

CHAPTER 01

INTRODUCTION

Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā being an essential text of the applied philosophy has become extremely popular not only among all the classes of Indian society but also among the scholars of Indology of the West. This is proved by the fact that huge numbers of commentaries and translations in almost all the languages of the world are available to the masses.

I The four ācāryas

The praiseworthy efforts of the earlier ācāryas can not be put aside, because Śrī Ādiśaṅkarācārya's (788-820 AD)¹ doctrine of Absolute Monism, which is usually known by the name of कैवल्यद्वैत or Absolute Monism, may be summed up in the four Sanskrit words : ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या. It is only intelligence, without form, without qualities, without any limitations of time, space or causality, that is real; and the unity which according to Śaṅkar is the substratum of all ephemeral and empirical plurality, it itself without the slightest touch of plurality; it is unity absolute; and as such the highest thought of humanity cannot go any further. The

greatest merit of Śaṅkar's system is his most successful attempt to reconcile the mutually contradictory texts of the Upaniṣads, in other words, to reconcile bold idealism, which is the result of introspection, with the realism which ruthlessly insists on forcing itself upon us from outside. This he does by the introduction of माया in his system or his doctrine has always two aspects, esoteric and exoteric.

Thus esoterically the Brahman or the supreme spirit is knowledge or realisation itself, without qualification and without possibility of change, exoterically, it is qualified, possessed of an infinite number of auspicious attributes, capable of producing this world from itself and reabsorbing it in itself, in brief, it is ईश्वर.

The exoteric cosmology, according to the natural but erroneous realism (अविद्या) in which we are born, considers the world as real and can express its entire dependence on Brahman only by the adoption of a myth, viz. creation of the world by Brahman, implying thereby a temporal character for this creation. But this goes against the doctrine that the transmigration of souls is without a beginning. To reconcile the two, Śaṅkar teaches that the temporal character does not belong to the creation for ever, but that there

are long periods for which the world is created and after which it is reabsorbed by Brahman, and that this succession of creation and reabsorption lasts for eternity, so that no creation may be regarded as the first.

The esoteric cosmology, however, says that all this is a mere appearance of truth. The manifold world is only an illusion, माया, a mirage (मृगतृष्णिका), a dream, and the reality is to be attained not by reasoning (तर्क), but by introspective realisation (अनुभव). If you return from this variegated world to the inmost recesses of your soul (आत्मा), you will be aware of a reality which can very properly be described as timeless, spaceless, changeless.

According to the esoteric psychology, the जीव is Brahman itself in full and total possession of eternity, omnipresence, omni-science, etc., but these godly qualities lie concealed within it as the fire in the wood, and will appear only after the final deliverance. Exoterically, this concealment of the divine nature is due to the external adjuncts (उपाधि) the mind (मनस्), the sense-organs (इन्द्रियाणि), and the vital airs (प्राणाः) which form the subtle body (सूक्ष्मशरीर). The whole psychological apparatus together with Karman accompanies the soul in all his migrations, without essen-

tially infecting his godly nature. These उपाधिस of course form part of माया and are due to the अविद्या which is innate in man.

Śaṅkar's system (as opposed to the परिणाम doctrine) maintains the विवर्त doctrine, according to which all effects are only superimposed upon the cause, which alone is real.

The philosophical part of Śaṅkar's doctrine may therefore be summed up as follows :

(1) All plurality is false or unreal, and superimposed upon one pure and eternal Brahman which is all pervading, and it is माया which makes us see plurality where there is unity and which itself has no independent existence.

(2) The individual soul is really nothing but Brahman.

(3) Knowledge (in the form of the actual realisation) of the identity of these two is the only means of मोक्ष.

The practical part of the doctrine amounts to this : Actions must be performed only to purify the mind so as to make it fit to acquire the knowledge of this identity of Brahman and जीव, but afterwards they must be all given up, since without a complete abandonment (संन्यास) of all actions, मोक्ष is impossible, for, action (कर्म) and knowledge (ज्ञान) Are opposed to each other like darkness and light.

This is what is called the path of renunciation (निवृत्तिमार्ग), or taking our stand on knowledge (ज्ञाननिष्ठा).

Śri Rāmānuja's (1017-1137 AD) Specified Monism which distinguishes the doctrine of Rāmānuja from the rest of the Vedānta schools is that the individual souls and the inanimate world, essentially different in themselves, form at the same time the body and mode or attribute of the supreme spirit, and, as such, they are incapable of an existence independent of the Supreme spirit. This is what gives the doctrine its name of 'विशिष्टाद्वैत' (non-duality qualified by duality or the non-duality of the Supreme spirit which is qualified by the individual souls and the inanimate world). Thus what the ordinary body is to the individual soul, so are the intelligence and the non-intelligence worlds to the supreme spirit, and just as the body can never be essentially the same as the soul, so the चित् and अचित् can never be essentially the same as the Brahman. It is in this way that Rāmānuja's doctrine reconciles the various statements in the Upaniṣads, referring to unity and to plurality.

The Brahman or Supreme spirit is the cause, both material and efficient, of the universe, intelligence and non-intelligence, it is possessed of an infinite number of

auspicious attributes, of which Omniscience, Omnipresence, Omnipotence and Bliss are the most essential. Brahman is at the same time, absolutely void of evil attributes and it is thus that Brahman is sometimes described as qualified and sometimes as non-qualified (ब्रह्मसूत्र ३.२.११). The creation of the universe from Brahman is not a production of something new; it is only a change of attribute or condition. It is a mere modification of that which is subtle into that which is gross. Thus Brahman, having for its body and mode the चित् and अचित् in their subtle condition, is the cause, while the same Brahman having for its body or mode the चित् and अचित् in a gross form is the effect. Similarly, the destruction of the universe is nothing but the becoming subtle of that which is gross.

