

## Pratyakṣa-Paśyati Interrelatedness

*Save me from death afflicted as I am by the unquenchable fire of this world-forest,  
and shaken violently by the winds of an untoward lot terrified and (so) seeking  
refuge in thee...<sup>1</sup>*

### INTRODUCTION

The introductory considerations on VC provide legitimacy to the current enquiry, as deliberations on many of the objections against authenticity and originality of the text seem to have resolved many of the difficulties. The current chapter initiates a sort of enquiry into the epistemological foundations of the text. The *raison d'être* of initiating an inquiry into the epistemological foundations of VC is traceable in the epistemological conundrum that is arrived due to the experience of dissatisfaction over the matters related to the *mundane* world that in fact becomes a cursor to things beyond itself. The supposed dissatisfaction and disorientation of human person and his urge to look beyond<sup>2</sup> somehow point to a metaphysics that is foundational to human person. This argument

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<sup>1</sup> *Durvāra-saṁsāra-davāgni-taptaṁ doḍbūyamānaṁ duradrṣṭa-vātaiḥ; bhītaṁ prapaṇnam paripādhi mrtyoḥ śaraṇyamanyadyadabam na jāne*—VC: 36.)

<sup>2</sup> “O Master, O friend of those that bow to thee, thou ocean of mercy, I bow to thee; save me, fallen as I am into this sea of birth and death, with a straightforward glance of thine eye, which sheds nectar-like grace supreme”.—VC: 35.

mirrors Kantian notion of hidden transcendental capabilities<sup>3</sup> that are vital to make sense of moral and ethical character in the person. There are persons who refuse to believe in a reality beyond the realm of empirical world, yet are much lauded for their spirit of humanism enhanced by their surpassing contribution in the field of morality, ethics, arts, culture, and so on. While Kantian presupposition of divine law embedded in the conscience of every person may be acceptable, there are many examples of those persons who are virtuous without embarking into a transcendental project in their lives. This in itself is not any worse than the persons who have diligently upheld a kind of transcendental metaphysics. Moreover, persons who are not aware of transcendental knowledge need not necessarily look beyond the empirical knowledge despite the fact that they might experience a sort of dissatisfaction. Therefore, persons who do not have a distinct metaphysical project as part of their existence need not look for something more satisfying than what they have. This stands as a strong evidence to refute any claim pertaining to the existence of transcendental Reality. Yet this equation does not always remain constant, as there are accounts of certain persons who endured frequently a kind of metaphysical dissatisfaction, experienced due to the frailties of the world, are totally balanced and virtuous upon embarking into a metaphysical project, which they consider illuminating.<sup>4</sup> Driven by surpassing degree of perfection, such persons sustain extraordinarily tranquility of mind and strive for peaceful coexistence by upholding the values of the individual as well as the society in a sublime manner that is suitable for happy human inhabitation.<sup>5</sup> The possibility of such a sublime existence permits us to look beyond Kantian notions of transcendental capabilities and makes us to wonder at the possibility of such diverse nature of knowledge in the absence of any sort of intervention. The persons indulging in shameful and immoral activities might be those who never discovered inborn metaphysical basis in them, while the persons of high moral standing who carve a virtuous conduct are those who may

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<sup>3</sup>Kant says that the moral laws are equivalent to divine laws, imprinted in the conscience of each person. <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/ngier/103/kant.htm>; Kant, Emmanuel. (1998). *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>4</sup>Swami Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi are the classical examples of the above claim.

<sup>5</sup>The life of Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Theresa are the standing examples of those who have worked for the benefit of the society.

be said to have discovered inborn transcendental capabilities in them. Nevertheless, the transcendental Knowledge attained after the illuminating metaphysical experience is far surpassing to *mundane* phenomenon, or a virtuous conduct, as it requires efforts far superior to transcendental capabilities presupposed by Kant. The objective of this chapter is to discover the epistemological foundations of such metaphysical experience—as distinguished from those who care less about it—that provides a methodological tool in embarking any investigation on the nature of the Self.

In Indian philosophy, *pratyakṣa* (perception) is the gateway for all kinds of knowledge. In a distinct way, *pratyakṣa* establishes an invariable nexus with the metaphysics of Advaita, as it is the manner of seeing that determines the formulation of one's metaphysics. A single object can be seen or experienced differently by different seers and is liable to misinterpretations. Therefore, the perception of the world in the text VC demands a distinct manner of disposition that enables its seeing from a particular perspective. Accordingly, the “Seer” or the “Perceiver” occupies a central place in the metaphysics of Advaita. In the present work, the term *paśyati* is used in the sense of its noun form, or a term equivalent to “the metaphysical seer”. In the VC then, perception in the sense of *paśyati* (metaphysical seer) is the starting point of its epistemological foundations. In order to understand its epistemological foundations in its proper perspective, it is imperative that the current chapter begins with a brief exposition of the meaning of *pramāṇa* (means of knowledge) and examines the significance of the six means of knowledge to the non-dual realisation. The doctrine of *vṛtti* (modification of consciousness), as a method of acquiring knowledge, dissolves the problem of novelty that is indispensable for every kind of knowledge. Even then, the study sticks to the relative importance of the six *pramāṇas* as a means for “metaphysical seeing” of the reality under investigation. Because of the necessity of external perception as a stimulus for the “metaphysical seeing”, this work takes into consideration the importance of perception in the entire Vedāntic literature and undertakes a detailed exposition of all facets of perception as is the starting point of Indian epistemology. The chapter examines the dual effects of *pratyakṣa*, namely illusoriness and dissatisfaction, and argues that *pratyakṣa* in VC awakens the Self from the slumber of ignorance. A careful observation of the text reveals that perception effects the “metaphysical seeing” of the reality, wherein the seeker (seer) is prompted to “seeing the world differently”. Accordingly, in the text,

the reader is the seeker-turned-to be a metaphysician in his pursuit of Knowledge, and the text VC is a philosophical text than to be merely a religious manual. This chapter outlines the necessity of *pratyakṣa* and *paśyati* as an initial stimulus for the non-dual realisation.

### THE MEANING OF *PRAMĀṆA* IN ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

The literal meaning of *pramāṇa* is “a proof, evidence, testimony, or ‘a means’ of arriving at correct knowledge” (Apte 1989, 664). *Pramāṇa* means “the valid means of knowledge”, and the schools of Indian thought have accepted various *pramāṇas* ranging from one to six.<sup>6</sup> B.K. Matilal defines *pramāṇa* as “the means leading to a knowledge-episode (*pramā*) as its end” (Matilal 1986, 22). But there is a different meaning for the term *pramāṇa* in Advaita.<sup>7</sup> The *Vedānta Paribhāṣa* (VP) defines it as “*tatra pramākaraṇam pramāṇam*”,<sup>8</sup> or the special cause of knowledge among a number of causes.

According to VP, the term *pramāṇa* misleads the true import of the teaching of Advaita as it is employed from the relative standpoint of ignorance (*ajñāna*) that causes the belief in the existence of an ontologically real world. However, the world is changing, unreal and merely an apparent manifestation of the *Brahman*. Accordingly, from an empirical perspective, it can be said that there are many causes, such as the

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<sup>6</sup>The Cārvāka system accepts only one *pramāṇa*, namely *pratyakṣa* (*pratyakṣameva pramāṇam*) (Sharma 2009, 42). The Buddhist and Vaiśeṣika accept two *pramāṇas*, namely *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* (for the Vaiśeṣika *anumāna* is inclusive of *śabda* and *upamāna*) (Sharma 2009, 126, 192). The Jaina, Śāṅkhya, Yoga and Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita Vedānta systems accept three *pramāṇas*, namely *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, and *śabda* (for Śāṅkhya *śabda* is trustworthy verbal testimony: *dr̥ṣṭam anumānam āptavacanam ca*, *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*, IV; Sharma 2009, 48, 169, 342, 372). The Nyāya system accepts four *pramāṇas*, namely *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *śabda*, and *upamāna* (BP 2004, 81–172; Sharma 2009, 192). Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā school accepts five *pramāṇas*, namely *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *śabda*, *upamāna*, and *arthāpatti* (Sharma 2009, 218). The Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā and Advaita accept six *pramāṇas*, namely *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *śabda*, *upamāna*, *arthāpatti*, and *anupalabdhi* (Sharma 2009, 218; *pratyakṣānumānopamānāgamārtāpattyanupalabdhibhedāt*.—VP I. p. 8).

<sup>7</sup>The elaborate exposition of this view can be found in the monumental work: Datta (1972).

<sup>8</sup>The word “means” stands here for the instrument of valid knowledge (*pramā*)—VP I. p. 4.

internal organs (*antaḥkaraṇa*) and the sense organs (*jñānendriyas*), the existence of which is necessary for the production of knowledge of an object.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, of these, the mind as a cause of all sorts of existence is common to all sorts of knowledge, perceptual, and inferential. Therefore, mind is not a special external (instrumental) cause (*karaṇa*), but an internal one.<sup>10</sup> A special cause is that in which the particular sense organ is involved as a particular means of knowledge (Datta 1972, 27). For example, in the case of *pratyakṣa pramāṇa*, a particular kind of sense organ (in external perception) is the special cause, because it becomes the source of that distinct kind of knowledge. Knowledge arises when there is a modification (*vṛtti*) of *antaḥkaraṇa* in the form of the object, assisted by the instrumental cause (*karaṇa*). Thus, the same basic consciousness assumes various forms through different mental modes corresponding to different objects. This clarifies why there is knowledge of varied forms, such as knowledge of a thing, e.g. tree, house, and horse; knowledge of an attribute, e.g. redness, beauty, and roundedness; knowledge of action, e.g. flowing, flying, and blowing. Like the varied knowledge of external objects, there is also varied knowledge of mental states, such as happiness, fear, love, imagination, and memory of which mind is also the instrumental cause. By taking various forms of diverse objects, *antaḥkaraṇa* causes variations in knowledge or consciousness, but does not generate it (Satprakashananda 2009, 89). Therefore, Paul Deussen reminds that unlike other systems of thought *pramāṇa*<sup>11</sup> in Advaita means “measures” or “canons”, of our knowledge, thereby meaning not as the term “source”, which is the basis of our knowledge, but rather “a means of control” by which we are to measure the knowledge that is already existing in us, and test its correctness (Deussen 2003, 88). In addition to what has been said so far, one is inclined to agree

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<sup>9</sup>VP I. pp. 11, 66.

