

---

## UNIT 2 SANKARA

---

Vedanta: An Introduction

### Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Epistemology
- 2.3 Metaphysical Categories
- 2.4 Means to liberation
- 2.5 Liberation
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Key Words
- 2.8 Further Readings and References
- 2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

---

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

---

The main objective of this Unit—is to elucidate the teachings of Philosophy of Advaita as propagated by Adi Shankaracharya. The School of Advaita deals with the triad, namely, Epistemology, Axiology and Metaphysics. The philosophical conclusion of the Absolute Truth is derived primarily by relying on the scriptural statements that forms the only valid epistemological base for Advaitic deduction. In this unit, we shall briefly see the fundamentals of Advaita philosophy and its hermeneutical skill resulting in the Absolute.

By the end of this Unit you should be able:

- to understand the fundamental teaching of Advaita;
- to learn the technical terms in Advaita and familiarise with its Sanskrit equivalent;
- to differentiate it from other Schools of Vedanta; and
- to relate its relevance in practical life.

---

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

---

Adi Shankara is considered to be one of the most prominent and outstanding teachers that time could ever produce. He was an exquisite thinker, a great visionary, a brilliant intellect, the most compassionate, who lived for just thirty-two years but created an indelible impact on the generations of minds to come. He is to be remembered not as a founder but as one who propagated the system of Advaita. The historical data states that Shankara was born in 788 A.D. in Kalady, Kerala to the couple Shivaguru and Aryamba, who were great devout of Lord Shiva. They chose to accept a child brilliant but with short life rather than dull-headed with long life. Shankara was born, who showed extraordinary brilliance at a tender age and is said to have composed *Balabodha sangraha* at the age of six. His versatility spread far and wide. Once as a *brahmachari* in the *gurukula* he visited homes to receive alms. A poor lady, reluctant to send the boy empty-handed, parted with her only food *amla* happily. Shankara impressed by

her humility and compassion outpoured hymns in praise of Goddess Lakshmi and it is said that immediately gold *amlas* showered in the poor woman's house. This composition is popularly known as *Kanakadhara stotra*. By the age of eight, Shankara was prepared to take to a recluse life but could not convince his mother. It is said that while Shankara was taking bath in a river, a crocodile dragged his leg and his mother was helpless. Shankara shouted if only she granted him to renounce then the crocodile will do no harm. Shankara's mother without any alternative consented to his wish. Shankara declared 'I renounce' thrice and the crocodile went away without harming. This incident is perhaps an allegory. Before he left his village in search of a guru, it is said that, Lord Vishnu appeared in his dream and directed him to the great ascetic, Govindapadacharya at Omkarnath. Shankara began his expedition in search of the ascetic and he moved towards the North. He stood at the opening of a cave on the banks of Narmada waiting for the ascetic in deep meditation to arise. The ascetic questioned Shankara 'Who are you?' for which Shankara poured out in ten verses the absolute nature of self. These hymns are popularly known as the *Dashashloki*. The ascetic was none other than Govindapada who accepted Shankara as his disciple. Shankara mastered all the scriptures in three years. At the end of his study, the *Guru* instructed him to write commentaries on the scriptures to cull out the essential teaching. It is said that the *Guru* was confident on Shankara's mastery of the scriptures revealed through his commentary to the *Vishnu Sahasranama* marking the end of his study period. Shankara as instructed by his *Guru* travelled to Kashi to spread the teaching of the scriptures. We can find the teachings of his *Guru* and his grand preceptor Gaudpadacharya re-presented magnificently in his own words. He was barely twelve years and set to comment on the *Prasthanaya Traya* (the three basic tenets of *Vedanta*, viz, *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita* and *Brahmasutra*). By the age of sixteen he established the supremacy of Vedantic knowledge and had huge followers. Shankara is considered to be the gem in the lineage of teachers since he amalgamated the Advaitic teachings prevalent before him, and paved a new path for the generation of teachers yet to come. It is said that, once an old *Brahmin* entered into arguments on the *Brahmasutra* and later Shankara came to know that it was Sage *Vyasa*. The Sage granted him another sixteen years in order to spread this teaching and win over those who were steeped in ritualism. Thus, by the age of thirty-two he bought thousands of people into his fold and established four *mutts* in four directions under the headship of his famous four disciples, Padmapada, Sureshvara, Totaka and Hastamalaka. Shankara not only wrote for the intellects, he gave the essence of the profound teachings in simple and lucid *stotras*. Thus, he catered to different kinds of seekers of Truth. His famous philosophical compositions are *Vivekachoodamani*, *Upadesha Sahasri*, *Vakyavrtti*, *Mohamudgara* (*Bhaja govindam*) etc. Some of his devotional hymns are *Ganesha pancharatnam*, *Soundaryalahari*, *Sivanandalahari*, etc. It is said that Shankara composed more than hundred works in his short life span. At the end of his mission in 820 A.D, he directed his disciples to carry out his vision for the welfare of humanity. He then, it is said, walked towards the *Himalayas*.

