



# Knowledge and Action in Non-Dualistic Vedānta: The Incongruity

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## Abstract

Non-dualistic Vedānta insists on the importance of knowledge rather than action for attaining liberation. Knowledge is regarded as the direct and immediate means of liberation. The cause of the bondage is ignorance (*avidyā*) and the latter can be removed by knowledge. Non-dualistic Vedānta advocates that the individual is ignorant of the truth that his Self is none other than the *Brahman* and gets involved in the chain of transmigration. Knowledge of the Self leads to liberation. However, this position leads to a debate between Non-dualistic Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā School of thought with reference to understanding whether knowledge itself is a mental action. The objective of the present paper is to examine whether knowledge can be regarded as a mental action.

**Keywords:** Non-dualistic Vedānta, Mīmāṃsā School, Action and Liberation

## 1. Introduction

In Non-dualistic Vedānta (hereafter NDV) of Śāṅkara, the realisation of one's Self (soul or *ātman*) as the universal Self (*Brahman*)<sup>i</sup> is the ultimate goal of human life. This realisation takes place through knowledge alone. The realisation is also expressed as realisation of the true nature of the Self. Knowledge is regarded as the direct and immediate means of liberation. Action occupies secondary importance in the realisation of Self. In fact, the action is

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projected to be opposed to knowledge. Actions, by causing attachment to the objects of the world, run under ignorance and act as an obstacle in the realisation of Self. In his commentary on Bhagavadgītā Śāṅkara writes that action is woven out of ignorance while knowledge removes the clutches of ignorance.

Discriminative knowledge is enveloped by ignorance. Thereby the ignorant mortal creatures in samsāra are deluded and think “I act, I cause to act, I shall enjoy, I cause to enjoy,” and so on. When the unwisdom by which the mortals are enveloped and deluded, is destroyed by wisdom or discriminative knowledge of the Self, then, as the sun illuminates all objects, so wisdom illuminates the whole of the Knowable, the Supreme Reality. (Śāṅkara, 1977, p. 16)

All the realistic schools of Indian Philosophy define knowledge as a revelation of some object (Mohanty, 1979).<sup>ii</sup> Knowledge reveals the object present in the place. Knowledge in the present context is defined as cognition that generates in the right way, i.e., right or valid cognition of an object. While action is defined as any physical or mental activity intended to attain the desired object. According to NDV, liberation is not a state or product to be achieved through activity, it is neither *heya* or *upadheya*<sup>iii</sup> but simply natural, unchangeable and eternal; it is simply cognition (*jñāna*) or experience of the Universal Self. No specific type of activity is needed to achieve liberation since it is not the result of any activity or devotion. Even, it cannot be asserted that knowledge brings liberation. Knowledge just removes ignorance and the Self shines forth. Just as the presence of a chair in a dark room cannot be apprehended by a person, similarly the Universal Self inside the individual is not recognised by him because of the darkness created by limiting adjuncts like mind-senses and body. As soon as the veil is removed, the person comes to know the real. Knowledge is the revelation of ‘what exists’ while action is directed towards what is good or bad and what is worth achieving. NDV aims at knowledge of the real, not only knowledge but experience of the real. Knowledge is quite different from action as action is concerned with the attainment of the desired object while knowledge is concerned with the revelation of the object. NDV aims at revelation

of Self which is possible with knowledge alone; consequently, knowledge is said to be different from action. Knowledge and action are directed towards different ends and occupy different nature. But the philosophical problem is: if knowledge is the only means of liberation and knowledge is opposed to the action, then, is not knowledge itself a mental action?

The above debate has been aptly raised by Śaṅkara in his work, *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya* (Tattu samanvayāt, 1/1/4) wherein the pūrvapakṣa, i.e., Mīmāṃsā is taken up for due consideration and logical scrutiny. Mīmāṃsā has a position that all the Vedic statements are action-oriented or they induce into action – *āmnāyasya kriyārthatvāt ānarthakyaṃ atadarthānām*, viz., all the Vedic sentences are meaningful because of their virtue of inducement into action. Upon the issue of the dichotomy of knowledge and action, Mīmāṃsā argues – *nanu jñānaṃ nāma mānasī kriyā*, viz., knowledge too is a mental action. Responding to this position, Śaṅkara argues by pointing out a significant distinction between knowledge and action. Knowledge is object-oriented – *vastu tantra*, whereas action is doer oriented – *puruṣa tantra*. Thus action depends upon the choice and desire of the agent. The present paper attempts to examine the epistemological foundations of the above debate and to evaluate the logical tenability of the above positions.

