

Whence Adhyasa?

A Discussion from the Advaitin List

compiled by S. Venkatraman

July 2003

Message 146

From: S Venkatraman

Date: Tue Jul 22, 2003 1:15 pm

Subject: Re: Non-Dualism vs. Qualified Non-Dualism
(Atmachaitanya108 discussion)

Namaste Ranjeet,

RANJEET

I had send an off-the-list mail to Shri Sadanadaji and this was his reply... "There is an excellent book by John Grimes which is entitled 'The Seven Untenables'. Each one requires an exhaustive analysis. Professor Grimes gives an excellent analysis. "

If any of the list members have this book, please shed some light...

VENKAT - M

I have the book. In fact its title is 'The Seven Great Untenables'. It is published by Motilal Banarsidas in India. Unfortunately I still have to read it. Soon after I bought the book, there was an excellent exchange of messages on the Advaitin list sparked off by a simple question which Dennis asked about the locus of Avidya. What followed was an excellent analysis of the Advaita - Vishishtadvaita polemics (the subject matter of Grime's book) by Atmachaitanya108. I have copied them all into a word file which I will forward to you and Benjamin tomorrow. (It's on the hard disk of my laptop.) I would request Benjamin to obtain the necessary permissions from the moderators of Advaitin, convert the file into PDF format and upload it on our files section. One day I will surely return to the book; but for now at least I am quite satisfied with the rebuttal presented in these messages by Atmachaitanya108. (For a long time it was big mystery on the Advaitin list as to who Atmachaitanya108 was till one day he told us all that he is an American who left America in the Sixties as a seventeen year old with nothing but Ramana's book 'Who Am I?'. After two years at Ramanashram, he became the disciple of Swami Dayananda Saraswathi. A few years thereafter he became the disciple of Swami Satchidanendra Saraswathi who wrote the magnum opus 'The Method of Vedanta'. He remained his disciple till the Swamiji passed away and now spends his time teaching Vedanta in India - 'Where in India?', nobody knows. Just as he mysteriously appeared on the Advaitin list apparently from no where, one day he disappeared. The reason for this rather long note on him is because in my opinion if any one can definitively answer Benjamin's questions on Advaita, he is most likely to be that person.)

Regards,

Venkat - M

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@d...>

Date: Mon Feb 18, 2002 3:09 pm

Subject: Whence adhyAsa?

Apologies if this question has been covered before. I know we have discussed the topic - at length during Sadananda's excellent posts on the BrahmasUtra - and I summarised the notes relating to adhyAsa specifically but I cannot immediately find any answer.

I am currently (re-)reading Douglas Fox's Dispelling Illusion, whose subject is the alAtashAnti of gauDapAda (the 4th prakaraNa of the mANDUkya upanishad). Referring to MU 2.12, he points out gauDapAda's claim that the 'self-luminous Atma, by means of its own mAyA, imagines within itself all objects and experiences'. He goes on to say that shaMkara rejected this because it meant that Brahman either actively created everything or was itself a victim, neither of which would be acceptable, knowing Brahman to be perfect and unchanging etc. ShaMkara therefore (says Fox) proposed his adhyAsa theory but is this any more acceptable?

As Fox says, it seems then that one of the following must be true:

- a) Brahman does the superimposing.
- b) adhyAsa is an 'independent' process outside of Brahman.
- c) we ourselves do it.

Since 'we' are ourselves a superimposition, if the third option is the case, it would be a superimposition superimposing. Who would produce the first superimposition? Since Brahman is infinite, how could something exist independently outside it? Thus the second option does not seem viable. If the first were the case, it would mean that Brahman were creating and therefore active, which means change. So that cannot be the case either. Is there another accepted answer?

Or is this one of those questions to which the answer is anirvachanIya (not to be mentioned - i.e. inexplicable)?

sukhaM chara,

Dennis

From: "atmachaitanya108" <stadri@a...>

Date: Thu Feb 21, 2002 2:01 am

Subject: Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Dear Dennis,

Your question on Adhyasa is a very important one, and demands a satisfactory answer. You are absolutely correct that neither of the misguided attempts by Warwick or Madathil Nair have adequately answered your question. Nor can you possibly feel content with your own proposed solution: that perhaps "this is one of those questions to which the answer is anirvachiniya (not to be mentioned-i.e. inexplicable)." For if that were case our Advaitic position would be reduced to merely an article of blind faith, and would be no better than any other theological dogma.

You go on to say that according to Douglas Fox, "Shankara rejected Gaudapadas claim that "the Self -Luminous Self... Imagines within itself all objects and experiences."(MU2-12), and proposed his own Adhyasa theory. But is that any more acceptable?" This leads us to the further issue of having to decide if Shankara was a true follower of Guadapada, or did he deviate from the 5th century sage, and head out on a new path of his own having recognized the defects in

Gualdapadas teachings?

To restate the problem as formulated by Fox:

A) Brahman does the superimposing (Gaudapadas position)

The problem: Brahman becomes active and changeable.

B) Adhyasa is an independent' process outside Brahman.

The problem: Brahman is no longer One without a second.

C) We ourselves do it. (Shankaras position)

The problem: Who would produce the first superimposition?

(I.e. the defect of an infinite regress and if Adhyasa is defined as MUTUAL SUPERIMPOSITION it would lead to nihilism-see below).

In addition if we accept C) (Shankaras position) then we have an another problem that must be addressed concerning Adhyasa; A problem similar to Fox's 3 alternatives, and that has been clearly articulated by the great Japanese scholar Mayeda in his introduction to his book , 'A Thousand Teachings by Shankara". He writes,

"3A; A Theoretical defect in Avidya (Adhyasa)

"Certainly the most crucial problem which Shankara left for his followers is that of Avidya. If the concept of Avidya is logically analyzed, it would lead the Vedanta philosophy toward dualism (Fox's point B) or nihilism (Fox's point C) and uproot its fundamental position. As we have seen Avidya is the mutual superimposition of the Atman and non-Atman. If so, Avidya would come to be logically untenable.

Shankara himself is aware of this fact and points it out in the pupil's question to his teacher: 'Is it not experienced that the thing which is superimposed upon something else, through Avidya does not exist in the later-for example, silver does not exist in the mother-of-pearl nor a snake in a rope, Likewise if the body and Atman are always mutually superimposed.. then they cannot exist in each other at any time...this being the case it would follow as a result that neither the body nor Atman exist. And this is not acceptable as this is the theory of the nihilists. For this reason the body and Atman are not mutually superimposed. (Upadeshasahasri 2-2-555)" Mayeda continues "Thus the teacher does not give any definite answer to the point raised by his pupil...As far as I know, Shankara's own pupils did not take up this problem; It was Sarvajnamuni who first tried to treat it. In his Samksepariraka he has further developed the concept of avidya on the basis of the ideas of his teacher and Padmapada and tried to solve the problem left unsolved by Shankara.

The 'Whence (cause) of Adhyasa' According to Post Shankara Vedantins

In Sarvajnaatman's opinion Avidya is beginningless (anadi SS1-454) it is not simply a negative entity like the absence of knowledge (or wrong knowledge-Adhyasa) but a positive entity (bhavarupa, SS 1-320-322) He identifies it with Maya(SS 2-190) ..and it is the cause of Adhyasa."

This, Dennis, has been the solution of every Vedantin from the time of Padmapada to the present day. It is called 'Mula Avidya' (the

same as Maya, Shakti. Prakriti, Made up of three Gunas) and is said to be the "Whence - the cause - of Adhyasa.. When I asked Swami Dayananda Sarasvati why we wake up from deep sleep, because in that state there is no Adhyasa, no misconceptions?, his reply was that because the Mula Avidya exists in that state, and if it didn't, we would never wake up! But that is no solution at all and it opens Advaitins to Fox's second charge that, if Avidya is a beginningless positive entity, that exists in all states including deep sleep, then Brahman can't be one without a second.

The post-Shankara Vedantins were well aware of this great challenge to and seeming defect of Advaita Vedanta. Many books were written to defend this untenable theory of Mula Avidya (i.e Vimuktatmas'. Ista Siddhhi , Sri Harsha's Khandana Khandana etc.etc.). But it is in fact undefendable. And all the Vaishnava Acharyas knew it, and used this Mula Avidya doctrine to defeat the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta.

I submit for your review the Vaishnava critic of Mula Avidya as used by Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha, and other 'Qualified Non-Dualists' and 'Dualists' after the time of Shankara. I do this because it is important to see that the post Shankara Vedantins attempted answers to your very pertinent question 'Whence Adhyasa' utterly fails, and that if no answer is possible, then Advaita Vedanta should be rejected as an indefensible, irrational and dogmatic outlook on life.

The Vaisnava Vedanta Critique Of the Advaita Vedantin's theory of Avidya/Maya

The Problem: All schools of Vedanta agree that there is One Supreme Reality. Universal experience testifies to the existence of a world.

The question then arises, how did this world come about? It is the answer to this question that differentiates the Vaisnava Vedantins from Advaita Vedantins in a very fundamental way.

The difficulty the Advaitin has is that he holds the Absolute Reality to be ever free from all qualities (Nirguna) and Non Dual. How could the world arise from such an entity? The Advaita Vedantins answer to this problem is as follows. He posits a principle which he indiscriminately refers to as AVIDYA (IGNORANCE), MULA AVIDYA (ROOT IGNORANCE), MAYA (ILLUSION), PRAKRITI (NATURE), SHAKTI (POWER), AVYAKTA (UNMANIFEST). This principle is a "Bava Rupa" it actually exists in a very peculiar way. It is Tri Guna Atmaka (MADE UP OF THREE GUNAS). This Avidya is ANADI ANNANTAM (BEGININGLESS AND ENLESS).

This Avidya has two powers: AVARANA SHAKTI (THE POWER TO COMPLETELY COVER THE ABSOLUTE REALITY) and VIKSHEPA SHAKTI (THE POWER TO PROJECT THE UNREAL WORLD). It is this Ignorance that is said to be the cause of the dualistic world as well as transmigratory existence (Samsara) as well as Adhyasa-the misconception of superimposing the Self and the Non-Self. This Ignorance is neither describable as existent nor as non-existent (sat-asat anirvachiniya) nor can it said to be either the same as the Absolute nor different from the Absolute. This Mula

Ignorance exists in all the common states of experience, including deep sleep. If it did not exist in deep sleep, the Advaitin argues there would be no cause to account for waking up! It is only by accepting this principle of Avidya that we can account for the appearance of the world from the Non Dual Quality less Absolute. This Ignorance can only be destroyed by the attainment of the Knowledge of the Absolute, this destroys both Ignorance and its effects--Adhyasa and the world and Samsara.

((That the above depiction of the Advaita Vedantins 'theory' of Ignorance/Maya is not merely a straw dog set up by the latter Vedantic Achhaaryas, (Baskara, Ramanuga, Madhva, Nibarka, Chaitanya and Vallabh) so as to make it easy prey for criticism, can be seen by an appeal to the writings of the great Advaitic Acharyas. Shakaracharya describes this doctrine of Mula Avidya and its identity with Maya and Prakriti in the most famous independent work ascribed to him, Viveka Chudamani. His direct disciple Padmapada elaborates on the doctrine of his teacher in his Panchapadika, ie his commentary on Shankaras commentary on the first four Sutras of the Brahma Sutra Bhashya . The two later branches of Advaita ,the Vivarana and the Bhamati schools, (who by this time had to respond to the criticisms of the Vedantic Acharyas against this Avidya Maya Vada (The Theory Of Indeterminable Illusory Ignorance))had all accepted the truth of this Mula Avidya. In fact Vimuktatmas' 'Ista Siddhi' is a sustained refutation of the criticisms of the 'Maya Ignorance' theory. And one can easily conclude that by the time Vacaspati Mishra composed the 'Bhamati, Baskara's Beda Abeda school had acquired wide currency at the expense of the Advaita philosophy. For we see in the Bhamati great efforts being made on the part of Vacaspati to answer the objections of Baskara against this Root Ignorance Theory. Sarvajamuni, Vidyananda (pancadasi). Sri Harsha, and every famous Vedantic writer has held this exact view. Not only is this true of the past, but every modern day Advaita Vedantin (in the orthodox sense - Swami Dayananda, Swami Chinmayananda, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Shivananda) has accepted and propounded this doctrine of 'Indescribable Ignorance' in one form or another. In 1984 the Sringeri Shankara Mutt, one of the highest authorities on the doctrinal issues concerning Advaita Vedanta, issued a book dedicated solely to upholding the truth that Ignorance in Vedanta does not mean merely 'not knowing, 'doubting', or 'misconceiving' as it is commonly understood in the world but rather a unique type of Indeterminable Ignorance (which, it appears, only the Advaitins know about, in as much as no other system of thought Eastern or Western have acknowledged such a principle). It is this SAME Avidya , this doctrine of Maya, that is the target of refutation by the Vaisnava Acharyas, and not a doctrine which they themselves have imagined!)))

The response of the Vaisnava Vedantins to the above

theory of "Mula Avidya Maya" is that it is 1) opposed to reason (yukti viruddha), 2) opposed to universal experience (sarva lukika anubava viruddha) and 3) opposed to the scriptures (shastra viruddha) and therefore should not be accepted by those who are striving for the highest goal attainable (parama purusharta). The following is an elucidation of these three criticisms:

1) Opposed to reason:

a) We would like to ask the Advaitin exactly where does this positive principle of Ignorance reside? It either exists outside of the Absolute or within the Absolute, as there are no other alternatives. If the Advaitin takes the first option then he must abandon the idea that the Absolute is Non Dual. If he takes the second option then he must abandon the idea that the absolute is without qualities (And if this Mula Avidya were to reside in the Absolute, since this is the greatest Ignorance of all- as compared with the ignorance of any particular individual (Tula Avidya)-it would result in making the Absolute the biggest ignoramus of all!).

b) To say that there is an entity whose nature is neither existent nor non-existent is contradictory. As these are mutually opposed qualities. The existence of one attribute necessarily implies the absence of its opposite. Just as motion and being stationary are not attributes that can be ascribed to a single object simultaneously, so too it is not possible to conceive of a positive entity called Avidya, which is neither existent nor non-existent.

c) How exactly this positive entity, Avidya, can have the capacity to cover the Absolute which is infinite is not something the mind can conceive, and therefore, this Avidya/Maya is nothing more than an article of faith, an unreasonable dogma that the Advaitin asks us to accept, even in face of the fact that it cannot be rationally demonstrated.

d) This Avidya is claimed to be beginningless and endless. It is not reasonable to suppose that a beginningless entity could ever come to an end. That which has a beginning will certainly have an end, that which has no beginning can never have an end!

e) Ignoring the above criticism, the Advaitin nevertheless claims that this Beginningless Avidya/Maya and its effects can be destroyed by Knowledge of the Absolute.(Brahmavid Brahma bhavati). Yet this too (just like his imagination of Mula Avidya) is no more than a dogmatic article of faith. How so? In the world it is NEVER seen that knowledge ever creates or destroys any positive existing thing. In fact, all that knowledge ever does and all that it can do is to reveal the object of knowledge as it is. When we get the correct knowledge of a pot, for example, that knowledge neither creates nor destroys the pot. It merely reveals it as it is. (To quote a nyaya- Vidya jnapakum na karakum- knowledge reveals the object it does not create anything) To say that Knowledge has the capacity to destroy a positive entity, Avidya, that is made up of the three gunas is not reasonable,. At best, knowledge could possibly reveal this Ignorance as it is ,

but it could never destroy it. Therefore since the Advaitin stakes his all on the necessity of Knowledge to the exclusion of every other means for the removal of this Ignorance. And since it has been demonstrated that Knowledge never destroys anything positive including Avidya, (Nor Maya, Nor Prakriti, Nor Avyakta etc-for these are no more than synonyms for Avidya according to the Advaitin.)!! It follows from this that even if one were to hypothetically accept the truth of the Advaitins' Mula Avidya, which is claimed to be the root cause of samsara, there is no way that anyone could destroy it -including the Advaitin -whether by knowledge or by any other means,(bhakti, karma yoga, meditation, etc) . And therefore the Advaitin has in fact disqualified himself for the attainment of the Highest Goal by accepting this Maya doctrine.

f) The Advaitin might retort that the knowledge that he is talking about is not any worldly knowledge, which he grants does not destroy anything, but a special type of knowledge that is gained in Nirvikalpa Samadhi, and it is this knowledge which has the capacity to destroy the beginningless Mula Avidya. This reply has several defects. Since this Nirvikalpa state is not a universal one, those who have not yet attained that state will have to take it as an article of faith that by attaining a particular state, at a particular time, at a particular place, that has a beginning and an end this will produce a knowledge which has the capacity to destroy, forever, this infinite Power/Shakti - Ignorance that has covered the Absolute from beginningless time. So there is no rational support for one who has not yet achieved it. The next defect arises when the Advaitin claims that the truth of Mula Avidya and its nature and its effects, as well as the fact that it is destroyed by the knowledge obtained in the Nirvikalpa state is 'proved' by those who have actually experienced that state. In other words, he claims that we know all this on the basis of the testimony of those who have experienced that state This reply can never be convincing for the very reason that if in fact a person attained this 'special' Knowledge in the Nirvikalpa state and thereby destroyed this Mula Avidya. There would then be no person left to give testimony to Mula Avidya nor any world left to hear that testimony! This follows rigorously from the logic that the sole cause for the whole universe as well as the individuals suffering in it, is nothing but the effect of Mula Avidya and this is said to have been destroyed.

The defect of invoking some private mystical state as well as the testimony of those who are supposed to have experienced those states, so as to substantiate the truth of something that can not be rationally defended, is that ANYTHING can be held to be proved by an appeal to that state. It is a passing strange that the state appealed to by the Advaitin, to defend the dogma that Mula Avidya can be destroyed by the Knowledge attained in Nirvikalpa Samadhi, is the very same state that Patanjali invokes to proclaim the truth of Duality. And even though Patanjali may be supposed to have attained this mystical private state (considering the fact that he wrote the

definitive book on the subject-the Yoga Sutras), he never conceived of, nor even hinted at this dogma of Mula Avidya. For Patanjali the only ignorance was subjective ignorance and when an individual removed his subjective ignorance, then he alone would attain Kaivalyam. But the world would not be destroyed nor become unreal thereby, nor would the subjective ignorance of all the other real individuals be destroyed. Thus by appealing to the same mystical state (and there can be no distinctions, by definition, with regard to the actual state of Nirvikalpa) we have two different reports about the nature of reality as well as the nature of ignorance (either a Cosmic Principle which accounts of the appearance of the world -Advaita Darshana-or a subjective misconception which merely accounts for only one individual's suffering and on the destruction of which there is an end of suffering for that individual alone-Yoga Darshana)! This should serve as a warning for those who would like to establish their views on the basis of an individual mystical state!

g) There is no empirical means by which this Mula Avidya can be demonstrated in as much as the senses cannot objectify this Mula Avidya, nor can it be inferred in as much as there is no previous cognition of it as associated with something else, so that it could now be inferred.

h) Because Ignorance is opposed to Knowledge and since the Advaitin claims that the nature of the absolute is Knowledge, how can Ignorance reside in the Absolute?

i) When the Advaitin says that this Mula Avidya must necessarily be inferred because without that inference we could never explain the appearance of duality, what he is really saying is that in order to uphold his cherished theory that Reality is Non-Dual and Qualitiless, he is going to assume, to hypothesize this Mula Avidya, even though it is not rationally sustainable and, in the face of the above, an irrational doctrine.

2) Opposed to Universal Experience:

When the Advaitin claims that the world is the effect of this hypothetical principle of Ignorance and is therefore unreal he contradicts the experience of all individuals. That the world is real is proved by every sense organ. We see the world, we hear the world, we touch the world, this is the proof that the world exists. As opposed to this evidence which is universal, if one were to assert that that the world is unreal" because it is the effect of this hypothetical Ignorance", it would be like someone claiming that fire is cold, and that this is so is because.... and then he gives you the reasoning to substantiate his claim. Would this reasoning be acceptable or convincing? When the fact that fire is hot is a universally accepted experiential fact, testified to by the senses directly, to say that it is cold and to give the reasons for it being so, is no more than sophistry and can never lead to conviction. Nor can the Advaita Vedantin fall back on the support of the Holy Scriptures to support his view, for even if a hundred Srutis were to

proclaim that fire is cold, that statement can never be taken in its literal sense and must be understood either metaphorically or as a viddhi/command of the scripture to superimpose the idea of cold on the fire and never that fire is in fact cold. This is so because all Vedantins accept that the Scriptures are a 'means of knowledge' and one 'means of knowledge' is never seen to contradict another 'means of knowledge' The eyes never contradict the ears, and the scriptures never contradict the sense organs. They each have their own sphere of operation and the scriptures only reveal what is not accessible to the sense organs. Only if both the sense organs and the scriptures were thought to both reveal the same object could it then be said that there is a possibility of contradiction, but this is not the case.

It is for this very same reason the Advaitin cannot offer as evidence the mystical state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi to confirm his view that 'the world is unreal, it being the outcome of Ignorance'. For what exactly is this state of Nirvikalpa? It is a state in which one is no longer aware of any distinctions, no objects and no subject aware of any objects. When a person then comes out of this state and is once again aware of the world and of himself as a subject cognizing that world, how can he claim that the world that he is now perceiving is unreal on the basis of that Nirvikalpa experience? In fact we all have the experience of not being aware of the subject or object in deep sleep, but no one coming out of that state believes that the world is unreal or that an indescribable Avidya causes it. How can the absence of the experience of the world prove its unreality when the senses, (even of the one who had Nirvikalpa or sleep), prove the world's existence now, and allow us to correctly infer its existence even during the time someone was in Nirvikalpa Samadhi or sleep?