---

## 2.2 EPISTEMOLOGY

---

The quintessence of Advaita philosophy is given out by Shankara in his famous line: *Brahma satyam jaganmithya jivobrahmaiva naparah* – Brahman is real, the world is unreal and the individual self is non-different from Brahman. This

teaching is based on the Upanisadic statements and the whole exercise of culling out the Advaitic essence lies in the interpretation of these Upanisadic statements.

Let us begin with the mechanism of knowing; which involves a knower (*pramata*), means of knowing (*pramana*) and object of knowledge (*prameya*) that give rise to valid knowledge (*prama*). The means of knowledge, according to Advaita, are six and they are perception (*pratyaksa*), inference (*anumana*), comparison (*upamana*), postulation (*arthapatti*), non-apprehension (*anupalabdhi*) and testimony (*shabda*). A *pramana* is defined as that which gives rise to the knowledge of an entity which is hitherto unknown or concealed by *avidya* and which is not sublated subsequently. In this sense, *shabda* alone is considered to be a *pramana* which gives rise to Brahman-knowledge and all other *pramana* deal with the material world. The other means of knowledge cannot reveal Brahman since Brahman is not an object of knowledge.

### Perception

According to Advaita, in the perception of an external object, the mind goes out through the sense organ, say the 'eyes' and reaches the place of the object, say a 'pot' and assumes the shape of the pot which modifies into the thought 'pot'. This modification is known as *vrtti*. The pervasion of *vrtti* removes the veil of ignorance (*vrttivyapti*) and the pervasion of reflected consciousness illumines the object (*phalavyapti*), which is expressed as 'This is a pot'. The capacity of the mind to illumine an object is because of the reflection of Consciousness (Brahman) in the mind. The knowledge of experiences like happiness, sorrow etc that occur in the mind without the aid of sense organs is known by the 'witness consciousness.' There is a mental modification internally that is expressed as 'I am happy' etc. The knowledge of self or Brahman cannot be gained by perceptual cognition since Brahman can never be objectified. When we say, words reveal Brahman, *vrttivyapti* alone functions and not *phalavyapti*, since Brahman is self-evident luminous being, hence the knowledge of Brahman is known as *svarupa-jnana* or knowledge of nature of self as opposed to *vrtti-jnana* or empirical knowledge.

### Theory of Erroneous perception

An object perceived differently is said to be invalid cognition in which again the three factors operate namely, the knower, the known and the instrument of knowledge. The famous example oft-quoted by Advaita School is one seeing rope as 'snake'. The reason for this erroneous perception may be due to defect in the perceiver, in the instrument of perception, in the environment (dim light), in the object etc. The analysis of the process of erroneous cognition by Advaita School is known as 'Indescribable Error' (*Anirvachaniya khyati*). It is imperative to understand the mechanism of error, since for Advaita, bondage is an error superimposed on Brahman due to self-ignorance and hence knowledge alone is the means to liberation. Based on the indescribable theory of error, the rope-ignorance creates a 'snake' here ignorance is the material cause of 'snake'. The rope is the substratum on which 'snake' is superimposed and hence rope is the transfigurative material cause of 'snake'. The perceiver of 'snake' superimposes the characteristics of snake is frightened and tries to run away. On rise of rope-knowledge, the 'snake' vanishes and the person 'feels' saved. In this instance, there is no sorrow but still one experiences grief because of lack of knowledge of reality (rope-knowledge). Advaitin states, in the same manner, the world of

plurality is superimposed on non-dual Brahman due to ignorance, plurality is cause of sorrow, on wake of Brahman-knowledge plurality vanishes (just as the ‘snake’ vanished) and one realises the non-dual nature of self and ‘attains’ bliss.