The individual soul is the subject of consciousness or knower and not mere consciousness is its essential attribute. Even in the state of dreamless sleep, though there is no consciousness of objects, still the sense of 'I' (अहङ्कार) persists. Knowledge is intuitive by nature and does not necessarily depend upon the senses. Bliss is also another essential attribute of the individual soul. It has also the power to act (कर्तृत्व) which, according to the सांख्य, belongs to प्रकृति and according to Śaṅkar, to Buddhi. The individual souls,

in the state of their pristine purity, possess all the auspicious qualities in common with Brahman (which is the reason why the जीव is often described as being identical with Brahman), but they differ from it in two points : (i) they have no power whatsoever on the movements of the world, whose creation and control belong exclusively to Brahman, and (ii) they are atomic in size, while Brahman is all pervading. Being atomic in size the individual souls are infinite in number and different for different bodies. Owing to ignorance, the individual souls are conjoined to matter and thus in spite of their original resemblance to Brahman, suffer; right knowledge of the nature of Brahman, from which results devotion (भक्ति), brings the soul to liberation, when it is restored to its original purity and bliss.

The inanimate world is also as real as the Brahman and the individual souls and is essentially distinct from both. १
At the same time, it forms an attribute of Brahman and so cannot exist independently of it.

Thus for Rāmānuja, Brahman, चित् and अचित् are three entities, individually distinct from each other, all equally real, at the same time all forming a unity, in the sense in which the self and its body form a unity.

Rāmānuja admits the परिणामवाद or the सत्कार्यवाद which maintains that the effect is nothing but a modification of the form of the cause, in which it is already present.

The devotion to वासुदेव is the only means of obtaining मोक्ष. This भक्ति is not knowledge, but the result of knowledge. It is the intuition or immediate presentation arising from a steady remembrance (ध्रुवास्मृति), uninterrupted like the flow of oil, a result of meditation. Actions are necessary only for the origination of knowledge, but no further. Thus, the function of actions with Rāmānuja is secondary or subordinate as with Śaṅkar.

Rāmānuja's doctrine, is based on the three ग्रन्थान्, the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavadgītā and the Brahmasūtras, the Viṣṇupurāṇa, which occupies a very important place in his doctrine and from which the Śribhāṣya quotes very frequently.

Vallabhācārya's (VS 1535=1479 AD) Pure Monism called शुद्धाद्वैत i.e. the unity of Brahman which is pure or free from माया. Thus the जीव and the inanimate world are essentially the same as Brahman, without involving any idea of माया. According to Vallabha, it is Brahman, pure and simple, and without any connection with माया, that can create the Universe.

जीव is non-different from Brahman, atomic in size (cf. Sūtras II.03.21) and a part of Brahman (cf. Sūtras II. 03.43). It is produced from Brahman in the sense in which sparks are produced from fire. The जीव is a manifestation of Brahman itself, with the attribute of bliss obscured. Thus it is as eternal and real as Brahman and production in its case means only a manifestation (आविर्भाव). The जीव is either (i) pure (शुद्ध), when its qualities such as greatness (ऐश्वर्य) are not obscured by contact with the ignorance (अविद्या), or (ii) संसारी, when it is in the bondage of अविद्या and experiences birth, death, etc., owing to its connection with the subtle and gross bodies, or (iii) मुक्त when it becomes free from bondage, by means of विद्या. The जीव though atomic can pervade the whole body by virtue of its quality of intelligence (चैतन्य), just as sandalwood can by its fragrance make its existence known even where it does not exist (cf. Sūtras II. 03.25, 26, 23).

The inanimate world or प्रपञ्च is also essentially Brahman (ब्रह्मात्मक), with the qualities of intelligence (चैतन्य) and bliss (आनन्द) obscured, and thus possessing the one quality of existence (सत्त्व). It is at the same time created from Brahman (ब्रह्मकार्य) in the sense that Brahman itself is manifested in the form of the gross world. Thus the creation and destruction of objects in this world mean only the manifesta-

tion (आविर्भाव) and disappearance (तिरोभाव) of the Bhagavat in those forms, and when Brahman appears as a product and as capable of being experienced (अनुभवयोग्य) the world is created, but when it goes back to its causal form and ceases to be the object of ordinary experience, the world is destroyed. The world is, therefore, as eternal and real as the Brahman itself, its creation and destruction being nothing but the powers (शक्तis) of Brahman. It is neither illusory nor essentially different from the Bhāgavat.

That form of Bhāgavat, in which another manifests itself is the cause, e.g. clay, and the other form manifested is the effect, e.g. pot. Thus सर्व खल्वुदं ब्रह्म has to be understood in a literal sense. From this it follows that the relation between cause and effect is absolute unity. १

The Brahman is one, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, possessed of an infinite number of attributes, and essentially of the nature of existence (सत्), intelligence (चित्) and bliss (आनन्द). It is pure (शुद्ध), i.e. never contaminated by connection with माया. It is possessed of marvelous power (ऐश्वर्य) which makes everything possible for it and even things mutually opposed can co-exist in its case. Thus both kinds of passages, those who describe the Brahman as

qualified (सविशेष) and those which describe it as non-qualified (निर्विशेष) are equally true with regard to it. Brahman manifests itself at its own will, as जीव or जड, simply for the purpose of sport, without undergoing any change in essence, as when, for instance, a serpent forms itself into coils (cf. Sūtra III.02.27). Thus the Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe (notice in this connection the explanation of the Sūtra I.01.04).

That Brahman has three forms, (i) the highest divine form (आधिदैविक) as Kṛṣṇa or Puruṣottama, possessing an infinite number of auspicious attributes, attainable by a devotee (भक्त), (ii) the अक्षर form (आध्यात्मिक), in which all the attributes have become non-manifest and which alone is attainable by a sage (ज्ञानी), and (iii) the अन्तर्यामी form as seen in the different incarnations of विष्णु.