3) Opposed to the Scriptures:

The Advaitin admits that in the Upanishads, (scriptures which he himself considers to be of the highest authority), one does find two types of texts—those that describe the Absolute as free from qualities and Non Dual and those that describe the Absolute with qualities. But the Advaitin argues that only the first of the above mentioned texts describes the true nature of the Absolute, and are therefore of primary and final import, whereas the other set of texts are merely of secondary and interpretable import. It is based on this arbitrary distinction, (in as much as this distinction is not to be found in the Upanishads themselves), that the Advaitin claims that the secondary description of Absolute (Brahman) with qualities is the outcome of Mula Avidya or Maya. The only problem is he has not yet demonstrated the truth of this Mula Avidya, the existence of which is necessary if his arguments about the secondary import of those texts which describe the Absolute with qualities are to be considered valid. Actually this type of argument against the Advaita Vedantin, while correct, is not even necessary, for the truth of the matter is as follows; If one were to go through all the Upanishads very

carefully and then proceed to meticulously analyze the 700 slokas of the Bhagavad Gita and then to carefully analyse the 555 sutras of the Brahma Sutras (ie: the Prastana Traya- the three canonical works on which all Advaitins must base their viewpoint) one would not find one mention, one hint, one allusion to this purely scholastic doctrine of an 'Indiscernible power which cannot be said to be existent or non-existent and which covers the Absolute and projects an unreal world'! In fact it is much more likely that this doctrine of Avidya Maya, rather than being a teaching that is faithful to the Upanishads, is a teaching borrowed from the Buddhists who are well known for proclaiming the illusory nature of the world. Furthermore we have not only this negative evidence to disprove the scriptural validity of the doctrine of Mula Avidya as the cause of the world, we also have the positive evidence to demonstrate that Mula Avidya is not the cause of any world real or unreal. The Sruti says "In the Beginning there was the Absolute alone, it desired...;let me be many' and it created the world." Here we are given in the clearest of terms that the cause of the world is the desire of the Absolute and not any inferred indiscernible cosmic force called Ignorance.

In summary, since all the Advaitic arguments for the existence of Mula Avidya Maya have been demonstrated to be opposed to reason, experience and scripture, unless these criticisms can be shown to be false, all those who are true seekers of truth, who desire liberation from all suffering and yearn to attain the highest bliss, should reject the Advaita system completely for like a stack of cards, without the acceptance of Mula Avidya the whole edifice of Advaita falls to the ground.

So, Dennis, in summary, I conclude that if you are really a jijnasu, you must get a satisfactory answer to this question. Perhaps some of the other members of this list will make an attempt. I plan to address your question ((and yes there is an answer) in the course of my attempt to show, from a different angle, how SHASTRA IS THE ONLY PRAMANA FOR ATMAVIDYA.

Hari Om

Atmachaitanya

From: K Kathirasan NCS <kkathir@n...>

Date: Thu Feb 21, 2002 12:49 pm

Subject: RE: [advaitin] Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Namaste Atmachaitanyaji

I would also like to bring to your attention that the existent Advaita Vedanta tradition doesn't accept the views of yours (and your teacher Swamiji Satchitanandendra Saraswati's) with regards to avidya or mulaavidya.

This particular point and many other views of Swamiji Satchitanandendra Saraswati are refuted in an unpublished work by Martha Doherty (a disciple of Swamiji Dayananda Saraswati) using the works of Shankara, Gaudapada & Sureswara (the same teachers whom Swamiji Satchitanandendra Saraswati considers to be the only authentic teachers of Vedanta). I beg you to purchase a copy of this brilliant 324 page Phd dissertation written by her

(read more about her at this site: <http://www.integralphilosophy.org/doherty.htm> & the link is also available there to purchase the dissertation). Her dissertation covers the views of traditional scholars and modern alike.

Thank you.

From: "Warwick Wakefield" <nomistake@o...>

Date: Thu Feb 21, 2002 4:04 pm

Subject: Re: [advaitin] Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Dear Sri Atmachaitanya

But let's look at some of the arguments you put forth.

You claim that the Maya, or Mula Avidya, is an indefensible theory, and that all the Vaishnava Acharyas knew it and used this doctrine to defeat the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta. So let's go through it, point by point.

A) We would like to ask the Advaitin exactly where does this positive principle of Ignorance reside?

Where does Maya reside? It arises in Consciousness. It is analogous to the arising of dreams in the night. Where do those dreams come from? They come from the mind. While they are happening they have a form of reality. When awakening happens they are seen to be only relatively real. Something that is, as Francis Lucille puts it, subject to such a radical discontinuity, cannot be real. Not absolutely real. And what we call everyday life is also seen to be a dream, or Maya, when it is seen who "I" really is. Even if it is seen only as a glimpse, it cannot be doubted that what "I" is, is that in which the appearances arise. But it is known then that the absolute "I" has no attributes of its own - it is the background against which everything that is in time and space happens, but it is not itself in time and space. It is like the silence within which sounds arise, sounds that do not destroy but only add depth to the silence. From the viewpoint of the imagined "person" it might appear that the Absolute is, to use your words, "the biggest ignoramus of them all" for wanting to entertain this Maya. But if you can remember how it was when you were a child, when you delighted in games of make-believe, you might be able to see that "playful" is a much better word to use than "ignoramus".

B) To say that there is an entity whose nature is neither existent nor non-existent is contradictory.

Oh dear! You really chose a bad metaphor this time! Being in motion and being stationary are qualities that are attributed to the one object all the time. Sir Isaac Newton believed, for a time, that there was such a thing as absolute motion. But since the time of Einstein nobody does. Motion is always relative. In relation to the earth in which it stands a post might be considered to be stationary. But in relation to the centre of the earth it is considered to be circling around it at tremendous speed. And in relation to the sun it is moving at even greater speed. And dreams also can be considered to be both existent and non-existent.

C) How exactly this positive entity, Avidya, can have the capacity to cover the Absolute which is infinite is not something the mind can conceive, and therefore, this Avidya/Maya is nothing more than an article of faith, an unreasonable dogma that the Advaitin asks us to

accept, even in face of the fact that it can not be rationally demonstrated.

Again, Sri Atmachaitanya, it is usually the case that the character who I think I am in a night-dream has no idea that he is, in form and in every other attribute, a figment of the imagination, as are also all the other characters in the dream. Sometimes there are lucid dreams, where the dream continues but it is understood that it is a dream. This is a good pointer, by way of metaphor, to what is the case. But you are right to state that it is something that the mind cannot conceive. The conceptual function of the mind is to make images and representations of things, and there is only so far that it can go. The mind exists within consciousness, and while consciousness can perceive the mind, the mind cannot conceive consciousness.

You make a mistake, dear Atmachaitanya, to imagine that the point of the teachings is just to give an intellectual grasp of reality; the point of the teachings is to take the mind, the diligent mind, to the limit of the mind's capacity, after which, by Her grace, a jump can be taken, out of what you think you are into what you have always been.

D) This Avidya is claimed to be beginningless and endless...

From the point of view of the separate entity, it has a beginning, at birth, and an end, at death or at awakening. From the point of view of the Absolute it could well be beginningless and endless.

E) Ignoring the above criticism, the Advaitin nevertheless claims that this Beginningless Avidya/Maya and its effects can be destroyed by Knowledge of the Absolute. Yet this too is no more than a dogmatic article of faith. How so? In the world it is NEVER seen that knowledge ever creates or destroys any positive existing thing. In fact, all that knowledge ever does and all that it can do is to reveal the object of knowledge as it is.

Here again you are a bit out of date. In the world of quantum physics it has been established for a very long time that reality is dependent on the observer. Also, you seem to think that the world consists of material things that exist independently of consciousness. But no one has ever known anything independently of consciousness. Consciousness is the sine qua non of everything. When this is truly understood it is readily experienced that knowledge certainly does destroy the idea that there are "things" which exist independently of consciousness. And there is another aspect, too. Thoughts, ideas, hopes and fears, pains even, are nothing more than appearances in consciousness. And I can tell you from my own authority that it often happens that when those thoughts, pains etc are closely observed, or "surrendered to", they dissolve into formless being.

And now, to tell you the truth, I am tired of this conversation. The basic point is that all the arguments that you put forward leave consciousness out of the picture, or at least give it a peripheral role. In the computer world they have a phrase for it; "garbage in - garbage out." But in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of consciousness, by means of logic, consciousness has to be at the centre of every proposition with which you start.

And I have here in front of me the words of Sri Krishna Menon:

"Often we hear people discussing spiritual truth from the objective

standpoint, and resting content with theoretical knowledge. This is the result of pursuing dry and fruitless lines of thinking. An aspirant has nothing to gain from mere appreciatory or deprecatory discussion of the truths set forth in philosophical works. The idea of the Acharya was only that each should follow some line of spiritual thought which would help him to attain realization." For me, Sri Atmachaitanya, Advaita, and especially the idea of Maya, or Avidya, does the job very nicely. For you perhaps it doesn't. Maybe, for you, some other line of thought does it. In which case, go for it, and good luck.

Cheers

Warwick

From: "atmachaitanya108" <stadri@a...>

Date: Fri Feb 22, 2002 8:48 am

Subject: Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Dear K Kathirasan,

You say that the 'existent Advaita Vedanta tradition doesn't accept my views ' about 'Mula Avidya'. Absolutely correct. So what?

Are we going to determine truth by consensus of opinion? Perhaps we should take a vote, and if 50 Swamis say there is Mula Avidya, and only 2 say there is no Mula Avidya, shall we go with the majority?

The problem is so simple that it defies my imagination how anyone who has even the slightest capacity to think for themselves could possibly be seduced into thinking that :

Mula Avidya is an existing thing (Bhava Rupa),(i.e. It actually has an ontological status) but it can be destroyed by knowledge!

You don't need to be a great scholar, you don't need to wear orange robes, nor have a PhD in Sanskrit to acknowledge the indisputable fact that the only 'things' that knowledge can destroy are the 3-fold epistemological categories of: A) not knowing a thing (Avidya). B) Doubts about a thing (Samshaya) c) misconceptions about a thing (adhyasa).

If I am wrong, and you or anyone else, can cite just one example. one illustration, one conceivable instance whereby knowledge destroys, removes, alters, purifies or modifies, any 'actually existing thing', I would love to hear about it,

If you can't, then disregard any Swami who dogmatically claims that it can. (Especially a Swami unfamiliar with Heisenbergs' Uncertainty Principle)

If your confidence will be increased about the veracity of my claims by an appeal to an authority, then I put before you the great Shankara himself.

Please read Shankaras' introduction to his Brahma Sutras (Adhyasa Bashya). This is his most complete examination of the cause, nature, and effect of Avidya. Nowhere else in whole of his extensive writings has he examined this subject more completely. You will not find one allusion, one hint, that points us to the idea that Ignorance is a "beginless and endless existent 'thing' that is made up of three gunas and has the twofold power of covering the Absolute and projecting the world and has to be 'destroyed' by Knowledge.

In fact the sum and substance of his famous introduction to his Sutra Bhashya is this:

Atman, the real 'I' of each one of us, is the Witnessing Consciousness. That alone is really real according to Vedanta, since it is absolutely undeniable. The non-Self which is made up of the body, the senses and the mind is an unreal appearance, set up by ignorance or privation of knowledge. Now the human intellect has an innate natural tendency to project the non-real not-Self (Un-Atman) and confound the identity of the real and unreal whenever it functions. This mixing up of the real and the unreal and the delusion, which prompts the mind to submit itself to a mistaken transference of the mutual properties of the Self and the Non-Self, is what is called Avidya. This tendency is so natural to all mankind that no one suspects that he is under the influence of this primary ignorance, due to want of discrimination, when he talks of me and mine. It follows that this Avidya or Ignorance is finally wiped off as soon as one discriminates the real and the unreal and determines their true nature. This discrimination and determination of the true nature of these, is what is termed Vidya or knowledge.

"It is on the presupposition of this mutual superimposition of the Self and the non-self, called Avidya that all conventions of the means and objects of right knowledge-whether secular or sacred- proceed, as also all the shastras dealing with injunctions, prohibitions or final release" (Intro. SBh.)

This clarification of the concept of Avidya then, is a special contribution of Shankara to Vedanta. Nowhere else, in the whole range of Vedantic literature do we find this precision of thought which distinguishes this basic Ignorance, which is responsible for the whole process of human knowledge and activity---from the individual instances of the ignorance of objects in ordinary life. And let me once again add that there is not the slightest mention of the Mula Avidya here, which was concocted by the post Shankara tarkikas, and so easily refuted by the Vaishnava Acharyas.

Hari Om

Atmachaitanya

P.S. And yes, I have ordered Dr. M. Doherty's dissertation. It should arrive in a few days. Thank you.

From: K Kathirasan NCS <kkathir@n...>

Date: Fri Feb 22, 2002 9:33 am

Subject: RE: [advaitin] Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Namaste Atmachaitanyaji

Here is my reply with all due respects to you:

The traditional Advaita Vedanta tradition accepts that Vedantic teaching is something that is passed down from a teacher to a student forming an unbroken lineage. If that is so, then Swami Satchitanandendra's (henceforth I will refer to him as SS) views are nothing but a break in tradition, hence an asampradayavit. Of course, I am here specifically referring to his view that avidya is not present in sleep. And may I know sir, who is Swami Satchitanandendra's teacher? Is he a sampradayavit? As far as I know, SS

didn't even agree with his own teacher with regards to his views on avidya and also with the other major views of the Vedanta tradition.

I don't find the need to discuss any further on this matter as it is my 'opinion' that the views of SS are entirely his and not belonging to the Vedanta tradition. And this conviction arises after analysing the defects of his argument from the source I have stated previously (although I am yet to finish studying the dissertation). It is good that you have ordered the dissertation. Please study it to look at the various areas where SS may have overlooked.

I would also highly recommend this dissertation to all mumukshus.

Thank you, sir.

Kathi

From: Gregory Goode <goode@D...>

Date: Fri Feb 22, 2002 11:42 pm

Subject: Re: [advaitin] Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Dear Atmachaitanya,

Before anyone can take up your invitation, you'd have to actually find one thing, whether a teacup, a schoolbus, a thought, or adhyAsa, that actually exists. Not even Knowledge exists. Rather, it is Existence itself. In trying to establish any "actually existing thing," one must show how it stands on its own. To do this, one must show how the thing is independent of awareness of the thing. Since the demonstration itself would happen in awareness, the demonstration cannot establish the existence of anything beyond awareness. So why believe that stuff exists in such a way??

Regards,--Greg

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@a...>

Date: Sat Feb 23, 2002 12:52 am

Subject: [advaitin] Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Shree atmachaitanya wrote:

>

>The problem is so simple that it defies my imagination how anyone who
>has even the slightest capacity to think for themselves could possibly
>be seduced into thinking that :

>

>Mula Avidya is an existing thing (Bhava Rupa),(i.e. It actually has
>an ontological status) but it can be destroyed by knowledge!

Fantastic!

There is a conceptual problem in thinking ignorance as bhavaruupa type as Shree atmachaitanyaji rightly pointed out. Personally I have been struggling with this problem and unable to reconcile it. I am not sure at what stage of the advaita doctrine development the bhavaruupa aspect of the avidya has been introduced. In

Vivekachuudamani - there are two slokas that define maya -

avyaktanaamnii parameshha shaktii

anaadyavidyaa triguNaatmikaa para

kaaryaanumeya sudhiyaiva maaya

yayaa gatsarvamidam prasuuyate||

sannapya sanna ubhayaatmikaano

bhinnaapyabhinna ubhayaatmikaano
saangaapyasangaa ubhayaatmikaano
mahat bhuuta anirvachaniiya ruupa||

(typos could be there since typed from memory)

where anaadi avidya is qualified by three guNa-s and identified with maaya.
There is of course a consideration that VivekachuuDamaNi is not of
Shankara. I am not sure if there are equivalent slokas in Upadesha sahashri.
The triguNa aspect of maya comes from Sw. Up. statement -of
identification of maaya with prakR^iti which is triguNaatmikam -
maayantu prakRitim vidyaat -
atmachaitanyaji is right - Ramanuja takes this bhaavaruupa aspect of
avidya as puurvapaksha as in his maahaa puurvapaksha in his
shreebhaashya.

I would appreciate if Shree Atmachaitanyaji provides a chronological analysis
of how this concept of bhaavaruupa avidya came about if it is from post
Shankara scholars.

Hari Om!, Sadananda

From: K Kathirasan NCS <kkathir@n...>

Date: Mon Feb 25, 2002 7:43 am

Subject: RE: [advaitin] Whence adhyAsa?

Namaste Nairji

You need not study that dissertation if you don't feel the need to, sir.

However, I discovered that some of the views represented by

Atmachaitanyaji

do not belong to the existing Advaita Vedanta tradition. And the one point
that the whole Vedantic tradition can disagree with is the 'non-existence of
avidya in deep sleep'. I managed to find 2 verses in the Brahma Sutra
Shankara Bhashya that suggests the existence of avidya in a seed-form
during

sleep. And another verse in Chandogya Upanishad also suggests the same.
Therefore, to say otherwise would mean to deviate from the tradition of
Vedanta.

I must confess that I have learnt alot from Atmachaitanyaji's posts and I
found his arguments really well supported by the many references he has
provided. For that I am indebted to him. However, on the point of 'avidya
being non-existent in deep sleep' is a deviation from the teachings of
Vedanta. Since you have quoted the Tattva Bodha, it is also worthy to note
that the presence of avidya is also mentioned in the Tattva Bodha in the
chapters that discuss the 3 bodies and the five sheaths, specifically the
karana sharira and anandamaya kosha.

Just a little history:

Supposedly there was a formal debate held in Karnataka organised by the
Sringeri mutt to ascertain if Shankara suggested the absence of avidya in
deep sleep in his various bhashyas on the prasthanas. The debate was
between the Advaitins, who subscribed to the view that avidya was indeed
present in deep sleep, and the disciples of Swami Satchidanandendra who
believed otherwise. This debate was also presided over by the pontiff of the
Sringeri mutt as well. In the end, the position of the traditional advaitins

(the ones who subscribed to the view that avidya indeed present in deep sleep) was found tenable.

This subject may not be of interest to many and to them I apologise. And I also apologise to Venkatji for making him wait longer for the responses from Atmachaitanyaji.

Kathi

From: "atmachaitanya108" <stadri@a...>

Date: Mon Feb 25, 2002 8:19 am

Subject: Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Dear K. Sadananda,

Let me begin by congratulating you for your courage to articulate your doubts about Mula Avidya, your recognition of the 'conceptual problem that it entails, and your admitted inability to reconcile it, as well as your willingness to doubt the authenticity of the claim that the Vivekachudamani is from the pen of Adi Shankaracharya. (In fact Vivekachudamani is a 16th century work that is filled with doctrines that are completely opposed to Shankara's Siddhanata, including the Identification of Avidya and Maya and that Avidya is Tri-Guna Atmika, as well as the erroneous doctrine that even after the attainment of the Knowledge of the Self, the sadhaka has to repeat this knowledge over and over again to make it 'STRONG' (Prasankyanavada-A pet view of Swami Dayananda, who holds that;: 'Just like a born beggar who has just won the lottery and is now a millionaire, but still his hand goes out automatically when someone is offering free food due to his old habits. So also for the one who has got the 'knowledge of the Self', the old vasanas keep coming back and in order to make his 'knowledge' firm, that knowledge should be repeated till it becomes natural'. His student,. Jaishankar writes; "Similarly after gaining doubtless Knowledge that 'I am Brahman' from Guru and Shastra one has to recollect this knowledge till all previous conditioning goes"(Post Sat. Nov. 27 1999) and again Sri Madathilnair writes to Orbitville;: "Once we have the basic Advaitic vision, what is needed is contemplation on it"(Sun Feb 3). And this view has been shared by every other Post Shankara Vedantin till this day! A view that is extensively and completely refuted by Shankara in his Upadesha Sahasri, - Mundaka Up.Bh 1-1-6, - Isha. Up. Bh 18, - Bri Bh,1-4-10 etc.etc.).

You are absolutely correct in stating the in the Upanishads it is only Maya(Prakriti) that is described as tri-guna-atmika (made up of three gunas), and the same is the case with Shankara, in that you will not be able to find one instance of him describing Avidya in such a manner. For Shankara, Maya, Prakriti, The Three Gunas, Shakti , Avyakta, Nama Rupa, are all the effect of Avidya (Avidya Kalpita -Imagined by ignorance: Avidya Krita-created by ignorance: Avidya Pratusapita-projected by ignorance etc.,etc. In other words Avidya is the cause and Maya is the effect. Our ignorance of the rope is the cause-and the effect of that ignorance is the snake. Our ignorance of Brahman is the cause; the dualistic Universe (Maya) is the effect of

that ignorance.

You are also correct that Ramanuja has totally demolished this dogmatic and indefensible theory of Mula Avidya in his Shri Bashya, but so has Bashkaracharya Madva, and it has been done with even greater force by Vallahba and his followers.

And lastly, you ask me to provide a chronological analysis of how this concept of Bhavarupa Avidya came about if it is from the Post Shankara scholars. While a complete answer would require an elaborate paper, here follows the short version:

History of Mula Avidya

The first hint that we have that there was a school of Advaita Vedantins who were upholding some form of the theory that there was a 'Mula Avidya' that served as the 'material cause' of the Universe is to be found in a casual allusion found in Madana Mishras' (A contemporary of Shankara) Brahma Siddhi, for he writes : "Thata cha uktum avidya upadana bheda vadhibihi-'anadi aprathjanaa cha Avidya" ("The supporters of the theory that Avidya is the material cause of the manifold, aver the Avidya is beginningless a serves no teleological purpose.") However it is clear that these thinkers, whoever they were, did not claim to be in Shankaras Sampradaya for the simple reason that they came before him. So the first 'Post Shankara Vedantin who claimed allegiance to Shankaras tradition and upheld this erroneous doctrine of Mula Avidya has to be ascribed to Padmapada, the author of the Pancapadika, and whose work includes an examination and commentary on Shankaras Adhyasa Bhasya. As I have stated before, ignorance for Shankara is only the mutual superimposition of the Self and the non-self, superimposition being understood to mean no more than mistaking one thing for another (atasmin tat budhi) As for instance taking nacre for silver. This ignorance of course need not be proved, for it is recognized to be such as soon as it is pointed out, being within the experience of all of us ("sarva loka pratyakshaha"). For the author of the Panchapadica, however, Avidya is an indefinable inert power (anirvachaniya jada atmka avidya shakti) which clings to the very being of both the Self and the external things, and is capable of transforming itself into an illusory object. This Avidya, he further surmises, must be presumed to cling to everything, self and external objects, for otherwise we cannot account for the origin of 'illusory objects'. And in the case of the Jiva, we have to postulate this Avidya on the strength of the Srutis which declare the identity of the Jiva with Brahman; for, how else could we explain the absence of the knowledge of this identity except by supposing that Avidya envelops the Brahmic effulgent nature (Brahma svarupa prakasha chadikaa) of the individual self?