### **Inference**

Inference is the means of inferential knowledge. Inferential knowledge is produced by the knowledge of invariable concomitance (*vyapti*). The latent impression of the invariable concomitance is the intermediate operation (*vyapara*). The inferential knowledge that ‘the hill has fire’ arises when one sees the smoke (*hetu*) in a hill (*paksha*), which arouses the latent impression of the invariable concomitance ‘where there is smoke there is fire’, and by this application one gains the inferential knowledge that the hill has fire (*sadhya*). Brahman cannot be known by inference because of absence of *hetu* to determine Brahman. According to Advaita, the falsity of the world can be shown through inference by the following syllogism:

Different from Brahman everything is false

Being different

Like shell-silver

### **Comparison**

The instrument of valid knowledge of similarity is comparison. For instance, a person goes to the forest and sees a *gavaya* (bison). He compares the form of cow which he knows with that of the *gavaya* and understands that ‘this thing is like a cow’ and then gains conviction that ‘my cow is like this’. Brahman cannot be known through comparison since there does not exist a similar second thing like Brahman.

### **Postulation**

It is presumption of an explanatory fact (*upapadaka*) from knowledge of the thing to be explained (*upapadya*). The knowledge of the thing to be explained is the instrument, and the knowledge of the explanatory fact is the result. This is explained by the well-known example of ‘Devadatta’. Devadatta does not eat during the day time, he is fat, these are known facts. If one does not postulate that ‘Devadatta eats at night’ the seen fact remains unexplained. Postulation, according to Advaita, also proves falsity of the world. The scriptural statement ‘*the knower of self transcends sorrow*’ reveals falsity of world by application of postulation. Here, the word ‘sorrow’ indicates bondage which can be removed by self-knowledge, since the statement says ‘knower of self’; if the falsity of bondage is not postulated then removal of bondage by knowledge cannot be said. Hence, bondage or world as false is known by postulation. In postulation, we presume something present elsewhere; there cannot be anything else to arrive at Brahman by postulation.

### **Non-apprehension**

The means of valid knowledge known as non-apprehension is the extraordinary cause of that apprehension of non-existence which is not due to knowledge as an instrument. A thing can be known by non-apprehension which has the capacity to be apprehended at a different time. For instance, one can understand the absence of a pot in a place, since pot as an object is apprehended previously or at a later

period. Here, non-existence of a thing is known and Brahman being ever existent (*Sat*) it is never available for non-apprehension.

Testimony

The verbal testimony is defined as that ‘sentence in 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’. According to Advaita, the purport of the scriptures is Attributless Brahman (*Nirguna Brahman*) which is known by scrutinizing the intention of scriptures based on six indicatory marks, they are, Introduction-Conclusion (*upakrama-upasamhara*), Repetition (*abhyasa*), Uniqueness (*apurvata*), Result (*phala*), Eulogy (*arthavada*) and Logical presentation (*upapatti*). A word can reveal its meaning in the primary sense and in cases where primary sense is unfitting, they are known by their secondary sense. Deriving the meaning of a word through its secondary implication is of three kinds, namely, Exclusive (*jahallakshana*), Inclusive (*ajahallakshana*) and Exclusive-Inclusive (*jahalajahallakshana*). The identity statements (*mahavakya*), according to Advaita, reveals the identity meaning by the application of exclusive-inclusive implication.

Check Your Progress I

Note:

a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1)

Give an account of Life and works of Adi Shankaracharya.

2)

Examine the mechanism of perception and erroneous perception in Advaita.