<sup>10</sup>*Manobuddhirahaṅkārascittam karaṇamāntaram; saṁśayo nīścayo garvaḥ smaraṇam viśayā ime.*—VP I. p. 32.

<sup>11</sup>According to M. Hirianna and Purushottama Bilimoria, *pramāṇa* as a basis for philosophical reflection serves three functions. Firstly, as *karaṇa*, it is the “source” or “sources of Knowledge” understood in the sense of instruments of knowing. Secondly, *pramāṇa* is the means of scrutinising, criticising, and evaluating through the process of reasoning the knowledge derived through the “source/s”. Thirdly, as *prāmāṇya*, *pramāṇa* is the “measurement” for the criterion of determining the validity of knowledge as either true or false (Hirianna 2005, 177–179; and Bilimoria 2008, 7).

with D.M. Datta when writes, “The *antaḥkaraṇa* can thus be regarded only as a factor in the modification of the already existing consciousness, and not as an instrument in the generation of knowledge as the Naiyāyikas and others suppose it to be” (Datta 1972, 59). As the manifestation of consciousness passes through a mental mode corresponding to the object, knowledge is varied and it lasts as long as the mental mode lasts. Deussen still argues that the term *pramāṇa* explains the fact that Indian philosophy did not start from an investigation into “the existent” (like the Greek) but rather from the critical analysis and testing of a complex of knowledge handed down through the *Vedas*.<sup>12</sup> For Śaṅkara, the perceptual knowledge is merely a pointer towards the non-relational Pure Consciousness and can be contradicted only after the realisation of *Brahman*.<sup>13</sup> The dialectical method adopted by the Advaitins to criticise the opponent view suggests that the Advaitic epistemology is not conclusive but suggestive (Mishra 1990, 2). To quote T.M.P. Mahadevan, “The purpose for which a study of the problem of knowledge is undertaken is not to solve the problem but to go beyond it” (Mahadevan 2009, 13). Hence, one should note that the aim of Advaita epistemology is not to establish any method of knowledge, but to go beyond all the methods of knowledge.

### SIX MEANS OF MODIFICATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Advaita Vedānta recognises six means of empirical knowledge, namely *pratyakṣa* (perception), *anumāna* (inference), *upamāna* (comparison), *śabda* (verbal testimony), *arthāpatti* (presumption), and *anupalabdhi* (non-apprehension).<sup>14</sup> The core teaching of Advaitic metaphysics reveals that the world is ontologically not real and all knowledge of the world is derived because of the modification of consciousness. Accordingly, all the six *pramāṇas* are valid from the empirical perspective only and are limited in bringing about trans-empirical knowledge, which is the central focus of Advaita philosophy. These six *pramāṇas* are examined, and

<sup>12</sup>An essential difference consists in modern philosophy in its fundamental character, being a toilsome struggle and gradual shaking off of the fetters of medieval scholasticism, whereas Indian philosophy through all time more closely adhered to the basis laid down in the Vedic *Upaniṣads*, which has a philosophical character (Deussen 2003, 88).

<sup>13</sup>*brahmasākṣātkāraṇantaram hi ghaṭhādīnām bādhah*.—VP I. p. 6.

<sup>14</sup>*pratyakṣānumānopamānāgamārtāpattyanupalabdhibhedāt*.—VP I. p. 8.

a brief discussion on their provisional validity as an aid for attaining the trans-empirical knowledge is taken up, whereas the role of perception is elaborately discussed in the sections that follow. In order to explain the *pramāṇas* of Advaita, the study mainly relies on *Vedānta Paribhāṣā* (VP). The study on the six *pramāṇas* is limited to the scope of this chapter, whereas their elaborate exposition can be found in the monumental work, “*The Six Ways of Knowing*” by D.M. Datta (1972).

The first *pramāṇa* of Advaita is *pratyakṣa* (perception). The Sanskrit word *pratyakṣa* (*prati*-near, *akṣa*- sense organ) is defined by Monier Williams as “present before eyes”, hence “visible”, “perceptible”, “direct perception”, and “apprehension by the senses”; and *pramāṇa* as “mode of proof”.<sup>15</sup> According to Puruṣottama Bilimoria, the terms other than “perceptible”, “direct perception”, and “mode of proof” are inadequate to explain the Advaitic perspective of perception, as terms like, “given to senses”, “cognized by any organ of sense”, “present before the eye”, and “visible” are inadequate depictions of, and grossly limit the scope of *pratyakṣa* in Advaita.<sup>16</sup> Perception provides a point of entry to all methods of knowledge as all theories of knowledge such as inference, comparison, and verbal testimony begin from perception, upon which every piece of evidence depends. Perception is important not merely in the sense that the latter are based on the knowledge derived from perception (genetically), but it represents a structure that overlaps into all other methods of knowledge (Gupta 1995, 39–40). The succeeding sections of this chapter elaborately discuss on the provisional validity of *pratyakṣa* and its importance as an aid for attaining the trans-empirical Knowledge.

The second *pramāṇa* of Advaita is *anumāna* (inference). *Anumāna* is the instrument of inferential knowledge (*anumiti*),<sup>17</sup> or the knowledge of invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*).<sup>18</sup> The invariable concomitance is

<sup>15</sup>Williams 1976, 614; V.S Apte, defines *pratyakṣa* as “cognizable by an organ of sense”, “apprehension by the sense”, or “considered as *pramāṇa* or proof” (Apte 1975, 664).

<sup>16</sup>Bilimoria 1980, p. 35. These are closer to Nyāya theory of perception, which makes the sense-object-contact (*sannikarṣa*) the central point of its definition, whereas Advaita does not consider sense contacts as the chief characteristic of *pratyakṣa*.

<sup>17</sup>*anumitikaraṇāmanumānam*.—VP II. p. 68.

<sup>18</sup>*anumitikaraṇaṇca vyāptijñānam*.—VP II. p. 69; *Vyāpti* is the essence of an inferential cognition, having the relation of invariable concomitance which is unconditional and necessary. It is a correlation between two terms, of which one is the pervaded (*hetu*) and the other is pervader (*sādhya*) (Grimes 1996, 354–355).

coexistent with the thing to be inferred and must abide in all substrata of the reason. Though *anumāna* cannot be negative, it is difficult to say that it is purely affirmative because every attribute is the counter-positive of the absolute non-existence abiding in *Brahman*. Since the thing to be inferred cannot be completely counter positive of non-existence, a purely affirmative inference is not possible. Besides that, inference cannot take place from completely negative invariables, because one cannot infer fire from the absence of smoke.<sup>19</sup> The inference of fire in the absence of smoke falls into the category of presumption. The *anumāna* taken as a *pramāṇa* is different from that of Nyāya system.<sup>20</sup> Advaita maintains that *anumāna* is not a *pramāṇa* in the case of *Brahman*, because *Brahman* being devoid of colour, shape, and external relations cannot have *anumāna* as the source of its knowing (Murty 1974, 140). The task of the inference is to prove the unreality of the entire universe through the help of three degrees of reality, namely *pāramārthika* (absolute Reality), *vyāvahārika* (conventional reality), and *prātibhāsika* (illusory reality), which is other than *Brahman*.<sup>21</sup> The unreality of the material universe is proved by negating two of the three degrees of existences in *Brahman*, which does not consist in negation of their actuality, but somewhat in denial of them as being absolute Reality.<sup>22</sup> Anumāna

<sup>19</sup> *Taccānumānamanvayirūpamekameva. ata evānumānasya nānvayavyatirekirūpatvam; vyatirekavyāptijñānasya anumityahetutbāt.*—VP II. p. 73.

<sup>20</sup> “Differentiating the Vedāntic *pramāṇa* of *anumāna* from that of Nyāya system T.R.V. Murti writes, “coming to inference, the features that distinguish the Vedānta from the Nyāya conception are mainly three: the non-acceptance of *parānarsa* as a *vyāpāra*, the contention that the *kevalavyatireka* type of *anumāna* is separate *pramāṇa-arhāpatti* and the total disallowance of the *kevalānvayi*. The first two are not peculiar to Vedānta alone. The last contention deserves more attention that is paid to it. Why cannot we have any inference that would be true of the entire universe of things? Nyāya thinks it is possible, because all are objects of thought (*prameya*), knowable. Vedānta denies this, as there is one thing at least which is not knowable-knowledge. Of this, all characters can be denied without consideration; for the characters are knowable, while knowledge is not, and hence the relation between the two is unprovable. The Nyāya acceptance of the *kevalānvayi* is based on the assumption common to all realism that knowledge of an object is but another object” (Murti 1983, 123–124).

<sup>21</sup> *evamanumāne nirūpate tasmād brahmabbinnanikhilaprapaṇcasya mithyātvāsiddhi.* VP II. p. 77; *Yadvā trividhaṁ sattvaṁ-pāramārthikaṁ vyāvahārikaṁ prātibhāsikaṁ ceti. pāramārthikaṁ sattvaṁ brahmaṇah, vyāvahārikaṁ sattvaṁākāśādeh, prātibhāsikaṁ sattvaṁ sūktirajātādeh.*—VP II. p. 81.