It is obvious that Shankara,s is a rational system based on universal experience, and Vidya and Avidya in his scheme of arguments are quite intelligible to all who are familiar with the antipathy between knowledge and error in everyday life. The system offered by the writer of the Panchapadika on the other hand, speculates on the

basis of a hypothetical Mula Avidya presumed to exist just to account for the appearance of illusory phenomena by a series of controvertible and easily refuted arguments with a view to justify the theological dogma that the knowledge of Brahman destroys the world of duality of which the postulated and unsubstantiated Mula Avidya is the material cause. I will give two specific instances where he totally distorts Shankaras Adhyaya Bhashya so as to insert his false ideas: Shankara states, "Although the subject and the object are of completely different natures, 'DUE TO FALSE KNOWLEDGE' (MITHYAJNANA NIMITAHA) having mixed up the real self and the unreal non-self, this natural worldly dealing of 'I am this' and 'this is mine' comes about" (Adhyaya Bhashya)

Padmapada takes this word Mithya Jnana (false knowledge) and breaks it up into Mithya (false) and Ajnana (ignorance)= and reads false ignorance (which no one has ever heard of, as it become then a tautology) instead of Shankaras clear and uncontroversial reading that we are all familiar with i.e." 'false knowledge', and remarks as follows:

"The commentary says ' Mithyaajnana nimittah'. 'Mithyaajnana' means 1) that which is false (mithya) and 2) that which is ignorance (ajnana)' By 'false' is meant 'indeterminability'. And 'Ignorance' means the inert power of ignorance'. 'Tat nimitaha' (that cause), means, having that (Adhyaya) for its MATERIAL cause." (Panchapadika pg 26 Madras ed.1938)

Note: Here it is claimed that the "power of Ignorance" is the material cause for Adhyaya (superimposition). The doctrine that Adhyaya requires a 'material' cause, the doctrine that ignorance is an 'inert power', and the doctrine that the word 'mithya (false) means 'indeterminable'- It is to be noted that none of these doctrines are found or even implied in Shankaras commentary.

And again: Padmapada writes-

"This beginningless Ignorance is referred to in the Vedas, Smritis, Epics and Puranas as Name and Form, the Unmanifest (avyayakta), Ignorance, Maya, Prakriti, Darkness, Power (Shakti), The Great Sleep, The Indestructible. In different places it is spoken of in many different ways. It is spoken of as preventing the manifestation of Consciousness (Avarana Shakti) in its true form as the Absolute, and the producing the appearance (Vikshepa Shakti) of the individual soul." (Panchpadika pg.98. Madras ed. 1938)

Note" Here, perhaps for the first time in Vedantic literature, Ignorance is specifically presented as having the same meaning as Maya, Shakti, Avyakrita (Unmanifest), etc., As well as having the power to cover the absolute, and project the world. The author regards Ignorance in the form of Adhyaya (superimposition), which was the form that it was explained by Shankaara in his introduction to his Brahma Sutra Commentary, as an effect, and he clings to the idea that the 'power of Ignorance' is its material cause (A Bhava Rupa).

Prakashatman Yati, who wrote a commentary on the

Panchapadika, and founded the Vivarana school of Advaita Vedanta, followed in his teachers footsteps in upholding the doctrine of Mula Aavidya, and Vachaspati Mishra, the author of the Bhamati, and founder of the 'Bhamati' school, adopted this very same point of view. Since then every Advaita Vedantin, while paying lip service to the Great Shankaracharya, and claiming to belong to his Sampradaya, has tried to uphold this false and irrational doctrine of Mula Avidya. Thus Advaita Vedanta has been degraded into a dogmatic and speculative system, divorced from universal experience and merely a system which demands unquestioning and uncritical faith. And even if we grant the existence of this hypothetical Avidya, there is no way that either Knowledge, or any other conceivable means could ever destroy it!.

Hari Om

Atmachaitanya

P.S. And yes, I am aware of the fact that I have not yet answered Dennis's question 'Whence Adhyasa', nor 'How the Shastra is the only pramana for Atmavidya'..

From: Gummuluru Murthy <gmurthy@m...>

Date: Mon Feb 25, 2002 8:11 pm

Subject: Re: [advaitin] Whence adhyAsa
namaste.

I was thinking whether I should stand on the sidelines along with shri Harsha, shri Warwick and shri madathilnair or jump into the ring. I decided, at least for the moment, to jump in and express my views on the content of this thread.

Shri Dennis asks whence adhyAsa and whose is the first adhyAsa? I understand the question as when did ignorance begin? We have discussed this many times. My understanding is: adhyAsa is from ignorance, and ignorance is anAdi, without beginning. Hence, when did ignorance begin cannot be answered. I have posted two or three articles on this quoting shri shankara's explanation of this from His shrilalitA trishatI bhAShya. I do not see any reason to question that explanation.

Some one said in this discussion that avidya is without end either. My understanding is: it is not so. Ignorance vanishes on the dawning of knowledge. Thus, although avidya is without beginning, it has an end.

We can consider the following analogy: Even with aparavidya, sometimes we encounter confusion in understanding the subject. Later, after we understand the subject, what happened to the confusion? Confusion simply vanished. Sometimes we cannot even reconstruct this confusion after we understand the subject. Further, we cannot say when this confusion started.

I am afraid I do not see Fox's points a, b, c as stated by shri Dennis in his original post and the comments on the three points also posted there. I do not see shri Atmacaitanyaji's expansion of these points either in his first post in this thread starting with the section (in his post) "opposed to reason" etc. I have

difficulty understanding this "mUla avidyA". What is it? What way is it different from avidyA? If mUla avidyA means the beginning of avidyA, then I think that chasing mUla avidyA will be the most fruitless exercise. You *cannot* reach the origin of avidyA. It has no beginning. Please refer to "mAyA pa~ncakam" by shri shankara where each verse ends with catchy "tva ghaTita ghaTanA paTIyasI mAyA". I posted a rough translation of these five verses sometime ago.

Regards

Gummuluru Murthy

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@a...>

Date: Mon Feb 25, 2002 8:39 pm

Subject: [advaitin] Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Shree Atmachaitanyaji,

Thanks for taking time for detailed response. It will take some time for me to digest before I continue the discussion on the topic. If you have patience with me I will get back to you as soon as I can resolve my thoughts.

Thanks again for the wonderful discussion.

Hari OM!

Sadananda

--

K. Sadananda

Code 6323

Naval Research Laboratory

Washington D.C. 20375

Voice (202)767-2117

Fax:(202)767-2623

From: "Jaishankar Narayanan" <srijai@e...>

Date: Tue Feb 26, 2002 6:10 pm

Subject: Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Dear Friends,

Atma Chaitanya wrote:

"(In fact Vivekachudamani is a 16th century work that is filled with doctrines that are completely opposed to Shankaras Siddhanata, including the Identification of Avidya and Maya and that Avidya is Tri-Guna Atmika, as well as the erroneous doctrine that even after the attainment of the Knowledge of the Self, the sadhaka has to repeat this knowledge over and over again to make it 'STRONG' (Prasankyanavada-A pet view of Swami Dayananda, who holds that; 'Just like a born beggar who has just won the lottery and is now a millionaire, but still his hand goes out automatically when someone is offering free food due to his old habits. So also for the one who has got the 'knowledge of the Self', the old vasanas keep coming back and in order to make his 'knowledge' firm, that knowledge should be repeated till it becomes natural'. His student,. Jaishankar writes; "Similarly after gaining doubtless Knowldege that 'I am Brahman' from Guru and Shastra one has to recollect this knowledge till all previous

conditioning goes"(Post Sat. Nov. 27 1999) and again Sri Madathilnair writes to Orbitsville;: "Once we have the basic Advaitic vision, what is needed is contemplation on it"(Sun Feb 3). And this view has been shared by every other Post Shankara Vedantin till this day! A view that is extensively and completely refuted by Shankara in his Upadesha Sahasri, - Mundaka Up.Bh 1-1-6, - Isha. Up. Bh 18, - Bri Bh,1-4-10 etc.etc.)."

I want to clarify that Swami Dayananda does'nt support Prasankyanavada. Those who hold on to Prasankyanavada say that Sabda Pramana does'nt give aparoksha jnana (direct or immediate knowledge). They talk about converting indirect knowledge (parokshajnana) gained from sruti to direct knowledge (aparoksha jnana) by doing Meditation (similar to Modern Vedanta). Swami Dayananda does'nt accept this view. He has rejected Prasankyanavada many times in the classes that I have attended. When we say that the knowledge has to be recollected (Nidhidhyasana) it is part of the Pramana vyapara which leads to a knowledge without any obstacles (apratibandhakajnanam). Depending on the qualifications of the seeker (mumukshu) there can be many different kinds of obstacles like doubts, vagueness and prior conditioning. All these obstacles have to be overcome to attain clear knowledge of the self as revealed by the sruti. A uttamaadhikari (a fully qualified person) may not need any recollection (Nidhidhyasana). For such a person only sravanam may be enough, but such persons are very rare. If Atma chaitanya rejects recollection of knowledge for everyone, how does he explain Nidhidhyasana? He cannot reject Nidhidhyasana as something introduced by the later acharyas !

Regarding Mulavidya and whether Avidya is a Bhavapadartha I have to say from my reading of Bhagavad Gita,Upanishad and Brahma Sutra Bhasyas that Shankara takes Avidya as jnanavirodhi (opposed to knowledge) rather than jnanaabhava (absence of knowledge). If Atmachaitanya disagrees with this then he has to give alternate explanations to Gita verses like "ajnanena Avrtam jnanam tena muhyanti jantava:"

"jnanena tu tadajnanam yesham nAshitamAtmana:
tesham adityavad jnanam prakashayati tatparam" etc.

" The beings are deluded by ignorance which covers jnanam. For whom this ignorance is destroyed by knowledge the consciousness shines forth like the Sun."

The other problem if ajnanam is taken as jnanaabhava is that in sleep there cannot be any jivabija or karanasarira (causal state). This is the position which Atmachaitanya takes which leads to lot of illogical implications. If ignorance is not there in sleep then all you have to do to be liberated is sleep. But that's not the case in this world. Further this position is contradicted by Shankara's bhasyam on Mandukya Karika's Agamaprakaranam and Chandogya Upanishad's 6th chapter. I can send a separate post on that as I don't carry the texts with me now.

Finally I want to state that all these things are only prakriyabheda (differences in the methodology of teaching) as we all agree on what is to be taught which is 'tat tvam asi'. That being the case, to claim that all others after Shankara and Sureshvara in the guruparampara are wrong or ajnanis,

is adhikaprāsanga or sheer arrogance. For different people different methodologies work but one cannot dismiss the parampara which has been coming for more than thousand years and has produced so many enlightened people as wrong, with flimsy reasoning.

with love and prayers,

Jaishankar

From: "Harsha" <harsha@c...>

Date: Tue Feb 26, 2002 6:38 pm

Subject: RE: [advaitin] Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Namaste Sri Jaishankarji

What you say makes sense to me. Sleep does not bring upon liberation. The phrase Sat-Chit-Ananda contains the clue. Chit refers to consciousness. The nature of consciousness is to be Awake. Pure Consciousness is Always Self-Awake. The ancient sages did not say the nature of Self is Sat-Nidra-Ananda (Existence - Sleep - Bliss). They say it is Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence, Consciousness, Bliss).

Love to all

Harsha

From: Gummuluru Murthy <gmurthy@m...>

Date: Tue Feb 26, 2002 6:55 pm

Subject: Re: [advaitin] Re: Whence adhyAsa?

namaste shri Atmachaitanya-ji,

I went through your response to shri Dennis Waite and particularly the objections you raised to what is adhyAsa, particularly in points labelled A, B, C....H. You have presented them as objections raised by vaishnava AcAryA-s. But the force with which you presented them lead me to believe that you yourself subscribe to that thinking.

I would like to categorically know whether you yourself accept that line of thinking (as presented in points A, B...H of your post).

I find the points made there without basis and, in my view, a complete misrepresentation of what is advaita. And I am surprised that a learned person like you, a disciple of swami satchidanendra saraswati, subscribe to that misrepresentation. I like to present here my understanding on these points. For brevity, I will not reproduce your post but will label my points the same as yours, viz. A, B...etc.

A. The locus of ignorance is in the feeling of individuality (ahaMkAra) of the jIvA. In answer to question whose is avidyA, shri shankara says it is in the person who is asking the question. There is no outside to the Absolute. Absolute, Itself, is without qualities, yet because of avidyA, the jIvA concept is born.

B. I suggested in my earlier post the analogy of confusion (about any subject even in aparavidyA). When we do not know the subject, confusion really exists for us in that state of mind. However, when we have full knowledge (of the subject), confusion is no longer there. Is the confusion existent or non-existent?

It is existent in one state of mind and non-existent in another state of mind. Similarly, avidyA has real existence in our

state of ignorance, but once knowledge dawns, avidyA is no longer there. I will refer to this again in a later point where you raised whether knowledge ever destroyed ignorance. C. The mind, engulfed by avidyA and created by avidyA, makes the jIvA not see the infiniteness of the Atman. I do not see why it is such an impossible thing to understand. Surely, the existence of avidyA (in our ignorant state) and the destruction of it as knowledge dawns is fully demonstrated. Take any of the standard examples in advaita. I cannot presume I can teach you here, but I am utterly dismayed by your seeming acceptance of what you called the vaishnava AcAryas' objections.

D avidyA is anAdi but is not endless. avidyA is anAdi is shown by shri shankara in His shri lalitA trishatIbhAShya (name: havirbhoktrI). avidyA has an end at knowing what we are. JIvA feeling has no beginning but ends when ahaMkAra does not rise its ugly head anymore. The statements which you presented in D do not make any sense to me.

E. Knowledge destroys confusion in aparavidyA and the Knowledge of the Absolute destroys ignorance. Whether you take ignorance as an existing thing is up to you. You cited the example of knowledge of the pot. The Absolute knowledge makes us see the pot what it is, just clay. That does not mean Knowledge destroys the pot. It destroys the ignorance of what the pot really is. Similarly, the Absolute Knowledge does not destroy the world, but it makes one to see what the jagat really is.

F. You brought in nirvikalpa samAdhi into discussion. Bringing in that is a bogey. The discussion here is of adhyAsa and let us concentrate on that rather than introducing various other things into discussion.

G, H and I are repetitions.

Finally, shri Atmachaitanya-ji, I bow to your scholarship. I cannot presume I can get into debate with you on intellectual expression and exposition of matters spiritual, but I must say: If you subscribe to the points made in A to H of your post (I still like to think that you are only paraphrasing vaishnava AcAryAs' objections to advaita), you seem to have wrong understanding of advaita. My apologies if I have expressed my points a bit too forcefully.

Regards

Gummuluru Murthy

From: "K. Sadananda" <sada@a...>

Date: Tue Feb 26, 2002 10:11 pm

Subject: Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Here is my understanding on the topic of the discussion:

Shree aatmachaitanyaji has provided information related to chronological development(?) of the avidya concept in Advaita Doctrine . First I want to thank him for the wonderful discussion he has provided. I would like to present my understanding of the concept more as a clarification as well as discussion from the point

of my understanding. Before I do that I would like to mention the following in response to Shree Warwick post related to the pertinence of the current discussion versus 'who am I inquiry?' - True- in the final analysis that is the bottom line - but we should recognize that 'Who am I' is an inquiry -and not a japa - and inquiry involves intellectual investigation of the nature of who I am? - or nature of myself? -One can keep questioning -who am I and who am I until the heaven freezes but nothing will happen since question requires an answer and who is going to provide the answer and how do I know that the answer that the intellect acquires during that inquiry is the right answer. Hence Scripture is only pramaaNā to confirm that what I have learned out of that inquiry is the right answer. - One can end the inquiry of 'who am I' with one sentence answer "tat tvam asi" ' you are that'? But that only leads to more questions in the intellect and answer will only be incomplete unless the inquiry is done appropriately. The fundamental question that needs to be resolved in the inquiry is - How is that which is one without a second ended up as many (jiiva-s) and multiplicity of the world? How is that one which is conscious entity ended up with unconscious entities involving the world of plurality? Unless that is resolved, any inquiry will be incomplete or involves blind acceptance - hence does not resolve into knowledge. Bottom line that I would like to stress is that 'who am I inquiry cannot be separated out from What is the world? And what is my relation with the world? If I am that how come I do not recognize I am that or what prevents me from that understanding? - These are inter related and buried in the 'who am I' inquiry - Hence scripture has recognized that inquiry of oneself is not different from inquiry of the Brahman - and Brahman who or which is defined as 'jagat kaaraNam Brahman' - who is the cause of the world? - then back to the question - how is that which is of the nature of existence-consciousness- bliss - satyam j~naanam anantam brahma - that one without a second becomes manifold universe consisting of chara and achara - movable and immovable - jiiva-s and jadam-s. Brahman implies the totality - 'I am' implies a singularity - how is that singularity can be equated to the totality - That is what is involved ultimately. Hence statements like "what is involved is only ' who am I inquiry' and what is the use of all this intellectual debate" involve non-recognition of the fundamental problem - how is that I who is satyam j~naanam anantam - one without a second - ended up as many involving multitude of conscious entities and unconscious entities. - in the who am I enquiry - I have to resolve I am that eternal unlimited, anantam or Brahman, entity - otherwise I have not understood who am I. Hence all aacharya-s addressed these questions and tried to answer these taking scripture as pramaaNā.

Inquiry is intellectual - and since it involves a subjective inquiry or inquiry of the very nature of the subject who is doing the inquiry -the solution resolves into the true understanding or understanding

of the truth of the subject-object distinctions as apparent and not real. Thus one goes beyond the very intellect that is instrumental in the inquiry - like pole vault. Until that happens one cannot forsake the pole since that is all one has, to go beyond! Hence one should not think that intellectual inquiry is contradictory to the spiritual saadhana. - Of course I do recognize that it can make one as egotistical if one does not watch out - hence scripture says - it is like a razor path - one can fall down any time - kshurasya dhaara duratyayaa durgam pathanaat kavayo vadanti - this is true in any path one can become arrogant or fanatic even in Bhakti sadhana - ego is very subtle and it has a way of rising up unnoticed.

Now back to the intended discussion.

Concept of adhyaasa is essentially Advaitic doctrine's explanation of how one appears as many - That is what ultimately is involved in the inquiry - adhyaasa means an error of judgement by the one who is committing the error. Root cause for an error is the ignorance of the truth. error analysis - khyati vaada- involves recognition of the truth as truth and false as false (each involves the other) along with the understanding of why false appears as truth and truth appears as false - or cause for the error. When the truth is recognized as truth - the cause of the original error -ignorance obviously eradicated.

Let us be clear about the facts - from the point of truth or Brahman there is no error. Brahman is one without a second and there is nothing other than Brahman - that is from the Advaita doctrine based on the Scriptural statement - All Advaitic masters endorse that -sadeva soumya idam agra asiit _ . etc. Existence alone was there alone in the beginning and that is one without a second - That eliminates all duality involving three types of differentiation - sajaati, vijaati and swagata bhedaas - difference of the same species, differences of different species and internal differences - One mass of homogeneous existent consciousness - praj~naana ghana - Hence existence of error is only from the point of the one who is committing the error - that is jiiva's point alone and not from the point of Brahman. This implies jiiva to be there to commit the error - and there rises a fundamental problem in Advaita - How to account the existence of jiiva who himself is a product of error for jiiva to be a locus of the error.

This is an unresolved problem since there is an inherent interdependence - to get around this problem one can say that Brahman is the locus of avidya or ignorance but that does not also make sense either when Brahman is one without a second. The other way is to accept the interdependence as unresolvable problem as a part of anirvachaniiyam - in explainable. It is not completely illogical and also experiential (since logic or anumana rests on pratyaksha or direct perceptual experience as the basis for cause-effect relations which are vyaapti j~naanam or concomitant relations required for logic to operate) - The familiar example is the chicken-egg situation

- it is anirvachaniyam . The second way of accounting the inexplicable nature of the avidya that the problem that is being addressed is not a real problem for a real solution to exist. The apparent problem can only have apparent solution, which cannot be logical, since the problem is not real. Ultimate solution to the problem is to recognize that the whole problem is only apparent and not real and there cannot be any logical answer to this non-existent problem. Intrinsic in the analysis of this problem is the very limitation of the logic and intellectual inquiry to resolve the problem with an intellect which itself is a product of the avidya. I am beginning to think that Shankara recognized the intrinsic nature of the problem and rightfully left without emphasizing who or what is the locus of avidya - as part of the anirvachaniyam - I will come back to this aspect of anirvachaniyam or inexplicability aspect again.

Anaadi aspect of the ignorance: Any ignorance has to be anaadi or beginningless and all aacharya-s (at least I know Ramanuja does) have accepted that for if it has a beginning then before ignorance started I must have been not having ignorance that is I must have been knowledgeable. If one ask me - do you know chemistry - and If I am ignorant of chemistry - now the next question is why did my ignorance of chemistry started. Ignorance of chemistry cannot start - it has to be beginningless - but it can end when I learn chemistry. Any ignorance is abaavaruupa only - Ignorance is the absence of knowledge and in the above example it is the absence of chemistry knowledge. Chemistry knowledge is opposite to chemistry ignorance. Ignorance of chemistry cannot project some other false knowledge. This is what Shree Atmachaitanyaji is addressing. I do not think he is questioning the anaadi aspect of it but its projecting power. Ignorance cannot project anything it is just the absence of knowledge or negative quantity. Somewhere in the line of thinking Advaita, the concept got mixed-up with the projecting power attributing it to avidya or ignorance.

Let us address the problem correctly - When I do not know that the object that I am seeing is a rope (ignorance of the object as a rope not complete ignorance of the object)- I project that it is a snake. Where did the projection of the snake or how did the projection of the snake arise. Can I say ignorance projected the snake - which does not make any sense. But yet ignorance of the rope is in a way inherent cause for the projection of the snake in the sense that If I had known that it is rope, there is no need for me to project the snake in the place of the rope. If you look at the sentence, ignorance is a cause but it is neither the material cause nor the intelligent cause nor the instrumental cause - it is a root cause for the subsequent projection. But the projecting power should rest with I the conscious entity - Hence although ignorance is the root cause or muula - it is neither the material cause nor the efficient cause. That is one of the reasons why one can get rid of it. The material

and instrumental cause must rest with conscious entity alone. Ignorance of the truth is the cause for projection of the false as the truth - that aspect is indisputable. When ignorance is removed by knowledge, which is antidote for ignorance, then the root cause is removed and the projection of the false falls down since it is false in the awakening of the true knowledge.

