

CHAPTER – 6

‘TAT-TVAM-ASI’ IN CHĀNDOGYA UPANIṢAD AND ITS INTERPRETATION

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6.1 ‘Tat-tvam-asi’ in Chāndogya upaniṣad

6.1.1 Introduction:

The Chāndogya¹ upaniṣad² belongs to the singers³ of the Sāmaveda. It is a section of the Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa⁴ which has ten chapters⁵. Chapters three to ten in this Brāhmaṇa form the Chāndogya Upaniṣad.

Together with the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, Chāndogya Upaniṣad represents the oldest and the most classical upaniṣadic tradition. Its oldest parts may date

¹ ‘chandoga’ is the singer of the Sāman chando Sāma gāyati iti Chandogaḥ). The upaniṣad belongs to the followers of the Sāma Veda. See S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal upaniṣads*, p.335.

² The word ‘upaniṣad’ means the knowledge of Brahman, source of liberation and means to know Brahman. It is known as vedānta and serves as the important source for Vedānta philosophy.

³ They are called ‘udgātṛ’

⁴ Hence the name Brāhmaṇopaniṣad.

⁵ Paul Deussen, *sixty upaniṣads of the Veda*, p.63

back to 9C BCE⁶. Each chapter of Chāndogya Upaniṣad is an independent whole and shows the unity of contents. It contains some of the important theological and philosophical utterances of ancient Hindus⁷. This is specially seen in the sixth chapter where our specific concern lies. Hence in this chapter there is first the treatment of the context and the structure of the sixth chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. This is done to locate ‘tat-tvam-asi’. After this the justification for Madhva’s reading it as ‘atat-tvam-asi’ is discussed. The rest of the chapter deals with the interpretation of Madhva and his critique of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. The chapter under with the meaning of ‘tat-tvam-asi’ as ‘bimba-bhava’ existing between Brahman and Jīva.

⁶ Belvalkar and Ranade, The creative period, p.102

⁷ Like तत्त्वमसि (Ch.U. 6.8.7) and सदेव सोम्य इदं अग्र आसीत् (Ch.U. 6.2.1)

6.1.2 The Sixth Chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad:⁹

Context and Detailed Structure

6.1.2.1 Context

Uddālaka sent his son Śvetaketu to study the Vedas and get religious instruction as per the family tradition. Having studied for twelve years the son comes home conceited, haughty and egotistical¹⁰. He was proud of his newly acquired knowledge and thought he knew everything. The father in order to humble his son's pride asked whether Śvetaketu knew that central principle by knowing which everything would be known¹¹. Śvetaketu was ignorant of it and appealed to his father to teach it. He knew that he had not yet penetrated to the heart of the matter. The correcting instruction follows in the form of a dialogue. The father becomes the teacher; the son becomes

⁹ This chapter specifically deals with 'तत्त्वमसि'. It occurs 9 times: 6.8.7, 6.9.4, 6.10.3, 6.12.3, 6.13.3, 6.14.3, 6.15.3 and 6.16.3

¹⁰ 'mahāmanāḥ' translated as 'greatly conceited' in S. Radhakrishnan, op.cit.p. 446

¹¹ येनाश्रुतं श्रुतं भवति, अमतं मतमविज्ञातं विज्ञातमिति (Ch.U. 6.1.3)

the student. Uddālaka gives instruction on Being and the place of human person in the universe in relation to the great Being. The famous proposition: By knowing one that is the central entity), everything is known is illustrated by various illustrations. Uddālaka tells Śvetaketu: Sa ātmātattvam asi¹².

6.1.2.2 Detailed Structure¹³ of the sixth chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad:

Section One

- 6.1.1 - Uddālaka urging son Śvetaketu to study the Vedas
- 6.1.2 - Return of Śvetaketu and Uddālaka's observation of son's pride
- 6.1.3 - Uddālaka's question and Śvetaketu's humility to learn from his father.
- 6.1.4 - Clod of clay and its modification
- 6.1.5 - Nugget of gold

¹² I am keeping the text as combined deliberately to show its possibility of two divisions as shown in section 6.1.3

¹³ I follow the text and translation of Radhakrishnan, The Principal upaniṣads, pp.446 - 467

- 6.1.6 - Pair of nail scissors
- 6.1.7 - Failure of venerable men to convey truths
and the request to be instructed in the
higher truths.

Section Two

- 6.2.1 - Creation from non-being
- 6.2.2. - Doubt
- 6.2.3 - May I be many. Water from fire
- 6.2.4 - Food from water.