The मोक्ष, which consists in the absolute cessation of all misery and the experiencing of the bliss which was observed in the condition of संसार, can be attained by two means, devotion (भक्ति) and knowledge (ज्ञान). Of these the former is superior, since it leads to the realisation of the divine form of Brahman as Kṛṣṇa or Puruṣottama, in which the आनन्दांश is at its best, while the latter is inferior, as it

leads to the realisation of the second or non-determinate form of Brahman where the आनन्दांश is of an inferior order. भक्ति itself is of two degrees, मर्यादाभक्ति and पुष्टिभक्ति. In the former, the devotee attains मोक्ष by the practice of means (साधना) on his own part, such as, the disciplines and restraints laid down in the शास्त्र, which produce an aversion to worldly things, or worship and prayer of the Bhāgavata. In the latter, and this is the higher kind of भक्ति the devotee, without having recourse to any साधना, depends upon nothing but pure and simple love of Him, his goal is only the service of Hari, his highest pleasure is to become one of the associates of Hari and to sport with him in the celestial वृंदावन. This पुष्टिभक्ति is the privilege of only him whom Bhāgavata is ? pleased to favour, it begins with प्रेम which removes a liking for anything but Hari, and passing through असक्ति which produces a positive aversion to objects not connected with Hari, culminates in व्यसन or entire devotion to Hari.

In addition to the three प्रस्थान (viz. the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavadgītā and the Brahmasūtras), the Vallabha school has a fourth one, i.e. the Bhāgavata, passages from which are very often adduced in the Vallabha-bhāṣya, have spread the philosophy of Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā in every corner of Indian society.

Nimbārka's (1130-1200? or 1162? AD) Dualistic Non-dualism (द्वैताद्वैत). Haṇsa, the unity of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is regarded as the first teacher of the Nimbārka school.² His pupil was Kumāra of the form of four व्यूहाः. Kumāra's pupil was Nārāda, the teacher of प्रेमभक्ति in the त्रेतायुग³ Nimbārka was the pupil of Nārāda and the incarnation of the power (सुदर्शन) of Nārāyaṇa. He is supposed to have introduced the worship of Kṛṣṇa in द्वापरयुग.⁴

On the basis of the chronological order of Vedānta ācāryas, Nimbārka's name is remarkable after Rāmānuja. According to some scholars he was prior to Rāmānuja and some others say that he was posterior to Rāmānuja. Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar thinks that he lived shortly after Rāmānuja.⁵ An internal analysis of Nimbārka's philosophy shows its great indebtedness to Rāmānuja's system and even the style of Nimbārka's भाष्य in many places of approach ? adopted by Rāmānuja in his भाष्य. This is an additional corroboration of the fact that Nimbārka must have lived after Rāmānuja.⁶

The works attributed to him as follows :

- (१) वेदान्तपारिजातसौरभः ।
- (२) दशश्लोकी ।

(३) श्रीकृष्णस्तवराजः ।

(४) गुरु परम्परा ।

(५) माधवमुखम् ।

(६) स्वधर्मधवबोधः । १

(७) श्रीकृष्णस्तवः ।

But excepting the first three works all the rest exist in Manuscripts most of which are not procurable.⁷

Among his writings the वेदान्तपारिजातसौरभः (fragrance of the wish fulfilling tree of Vedānta) the commentary on the ब्रह्मसूत्रs. Apart from that he has also written दशश्लोकी (a bunch of ten stanza) or सिद्धान्तरत्नम् (the gem of the philosophy) delineating the principles of Dualistic Non dualism (द्वैताद्वैतवाद). In the ब्रह्मसूत्रभाष्य he has tried to prove that the world and the souls are different as well as non different from the Brahman. Apart from these, his disciple Śrī Nivāsa has also written a commentary called वेदान्त कौस्तुभ on the ब्रह्मसूत्रभाष्य of Nimbārka, in which we find a very beautiful and brief description of the doctrine of Dualistic Non dualism. Keśava Kāśmīri Bhaṭṭācārya has compose तत्त्वप्रकाशिका in the form of a वार्तिक on Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā, in which we find the appreciation and elaboration of the principles of Nimbārka's doctrine. Keśava Kāśmīri Bhaṭṭācārya has also

written वेदान्त कौस्तुभ प्रभा (light on the वेदान्त कौस्तुभ) in the form of an explanation (वृत्ति) on the work of Śrī Nivāsa. It is also a work corroborating the Dualistic Non-dualism (द्वैताद्वैतवाद).

Besides these Pursottama Prasada has written वेदान्त रत्न मञ्जुषा (A box of gems of Vedānta) on the दशश्लोकी of Nimbārka.

II Philosophical Tenets

The philosophy that arose as a reaction against the attributeless Brahman and the Māyāvāda (Illusionism) of Śaṅkara Vedānta was, as it generally seems, because of adopting Brahman possessed of attributes and considering the Soul and the World real. Many things are common in Vaiṣṇava sects. The main tenets of Rāmānuja with a little change are acceptable to Nimbārka, Madhava, etc.

The doctrine of Nimbārka is known as Dualistic Non dualism द्वैताद्वैतवाद or Identify in Difference (भेदाभेदवाद) Audulomi, referred to by Bādarayaṇa Vyāsa in his Vedānta Sūtras: उत्क्रमिष्यत एवं भावादित्यौडुलोमिः ॥२.४.२१॥ आर्त्विज्यमित्यौडुलोमिस्तस्मै हि परिक्रीयते ॥३.४.४५॥ was also a follower of Dualistic Non dualism.

Nimbārka also like Rāmānuja, accepts the three Supreme elements like चित् (Intelligence or mind) अचित् (Non-Intelligence) and ईश्वर (God). The soul and the world have no independent existence, but they are always dependent on God and hence in that way these (the soul and the world) are non-different from God. This point of the non-difference supplies the element of the Monism in the doctrine of Nimbārka but there is no absolute identity of the soul and the world with God. They possess a different nature (स्वरूपभेद) indicates the Dualism in the doctrine of Nimbārka. Due to the combination of Dualism and Non-dualism, the doctrine of Nimbārka is known as Dualistic Non-dualism (द्वैताद्वैतवाद). Rāmānuja emphasizes on the Monism much but the doctrine of Nimbārka lays equal importance on the Dualism as well as the Non-dualism (i.e. Monism).