## 2. The Distinction between Knowledge and Action

The aim of NDV is to inquire into the nature of *Brahman* and *Brahmajñāsa*. It aims at not only inquiring but also prescribing a way for realising one's Self as absolute and non-dual. This inquiry is quite different from inquiry into what is to be sought or what is to be discarded, what is good or bad, what is desirable or to be attained and what is undesirable. The latter inquiry according to Mīmāṃsā, is the inquiry into *Dharma* - the '*dharmajñāsa*.' NDV argues for the realisation of the Self by means of knowledge while Mīmāṃsā holds that it is action which brings beatification. For Mīmāṃsā, there is hierarchy and a necessary connection between *dharmajñāsa* and *brahmajñāsa* (the enquiry into *Brahman*). In his commentary on *Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya* (hereafter BSB), Śaṅkara enters into a debate with Mīmāṃsā that knowledge of the *Brahman* is not a result of action. For NDV, the scriptures are the major

source of knowledge of the *Brahman*, the supreme reality. But, scriptural passages apparently prescribe rituals advocating action or injunction. Then what role does the action have in realisation of the real? Does action have a role in attainment of liberation at all? To this, the response of NDV is negative; injunctions do not bring knowledge. In simple words, knowledge is not subservient to the injunction. On the contrary, Mīmāṃsā School of thought holds that the Vedas are indicative of injunctions only. Each and every word in the Vedas are meant for action and if one believes in Veda then one has to be a believer in injunctions. Jaimini sūtras hold: “As action is the purport of the Vedas, whatever does not refer to action is without a purpose” (Śaṅkara, 1960, p.17). Action or *dharma* is the driving force of the universe. It holds that just as a man has to perform certain rituals or sacrifices in order to attain the desired end (for instance *agnihotra* is to be performed for attaining heaven); similarly in order to attain immortality one has to enjoin on the acquisition of the knowledge of *Brahman*.

There are two paths leading to liberation: the path of action, i.e., *karmakāṇḍa* and the path of knowledge, i.e., *jñānakāṇḍa*. Both the paths are meant for different goals. The *karmakāṇḍa* is directed towards fulfillment of duty while *jñānakāṇḍa* is directed towards the *jñāna* of already existent *Brahman*. For the knowledge of the *Brahman*, nothing is to be fulfilled except removal of ignorance which veils the *Brahman* from the individual and this ignorance can be removed with the help of knowledge alone. Knowledge brings liberation which is eternal while action produces the results which are transitory in their nature. It leads to the view that the result of the action is altogether different from the result of knowledge. Through action one attains some object (especially empirical object of desire)iv but *Brahman* is not to be attained, it is already existent which has to be revealed or realised and not to be achieved. Most importantly, the result of every action is transitory and if liberation is said to be the product of action, then it would be of a superior type of transitory fruit of action. But in NDV, liberation is eternal, so to regard it as transitory is to contradict the scriptural statement that liberation is eternal. Thus, liberation could not be and is not the product of action. Action is totally different from liberation (which is said to be of the nature of intuition of *Brahman*). Contemplation of *Brahman* brings about intuitive knowledge of the nature of

*Brahman*. But such an intuition of *Brahman* does not require action at its means because, means must be suitable to the end, but the nature of the means (action) is entirely different from the end (liberation). Action produces the following results:

1. Reaching or getting somewhere (*āpti*)
2. Producing something (*utpatti*)
3. Purifying (*samskāra*)
4. Modifying (*vikāra*)
5. Refinement (*shodan*)