<sup>22</sup> VP II. pp. 81–82.



as a mode of ordered thinking becomes imminent when the perceptual awareness and the teachings of *śruti* are mutually conflicting. The capacity to respond to doubt or to convince oneself or another about the truth value of certain claims was not the only object of *anumāna*, but it also functioned as a formal process for deducting or inferring novel understanding from the interrelation of facts, objects, or events perceived through such other sources as perceived and so forth. Logic is thus developed as an extension and aid to the wider capabilities of *anumāna* (Bilimoria 2008, 8). The usefulness *anumāna* rests on illusory objects and defective senses. Therefore, the validity of *anumāna* is not absolute, and hence, it is not the source of the trans-empirical Knowledge.

The *third pramāṇa* of Advaita is *upamāna* (comparison). VP defines *upamāna* as “the instrument of the valid knowledge of similarity”.<sup>23</sup> It is a distinct method of mediate knowledge dependent upon sense perception. The doctrines of Advaita do not uphold the validity of sense perception, and therefore, world does not have an ontological existence. Comparison between *Brahman* and any other object is not possible empirically, and therefore, *upamāna* fails to provide trans-empirical insight. The classical example is that of gaining the knowledge of the wild cow with a comparison of the cow perceived elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> *Upamāna* is used to communicate the nature of *Ātman* and *Brahman* by means of the knowledge of similarity. *Ātman* is said to be all pervading and unrelated like *ākāśa*, so by reflecting these characteristics, the seeker can form the idea of the nature of the Supreme Self (Datta 1972, 158). However, this comparison does not hold good as Advaitic Reality is one, and comparison cannot be made from the perspective of ignorance as it is false and misleading, whereas in the state of Pure Knowledge, comparison is not possible or becomes redundant.

The *fourth pramāṇa* of Advaita is *śabda*, which in VP stands for authoritative verbal testimony. VP defines *śabda pramāṇa* as an authoritative verbal testimony (sentence), as “a means of valid knowledge in

<sup>23</sup> *tatra sādhyasyāpramāṇakaraṇamupamānam*,—VP III. p. 83.

<sup>24</sup> *ayaṁ piṇḍo gosatyaśah*, VP I. p. 83. To explain further a person who has seen a cow at his hometown sees a *gavaya* (wild cow) in the forest and comes to cognition, “This thing is like a cow” (*ayaṁ piṇḍo gosatyaśah*). Then by the way of comparison, he has the further knowledge, “My cow is like this”. Thus by a process of agreement and difference, the knowledge of “that likeness of a cow which exists in a gayal (*gavaya*)” becomes the instrument to the resultant knowledge of ‘that likeness of a gayal existing in cow’.

which the relation among the meaning of words (that is the object of its intention) is not contradicted by any other means of valid knowledge”.<sup>25</sup> It must be added that VP uses the word *agama* for verbal testimony,<sup>26</sup> in which sentence (*vākya*) that gives a knowledge has four causes, namely expectancy (*akāṅkṣa*), consistency (*yogyatā*), contiguity (*asattaya*), and intention (*tātparya*).<sup>27</sup> Specifically in Vedānta Philosophy, *śabda pramāṇa* has two functions, namely it communicates

<sup>25</sup> *yasya vākyaśya tātparyaviśayābhūtasamśargo mānāntareṇa na bādhyate tadvākyam pramāṇam.*—VP IV. p. 87.

This definition entails that the knowledge arising from the sentence has four causes, viz. expectancy, consistency, contiguity, and the knowledge of the intention. For details, see *Vedānta Paribhāṣa*, IV; The most elaborate definition of *śabda* is given by Bhartṛhari, who explicates it from three perspectives, namely (i) *śabda* as a *tattva*, i.e. the metaphysical principle; (ii) *śabda* as an object of *loka-vyavahāra*, i.e. as it is used empirically; and (iii) *śabda* as *śāstra-vyavahāra*, i.e. as an object of analytical or grammatical study. For details, see Patnaik (2009, 186).

<sup>26</sup> *aṭhāgamo nirūpyate.*—VP. IV. p. 86.

<sup>27</sup> *ākāṅkṣāyogyatā’asattayastātparyajñāna.*—VP IV. p. 86. It could be further explained in this way. Expectancy is the capacity of the meanings of the words to become objects of inquiry regarding each other. The term “capacity” in the definition is important because even one who is not inclined to inquire comprehends the meaning of a sentence without any external assistance. Consistency is non-contradiction of the relation that is intended (*yogyatā tātparyaviśayasamśargābādha*).—VP IV. p. 90). When there is a contradiction of relation in the sentences (he is sprinkling (plants) with fire), there is no consistency. However, the sentences like, “That, thou art” (ChU VI. 8. 7), have consistency, because, although there is contradiction of the identity of their direct meanings, still there is non-contradiction of their identity of implied meaning, which is their real essence. Continuity is the apprehension, without an interval, of meanings of words that are produced by those words (*āsattiścāvyavahānena padajanyapadārthopasthitih*, VP IV. p. 91). The phrase, “that is produced by those words”, guarantees that the meanings of words comprehended by other means of knowledge do not lead to any comprehension of their mutual connection. The meanings of the words are two kinds: primary and implied (*padārthakṣa dvidivbah:- śakco lakṣyaśceti*, VP IV. p. 93). The primary meaning is the direct reference (significance) of words to their meanings. An implied meaning is the object implied by a word (*lakṣaṇā ca dvidivdhā-kevalalakṣaṇā lakṣitalakṣaṇā ceti*, VP IV. p. 96). Intention is the capacity to produce cognition of a particular thing (*tatpratītiḥjananayogyatvaṁ tātparyam*, VP. IV. p. 107). For example, the sentence, “There is a pot in the house”, is capable of producing a cognition of the relation of the pot, and not that of a cloth, to the house. The intention, which is the (capacity for) generation of the cognition of a particular thing, is the cause of verbal comprehension. The intention of the *Vedas* is determined by reasoning and is rectified by the principles of interpretation, and they are not of the nature of restatement as their meanings are known only by the Vedic sentences.

the facts of the sensible world (*vyāvahārika*) and speaks of the supra-sensible truth (*pāramārthika*). And *śruti* reveals Knowledge of the supra-sensible truth. Śaṅkara says *śruti* (scripture) is self-valid (*śruteḥ svataḥ prāmāṇya*).<sup>28</sup> “Scripture is valid only in those spheres which are super sensuous” (Murti 1983a, 68). Not all verbal knowledge will give immediate knowledge (*nirvikalpaka jñāna*), but “statements about things which are immediate are capable of giving immediate knowledge” (Murti 1983a, 70). In other words, “intuitions of the real are given to us by *śruti*, whereas reason will help us to understand *śruti* properly and assimilate what is given to us” (Murti 1983a, 71). Any information that gives accounts or descriptions of the things in the world is verbal testimony of *vyāvahārika*. It is *śabda* but does not amount to *śruti* (Skoog 1989, 72). However, *śruti* in itself does not succeed in bringing the trans-empirical Knowledge of *Brahman*. The function of *śruti* is only to indicate imperfectly what it signifies, as according to Advaita its tools are unreal in comparison with the reality in quest. Even *śruti* in empirical realm is only provisional and dependent upon objects or state of facts. An elaborate discussion on *Śruti* is undertaken in the third chapter.

The *fifth pramāṇa* accepted by Advaita is *Arthāpatti* (Presumption). *Arthāpatti* is the assumption of an explanatory fact (*upapādaka*) from the knowledge of the thing to be explained (*upapādyā*).<sup>29</sup> Here, the knowledge of the thing to be explained is the instrument, and the knowledge of the explanatory fact is the result. That which is inexplicable without (the assumption of) something, is the thing to be explained with reference to the latter, and that in the absence of which something is inexplicable, is the explanatory fact with reference to the latter,<sup>30</sup> as is the case in the classical example of the fat man who does not eat during the day time is inexplicable unless we assume his eating at night; hence such stoutness is the thing to be explained.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, finding a ground completely wet in a dry summer would make one to presume that the

<sup>28</sup> *Śloka vārttika*. I. 1. 2.

<sup>29</sup> *tatropapādhya jñānenopapādakakalpanamarthāpattiḥ*, VP V. p. 117.

<sup>30</sup> VP V. p. 117.

<sup>31</sup> The classical example in the literature for *arthāpatti* is that of the stoutness of a man who does not eat at daytime is inexplicable unless it is assumed that he eats at night. Hence, stoutness is the thing to be explained. Since in the absence of eating at night such stoutness is inexplicable, eating at night necessarily becomes the explanatory fact (VP V. p. 117).

ground is irrigated. The defective senses can generate wrong knowledge. Therefore, the validity of *arthāpatti* is provisional, and additionally, the premises of *arthāpatti* are incapable of generating the absolute Knowledge of *Brahman*.

The *sixth pramāṇa* according to Advaita is *anupalabdhi* (Non-apprehension). *Anupalabdhi* is defined in VP as “the extraordinary cause of that apprehension of non-existence which is not due to knowledge as an instrument”.<sup>32</sup> It is a “conscious non-cognition” (Murti 1983c, 125). Non-perception as well as perception serves as a means of knowledge to the knowing self, as they lead to positive and negative experiences. One is able to know the presence of a thing by perception and the absence of it by non-perception. For example, I know that there is a plant in the courtyard because I see it, and I know that there are no fruits on the plant, because I don’t see them. The former is the case of perception, while the latter is the case of non-apprehension. *Anupalabdhi* is translated as non-existence (*abhāva*) or absence. There are four kinds of *anupalabdhi*, namely previous non-existence, non-existence as destruction, absolute non-existence, and mutual non-existence.<sup>33</sup> The previous non-existence is the absence of an effect such as a pot in its cause (such as in a lump of clay) before the pot was made. Non-existence as destruction is the absence of a pot in that very thing, after the pot has been dealt a blow with a club. The non-existence as destruction is also destroyed when its substratum; the piece of a pot is destroyed. That whose non-existence in a particular substratum is for all time (past, present, and future) has the absolute non-existence (there); as, the absolute non-existence of water in the stone. Mutual non-existence is the absence of a thing in another. Mutual non-existence can be conditioned when the difference of which is the subordinate concomitant (*vyāpka*) of the existence of its limiting adjunct, and unconditioned when the difference does not have such type of existence. The example of the first type is that the same ether is differentiated by different limiting adjuncts such as the pot. The example for the unconditioned mutual non-existence is

<sup>32</sup> *jñānakaraṇājanyābhāvānubhavāsādhāraṇakāraṇamanupalabddhirūpaṁ pramāṇam*, VP VI. p. 125.