The world and the souls are different from the Brahman because they are dependent on the Brahman, but their existence is real and different. They are different from the Brahman, because they have no existence apart from the Brahman.

III Tenets of the Nimbārka Philosophy

There are three elements तत्त्वं तावत् त्रिविधं चिदाचिद् ब्रह्मभेदात् । Intelligence (the Soul), Non-intelligence (the World)and the Brahman (God).

(01) God or Supreme Soul (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) - in the Nimbārka's doctrine like Rāmānuja, the Brahman is presented as possessed of attributes and forms, the Brahman with attributes Himself is God. Unlike Rāmānuja who establishes Lord Viṣṇu as Brahman Nimbārka believes Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme God. In his दशश्लोकी (verse 4) he prays Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, "We meditate upon Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is sublime by nature, beyond the perversion of nature, is an embodiment of all virtues, Vāsudeva, Śankaraṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha are His four parts i.e. manifestations, the lotus eyed and by nature free from all the impurities is adored by all as the Highest, all pervasive and all controller Brahman."⁸

Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are Nārāyaṇa and His spouse (power). Radha is not a Gopi but she is the everlasting betterhalf of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This Lord Vāsudeva termed with the name Brahman is Sri Pursottama. He is Omni

scient, existent by nature, beyond contemplation, infinite and the substratum of whatever may be the power of such an attributive of the Ātmā (soul). He is the root cause of Brahma, Rudra and Indra, the controller of Atoms, Time, Action and the Nature. The faults do not touch His border and he is the substratum of the Nature identify and the non different from Intelligence and Non-Intelligence. God is the controller of the soul, the world and without the blemishes like Nescience, etc. as well as free from all qualities those can be imagined. He is the Material as well as Efficient cause of this world. He is the root cause of manifestation of the Intelligence and the non-intelligence from subtle to the gross in this sense God is the Material cause. He is the organiser in giving fruits according to the action, the creator of the means of pleasure for soul, in this sense God is the efficient cause.

The concept of God is a little different from that of Rāmānujācārya's God who is specified by the Material cause of the souls and the world. According to Nimbārka the Brahman though transformable is unchangeable just like curds transforming from the milk, through his uncommon power the world evolves out from the Brahman. There are four forms of the Brahman (1) Higher (2) Lower (3)

The individuality and (4) The plurality. Among these the Higher form is formless, The Brahman as the sole substratum of all powers is the lower form, the plurality form manifest plurally the Golden Egg (हिरण्यगर्भः), that which manifests individually is an individual soul. The group of four composites (ब्यूह) (वासुदेव, संकर्षण, etc.) described in the भागवतधर्म also fall under these four forms of the Brahman. Here the term composite or the divine manifestation is in the sense of incarnation. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes an incarnation in the form of one composite in order to create, sustain as well as to destroy the world and to grace (favour) His devotee.

Here अनिरुद्ध⁹ is presented as the element called Ego (अहङ्कार), प्रद्युम्न is the deity of the element of Intelligence (महत्), संकर्षण is the controller of the primordial matter (प्रकृति) while Śrī Vāsudeva is the highest of all these three. He Himself takes incarnation in various forms for the destruction of the unrighteousness (अधर्म), for the upliftment of the liberation-wishers. For the growth of this divine-sports like attributed form (गुणावतार) incarnation for Universal Sport form (लीलावतार) Manly incarnation (पुरुषावतार), etc. The Brahman is bereft of all faults. Here the term 'fault' indicates affliction, action, fruition and intention as described in the Patañjali's Yoga sūtras,¹⁰ in this sense

Nimbārka's concept of God is similar to that of योग system of philosophy.

(02) Individual soul - the soul is the element called Intelligence (चित्), spark or a wave of the Supreme self.¹¹ The souls are many. The element Intelligence is the soul. The soul is by nature Knowledge, Self-illuminer, Atomic Knower, Agent, Enjoyer, Controlled by the Lord, subtle and different according to their connection and separate from the body and again in an individual body, such souls are innumerable. The soul in this doctrine, is not only the Knowledge and non-doer like that of 'Śrī Ādiśaṅkarācārya', but he is also His attribute or quality and there is no identity between the quality and the qualified or the attribute and the attributed.

Though both of them are non-different, there is undoubtedly the difference. Just as the sun is both the light and source of light, so also the soul is the Knowledge and also the substratum or source of Knowledge. The soul is also a doer and in every stage his doership remains. In the transmigratory stage the doership of the soul is seen and experienced. Śrī Ādiśaṅkara does not believe the soul's doership in the state of Absolution, but according to

Nimbārka the soul's doership is experienced both in the state of transmigration and that of Absolution as well.

The soul is not an independent doer because God's control is present in every actions. The Brahman as innerself (अन्तर्यामी) is not affected or touched (अपरामृष्ट) by the faults of the soul. The soul is a knower, a doer and an enjoyer as well, but he is dependent on God for the enjoyment as for the knowledge and action. Though the soul is equal to God in the both the forms of consciousness and the substratum of Knowledge still he has the exclusive quality of his different from God and that is the quality of being controlled. In short God is the controller and the soul is the controlled one. Even in the state of absolution the soul remain under God's control and shelter.

