Introduction

The āvaraṇa (veil) shrouding an object is removed by vṛttivāyāpti alone. Brahman too is veiled by āvaraṇa and hence Vedānta Acharyas admit vṛttivāyāpti even in the case of brahmajñāna. In the last essay we had seen how brahmakāraṇa (the thought ‘aham brahma smi’) destroys the veil of ignorance covering Brahman.

This essay will focus primarily on phalavyāpti in the context of brahmajñāna. The present analysis will help us ascertain that phalavyāpti - which is necessary and unavoidable for viśayajñāna - is redundant and inadmissible in brahmajñāna.

Phalavyāpti Inadmissible

Phalavyāpti leads to objective knowledge - viśayajñāna, wherein the perceiver subject remains distinct from the perceived object. For instance, in the phalavyāpti generated knowledge ‘aham ghaṭan i jānāmi – I know the pot’, the ‘knower Self’ is seen to be different from the ‘known pot’.

But the knowledge ‘aham brahmāsmi – I am Brahman’ - which alone is termed ‘brahmajñāna’ - is not of the same nature as viśayajñāna. Herein it is essential for the difference between the

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1 We perceive inert objects through the dual-process of vṛttivāyāpti and phalavyāpti. The pervasion of the object by the antahkarāṇa-mode is ‘vṛttivāyāpti’ and the illumination of the object by the ‘phala’ or ‘cidābhāsa’ is termed ‘phalavyāpti’. Refer ‘Brahmakāraṇa-vrtti-I’ which appeared in the June 2005 issue of Tapovan Prasad.

2 Refer to Brahmakāraṇa-vrtti-II in the July 2005 issue of Tapovan Prasad.
knower Self and the known Brahman to vanish, since the Self is non-different from Brahman. Hence phalavyāpti, which presupposes and requires the distinction of the knower and known, is inadmissible in brahmajñāna.

**Phalavyāpti Redundant**

Consider a luminous lamp covered by a cloth and kept in a dark room. To see the lamp one has to just remove the cloth veiling it. Since the lamp is by nature self-revealing (i.e. makes itself evident without the aid of any extraneous light), there is no need to further illumine the lamp with another light source.

Brahman is of the nature of Consciousness (cit) and is svayamprakāṣa (Self-effulgent or Self-revealing) like the lamp in the illustration. To see the Self no other light is required. Just as the lamp in the illustration shines by itself and makes itself evident with the mere removal of the cloth veiling it, so too, the effulgent Self reveals itself when its veil of ignorance (āvaraṇa) is merely removed by the brahmākāra-vṛtti (vṛttivyāpti).

While an inert object like a pot requires both (1) removal of āvaraṇa (veil) by vṛttivyāpti and (2) the illumination of the object by phalavyāpti, in order to be known, Brahman requires only the removal of āvaraṇa (veil) by vṛttivyāpti. Phalavyāpti is redundant because of the Self-effulgent (Self-revealing) nature of the Self. This is made clear by Swami Vidyaranya in Pañcadaśī (verse 7.92):

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बहुप्यज्ञाननाथाय वृत्तिव्याप्तिसपक्षिता ।
स्वयंसुर्मुक्तपञ्चावख्मास उपस्थिते ॥
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3 The Self alone is svayamprakāṣa (Self-effulgent or Self-revealing) in the true sense of the term. Even the lamp, to reveal itself, requires the perceiving eye. The eye too needs the presence of a mind in order to be known. The mind in turn depends on the Self to illumine it. In this way the external lamp, the eye and the mind, can be known only in the presence of something other than themselves. Hence the statement that 'the lamp is self-effulgent' is true only in a secondary sense, by courtesy (upacāra). Unlike the lamp, the senses and the mind, the Self is truly Self-effulgent. It reveals itself even in the absence of the lamp, even when the senses are defective and the mind absent in the state of deep-sleep.
In the knowledge of Brahman, vrttivaypti is necessary to remove ignorance; but, as Brahman is Self-effulgent, there is no role herein for the cidabhäsa.