<sup>33</sup> *sa cābhāvaścaturvidhaḥ:—pragbhavaḥ pradhvaṁsābhāvo’ryanābhāvo’nyonyābhāvaśceti*, VP VI. p. 137.

that the pot is different from a piece of cloth.<sup>34</sup> The knowledge of *anupalabdhi* is derived through the help of logic when the possible existence of an object is proved. But *anupalabdhi* is not an independent *pramāṇa* of knowledge. One cannot establish the existence of a trans-empirical Reality by witnessing absence of the material fact. Therefore, this *pramāṇa* does not completely satisfy even in the case of the supposed absence of *ajñāna*, as *Brahman* is the substratum of the universe. This may remain only to the realm of logic, while there cannot be empirical justification. The only means of knowing *Brahman* is direct realisation.

The study in the preceding section reveals that none of the five *pramāṇas* can be independent means of knowledge sans *pratyakṣa pramāṇa*. All the six *pramāṇas* are valid relatively, and none of them can adequately be the means of trans-empirical Knowledge. In the forthcoming section, the process of *pratyakṣa pramāṇa* as the modification of consciousness is being examined.

### NATURE OF MODIFICATION IN *PRATYAKṢA PRAMĀṆA*

In Advaita and in *VC*, *Pratyakṣa* plays a dual role as there are two kinds of perception, namely determinate perception (*savikalpaka pratyakṣa*) and indeterminate perception (*nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa*).<sup>35</sup> The determinate perception is the means by which the knowledge arises due to the apprehension of the relatedness of the substantive and qualifying attributes, which can be seen in the knowledge such as “I know the pot”.<sup>36</sup> The *savikalpaka pratyakṣa* is two types, namely the *external perception*<sup>37</sup> (that due to the *jñānendriyas*) and the *internal perception* (that sans the

<sup>34</sup> VP VI. pp. 137–140.

<sup>35</sup> *pratyakṣam dvividham savikalpakanirvikalpakabhedāt.*—VP I. p. 32.

<sup>36</sup> *tatra savikalpakam vaiśiṣṭyāvagāhi jñānam. yathā “ghaṭamahaṃ jñāmi”.*—VP. I. p. 32.

<sup>37</sup> According to *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*, the contact of the sense organs (*jñānendriyas*) with their respective objects, which is essential for external perception, is effected in two ways. While the organ of hearing and organ of vision contact their respective objects by extending and meeting them where they are, the organs of touch, taste, and smell associate their respective objects abiding in their own states (VP I. p. 66: The reason for this is that the organ of hearing and the organ of vision, being constitutive of the nature of ether (*ākāśa*) and light (*tejas*), respectively, can move instantly and freely, while the organs of touch, taste, and smell associate their respective objects abiding in their own states).

help of *jñānendriyas*).<sup>38</sup> The internal perception, such as the perception of happiness and sadness, hope, and despair, takes place through the mind (*manas*). The *savikalpaka pratyakṣa* would be elaborated in the succeeding sections through the explication of the concepts of *antaḥkaraṇa* and *antaḥkaraṇa vṛtti*.

The second kind of perception is *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* (indeterminate perception). The indeterminate perception is the means by which knowledge arises without apprehending the relatedness or the particular features. For example, in a sentence like “thou art that”, the knowledge arises when the contradictory terms are negated. Here, the criterion is not the apprehension of the relation between the meanings of the word, but apprehension of its intention, which is its implied meaning.<sup>39</sup> External perception that can be grasped by *antaḥkaraṇa* is not equivalent to experience, and this experience cannot be grasped by *antaḥkaraṇa*. The *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* or indeterminate perception is an experiential perception. VC distinctly explores the experiential aspect of *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa*, which will be discussed under the head *anubhava* in the next chapter.

### *The Role of Antaḥkaraṇa*

The common-sense view of perception, as that of Nyāya, defines perception as sense-functioning, or the knowledge which is produced by the connection between organs and objects, and is infallible (Biswas 1987, 37; BP 2004, 81). The Advaita makes a departure from this view, as sense organs according to them only constitute the instrumental cause of perceptual cognition. In Advaita, the actual organs of sight, hearing, smell etc., as the instruments of perception and action, are not the visible physical organs,<sup>40</sup> but the subtle material substances with distinctive powers, known as “*indriyas*” (*jñānendriyas*),<sup>41</sup> belonging to the subtle

<sup>38</sup> *uktam pratyakṣa prakāraṇtaraṇa dvividham-indriyajanyam tad-ajanya-ca- iti*. VP I. p. 65.

<sup>39</sup> VP I. pp. 33–35.

<sup>40</sup> The physical sense organs such as the eyes, the ears, the nose, and the rest are the outer stations of *indriya*.

<sup>41</sup> Though imperceptible, the “*indriyas*” are composed of the same type of subtle substance as mind and can expand and contract as freely as mind (VC: 74, 92, 167; VP I. p. 66; Satprakāśhananda 2009, 44, 45). Their existence is inferable through their functions that take place through the corresponding physical organs including the brain centres.

body, of which *antaḥkaraṇa* (internal organ) is the main component factor.<sup>42</sup> The notion of *antaḥkaraṇa*—*antah* meaning “internal” and *karaṇa* meaning “organ” or “instrument”—in Advaita takes into consideration four internal organs, namely *manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *ahaṁkāra* (ego), and *citta* (memory).<sup>43</sup> The *antaḥkaraṇa* (internal organ) has four states, namely doubt (*saṁśaya*), certitude (*niścaya*), egoism (*garva*), and recollection (*smaraṇa*) due to which the *antaḥkaraṇa*

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They are very fine and limited in size, but capable of quick expansion and contraction. Each sense organ (*jñānendriya*) is produced by that very subtle element whose distinctive property is the power to reveal. For instance, the organ of hearing (auditory) is composed of the *sattva* aspect of subtle *ākāśa* (ether), which manifests “sound” as its specific property. Similarly, the organ of touch (tactual) is composed of the *sattva* aspect of subtle *vāyu* (air), manifesting “touch” as its specific property. The organ of sight (visual) is composed of the *sattva* aspect of subtle *tejas* (light or fire), manifesting “colour” as its specific property. The organ of taste (gustatory) is composed of the *sattva* aspect of subtle “*ap*” (water), whose specific property “taste” is manifested by it; the organ of smell (olfactory) is composed of the *sattva* aspect of subtle *kṣiti* (earth), whose specific property “smell” is manifested by it (Sāprakashananda 2009, 50).

<sup>42</sup>The *antaḥkaraṇa* has *buddhi* (intellect) and *manas* (mind) as its main components, both of which are comprised of *citta* (memory) and *ahaṁkāra* (ego), respectively. *Manas* (mind) is the function in the process of forming concepts and judgement, and *buddhi* (intellect) is the function that gives them definite shapes (*nigadyate’ anataḥkaraṇam mano dhīr ahaṁkṛtis cittam iti sva-vṛttibhiḥ; manas tu saṁkalpa-vikalpanādibhiḥ buddhiḥ padārth’ ādhyavasāya-dharmataḥ*.—VC: 93; *atrābhimānād ahamityahaṁkṛtiḥ; svārtbhānusandhānaguṇena cittam*.—VC: 94; VS: 67; PD: I. 20).

The combination of *sattva* aspect of all the five subtle elements produces internal organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*), which is therefore material and has constituent parts. Similarly, the *rajas* aspect of the five subtle elements, being combined, generates *prāṇa*, the life principle with its five main functions (biological processes). The *rajas* aspect of the five subtle elements severally produces the five organs of action in succession. Thus, the *rajas* aspect of *ākāśa* (ether) produces the organ of speech, of *vāyu* (air) the hands, the *tejas* (fire or light) the feet, and so on. Because of the prevalence of *rajas*, the five *prāṇas* and the five organs of action have motive force. The five subtle elements with *tamas* preponderant in each, being compounded by the process of quintuplication (*pañcīkaraṇa*), produce the five gross elements (VC: 92–97, 103; Sāprakashananda 2009, 50).

<sup>43</sup>*manobuddhīrahaṁkāraścittam karaṇamāntaram*,—VP I. p. 32; VC: 93–94.

gets the above-mentioned four internal organs *manas*,<sup>44</sup> *buddhi*,<sup>45</sup> *ahaṁkāra*,<sup>46</sup> and *citta*,<sup>47</sup> respectively.<sup>48</sup>

The *antaḥkaraṇa* having constituted by the finest and purest essence of matter, has the special capacity to expand and contract, and thereby assumes the form of any object of knowledge. *Antaḥkaraṇa* is infinite, that is, medium of magnitude which can connect one or more organ simultaneously. The *antaḥkaraṇa*, which is an internal instrument of the knowing Self, is neither the Self nor has consciousness inherent in it, because “it (mind) is not self-luminous, because it is observable”.<sup>49</sup> Being composed of the subtlest and most transparent substance and closest to the Self, *antaḥkaraṇa* receives the light of consciousness that belongs to the Self and is illuminated by it. With no light of its own, it appears luminous. The *antaḥkaraṇa* in conjunction with *jñānendriyas* manifests the objects through the light of consciousness (Self)—the reason by which Self remains in conjunction with the objects. Just as a person cognises external things, so does the Self as the knower per se cognises its mental states, and remains distinct from the cognisable, for “the cogniser is invariably the cogniser; the cognizable is invariably the cognizable” (Satprakashananda 2009, 46). Being devoid of the light of

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<sup>44</sup>The *manas* is the modification of the internal instrument whose function is doubting. That when a person is unable to determine the certitude of an object, and unable to take a particular action, that status of the internal organ is known as *manas*. For example, having seen an object from distance, one is unable to determine whether it is pot or a basket. When the *manas* aspect of *antaḥkaraṇa* establishes the relationship of “I” or “mine”, it is denoted as *ahaṁkāra* (VS: 66, 67, 69; PD: I. 20).