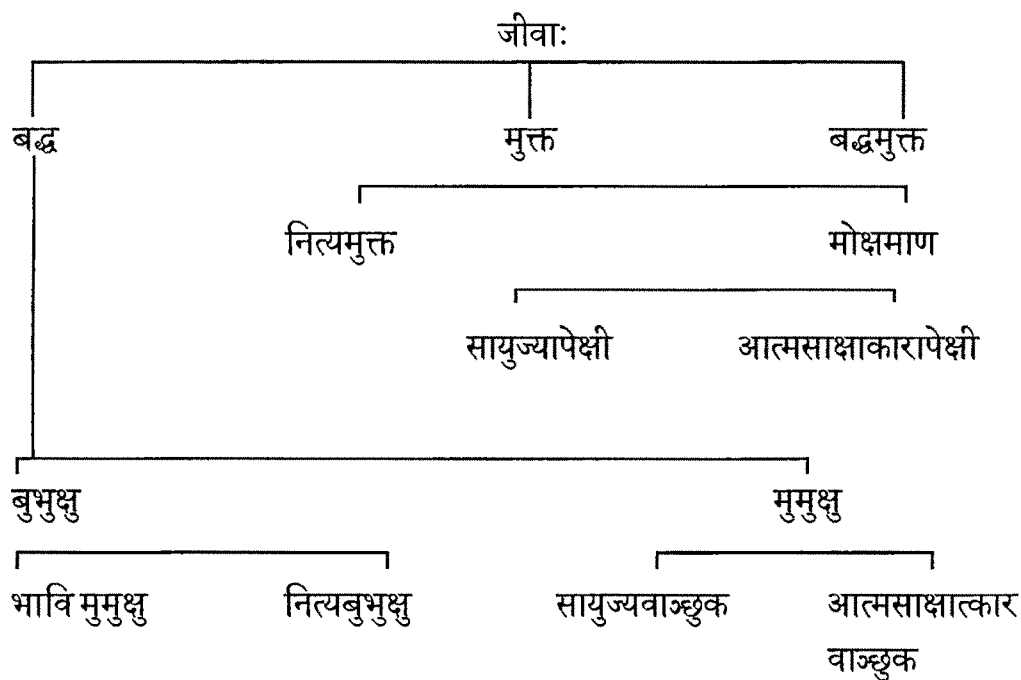
On the viewpoint of size the soul is an atom, and of number the souls are many. Though the soul is of an atomic size his quality of knowledge is infinite. The soul's consciousness remains spreading all over the whole body like the light of a lamp spreading very far. The different souls reside in different bodies, in this way the souls are innumerable.

According to Nimbārka these souls of an atomic size are infinite and are the part and parcel (अंश) of God. Here the part and parcel does not mean any part or a section, but it is of the form of power (शक्ति). God is neither a combination of parts nor a collective form of individualities. God is omni-potent and hence manifests Himself in the souls of the form of power through His infinite power. In this sense only the soul is a part and parcel of God's infinite form. The soul is less-intelligent. This nature of the soul is wrapped in beginningless माया so it is not known. But some devotees are able to know it through the God's grace.

There are three varieties of the soul bound, liberated and bound yet liberated. The commentators have elaborated these three varieties. The bound souls are two fold : (1) Pleasure-wishers (desiring sensual pleasures) are two types : (a) Acquiring liberation in future and (b) Ever transmigratory (2) Liberation-wishers souls (wishing liberation) are also of two types : (a) Wishing liberation in the form of God's Union (b) Wishin liberation in the form of Self-realisation. The liberated are also of two fold : (i) Wishing liberation in the form of God's union are God's attendants (पार्षद) are ever liberated (ii) Wishing to realise their own self and becoming free from this transmigratory

world through God's grace, are called the liberated. Some of them attend union with God, while some are satisfied by realising their own self.

The souls enwrapped in this transmigratory existence and being bound by actions caused out of the beginningless nescience have forgotten their own real form. Their original form of bliss is hidden due to the enwrapping of the nescience. But the bondage of the nescience can be shattered through God's grace and as a result of that the soul can enjoy the full bliss.



(03) The meaning of the mahāvākya-तत्त्वमसि (Thou Art That) - Nimbārka explains तत्त्वमसि that which is taught by the Vedānta teachers in the line of Identifying difference. In this statement the word ‘That’ (तत्) stands for the

Brahman who is the Omni potent and the support of the whole world. ‘Thou’ (त्वम्) means the soul who is dependent on The God and the part and parcel of God, and by the verb ‘Art’ (असि) is understood the relation of Difference and Non-difference between the soul and God. This relation is like the sun and its shining rays.

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya has also supported this type of relation. He also talks of the relation of the sea and its waves as well as the water and bubbles and its foam, etc. In this way without accepting the relation of difference and non-difference the worldly and spiritual parlance are not possible.

Keśava Kāśmiri Bhaṭṭācārya explaining the concurring form of this great statement declared in the Chāndogya Upaniṣads (03.01.07) Nimbārka, declares that the meaning of the statement Thou + Art + That : ‘That’ means Arjuna’s friend Lord Śri Kṛṣṇa, ‘Thou’ means Arjuna (धनञ्जय) staying always beside Lord Śri Kṛṣṇa the Supreme Self and the verb ‘Art’ (असि) indicates the element of the spiritual oneness as a means to attain Lord Śri Kṛṣṇa.

In this way the meaning of this great statement is as follows : The soul with less-power takes refuge in the lotus-feet of the spiritual master follows the path instructed by him and attains vicinity of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa (Thou) like Arjuna. The spiritual master who has realised the Brahman is the connector of 'That' and 'Thou'. The Egostic and proud soul through the shelter of the spiritual master can realised Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa quickly.

(04) The World - Matter element or the Primordial Matter. - According to Nimbārka, the world (Non-intelligence element, (अचित्) is real but not माया (Illusion). It is the transformation of the Brahman yet its existence is not separate from Him in that sense the world can be called unreal from the point of view of nature of the world. The meaning of "Non-intelligence" is an object without consciousness. It's three verities are accepted.

- (A) Pertaining to the Primordial Matter
- (B) The non-primordial Matter, and
- (C) Time

(A) The primordial matter stands for representing, cosmic intelligence to five gross elements created by the

Nature (प्रकृति). This matter (प्रकृति) as the school of Sāṅkhya philosophy believes, is the combination of three Qualities like सत्त्व, रजस् and तमस्. But the difference lies here that the primordial matter is not independent like that of Sāṅkhya philosophy because it is always controlled by God.

(B) Non-primordial matter means those which are not created by Qualities of the primordial matter, like ब्रह्मलोक, etc. This non-primordial matter of Nimbārka is equivalent to the Pure entity or “Ever manifestation” of Rāmānuja.