Now projection of the snake involves some other aspects too - why snake if one asks - there are similarities in terms of some attributes that are recognized and dissimilarities in terms of some attributes that are not recognized in the perception of the object (here it is rope). Ignorance of the rope covered the (knowledge of the) rope is a statement does not make full sense other than it is just the absence of the knowledge of the rope which is called ignorance due to non-comprehension of full attributes of the rope. Now for the projection of the snake where the rope is, I, the conscious entity, should have the knowledge of the attributes that are similar to both rope and snake and lack of knowledge of any attributes that differentiates the rope and the snake in the object that I am perceiving. This implies that I should have the prior samskaara or knowledge of the snake - at least a false snake if not a real snake for me to project the snake where rope is. Here where the problem comes in accounting the jagat and jiiva aspect - since for me to project all that on Brahman, I should have prior knowledge of the jagat and jiiva just as the I should have knowledge of a snake to project on the object where the rope is. One can escape the answer by saying that prior samskaara comes from prior life and for the prior life projection the previous to the prior life provides the samskaara and this can go on - and when forced to answer when did the first projection or how did the first projection started we can say - the ignorance is anaadi and the projection is also anaadi. or beginningless. We are back to chicken-egg situation and we can say it is just anirvachaniiyam - because there is actually no real projection or real ignorance either for anybody to account.

The fundamental problem arises because an illegitimate guy is asking an illegitimate question and any answer will be illegitimate only since in reality there is no problem to solve. Only solution to the illegitimate problem is to recognition of the illegitimacy of the problem - it is not ignoring the problem but understanding the problem from correct perspective. This aspect all Advaitic masters emphasize.

Looking from the total perspective - avidya is just ignorance or lack of knowledge of the truth and projecting power rests with the chaitanya vastu - you can say Iswara in terms of the total universe (macrocosm) or jiiva in the microcosm. 'Covering aspect' that Jaishankar brought to our attention is not real covering either but 'as though covering' since these are explanations within the realm of anirvachaniiyam aspect. The locus of avidya should rest with the jiiva since he is the one who is asking the question and trying to

find who am I? - How did jiiva who is the product of avidya be locus of avidya - true if one puts it that way - but the fact of the matter is both jiiva and avidya are anaadi - which one started first is the chicken-egg situation and we are back to anirvachaniiyam. Thanks to aatmachaitanyaji I am beginning to appreciate more Why Sankara left it as such without giving unnecessary explanations that which cannot be explained logically since it is an indeterminate problem.

Coming back to deep sleep - there is avidya alone without the projecting power and since the instruments of projection - mind and intellect are also folded during the deep sleep. What is there at the time - but before we answer that question - let us look at first who is asking that question? - Deep sleeper cannot ask the question since he is comfortably sleeping and waker has no passport to go and find out the fact of the deep sleep state. 'I slept well' is only a inferential statement of the waker - I would resort back to indeterminate problem within the realm of anirvachaniiyam since mind and intellect supported by the chaitanyavastu is required for the projection. Ignorance was there in deep sleep since I did not know I slept well when I am sleeping well. - Experience of the sleep was there in terms of the absence of the mind and intellect and that will be left as the memory to recall that experience of its absence during deep sleep state. Even though ignorance was there, there is no projecting power and hence it is incorrect to say ignorance is of bhavaaruupa - it is just the absence of knowledge of - of everything. - hence even if I recall that experience - it is just I did not know anything is only the knowledge of that experience.

Without the mind and intellect active - is there a world out there - refer back to my extensive discussion with Nanda few months ago - this is again indeterminate problem - the subject - object distinctions are superficial and raise in the mind and intellect - how that occurs one can say - I have the power to project and also power to split into the subject and object - What remains in deeper analysis is consciousness alone - idam thoughts and aham thoughts both are pervaded by consciousness that I am. Projection itself is not problem that is my power to project. But if that projection is backed by the ignorance - then I can mistake it as real and forget I am the substratum for both seer and the seen. But if the projection is backed by knowledge since I can still project since I have the mind and intellect - since that power rests with me and not with ignorance - then I can see the plurality but not mistake the seen plurality is real since I have knowledge that seer and seen are one and the same. Hence plurality is not the problem per say - but taking the plurality as reality is the problem and that is called moha or delusion - Illusion is the projection and delusion is taking the illusion as real.

I presented my understanding of the problem and of course open for discussion as always.

Hari Om!

Sadananda

From: "atmachaitanya108" <stadri@a...>

Date: Wed Feb 27, 2002 10:00 am

Subject: Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Dear Brian,

When you write: " He also, I believe, is taking value from his participation by testing his mettle in various aspects of his sadhana...so that he can be a worthy carrier of the "true" message of Shankara.", you have hit the nail on the head. Please allow me a quote from Suresvaracharyas' opening verses to his NaishkarmyaSiddhi: "On the philosophy of the Veda, presented by my preceptor, I can say nothing because of my incompetence. What can a glow worm do towards illumining what has already been flooded by the light of the thousand-rayed sun?"

" It may appear then, as the preceptor himself has composed the exposition of the import of the Vedas, the work on hand proceeds from invalidating motives like love of fame. Such a supposition is ruled out in what follows."

"This work in not composed by me for the sake of fame, gain or reverential consideration: It is for the purposes of purifying my own understanding by the testimony of those who know Brahman." (Nais. 5 - 6)

(He then goes on to refute the false doctrines of other Advaitins, all of whom believed in the truth of the sentence 'Tat Tvam Asi', but who, according to his understanding, had deviated from the true methodology, as presented by his Guru, Shankaracharya.)

Dear Warwick,

You may not believe me, but when you write:

"Are there Any members of this list who long to receive a real, non-conceptual answer to this question "Who am I?" It might take the form of a longing to disappear in God, it might take the form of great longing to know, "What is really true, of what can I be so certain that, for the sake of it, I would surrender my position in society, the affection of all my friends, the respect of the world, all my possessions and also my life?

Is there a truth that is known with one's totality, not just one's mind?" Is there any one like that?"

I agree with you 100%. Vedanta is not about intellectual questions and answers. The problem is not an intellectual one, but a spiritual one. It can't be solved by the 'intellectual faculty' of the mind. It has to be solved by the 'spiritual faculty' of the mind; i.e: The minds' capacity to turn inwards and directly intuit the Self as it is (which is beyond the mind). It's not about refuting the Buddhists, the Prasankyanavadins or the Mula Avidya theorists. Vedanta is about purifying the mind, turning inwards and taking a stand in your True Self. As I said in a previous post:

"There are only two kinds of 'Real Vedantins': 1) Those

who have taken a stand in the True Self. 2) Those who are trying to take a stand in their True Self.

For those Vedantins of the second category, the qualities which you mention in your above quoted passage, and which can be described as intense 'Mumuksutva', are the most important and indispensable qualifications for a Vedantin.

Dear Gummuluru Murthy,

You ask: "If you subscribe to the points made in A to H of your post (I still like to think that you are only paraphrasing Vaisnava Acharyas objections to Advaita) you seem to have a wrong understanding of Advaita."

I am sorry to say that you seem to have missed the whole point of my post. What I was paraphrasing was the Vaisnava critique of Bhavarupa Mula Avidya. A critique which is absolutely valid, because once you accept Mula Avidya as an actually existing 'thing' that is the 'material cause' of the universe, you have abandoned Advaita. My main point is that Shankara never in his wildest dreams ever propounded such a fallacious theory. And if in fact there was such a 'thing' as Mula Avidya, that is made up of three gunas, knowledge could never destroy it.

Dear Jaishankar,

Please allow me to address your comments on Prasankyana Vada. Your other points about Mula Avidya, and Avidya in deep sleep, as well as your 'notions' about Prakriya Bedas will have to be dealt with at a future date.

You say that:

"Swami Dayananda doesn't support Prasankyanavada . Those who hold onto Prasankyanavada say that Sabda Pramana doesn't give aparoksha Jnana (direct or immediate knowledge). They talk about converting indirect knowledge (paroksha Jnana) gained from the sruti to direct knowledge (Aparoksha Jnana) by doing meditation (similar of modern Vedanta). Swami Dayananda doesn't accept this view. He has rejected Prasankyanavada many times in the classes that I have attended. When we say the 'KNOWLEDGE' has to be recollected (Nidhidhasana) it is part of the pramana vyapara which leads to a knowledge without any obstacles (apratibandikajnana)."

Now I would like to ask you: Is this " knowledge that has to be recollected " indirect knowledge, or direct knowledge? It can't be indirect knowledge, because no amount of recollecting indirect knowledge will convert it into direct knowledge as Swami Dayananda himself admits.. The only other alternative is that it is the 'direct knowledge' (aparoksha Jnana) that has to be repeatedly recollected to remove the remaining obstacles, AFTER the direct knowledge has been attained from the shabda Pramana. But this is exactly the false doctrine that Shankara has over and over again refuted throughout his Prastana Traya Bhashyas, and in his Upadesha Sahasri. Shankaras

position is that after the attainment of Apararoksha Jnana, there is absolutely nothing left to do, no obstacles left that have to be destroyed, and no individual left to do any recollecting. Let me cite a few examples:

To begin, lets see what Suresvara has to say about this recollecting of knowledge (which by the way you wrongly identify with nididhyasana, but that is another story): so as to remove the 'obstacles that remain after direct knowledge has been attained:

"At this conclusion, some supported by their own tradition, aver that this knowledge of the form 'I am Brahman' arising out of the hearing of the Vedantic text, does not at all remove ignorance at its very inception; but by this same knowledge being repeated day by day for a long time, is wiped off all ignorance without a residue." "What follows is in refutation"

"The understanding of the Scripture at once, without repetition, destroys the ignorance that bears the forms of action and the factors involved in action" (Nias. 1-67)

And Shankara writes:

" Just as in a sentence which stipulates an injunction Karma, even after the meaning of the sentence is understood, the activities which are to be performed by gathering many instruments of action remains,-- the deliberation on the Vedanta Vakya which teaches the Knowledge of the Supreme Self is not like that at all; at the very instant of our understanding the meaning to the Vedantic sentence, the whole process gets completed." (Mun. Bha>1-1-6)

Note: Here it has been clearly stated that after understanding the meaning of the Vedanta Vakya there does not remain any thing whatsoever to be done, including the repeated recollection of the meaning to destroy the remaining obstacles. It amounts to saying that the teaching of Sri Vachaspati Mishra (Bhamatikara) and Swami Dayananda, who opine that Some such practice as the Jnana abhyasa should be performed, is opposed to the Sampradaya of Shankara.

And again:

"Because of the reason that after Knowledge accrues Ignorance has disappeared...this Avidya can no longer exist. Just as, even after the knowledge that fire is hot and it illumines - to that person who has that knowledge- to such a person the false knowledge (Mithyajnana) to the effect that fire is cold or that it does not illumine- can never occur; further, either Samshaya (doubt), about it or its non-knowledge (ajana) can NEVER exist." (Isa Bbha 18)

Note: Here, not only are the 3 types of ignorance recognized by Shankara enumerated 1) not knowing 2) doubt 3) misconception. (There is no Mula Avidya ever mentioned by him anywhere in his writings), but also the fact that after apraroksha Jnana there is no possibility of any "doubts or vagueness" as Jaisankaar would have it.

While I could go on and on with quotes which demonstrate that for Shankara, after Aparoksha Jnana, there is nothing more to do, no more doer, no one to recollect anything, and that All Pramana Prameya

Vyvahara completely ceases, but. I will spare you all, and end these quotes with a final clincher, and then quote the BrahmaSiddhi to demonstrate that Swami Dayananda and Jaisankar both belong to a different Sampradaya than Shankara.

"The repetition of concepts may be of use in the case of results to be achieved by meditation, in as much as it is possible that some intensity is effected in them by repeated practice. But in the case of the knowledge of the higher Brahman, which reveals Brahman that is the very self of the seeker, eternally pure, conscious and free, what purpose would be served by its repetition?"

" If it be said that the knowledge of the identity of Brahman and atman is not born by listening to the text merely once, and hence its repetition is held to be necessary, we reply that this can not be so: for, the result is not conceivable even in the case of repetition. (To explain): If hearing the Vedantic text once, does not produce the knowledge of the identity of Brahman and Atman, Where is the hope that the same repeatedly heard, (or recollected) would produce that knowledge?" (SBh.4-1-2)

(Swami Dayananda, it would seem, belongs to Mandana's Sampradaya not Shankaras)

Mandana writes:

" Even when the knowledge of the truth has dawned, but a sufficiently strong impression of it has not been stored up, while the impressions born of false knowledge are stronger, even correct notions may present false objects, as for example in the case of one who is confounded with regard to the cardinal directions, but does not keep up the memory of the testimony of a friend; for, he is found to proceed in the wrong direction even then as before. This is the case also with regard to a rope ascertained to be such, which is found to give rise to fear through a misconception that it is a snake, in case one does not keep up the memory (keep recollecting) of his correct knowledge.....Therefore even after True Knowledge has dawned by the help of the right means of knowledge, the repeated maintenance of correct knowledge, is deemed to be necessary for the purpose of overcoming or destroying the stronger impression that has arisen out of continued repetition of false perception" (Brahama Siddhi pg. 35) Both Madana, Padmapada and Swami Dayananda, think that even after the dawn of knowledge of Atman there is a possibility of its being obstructed by some external factor (pratibandikas)-Impressions of wrong knowledge in the case of Madana, and suspicion that it is not probable in the case of Padmapada (And probably a combination of both in the case of Swami Dayananda). It is clear that this fear, while applicable to empirical knowledge, can have no place in the case of the Knowledge of the Non-Dual Self, since there is no scope for any ' external obstructive cause' in the state of this Knowledge. Witness the Sruti quoted so often by Shankara;("Where to this enlightened one everything has become the Self alone, there one could see whom and with what?....there one could know whom and with what?") which emphatically denies the distinction of the knower, knowledge and the knowable in that state.

Dear K Sadananda

I hope to address some of your points when I deal with the the outstanding questions; "Whence Adhyasa" and "How the Shastra is the only Pramana for Atmavidya. Let me just remark that I don't think that the answers are as "Anirvachaniya" (inexplicable) as you make them out to be. Lets hope not. Please be patient for my next post , I am sure you all need a break from my verbosity.

Hari Om

Atmachaitanya

From: K Kathirasan NCS <kkathir@n...>

Date: Wed Feb 27, 2002 10:56 am

Subject: RE: [advaitin] Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Namaste Atmachaitanyaji,

May I know what does 'intuiting the self' mean in this context? I would be grateful if you could clarify this.

With regards to 'ignorance' being 'bhavarupa' & existing in a seed form in sleep, I will post 2 references from the brahmasutra shankarabhashya tomorrow. The two verses seem to support the idea that ignorance does exist in a seed form in sleep. If you do know the verses I am referring to, could you please quote them and explain how you would reconcile them with your claim that ignorance is non-existent in deep sleep.

Pls, could you also address Jaishankarji's line of reasoning mentioned below, taken from his last post:

'The other problem if ajnanam is taken as jnanaabhAva is that in sleep there cannot be any jivabija or karanasarira (causal state). This is the position which Atmachaitanya takes which leads to lot of illogical implications. If ignorance is not there in sleep then all you have to do to be liberated is sleep. But thats not the case in this world.'

Thank you.

From: "Jaishankar Narayanan" <srijai@e...>

Date: Fri Feb 22, 2002 7:04 pm

Subject: Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Dear Friends,

Atmachaitanya wrote

"Now I would like to ask you: Is this " knowledge that has to be recollected " indirect knowledge, or direct knowledge? It can't be indirect knowledge, because no amount of recollecting indirect knowledge will convert it into direct knowledge as Swami Dayananda himself admits.. The only other alternative is that it is the 'direct knowledge' (aparoksha Jnana) that has to be repeatedly recollected to remove the remaining obstacles, AFTER the direct knowledge has been attained from the shabda Pramana. But this is exactly the false doctrine that Shankara has over and over again refuted throughout his Prastana Traya Bhashyas, and in his Upadesha Sahasri. Shankaras position is that after the attainment of Apararoksha Jnana, there is absolutely nothing left to do, no obstacles left that have to be

destroyed, and no individual left to do any recollecting. Let me cite a few examples:"

We dont claim that one has to do nidhiddhyasana (recollection) after one attains aparokshajnAna. What is to be understood is that manana and nidhidhyAsana are really angas (part) of sravana. Infact sureshvara in naishkarmyasiddhi even states that repeated sravanam itself is nidhiddhyAsana. So both recollection of what is heard already and repeated listening to the sastra are nidhiddhyAsana. All three (sravana, manana and nidhiddhyAsana) are for gaining this aparokshajnAna only. What is recollected is neither direct nor indirect knowledge but it is the words of the sruti and guru which leads to the destruction of ajnAna. Even in the case of objective knowledge an insight has to be repeated for it to be truly effective. This does not contradict what shankara says in all his bhasyas. What shankara actually rejects is the jnAnakarmasamucchayavAdi who says that one has to do a mental karma like meditation (upAsana) after gaining knowledge from the sastras (similar to modern vedantins). nidhiddhyAsana is not a mental karma to produce an adrstaphala but part of the pramanavyApAra to gain knowledge by destroying ignorance. You are actually putting up a straw man (prasankhyAnavAdi) and beating it. Try to understand what the other person says.

In brhadAranyaka bhAsya sankara says nischayena dhyAtavyam (should be meditated upon) explaining the sentence AtmA vAre.. nidhidhyAsitavya:.
How do you explain this?

Further sankara while commenting on BG 7.2 'jnAnam teham savijnAnam idam vaksyAmi...." explains savijnAnam as svAnubhavayuktham (along with one's own anubhava). How do you explain jnAnam and vijnAnam here?
with love and prayers,

Jaishankar

From: "atmachaitanya108" <stadri@a...>

Date: Thu Feb 28, 2002 11:54 pm

Subject: Re: Whence adhyAsa?

Dear Jaisankar,

Please accept my apologies for not having understood your position properly. But when I read your post which clearly stated "After gaining 'doubtless knowledge that I am Brahman" from Guru and Shastra, one has to recollect this knowledge till all previous conditioning goes." I naturally took your words literally. And when you further clarified your position by later posting that what you actually ment was that: "When we say that knowledge has to be recollected it is part of the Pramana Vyapara which leads to a knowledge without any obstacles." I naturally interpreted this to mean that the knowledge that you were referring to was the knowledge that was obtained from the Guru and the shastra and that this knowledge had to be either 'indirect knowledge' with obstacles, or 'direct knowledge' with obstacles. But now I am clear that what you meant by the expression 'doubtless knowledge that I am Brahman ', doesn't refer to knowledge at all, and what the sadhaka has to 'recollect' is neither indirect knowledge nor direct knowledge, but rather, what he has to recollect

is the words of the guru and the shastra so that he can gain the 'direct knowledge' i.e.: 'The doubtless knowledge that I am Brahman, without any obstacles at all. For certainly no one would want to maintain a view where by a wise man, who had Aparoksha Jnana, still had obstacles (A Jnani with Pratibandhikas!). You have rectified my misconception when you explicitly state in your last post:

" All three (Sravana , Manana, Nididhyasana) are for gaining this Aparokshajnana only" And in this I am in perfect agreement with you. To quote Shankara:

" Repetition will be unnecessary for one who can realize the Self as Brahman after hearing "That Thou Art" only once. But for one who cannot do so, repetition is a necessity. Thus it is noticed in the Chandogya Upanishad that Uddalaka teaches his son, "That Thou Art, O Svetaketu"(Chan. 4-8-7-), and then being requested by his son again and again, "Oh revered sir, explain to me again", he removes the respective causes of his (Svetaketu's) misconceptions, and teaches that very same fact "That Thou Art" repeatedly. That process is referred to by citing the text "It is to be heard of (Sravana), reflected on (Manana), to be contemplated upon (Nididhyasana)." Sutra Bh.4-1-2

So once again my apologies, I honestly had no intention of putting up a strawdog and then beating it.

Hari Om

Atmachaitanya

From: sophia & ira schepetin <stadri@a...>

Date: Mon Mar 25, 2002 2:14 am

Subject: Whence Adhyasa

Dear Dennis, and all others interested in this subject, namaste, When you originally asked the question, 'Whence Adhyasas' you did so in the context of a seeming problem that was raised by Douglas Fox's assertion that the cause of Adhyasa could not be answered by three possible alternatives 1) That Brahman is the cause 2) That something independent of Brahman was the cause 3) That we ourselves are the cause. I would like to attempt an answer to your question 'Whence Adhyasa' by advocating the third choice, that I am the 'cause', in the sense that: 'I don't know the Self, I haven't been able to discriminate the true nature of the Self, and due to this , I may be considered the 'cause' of superimposition, and to show how this in fact is Shankaras position, (as opposed to the Mula Avidya Vadins who opted for the second alternative, and by so doing in fact abandoned Non Duality) and to demonstrate that by taking such a position, it does not result in the unacceptable consequences that Fox seems to think it does. I would like to further add that this subject is not of merely academic interest, nor is it only a matter of semantics with no real practical outcomes, for the subjects of Ignorance and Misconception are the very cornerstone of Shankaras Advaita: a topic which he describes as the "anartha hetu" –the source of all evil- and that the primary purpose of all the Vedantic teaching is solely to remove this primary Misconception and nothing

else.

However, before beginning, I think a few preliminary comments are in order. I would like to emphasize the fact that, with regard to the contents of this post as well as all my previous posts, I make no claim to any originality in thinking at all. Everything that I put forth is either from the writings of Sri Shankaracharya, Guadapada, and Suresvaracharya, whom I take to be the true representatives of the Advaitic Tradition' as I understand it, as well as the voluminous writings of Swami Satchidanandendra, the works of Swami Jnanandendra (The former Vidya Guru of the Maharaja of Mysore), and extensive conversations with Swami Atmanandendra, and other direct disciples of Swami Satchidanandendra. I have made free use of these last mentioned sources either by paraphrasing their positions on various topics, or by reproducing their exact words without mentioning the specific texts and verses from which they are derived. The same will be the case in this post.