<sup>45</sup>*Buddhi* is that modification of the internal instrument (*antaḥkaraṇa*) which determines or discriminates the real nature of an object. It is comprised of *citta*. When the *antaḥkaraṇa* becomes absolutely sure of the existence of the pot, then it is known as *buddhi*. Having determined the certitude of an object, when *antaḥkaraṇa* remembers that object, it is denoted as *citta*, and when it establishes a relationship of “I” or “mine” with the object (I am happy; I know the object), it is denoted as *ahaṁkāra* (VS: 65, 67, 69; PD: I. 20).

<sup>46</sup>The modification of inner organ that belongs to *manas* and is characterised by Self-consciousness is known as *ahaṁkāra* (VS: 69).

<sup>47</sup>The modification of inner organ that belongs to *buddhi* and performs the function of memory is called *citta* (VS: 68).

<sup>48</sup>*manobuddhirahaṁkāraścittam karaṇamāntaram; saṁśayo niscayo garvāḥ smaraṇamviśayā ime.*—VP. I. p. 32.

<sup>49</sup>YSV IV: 19.



consciousness, the *antaḥkaraṇa* and the *jñānendriyas* are directed by the luminous Self to perform their respective functions. Whereas the inability of the *antaḥkaraṇa* and the *jñānendriyas* to move by themselves can be credited to the lack of self-luminous Consciousness, the mover is distinguished from all the limiting adjuncts of the moved. Accordingly, VP cites instances of internal perceptual experiences such as pleasure, pain, happiness, sadness, hope, and despair, and other internal perceptions where the modes of *antaḥkaraṇa* without the involvement of any sense contact are directly apprehended.<sup>50</sup> By this claim, the involvement of sense contact (*jñānendriyas*) as an indispensable criterion for knowledge acquisition is ruled out, though it can be still maintained that *pratyakṣa* is the channel or the canon to discover or measure the knowledge, or in other words, *pratyakṣa* is the directedness of the knowledge acquired through perceptual process.<sup>51</sup>

The *antaḥkaraṇa* is different from all the *indriyas* is proved when despite the fact that one closes his eyes, he is able to know whether one has joy or sorrow, love or hatred, hope or despair, and so on. In addition to that, by losing any of the *jñānendriyas*, such as the organs of vision, or the organs of hearing, or the organ of speech, one does not lose one's *antaḥkaraṇa*. In spite of physical pain, one can have peaceful *antaḥkaraṇa*, where as in spite of physical comforts, one can have uneasy *antaḥkaraṇa*. This shows that *antaḥkaraṇa* is other than the body. Moreover, the power of a healthy *antaḥkaraṇa* is seen in its ability to heal the physical pain, whereas impossibility of the body to heal the mental problems is a sufficient justification to claim that the body is instrument of (*antaḥkaraṇa*), wherein its modes are expressed. The *Upaniṣad* supports the same view when it says that when the mind is absent minded, neither can the self see or hear anything. Obviously, through the mind one sees, through the mind one hears, desire, deliberation, doubt, faith, want of faith, patience, impatience, shame, intelligence, and fear—all

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<sup>50</sup> *Nabīndriyājanyatvena jñānasya sakṣāttvam, anumityāderapimanojanyatayā sāksāttvāpatteḥ, Īśvarajñānasyānīndriyājanyasya sāksāttvānāpatteḥca* (VP I. p. 12). Swami Madhavananda translates it as, “the immediacy of knowledge does not lie in its being due to an organ; for in that case inference, etc. also, being due to the mind, would be immediate, and God's knowledge (*in our context Brahman*), which is not due to any organ, would not be immediate” (VP 2008, I. p. 12).

<sup>51</sup> Bilimoria (1980, 35): Also see in detail, VP 2008, 26.

these are but [different modes of] the *antaḥkaraṇa*.<sup>52</sup> Hence, there is a significant and independent role of the *antaḥkaraṇa* in *pratyakṣa*.

### *The Method of Advaitic Perception: Vṛtti*

In Advaitic epistemology, the conception of *vṛtti* has a special significance. As mentioned just in the preceding section on *antaḥkaraṇa*, *antaḥkaraṇa* plays a vital role in perception. According to VP, it is *antaḥkaraṇa* that travels out to perceive the objects in the world (*viśaya*). When a pot is perceived, the *antaḥkaraṇa* travels via particular *jñānendriya* to the object and modifies itself into the form of the pot. This modification of the *antaḥkaraṇa* (internal organ) is called *vṛtti*. VP says: “Just like the water of a tank, issuing through a hole enters in channel, and takes the shape, so also the luminous mind, issuing through the eye etc., goes to the space occupied by objects such as a jar, and is modified into the form of a pot or any other object”.<sup>53</sup> As soon as the *vṛtti* envelops the pot and becomes one with it, the *antaḥkaraṇa* or the consciousness limited by the mental state is reflected in the pot.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, what is responsible for cognition of “this is a pot” (*ayaṁ ghaṭṭaḥ*)<sup>55</sup> is the modification of *antaḥkaraṇa* (*antaḥkaraṇa vṛtti*) and reflection of it in the object. Perception with reference to the cognition is produced by a non-difference between the apparent consciousness (*antaḥkaraṇa*) determined by the modification (*vṛtti*)<sup>56</sup> and the

<sup>52</sup> *Anyatra manā abhūvaṁ nādarśam, anyatra manā abhūvaṁ nāśrauṣam iti, manasā hy eva paśyati, manasā śṛṇoti, kāmāḥ saṁkalpo vucikiṁsā, śraddhā, dṛṣṭir adṛṣṭir hrīr dhīr bhīr ity etat sarvaṁ mana eva* (BrUB 2008, I. 5, 3, p. 174).

<sup>53</sup> *Tatra yathā taṇḍāgodakam cidrānnigrhya kuḷyātmanā kedārān praviśya taddeva catuṣkoṇādhyākāraṁ bhavati, tathā taijasamanta karaṇamapi cakṣurādidivārā nirgatya ghaṭādiviśayadeśam gatvā ghaṭādiviśayākāreṇa pariṇamate.*—VP I. p. 14.

<sup>54</sup> The consciousness limited by the jar and the consciousness limited by the mental state are one and the same, for the mental state and objects such as jar, although (usually) they are divided factors, do not produce any difference, since they occupy the same space (VP: I. 15).

<sup>55</sup> VP. I. p. 14.

<sup>56</sup> It is to be noted that in looking for an elaborate discussion of the *vṛttis* going out and enveloping or assuming the form of the object is to be found neither in Śāṅkara nor in Padmapāda. Śāṅkara, for instance, though maintained a realist position regarding the phenomenal world, did not give a detailed account of the process through which experience and validation of the knowledge of the external world take place. Both of them seem to be interested only in the metaphysical aspect of perception, as they do not give a complete

reflection of it, as determined by the object. Thus, in a perception like “this is a pot”, the consciousness determined by the pot (object) and the consciousness determined by the *vr̥tti* (cogniser) are non-different as both the pot and the *vr̥tti* are found in the same locus, when the perception is produced.<sup>57</sup> Perceptual experiences are relational to the senses and to the object perceived. Perceptual experiences are changing instants that are sublated and varied in accordance with the capacity of the perceiver. That the perceptual sense organs incapable of grasping the thing-in-itself is proved, when we find that each sense organ can grasp fixed to their own spheres, and they cannot travel beyond. In the case of sound, we can locate its source without seeing it, whereas the source of the smell cannot be located in the same way, though we might determine its cause (Satprakashananda 2009, 54). The kind of diversity present in the perceptual function<sup>58</sup> is possible only through *antaḥkaraṇa* with modified consciousness (*antaḥkaraṇa vr̥tti*). Moreover, the sense data can grasp only the image of a thing as confronted with them or the sense data, which is the object of experience, and not the experience itself. Water or the sweet as the sense data that can be grasped by the mind is not equivalent to the experience of drinking/eating them, which is not

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analysis of the mechanism of the perceptual process. Though Padmapāda, the immediate disciple of Śaṅkara, attempted a Vedāntic explanation of perceptual process, his cursory attempt was later taken over by Prakāśātman of the Vivaraṇa school, evidently under the polemic pressure of other schools. These views were collected and systematised in the brilliant exposition of *Vedānta Paribhāṣā* by Dharmarāja Adhavarīndra. The theory of perception expounded by these later writers, since it is the very opposite of modern scientific views on the subject, has been the object of much unfavourable criticism in recent times. D.M. Datta attempts a scientific defence of the theory on the basis of certain tenets of the Gestalt School of psychology coupled with some other common-sense considerations (Dasgupta 1975, vol. II, 105–106; Radhakrishnan 1932, vol. II, 492–493; Datta 1972, 62–70; Grimes 1990, 10).

<sup>57</sup>The Advaitic consciousness in perceptual process is threefold, as associated with the object (*viśaya*), with the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), and with the subject or knower (*pramātṛ*).

