

VISHNUTATVA VINIRŪYAH OF SRI MADHVĀCĀRYA

Vishnutatva Vinirūya is one of the major works amongst the ten Prakaranas (compendiums).

In the benedictory verse while offering prayer to Lord Nārāyaṇa, Acārya has used three adjectives. –(1) He can be known only through sacred texts (Sadāgamas), (2) He is superior to (perishables) Kṣaras and (Non-perishable) Akṣara, (3) He is free from blemishes and having infinite number of auspicious attributes. These three adjectives (aspects) are the three chapters of this work.

Chapter I (Sadāgamaika Vijñeya): All the four Vedas (Apauruṣeya – non-authored texts), the whole of Pancarātra, Mūlarāmāyaṇam, Itihāsa, Purāṇas etc. which are in arrangement with Vedas are denoted as Sadāgamas. Lord Viṣṇu is known only through Sadāgamas by those who have faith and devotion in Him. Apart from this there are authored some texts through which Lord Viṣṇu is non-comprehensible. Those are known as Durāgamas.

God, Goddesses, Dharma, Adharma, heaven, hell, virtue etc. are super sensory matters. These can be known through Āgamas only. Āgamas are of two types viz., Sacred texts having no authorship for (Apauruṣeya) and others having authorship (Pauruṣeya). The Apauruṣeya text means the authorship for those texts is not known or heard of. These texts have come to be known as Vedas (sacred texts). They are free from errors, since no human elements are involved in composing them. Moreover, based on Pauruṣeya texts Dharma-Adharma matters cannot be decided since factors like errors and cheating arise. Hence, there is a necessity for accepting Apauruṣeya text by all the sponsors of any faith. Thus the Vedas are flawless documents, proven through ages and eternal in nature. It's authority is to be respected. It follows as a corollary that the alphabets contained in them are also eternal.

The knowledge obtained through Vedas is self-valid. It does not need other corroborative evidences. Such dependencies lead to infinite regress. The Vedas are generally self-valid, but only in case of a dilemma other evidences are to be thought of. The knowledge and validity are comprehended by Sākṣin.

‘The purport of all the Vedas declare that Lord Nārāyaṇa is Omniscient, omnipotent, free from defects and supreme’ says Nārada Purāṇa. However, Advaita school holds that the purport of the Vedas is to convey the identity between soul and Brahman. They say that in the Veda there are passages which mean difference between soul and Brahman. There are also some passages which convey identity of soul with Brahman. Of the two the former are merely the restatement of the known; ie., they mean that difference is known by perception and inference. Since these passages which appear to convey the obvious fact this cannot be the main subject while the identity is not known by any other Pramāṇa. Therefore identity is the principle topic of Vedas and those passages are Pramāṇa. Here Madhva says that Bheda Śrutis itself render them Apramāṇa.

Madhva further points out their contention is not tenable. Here, while Jīva is Sākṣi-Pratyakṣa, Īśvara cannot be known either by perception or inference. Therefore the difference between the two is not established. Hence, the Vedic passages which convey distinction between the

two are not restatement (Anuvāda). The Bedha Śrutis therefore are equally valid. It may be noted that Bedha Śrutis are supported by Pratyakṣa and Anumāna, which are also Pramāṇa. Consequently, the Abedha Śrutis become Apramāṇa since they oppose to the Bedha Śrutis. Moreover it is the convention that perception and inference are the Upajīvyā Pramāṇa. Āgama is Upajīvaka. If Āgama opposes Upajīvyā Pramāṇa the Upajīvaka becomes invalid. Therefore the Tatvamasi, Ahambrahmāsmi Śrutis which apparently means Aikya passages in the real sense mean difference only.

Śrutis say except liberation (Mokṣa) all other achievements are temporary. Liberation is achieved by the grace of God. The grace of God is possible by the knowledge of His supremacy over all others. He is distinct from all others. The difference between ‘A’ and ‘B’ will be known by comprehending adjective and substantive or differentiating Dharmi or Pratiyogi. In either way it is said it incurs reciprocal dependency. In this connection Madhva says such objection is untenable because the difference constitutes the very nature of every object. It is born with its identity because when the object is comprehended its distinction from all others is also simultaneously identified.

Madhva contends that there is not a single statement in any Veda to prove the identity of Jīvātman with Brahman. All the passages like “Tatvamasi”, ‘Aham-Brahmāsmi’ etc. mean distinction between the said two. To remove any ambiguity Madhva while explaining the Upaniṣat passage Tatvamasi, splits the word ‘**Sa Ātma Aatvamasi**’; meaning **thou art not that**.

In the passage ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ means He understood Himself as Aham –undiscardable, Brahma – perfect, Asmi – eternal or indweller (Nārāyaṇa Sruti). Similarly all the Vedic passages which Advaita school interpret indemnity have been explained by Madhva in favour of difference with authorities.

It is not only the difference between Jiva and Brahman but also other differences exist. Madhva next explains the Upaniṣat statement ‘Prapñco Yadvidyeta...’. The fivefold difference in the universe are as follows:

The difference exists between – 1) Brahman and souls 2) Brahman and inanimates (Jadas) 3) Souls and Jadas 4) Soul and soul 5) Jada and Jada. These five differences are not created hence not destroyed. Only Brahman is Advaita, without any equal or above. All the rest in the world are distinct.

Apart from this scriptures say that there is not only difference between the souls but also there is hierarchy amongst Devas. It is not only during Samsār but also persists in the state of salvation (Mokṣa) too. Their bliss in liberated state is graded in steps of hundred in an ascending order (Taittiriya Śruti)

In case it is said that the universe is projected as a mere illusion two real worlds are to be envisaged. Unless there is a real shell and real silver and knowledge of similarity between these two no illusory projection of silver is possible.

The Brahman does not reduce Himself to the form of Jīvātman due to Avidhya or any adjunct (Upādhi) nor the souls are going to identify with Brahman one day. Jīvas are separate entities. Even in atomic size of place there are infinite numbers of souls due to the unimaginable power of God.

Chapter II (Kṣarākṣarātītatva): Caturmukha Brahma, Śiva, the other deities and all other Jīvas are designated as Kṣaras; since they possess perishable bodies. Goddess Lakṣmi is designated as Akṣra since her body is imperishable. Lord Viṣṇu is superior to these two. He carries out eight functions like creation, sustenance etc. says the Parama-Śruti.

Chapter III (Nirdoṣa - Aśeṣa- Sadguṇa): The discussion between Nārada and four headed Brahma in Brahmānda Purāṇa reveals that Lord Viṣṇu does not assume body created by the contact of man and woman. But he reveals Himself with His eternal body constituted by bliss and consciousness which is absolutely free from any blemishes.

The attributes and activities of Viṣṇu constitute His very nature. These are not different from Him. These are not different from one another also. Though not different, these are transacted as different by the help of unique concept designated as Viśeṣa. Such a phenomenon is called Saviśeṣa –Bheda.

By obtaining knowledge of Viṣṇu as possessing infinite auspicious attributes and free from blemishes one will get rid of transmigration, obtains the bliss devoid of sorrow live in His abode near Him. All liberated are different from Him and depend upon Him. The work closes with a prayer to Nārāyana.

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