2.3 METAPHYSICAL CATEGORIES

We have seen so far the Advaitic Epistemology and the role of each means of knowledge. In this section we shall deal with the metaphysical categories of Advaita that is divided into five, namely, *Brahman*, *Maya*, *Ishvara*, *Jiva* and *Jagat*. We shall deal with each of them sequentially:

## Brahman

Upanisads define Brahman in two ways, one is revelation of its essential nature (*svarupa laksana*) and the second is revealing Brahman through secondary attributes (*tatastha laksana*). The Upanisadic statements like ‘*Existence Consciousness Limitless Brahma*’ is known as essential or direct definition of Brahman and statements that describe Brahman as the creator of the universe, like, ‘*That from which all beings originate*’, is *tatastha laksana*. Brahman is described as one, only, without duality which implies Brahman is free from homogeneous difference, heterogeneous difference and difference within itself (*sajatiya vijatiya svagata bheda shunya*). The non-dual Brahman free from attributes, modifications, and form, ever-pure, alone exists. It is transcendently real and is the absolute being. According to Advaita, *Nirguna* Brahman alone is real. Brahman, when realised as non-different from the true nature of individual self is known as Atman. Thus, Brahman and Atman are essentially one. Brahman is *anadi* or without a beginning.

## Maya

*Maya* or the primal matter is also without a beginning that has Brahman as its locus and content. The existence and evidence of Brahman is concealed by *maya*. *Maya* is the limiting adjunct that distorts Brahman-consciousness. But, *maya* does not affect Brahman since *maya* is of a lower order of reality. *Maya* is defined as indescribable or that which cannot be categorised as existent, or non-existent or both. It cannot be said to be existent, since on rise of Brahman-knowledge, *maya* and its effects gets sublated. It cannot non-existent, since it is experienced. It cannot be both since opposed features cannot exist in the same locus. Therefore, it is said to be different from existence and non-existence which is known as indescribable. *Maya* cannot be categorised as different from Brahman because it affects the philosophy of non-dualism, neither can it be said to be identical to Brahman since on wake of Brahman-knowledge, *maya* will continue remaining unsublated like Brahman. *Maya* is one without parts. If *maya* is said to have parts then its origin is to be determined, *maya* is beginningless according to Advaita. It cannot be therefore said, *maya* is partless because it is the transformative material cause of the universe. A partless entity cannot transform or modify to become something. Scriptures declare *maya* as a great mystery. It contains three *gunas*, namely, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It is not perceptible but inferred through its products, the world and the material bodies. *Maya* possesses two powers, one to conceal (*avarana shakti*) the nature of consciousness and the other to project (*vikshepa shakti*) a world of plurality. *Maya* does not have an independent existence of its own and it depends on Brahman for its existence. According to Advaita, that which has a dependent existence is unreal (*mithya*).

## Ishvara

Brahman, defined in its secondary attributive form, is known as *Saguna* Brahman or *Ishvara*. *Ishvara* is defined as Brahman-Consciousness reflected in *maya*, where *maya* is the power of *Ishvara*. *Ishvara* is the reflected consciousness through *maya*, who is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. He is one from whom the world has originated, in whom it is sustained and unto whom it gets resolved. *Ishvara* is the cause of both subtle and gross universes. *Ishvara* is said to be the bestower of results of actions of the individual souls. *Ishvara* is ever-liberated since he is not affected by the concealing power of *maya* and hence

free from ignorance. However, the projecting power of *maya* is operative and hence plurality of world is seen by *Ishvara*. *Ishvara* is also known as *paramatma*. *Paramatma* is one, formless, all-pervasive. *Ishvara* is unaffected by *karma*, He is neither a doer nor a reaper.

### Jiva

According to Advaita, the Brahman-consciousness reflected in the mind is *jiva*. *Jiva* is also said to be without a beginning. By considering six factors as beginningless, Advaita shows the cyclicity of time and does not probe into the ‘first’ creation that is dismissed as illogical. The six factors that are without a beginning are, Brahman, *Maya*, *Ishvara*, *Jiva*, the difference between *Ishvara* and *Jiva*, the combination of Brahman and *Maya*. Since mind a product of *maya* is of inferior quality, the attributes of *jiva* are inferior. In the sense, *jiva* is limited in knowledge, power and located in a place. *Jiva* is many, constituting three bodies – gross, subtle and causal, the material body is subject to birth and death. While the physical body serves as the abode of experiences, the subtle body serves as the means of experiences. The three bodies based on their functions are classified into five sheaths (*panchakosha*), viz, food-sheath (*annamayakosha*), air-sheath (*pranamayakosha*), mental-sheath (*manomayakosha*), intellect-sheath (*vijñanamayakosha*) and bliss sheath (*anandamayakosha*). The individual soul or *jiva* undergoes three states of experiences, namely, waking, dream and deep sleep states. The *jiva* through its various constituents is a doer and reaper. The *jiva* is bound by three kinds of *karma*, viz, *sanchita*, *prarabdha* and *agami*. *Sanchita karma* is the result of past action yet to fructify, the *prarabdha karma* is the fructified result that is experienced now and the *agami karma* is the result of action to be gained by future actions.