Cidabhäsa Overwhelmed

The cidabhäsa is only a mere reflection of the Self. Not only is the cidabhäsa not required to know the Self, but it is utterly overwhelmed by the effulgence of the Self. Just as the shining stars are utterly invisible in the brilliance of the sun by day, just as the flickering light of a firefly is wiped out by the effulgence of the midday sun, so too, the cidabhäsa pales into insignificance, while in the proximity of the overwhelming brightness of the Self.

In Sarvavedantasiddhântasârasaṅgraha (verses 801-803), Sri Sankaracharya clarifies this point:

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\begin{align*}
\text{tapovan prasad} \\
\text{37}
\end{align*}
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\begin{align*}
\text{Just as a small lamp is incapable of revealing the sun, so too the cidabhäsa present in the vrtti is incapable of revealing the Self-effulgent Supreme Brahman. It is as though one would hold a tiny lamp in order to throw light upon the mid-day sun - its light is overwhelmed by the brilliance of the sun.}
\end{align*}
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\[4\] The effulgence of the Self is not to be imagined like the effulgence of a bright object like an incandescent lamp or the dazzling sun. It is most bright in the sense that Its presence is vivid.

Tapovan Prasad
Is there Advaitahāni?

From the above discussion it becomes evident that the veil of ignorance covering Brahman is destroyed by brahmākāraavyṛtti and that cidābhāsa is neither required nor competent to illumine Brahman as it is overwhelmed by the supreme effulgence of Brahman.

But this scenario seems to engender duality for we are left with three entities:
1. Brahman (whose āvarana has been removed)
2. Brahma-kāraavyṛtti (which has destroyed Brahman’s āvarana) and
3. Cidābhāsa (which has been overwhelmed by the effulgence of Brahman).

Advaita Vedānta declares that Brahman alone is true and that there is nothing else apart from Brahman – ‘neha nānāsti kiñcana’. How then can both the brahmākāraavyṛtti and cidābhāsa exist coeval and coequal with Brahman? Does it not unsettle (hāni) the fundamental doctrine of non-duality (advaita)?

The following analysis shall reveal that once the veil of ignorance covering Brahman is destroyed, both brahmākāraavyṛtti and cidābhāsa cease to exist and all that remains is the one indivisible Brahman. Hence there is no issue of ‘advaitahāni’ at all.

End of Brahma-kāraavyṛtti

The purpose of brahmākāraavyṛtti is merely to remove the veil of āvarana shrouding Brahman. When the veil of āvarana is removed, at that very moment of direct experience (aparokṣa-
nubhūti) of Brahman, ajñāna is destroyed and its effect (inert world) falsified. Brahmākāraṇvatī also falls under the category of ‘jaḍaprapañca’, for it is just a mode of the inert antaḥkarana, and hence it is also destroyed. Swami Sadananda in Vedanta Sāra clarifies this point:

“When the threads constituting a piece of cloth are all burnt, the entire cloth itself is burnt; so too when ajñāna (ignorance), the cause of all (jaḍaprapañca), is removed, all the effects arising from it will disappear, and the brahmākāraṇvatī also, because of its falling within that sphere (of jaḍaprapañca), will be destroyed” ⁵.

Thus brahmākāraṇvatī dies the very moment it strikes the death knell to ignorance and its effects. The concept of brahmākāraṇvatī ending itself while enabling the removal of ajñāna is traditionally explained with the following examples:

1. Katakaraṇojavat – like the katakaraja: Katakaraṇa or katakarenū (kataka - dust) is the powdered kataka-nut. Its action is similar to that of alum. It was used in ancient India to clean muddy water. This katakaraja when added to muddy water attaches itself to the suspended mud and dirt in the water, becomes denser and then settles down along with the water impurities. The water is then decanted and used.