Section Three

- 6.3.1 - Three origins of beings
- 6.3.2 - Divinity entering into divinities and
developing into names and form
- 6.3.3 - Names and form
- 6.3.4 - The process of manifoldness

Section Four

- 6.4.1 - Distinguishing appearance from essence;
examples of water, earth etc.
- 6.4.2 - Modification is only a name arising from
speech
- 6.4.3 - Modification is only a name

- 6.4.4 - Modification is only a name
- 6.4.5 - Knowledge of great persons
- 6.4.6 - Knowledge of the great
- 6.4.7 - Manifoldness is due to three divinities

Section Five

- 6.5.1 - Food becoming threefold (faeces, flesh, mind)
- 6.5.2 - Water becoming threefold (urine, blood, breath)
- 6.5.3 - Fire becoming threefold (bone, marrow, speech)
- 6.5.4 - Summary and request for further instruction

Section Six

- 6.6.1 - Curd turning into butter
- 6.6.2 - Food becoming mind
- 6.6.3 - Water becoming breath
- 6.6.4 - Fire becoming speech
- 6.6.5 - Summary and request for further instruction

Section Seven

- 6.7.1 - 16 parts of a person. Instruction not to eat for 15 days
- 6.7.2 - Unable to understand Vedas without eating
- 6.7.3 - Eat and you will understand
- 6.7.4 - He ate and answered
- 6.7.5 - A little fire burns much
- 6.7.6 - Breath covered with food blazes up, mind consists of food, breaths consists of water and speech consists of fire

Section Eight

- 6.8.1 - The nature of sleep
- 6.8.2 - Bird tied by a string, settling down at a place where it is bound
- 6.8.3 - Hunger and thirst – Body has root in food
- 6.8.4 - All creatures have their root in Being
- 6.8.5 - Body cannot be without a root
- 6.8.6 - Merging of speech, mind and breath in the highest divinity
- 6.8.7 - Sa ātmātattvam asi!

Section Nine

- 6.9.1 - Honey and different juices
- 6.9.2 - Non-discrimination of creatures about their reaching the Being
- 6.9.3 - Whatever they are, they become Being
- 6.9.4 - Sa ātmātattvam asi

Section Ten

- 6.10.1 - Rivers reaching the sea
- 6.10.2 - Application
- 6.10.3 - Sa ātmātattvam asi

Section Eleven

- 6.11.1 - Oozing of Sap from the tree when cut
- 6.11.2 - Life sap leaving the tree
- 6.11.3 - Body without living self.
 - Sa ātmātattvamasi

Section Twelve

- 6.12.1 - Breaking the nyagrodha seed
- 6.12.2 - Subtle essence of nyagrodha
- 6.12.3 - Sa ātmātattvam asi

Section Thirteen

- 6.13.1 - Placing salt in water
- 6.13.2 - Perceiving salt by taste
- 6.13.3 - Sa ātmātattvam asi

Section Fourteen

- 6.14.1 - Blind folded person led to Gandhāra
- 6.14.2 - The need of a teacher
- 6.14.3 - Sa ātmātattvam asi

Section Fifteen

- 6.15.1 - Dying person and the merging of mind,
speech, breath and fire in the highest
Deity
- 6.15.2 - Inability to recognize
- 6.15.3 - Sa ātmātattvam asi

Section Sixteen

- 6.16.1 - Thief and touching of the hot iron axe
- 6.16.2 - If true, not burnt
- 6.16.3 - Sa ātmātattvam asi

The above detailed structure and its contents show that the sixth chapter is a connected whole and 6.8.6 refers

back to 6.4.7. There is a constant refrain of Sa ātmātvamasi which is the basic thought.

6.1.3 Madhvācārya's reading of 'atat-tvam-asi' in Chāndogya Upaniṣad

Madhvācārya's interpretation of 'tat-tvam-asi' is based on two different ways of splitting the key sentences into either sa-ātmā-tat tvam-asi' or sa ātmā--'atat-tvam-asi'. Madhva has adopted the reading 'atat-tvam-asi' in his commentary on the Chāndogya Upaniṣad¹⁴. In Gītātātparya he has taken 'atat-tvam-asi'¹⁵. Thus he has shown that preferring a particular form does not change the thrust of his theological enterprise.

The Upaniṣad itself does not contain any independently worded sentence 'tattvamasi' where 'tat' stands for Brahman and 'tvam' for the individual soul. The

¹⁴ In Viṣṇutatvta-vinirṇaya also Madhva adopts the reading 'अतत्-त्वम् – असि

¹⁵ HDVL, p-178

part wherein 'tattvamasi' occurs reads as 'ātmā tattvamasi' with 'ātmā' and 'tattvamasi' joined together.¹⁶

Actually there is no grammatical bar against Madhvācārya's word division. The Padacchedha 'Atat-tvam-asi' is based on savarnadīrgha sandhi between the final long vowel in the preceding word 'ātmā' followed by the initial short vowel of the following word 'atat'. Hence the rendering according to Madhva would be:

Sa ātmā atat tvam asi¹⁷

Further by the analysis of the nine illustrations¹⁸ occurring in the sixth chapter of Chāndogya Upaniṣad Madhva justifies his reading. Besides the reading 'atat-tvam-asi' directly and categorically conveys the truth of

¹⁶ D.N. Shanbhag, "In defense of difference", pp. 361 – 362.