(C) Time : Time element is different from both the primordial matter and the non-primordial matter. Time is the only cause of the constant change in all the objects of the world. But Time though the controller of the wheel of transmigration, is dependent on God. So with reference to God Time can be called controlled (नियम्य). Time, though is partless by nature has secondary divisions(Past, Present, Future, etc.). Time is imperishable Nature but by as a product it is perishable.

Matter or Prakṛti (Primordial Matter)		
Non-conscious		
Non-Primordial	Primordial	Time
Matter	Matter	
God's celestial abode, light etc. ever manifestation	(Cosmic- intelligence Ego etc.)	Different from the Primordial The primordial matter (imperish- able and all- pervading yet controlled by God.)

(05) Procedure of the Creation

Creation means manifestation of the subtle into the gross. Creation is the transformation of the subtle element into the gross form. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya accepts the doctrine of Illusionism (विवर्तवाद) which is not acceptable to Nimbārka, because the world in its subtle form resides in the Brahman so it is not an illusion.

In this doctrine the creation of the body is believed on the corollary of the creation. Just as excrement, flesh, and

mind are created in the body from the earth, urine, blood and vital air from the water, and bones, marrow and speech from the fire, on the basis of this one can know that mind is earthen object.

(06) Devotion

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's devotion is the only exclusive path for attaining liberation from the transmigrator bondage and the devotion is acquired through the grace of God. Here devotion does not mean meditation or worship like that of Rāmānuja but it means pure affection or the sublime love. }✓
A devoted soul acquires eligibility for the grace of God through act of surrender and qualities. }✓

The act of surrender means the feeling of total surrender. God realisation is attained through devotion. That itself is the liberation. There is no other path (of liberation) except Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet bowed to by Brahmā and Śiva. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa assumes, according to the devotee's wish, the form upon which he can meditate, yet His power is unthinkable (beyond the thinking faculty). His nature is difficult to know (दशश्लोकी).¹² There is no other source except devotion to realise the Supreme-self. Hence one who surrenders to the Supreme self without any of the four

human goal (पुरुषार्थ) attains Supreme self. God's grace occurs to him who possesses the qualities like total dependability and through that grace only, the devotional love of that unique great soul arises. The devotion is of two types one is of accomplishing Nature and other is Higher or of the nature of fruit (दशश्लोकी).¹³ Here total dependability means surrendering. Total dependability means abandoning the pride of all means and to depend only on the grace of the Supreme self.

This surrendering is of six types¹⁴ like that of Rāmānuja. The surrendering though, caused from the God's grace gives arise to the devotional love. The selfless service to God is the devotion. It is called the accomplishing devotion which as a result of merits of innumerable births. It is also two fold : the Vedic and the Paurāṇic. It is called the fruit or Higher devotion which arises after realising the self, and whatever devotion God gives being pleased with obeying God's command such as the Path of action (कर्मयोग), etc. The sublime devotional love is that in which one's mind sticks always to the form, attributes, etc. of God.

(07) Absolution

God is realised through the devotion. That itself is the Liberation. Total surrender or self surrendering is the only path to liberation. Total surrender to God is necessary for liberation. In six types of total surrendering (1) Wish for dedication (2) Abandoning opposition (3) Full confidence of the form that God will protect (me) (4) To believe God to be the only protector, (5) To believe oneself totally dependant on God. and (6) The sense of self helplessness - are included. All actions are destroyed, the nescience is totally removed and then the God's form is constantly experienced, that is called liberation of the form of unity or association or equality. In it there is no meaning of non-quality with God, but of equality. Nature of Absolution that Śāṅkara Vedānta accepts has no place here. According to Nimbārka there can not be even the imagination of liberation until the dissolution of the fruition of the destined actions. the imagination of liberation. Moreover, he does not support the gradual liberation (क्रममुक्ति) but to the immediate liberation (सद्योमुक्ति). Even in the stage of liberation the relation of difference and non difference continues between the soul and God. In the stage of liberation also, though the soul becomes united with the Brahman it does not merge into the Brahman, but (the) preserves his

own separate and independent identity. Like the Brahman liberated soul has no power on the creation, protection and dissolution, opposite mental tendencies or mentality that become hurdles in acquiring God include.

1. To believe the matter like the body, the senses, the mind, intellect etc. as the spirit.
2. Disregard for God's commands like Sruti, Smṛti, etc.
3. Aspiring unrighteous scriptures.
4. Worshipping bowing down, salutation etc. to other Gods.
5. To feel one self independent.
6. Egoism, attachment, lack of faith in the holy master, etc.

So it is necessary to abandon them. Sinners are not entitled to Lunar-path. The learned are entitled to reach the Brahman even though they die in the period of the sun's transition to the south. Those who go to the abode of death experience miseries. Here the Śūdra is not qualified for the science of Brahman. They are not qualified for the Vedic devotion but for the Paurāṇika one. Nimbārka tries to represent that there is concordance in the concepts of the Dualism and the Monism. According to his Dualistic

Non-dualism, the Brahman is different from as well as nondifferent from the soul and the world of matter, when the soul meditates deep on the real form of God, he gets merged in God. The soul is a part and parcel of God. So the part can not be different from the whole. But in the stage of bondage the soul forgets this unity with God, and believes firmly that he is the independent doer of all actions. When the detachment arises through the sublime love, he knows that he is totally controlled and ruled by the Brahman.

Nevertheless the Lord in His all pervading form is beyond the forms (the soul, the world and gods). In that form He is not contaminated by any effect and He is non-different of Pure being, Bliss and Consciousness. In this manner the liberated soul merges into God though he has neither right nor control over the worldly parlance, because all sorts of the worldly parlance are totally carried on by Lord of the world. In the state of liberation a devotee realises his oneness with God and dwells as the part and parcel form of his power form. The liberated soul resides in God with his special power.