   The katakaraja is as extraneous to water as mud and dirt are. Yet, when added to the impure water it destroys the impurities and destroys itself also. In the same way, the brahmākaraṇvatī also, while destroying ajñāna and falsifying the whole jaḍaprapañca, destroys itself and what is left is the pure Brahman alone.⁶

2. Dāru-mathana-janita-agnivat – like the fire which has been produced by the churning of the wood: For ritualistic purposes fire was produced by churning the aranis (two hollowed out wooden pieces) with a wooden rod. The fire that

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⁵ Tādā paṭākāraṇatantudate paṭādahavad aklakāraṇa’jñāne badhitī sati tuṅkārayasya akhilāsaṃ badhitatvād tadantarbhūtakhandākāraṇātī citaṃ vṛtthāḥ api badhitā bhavati. (Vedānta Sāra)
⁶ kṛtvā jñānaḥ svayam naśyai jalaṁ katakareṇucat – Atma-bodha (verse 5) of Sankaracharya.
was thus produced would then be transferred to the samits (sacrificial faggots) in the homakuṇḍa. This fire burns the samits and while doing so completely exhausts itself.

In much the same way, brahmākāravṛtti also dies while ‘burning’ ajñāna and the entire inert world.

(3) Udarāstha-duṣṭajala-sāntyarthā-pīta-tapta-jala-vat – like the warm water drunk for easing the discomfort created by the ‘bad water’ present in the stomach: When there is discomfort in the stomach due to undigested food and water, Ayurvedic physicians prescribe drinking warm water. The warm water causes the patient to vomit the entire ‘bad’ contents of the stomach and in that very process of vomiting, the warm water is also thrown out. The person then returns to his earlier state of good health.

The action of warm water in the above analogy resembles the function of brahmākāravṛtti. It does away with the ignorance ailing the individual and in that very process it is also destroyed, restoring us ultimately to our essential nature of good ‘health’.

End of Cidābhāsa

All reflections co-exist with their reflecting medium. The reflected face – though originating from the object face (bimba) – exists as long as the mirror exists and disappears the moment the mirror is broken. The general principle governing reflections can be summarised as: ‘darpānābhāve pratibimbābhāvah – in the absence of the reflecting medium there cannot be any reflection’.

The cidābhāsa (or phala) is ‘pratibimbacaitanya’ i.e. the Supreme Consciousness reflected in the vṛttī. Similar to the case of the reflected face, the cidābhāsa’s existence and non-existence are

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7 Sri Ramana Maharshi explains the death of brahmākāravṛtti with a simile: In the burning ghat a long stick is used to facilitate the burning of the corpse. In the very process of assisting, the stick too becomes charred. No one brings that charred stick home. The vestiges of the stick are also thrown into the same fire that destroyed the body and the stick too is thus reduced to ashes. In the above analogy the fire is Self-Knowledge, the corpse is ajñāna and the stick is the brahmākāra vṛttī.
governed by the presence and absence of its reflecting medium viz., the antahkarana-vrtti. As long as the vrtti is, the cidabhasa will have to choicelessly exist and when the vrtti dies the cidabhasa obviously ceases to exist.

In the preceding sections of this essay we have already seen that even at the moment of vrtryapti i.e. when the brahmakaravrtti envelops Brahman, the cidabhasa that rests in the brahmakaravrtti becomes overpowered by the effulgence of Brahman. But the very next moment when the brahmakaravrtti is destroyed – because of the destruction of ignorance – that very instant the cidabhasa too ceases to exist for the cidabhasa’s existence is coeval with that of the vrtti, its reflecting medium. The cidabhasa, so to say, ‘merges back into Brahman’ – the source of its origin. Swami Sadananda in Vedanta Sāra explains this,

“The cidabhasa will lapse into Brahman Itself, when its conditioning of brahmakaravrtti is no longer there – as the reflection of a person’s face is resolved into the face when its conditioning of the mirror is broken.”