¹⁷ MM, p.177

¹⁸ The nine illustrations are: A bird tied to a sting, flower-juices and the honey, rivers and the sea, tree and the sap, banyan seed, salt in water, sick man on the deathbed, blind folded person, thief and touching hot iron to prove innocence.

‘Jīveśvara-bheda’. Vyāsātīrtha justifies this in his famous work, Nyāyamṛta¹⁹.

Madhva also quotes the following verse from Sāmasaṁhitā at the end of his commentary on the sixth chapter of Chāndogya Upaniṣad to justify his reading.

Text of Sāmasaṁhitā

Sāratvāt ‘sa’ iti prokto

Jñānatvāt ‘ya’ itīritah!

Sarvasya iṣṭah ‘ityeṣa’

mānānām aṅako’nimā!!

Tat tantratvād ‘aitadāmyam’

Sa satyah sādhurūpataḥ

‘tat’ tateḥ pūrṇataśca ātmā

sādanāt ‘sa’ itīritah

Atat-tvam-asi putreti yah uktah²⁰

¹⁹ अधीनत्वस्य एव उक्त्यात् ‘अतत्’ इत्येव छेदः युक्तः

²⁰ S.C. Vasu, Chāndogya-upaniṣad with the commentary of Śrī Madhvācārya, p.410

Translation: He is called 'sa' because he is the essence (sāra). He is named 'ya' because he is all-knowledge (Jñāna). He is called 'eṣaḥ' because he is desired by all (iṣṭah). He is called 'aṇimā' because he is the impeller (aṇaka) of every devatā which presides over 'mān' or knowledge. He is called 'tat' because he pervades all. He is called aitadāmyam because he is the ruler (ātmā) of this whole universe. He is called 'Satyam' because his form is all goodness. He is called ātmā because he is full. He is called 'sa' because he destroys everything. Gautama nine times repeats to his son the phrase 'Atat tvam asi'²¹.

6.2 Interpretation of 'tat-tvam-asi'²²

6.2.1 Introduction:

Having seen 'tat-tvam-asi' in the Chandogya upaniṣad with its justification, now we shall take a look at

²¹ S.C. Vasu, Op. cit. P. 452

²² For this section I am heavily depending on BNK Sharma's views found in his 'Mahātātparya of Mahāvākyas and other Advaita śrutis.

various attempts of Madhva and his followers²³ to bring out the import of ‘tat-tvam-asi’. Madhva and his followers resort to various interpretive methods. As it is stated already in the first part whether one adopts ‘atat-tvam-asi’²⁴ or ‘tat-tvam-asi’²⁵ it does not bring any change to Madhva’s grand theological and philosophical enterprise. Madhva himself followed ‘atat-tvam-asi’ in his commentary on the Chandogya Upaniṣad and ‘tat-tvam-asi’ in Gīta-tātparya-nirṇaya. We shall see the interpretation of ‘tat-tvam-asi’ under various headings. It is quite interesting to see how Dvaita interpretation is informed by Pāṇini’s Grammar, Pūrvamīmāṃsā exegetical rules and rhetoricians’ technique of Lakṣaṇā. They also employ the popular maxims like ‘śākhācandranyāya’²⁶.

²³ Especially Vyāsatīrtha (c.1539) in his Nyāyamṛta and Jayatīrtha (c.1388) in his commentary on Madhva’s Viṣṇu-tattva-vinirmaya.

²⁴ Madhva adopts ‘atat-tvam-asi’ in Chāndogya upaniṣad-bhāṣya and Viṣṇutattvavinirṇaya.

²⁵ ‘tat-tvam-asi’ is the reading in Gītā-tātparya-nirṇaya.

²⁶ This is the maxim of the branch and the moon. As the moon, though

6.2.2 Interpretation of ‘tat-tvam-asi’ in the light of its context in the Chāndogya Upanṣad²⁷

The context shows that the purpose of Uddālaka’s upadeśa was to rid Svetaketu of pride²⁸ and awaken a sense of the presence of a power greater than everything, subsisting in all and controlling without being controlled. Uddālaka has this forthright statement:

सन्मूलाः सोम्य इमाः सर्वाः प्रजाः सदायतनाः सत्प्रतिष्ठाः²⁹

The above statement couched in Bahuvrīhi compounds³⁰ like ‘Sanmūlāḥ’ clearly points to the supreme power as the support and sustaining force of the universe. Thus the whole purpose of the upadeśa is to overcome the egoism

considerably distant from the branch is spoken of as ‘moon on the branch’ because of proximity. See Apte, The practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary, p.575.