### Jagat

Advaitins advocate the theory of transfiguration (*vivartavada*) in order to account for the origination of the phenomenal universe. According to this theory, the cause produces an effect without undergoing any change. Brahman is the substratum on which the world appears. The world does not exist independent of Brahman. The cause of the appearance of the world is *maya* which undergoes change and hence it is the transformative material cause (*parinami upadana karana*). Advaitins hold that the universe exists in an unmanifest form in Brahman. Such a view is known as *Satkaryavada*. Since *maya* does not exist independent of Brahman and Brahman devoid of *maya* cannot be the cause, *Ishvara* is said to be both the material and intelligent cause of the universe. *Ishvara*, the wielder of *maya* spins the universe in an orderly and purposeful manner. The causal state of *maya* is also beginningless, that evolves in two stages, firstly there is the evolution of the subtle universe, from which the gross universe emerges. This process develops at the macrocosmic and microcosmic level. Let us see the evolutionary process:

The causal body in unmanifest condition firstly manifests as the subtle body, like a sprout from a seed. The five elements, space, air, fire, water and earth at the causal state consists of three *gunas* having emerged from *maya*. The subtle body evolves through a process of non-grossification (*apanchikarana*). It is a combination of sixteen organs that are invisible and intangible. They are five sense organs of knowledge (sense of hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell), five sense organs of action (speech, sense of grasping etc, sense of locomotion, organ

of excretion and organ of procreation), five vital air (respiration, circulation, digestion, evacuation and reversal process), and internal organ (*antahkarana*) with four-fold functions as mind, intellect, sense of ‘I’ and memory. The sense organs of knowledge and mind/intellect are the product of *sattva guna* of *maya*, the sense organs of action and vital airs are the product of *rajoguna* of *maya*. The subtle universe possesses the corresponding presiding deities of each of these organs. For example, the god of sun is the presiding deity of eyes and so on. At this stage, there is the evolution of subtle body and subtle universe. The evolutes from *tamoguna* of *maya* undergo the process of grossification (*panchikarana*). The five elements at the gross level are divided into two equal parts. One-half of each element further is divided into four parts. The one-eighth of each element is transferred to other elements retaining one-half of the division. At the end of this grossification process, each element will contain one-half of its own and one-eighth of other elements. For example, the earth element will contain one-half of earth element, one-eighth of space, air, fire and water. At this stage one experiences the gross body and gross universe. The material world and body is known as not-self.

**Cause of Bondage**

Due to self-ignorance, the nature of self and not-self is mixed up that result in bondage. The nature of self is eternal, immortal, pure, unlimited, blissful etc. The nature of not-self is non-eternal, mortal, impure, limited, sorrowful etc. The nature of not-self is falsely transferred to the self and also the nature of self, that is, Existence and Consciousness is falsely transferred to the not-self. This mixture is the cause of bondage, says Shankara, in his introductory commentary to the *Brahmasutra*.

---

**2.4 MEANS TO LIBERATION**

---

We had earlier mentioned that according to Advaita School, self-knowledge is the liberating solution. On analysis of the metaphysical categories we understand that there are two factors, Consciousness (Brahman) and Matter (*Maya*), of which matter and its products are unreal and consciousness alone is real. One who gains the knowledge that self is non-different from Brahman and the experienced plurality is unreal is free from sorrow. To enter into an enquiry of the nature of self, scriptures prescribe remote means, proximate means and direct means. According to Advaita, the remote means to knowledge is action and meditation which enhances the purity of mind. The proximate means are the four-fold qualifications namely, *viveka* or discrimination between eternal and ephemeral, *vairagya* or dispassion towards worldly benefits, *shamadishatkasampatti* or six-fold mental disciplines and *mumuksutva* or intense desire for liberation. Such a seeker is known as *adhikari* who takes up the direct means, namely listening to the scriptures (*shravana*), engaging in removal of doubts (*manana*) and being established in Brahman by dwelling on the teaching (*nididhyasana*).