IV Nimbārka and Rāmānuja

There are many points similar and a few different in the doctrines of Rāmānuja (Qualified Monism) and Nimbārka (Dualistic Non-dualism)

(A) Similarities :

- (1) Both are antagonists to Absolute Monism of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya.
- (2) Both are the sects of Bhāgavata Vaiṣṇavaism. In both qualified, formed and personal God is established.
- (3) Devotion is in prominent position in comparison of knowledge and action; and both believe that such a Devotion is acquired only through God's grace.
- (4) Through total surrendering and with other virtues as well a devoted soul becomes a deserving one for God's grace.
- (5) Devotion here means sublime love towards God.
- (6) Liberation is acquired through devotion.
- (7) Both believe in the difference and the Non difference as real.
- (8) The world is real according to both of them.
- (9) Both hold the view of the Brahman believing transformed (परिणाम).
- (10) The world is the form of the Brahman itself.
- (11) In the state of liberation the soul does not merge into the Brahman becomes similar to Him.

(B) Dissimilarities :

- (1) The sect of Rāmānuja is called श्रीसम्प्रदाय (hence श्रीभाष्यम्), while the sect of Nimbārka is सनकसम्प्रदाय.
- (2) In the sect of Rāmānuja the God is Nārāyaṇa or Vāsudeva (as in विष्णुपुराण) and His spouse is Lakṣmī, while in the sect of Nimbārka Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are worshipped in place of them.
- (3) The devotion in Rāmānujācārya contains the part of knowledge and rituals, while that of Nimbārka is pure and sentimental (This is the subtle difference).
- (4) Rāmānujācārya has followed the commentary of Bodhyayana, while Nimbārka follows the principles of Audulomi.
- (5) According to Rāmānuja the element one without second is qualified (विशिष्ट) by the intelligence (चित्) and non intelligence (अचित्) which are undifferentiated from the adjectives, while to Nimbārka the intelligence and Non intelligence are different as well as non different with the Brahman.
- (6) According to Rāmānuja there is a difference between devotion and total surrender, while Nimbārka includes devotion in 06 types of total surrender.

- (7) Rāmānuja believes the non difference as prominent and difference as secondary., while Nimbārka gives equal importance to both because both belong to equal status.

Some people give the name “non separate position” to the doctrine of Rāmānuja in order to specify clearly the relation with identity in difference.

V Purports of the ācārya and the modern scholars

(01) Ādi Śaṅkarācārya¹⁵ - according to him it (i.e. Gītā) is path of action (प्रवृत्ति), which was taught by the Lord, that the Omni scient and adorable Veda-Vyāsa (the arranger of the Vedas), embodied in the seven hundred verses called Gītā.

“This famous scripture Gītā is an epitome of the essentials of the whole Vedic teaching, and it’s meaning is very difficult to understand. Though to effort a clear view of its teaching, it has been explained word by word and sentence by sentence, and its import critically examined by several commentators still Ādi Śaṅkarācārya has found that to the laity. It appears to teach diverse and quite contradictory doctrines. He has proposed therefore, to write a brief commentary with a view to determine its precise meaning.”

(02) Śrī Rāmānujācārya¹⁶ according to him, the Gītā teaches a loving personal God, full of all kinds of auspicious attributes. The central teaching of the Gītā about God, according to him, is that He is the soul of the Universe, “अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः। “I am the self, O Arjuna (गुडाकेश)”, “says Śrī Kṛṣṇa” seated at the heart of all creatures (X.20).

In his commentary, Rāmānujācārya has never tried of calling attention to the auspicious qualities of the Lord. His beauty and His grace, His love and His mercy are stressed again and again. Differing from other commentators he interprets X-10 (i.e. तेषां सतत युक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम्।) in such a way as to bring out the affection with which the Lord bestows devotion on those who worship Him, with a view to attaining constant union with Him. Thus, Rāmānujācārya’s commentary is throughout rich with the suggestion that the Lord is continually striving to win the struggling souls to salvation.

His commentary proceeds throughout to explain the teaching of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in such a way as to inspire self lessness service to fellowmen and devotion to God.

(03) Keśava Kāśmīri Bhaṭṭācārya ¹⁷ - by making him (Arjuna) the target and out of compassion for all liberation wishers and devotees. He drew him out through the preaching of the scripture Gītā, the quintessence of the Vedas, dealing with the three paths of Knowledge (ज्ञान), Action (कर्म) and Worship (उपासना i.e. भक्ति).

The explanations being extremely deep in meaning it is meant for those qualified persons who are equipped with the means declared in the Vedānta text like the शारीरक मीमांसा (investigation into the subject of the embodied soul) and the dull-witted not finding entrance into it have desire to know its meaning and also they wish liberation with less efforts, for their benefit in order to make them understand in no time, the quintessence of this commentary, I (i.e. Keśava Kāśmīri Bhaṭṭācārya) with the only might of remembering His lotusfeet, write according to my understanding, the easy commentary called “the Illuminer of the principles” (तत्त्वप्रकाशिका) on the glorious Bhagavadgītā on the line of principles obtained by His grace and which are established by Him.

Many ācāryas has explained this scripture on the line of their respective views, but as they have no omniscience

and because their explanations are mixed with portions contradictory to scriptures, they are not fit to be adopted by all liberation wishers. (trns. by J.A. Jani, pp. 5-7)

(04) Bal Gangadhar Tilak¹⁸ puts aside all criticisms, commentaries and independently as well as thought fully read the Gītā over several times, he then got out of the clutches of the commentators, and was convinced that the original Gītā did not preach the philosophy of Renunciation (निवृत्ति), but of Energism (कर्मयोग) and that possible the single word “योग” used in the Gītā had been used to mean कर्मयोग.

He gives his opinion that the Gītā has propounded the device of performing Action in such a way that one ultimately attains release without committing sin, namely, the कर्मयोग founded on Knowledge in which Devotion is the principle factor. He has tried to show how former commentators have stretched the meaning of some of the stanzas of the Gītā in order to support their own doctrines (see Gītā-Rahasya III.7, 19, VI. 3 and XVIII.2). He has also pointed out which of the various doctrines enunciated in the Gītā-Rahasya to the catechism method of the Gita. He has separated the exposition of the Gītā-Rahasya

(Esoteric Import of the Gītā) from the translation itself.