²⁷ BNK Sharma, op.cit, p. 174

²⁸ See ‘Essentials of Daśaprakaraṇas’ p.34 सर्वान् वेदानधीत्य महामनाः अनुचानमानी स्तब्ध एयाय इति आत्मनः अन्यं अनुचानत्वादिगुणप्रदं परमविज्ञा. स्तब्धस्य पराधीनत्वज्ञापनेन स्तब्धतां निरस्य तन्निष्ठः हि अत्रोपदिश्यते।

²⁹ Ch.U. 6.8.4

³⁰ In Bahuvrīhi compound two or more nouns in apposition to each other are made to qualify another substantive which is outside the compound; see Apte, op.cit. p.697

of Śvetaketu who was afflicted with an attitude of spiritual conceit born of ignorance of the supreme power³¹

6.2.3 Interpretation based on Lakṣaṇā³²

Madhva and his followers use the concept of 'lakṣaṇā' to bring out the import of 'tat' and 'tvam'. Let us first get some idea of this 'lakṣaṇā'.³³

6.2.3.1 Characteristic of Lakṣaṇā:

In addition to their primary semantic power abhidhā words have also secondary semantic power known as lakṣaṇā. When in a given context the primary meaning of a word is unintelligible the word is credited with the secondary meaning related to the primary meaning. The famous example is: The village is on the Gaṅgā (गङ्गायां घोषः) Since the primary meaning (Village on the water) in the given context is impossible the sentence 'गङ्गायां घोषः' is

³¹ स हरिः सर्वस्यामी त्वं तु न कदापि तत् परं ब्रह्मासि इति See Ch.U.Bh. Khaṇḍārtha

³² Mahātātparya, pp. 178 - 193

³³ John Grimes, Problems and Perspectives in Religious Discourse, pp.118 – 119.

understood as गङ्गातटे घोषः (The village is on the bank of the river)

6.2.3.2 Classification of Lakṣaṇā

Lakṣaṇā is divided into three kinds:

i. Exclusive (Jahallakṣaṇā) – In this type the primary meaning is completely abandoned and the new secondary meaning is posited, e.g. The village is on the Ganges.³⁴

ii. Inclusive (ajahallakṣaṇā) – This type includes the primary meaning in addition to the secondary meaning. E.g. Protect the ghee from the crows³⁵.

The meaning of the sentence would be to protect the ghee not only from crows but also from other animals.

iii. Quasi-inclusive (jahadajahallakṣaṇā) – In this type a part of the primary meaning is abandoned and part of it is retained. e.g. ‘This is that Devadatta.’³⁶

³⁴ The implied meaning is: The village is on the bank of the Ganges

(गङ्गातटे घोषः)

³⁵ The Sanskrit version is काकेभ्यो दधि रक्ष्यताम्

³⁶ सोऽयं देवदत्तः

To arrive at the identity of Devadatta qualified by ‘this’ referring to the present time and ‘that’ referring to the past time are rejected and ‘Devadatta’ bereft of spatio-temporal qualifications is retained. Advaita Vedānta makes use of this kind of lakṣaṇā³⁷ to bring out the significance of ‘tat-tvam-asi’.

6.2.3.3 Lakṣaṇā on ‘tat’³⁸

i. Association expressed as identity:

Dvaita followers make use of an example under the Panini’s rule (4.2.63)³⁹ given by Patañjali, the great Grammarian the author of Mahābhāṣya. The example ‘vasantādhyayanam’ (spring study) does not refer to the object of study called ‘vasanta’ but the association of ‘spring-time’ with study.⁴⁰ The word ‘tat’ in ‘tat-tvam-asi’ means close association of Jīva with Brahman. This

³⁷ It is also called ‘Bhāgatyāgalakṣṇā’ (literally: part abandoning implication)

³⁸ MM. pp. 180 - 183

³⁹ The Sūtra of Pāṇini (4.2.63) reads ‘वसन्तादिभ्यश्चक्’

⁴⁰ वसन्त-सहाचरितमध्ययनं वसन्ताध्ययनम्

association of Brahman is understood as Brahman's control⁴¹.

ii. Basic relation or identity⁴² (तदाश्रितत्त्वेन तदिति व्यपदेशः)

According to Pāṇinis' Sūtra: समर्थः पदविधिः (2.1.1) the term 'samartha' in the sūtra stands for syntactic competency of words in a compound. Hence here 'samartha' means samāthāsrita-padaividhi⁴³. Such part and whole relation (aṅgāgī-bhāva) is intended by Uddālaka when he says: सन्मूलाः इमाः सर्वाः प्रजाः सदायतनाः सत्प्रतिष्ठिताः⁴⁴ Hence 'tat' means a fundamental relation of Brahman with Jīva.