Whence Adhyasa?

All Indian thinkers who put forth the view that there is only one Absolute Reality have had to grapple with the question: If there is only the Absolute Reality, then how is it that the dualistic world of multiplicity makes its appearance? The answer to this question has basically been dealt with by positing some power, force, energy, 'desire' or primal 'stuff', that inheres in the very fabric of the Absolute. Thus the Shaivites postulated a 'Shakti' that is inseparable from Shiva, and which allows Shiva to perform his 'dance of creation'. The Kashmiri Shavaitees called it "Tuiti" (The primordial seed), or "Iccha"(the desire of Shiva). The Dzog Chen Buddhists called it 'Stahal'(The inexhaustible inherent energy of the Absolute). Ramanuja held that the Absolute associated with Chit(consciousness) and Achit (insentient) is the cause of the world. Vallabhas' Shudda-Advaita held that the 'inner power' of the Absolute called 'Maya', was the cause for the world. It should be noted that all these thinkers accepted the reality of the world, and therefore it was really created, and therefore there must be a cause for it and that cause must in some way inhere in the very nature of the Absolute.

This very same pathetically 'realistic' type of Absolutism was mimicked by the post Shankara Advaita Vedantins who, like their dualistic brethren, postulated an actually existing 'Mula Avidya'(Root Ignorance) that inhered in the very nature of the Absolute from beginningless time so as to account for the world of duality. In addition, this ontological principle (Bhava-rupa, tri-guna atmika, vastu) was hypothesized to be not only the 'cause for creation' but also the ultimate cause (The Whence of Adhyasa) for all the individuals who each had their own personal misconceptions (Adhyasas) about the nature of the Absolute! That this explanation of the "Whence of Adhyasa" is false, completely opposed to reason, experience and to Shankaras radical Non-Dualism (Na sajati bedha, Na vijati bedha, Na svagati bedha) as well as what is the correct explanation, according to Shankara, for

the cause of Adhyasa(superimposition) will be unfolded in what follows. In order to understand the 'Whence of Adhyasa', at least according to Shankaracharya, the first important issue that must be appreciated is the distinction between the "Absolute point of view"(Paramarthika Drishti) and the "Worldly or empirical point of view" (Loukika-vyavharika Dristi). From the Absolute perspective, the perspective of truth, there was never anyone who had ignorance, no one had to get any sort of knowledge to remove that ignorance, and there never was a Guru who had to teach the meaning of the Upanishads to a seeker so that he could be released from his bondage caused by that ignorance. This is the final position of Advaita Vedanta, and not that in fact a really existing Ignorance that someone actually had was at some particular point in time removed by the Shastra Pramana, and in so doing the seeker really became liberated. (It should be noted that if in fact this were the case then liberation would be an event in time, and thus it would have a beginning and would therefore necessarily have an end. It could not be eternal.) For the final realization is merely recognizing the fact that 'I am the Absolute Reality', and in me there never was, is, or will be any ignorance and therefore no need for the removal of that ignorance at all. (Of course, the same can be said for the concepts of Karma, Rebirth, Qualifications for the attainment of Knowledge, Creator and his creation, or that there are three states and we are passing through those states, etc. etc.).This distinction between the Absolute Reality and the 'Empirical' viewpoint should be unfailingly borne in mind in order to reconcile the several seeming self-contradictory statements in Shankaras' commentaries.

In the light of the above it becomes easy to understand that all talk of someone having ignorance, the cause of his ignorance (The Whence of Adhyaasa), the object of his ignorance, his need to remove that ignorance, the means by which that ignorance is removed, are all from the 'worldly' or empirical point of view', the point of view of duality, in fact, the point of view of ignorance.

To illustrate that this distinction of the Absolute and the Empirical viewpoints in relation to the topic of Ignorance is utilized by Shankara, the following quotes should suffice:

"If it should be asked 'And to whom does this Ignorance belong?' We answer, 'To you who are asking this question!' (Objection) 'But I have been declared to be the Isvara Himself by the Scriptures! (Reply) If you are thus awakened, then there never was any Ignorance that ever belonged to anyone'." (Sutra Bhasya 4-1-3)

(Note: It is obvious that according to this view, any question about Ignorance can arise only at the level of empirical life, where there is duality. One who raises the question, is himself ignorant of the truth, and so, it must be admitted that at that stage the questioner himself is ignorant. But when it is known that Brahman or Isvara is the only Reality, there can be neither any question nor reply concerning ignorance or anything whatsoever. Accordingly, Shankara anticipates another objection, i.e.: that if there really is Ignorance then the Self would have at least one thing second to it and thus Non-Duality would be

abandoned. Shankara shows the futility of this objection thus:)

"And this defect that is attributed to the system by some, may also be deemed to have been warded off by our reply to the question raised above. For they are supposed to hold that if such were the case, then the Self would have a second beside him in the shape of Ignorance!"(SBh 4-1-3-)

(Shankara means to say that it may be granted that duality or the empirical view is possible only so long as the unity of the Self is not yet known, but at the transcendental level of Absolute Reality, there is no duality or ignorance that ever existed at all, and therefore Non Duality stands unimpeded.)

So it is from this empirical perspective alone that Shankara begins his teachings about Ignorance or misconception. And from this perspective Ignorance is not a 'theory' that Shankara concocted so as to be able to explain the appearance of the world of duality, nor is it some 'inexplicable' (anirvachiniya) phenomena that can't be said to be 'existent or non-existent' nor is it a dogmatic postulate that is to be blindly accepted on the strength of the scriptural statements, but rather it is a universal fact of human experience, regardless of age, culture, race or sex. In the whole of Shankaras' introduction to his Sutra Bhasya, he does not quote even one scripture, or one traditional guru as an authority, nor does he rely on any questionable logical devices to substantiate his teaching that all worldly-empirical life is based on a fundamental misconception.

What he does say, however, is that this fundamental misconception (Adhyasa), the misconception of mixing up the Self and the Non-Self, the subject and the object, the knower and the known, (even though it is admittedly opposed to all reason) is a FACT of universal experience ("sarva loka pratikshaha"). What he intends to indicate by this is that although the Self is the subject and conscious, and the Not-Self is the object and of a completely opposed nature to the subject, just like darkness and light (tamasah prakashavad) and it is therefore reasonable that they should not be mixed up, nevertheless, all people without exception and regardless of their intellectual capacities, have naturally and uncritically mixed these two completely different and mutually opposed entities, and in so doing are carrying out their worldly lives in the form of 'I am this' and 'this is mine'. To clarify: You, the reader, are now presumably convinced that you are sitting in front of your computer screens, reading this post, and evaluating the veracity of the assertions that are being made. But for you to be sitting, it is necessary that you have accepted the idea that you are either the body or at least the idea that you have a body. For you to be reading this post, the minimum requirement would be to accept the fact that you have the 'sense of sight', and for you to evaluate the correctness or falsity of my assertions, it is absolutely necessary that you have a mind. Yet the idea that you have a body, senses or mind can only come about as a result of not discriminating the Subject from the object, the knower and the known, the Self and the not-Self, and it is

the misconception (Adhyasa) or mixing up of these two categories into one identified entity that is the root cause for all of Samsara. It alone is the 'knot that binds', the Himalayan blunder that serves as the cause for birth and death, for hunger and thirst, for old age and disease, for confusion and doubt, or as Shankara calls it: the "source of all evil". This and only this is the principle meaning of Ignorance according to Shankara, i.e Adhyasa is the mutual superimposition of the Self and the Not-Self along with the mixing of their distinct qualities on each other.

Now, Dennis, we can begin to tackle the question 'Whence Adhyasa. It is a question that can be interpreted as: ' O.K let us grant that Adhyasa is the mutual superimposition of the Self and Non-Self, and let us also grant that because of this Adhyasa all worldly life is proceeding, and not only that, let us also grant that due to Adhyasa all 'spiritual life' (Vaidika Vyvahara) is proceeding, such as the teachings concerning injunctions (Vidhis) and prohibitions (pratishedas), Karmas and meditations as well as the principal Upanishadic teaching concerning the knowledge of the Self, and how this relates to bondage and release (Bandha Moksha Vyvahara), but the question now is: What is the 'cause' for this misconception itself? Why do we superimpose the Self and the Not-Self? What is the reason for this Adhyasa to come about in the first place?

Shankaracharya never explicitly poses the question "What is the cause for misconception?" Nevertheless he leaves no doubt in the mind of his readers how exactly this question of the Whence of Adhyasa is to be dealt with. For, to the questions 'Why do the common people commit or entertain Adhyasa? Why do they wrongly reckon the Self and the Not-Self each for the other? The answers are to be found in the following quotations:

1) "Even though it is not reasonable that people should misconceive the Self for the Not- Self, the worldly people BY NATURE (Naisargika) do have a misconception with regard to the Self and the Not-Self by misconceiving one in the other mutually as also misconceiving the qualities (Dharmas) of each in the other; BECAUSE OF THE REASON THAT THEY HAVE NOT DISCRIMINATED (AVIVEKENA) their qualities which are extremely different, as also those entities (Dharmis) which have those qualities, one from the other.-They have mixed up the Real and the Unreal and are carrying on their workaday transactions NATURALLY due to wrong knowledge(Mithyaajnana nimitaha) in the forms of 'I am this' and 'This is mine'.." (Sutra Bha. Adh.Bha. 1. 'Intro to Brahma Sutra Commentary 2nd paragraph)

Here it is evident that Shankara wants to say that this misconception is natural. In other words, he is saying that it is the very nature of the human mind to confound the Self for the Not-Self whenever it functions. It is just like saying 'it is the nature of water to flow down hill' why? What is the 'cause' for its tendency to flow down a hill? Let us say that it does this 'naturally'. Because that is what water always does. Though waters' tendency to flow down a hill can be

said to be its nature, this should not be interpreted as indicating that this is the intrinsic, inalienable nature of water, for water can, under some peculiar circumstances, flow up a hill. And it is in this sense alone that Shankara says that this misconception is 'natural' to the human mind, and not that it can never get rid of this tendency to have a misconception regarding the Self and the Not Self.

Now, if further pursued, we ask the question what is the 'cause' for this natural tendency of the human mind to misconceive the Subject and the Object, the Real and the Unreal, Shankara replies: 'It is due to the fact that we haven't discriminated (Avivekena) between the two. Because we have not clearly and distinctively determined what exactly is the Real Self, and what exactly is the Unreal Not-Self, because of this, because of not knowing that the Self is the only Reality and because of not knowing that the Not Self is completely Unreal and therefore never existed as a second thing besides the Self, due to this 'CAUSE' of not knowing (Jnana Abava, Agrahana), due to the 'reason' of not having the Knowledge of the Self, we are all misconceiving it. In other words, it amounts to his saying that the inability to distinguish between the Atman and Anatman, Self and Not-Self is the primary ignorance. Because of this primary ignorance, of not knowing (Agrahana) or absence of correct knowledge (Jnana Abava), this primary Ignorance itself is responsible for the "wrong knowledge" (Mithya Jnana), the misconception (Adhyasa) about the Self.

One could object to this explanation on the grounds that if "misconception is an 'effect' that really exists, then its cause must be something that really 'exists'. Its 'cause' can't be something that is a mere absence, a non-existent 'cause' such as not-knowing (Agrahana) or absence of knowledge (Jnana Abava). For everyone adheres to the rule that from non-existence, existence can never come, without an existing cause there can never be an existing effect, and therefore the 'cause' must be an existent, a material something, a positive entity. But this objection is the outcome of a confusion about ontological causality and epistemological 'causality'. And while it is true that for every material effect, a material cause is necessitated (a pot needs its clay and a tree needs its seed), in the case of epistemological 'causality' the cause of 'not knowing' is quite sufficient to account for the effect of misconceiving. Let us examine a common example: When one mistakes a rope for a snake, if one were to enquire as to the 'cause' of that mistake, it would be quite reasonable to reply that "Due to the cause of 'not knowing' that it is a rope, the effect of mistaking it for a snake has taken place. In the same exact way it is perfectly intelligible to assert that due to the 'cause' of not knowing the Self, you have mistaken it for the Not-Self.

And again:

"The Field (Kshetra) and the Field Knower (Kshetrajna) means the Not-Self which is the object (vishaya), and the Self, which is the Subject (vishayi) respectively; although both of these are of different essential natures, having misconceived (Adhyasa) each for the other, and

their respective qualities (Dharmas) mutually in each other, is itself their 'union', their 'association', their 'contact' (Samyoga). For this association, the absence or lack of not distinguishing (Viveka Abava) between the essential nature of the Not- Self (Kshetra Svarupa) and the essential nature of the Self (Keshtrajna Svarupa) IS ITSELF THE 'CAUSE'. Just like the 'contact' of a 'snake' or 'silver' etc., in the rope, shell, etc;-- a 'contact' of the nature of a misconception, owing to want of discrimination between the two." (Gita Bha. 13-26)

In this quotation (which is basically a re-echo of his Adhyasa Bhashaya) Shankara makes it even clearer, if that is possible, that the only reason, or 'cause' for our misconceiving the Self is merely because we do not know the Self. If we in fact knew the Self, it would not be possible to misconceive it as anything else. Just as in the case of the mistaken knowledge about the misconceived 'snake'. That misconception could never arise without there being an absence of knowledge with regard to the fact that all that is there, all that was there, all that will be there, is the rope alone. The 'snake' was no doubt an 'effect' and the absence of knowledge with regard to the rope can be considered to be the 'cause' of the snake, but this cause is not a positively existing material 'thing' some ontological entity needed to account for the effect called a 'misconceived snake'. An important corollary of this illustration of the rope-snake is that once we do get the true knowledge of the rope, the 'objective effect' of the absence of knowledge ie " the 'externally existing snake', as well as the subjective misconception that the rope is a snake, are immediately removed. In the same way, once we get the true knowledge of the Self, the 'objective effect' i.e.: the world of duality, the world of time space and causality, the world of many agents, enjoyers and knowers, as well as the subjective misconception that what is really the Self alone, is the world of duality, are both immediately removed. Only the Non-Dual Self remains.

However, there is also a significant distinction that should be noted between this worldly illustration about misconception and the correct knowledge regarding the rope-snake, as opposed to that which is being illustrated about the misconception (Avidya) and correct knowledge (Vidya) regarding the Self. Before we misconceived the rope as a snake, we were knowers, and after we determine the true nature of the rope and get its correct knowledge, we still remain as knowers, and there is still the possibility that we could have misconceptions in the future with regard to a number of things, including another rope. But in the case of the knowledge of the Self, once we have determined the true Non Dual nature of the Self, all of duality is removed for good, so that the duality of a knower, his means of knowledge, as well as the objects of knowledge no longer remains, and thus there is no possibility that any future misconceptions could arise with regard to the Self, or anything else that was previously misconceived to be existing as a second something in relation to the Self. Knowership is the outcome of superimposing (adhyasa) the Self and the mind. All talk of means of

knowledge and objects of knowledge are dependent on a knowership. And knowership itself depends on Adhyasa, so once this misconception is sublated by the knowledge of the Non-Dual Self, all the empirical dealings of 'knower', 'means of knowledge', and 'known'; (Pramatru, pramana, premeya vyavahara) ceases to be.

There is also another question that makes its appearance when one takes the position that absence of knowledge of the Self is the cause for misconceiving the Self (The Whence Of Adhyasa): To have an absence of knowledge with regard to some object of knowledge, and to misconceive an object of knowledge as something else, requires either the existence of a mind, or to put it in Fox's term, it requires 'some 'one' who is doing the misconceiving'. It would then mean that that which is superimposed, either the mind, or the individual, both of which are already superimposed on the Self, would be the entities that are doing the superimposition. The superimposed is doing the superimposing? This is the objection: and while at first glance this objection seems valid, because it exposes the defect of an apparent mutual dependency that is being relied upon. The supposed defect of saying that you need a mind to do any type of superimposing, and at the same time asserting that the mind itself is a superimposed thing. But let us examine the rope snake example once again. It is not the case that we first have a misconception that there is a snake, and then after that misconception the snake appears. For the appearance of the snake and the misconception are simultaneous. There is no appearance of a snake without the misconception, and there is no misconception without the appearance of the snake. In the same way there is no Adhyasa without the appearance of the mind, and there is no appearance of the mind without Adhyasa. When Adhyasa is removed the mind is removed, and when there is no mind there is no adhyasa. The same can be said with equal validity regarding the individual; There is no individual without adhyasa and there is no adhyasa without the individual And this in fact is our experience. Whenever the mind makes its appearance it does so with the conviction that Duality is real. With the conviction that it is a knower and there is an independent world which can be known. But when the mind makes its disappearance, as in the state of deep sleep, faint, coma or nirvikalpa samadhi, there is no more any Adhyasa or misconceptions, and also no dualistic dealing of a knower knowing something, no mind and no individuality.

And while this answer of Shankaras' to the question 'What is the cause for Adhyasa' is both simple and elegant and in perfect agreement with universal experience, as well as the intelligibility of his claim that this Adhyasa can be totally removed by correct knowledge, this teaching may not feel satisfying to those who have a propensity towards realism and to convoluted hypotheses and unsubstantiated postulates, and would prefer to see the profound teachings of Advaita Vedanta degraded to the level of a speculative theological system that requires of its adherents both blind belief and unquestioning submission to the authority of the Scripture and the Guru. They may instead prefer to dogmatically assert

(while no other system of philosophy, darshana, or religion, has ever thought it necessary to put forth such a view) that instead of 'not knowing' being the cause for Adhyasa, there is an indescribable, inconceivable beginningless and endless power, that has the capacity to cover the Absolute and project the world, an ontological entity (not something totally false or unreal), made up of three gunas, and which cannot be described as existent nor non-existent, and which is a Shakti that inheres in the very nature of the Absolute! An unbelievable view that Shankara never even hinted at in all of his writings! So be it. But I must end this post by asking them to sincerely enquire, in their own hearts as seekers of truth, what is the answer to just one question? Forget about what Shankara may or may not have said on the subject, put aside what any 'tradition' or Swami may have declared, and ask yourself: How would it be possible for Knowledge to remove such an entity?? Can knowledge really get rid of some material (Upadana Karana) 'thing' (Bhava Rupa) that actually exists from beginningless time?? Just answer that. If there is a reasonable answer to this question, I eagerly wait to hear about it.

Om Tat Sat

Atmachaitanya

P.S. ` How the Shastra is the only means of knowledge for the Self' is coming

From: "Stig Lundgren" <slu@C...>

Date: Mon Mar 25, 2002 7:15 am

Subject: Re: [advaitin] Whence Adhyasa

Dear Atmachaitanyaji, namaskaram

Many thanks for your truly excellent posting on the origins of Adhyasa!

Adi Shankara's "adhyasa bhashyam" (the introduction to the Brahma Sutra Bhashya) no doubt offers the key to the understanding of Advaita Vedanta as propagated by Shankara. Anyone interested to know about genuine Shankara vedanta would benefit from studying "adhyasa bhashyam". Therefore, I would like to recommend the members of this list to read the following article:

Quote

adhyAsa Bhashyam

shankaram shankarAchAryam keshavam bAdarAyaNam

SUtrabASykrtau vande bhagavantau punah punaha

SrutismrtipurANAnAm Alayam karuNAlayam

NamAmi bhagavdpAdam shankaram lokashankaram

SUtrabhASyapraNetArau vedAntAbjaprabhAkaru

Vande parasparAtmAnau bAdarAyaNashankaru

Introduction

In the canon of vedanta literature, the Brahma Sutram occupies a unique position as the oldest systematic commentary on the Upanishads. Of commentaries on the Brahma Sutram, Shankara's commentary stands preeminent

in elaborating advaita vedanta according to his tradition, or sampradaya. Whilst there is doubt regarding authorship of some of the works attributed to shankara, there is universal agreement in the tradition that the bhAsyam on brahma sUtram was composed by Adi Shankaracharya. This is evidenced by the fact that the genesis of post shankara schools arises from sub-commentaries on primarily his brahma sutra bhASyam. In these subcommentaries

(of which the so-called bhAmati and vivaraNa schools are most recognised), the authors profess to be elaborating on shankara's system of advaita, and clearly identify shankara as the author of the bhASyam.

His astonishing introduction to his Brahma Sutra Bhashyam (BSB), often called the adhyAsa bhASyam, is, in my view, one of the greatest texts written on vedanta, and holds the status for me of a Sruti. For in it, we find no quotation from other shastra in this introduction to support his statements. They are simply outpourings from anubhava, or experience, of an enlightened sage, and which appeal to that sArvatrika-anubhava, or universal experience, that belongs to each and every one of us.

Shankara's adhyAsa bhASyam fully serves the purpose of an introduction. He succinctly manages to summarise all the key points that will unfold in his Brahma Sutra Bhashyam, and connects them to the central underlying theme. The theme of his work is: " My commentary will explain how the brahma sutram identifies the fundamental obstacle to knowledge, and how it explains the method used in the Sruti to remove this obstacle, so that ultimate knowledge (which will be defined), is acquired". At one stroke he covers the aim of the work, its purpose, and what the answer is to the basic question above.

In summary, Shankara clarifies for us that the obstacle to enlightenment is a misconception on our part, which superimposes (mixes up) up the real and non-real, which drives an empirical view of the world as an apparent duality of subjects, objects, and means of knowing these objects. The misconception is innate to us, and tradition gives the technical name adhyAsa to this superimposition. Shankara further defines the avidyA in the Sruti as this adhyAsa. Once this avidyA is removed, what is left is vidyA or knowledge that is the experience of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. Therefore, shankara says, the purpose of the shastra is to reveal Brahman by identifying and removing avidyA or misconceptions, so that Brahman can shine of its own accord.

In so doing, in his adhyAsa bhASyam, shankara sows the seed for all the important aspects of his tradition of advaita:

- 1) What knowledge gives us knowledge of Ultimate Reality?
- 2) What is the obstacle to knowledge?
- 3) What is the nature of this obstacle?
- 4) How is knowledge of Brahman attained? What are the means of knowledge, and why is Sruti the ultimate means of knowledge?
- 5) What is the role and purpose of shastra in revealing this knowledge?
- 6) What is the method used by the shastra to reveal Brahman?