The identity of individual self and Brahman is revealed through the *mahavakya* in the Upanisads. There are many *mahavakyas* in the 1180 Upanisads, of which traditionally four *mahavakyas* are enumerated representing the four Vedas. The *Aitareya* belonging to *Rg Veda* contains the *mahavakya* – *Prajnanam brahma*, the *Brihadaranyaka* of *Yajur Veda* has *aham brahmasmi*, the *mahavakya tattvamasi* occurs in *Chandogya* of *Sama Veda* and *Mandukya* of *Atharvana*



*veda* contains *ayamatma brahma mahavakya*. Here, we shall analyse the *tattvamasi mahavakya* which is of instructive nature.

In *Chandogya*, *Sadvidya* section, a dialogue is carried out between father Uddalaka and son Shvetaketu. The dialogue opens up to indicate ‘that by knowing which everything else is known’. Uddalaka describes *Ishvara* as the cause of the universe manifesting as ‘*Sat*’ or Existent. Through the *mahavakya* ‘*Tat tvam asi*’; he refers to his son Shvetaketu and says, ‘You are that’. The primary meaning of the words ‘*tat*’ (That) and ‘*tvam*’ (You) do not convey the meaning of identity. Let us see this process sequentially.

The primary meaning of the word ‘*tat*’ refers to *Ishvara*, who is defined as Consciousness reflecting in *maya* and is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. The primary meaning of the word ‘*tvam*’ refers to *Jiva*, that is defined as Consciousness reflecting in the mind and is limited in intelligence, power and limited by space. The features revealed through the primary meaning are opposed to each other and are contradictory in nature. The identity of ‘*tat*’ *paramatma* and ‘*tvam*’ *jivatma* is impossible. Since primary meaning does not fit, we apply the secondary meaning. The secondary implication is developed in three stages:

- 1) The first stage is known as *Samanadhikaranya* or the Appositional usage, in which two words that are in grammatical coordination refers to the same locus. For instance, ‘white lotus’ are two words that are coordinated grammatically refers to the same flower. Similarly, the words ‘*tat*’ and ‘*tvam*’ are in apposition and hence refers to the same locus. But the word-meanings are opposed to each other.
- 2) The second stage is known as *Viseshyavishesana sambandha* or the relation of qualified-qualifier. The word meanings act as qualifier and qualified and delimit each other. In the case of ‘white lotus’, the word-meaning of ‘white’ is ‘whiteness’ and ‘lotus’ is ‘lotusness’. In the first instance, white is qualifier and lotus is qualified and in the second instance, lotus is qualifier and white is qualified. Thus, both word-meaning delimit each other referring to the same locus. But in the case of the words ‘*tat*’ and ‘*tvam*’, the process of qualified and qualifier does not hold good since the word-meanings with opposed meaning cannot refer to the same locus. Hence, we have to proceed to the third stage of secondary implication.
- 3) The third stage is known as *Lakshyalakshana sambandha*, or the relation of indicator-indicated. As mentioned earlier, the *lakshana* is of three kinds, exclusive, inclusive and exclusive-inclusive. In the exclusive kind, the primary meaning is completely abandoned and a related secondary meaning is taken up to understand the meaning of a sentence. For example, ‘well is walking’ does not make sense. The primary meaning of the word ‘well’ is unsuitable since ‘well’ cannot walk. The meaning related to ‘well’ is ‘water’ which is contained in a leather bag. This leather bag is hung on the oxes that are walking which is derived by the exclusive secondary application. This method does not fit in the case of the *mahavakya* since the primary meaning is to be completely abandoned. If it is so, then the primary meaning of ‘*tat*’ and ‘*tvam*’ that includes consciousness has to be abandoned and identity cannot be arrived at.