<sup>58</sup>The difference of modification of *antaḥkaraṇa* limited by respective *jñānedriyas* is proved in the case of smell, when it is learned that though the object is at a distance, its fragrance upon reaching the nose does not reveal its distance, which is significantly different in the case of vision and sound, the sensation of which is grasped in the place of their origination. We do not smell the flower right there where we see it, but we smell it where we are (VP I. p. 66; Satprakashananda 2009, 54).

grasped by the mind. “Experience is the idea of sweet or sever having no physiological quality like extension, form etc. and hence a cognitive unit and, hence, internal while the senses are naturally fixed only in the external object” (Tiwari 2000, 136). Therefore, *Vedānta Paribhāṣa* defines perception as “the instrument of valid perceptual knowledge, which knowledge, according to Vedānta, is nothing but Pure Consciousness, for the *śruti*, says, “The *Brahman* that is immediate and intuitive””.<sup>59</sup> Perception is the capacity of cognising an object when it is capable of being perceived and is devoid of any existence apart from that of the consciousness associated with the subject, which has for its limiting adjunct a mental state in the form of that object (VP 2008, 30). In this way, perception, which is the gateway for all types of empirical knowledge, is not a source of new knowledge, but the illusory modification of *antaḥkaraṇa*, known as *antaḥkaraṇa vṛtti*. Accordingly, *pratyakṣa* and all other *pramāṇas* are merely modification of the already existing consciousness (*antaḥkaraṇa*: *buddhi*, *manas*, *ahamkāra*, and *citta*) and do not bring about any novelty (*pramā*) in the cognition. Hence, one is inclined to conclude that all the six *pramāṇas* have merely provisional (empirical validity), and from the perspective of Advaita, all of them are illusory.

Śaṅkara in VC and in other popular writings maintained a realist position regarding the phenomenal world. Nonetheless, he does not develop elaborately on this concept in any of his writings, as his primary concern was the metaphysical aspect of perception, which is the perception of ultimate Reality.<sup>60</sup> Since empirical perception is concerned only with

<sup>59</sup> *Tatra pratyakṣapramāyāḥ karaṇaṁ pratyakṣapramāṇam. Pratyakṣapramā cātra caitanyameva, “yat sāṅśādaparoṣād brahma” ity śruteḥ.*—VP I. p. 8.

<sup>60</sup> It is to be noted that in looking for an elaborate discussion of the *vṛttis* going out and enveloping or assuming the form of the object is to be found neither in Śaṅkara nor in Padmapāda. Śaṅkara, for instance, though maintained a realist position regarding the phenomenal world, did not give a detailed account of the process through which experience and validation of the knowledge of the external world take place. Both of them seem to be interested only in the metaphysical aspect of perception, as they do not give a complete analysis of the mechanism of the perceptual process. Though Padmapāda, the immediate disciple of Śaṅkara, attempted a Vedāntic explanation of perceptual process, his cursory attempt was later taken over by Prakāśātman of the Vivaraṇa School, evidently under the polemic pressure of other schools. These views were collected and systematised in the brilliant exposition of Vedānta Paribhāṣā by Dharmarāja Adhavarīndra. The theory of perception expounded by these later writers, since it is the very opposite of modern scientific views on the subject, has been the object of much unfavourable criticism in recent times.

the outwardly superficial aspects and the senses cannot perceive things in its entirety,<sup>61</sup> empirical perception in itself cannot be a means to know the beyond. All the same, one can trace Śaṅkara's perspectives on empirical perception and its epistemic modalities by analysing the basic function of consciousness, its modification, and various phases of illusion that take place due to the effect of *ajñāna*, which is foundational even for embarking into a metaphysical search. The role of empirical perception as an aid for the quest of trans-empirical Knowledge as delineated in *VC* can be summed up in following headings, namely Illusoriness and Dissatisfaction, and Metaphysical Seeing, that would be taken up in the remaining sections of the chapter.

### ILLUSORINESS AND DISSATISFACTION IN PRATYAKṢA

Perception in primary sense refers to empirical knowledge produced by the mind as the organ, and all other organs as its instruments (BP 2004, 81). Śaṅkara began with the presupposition that truth is real and non-contradictory in experience.<sup>62</sup> In *Bhagavad Gītā Bhāṣya*, he defines veridical perception in terms of changelessness: "That in relation to which the awareness does not change is Real; that in relation to which it changes is unreal".<sup>63</sup> Whereas the Real is immutable, unchanging, eternal, and unsublatable, the test of Reality is the knowledge that does not miscarry.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, the phenomenal reality is mutable, momentary, discontinuous, discrete, and everything is in flux (Murti 1983b, 1). Śaṅkara undertook to examine this apparent contradiction between Real

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D.M. Datta attempts a scientific defence of the theory on the basis of certain tenets of the Gestalt School of psychology coupled with some other common-sense considerations; For details, see Dasgupta (1975, 105–106), Radhakrishnan (1932, 492–493), Datta (1972, 62–70), Grimes (1990, 10).

<sup>61</sup> *parañci khāni vyatṛṇat svamibhūh tasmātparāṇpasyati nāntarātman*, Kathopaniṣad II.1.1.

<sup>62</sup> "The Brahman of the Upaniṣads is the only Reality, and everything else... is unreal..." BSB 2008, 1; "Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, Infinity", TaU. II.1.

<sup>63</sup> BGB (2010, II.16); Also see, BSB (2008, II.11): "True knowledge of a real thing depends on the thing itself, and therefore it is always uniform. Hence a conflict of views with respect to it is not possible".

<sup>64</sup> BGB: II. 16; BSB: II.1.11 & III. 2. 4.

and unreal by certain classical examples of phenomenal existence and explained the predicament through the theory of *adhyāsa*. In the initial verses of the text VC, the effects of *pratyakṣa* have been presented with an immense impact. In the latter part, the need of *śruti* and *tarka* as a solution to the problems experienced through *pratyakṣa* is analysed. The fundamental claim of VC is that the Reality is superimposed by the power of beginningless (*anādi*) ignorance (*ajñāna*), known as *māyā* or *avidyā*. The text in some way allures Śaṅkara's original thought in its attempt to explain the problem of *avidyā* (VC: 108) and compliments his classical examples, such as, rope/snake illusion (VC: 110), silver/nacre illusion, double-moon illusion and so on, the aim of which is to prove that reality misrepresents itself as something different from what it is.<sup>65</sup> The analogy of the misrepresentation of rope as snake suggests that the reality of the snake at first instance remains undoubted, because it is cognised. "The water that is quaffed in a dream will not quench actual thirst. At the same time the relation is not unreal, for it is experienced" (Hiriyanna 2005, 352). In the first instance, these experiences are real or "*sat*", and later, on careful scrutiny they are discovered to be unreal or "*asat*". Since the phenomenal experiences are cognised, they are not to be taken unreal (*asat*), and since they are sublated, they are not taken to be real (*sat*). They are neither real nor unreal, but they are *sat* and *asat* (real and unreal) at the same time, and therefore, the phenomenal experiences are *mithyā* (false) and *anirvacanīya* (indescribable, VC: 109).

When Śaṅkara states that the world is "false", in the sense of illusory, the falsity is not limited to the external physical world, but the internal psychical world as well (VC: 111–116), because pluralistic experience has no place, where the reality is unitary. Ras Vihari Das in his article, "The Falsity of the World", writes in the following words:

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<sup>65</sup> It is our common experience that in a bad light we might misjudge a rope for a snake and vice versa. There are several instances when we misjudge a nacre seen in a distance for a piece of silver. There are several instances of this world in physical world we misjudge in a first sight as something, and on closer scrutiny, we realise the reality. In a similar way, the empirical world is misjudged to be something else. Such misjudgment or falsity is caused, according to Śaṅkara, by illusion or *ajñāna*. See Malkhani (1993, 52).

"The double-moon illusion will occur in a locus by depressing, for e.g. one eyeball. The two moons may be distinct and separate, or overlapping as the case may be, as this is dependent on the extent to which the depression of the eyeball is made. This 'illusion' can also occur when the person is shortsighted. In this case depressing the eyeball is not required". See Kumar (2006, 18).

The world does not mean merely the external visible world with its sensible qualities. It means this and more than this... In fact whatever can be presented to us either externally or internally, to the mind or the senses forms part of the world which as a whole as well as every item in it is said to be false. Falsity is thus asserted of everything that we can sense or feel, think of or imagine as an object. (Das 1943, 80)

Śaṅkara further examines various types of perceptual illusions of mental phenomena such as dreams, feelings, emotions, and hallucinations. There are visual hallucinations like confronting a human figure or a distorted image of something, optical illusions like reflection and refraction of colour, illusions of size, and distance that do not present a material content for the illusion to take place. Apart from the above perceptual illusions, there are non-perceptual illusions such as wrong opinions, convictions, misunderstandings, faith and so on. These are by far the most stubborn facts that constitute the main spring of all actions. They ostensibly seem to give us correct information and acquaint us with real entity; on careful scrutiny of them, they would fail to validate their claim (Murti 1993, 126). According to Ras Vihari Das, “Ignorance...means nothing but a misconception about our true nature. This misconception about the Self or Reality does not bring about a real change in Reality...” (Das 1943, 84). G.R. Malkhani says, “Avidyā is only another name for this misperception” (Malkhani 1993, 4). For Hiriyanna, *adhyāsa* is “illegitimate transference...” (Hiriyanna 2005, 351). Thus, *Ajñāna* can be construed as the result of the misperception by the person affected by the illusive content. Accordingly, *Ajñāna* is the result of the superimposition over the real nature of Self, which is known as I-*adhyāsa* or I-cognition (Joshi 1979, 127). In VC and in all other texts, Śaṅkara’s analogy of external and internal illusions (object *adhyāsa*) presents the metaphorical explanations to understand I-*adhyāsa*. The analogies set to claim that every kind of object *adhyāsa* is the result of I-*adhyāsa* whereby individual self (*jīva*) is superimposed upon the Supreme Self. In order to explicate the I-*adhyāsa*, Śaṅkara in his *adhyāsa bhāṣya* demarcates the spheres of subject and object, “I” and “Thou”, respectively, as opposed to each other like light and darkness. According to him in the examination of concepts like “I am body”, “You are myself”, “there is an apprehension of the ‘I’ which apprehension is non-sensory and immediate (*aparokṣa*)” (Kumar 2006, 86; VC: 72, 73 & 244). Here, the body as the object is in no way related to the subject “I”. Nonetheless, in our casual conversations we

discover that, due to the ignorance of the real nature of itself, the ego (*ahamkāra*) superimposes upon the real Self. Śaṅkara in the VC exposes this phenomenon by undertaking the analysis of the five sheaths of the body, which is known as *Pañca-kośa-viveka* and realises that “There is some Absolute Entity, the eternal substratum of the consciousness of egoism, the witness of the three states, and distinct from five sheaths or coverings”.<sup>66</sup> Accordingly, Śaṅkara concludes that the physical body with its manifold appearances is illusory and false, like the snake seen in the rope, and every instance of object *adhyāsa* is the reflection of the I-*adhyāsa*.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, from the perspective of I-*adhyāsa* the superimposition in the objective universe is real until its sublation, and after the sublation it is not unreal like the son of a barren woman, for it has been experienced. “Nothing experienced is absolutely unreal, hence there must be levels of reality culminating in...substratum of all experienced objects” (Das 1933, 82). According to VC, the superimposed attribute does not have any meaning apart from the substratum, as it is the substratum, caused by delusions appears in multiple forms. “That which is superimposed upon something else is observed by the wise to be identical with the substratum, as in the case of the rope appearing as the snake. The apparent difference depends solely on error”.<sup>68</sup> This illusoriness of the material universe is vividly pointed out in the initial part of the text VC.