If one had the time, one could take each statement in the adhyAsa bhASyam

and unravel it to reveal all of shankara's tradition of advaita. In this article I will simply give a guided tour of the contents of the adhyAsa bhASyam line by line, and highlight the key messages. My rendering of the bhASyam will be as literal and transparent as possible, so the readers scan judge themselves the true meaning for them.

adhyAsa bhASyam is a short text, and one can read it in about 10 minutes or so. I have found it invaluable committing it to memory, so it constantly flows through all my thoughts. I hope by the end of the article the reader has the same feeling about this text as I.

I have referred in brief to the portions of the bhASya discussed at the start of each section. I have followed the bhASyam in the order it was written.

2) The nature of confusion

yuSmadasmāt pratyaya...adhyAso mithyēti bhavitum yuktam

In a manner that is classic of shankara's style, the author of the bhASyam begins with an objection. The objection runs as follows: Atman is real, and is the eternal subject I . Everything else is not real, and is perceived as a separate object you (yuSmāt). How is it possible to confuse or superimpose(adhyAsa) the distinct concepts (pratyaya) of subject and object (the "I" and the "you"), and related attributes (dharma's), as they are by nature as different as night and day (tamah prakAshavat)? Such confusion should be impossible (mithyēti bhavitum yuktam). Shankara's objection simply states that, in theory, it should be crystal clear to all what reality is, since it is so different from the unreal, so what is all the fuss about, and what is the need to write a whole book about reality and how to perceive it?

Shankara's reply runs as follows:

TathA'pi anyonyasmin,...naisargiko'yam loka vyavahAraha

It is, however, a matter of common experience (loka vyavahAraha), that, through lack of discrimination (avivekena), we superimpose concepts on each other (anyonyasmin, anyonyAtmakatAm) and their attributes (anyonyadharmAn cha adhyasa), even though they and their attributes are utterly distinct in nature (atyanta viviktayoh dharma-dharmiNoh), impelled by false knowledge (mithyAjnAna-nimittaha), it is an innate human error (naisargikah) to confuse the real and the non, real or the "I" and "mine" (satyanrte mithunIkrtya, aham idam mamedam iti).

In other words, shankara tells us " but common experience shows us that we do it all the time! We see duality where in reality there is none, we mistake one thing for another every day". That we do this is not through any mystery but is innate. The mixing up is adhyAsa. Shankara will later go on to say that this adhyAsa has always been there, and is therefore beginningless. It is important to make an important clarification here. Shankara proceeds on the same basis as the Sruti, which takes it as axiomatic that Brahman is the ultimate reality. We find very few instances where discussions occur to "prove" that the correct view of the world is that there is an Ultimate Reality called Brahman. For shankara and the Sruti this was self evident that Atman is self -established (swayam prasiddhatwaat). Viewed from this transcendental viewpoint of reality it is clear why shankara views this mixing of the real and the non real as an error. This is fundamental to understanding shankara's tradition of advaita. All that is required for knowledge is to

remove this error to reveal Brahman, and the universe will naturally be seen in its true light

NB: A side note for the specialists. If you want to stick to the essence of the meaning, skip the next paragraph

In this passage we find the first divergence of opinion amongst post shankara commentators. In the panchapAdika sub-commentary, attributed to padmapAda, the word mithyAjnAna is explained as "mithyA cha tat ajnAnam cha", meaning an unreal ignorance. The other way to decompose this word is as "mithyA cha tat jnAnam cha", meaning a misconception, or false knowledge. Using the former definition, the sub-commentator has explained that the cause of this adhyAsa or avidyA is some other material cause (upAdAna kArana) that he defines as a mysterious avidyA shakti, that is indescribable (anirvachaneeya), and inert (jaDAtmika). The later writers have used the term mulAvidyA, or Root Ignorance, for this material cause, and equate it with the term mAyA. This gives a different flavour to the nature of avidyA than a literal reading of mithyAjnAna. The question as to whether shankara really meant just false knowledge or something more mysterious is the subject of great debate. This is not the place to go in to this in detail. I will be explaining the adhyAsa bhASyam using the literal meaning of simply false knowledge.

3) How is adhyAsa defined?

"Aha ko'yam adhyAso nameti"....."ekah chandraha sat dwitIyavat iti"

Shankara now proceeds to give various definitions accepted by the tradition as follows, and tries to identify the underlying theme:

In response to the question, "so, what is adhyAsa (ko'yam adhyAso nAmeti), shankara replies that it is the nature of something remembered (smrti rUpah), or the impression of something seen in the past (paratra pUrvadrSTAvabhAsah). By this he wishes to confirm that it is a mental notion. He further goes on to give 3 definitions from tradition:

i) Some say it is simply the superimposing the qualities of one thing (anyadharmAdhyAsah) on another (anyatra)

ii) Others say it is a a confusion of our faculty to discriminate (tat vivekAgraha-nibandhano bhrama iti)

iii) Others further says it is the superimposing 2 things and their attributes that are of opposite nature (tasyaiva vipareeta dharmatwa-kalpanAm Achakshate iti)

Shankara then explains that the common thread running through all definitions is that of confusing one thing and its attributes with another (anyasya anydharmAvabhAsatAm na vyabhicharati). For, it is a matter of common experience (tathA cha loke anubhavah), where we all have confused one thing for another. Two examples are given: confusing silver for nacre (shuktika hi rajatavat avabhAsate, and when, due to a trick of the light, one moon is seen as two (ekah chandra sad-dwiteeyavat iti)

Put simply, our ignorance is confusing one thing for another, which in the context of vedanta, is confusing the world of duality for the real world, whereas the real world is one where no duality exists. This confusion is an experience, and therefore its existence does not need to be proved or disproved. Sureswara says this in his vArtika:

Atah pramANato'shakyA'vidyA'syeti vIxitum
KIDrshI vA kuto vAsAvanubhUtyekarUpatah
Sambandha Vartika 184

In fact, one can never know ignorance as belonging to any one, neither determine its nature nor conceive how it can possibly be at all, for it is essentially the nature of experience itself (by the way, this affirms that, in shankara's tradition of advaita, it is futile trying to establish the cause of avidyA, as, once it is recognised and removed, it is seen to never have existed at all! This is why shankara never taxes himself with detailed discussions concerning where does this avidyA come from, and to whom does it belong, as these matters become totally irrelevant once atman is known. Later followers of shankara chose not to let the matter rest, hence the elaborate theories regarding the root cause of avidyA, and various discussions of the locus of avidyA. One imagines that, should these discussions have happened in front of shankara, he would have given them short shrift by saying something like "its about Brahman, not avidyA! Don't get distracted!")

4) Further clarification that adhyAsa is possible

katham punah pratyagAtmanyaviSaye...evam aviruddhah pratyagAnmanyapi anAtmAdhyAsah

To further clarify Shankara's statement that adhyAsa is a matter of common experience, he next raises an objection, which is then answered. The objection runs as follows:

We can accept the superimposition of two objects in front of us (sarvo hi puro'vasthite viSaye, viSayAntaram adhyasyati). But, how can the atman that you claim is ever the subject (aviSayatwam bravIshi) be confused with something that is the not Atman, expressed as "you"!

Shankara has essentially restated the original objection in a different way. His reply is as follows:

It is not unusual at all that such superimposition occurs regarding atman (na tAvat ayam ekAntena aviSayah), for in empirical life the atman is referred as the object of the "me" notion (asmatpratyayaviSayatwAt aparoxatwAt cha). Secondly, there is no rule that says only two perceived objects in front of one can be confused (na chAyam asti niyamah puro'vasthite eva viSaye viSayAntaram adhyasitavyam iti). For, the sky is imperceptible, yet children confuse dirt in the sky as having made the sky dirty (apratyakhse'api hyAkAshe bAlAh talamalinatAt adhyasysanti). Therefore, it is not unreasonable to expect that the imperceptible atman that is the eternal subject, can be confused with objective phenomena around us. (evam aviruddhah pratyagAtmanyapi anAtmAdhyAsah)

5) Adhyasa is avidyA

tametem evam laxanam adyAsam paNDitA avidyeti manyante, tadvivekena cha vastuswarUpAvadhAraNam vidyAm Ahuh. Tatraivam sati yatra yadadhyAsah tatkrtena doSeNa guNena vA aNumAtreNApi sa na sambadhyate.

Now we come to an important part of the bhashya. Shankara here explicitly defines that confusing of the real and the non real, that is adhyAsa (tametam evam laxaNam adyAsam), that results in the apparently real world of duality

of subjects, objects and means of knowledge , as being called avidyA in the shAstras by the learned (paNDItA aviyeti manyante). In contrast, ascertaining the true nature of things though discrimination is called vidyA (tadvivekena cha vastuswarUpAvadhAraNam vidyAm Ahuh). In addition, to clarify, where avidyA operates, it does not in any way affect the substrate at all as a result of the perceived acts, defects, qualities etc that avidyA may imply as being atman (Tatraivam sati yatra yadadhyAsah tatkrtena doSeNa guNena vA aNumAtreNApi sa na sambadhyate).

Atman is never tainted by the effects of Ignorance

We find in the vArtikAs and kArikAs numerous statements that describe avidyA as that which results in a confusion of the real and non real. There are also descriptions of subtle shades of this false knowledge (mithyAjnAna) that is avidyA (nature of samshaya, of "I do not know") etc, but the core definition of avidyA is that given by shankara here in the bhASyam. In upedasha sAhasI he beautifully elaborates his definition, to directly link adhyAsa with the world of samsAra and duality:

"Twam paramAtmAnam santam asamsAriNam samsAryaham asmIti viparItam pratipadyase, akartAram santam karteti, abhoktAram santam bhokteti, vidyamAnam cha avidyamAnamiti, iyam avidyA" (US II 50)

"You are the non-transmigratory self, but you wrongly think that you are liable to transmigration. In the same way, not being a doer/agent, an experiencer, a knower, you mistake yourself to be these. This is avidyA" Sureshwara also beautifully summarises shankara's bhASya so far, in an unrelated verse:

AntaryAmI tathA sAkshI sarvagyaashchetyavidyayA

MiththyAdhyAsaishcha tat karyaihi aprameyam prameeyate

BBV 2.3.10

"That Inner Dweller, The Witness, all knowing and un objectifiable, appears to become a separate object through the false superimposition that is aviydA"

Anywhere the notion of "I am an agent, doer, thinker," arises, then avidyA is there, as it implies a distinct separate doer/agent/knower, and an object that is to be done/achieved/known. This leads perfectly to the next astonishing segment of the adhyAsa bhASyam:

6) All secular activities that presuppose a separate doer etc are in the field of avidyA, even the veda's!

tametam avidyAkhyam AtmAnAtmanoh iteretarAdhyAsam puraskrtya sarve pramANa-prameya vyavahArAH, laukikAh vaidikAh cha pravrttAh sarvANI cha shAstrANI vidhi-pratiSedha-moxaparANI

This statement can be a bombshell for those not acquainted with the subtler meaning of vedanta . And was certainly an epiphany for me in my early vedanta studies. For, shankara declares without hesitation that all empirical activities where separate subjects and objects are perceived, (sarve pramANa-prameya vyavahArAH), both day to day and vedic (laukikAh vaidikAh cha) operate in the field of avidyA (tametam avidyAkhyam AtmAnAtmanoh iteretaram adhyAsam puraskrtya). So do all shastras (sarvANI cha shAstrANI) that pertain to injunctions, prohibitions and discussions of liberation (vidhi-pratiSedha-moxaparANI). In other words, all

discussions of injunctions , vedic ritual including pooja havan, meditation etc, even talk of liberation itself are in the field of ignorance. Why is this so? shankara anticipates that this would be a question, and raises it himself next as an objection, followed by the answer. The objection runs as follows: Katham punaha avidyAvatviSayAni pratyakshAdini pramANAni shAstrAni cha iti?

How can all means of knowledge (pramANani) and the shAstra's have ignorance as their locus?

The response is as follows:

Uchyate dehendriyAdiSu....pramANAni shAstrAni cha

Since a man without self identification with the body, mind and senses etc cannot become a knower, and as such, the means of knowledge cannot function for him, (dehendriyAdiSu ahammamAbhimAnarahitasya pramAtrwAnupapattu pramANapravrtyanupapatteh). Since perception and other activities (of such a cogniser) are not possible without accepting the senses etc as belonging to him (na hIndriyANyanupAdAya pratyakshAdivyavahArah sambhavati). Since the senses cannot function without the body as a substrate (na cha adhiSTHANamantareNa indriyANam vyavahArah sambhavati). And, since nobody engages in any activity with a body that has not the idea of the self superimposed on it (na cha anadhyasta AtmabhAvena dehena kashchit vyApriyate), even though the self it is unattached and cannot become a knower unless there are all of these above notions(na cha etasmin sarvasmin asati asangasyAtmanah pramAtrtwam upapadyate). And since the means of knowledge cannot function without a "knower" (na cha pramAtrtwam antareNa, pramANa-pravrirttirasti), it therefore follows that all means of knowledge, such as direct perception as well as the shastras are in the field of avidyA, as they are based on the basic adhyAsa that one is a distinct knower (tasmAt avidyAvadviSayAnyeva pratyakshAdIni pramANAni shAstrAni cha)

Put simply, for the means of knowledge to operate, it requires the notion of a doer, and the notion of a doer is the result of superimposition on the unattached Atman. In other words, as soon as one falsely identifies the self as a pramAtr, ie an agent, or doer, then all fields that operate are in the field of avidyA. ShAstra, means of knowledge etc, since they require a distinct doer, are therefore bound in the field of avidyA.

Side note:

For those not familiar, the concepts of prAmtr prameya etc are defined in the nyAya shAstra as follows:

Yasya prepsAjihAsAprayuktasya pravrttih sa pramAtA

One who is urged to get or avoid something and therefore engages in enquiry (because he wants to know things correctly) is pramAtr

YenArtham pramiNoti tat pramANam

That by means of which he ascertains his object is prameya

Yo'rthah pratIyate tat prameyam

The object ascertainable is prameya

YadarthavijnAnam sA pramitih

The correct ascertainment of the object is pramiti

These concepts are fundamental to enquiry of reality in the Indian systems of

philosophy. We are a sea of pramAtr's in a world full of objects to be known, known as pramANa-prameya vyavahAra. It is advaita, particularly as expressed in Shankara's school, where it is declared that such distinction of the world into a duality of distinct subjects and objects is an illusion, driven by the innate trait of superimposing on the atman the concept of pramAtrhood.

Gaudapada declares elsewhere , "mAyAmAtram idam dvaitam, advaitam paramArthatah", this world of duality is false, the supreme reality is advaita. This process of confusing the atman as distinct pramAtr is the subject of adhyAsa bhASyam.

7) In the matter of empirical life, human procedure is identical to all animals

pashwAdibhishcha avisheSA...tat kAlah samAnah iti nischIyate

The world as perceived when the notions of pramAtr, prameya and pramANa are assumed to exist is called the empirical standpoint in the shankara's bhashyas (vyavahAra drSTI). When these notions have been abandoned, the world is in its true light from the standpoint of supreme reality (paramArtha drSTI). It is vital always to understand in shankara's bhashyas which standpoint is being adopted for an argument, otherwise it can lead to massive confusion. In the next section of adyAsa bhASyam, shankara amplifies the point that the empirical world conjured through this avidyA is a matter of common experience that we share with all living beings.

For animals, when they hear a sound they believe is dangerous, they turn away, and move towards that which seems safe (YathA hi pashwAdayah shabdAdibhih shrotrAdInAm sambandhe sati shabdAdivijnAne pratikUle jAte tato navartante, anukUle cha pravartante), and they turn towards someone holding green grass, and shie away from one holding a stick, thinking that they will be beaten (yathA daNdodyakaram puruSam abhimukham upalabhya, mAma hantum ayam icchhatIti palAyitum Arabhante, harita-trNapUrNa-

pANim upalabhya tam pratyabhimukhI bhavanti). In the same way wise humans are repelled by strong, riotous people with menacing looks and swords drawn, but drawn to those opposite in nature (evam puruSa api vyutpannachittAh krUradrSTIn Akroshatah kaDgodyatakarAn balavata upalabhya tato nivartante, tatviparItAn prati pravartante). In this way, the behaviour of humans and animals in the empirical sphere of subjects and objects is identical (atah samAnah pashwAdibhih puruSANAM pramANaprameya-vyavahArah)

To further clarify, shankara goes on to say that it is of course well known that animals use their means of perception without the benefit of discrimination etc (pashwAdInAm cha prasiddho'vivekapurassarah pratyakshAdivyavahArah). From this we can conclude that from the empirical standpoint, the means of perception employed by the wise and animals are identical (tat samAnyadarshanAt vyutpattimatAm api puruSANAM pratyakshAdivyavahArah tatAlah samAnah iti nischIyate)

So, what is the point of the above? Simply to say that the instinctive behaviour of humans in the empirical field is due to a series of

misconceptions due to a non-discrimination between the Atman and the non-Atman, and that humans share this behaviour with the rest of the animal kingdom. Now humans, apart from their faculty of discrimination, must be different somehow, and therefore not subject to avidyA? Shankara deals with this objection in the next section.

8) The shastra's are ever bound in the field of avidyA as they must presuppose a distinct agent

shAstriye tuAshritya pravartante

Shankara says that it is indeed true, that one must have some notion of self as distinct from this life and the hereafter to perform karma's (shAstriye tu vyavahAre yadyapi buddhipUrvakArI nAviditwA Atmanah paralokasambandham adhikriyate). However, such a person has not cognized the true self which, according to vedanta, is beyond hunger and thirst, beyond the distinctions of caste, and beyond the notions of rebirth from one life to the next (tathApi na vedAntavedyam, ashanAyAdyatItam, apetabrahmakshatrAdibhedam, asamsAryAtmatattwam adhikAre apekshyate). In fact, the ultimate knowledge that Atman as a non-agent is not only a useless notion for one engaged in acts to be performed, but is in fact diametrically opposite to it! (anupayogAt, adhikAravirodhAt cha). So, all human behaviour, whether secular, vedic or employing means of valid knowledge are in the realm of avidyA. Now, it is clarified that even the shAstra laying out injunctions also operate in the field of ignorance. Shankara says that:

For, before the dawn of real knowledge, all shAstra's can never transcend the field of avidyA (prAk cha tathA bhUtAtmavijnAnAt pravartamAnam shAstram avidyAvadviSayatwam nAtivartate). For, in the example injunction "a brahmin should offer sacrifice", the notion of caste, being an agent, being at a certain stage in life, etc have first to be superimposed on the changeless, eternal Atman before such a sentence can make any sense! (tathA hi Brahmano yajeta ityAdIni shAstrANi Atmani varNAshramayo'vasthhAdivisheSAdhyAsam Ashritya pravartante)

This section can be distressing to those who have, all their life, depending on performing japa, pooja, homa, or following injunctions as a means to secure revelation. In contrast, such activities must presuppose a distinct notion "I am doing such and such", which puts them in the field of ignorance. Shankara elsewhere explains that, when such acts are performed without desire for fruit, by recognising the there is no "doer", then they inculcate the desire for brahavidya, which takes the aspirant closer to realising the message of vedanta.

9) Various examples of adhyAsa elaborated

adhyAso nAma... adhyasyati.

Shankara now gives various examples of this adhyAsa, which he defines again as the cognition of one thing as something else (adhyAso nAma atasminstadbuddhih ityavochAma). The first example is one where, when family members are sick or well, we feel sick or well too, because of the attachment (tadyathA putrabhAryAdiSu vikaleSu sakaleSu vA, aham eva vikalah sakalo vA iti bahyadharmAn atmanyadhyasyati). The next example

relates to attributes of the body (tathA dehadharmAn), where we say "I am fat", or "I am thin", or "I am fair"; "I stand, I go, I limp" etc (sthhUlo'ham, krsho'ham, gauro'ham; tiSThAmi, gachhAmi, langhayAmi cha iti). The next examples relate to the senses and organs (tathA indriyadharmAn), such as "I am dumb, I am one-eyed, I am a eunuch, I am deaf, or I am blind (mUkah, kANah, kIibah, badhirah, andho'ham iti). Finally, the attributes of the internal organ , when one superimposes the notions of will, doubt, perseverance etc (tathA antahkaraNadharmAn: kAma-sankalpa.vichikitsAdyavasAyAdIn). In this way , one firstly superimposes the internal organ possessed of the ego notion, on the innermost Atman which is the eternal Witness (evam ahampratyayinam asheSaswaprachArasAkshiNI pratyagAtmanyadhyasa), and then in the opposite direction, one superimposes on the internal organ that Atman which opposed to non-Atman, and is the witness of everything (tam cha pratyagAtmAnam sarvasAkhiNam tadviparyayeNa antahkaraNAdishwadhyasyati).

Here, shankara comes full circle, and reiterates the opening section of adhyAsa bhASyam, showing how the Atman, the Witness that is ever unattached, can be confused to be the notion "me", and be confused with the non-Atman expressed as objects, or the notion "you". The inner organ referred to by shankara is none other than the manas, or mind (see shankara's commentary on BSB 2-3-32). It is possible that shankara had in mind the famous verse in Swetaswata Upanishad, which describes atman as sAkhi or witness:

Eko devah sarvabhUteSu gUDHah sarvavyApI sarvabhUtantarAtma
KarmAdhyakshah sarvabhUtAdhivAsah, sAkshI chetA kevalo nirguNashcha
(Swe 1-6)

That one Shining One is hidden in all beings, is all pervasive and the innermost Atman of all

It is the overseer of all actions, the indweller in all beings, the Witness, Pure Consciousness, that which is all that is left (when avidyA removed), and is beyond all qualities.

These examples only are given to show it is a matter of common experience that we mistake one thing for another. Elsewhere, the example of the rope and snake is given. In particular, we confuse the Atman with that which is non-Atman. Until this basic confusion is removed, enlightenment is not possible. This is how shankara wraps up his adhyAsa bhASyam and sets up his commentary on the brahma sutram:

10) The purposed of the brahma sutram and shankara's commentary is to expose the fundamental flaw that is avidyA, and remove it

evam ayam....pradarshayiSyAmah

In wrapping up, shankara re-iterates all the main elements of adhyAsa, and the results, saying:

Thus occurs this superimposition , or adhyAsa, which is beginningless and endless (anAdiranantah), which is innate (naisargikah adhyAsah), which is of the nature of a false notion or knowledge (mithhyApratyayarUpah), is the basis for all notions of agentship and enjoyership (kartrtwa-bhoktrtwapravartakah),

and is a matter of common knowledge to all of us (sarva-lokapratyakshah).