In the second kind of inclusive, the primary meaning is retained and a related word is included to arrive at the sentential meaning. For example, ‘browns are running’ does not convey the meaning. ‘Brown horses are running’ is understood based on the context by adding the word ‘horses’. Here, the primary meaning is not given up but a new element is included. This method is inapplicable in case of the *mahavakya* since if the primary meaning is retained then the incompatible features of *paramatma* and *jivatma* has to be retained and identity can never be arrived at.

The third implication process is known as exclusive-inclusive wherein one part of the primary meaning is retained and another part is given up resulting in identity knowledge. For instance, a person meets his friend after many years and recognises him as ‘this is that Devadatta’. The word ‘this’ refers to Devadatta related in present time and current place and the word ‘that’ refers to Devadatta related to past time and a different place. The oneness of Devadatta is arrived at by excluding present time and place and past time and place and retaining only the person Devadatta. In the same manner, the features of ‘*tat*’ is excluded and the features of ‘*tvam*’ is excluded, the consciousness behind ‘*tat*’ and ‘*tvam*’ alone is retained which is essentially the same. Thus, one arrives at the consciousness principle that is non-dual as the true nature of the self.

---

## 2.5 LIBERATION

---

One, who gains the ‘identity-knowledge’ through the *mahavakya*, is a *jivanmukta*. Technically, it is said that, the *jivanmukta* burns down the entire *sanchita karma* and is unaffected by the *agami karma*. Since the *prarabdha karma* has fructified it can be exhausted only by experience. The *jivanmukta* continues as long as the *prarabdha* continue. After the fall of the body, the liberated one does not assume another body and thus attains freedom from re-birth or *videha mukti*. The one who does not gain this knowledge here but has acquired all the qualifications to gain the non-dual knowledge is said to travel to *brahmaloka* after death and attain gradual liberation or *krama mukti*. The Scriptures describe the characteristics of a *jivanmukta* as one who never has the idea of ‘I’ with regard to the body, senses or the mind and is not attached to the sense-objects. The *Bhagavad Gita*, describes such an ‘exalted soul’ as whose mind remains unperturbed amid sorrows, who is free from passion, fear and anger, and encountering good and bad experiences, neither rejoices nor recoils. The scriptures goes to the extent of saying to such a liberated soul there is neither injunctions nor prohibitions prescribed because he conducts himself in the society in keeping with the scriptural teachings spontaneously.

**Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Give a brief account of the metaphysical categories of Advaita?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2)

Explain the process of secondary implication to arrive at the nature of Self and describe the features of a *jivanmukta*.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to give a general understanding of the Philosophy of Advaita based on the commentaries and independent works of Adi Shankara. Though Advaita as a system flourished prior to Shankara and developed further after Shankara, we have restricted to the period of Shankara, since he is considered to be the pioneer and champion in regulating the course of Advaita knowledge. We have briefly described the life of Shankara and his works that forms the historical content of this unit. The purpose of Epistemology is discussed and the Metaphysical categories are defined and examined separately. Knowledge as the means to liberation is an important tenet of Advaita that differentiates itself from other Schools of Vedanta. Finally we conclude the unit with the nature of a liberated person that seems to be a necessitated personality for a harmonious existence of present day society.

2.7 KEY WORDS

- Anadi

:

that whose beginning cannot be determined in the concept of time and space.
- Guna

:

Quality residing in a substance
- Sattva

:

the luminous quality because of which knowledge arises
- Rajas

:

the active principle because of which activity takes place
- Tamas

:

the quality of inertia because of which there is neither knowledge nor action
- Adhikari

:

a seeker who has the four-fold qualifications
- Brahmaloka

:

the region said to be the seventh heaven presided by Lord Brahma who imparts knowledge resulting in gradual liberation.

2.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Balasubramanian, R. *Advaita Vedanta*. Madras: University of Madras, 1976.

Dasgupta, S.N. *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I to IV. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 2000.

Nirod Baran, Chakraborty. *A Dictionary of Advaita Vedanta*. Kolkatta: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 2003.

Potter, K.H. *Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophies*, Vol.III. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 2000.

Sharma, C.D. *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 2003.