Śaṅkara’s defence for the illusory nature of the empirical world primarily comes from his *Adhyāsa Bhāṣya* in which *ajñāna* is said to be the cause of false cognition of the perceived object. A false cognition is the result of superimposition (*adhyāsa*) of false content on the real object. The illusory content has no properties of its own, though it haunts the subject even after the cancellation of the content objectively. Therefore, one can establish that *adhyāsa* is nothing but predication of subjective facts to the object, created due to the ignorance of the real nature of Self, known as I-*adhyāsa*. One cannot disown the illusory snake that was directly presented to the consciousness just as the real rope cannot

<sup>66</sup>“*Asi kaścit svayaṁ nityaṁ ahaṁ-pratyaya-lambanaḥ; avasthā-traya-sākṣī saṁ pañca-kośa-vilakṣaṇaḥ*,” VC: 125.

<sup>67</sup>VC: 227, 234 & 246.

<sup>68</sup>“*Ananyatvaṁ adhisthānād āropyaśya nirīkṣitam; paṇḍitai rajju-sarpādau vikalpa bhrānti-jīvanah*,”—VC: 406.



be disowned. Just like the dream state can be negated from the waking state, and vice versa, so also the objects predicated exists in its own right until it is sublated by a true cognition. If that is the case, the distinction between the real and the illusory seems to be based on nothing more than purely practical considerations, because waking state can be annulled from the dream state and vice versa, while neither of them can exist by their own right. In this sense, the contention that illusory object alone is false (*mithyā*), is itself false (Murti 1993, 140). In the context of Advaita, therefore, the word *ajñāna* entails every wrong knowledge or belief in things not existing, where they are presumed to do so. Accordingly, we may claim that the things of the world arise as a sequence of fundamental belief in the reality of the object. This *mūlajñāna* has no traceable beginning or logical explanation. This beginningless illusion creates differences where none exists in reality (Das 1993, 111). Therefore, T.R.V. Murti defines *Ajñāna* in relation to knowledge, as “...a belief that is cancelled by the right cognition” (Murti 1993, 117). *Ajñāna* is a positive state of wanting to know something perfectly than not knowing anything. Therefore, an inquiry into a thing, about which we are ignorant about (*ajñāna*) is the possible object of thought as well as the sufficient proof of our ignorance about the same thought, in the sense that “I inquire something in order to get the true knowledge or complete picture of the reality”. In this sense, there cannot be anything completely false or unreal, as we commonly ascribe to the word *ajñāna*; but some part of the previous knowledge is to be either rejected or improved upon, so as to destroy the distortive picture that exists in what we seek about. An enquiry into *Ajñāna* therefore would be an investigation into the “a priori” conditions of the experience of perfect knowledge (Murti 1993, 122). Accordingly, the conventional truth becomes the ladder for the ultimate truth.<sup>69</sup> This thought is perfected in VC, where after experiencing the illusoriness of the physical world there is an attempt to quench the thirst created by the dissatisfaction.

The enigmatic nature of the diverse forms of phenomenal existence has been vividly documented in VC, which remarks: “How to cross this

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<sup>69</sup> *Vyavahāramanāśritya paramārtho no deśyate/paramārthamanāgamyā nirvāṇaṁ nādhigamyate//* (Without recourse to conventional truth, the absolute truth cannot be understood. It is impossible to realise *nirvāṇa* without understanding the absolute truth), *mādhyanīkākārikā* 24: 10.

ocean of phenomenal existence...which of the means should I adopt—as to these I know nothing”.<sup>70</sup> The epistemological perspectives of the perceptible world do not bring satisfaction to the seer, than confusion and misery. He says, “From the perception of unreal things there is neither satisfaction nor a cessation of misery”.<sup>71</sup> Further, he says, “...I am... shaken violently by the winds of an untoward lot, terrified...I do not know...with whom to see shelter”.<sup>72</sup> These sentences present the experience of a very profound sense of helplessness and meaninglessness in one’s life. In the very outset of the text, the seeker is presented like a person dissatisfied, and who is incessantly in search of the true knowledge that can quench his thirst. Such seeker is not an ordinary person who is not able to see the world differently, but a metaphysician who is able to search what is beyond the transitoriness of the empirical world. This existential dissatisfaction, so commonly noted in the Indian tradition, is not an isolated phenomenon. Anantanand Rambachan in his famous book, “The Advaita World view...”, cites the example of a famous Russian author Leo Tolstoy, who once upon a time in a pinnacle of success was gripped by unshakable sense of the meaninglessness of his life. “All this”, wrote Tolstoy,

took place at a time when so far as all my outward circumstances went, I ought to have been completely happy. I had a good wife...good children and a large property... I was loaded with praise by strangers; and without exaggeration I could believe my name already famous... And yet, I could give no reasonable meaning to any actions of my life... One can live only so long as one is intoxicated, drunk with life; but when one grows sober, one cannot fail to see that it is all a stupid cheat. (James 2004, 123; Rambachan 2006, 16)

Anantanand further observes, “...at the back of every finite search and action is a quest for the infinite and hence one of the reasons why the finite will always fail to satisfy” (Rambachan 2006, 16). The empirical phenomenon is false and limited. It creates flimsiness and confusion in the minds. It is unrealistic. Thus, falsity of the empirical world poses a

<sup>70</sup> “*Katham tareyam bhava sindhum etam kā vā gatir me katamo’astyupāyah...*”—VC: 40.

<sup>71</sup> “*Asat-padārth’ānubhavena kiñcit na hy’asti tṛptir na ca dukḥkha-bāñih,*”—VC: 523.

<sup>72</sup> “*Durvāra-saṁsāra-davāgni-taptaṁ dodbhūyamānaṁ duradṛṣṭa-vātaiḥ; bhūtaṁ prapañnam paripādhi mṛtyoḥ śaraṇam anyad yad ahaṁ na jāne,*”—VC: 36.

sort of mystification in the epistemology of Advaita. The predicament regarding the ascertainment of truth-condition of empirical world meets not only in Śaṅkara, but even to some of the recent philosophers of the West. In the following example, one can see how a genuine reflection on the physical world is deceptive and falls back to one's own inherent convictions of the reality. Barry Stroud, in his recent book called, *Engagement and Metaphysical Dissatisfaction* aims to understand "how any active engaged person...can carry out a reflective philosophical project...and arrive at metaphysical conclusions he or she can believe and find illuminating" (Stroud 2011, 5). For Stroud, the task of his metaphysics is to determine what kind of things exist independently of our responses and beliefs, and what kind of things or facts have no existence independent of our responses. A common metaphysical view is that the physical facts of an object such as its width and breath are independent of human responses, while value judgment upon the same object cannot exist in themselves. Such distinctions between what is natural and what is not natural, and evaluation on them to access which of the things falls either side of the line seems entirely legitimate way to deepen our understanding of the world and our relation to it. Nevertheless, the distinguished philosopher in his book argues that the project cannot be carried out, because we are too immersed in the system of concepts that we hope to subject to metaphysical assessment. This predicament prevents us from finding an appropriately impartial metaphysical verdict on the relation between the two, as there is no enough distance between our conception of the world and the world existing as it is. Stroud's general point is that the metaphysical project is doomed because, on the one hand, it begins with an unsustainable separation between ourselves and our thoughts, and on the other, we cannot distance ourselves from the world. We are part of a thinking process about ourselves and the rest of the world (Nagel 2011, 5). We cannot even understand the existence of persons who have beliefs about causality, necessity and value without engaging in judgments of causality, necessity and value. We understand people's beliefs as caused in large part by their interaction with the world they perceive. We cannot make sense of the idea of a thinker who never believes that a certain thought he entertains could, or must, be true if a certain other thought is true. In addition, accepting value judgments to the effect that, something is a reason to do or believe something, is completely indispensable both in thinking or acting ourselves and in understanding others as thinkers or agents (Nagel 2011, 5). Such

indispensability, Stroud says, “poses an insurmountable obstacle to the kind of metaphysical satisfaction we seek” (Stroud 2011, 126). A fitting solution to the predicaments of Stroud, which in my opinion comes due to his over dependence on the categories of material realities, comes from Paul Deussen who writes,

...if empirical or physical investigation were able to throw open to us the true and innermost being of nature, we should only have to continue along this path in order to come at last to an understanding of all the truth... If...the metaphysicians of ancient and modern times, dissatisfied with empirical knowledge, went on to metaphysics, this step is only to be explained by a more or less clear consciousness that all empirical investigation and knowledge amounts in the end only to a great deception grounded in the nature of our knowing faculties, to open our eyes to which is the task of metaphysics. (Deussen 2003, 48–49)

Thus metaphysics is something that opens ourselves to the realities of our existence. The ignorance we experienced becomes a ladder for the metaphysical realities that we do not see clearly, or that we see imperfectly in and through the perceptual dissatisfaction. *Paśyati* or the metaphysical seeing of the world is what would set the metaphysician free from the dissatisfaction that he experiences in the physical universe. Metaphysical seeing alters the way we view the reality. It is in this perspective that VC becomes a philosophical text than a mere spiritual manual or a religious book. The text in the verses 35–40 does not look for worship or not doing any sort of religious spirituality, but rather it is a sort of philosophical enterprise to view the world differently, which is achieved by means of intense reflection and understanding. The seeker sees the reality trans-empirically, employing his human capabilities by the employment of reason. This “seeing” (*paśyati*) becomes a step forward in gaining further insights on the true nature of Advaitic Reality, experienced imperfectly in the “seeing” of the world.