To eradicate this fundamental source of destruction of true knowledge (asyAnarthahetoh prahANaya), and establish the unity of Atman (atmaikatwavidyA pratipataye), all the vedanta's are begun (sarve vedAntA Arabhyante). That this is the purport of all the vedanta texts, we shall begin this work on the shArIrika mImAmsa, known as the brahma sUtram (yathA chAyam arthah sarveSAm vedAntAnAm, tathA vayam asyAm shArIrikamImAmsAyAm pradarshayiSyAmah).

In summarising, shankara, restates the basic nature of adhyAsa, and, more importantly that this avidyA is the only obstacle to true knowledge. Therefore, hew declares, the purpose of all the vedanta texts is simply to remove this avidyA, and establish Atman or Brahman as the only reality. As such the shAstra's are called the Ultimate Pramana (antyam pramANam), because they remove misconceptions that come from Ignorance. For, once these misconceptions are removed, Atman will shine of its accord, and there will be nothing more to be done

Conclusion

In his brief introduction, shankara tells us the reason we cannot attain enlightenment. It is because it is in our nature to mix up the real and not real, and therefore perceive a world of duality with multiple knowers/doers/subjects and things to be known/done/objects. In particular, we falsely confuse the eternal Atman, that is our innermost self and is The Witness with no role in empirical life, to be acting as an agent . This confusion is innate to us, and is a matter of common experience requiring no proof. It is beginningless and endless in the sphere of the empirical universe. This confusion, or superimposition is the basic ignorance that results in this world of duality. The world of duality fashioned by avidyA is termed to be mAyA, or illusion, as it can only be perceived once this basic superimposition has occurred., and all activities including the secular and vedic fall into the field of ignorance as they must presuppose a distinct doer. The purpose of the vedanta texts is to point out this ignorance as essentially the nature of a false mental notion, and remove all misconceptions, to reveal the nature of Atman. A thorough understanding of adhyAsa bhASyam, therefore, is vital to understanding the texts of vedanta and shankara's bhASyas in particular. It is for this reason that this text is held in such high regard, and deserves to be studied by all serious students of vedanta
Harih Om

Sri krSNArpaNamastu

Unquote

This article was written by Sri Subhanu Saxena, a disciple of Sri Aswattha Narayana Avadhani, who in his turn is a disciple of Swami Satchidanandendra Saraswati. In other words, Swami Satchidanandendra is the paramaguru of Sri Subhanu Saxena.

Very best wishes

Stig Lundgren

From: "satyan_c" <satyan_c@y...>

Date: Mon Mar 25, 2002 12:24 pm

Subject: Re: Whence Adhyasa

Dear Sri Atmachaitanyaji,

As usual, I immensely enjoyed reading your post. I was reminded of Swami Chinmayananda's oft quoted statement: "The non apprehension of reality leads to the mis-apprehension of reality" in various parts of your writing.

However, a few doubts still linger especially with the chicken and egg problem you have raised towards the end:

Non discrimination presupposes an individual with a non discriminating mind and it also presupposes entities real and unreal (ie duality) to be discriminated between. However, aren't we trying to analyse what is even causal to the individual and the mind and the first appearance of duality? ie what is it that brought about the individual/mind/duality to begin with.

Vedanta puts forth the causal body model to explain (on the empirical level for the ignorant but seeking intellect) the cause for the individual mind and intellect. However, then, Trigunatmika Maya (and Avidya) are also necessarily brought in, the need for which is what you precisely are questioning.

Hence, there is still a gap in my understanding as to why there is a need to question the Maya/Avidya "theory" which conveniently and provisionally explains (to the ignorant but seeking mind!) how the individual/mind/duality arose. Given that Maya (Avidya) does not really exist, only seems to, settles the ignorant questioning intellect while it lasts(!), and also disappears on enquiry/realization, I don't see the major objection accommodating it.

regards,
--Satyan

From: "Stig Lundgren" <slu@C...>

Date: Mon Mar 25, 2002 8:06 pm

Subject: Re: [advaitin] Re: Whence Adhyasa

Sri Satyanji wrote,

> Vedanta puts forth the causal body model to explain (on the empirical
> level for the ignorant but seeking intellect) the cause for the
> individual mind and intellect. However, then, Trigunatmika Maya (and
> Avidya) are also necessarily brought in, the need for which is what
> you precisely are questioning.

Why do you think "the causal body model" and trigunatmika maya are necessarily brought in in order to explain the cause of the individual mind and intellect? Adi Shankara certainly didn't think so. The trigunatmika maya theory was formulated by vedantins in the post-Shankara era. The same is true also regarding the causal body (kArana Shariira) model. The causal body is mentioned only once in the whole bulk of Shankara's writings, namely in his bhashya on Isa Upanishad. The post-Shankarites, however, formulated a theory according to which the soul enters a causal body in deep-sleep. And this is not at all what Shankara says regarding the causal body.

The post-Shankara vedantins holds the view that the causal

body and the trigunaatmika maya are due to the existence of the individual (and ignorant) mind. And hence the chicken and egg problem is deluding us again: If the individual mind is due to the causal body etc., then how can the causal body etc. exist due to the individual mind? Personally, I can't see how adhyasa and avidya could be satisfyingly explained by bringing the post-Shankara theories into the picture. If mUIAvidyA is considered as necessary in order to explain adhyasa, then why don't we have to explain the cause and existence of mUIAvidyA? And if we somehow tries to explain the cause of mUIAvidyA, then we have to explain the cause and existence of this cause etc. in infinitum. This way of reasoning apparently leads to an infinite regress.

> Hence, there is still a gap in my understanding as to why there
> is a need to question the Maya/Avidya "theory" which conveniently
> and provisionally explains (to the ignorant but seeking mind!) how
> the individual/mind/duality arose. Given that Maya (Avidya) does
> not really exist, only seems to, settles the ignorant questioning
> intellect while it lasts(!), and also disappears on enquiry/realization,
> I don't see the major objection accommodating it.

Well, the post-Shankara theories leads to a number of logical problems, already pointed out by Ramanuja in his 1100th century critique of the Advaita school as he knew it (that is, the post-Shankara Advaita school). The critique of Ramanuja only applies to the standpoints of the post-Shankarites, and could have been avoided if the post-Shankarites had remained faithful to the teachings of Adi Shankara himself. And this critique makes way for the rise of the dualist schools. So at least to some degree, the post-Shankara theories were responsible for the forming of rival vedantic schools.

However, a bigger problem is the confusion caused by the post-Shankara advaitins among the students and sincere followers of Advaita Vedanta. For instance, when I started out studying vedanta, I was confused by the fact that already a couple of generations after Adi Shankara, subtraditions emerged under the names of Vivarana and Bhamati. I was confused regarding which one of these subtraditions represented the genuine philosophy of Adi Shankara. Did Vivarana or Bhamati follow the tradition of Shankara? A friend of mine (an extremely learned advaitin) had already guided me through the "adhyasa bhashyam" (the introduction to Shankara's Brahma Sutra Bhashya), and I couldn't figure out in what way the Vivarana and Bhamati theories corresponded to what Shankara said in "adhyasa bhashyam". I guess that other seekers and students of Advaita Vedanta have faced problems and questions similar to mine.

Very best wishes

Stig Lundgren

From: "madathilnair" <madathilnair@y...>

Date: Tue Mar 26, 2002 5:55 pm

Subject: Re: Whence Adhyasa

Namaste!

I read Shri Atmachaitanyaji's long post several times. Then I went over Shri Dennis Waite's original post (12349 of 18th February 2002) and the several responses it subsequently elicited including mine. I would like to respectfully present the following humble thoughts. I may kindly be forgiven for any ignorance:

1. Neither Shri Waite nor those who initially responded to his post mentioned anything about a moola-avidya with bhava roopa. It was first brought into the discussion by Shri Atmachaitanyaji himself in his post 12380 dated 20th February 2002 in order to validate Douglas Fox's thought that adhyasa cannot be an independent process outside of Brahman.
2. Sizeable portions of Shri Atmachaitanyaji's latest post and previous posts in this chain are devoted to refute this moola-avidya with bhava roopa, which he himself introduced into the discussion, and the post-Sankara advaitins who advocate(d) it, whoever they are.
4. I believe the explanation that he has offered to the conundrum of adhyasa could have stood on its own without all such lengthy refutation. This is not to say that we have not learnt anything from his fantastic expositions.
5. No doubt, Shri Atmachaitanyaji has drawn from several sources and built a brilliant case for his contention that we ourselves are the cause for adhyasa. Reading his post was a real, big, enlightening experience.
6. But after everything, the big question that lingers in mind is if we are not back at square one. Let us look at Shri Atmachaitanyaji's conclusion: "in the sense that: "I don't know the Self, I haven't been able to discriminate the true nature of the Self, and due to this, I may (sic) be considered the `cause' (sic) of superimposition". Don't the words "may" and apostrophized `cause' point at some doubt and uncertainty?
7. By "I" , I am sure he does not mean the Self. This "I" is in the realm of the Unreal Not-Self (to quote his own terminology), because with regard to the Self there is no adhyasa at all. The "I" certainly is the "some `one'" referred to by Shri Atmachaitanyaji towards the end of his post who appears simultaneously with adhyasa. Can this "I" which itself is born within and at the same time as adhyasa probe into the origin of adhyasa and get a satisfactory answer, i.e. can these two `entities" have distinct separate existence (as is our experience) so that at least one of them can enquire into the cause of the other and ultimately conclude that the `enquirer' himself is the cause? To make it short, can two entities originate at the same point in time from the same primal cause? Doesn't it sound like two events at the same point in space and time? Please correct me if I am wrong.
8. How can adhyasa without bhava roopa give rise to an Unreal Not-

Self of beings with bhava roopa? How can the bhavaatheetha (beyond bhava), through the agency of something without bhava roopa, give rise to something with bhaava roopa? How can a misconception (immaterial cause) result in a material universe? An epistemological causality with ontological possibilities? These are of course questions which Shri Atmachaitanyaji himself had introduced before to this discussion and still valid.

9. Sankara, as quoted by Shri Atmachaitanyaji, has stated that the misconception with regard to the Self and Non-Self is naisargika (by nature). Isn't this another way of saying that avidya is anaadi? Sankara has said that right in Thathwabodha". Naturally, therefore, we cannot fix the birth date of this natural misconception!

10. Shri Atmachaitanyaji had promised to go through the Martha Doherty's dissertation (recommended by Shri Kathirasanji). He has not mentioned anything in that regard..

11. Ultimately, I am left with a feeling that Shri Atmachaitanyaji has not taken us any farther than where we had reached under the guidance of our teachers and those who wrote before in this forum other than throwing fresh insights into the rope-snake analogy and postulating the simultaneous origin of "I" and adhyasa to accommodate and affirm Douglas Fox's thought (c). In fact, the gamut of his conclusion rests purely on the latter.

12. To quote Shri Atmachaitanyaji again:

"But for you to be sitting, it is necessary that you have accepted the idea that you are either the body or at least the idea that you have a body. For you to be reading this post, the minimum requirement would be to accept the fact that you have the `sense of sight', and for you to evaluate the correctness or falsity of my assertions, it is absolutely necessary that you have a mind. Yet the idea that you have a body, senses or mind can only come about as a result of not discriminating the Subject from the object, the knower and the known, the Self and the not-Self, and it is the misconception (Adhyasa) or mixing up of these two categories into one identified entity that is the root cause for all of Samsara."

The sense of body, sight, mind etc. does not occur when an experience goes on. When the experience occurs, there is only the lighting up of the "experiencing". Even the experiencer and the object experienced vanish. I am listening to Jesudas. When "laya" takes place, there is no Jesudas, there is no song, there is no me (i.e. "Ithe listener-self-awareness"), there remains only the lighting up of enjoyment. The body, mind, eyes, sense of sight etc. come into the picture only when they are thought of. Then again, in ultimate analysis, there is only their being lighted up as respective objects/thoughts awareness. When such lighting up takes place, at that moment, there is no "I-the-seer-self-awareness". If this analysis is further extended, then the thought that all this duality is a misconception is also a lighting up of awareness when it occurs. The common denominator in all this is the "lighting up" and

that exactly is what we are all after. So, endeavour to see the one "lighting up" in all the "lighting-ups" – the misconception vanishes leaving only "LIGHTING UP".

13. Shri Atmachaitanyaji said:

"This and only this is the principle meaning of Ignorance according to Shankara,; i.e. Adhyasa is the mutual superimposition of the Self and the Not-Self along with the mixing of their distinct qualities on each other."

There cannot be any superimposition due to mixing up of the distinct qualities of each other. We already agreed that no qualities exist in the Absolute and from the Absolute perspective. To put it crudely, the Self does not have any qualities at all. The Unreal Not-Self has to be created first of all and then endowed with qualities for its qualities to be subjected to "superimposition".

14. The whole argument of the post is built mainly on the rope-snake example, which has its own limitations. The seer of the snake on the rope has definitely had a previous snake experience. Otherwise, the snake qualities will not be "superimposed" on the rope reality.

However, in the Self-Not Self confusion, there is no memory or recollection involved. Here, the Self is "manifesting" as the Not Self due to misconception. Does it really matter if this misconception is named avidya, adhyasa or maaya as long as we all, from Shankara down, are prepared to admit that there is a misconception. And whatever this "manifestation" is due to, it is our daily experience that it is "thrigunathmika" with bhava roopa.

Then, why take cudgels with the post-Sankara vedantins?

Shri Atmachaitanyaji wrote: "This distinction between the Absolute Reality and the "Empirical" viewpoint should be unfailingly borne in mind in order to reconcile the several seeming (sic) selfcontradictory statements in Shankara's commentaries."

This actually is the crux of the problem. No amount of explanation can completely answer the adhyasa conundrum. Perhaps, mostly it is best understood in a very simple manner by those who intuit on the lines mentioned in (12) above.

Shankara is quoted by Shri Atmachaitanyaji as below:

"If it should be asked `And to whom does this ignorance belong?' We answer, `To you who are asking this question!' (Objection) `But I have been declared to be the Isvara Himself by the Scriptures!

(Reply) If you are thus awakened, then there never was any Ignorance that ever belonged to anyone'." (Sutra Bhasya 4-1-3)."

I wish Shankara had added: "Till you are awakened, you will keep asking this question "Whence Ignorance?" and not find any satisfactory answer to it."

May I conclude by quoting the very realistic Shri Jaishankarji (from Message 12461):

"Finally, I want to state that all these things are only prakriyaabhedas (differences in the methodology and teaching) as we all agree on what is to be taught which is `tat tvam asi'".

All of you Advaitin brothers and sisters – please forgive me if I have erred anywhere. I am neither trained nor well-read in vedantic logic. I mostly rely on commonsense, which may not be sharp enough and foolproof.

Pranams.

Madathil Nair

--- In advaitin@y..., sophia & ira schepetin <stadri@a...>(Shri Atmachaitanyaji) wrote:

> Dear Dennis, and all others interested in this subject, (the rest deleted in order not to choke the "electronic super-highway" as Shri Ram Chandranji calls it.)

From: "atmachaitanya108" <stadri@a...>

Date: Wed Mar 27, 2002 5:28 am

Subject: Re: Whence Adhyasa

Dear Sri Madathilnair,

Please allow me to respond to some of the points that you raise regarding my answer to the question: Whence Adhyasa?

With reference to points 1,2 and 4, in which you indicate that it was I, who introduced this subject of "Bhava Rupa Mula Avidya", I concede the observation. And the reason I did so was that everyone at this Advaitin web site presumably has an interest in Shankaras' Advaita Vedanta. And anyone who is familiar with the literature associated with this tradition has come across this "Root Ignorance" theory. It is to be found not only in works falsely ascribed to Shankara, such as Vivekachudamani, and many other popular 'Prakarana Granthas', but it is a theory which has been developed and expounded upon in many important independent works such as Vidyarayanas' Panchadasi, Prakashatma Yatis' Vivarana, Sri Harshas' Khandana, Citsukas' Tatva Pradipika, and Sarvajnatmans' Sankshepa Sariraka, to mention only a few. But let it not be assumed that this theory of Root Ignorance is merely a historical artifact, and not relevant to the current, modern day Advaita Vedantins, for this very same theory is being propagated, in the name of Shankara, by all the current 'Shankaracharyas' at the main Mutts, as well as the most prominent and popular Swamis now 'representing' the tradition of Shankaras' Advaita. It is because I am convinced that their answer to the question Whence Adhyasa?, is false, opposed to reason and experience, contradicts Shankaras own position on the subject, and degrades the sublime Absolutist teachings of Vedanta to the level of dry dialectics, 'realism', theological dogmatism, the abandonment of Non Duality and finally (and most importantly) the impossibility of putting an end to Samsara once the theory of 'Root Ignorance' is accepted, because Knowledge could never destroy it, that I went to such lengths to refute it..

With reference to the issues you raise in point 8 in which you ask:

"How can Adhyasa, without Bhava Rupa, give rise to an Unreal Not-Self of beings with Bhava Rupa?" and again, "How can a misconception (immaterial cause) result in a material Universe?" Let me respond by stating that the 'beings' that appear due to Adhyasa are not existent

(Bhava Rupa) at any time, either before their manifestation, during their manifestation, or after their disappearance. The Universe that appears due to misconception is not 'material' but merely an illusion, and its true nature was, is and forever will be, always Atman alone. It is true that there have been a number of 'Advaita Vedantins' who advocated the actual birth of 'illusory objects' and attributed a certain kind of 'existence to them (pratibasika satta), but this is totally foreign to Shankaras declarations and to common sense. When we mistake a rope for a snake, that snake never had any existence of its own. And after we correct this misconception by getting the correct knowledge of the rope, no actually existing snake of any kind was ever destroyed. We all take the position that there never was a snake in all the three periods of time, past present and future. It should be clearly remembered that according to Shankara,"an appearance is something which seems to exist, but which in truth never existed at all'. In addition, Shankara points out the indisputable fact that no appearance could ever manifest without there being an actually existent substratum or basis for that appearance. The snake could not appear without the existence of a rope, and the appearance of the universe could not manifest without there being the Self as its underlying reality (adhistana).

The point that you make in number13, is the outcome of a total confusion regarding Shankaras position about Adhyasa. You state" There cannot be any superimposition due to mixing up of the distinct qualities of each other. We already agreed that no qualities exist in the Absolute, and from the Absolute perspective. To put it crudely, the Self does not have any qualities at all." Dear Madatilnair, what I 'agreed' to was that in the Absolute or from the Absolute perspective there never was, is or will be any Ignorance or Superimposition, nor its removal. However for the sake of discriminating between the Self and the Not-Self, Shankara is not at all reluctant to say that the 'qualities' of Consciousness and Being belong to the Self alone and never to the Not-Self. In his Adhyasa Bhasya he describes the true 'I', the Subject (vishayi) as Chitatmika (Of the nature of Consciousness). To say Consciousness and Existence are qualities of the Self is like saying that heat and light are the 'qualities of fire. It is their very nature (Svarupa). So in this context, the word 'quality' does not refer to some attribute that belongs to something of which it could dispense with and still remain that thing. It refers to the very nature of the Self, in the same way that it is the very nature of fire to have heat and light. Unlike the 'qualities' of beauty and ugliness or intelligence, with reference to a person who could continue to be that very same person even if those attributes were to change. It is the 'qualities' of Consciousness and Existence that are falsely attributed (Adhyasa) to the Non-Self that makes everyone think that their bodies, senses and mind are conscious and that they exist.

You state in 14,that "The whole argument of the post is built mainly

on the rope-snake example, which has its own limitations". But this is not my example, it is Shankaras. He uses this example throughout his commentaries repeatedly, and he does so because it suits his purpose quite well. It is an illustration from worldly life that we are all familiar with and which demonstrates that people do mistake one thing for another, that the mistaken 'thing' never existed where it was thought to have existed and that after the correct knowledge of the thing the appearance is sublated . As to the limitation of this illustration, in that it does not match up exactly with what is being illustrated, Shankara admits to the defect, but points out that if the illustration was exactly the same as what was being illustrated, it would merely be a tautology, and would no longer serve as a teaching device.

And in conclusion, I would like to respond to your final summation, which accurately portrays an opinion that is shared by most Indian pundits and Western Indologists. You state: "May I conclude by quoting the very realistic Shri Jaishankarji..." Finally I want to state that all these things are only prakriyaabedhas (Differences in the methodology and teaching) as we all agree on what is to be taught which is 'tat tvam asi'."

I can only say that I take this position be a great disservice to the contributions that was made by Shankara regarding the clarification of important Vedantic concepts, in clarifying, for the first time in Vedantic literature, what exactly is the nature of Ignorance, and indicating exactly what were the defects in the other Advaitic schools, (despite the fact that they all taught 'tat tvam asi', and that were prevalent during his times and before him), so that the sincere seekers of truth would not be lead astray.

Why does Shankara refute the Karmajnana Samuchya vadins (the theory that by a combination of actions and knowledge one attained moksha)? They were Advaitins who taught 'tat tvam asi'. And why did he refute the prasankyana vadins (those who held that after the attainment of knowledge, that knowledge had to be repeated to make it strong enough to ward off the old vasanas. They were Advaitins who taught 'tat tvam asi' And why did Shankara refute the notion that Nirvikalpa Samadhi was the means to the knowledge of the Self, even though many modern day and ancient Vedantins hold such a view and all teach 'tat tvam asi'? Who were the "Vritikaras' (previous commentators) that Shankara examines in his Gita commentary and refutes mercilessly calling them "idiots"(Murkaha), despite the fact that they were Advaitins all teaching 'tat tvam asi'. And how is it that Suresvaracharya could compose 14000 verses for his Brihidaranyaka Vartica, the bulk of which contains an examination and ruthless refutation of other Advaitins (at least nine schools have been identified by Mahadeven in his English translation of the Sambanda Vartica, all of whom adopted different 'methodologies and teachings' (Prakriya bhedas) from those of Shankara and Suresvara) even though they all taught 'tat tvam asi'?