iii.. Source of another expressed as identity⁴⁵ (ततो जातत्वात् तद् व्यपदेशः)

The Vedic Statement: The Brahmaṇa was his face⁴⁶ refers to the Puruṣa from whose face the Brāhmaṇa is

⁴¹ तत् साहचर्यात् तदिति व्यपदेशः।प्रसिद्धं च जीवस्य ब्रह्मसहचारित्वं द्वासुपर्णा इत्यादौ।

⁴² MM, p.180

⁴³ Compounding based on semantic competency

⁴⁴ Ch.U.6.8.4

⁴⁵ MM, p.181

produced. Similarly Jīvas owe their genesis to the Lord⁴⁷. Hence 'tat' expresses the meaning of creation understood as parādhīnaviśeṣāpti in Dvaita⁴⁸.

iv. Dependence on another expressed as identity⁴⁹

(तदाधीनत्वात् तदिति व्यपदेशः)

We have the reference to the husked rice as grain in the Vedic passage: धान्यमसि धिनुहि देवान्.⁵⁰ Mīmāṃsaka explain it as a लक्षणा based on dependence. Hence the sentence would mean: धान्याधीनोत्पत्तिके तण्डुले धान्यशब्दप्रयोगः⁵¹

This is employed in understanding the meaning of 'tat' as sanmūlāh⁵²

⁴⁶ Rv 10.90.2

⁴⁷ Since Madhva believe in eternal souls, the word genesis is taken in the sense of 'embodiment'.

⁴⁸ Parādhīnaviśeṣāpti means the acquiring of a new trait that depends on the will of the 'other' (God). This is a distinct contribution of Madhva.

⁴⁹ MM, p.181

⁵⁰ Taittirīya Saṁhitā 1.1.6.1

⁵¹ PMS, 9.1.38

⁵² existential root

v. Resemblance expressed as identity⁵³

In the Pāṇini-Sūtra- बहुगणवतुडति संख्या (1.1.23), according to Patañjali, the purpose is not to designate bahu, gaṃa, vatu, ḍati as numerals (Sāṅkhyā). The word 'Sāṅkhyā' here means 'sāṅkhyāvat' expressing similitude. Even in the world there is a tendency to equate when similarities are found. Accordingly for pūrvamīmāṃsā the sentence आदित्यो यूपः⁵⁴ (The sacrificial post is the Sun) is understood in its resemblance⁵⁵. Since Jīva resembles Brahman to a certain extent in jñāna, ānanda it is expressed as identity.

vi. 'Tat' standing for all its oblique cases.⁵⁶

According to Pāṇini sūtra 'सुपां सुलुक्' (7.1.39) the case ending of a noun can be deleted without affecting its

⁵³ MM, p. 182

⁵⁴ Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 2.1.52

⁵⁵ आदित्यो यूप इतिवत् सादृश्यार्था तु सा श्रुतिः
न स्वरूपैकता तस्य युक्तस्यापि विरुपतः
स्वातन्त्र्यापूर्णतान्नप्यतेपारतन्त्र्यो विरुपते ॥ (अनुव्याख्यान)

⁵⁶ MM, p.179

oblique case sense. Hence according to the word 'tat' has all its case senses. So this enables one to contrive the term 'tat' as⁵⁷

- a) 'तेन त्वमसि' ----- you are by Brahman
- b) 'तस्मै त्वमसि' ----- you are for his service
- c) 'तस्मात् त्वमसि' ----- you are from Brahman
- d) 'तस्य त्वमसि' ----- you are Brahman's servant
- e) 'तस्मिन् त्वमसि' ----- you are in Brahman,

6.2.3.4 Lakṣaṇā on tvam:

i. Sense of Vicinity⁵⁸

By शाखाचन्द्रन्याय 'the moon is said to be between the branches of a tree. Here the word 'शाखा' signifies 'शाखासदेश्य' (in the vicinity of the branches) In a similar manner 'tvam' means Brahman nearest to the Jīva as 'antaryāmī' (त्वत्सदेश्यं ब्रह्म)⁵⁹

⁵⁷ यच्च सुपां सुलुगित्यादि सूत्रात्तृतीयविभक्त्यादिः लुक् प्रथमैकवचनादेशो ततस्तेन त्वं तिष्ठसीति वा, ततस्त्वं जात इति वा तस्य त्वमिति वा, तस्मिन् त्वमिति वाऽर्थः

⁵⁸ MM, p. 184

⁵⁹ शाखासदेशे चन्द्रे शाखाशब्दवत् जीवान्तर्यामितया जीवसदेशे ब्रह्मणि त्वमिति व्यपदेशः

ii. As one's sustaining force:

In the statement: Brāhmaṇa is all the gods⁶⁰, the word 'Brāhmaṇa' is understood as the mainstay of all varṇas to his functions. Similarly Brahman is the sustaining force of the Jīva. Brahman is called tvam as he is the abode of the Jīvas⁶¹.

iii. Being the source of all:

The sentence 'यजमानः प्रस्तरः'⁶² (The sacrifice is called the darbha grass). Jaimini in his Mimāṃsā sūtra (1.4.23) understands it as the source⁶³. In a similar manner Brahman being the source of all is identified with the Jīva⁶⁴.