### PERCEPTION AND THE METAPHYSICAL “SEEING”

Tolstoy, Anantanand, Stroud and Deussen, we have found that on genuine reflection on the world, some sort of dissatisfaction is inevitable. This, however, does not completely negate the value and significance of human action in the world. “Its aim”, according to Rambachan, “is to

comment on the limits of these relations to the attainment of the limitless” (Rambachan 2006, 16). Though such view may cause despair from earthly point of view, if one does not understand the limits of the finite, he would expect unrealistic rewards from the world. Only solution that could be possible is to know that subjective consciousness was instrumental to everything, though we attempted to prove how the consciousness ought to be taken as unitary and thereby creating the rupture in the notion of epistemic modality. The study also somehow raises doubts on the possibility of having to explain the perceptual process merely through psychology or physiology.<sup>73</sup> Even the rudimentary experience of sensation cannot be explained in physiological terms, as we are faced with no clue to explain how the mechanical brain processes turn into psychical functions. The perceptual process cannot result from the mental operations, as we know that consciousness is not inherent in the mind. While the subject is self-luminous, the perceived object is stark blind and wrapped in darkness. The light of consciousness proceeding from the subject unveils the object. “A thoroughgoing study of sense-perception has to take into account not only the physical and the psychical factor involved, but also the fundamental reality underlying them, which alone is self-existent and self-luminous” (Satprakashananda 2009, 61). Therefore, anything known presupposes the knowing Self who is the seer, whose function is not limited to the sensory function, which is accomplished through the physical eye, but “seeing” with an inner eye (Gupta 1995, 23). The real is not what is implying seen, heard, smelled, tasted or touched and therefore, is not “perceived”. But, in another sense, the reality is perceived all the time when something is perceived.

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<sup>73</sup>Deussen (2003, 47–48): “The thought that the empirical view of nature is not able to lead us to a final solution of the being of things, meets us not only among the Indians but also in many forms in the philosophy of the west. More closely examined this thought is even the root of all metaphysics, so far as without it no metaphysics can come into being or exist. For if empirical or physical investigation were able to throw open to us the true and innermost being of nature, we should only have to continue along this path in order to come at last to an understanding of all truth; the final result would be PHYSICS (in the broader sense, as the teaching of nature), and there would be on ground or justification for METAPHYSICS. If, therefore, the metaphysicians of ancient and modern times, dissatisfied with empirical knowledge, went on to metaphysics, this step is only to be explained by a more or less clear consciousness that all empirical investigation and knowledge amounts in the end only to a great deception grounded in the nature of our knowing faculties, to open our eyes to which is the task of metaphysics.

“Surely, we do not experience anywhere the rope-snake and the mirage etc., without their objective bases”.<sup>74</sup> In some extended sense, this perceiving provides insight into the nature of reality that is beyond perception. VC says, “that which is perceived by any one has that person as its witness...”<sup>75</sup> The reality perceived is, but the consciousness conditioned or defined by the perceived object. Therefore, perception is not limited to the cognitive act, but rather it is self-understanding. This view somehow suggests that the bridge between perceiving as a function of sense organs, and perceiving as perceiving of the real object must be crossed. The function of seeing in this analysis points out to contemplation. This self-transcending character of the perceptive knowledge is crucial for further development. The person who perceives with his fullest human capabilities can see the stages of perception that are just mentioned. This is the highest stage, as human as we are can reach, wherein we find one single metaphysical basis for our existence. Nonetheless, the search carries on to the very fact that one is curious to find out what is that basis of our existence. As Radhakrishnan writes, “Man’s incapacity to be satisfied with what is merely relative and remain permanently within the boundaries of the finite and empirical reality cannot be denied” (Radhakrishnan 1932, 81). Regardless of the fact that the universe is immediately manifested to the consciousness, the person in search of the reality, under the guise of a metaphysician, significantly satisfies himself by seeing the substratum upon which the phenomenon finds its basis. Metaphysician views the world differently from others, as his queries are far removed from perceptible sense experiences despite the fact that they are grounded upon sense experiences. The metaphysician sees beyond the empirical perceptions, seeking an insight into the nature of reality. Unsatisfied by inquiry into this world he thirsts for the knowledge beyond this world. He experiences the perceptual knowledge of the world in a limited sense that makes him search for the unknown and unknowable. He sets to search for a comprehensive reality that encompasses the inner nature of the human mind. “Metaphysics bears testimony to the fact that man is intellectually dissatisfied with what he knows regarding the world” (Pradhan 2009, 2). In this connection, Arvind Sharma writes: “Beyond the unsatisfactoriness of the phenomenal world there is the real spirit

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<sup>74</sup>MāUB: I. 6.

<sup>75</sup>“*tat sāksikam bhavet tattadyad yad yen’ānubhīyate,*”—VC: 215.

which embodies and encompasses all, even ‘the little life show’, (*līlā* itself” (Tiffin 1983, 362). In another context he remarks, “The dissatisfaction with the finite, in other words, is the beginning of the conscious journey to the infinite” (Rambachan 2006, 17). In VC, glimpses of hopes are raised by suggesting the possibility of gaining the limitless, ultimate knowledge. It is only the dissatisfaction with the finite and the desire to be free from the clutches of the world-forest that brings one to the feet of a *guru*. Therefore, in the text VC, the metaphysician, in the guise of a *śiṣya*, terrified by the illusory nature of the world, undertakes to carry on an enquiry into the unknowable.<sup>76</sup> In this text, the reader is the *śiṣya* in the true sense of the word, who sees the world metaphysically, or differently from the ordinary acts of perception, and sets his sight on the highest Reality, the Advaitic *Brahman*, which seems to be able to quench every thirst experienced by the metaphysician in the transitoriness of the empirical world.

### SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The Advaita literature gives importance to *śabda-pramāṇa*, though Advaitins have seldom given importance to *pratyakṣa* and *paśyati*. One should be careful not to equate *paśyati* with any other forms of perception that we have seen in the earlier sections of this work. *Paśyati* is different from internal perception and external perception: In the case of internal perception, the mind generates the knowledge without the instrumentality of the sense organs, whereas external perception makes use of the sense organs. On the other hand, *nirvikalpaka* perception, being an experiential perception does not require the instrumentality of the *antaḥkaraṇa* (mind) in the process of knowledge generation. In *nirvikalpa* perception, the *antaḥkaraṇa* loses its autonomy of mirroring, and with the individual self directly identifying itself with the supreme reality, there is a direct cognition between the consciousness modified and the supreme Consciousness. However, in the case of *paśyati*, it should be mentioned that there is an attempt to see the world differently, i.e., *paśyati* involves a longingness to see the world in a different sense. *Nirvikalpaka* perception is an advanced stage of *paśyati*, whereas

<sup>76</sup>“*ukta-sādhana-sampannah tattva-jijñāsur ātmanah| upasīded gurum prajñām yasmād bandha-vimkoṣaṇam,*”—VC: 32.

*paśyati* is the basis of the genuine metaphysical search. It inspires the seeker to read the infallible word, the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads* due to the dissatisfaction experienced in the transitory objects of the world.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the present chapter highlights the missing link in Advaitic epistemology. The true notion of *pramāṇa* explains the fact that Indian philosophy, did not start from an investigation into “the existent” (like the Greek) but rather from the critical analysis and testing of a complex of knowledge handed down through *Vedas* (Deussen 2003, 88). The purpose of it is not to solve the problem of epistemology, but to go beyond all the methods of knowledge. But the foundation of all this enquiry necessarily requires a starting point, and that starting point is embedded in one’s experience of the world. And the enquiry in the *śruti* is only an extension of *paśyati* or metaphysical seeing of the physical world. The current chapter entails that the metaphysical enquiry requires definite processes, which is the subject matter of the next chapter.

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 VC: *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya*. 1991. Swāmī Turīyānanda (tr.). Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math.

#### ii. Other Original Sources

- BGB: *Bhagavad-Gītā with Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*. 2010. Swami Gambhirananda (tr.). Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama.  
 BP: *Bhāṣā Pariccheda with Siddhānta-muktāvalī*. 2004. Swami Madhavananda (tr.). Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama.  
 BrUB: *Śaṅkara’s Commentary on the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*. 2008. Swami Mādhavananda (tr.). Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama.  
 BSB: *Brahma Sūtras According to Śrī Śaṅkara*. 2008. Swami Vireswarananda (tr.). Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama.  
 ChUB: *Chāndogya Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*. 2009. Swami Gambhīrānanda (tr.). Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama.

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<sup>77</sup>For evidence kindly refer: “*Durvāra-saṁsāra-davāgni-taptaṁ dodbhūyamānaṁ duradṛṣṭa-vātaiḥ; bhūtaṁ prapaṇnam paripādhi mrtyoḥ śaraṇyam anyad yad abhi na jāne*,”—VC: 36.



- KaUB: *Kaṭha Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*. 1987. Swami Gambhirananda, (tr.). Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama.
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2017, XIX, 309 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-62760-1