Shanakra in his Gita commentary, chap 13.says there is only one method

of teaching. He calls it Adhyapropa Apavada (The Method of Deliberate Superimposition and Rescission), He quotes ancient Vedantins as being knowers of this methodology, and concludes by stating that "though a man be learned in all the scriptures, should he be bereft of this traditional method of teaching (Adhyaropa Apavada) HE SHOULD BE DISREGARDED LIKE A FOOL.LIKE THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND"

Hari Om

Atmachaitanya

--- In advaitin@y..., "madathilnair" <madathilnair@y...> wrote:

> Namaste!

>

> > Dear Dennis, and all others interested in this subject, (the rest > deleted in order not to choke the "electronic super-highway" as Shri > Ram Chandranji calls it.)

From: "srikrishna_ghadiyaram" <srikrishna_ghadiyaram@y...>

Date: Wed Mar 27, 2002 6:30 am

Subject: Re: Whence Adhyasa

Hari Om !!

Sri Atmachaitanya, would you please clarify the following:

1. Is it your position that Avidya is Adhyasa and, Avidya is not Maya; or is it more than that ?
2. After accepting that Avidya does not mean or equate to Maya, do you still disagree with the definition of Trigunatmika Maya for the cause of the creation of the Universe. Here I simply mean the evolution of elements and the universe of objects and the three Gunas etc. Is there any problem in this regard, based on original Sankara's teachings about what Maya is ?
3. How this controversy should effect a Sadhak in his/her sadhana and hence realisation?

Kindly clarify.

Om Namo Narayanaya !!

Srikrishna

Is it only "Avidya" that is mis-interpreted by the later day Advaitins or even the definition of Maya as Trigunatimika as the cause of

--- In advaitin@y..., "atmachaitanya108" <stadri@a...> wrote:

> Dear Sri Madathilnair,

>

> Please allow me to respond to some of the points that you raise > regarding my answer to the question: Whence Adhyasa?

From: K Kathirasan NCS <kkathir@n...>

Date: Wed Mar 27, 2002 7:33 am

Subject: RE: [advaitin] Re: Whence Adhyasa

Namaste Atmachaitanyaji

You mentioned: "It is because I am convinced that their answer to the question Whence Adhyasa?, is

false, opposed to reason and experience, contradicts Shankaras own

position on the subject, and degrades the sublime Absolutist teachings of Vedanta to the level of dry dialectics, 'realism', theological dogmatism, the abandonment of Non Duality and finally (and most importantly) the impossibility of putting an end to Samsara once the theory of 'Root Ignorance' is accepted, because Knowledge could never destroy it, that I went to such lengths to refute it."

K: None of the present traditional teachers have abandoned non-duality by postulating a mula avidya. At least I am yet to know of one. Although they might disagree on matters concerning Nirvikalpa Samadhi or even shastra pramana but everyone accepts that there is One unchanging, eternal Consciousness. I am also not convinced with your explanation that the acceptance of mulavidya can't put an end to samsara. When Atma alone is given the status of Satyam and when everything else is given the status of Mithya (including mula avidya), what problem will there be for you with regards removal of Samsara. I think you are unnecessarily confusing yourself by accepting mula avidya to be Satyam..sort of a parallel reality to Atma. Although it may exist in the waking, dreaming and the deep sleep state, but it is NOT invariable (or changeless) . Ignorance varies with the three states therefore making it also mithya. So what's the problem?

When asked by Nairji, "How can Adhyasa, without Bhava Rupa, give rise to an Unreal Not-Self of beings with Bhava Rupa?" & "How can a misconception (immaterial cause) result in a material Universe?", you (atmachaitanya) have conveniently answered the question by shifting the standpoint of vyvahaarika to paramarthika. As anyone would know, that everything can be resolved at the paramarthika level (in fact there is nothing to be resolved) BUT the question asked by Nairji is from the standpoint of vyavahaarika alone. So is this an attempt to evade the question?

You have mentioned that Shankara has explicitly claimed that no one will be able to know the teachings or the method without knowing the tradition. Therefore, we know that this methodology is passed down from time immemorial. But I am particularly interested and curious to know who is the link to this ancient sampradaya before your own Guru? Who is the teacher of your Guru who forms a part of this teaching tradition? Then only can I accept the teachings of yours as authentic.

With luv,
Kathi

> -----Original Message-----

> From: atmachaitanya108 [SMTP:stadri@a...]

> Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2002 7:59 AM

> To: advaitin@yahogroups.com

> Subject: [advaitin] Re: Whence Adhyasa

>

> Dear Sri Madathilnair,

>

> Please allow me to respond to some of the points that you raise

> regarding my answer to the question: Whence Adhyasa?

From: Madathilnair

Date: Wed Mar 27, 2002

Dear Shri Atmachaitanyaji,

I am indeed very grateful to you for your clarifications.

At the outset, permit me to make the following clear:

1. I am a grihastha who dabble in Vedanta off and on. My arguments may, therefore, have pitfalls and lack continuity of thought and the exact logic pertinent to the points under discussion.
2. However, I would like to learn and that is exactly why I am making impatient attempts to present my points of view.
3. Even amidst my responsibilities as a householder, I do contemplate over vedantic issues and teachings most of the time. This practice has produced some insights (on vedantic teachings) of an experiential nature. Mostly, I base my points of view on such insights, which practice, I admit, has its own benefits, as well as dangers due to being subjective.
4. Before I began writing through this Advaitin forum in January this year, I had never expressed myself in print at any time, although talking Vedanta ad infinitum to my bored family and friends has quite some time been my intense passion. I am, therefore, a simple freshman.

Kindly, therefore, grant me the benefit of your understanding.

Let us now get down to the business in hand.

(a) I have nothing to say about your raison d'etre for refuting the Moola Avidya vadins. I don't think I am competent enough, at the moment, to defend either point of view except that I can only acknowledge the existence of ignorance in the form of misconception.

(b) Thanks for elaborating on Sankara's position about adhyasa. I admit my misunderstanding and would like to confess that I have not studied or even read adhyasa bhasya or an authentic interpretation of it excepting that I have heard passing references to adhyasa in discourses given by different teachers.

(c) Your explanation has triggered new insights in this regard and, in this context, I am rather disappointed that you did not dwell on my point No. 12. Your reason may possibly be that it was slightly outside the main track. To recapitulate, was it not the chitatmika nature of the Self that I (unknowingly) endeavoured to articulate in point No. 12? If yes, you have granted Sankara's authority to my thoughts. In fact, I would now like to expand my point of view.

(d) I said before that the one and only "LIGHTING UP" could be appreciated by recognizing that It is the common denominator of all "lighting ups". To look at it another way, each individual "lighting up" of awareness can be endlessly reduced (theoretically at least) to its `very basics'. Fundamentally, the big LIGHTING UP can be seen to remain at the bottom of everything as the essential Substratum, which is nothing but the chitatmika Consciousness. With such reduction to fundamental levels, a `tending' towards qualitylessness and formlessness can also be seen to occur. This is applicable to everything perceived - objects,

thoughts, ideas, concepts, experiences, etc. etc. pointing to the fact that fundamentally all things seen differently in our ordinary vyavahara (prathibhasathmika also included) are just the 'Same'.

(d) In this analysis and in point (12) of my previous message, is it not important to note that the principle of Unity has been recognized and appreciated without bringing entities like mind, intellect etc. etc., which shine after chitathmika Consciousness? I admit that it is very necessary to talk about mind, intellect etc. to elucidate vedantic principles or, as I would like to put it, to systematize "Ignorance" . Beyond that, do we have to permit them to cloud, confound and impede our vision of the Absolute which can be demonstrated to exist even without their assistance as explained above?

(e) Besides, if the Truth is appreciated and the misconception about it is realized on the above lines, then is there a need to look where that misconception is occurring? It can't be occurring anywhere other than to the "enquirer" himself/herself as you have concluded or as Sankara answered: "To you who are asking this question".

(f) Disappointingly again, you seem to have overlooked my point No.7. That is the heart of the matter – your ultimate logic for the above conclusion. To rephrase my question more clearly, how can the cause or origin or whence of "something" come into being at the same instant as that "something"? In the rope-snake example the misconception is the snake itself, i.e. the misconception is not the "whence" of the snake or vice versa. But, in individual (mind) – adhyasa issue there are two distinct entities which are essentially not the same.

(g) Till this question is convincingly answered, I, with my limited intellectual resources, have no other alternative but to move with the crowd, which may or may not include some Moola Avidya vadins too. And that cannot be a disservice to Shankara! As I mentioned above, I acknowledge the existence of a misconception, I know I am the `ignorant' one and Sankara is my authority thereto. I hope my situation will be appreciated.

Best regards,
Madathil Nair

--- In advaitin@y..., "atmachaitanya108" <stadri@a...> wrote:

> Dear Sri Madathilnair,

>

> Please allow me to respond to some of the points that you raise

> regarding my answer to the question: Whence Adhyasa?

>

From: Dennis Waite

Date: Wed Mar 27, 2002

Many thanks to Sri Atmachaitanya for the brilliantly lucid exposition on this topic. I may have waited several weeks for a satisfactory explanation to this apparently insoluble problem but it was worth it! I certainly feel happy with this way of looking at things and it leaves one's faith in the

philosophy (as propounded by Shankara) unshaken. I am indebted.

Dennis

From: atmachaitanya108

Date: Wed Mar 28 2002

Dear K Kathirasan NCS,

If you really take the position that Mula Avidya (Root Ignorance- An Avidya that is completely different from the three well known categories of merely 'Not Knowing' 'Doubting' and 'Misconceiving') is Mithya (false) then we have no fundamental disagreement because if it is false then it can be said to be removed by knowledge.. But please take note, that if it is false, then it too must be the result of a Misconception (Adhyasa). The 'false snake' cannot appear without the misconception.. It must be Avidya Kalpita, Imagined by Ignorance. We all see a world. We all feel that it must exist in some manner, we therefore imagine a cause for that world, a cause that actually exists, or exists in a peculiar way, such as 'neither existent nor non-existent', and that must somehow cover Brahman and result in the world that we see. But the world and its inferred cause are both superimpositions on the Self. Just like the misconceived snake and its 'cause', 'the inferred mother of that snake. When we realize there never was a 'snake' what happens to the 'inferred mother', which was the 'cause' of that snake? When we realize that there never was any duality, or world, what will happen to that imagined 'cause' for the supposed Duality or world? They were both just Misconceptions. Superimposition (Adhyasa) has to be in full play to even see a world or imagine its cause. Cause and Effect only arise with the appearance of Duality and Time (In Duality the cause must come first, the effect after). Duality is a Superimposition on the Self, a 'wrong' knowledge regarding the Self, a 'misconception' about the Self. It is knowledge of the Self that can destroy this 'Misconception' (Adhyasa) about the Non-Dual Self . Knowledge can do nothing more, and nothing more need be done. (This is the view of deliberate Superimposition, Adhyaropa, the Empirical View). When it is understood that there is only the One Self Without a Second, then we realize that no one ever had any misconception, and no knowledge was ever needed to remove that misconception. All of this Avidya and Vidya has also been the outcome of a misconception. There has always been only the Self (This is the Apavada in the methodology of Vedanta, even the teachings of Vidya and Avidya are rescinded in the end, Not This, Not This). As Advaitins, we certainly both agree that Ultimately there never was any Ignorance at all. Not that Ignorance really existed from beginningless time and really inhered in the Absolute. And that we, somehow, have to really remove it to get free. If you try to clarify your position by stating that even in your theory Root Ignorance is also false from the Absolute view point, and that it is only from the empirical view that we put forth this teaching. . Then I reply that our disagreement is, of course, only from the empirical point of view. I am not shifting viewpoints and then merely dismissing Madatilnairs' objections from the absolute point of view. It is from the empirical view point that I answered the objections. It is from the Empirical view point that we disagree about the nature of Ignorance as well as its cause. I hold that from the

empirical point of view, to teach that: 'Due to 'not knowing the Self' we have misconceived it as the false Not-Self', is a teaching that points out a universal fact that is verifiable by all in their own experience. We have all mixed the Witness with the Witnessed; even this Vedantic teaching is proceeding due to this most basic misconception (Adhyasa) of taking the Witness for the Witnessed. For without misconceiving that we are the body, senses and mind (which experience can we verify as a misconception, for in experience, the body, senses and mind are forever the "Witnessed" and never the Witness), we can't be 'knowers', we can't be ignorant of anything, including the the Self Evident, Self Manifest, Self, we can't seek out a Guru who is different from us and who will teach us the correct knowledge of the Self. All this proceeds on this fundamental Misconception (this I take to be Shankaras teaching from the empirical point of view, the Adhyaropa, 'Deliberate Superimposition' point of view). As opposed to the 'empirical point of view' in which a theory is put forth, (totally divorced from any common experience that could be relied upon to confirm it) in which we postulate a beginningless positive cause (not merely imagined, but an existing Indescribable, Anirvachiniya, 'empirical thing' that is the 'cause' for both the appearance of duality and the imagination, misconception (Adhyasa) about it - for

MulaAvidya Vadins misconception is caused, it is the effect of this inert twofold power to it cover Reality (avarana Shakti) and project the world (vikhepa Shakti), a power that projects not only the world but all the individuals in the world, who each have their own personal misconceptions, and it is not merely 'not knowing' that makes misconceptions appear). A Bhava Rupa 'power'. that we have to somehow 'destroy' or remove by knowledge. How exactly Knowledge accomplishes this 'empirical' feat is never made clear. And if knowledge could ever get rid of this Anadi Tri Guna Atmika Prakriti (the beginningless primal nature which is made up of three Gunas and which is a synonym for Mula Avidya), then liberation would be both an effect and an event in time, and thus non-eternal.

Hari Om

Atmachaitanya

P.S. I would like to extend my thanks to all the participants in this discussion about the 'Whence of Adhyasa'. To Stig Lundgren for making available that fantastic article on Adhyasa Bhasya, (it should be made mandatory reading for all those who are serious about trying to get to the heart of Shankaras Advaita), and especially to those who have objected and will continue to object to the views I have presented, as well as to those who moderate and maintain this Advaitin web site. It has allowed me the opportunity to articulate and ponder and be challenged over this profound and subtle subject of Adhyasa and its 'cause'. Where else could one find a forum whose stated intent is to discuss primarily Shanakras' Advaita Vedanta Philosophy and Practice, and its related issues. I hope that the pedantic and aggressive style of my posts haven't overly offended those who are also analyzing and trying to understand these very same issues. Each inquirer will ultimately decide for himself on the "Whence of Adhyasa" one way or the other, or suspend judgment or decide that it really isn't that

important and move on to other things, perhaps thanking the Supreme for their remaining Avidyalesha, so they can enjoy the Lila.

From: K. Kathirasan NCS

Date: Wed Mar 28, 2002

Namaste Atmachaitanyaji

Thanks for this clarification. I find myself more in agreement with you now than ever. Of course, I still maintain that an acceptance of a Bhavarupa avidya poses no problem to the removal samsara as long as I know that it is mithya too. With regards to avidya being anadi, i think the word anadi should be interpreted as not 'begininglessness' but rather 'untraceable beginning'. pls comment.

I have one more question for you, that is if you don't mind. Now that I know that I am the absolute Brahman why is it that I still have the fear of duality? Shastra declares that 'the one who knows this Truth crosses fear'. But why is it that despite discussing and being convinced 'intellectually' (is this the right word? nevermind) that Brahman alone IS, why do I still feel that I am 'ignorant', 'a seeker', 'a doer' etc.....Or what can I do to overcome this? Pls advise.

Anyway, Atmachaitanyaji I enjoyed studying all your posts and have learnt a lot from it. I thank you for that and would like to let you know that I wasn't offended by any of your posts although i could have offended you with my replies. I am sorry for that.

Kathi

From: madathilnair

Date: Wed Mar 28, 2002

Dear Shri Atmachaitanyaji,

Reading your brilliant post was indeed an electrifying experience. Thanks to you for the explanation and to Shri Kathirasanji for the incisive prodding.

From the P.S. to your post, I am afraid you are closing shop and calling it a day. Not yet please, Shri Atmachaitanyaji.

We, those who have not delved into Adhyasa Bhashya, will certainly read the recommended article. In the meanwhile, as I indicated in my last post, I am still not sure if I can accept the logic that you employed to clinch your conclusion that the limited "I", the enquirer who is affected by the misconception, is himself/herself the "whence" of the misconception (adhyasa).

Like the appearance of the snake and the appearance of the misconception are simultaneous, you have pointed out that the appearance of the mind (the "I" who asks "Whence Adhyasa?") and misconception (Adhyasa itself) are simultaneous. I have almost continuously been ruminating over your argument and still find it very unconvincing due to the reasons already mentioned in my previous posts and also due to the fact that the answer to the question in

this particular case does not subststantiate or validate the very question itself. What I mean is that since the "whence" of something is looked for, logically that "whence" should, if it exists, precede the something. The rope-snake example is not just adequate as I explained before because the snake itself is the misconception there.

Sorry to bother you with all this. There is yet another doubt. In your last post of 26th March, you very kindly cleared my misunderstanding about Shankara's viewpoint of Adhyasa. You then pointed out: "For the sake of discriminating between the Self and the Not-Self, Shankara is not at all reluctant to say that the `qualities' of Consciousness and Being belong to the Self alone and never to the Not-Self". If this is accepted and since Adhyasa is

something that is cognized and existing in our awareness (because we are asking the question "Whence Adhyasa?") like the chithathmika universe, then why did Shankara have to reject Gaudapada's position that Brahman does the superimposing (Thought (a) of Douglas Fox). If the `qualities' could be accepted as belonging to Consciousness, then "adhyasa" could also be included under the scope of `qualities". Brahman can thus be the "whence" of adhyasa and still be considered as not becoming active and changeable. I would love to have your views.

Best regards.

Madathil Nair

From: Gummuluru Murthy

Date: Wed Mar 28, 2002

namaste.

I am sorry for my late entry into this discussion again. I tend to agree slightly with shri Madathil Nair's first post in the recent rejuvenation of the thread. While shri Atmachaitanyaji's posts are very lucid expositions, they are overpowering against mUla-avidya. I do not think anyone here has argued *for* mUla-avidya. The untenability of mUla-avidya (here I understand mUla-avidya as that having its own independent existence parallel to Atman) is obvious. The bogey of mUla-avidya is brought into the discussion by shri Atmachaitanyaji himself and is flogged to death by shri Atmachaitanyaji himself. Shri Atmachaitanyaji's presentation on adhyAsabhAShya can stand tall by itself without condemning the straw-man of mUla-avidya. Yet, the discussions on 'whence adhyAsa?' are very useful in re-visiting shri shankara's points on this matter.

In this context, I request a few clarifications.

On Sun, 24 Mar 2002, sophia & ira schepetin wrote:

> [...]

>

> All Indian thinkers who put forth the view that there is only one > Absolute Reality have had to grapple with the question: If there is only > the Absolute Reality, then how is it that the dualistic world of > multiplicity makes its appearance?

Why do people say the *dualistic* world makes its appearance? Is it not in our thinking whether it is dualistic or not? It is our ignorance which makes the world *dualistic*. Is it not the defect in our perception that makes it dualistic? Let us look at fingers of the hand. We do not see any duality there. If we keep extrapolating this, we can conclude that while the world *appears* dualistic, it has for its basis only the non-dual Consciousness. It

only *appears* dualistic.

> In order to understand the 'Whence of Adhyasa', at least > according to Shankaracharya, the first important issue > that must be appreciated is the distinction between the > "Absolute point of view"(Paramarthika Drishti) and the > "Worldly or empirical point of view" (Lokika- > vyavaharika Drishti). From the Absolute perspective, the > perspective of truth, there was never anyone who had > ignorance, no one had to get any sort of knowledge to > remove that ignorance, and there never was a Guru who had > to teach the meaning of the Upanishads to a seeker so > that he could be released from his bondage caused by that > ignorance. This is the final position of Advaita Vedanta, > and not that in fact a really existing Ignorance that > someone actually had was at some particular point in time > removed by the Shastra Pramana, and in so doing the > seeker really became liberated.

I am wondering who in advaita has postulated a *really existing ignorance* ? May be we are fighting imagined enemies here.

> (It should be noted that if in fact this were the case > then liberation would be an event in time, and thus it > would have a beginning and would therefore necessarily > have an end. It could not be eternal.)

From the paramArtha, there is no beginning or end for moksha. Moksha itself will not have a meaning, just like ignorance does not have a meaning. Yet from the perspective of the ignorant people around, there is a beginning time for moksha, when they see that a person amongst themselves, with Knowledge, sees the jagat as it is, Brahman. They (in the vyavahArika) perceive a beginning time for moksha. That is a vyavahAric concept, which cannot be denied in vyavahArika.

Further, I notice shri Atmachaitanyaji saying "If anything has a beginning, it has to have an end....". I will give two examples, both vyavahArika concepts which contradict this. Ignorance: it has no beginning, it has an end. Moksha: it has a beginning, but it has no end. I would like to emphasize again: these are vyavahArika concepts which can be defended. The paramArtha perspective of GauDapAda in the kArika: "Adau anta ca yAn nAsti vartamAnepi tat tathA" [that which is not there at the beginning and which is not there at the end may just as well be considered not there at the present] is the Truth.

> Now, Dennis, we can begin to tackle the question

> 'Whence Adhyasa. It is a question that can be interpreted

> as: ` O.K let us grant that Adhyasa is the mutual

> superimposition of the Self and Non-Self, and let us also

> grant that because of this Adhyasa all worldly life is

> proceeding, and not only that, let us also grant that due

> to Adhyasa all 'spiritual life' (Vaidika Vyvahara) is

> proceeding, such as the teachings concerning injunctions

> (Vidhis) and prohibitions (pratishedas), Karmas and

> meditations as well as the principle Upanishadic teaching

> concerning the knowledge of the Self, and how this

> relates to bondage and release (Bandha Moksha Vyvahara),

> but the question now is: What is the 'cause'for this

- > misconception itself? Why do we superimpose the Self and
- > the Not-Self? What is the reason for this Adhyasa to come
- > about in the first place?

"What is the cause for adhyAsa?" is, in my view, an absurd question (with all respect to shri Dennis). This question does not have an answer. The intellect, which asks this question is itself a product of adhyAsa, hence cannot grasp any answer to it (even if there is an answer). The intellect and the question get melted away as what may be called an answer to this appears.

Finally, in his most recent post, shri Atmachaitanyaji seems to be putting a farewell post. I hope he will continue to post on the list on these topics which are dearest to all. His posts are very lucid expositions.

Regards

Gummuluru Murthy