⁶⁰ ब्रह्मणो वै सर्वाः देवताः वसन्ति ।

⁶¹ यश्च ब्राह्मणो वै सर्वा देवता इत्यादिवत् जीवाश्रयत्वात् ब्रह्मणि त्वमिति व्यपदेशः

⁶² Tatittirīya Saṁhītā 1.7.4, see Sāyaṇa's Remarks: यजमानवद् यागसाधनत्वात् प्रस्तरे यजमानोत्वोपचारः PMS 1.4.23 stress its metaphorical use.

⁶³ तत् सिद्धि (pms 1.423)

⁶⁴ यजमानप्रस्तरत्वं यथा नार्थः श्रुतेरभवेत् । ब्रह्मत्यमपि जीवस्य प्रत्यक्षस्याविशेषतः ॥

Anuvyākhyāna v.36, p.4 in SMG

6.2.3.5 Spirit of 'tat-tvaṃ-asi' from the meaning of the antecedent 'aitadātmyam'⁶⁵

In the declaration of Uddālaka, 'tat-tvaṃ-asi' is preceded by 'aitadātmyam'. According to the Dvaita interpreters it stands in apposition to its consequent 'tat' relating to Brahman. Further 'aitadātmyam' is the secondary nominal derivative of aitadātmā with a suitable suffix. The derivative suffix conveys the sense of belonging to the ātman, i.e. Brahman. This is beautifully explained by Jayatīrtha⁶⁶, the famous commentator of Madhva. The sense of 'aitadātmyam' as 'belonging to' suits the context and the import of the nine illustrations used in the sixth chapter of the Chāndogya Uaniṣad.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ MM, 189 -191

⁶⁶ एतेन ऐतदात्म्यं एतत् स्वामिकमेतदीयमिति सिद्ध्यति - (VTN tikā), MM, P.189

⁶⁷ Like everything else in the entire universe Jīvātman too has the one supreme Being for his inner rules and indwelling principle (ऐतदात्म्यम्). The neuter 'tat' (pronoun) how has for its antecedent the compound 'aitadātmyam' (neuter) which provides a smooth anvaya (syntactical connection) Thus the overall Samanvaya of the whole gamut of

6.2.3.6 Illustrations revealing the meaning of ‘tat-tvam-asi’⁶⁸

According to Madhva, the nine illustrations found in the sixth chapter of Chāndogya Upaniṣad clearly bring out the aspect of difference between Jīva and Brahman⁶⁹. Let us see the explanations and interpretations of these illustrations occurring in the Upaniṣads.

i. A bird tied to a string at one end and to a peg at the other:

The bird flies here and there and at last finding no place to rest comes back to the peg and rests. In a similar manner the sentient Jīva having wandered endlessly in his dream rests near the source and engrossed in deep sleep. The bird and the rope in the illustration are compared to Jīva and Brahman respectively. As there is difference

upaniṣad in the majesty of Brahman is achieved. See BNK Sharma, Dvaita Philosophy, p.35.

⁶⁸ A.V. Nagasampige, “Viṣṇutattvavinirṇaya” tattvavāda, pp. 26 – 30.

⁶⁹ न हि शकुनिसूत्रयोः नानावृद्धरसानां नदीसमुद्रयोः जीववृक्षयोः अणिमाधानयोः लवणोदकयोः गान्धारपुरुषयोः अङ्ग प्राणानियामकयोः स्तेनपहार्ययोः ऐक्यं(VTN)

between the bird and rope, similarly there is difference between Jīva and Brahman.

ii. Nectar of different flowers collected by bees and the honey:

Bees suck the nectar of different flowers and prepare honey by mixing juices. Though all nectars mix to produce honey yet each nectar maintains its individuality even if they do not know it. Similarly Jīvas are with God inseparably maintaining their individuality.

iii. Rivers joining the sea:

Though rivers join the sea they do not lose their individuality even though they do not know it. River particles and sea particles remain separate without losing their properties. Similarly Jīvas joining Brahman retain the difference.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ ' ताः समुद्रात् समुद्रमेवापियन्ति

स समुद्रः एव भवति'

इत्यत्रापि भेद एवोत्पद्यते। अन्यथा

iv. Tree and its life giving sap:

When the living tree is cut in different places the sap goes out and the tree withers. The withering of the tree is due to the leaving of Vṛkṣa-Jīva. This vṛkṣa-jīva itself in turn is sustained by the antaryāmī Brahman. The tree is compared to Jīva and the emerging principle is compared to Brahman. The aspect of difference is clearly seen here.

v. Cutting open the Banyan seed:

Śvetaketu is asked by Uddālaka to cut open the seed of the banyan fruit progressively till he sees 'nothing'. Then the father enlightens him saying that it is by the invisible power⁷¹ hidden inside the tiny seed makes the mighty Nyagrodha come into being. Here seed is the sentient Jīva and the invisible power is Brahman. Again the illustration points to difference.