Tilak has explained the Gītā in a special way, that the Gītā-Rahasya has not been written with reference to any particular person or any particular system, according to him “The clear request of Arjuna to the Blessed Lord was, “Do not confused me by placing before me several courses of conduct, but point out me definitely only one course which is the proper course (Gītā III. 02 & V. 17). It is clear that the Gītā must be in support of one particular opinion. His attempt seems to popularise the true inner import of the Gītā. (Gītā Rahasya author’s preface pp. XVII-XXXI)

(05) Sri Aurobindo¹⁹ is related to the Gītā in a unique way, being a scholar, a man of learning and a thinker, he had studied the Gītā.

According to him, the purpose of the Gītā, lies in, to do His work, to be free from repulsion and desire, to do work for Him without the demand for fruit, to renounce self-will and become a passive and faithful instrument in His hands, to have an equal heart for high and low, friend and opponent, success and failure, yet not to do His work negligently.

The Gītā teaches us not works at all, but a discipline of preparation for renouncing life and works: the indifferent performance of prescribed action or of whatever task may lie really to the hands, becomes the means, the discipline: the final renunciation of life and works is the sole real object.

That which the Gītā teaches is not human, but a divine action, not the performance of social duties, but the abandonment of all other standers of duty or conduct for a selfless performance of the divine will working through our nature. In other words, Gītā is not a book of spiritual ethics, but of the spiritual life.

(06) H. H. Pandurang Sastri Athavale (Dādā)²⁰ in the first phase delivered lectures on the Gītā with special reference to moral values and cultural aspect. Then in the second phase, he delivered lectures with special reference to parameters of awakened class of intellectuals. In his third phase, he delivered lectures with special reference to his scientific thoughts on devotion and the higher states of the embodied self as well as the Supreme self.

Dādā (elder brother in Marāthi) says, “I am not a lover of literature, nor a scholar of Sanskrit, I am not a कर्मयोगी nor

a ज्ञानी nor a devotee, I am not even a grammarian, yet the Gītā appeals me the most.

Why?

There are three reasons for that :

- i. I love Yogeśwar Kṛṣṇa (Universal Spirit) the Divine singer.
- ii. I have received peace many a times from the Gītā, and
- iii. Yogeśwar Kṛṣṇa has himself instructed the Gītā.

Veda Vyāsa, without following blindly any caste or creed, has incorporated the eternal values of mankind in the Gītā.

The Gītā is a universal book, truly speaking, it is an invaluable book on the philosophy. It is a universal holy text.

I consider the Gītā as the Mother. There are, no doubt innumerable women in the world, but they can not to become the Mother. Similarly there are innumerable books that are the best but they cannot stand in comparison of the Gītā. The reason is that the Gītā is my Mother, Just as a baby can not survive without sucking the Mother, a man can not survive without the nectar of the Gītā. Starting from

a wretched man indulged in various unforgivable sins upto the best man of Devotion, the Gītā is really to lead them all on a better and still better path. The reason is clear, because the Mother hates none of her children.”

Conclusion

Thus looking to the tenets of the Nimbārka philosophy in comparison with those of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya and Rāmānujācārya, it is quite clear that Nimbārka has tried to blend the important tenants of both the ācāryas, replacing Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā for Lord Viṣṇu of Rāmānujācārya. Nimbārka has also incorporated the nature of the individual soul from Patañjali’s Yoga.

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13. कृपास्य दैन्यादियुजि प्रजायते
यया भवेत्प्रेमविशेषलक्षणा ।
भक्तिर्ह्य नन्याधिपतेर्महात्मनः
सा चोत्तमा साधनरूपिकाऽपरा ॥दशश्लोकी ९॥
14. तत्त्वप्रकाशिका, पृ° १३१९
आनुकुलस्य संकल्पः प्रातिकुलस्य वर्जनम्
रक्षिष्यतीति विश्वासो गोप्तृत्ववरणं तथा ।
आत्मनिक्षेपकार्पण्ये षड्विधा शरणागतिः ॥
15. The Bhagavadgītā with the commentary of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, Trl. Alladin Mahadeva Sastry, P 04.
16. Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā - Rāmānujabhāṣya, English Trl. by Sampatkumar M.S., Intro. pp. IX-XXXI.
17. तत्त्वप्रकाशिका, पृ° ०२ सर्वमुमुक्षुभक्तानुकम्पया ज्ञानकर्मोपासनात्मकत्रिकाण्डविषय-
सकलवेदसारभूतगीताशास्त्रोपदेशैस्तत उज्जहार । पृ° ०३ तस्य त्वतिगम्भीरार्थतया
शारीरकमीमांसादि सर्ववेदान्तोक्तसाधन सम्पन्नसूक्ष्म बुद्ध्यधिकारिकरत्वेन मन्दमतीनां तत्र
प्रवेशानर्हत्वात्तेषां तदर्थजिज्ञासूनाल्पप्रयत्नानां मुमुक्षूणामुपकारायाऽञ्जसा तदुक्तार्थोपलब्धये
तच्चरणस्मरणैकबलेन तत्कृपालब्ध तदुक्तसिद्धान्तेन मया श्रीभगवद्गीताटीका सुगमा
तत्त्वप्रकाशिकाभिधायथामति विधीयते । बहुभिराचार्यैः स्वस्वमतानुसारेण व्याख्यातमिदं शास्त्रं
परन्तु तेषां सर्वज्ञत्वाभावात्तद्व्याख्यानां शास्त्रविरुद्धांशेनापि युक्तत्वान्न सर्वमुमुक्षूपादेयत्वम् ।
18. Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā-Rahasya or Karma-Yoga-Śāstra, by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, pp. XVII-XXXI.
19. Essays on Gītā, by Sri Aurobindo, pp. 29-31.
20. गीताभूतम्: स्व. प. पू. पांडुरंगशास्त्री आठवले (दादा), लावणं, पृ° ०२-०५.