Satprakashananda. *The Methods of Knowledge according to Advaita Vedanta*. Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 2005.

---

## 2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

### Check Your Progress I

- 1) Adi Shankara was born in 788 A.D. in Kalady, Kerala to the couple Shivaguru and Aryamba. Shankara showed extraordinary brilliance at a tender age and is said to have composed *Balabodha sangraha* at the age of six. By the age of eight, Shankara was prepared to take to a recluse life. Shankara began his expedition in search of his preceptor and was embraced by Govindapada who questioned Shankara ‘Who are you?’ for which Shankara poured out in ten verses the absolute nature of self. These hymns are popularly known as the *Dashashloki*. Shankara mastered all the scriptures in three years. He was barely twelve years and set to comment on the *Prasthanara Traya*. By the age of sixteen he established the supremacy of Vedantic knowledge and had huge followers. By receiving an extension of another sixteen years from Vyasa he engaged in spread Advaita knowledge. Thus, by the age of thirty-two he established four *mutts* in four directions under the headship of his famous four disciples, Padamapada, Sureshvara, Totaka and Hastamalaka. Shankara not only wrote for the intellects, he gave the essence of the profound teachings in simple and lucid *stotras*. Thus, he catered to different kinds of seekers of Truth. Shankara composed more than hundred works in his short life span. At the end of his mission in 820 A.D, he directed his disciples to carry out his vision for the welfare of humanity. He then, it is said, walked towards the *Himalayas*.
- 2) According to Advaita, in the perception of an external object, the mind goes out through the sense organ, say the ‘eyes’ and reaches the place of the object, say a ‘pot’ and assumes the shape of the pot which modifies into the thought ‘pot’. This modification is *vrtti*. The capacity of the mind to illumine an object is because of the reflection of Consciousness (Brahman) in the mind. Theory of Erroneous perception: An object perceived differently is said to be invalid cognition in which again the three factors operate namely, the knower, the known and the instrument of knowledge. The analysis of the process of erroneous cognition by Advaita School is known as ‘Indescribable Error’ (*Anirvachaniya khyati*).

### Check Your Progress II

- 1) The metaphysical categories of Advaita are Brahman, *Maya*, *Ishvara*, *Jiva* and *Jagat* that are said to be *anadi*. Brahman is one, only, without duality. It is transcendently real and is the absolute being. *Maya* or the primal matter

that is indescribable consisting of three *gunas*, namely, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It possesses two powers, one to conceal (*avarana shakti*) the nature of consciousness and the other to project (*vikshepa shakti*) a world of plurality. *Maya* dependently existing on Brahman is *mithya*. *Ishvara* is defined as Brahman-Consciousness reflected in *maya*, where *maya* is the power of *Ishvara*. *Ishvara* is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. The Brahman-consciousness reflected in the mind is *jiva*. *Jiva* is limited in knowledge, power and located in a place. *Jiva* is many, constituting three bodies or five sheaths that undergoes three states of experiences. The material world is manifested through a process of non-grossification and grossification.

- 2) The secondary implication is developed in three stages: Firstly, *Samanadhikaranya* or the Appositional usage, the words '*tat*' and '*tvam*' are in apposition and hence refers to the same locus. But the word-meanings are opposed to each other. The second stage is *Viseshyavisheshana sambandha* or the relation of qualified-qualifier. The word-meaning of '*tat*' and '*tvam*' cannot delimit each other being of opposed qualities. The third stage is *Lakshyalakshana sambandha*, or the relation of indicator-indicated. The exclusive and inclusive method do not fit since they either exclude the consciousness part or retain the opposed attributes. By the application of exclusive-inclusive identity knowledge is arrived. The features of '*tat*' is excluded and the features of '*tvam*' is excluded, the consciousness behind '*tat*' and '*tvam*' alone is retained which is essentially the same. Thus, one arrives at the consciousness principle that is non-dual as the true nature of the self. One who is established in this knowledge is a *Jivanmukta* who is described in the *Bhagavad Gita*, as an 'exalted soul' whose mind remains unperturbed amid sorrows, who is free from passion, fear and anger etc. He conducts himself in the society in keeping with the scriptural teachings spontaneously.