ताः समुद्र एव भवतीति व्यपदेशः स्यात् cVTN)

⁷¹ The word used is, 'añimnaḥ' (the atomic essence)

vi. Salt dissolved in Water:

Salt is present in the solution yet it is not visible to the naked eye. It can be felt only by taste. As salt is in salt solution Brahman is immanent in the whole universe including the Jīvas. The relation between Brahman and Jīva is same as the salt and the water.

vii. Blind-folded person:⁷²

A wayfarer who is blindfolded is led by a kindly traveler to his right destination. The struggling wayfarer is the Jīva; the kindly traveler is the guru. The individual who is enabled to see God by Guru's guidance is different from the goal he has to reach. Thus the thesis of difference is clearly illustrated.

viii. The thief and the touching of red hot iron:

The thief who has stolen in order to prove his innocence has to touch the red hot iron. If he is innocent he is not burnt. A Jīva who is not Brahman becomes a thief if

⁷² The illustration is named 'गान्धारेभ्यो अभिनद्धक्षः पुरुषः'

he thinks he is one with God. Advocating and meditating on non-difference is punishable. The failure to accept difference is a robbery⁷³.

ix. The sick person and the ability to recognize relatives:

As long as the power of God animates the sick person his senses would be alert and he is able to recognize his relatives who are beside his death-bed. This illustration speaks of the overall control of God on Jīva.

Thus Madhvācārya has brought out import of ‘Tattvamasi’ as ‘difference’ between Brahman and Jīva by interpreting the nine illustrations.

6.3 Interpretation of ‘Tat-tvam-asi’ by Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja and Madhva’s Critique

⁷³ The words, apahārṣīt, steyamākarṣīt clearly indicate difference HDVL, pp, 176 - 177

6.3.1 'Tat-tvam-asi' according to Śaṅkara⁷⁴

According to Śaṅkara the words 'tat' (that) referring Brahman and 'tvam' (thou) referring to the Jīva, should not be understood in the literal meanings (vācyārtha). In vācyārtha the word 'thou' means "consciousness connected with the internal *organ* (antaḥkaraṇa) and illuminated as object (ālambama) of the word "I". The word 'that' means that which has māyā as its limitation (Īśvara) which is the cause of the universe, omniscient etc." Since the meanings are incompatible one has to resort to the implied or the secondary meaning (lakṣyārtha). Śaṅkara uses a special kind of lakṣaṇā called jahat-ajahat-lakṣaṇā or bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇā. The explanation of this type of lakṣaṇā we have already seen. In the process of applying this kind of lakṣaṇā one "leaves out the part consisting of the internal organ and the reflection of consciousness from the direct meaning of the word 'thou'

⁷⁴ M.A. Devasia, some Hermeneutical Reflections on Religious speech Acts, pp, 66 – 67.

and also leaves out that part consisting of 'māyā' and the reflection of consciousness from the direct meaning of the word 'that'. Thus the only possible meaning of 'tat-tvam-asi' (thou-art-that) according to Śaṅkara would be: the one indivisible entity with its existence-knowledge-bliss having no connection either with māyā or the internal organ or with the reflection of consciousness in either form”

Hence the focus of Śaṅkara is on identity between 'tat' and 'tvam' in its implied meaning.

6.3.2 Rāmānuja on 'tat-tvam-asi'⁷⁵

For Rāmānuja, “both the terms 'that' and 'thou' are in mutual predication and signify Brahman alone under two aspects. The term 'that' refers to Brahman, who is the cause of the universe, the abode of all auspicious qualities, the flowers and the changeless one; where as the term 'thou' signifies that same Brahman who , because he

⁷⁵ J.B. Carman, The Theology of Ramanuja, p.124

hs is the inner controller of finited selves, has these services, alongwith their bodies, as His modes”

Thus Rāmānuja in his interpretation of ‘tat’tvam – asi’ strikes a middle course between dvaita and advaita with his doctrine of viśiṣṭādvaita⁷⁶. Further according to Rāmānuja ‘tattvamasi’ is not the main proposition but an extension of the earlier pronouncement ऐतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वम्⁷⁷.

