosophy must be abandoned to keep God free. The law of karma is a manifestation of God's will. The order of karmadhyaksah is established by God, who is the controller of karma. To some extent, the law reflects God's nature; hence, it stands to reason that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. Some argue that God may choose to forgo suspending the law of karma, but He doesn't, proving that karma is not autonomous from God. The moral code is an eternal expression of His righteous will, and because He has pledged to uphold it, He permits evil that He could otherwise prevent. The inner ruler constantly takes into account the voluntary effort that drives a man's actions. He has no desire to disrupt His own laws or the global plan. God does not wish to be intrusive, even if He is present on Earth. It stands to reason that adrsta, or the benefits and drawbacks accruing from past actions, influences the achievements of the individual self. But adrsta can't do its job without a conscious actor, like God, guiding it since it's an unconscious principle. Since he rules over all, Isvara, also known as God, is the object of devotion, and the worshipper is the self. Achieving sayujya, or everlasting communion with God, and continuing to serve Him eternally, is the goal of every free person. Since the ego and Brahman are fundamentally different, Ramanuja argues that Samkara is mistaken in his belief that they are one and the same. Each human soul is equal to, but distinct from, the universal soul, Vishnu, according to Ramanuja's qualified non-dualistic theory (Visistadvaita). In contrast to the limited, atomic, and flawed ego, Brahman is timeless, everywhere, and flawless. In the Upanishads, Brahman and the self are considered to be identical; the only difference is that the latter is governed from within by Isvara. In Ramanuja's view, two distinct or identical entities cannot be identified; rather, identification can only exist between different forms of the same entity. When we say, 'This is that Devadatt'a, the judgment asserts the identity of two complexes—the 'this,' i.e., Devadatta seen at present, and the 'that,' i.e., Devadatta seen in the past. The person seen at present and the person seen in the past differ in their meanings because the person occupies different positions at different times, yet both refer to the same person, Devadatta. Similarly, the Upanisadic saying 'tat tvam asi'—'that thou art'—means the two complexes 'that and 'thou are identical, though they have distinct meanings, yet they refer to the same substance. That signifies God in the form of the omniscient and omnipotent Creator of the world, and 'thou signify God as the inner self of the jiva. The identity spoken of here is, therefore, between God endowed with certain qualifications and God endowed with some other qualifications, i.e., between two states of the same reality of Brahman. In other words, this identity is one of two qualified states of the same entity—visistasya aikyam. Though co-eternal with Brahman, the self is devoid of any separate



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existence; they are related to Brahman in both the causal state and the effect state as its inner body, while the world forms the outer body. (Ackeren, M.V., Archer, A., 2018).

The jiva is not one with God because it is different from Him in its essential character. It is said to be a part (amsa) of Brahman, but it cannot be a part cut out of the whole because Brahman admits no divisions. According to Ramanuja, the souls are parts of Brahman in the sense of visesanas, qualified forms or modes of Brahman, just as light and color are regarded as parts of fire and jar, respectively, in which they inherit as attributes; similarly, the self is regarded as a part of Brahman to which it is related as a quality or mode. The self, like an attribute, cannot exist apart from Brahman. In dissolution, it merges into Brahman in its subtle, unmanifested form (the causal state), and in creation, it manifests as Brahman (the effect state). In both states, the self and Brahman are inseparable; the former forms the body or qualification of the latter.

CONCLUSION

Ramanuja admits that knowledge is the immediate cause for liberation, but this knowledge is real knowledge (tattvajnana) and not ordinary verbal knowledge. Otherwise, all those who studied Vedanta would obtain liberation. The real knowledge is identified by Ramanuja with the highest bhakti, or devotion, which is obtained by prapatti, or self-surrender, and by constant remembrance of God as the only object of devotion (dhruva smrtih), which is also called pure meditation (upasana) or dhyana or nididhyasana (concentrated contemplation). It is very important to note that constant meditation itself is not the highest bhakti (which is the same thing as real jhana) but only a means to realize it. Enjoined actions (karma) and ordinary knowledge (jhana) are means to realize ordinary bhakti, which may be identified with prapatti, or flinging oneself on the absolute mercy of God, and with constant remembrance and contemplation of God called smrti, upasana, or nididhyasana. This ordinary bhakti, which means prapatti and upasana, is itself a means to realize the highest bhakti, which is pure jhana, or immediate intuitive knowledge of God, which is the direct cause of liberation and which dawns only by the grace (prasada) of God. Liberation is not the merging of the individual soul into the Absolute, but only the direct intuitive realization by the individual soul of its own essential nature as a mode of God. This realization presupposes two things: firstly, the utter destruction of karmas by which the soul acquires its innate purity, and secondly, the dawning of the divine graces that transform constant meditation into the immediate intuition of God. This system is known as visistadvaita, or monism of the One who is qualified by the presence of the many parts. God is like an infinite ocean, and we are like creatures that live in the ocean. The world and all its creatures are just as real as God, and nothing exists outside of God because matter and soul are both within God.



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