**No Advaitahāni**

Thus, since neither brahmakaravrtti nor cidabhasa exist after the Knowledge of the Self, there is no question of there being three ultimate principles (paramārtha vāstū) – Brahman, brahmakaravrtti and cidabhasa. Hence there is no duality after Knowledge. All that remains at aparokṣa-ñubhūti is the one indivisible Brahman – ‘ekam eva advitiyam’. There is no question of ‘advaitahāni’ at all.

**Resolution of Contradiction**

The concepts of vrtryapti and phalavyapti help us to resolve an evident contradiction that is seen between the Upaniṣadic statements that postulate Brahman becoming an object of the

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mind and those which deny the same. Consider the following sets of sentences:

I. Statements that posit Brahman being an object of the mind:

1. “manasā eva anudraṣṭāvyaṃ – The Self is to be seen through the mind alone”. (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.4.19)
2. “manasā eva āptavyaṃ - The Self is to be attained through the mind alone”. (Kaṭhopaniṣad 2.1.11)
3. “dṛṣyate tvagyayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ - But by the seers of subtle things, He is seen through a single pointed and fine intellect”. (Kaṭhopaniṣad 1.3.12)

II. Statements that deny Brahman being an object of the mind:

1. “yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha – Failing to reach Which, words turn back along with the mind.” (Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.9.1)
2. “yanmanasā na manute – That which one does not comprehend with the mind.” (Kena Upaniṣad 1.6)
3. “avijñātām vijñatām vijñatamavijñatām – It is unknown to those who know well and known to those who do not know.” (Kena Upaniṣad 2.3)

The Amṛtabindu Upaniṣad (verse 9) speaks of the Reality as both ‘known’ and ‘unknown’ in almost the same breath: “aprameyamanādin ca yajñātvā mucyate budhah – It is unknown and without beginning – knowing which, a wise person gets liberated”.

This palpable contradiction is resolved when we take into account the fact that the first set of sentences is true from the standpoint of vṛtti vyāpti, wherein one accepts the pervasion of Brahman by antahkaraṇa, while the second set of sentences which deny Brahman becoming an object of the mind, is equally valid from the standpoint of phalavyāpti, for Brahman never becomes an object of the cidābhāsa that is present in the brahmakaravṛtti.
In *Sarvavedānta-siddhāntasaṁgraha* (verse 807), Sri Sankaracharya clarifies this point:

> अत एव मर्यदा वृत्तिवाप्यतर्थं वर्तनः सताम्।
> न फलविवाप्यता तेन न विरोधः परस्परम्॥

That is, 

> atā eva mataṁ vṛttiyāpyatvam vastunāḥ satāṁ,
> na phalavīpyatā tena na virodhah parasparam.

The learned therefore hold that *Brahman* is pervaded by *vṛtti* but not so by the *cidābhāsa*. Consequently, there is no mutual contradiction in the statements of the *Sruti*.

But for *vṛttiyāpti* and *phalavyāpti*, the contradiction between declarations that postulate *Brahman* becoming the object of mind and those which deny the same emphatically, would remain unresolved.

**Conclusion**

*Ajñāna* (ignorance) has been the perennial source of all our miseries by being the very cause of *saṁsāra* - the cycle of transmigration. This *ajñāna* is put to naught by *brahmākāra-vṛtti* alone and hence *brahmākāra-vṛtti* is the direct cause (*sākṣātkāraṇa*) of Realisation. Till one attains Realisation one has to practise 1. *śravaṇa* (listening), 2. *manana* (reflection), 3. *nididhyāśana* (contemplation) and 4. *samādhi* (absorption).

In the following essays we shall take up each of these *sādhana*ś and discuss their nature, purpose and importance in *Vedāntic sādhanā*.

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**Shraddhanjali**

**Sri K.K. Vijayakumar**, who served Chinmaya Mission, Tattamangalam for more than 17 years, passed away on May 15 after a heart surgery. He served as a Secretary for 7 years and remained an active worker till his deteriorating health dictated a more relaxed lifestyle. The Chinmaya Family will miss him in the years to come.