6.3.3 Critique of Śaṅkara by Madhva⁷⁸

Śaṅkara reduces the meaning of ‘tat-tvam-asi’ to a bare consciousness without any characteristic. The procedure adopted by him in interpretation empties the constituent parts by their denotative content leaving only a hazy notion of pure consciousness. A bare ‘identity’ without reference to any correlates makes no sense.

Further resort to lakṣaṇā is optional for Madhva. By taking the reading ‘atat-tvam-asi- he has dispensed with

⁷⁶ चित्-अचित्-विशिष्ट ब्रह्मणः अद्वैतम्

⁷⁷ BNK Sharma, Dvita Philosophy, p.50

⁷⁸ MM, pp. 163 - 175

lakṣaṇā. Even if one were to insist on ‘tat-tvam-asi’ dvaita interpretation manages with a single lakṣaṇā on any one of the terms at a time. This we have seen already. By applying lakṣaṇā on both ‘tat’ and ‘tvam’ simultaneously advaita incurs the fault of ‘Kalpanā-gaurava’⁷⁹. In the light of the context and illustrations of ‘tat-tvam-asi’ in Chāndogya Upaniṣad, Madhva further explains the untenability of Śaṅkara’s interpretation.

6.3.4 Critique of Rāmānuja by Madhva⁸⁰

According to Rāmānuja Brahman exists in manifold forms as sentient souls and insentient matter. Thus there are both distinction and identity. Madhva criticizes the Rāmānuja system for advocating mutually opposed relations among the three fundamental entities (i.e. God, sentient soul and insentient matter). Further there is a logical difficulty and impossibility of making the

⁷⁹ Greatness of effort in expression. Dvaita can manage the interpretation of any term in ‘tattvamasi’ with a single lakṣaṇā at a time.

⁸⁰ MM,p xviii

Independent real actually transform⁸¹ itself into souls and matter without loss of authentic being and nature. Since Rāmānuja advocates real transformation of Brahman into the world and souls, an illusory transformation of Brahman into the world and souls an illusory transformation⁸² has no place.

6.4 Madhva's analogy of 'Bimba-Pratibimba' highlighting the meaning of 'atat-tvam-asi'

The meaning of 'atat-tvam-asi' is succinctly summed up by Madhva in his analogy of 'bimba-pratibimba' (prototype – reflection).

This is derived by Madhva from Ṛgveda 7.47.18.

‘ Rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpo babhūva

Tadasya rūpaṁ praticakṣaṇāya’

(With reference to each form of Jīva He (the Lord) becomes the original form. His form is for this one (.e. the

⁸¹ It is called Brahmapariṇāmavāda

⁸² This is known as vivartavāda

Jīva) to perceive.)⁸³ By this analogy Brahman is the 'bimba' and 'Jīva' is the 'pratibimba'. As 'pratibimba' (reflection) owes its existence to 'bimba' (prototype) so Jīva is dependent on Brahman. "Madhva emphasizes Jīva's dependence on Brahman for its existence, consciousness and activities for all the time".⁸⁴ Brahman is the sole independent source of all reality.

Madhva is careful to distinguish his understanding of 'bimba-pratibimba' analogy from Advaita. Pratibimba is not a false reflection. According to Śāṅkara the Jīva is a false appearance or projection of Brahman on the screen of avidya (ignorance). Hence the relation can be transcended which is not the case in Madhva. The relation of 'bimba-pratibimbabhāva' between God and soul is a sacred and inviolable relation true for all time. This relation goes to the very core of Jīva constituting essence and could never

⁸³ PM, p 306

⁸⁴ PM, p 307

be annulled or transcended.⁸⁵ ‘Pratibimbatva’ is not a false relation which the Jīvas are to be ashamed of and should try to shake off as in Śaṅkara. In fact, Mokṣa (liberation) is the complete realization of metaphysical dependence on and similarity to the Supreme.⁸⁶

Madhva wants to drive home through the analogy of ‘bimba-pratibimba’ three truths concerning the nature of relation between God and soul.⁸⁷

1. The finite spiritual being is similar to Viṣṇu.
2. It is completely distinct from Viṣṇu.
3. It is radically dependent on Viṣṇu.

6.5 Conclusion

Madhva’s interpretation of ‘atat-tvam-asi’ emphatically brings out the significance of difference. The methods of interpretation (context, lakṣaṇā, illustrations, Padacchedha, aitadātmyam, critique of Śaṅkara and

⁸⁵ ibid

⁸⁶ ibid

⁸⁷ I.Puthiadam, Viṣṇu, the ever free, p.230

Rāmānuja and the analogy of 'bimba-pratibimba') highlight the aspect of difference. 'Atat-tvam-asi' is a metaphysical statement of relation. It is a metaphysical relation of radical dependence of Jīva on Brahman. Though in certain respects there is similarity,⁸⁸ the difference and distinction is clearly stated by Madhva through his interpretation of 'tat-tvam-asi'.

⁸⁸ PM, p.318