None of these seems to have any application for liberation. Liberation is realising one's self as *Brahman* and it is not to be reached somewhere else, since *Brahman* is not away from individual self, but is our own Self (*ātman*). Secondly, *Brahman* is not a product which is to be produced or obtained, on the other side of the coin *Brahman* is all-pervading like *ākāśa* and every individual self possess it in himself or herself as his/her own nature. *Brahman*-intuition is not something which is to be modified. If the self is liable to be modified by action, it would mean that it is not eternal, and in that case, scriptural statement that "it is said to be unmodifiable" (Śaṅkara, 1960, p. 25) would be contradicted, which is not desirable. Again, liberation is not said to be the result of refinement, since refinement includes either addition of some attribute or removal of some blemishes, but liberation is of the nature of *Brahman* (which is attribute-less and eternally pure) and to which nothing can be added nor anything can be removed (Śaṅkara, 1960). So, liberation is not the result of any of the above. But the opponent raises an objection that if liberation is just a revelation of *Brahman* upon removal of ignorance, just as in case of removal of dust from the mirror, it becomes manifest. Similarly, liberation results from process of refinement by some sort of action. But Śaṅkara holds that the Self can never be an object to any sort of action on it since the nature of action is such that it always leads to change or modification into which it abides. But the Self is bereft of any modification or refinement. It shows that the nature of action is quite different from nature of knowledge and hence that of

liberation. There is no other reason which shows that liberation can be connected with action.

### 3. Is Knowledge Mental Action?

According to NDV, every action which we perform in life is under the realm of error. So, how can an action performed under error take us out of error? Since action is performed by the embodied self as an agent woven by *avidyā*, it gives rise to superimposition (*adhyāsa*). Superimposition means attributing the property of one thing on the other. The individual self under *avidyā* (ignorance) superimposes the attributes like mind, sense and body on the Self and becomes finite, i.e., limited in power, knowledge and other respects. The individual is subject to pain, pleasure on account of performance of actions and is caught up in transmigratory existence. Every action involves duality "I am the one doing the action" and "let this be mine"<sup>v</sup>. The first entrenches the idea that one's identity resides in the empirical agent, this being the manner of intensifying the superimposition of the Self onto the not-self (mind-senses and body), while second ascribes empirical attributes and superimposes the not-self on the Self, which is thus subject to qualifications, modifications, and gets involved in the transmigratory existence. Action can at best be described as operating under the realm of *avidyā* (Śaṅkara, 1960)<sup>vi</sup> and binding a man to the chain of transmigration. While knowledge of discrimination between the self and not-self breaks the chain of transmigration. According to NDV, *to know the Brahman is to become Brahman*. *Munḍaka Upanishad says: "He who knows Brahman became Brahman"*(Śaṅkara, 1960, p. 23). *As Brahman is an already existing entity, knowing Brahman does not involve an act like a ritualistic act. When avidyā or nescience is destroyed through knowledge of the Self, Brahman manifests itself, just as a rope manifests itself when the illusion of the snake is removed. As Brahman is one's very inner Self, one cannot attain it by any action. It is realised as one's own Atman when the ignorance is annihilated.*

NDV advocates the incommensurability between knowledge and action. Knowledge is not a mental action. The process of Self-realisation in NDV involves meditation, contemplation and intuition of the Self; these processes are indeed mental. Meditation

involves concentration of mind by distracting it from the external objects. This concentration of mind is a kind of activity, though of mind. In BSB, Śaṅkara writes that “action is of course that which is enjoined, independent of the nature of anything and is dependent on the operation of the mind of a man, for instance, the following passages viz, for whatever divinity an oblation is taken up one should meditate on the divinity while reciting *vāshat*. Let him meditate on *sāndhya* etc. Though Meditation or reflection is mental, it is yet possible for a man to do it or not to do it or do it in any other way because it solely depends upon a man” (Śaṅkara, 1960, p. 26). From this assertion of Śaṅkara, it is clear that meditation is a mental action. But if it is mental action, it implies that liberation is the result of action because liberation takes place through intense meditation. To this, Śaṅkara responds that no doubt meditation, contemplation, etc., is mental action, as action is that which depends on an agent’s will. Actions are voluntary and depend on the agent’s choice. But knowledge has no connection with individual’s will and is concerned with existing object alone. An object can be known by right means of knowledge and right means of knowledge has concern with the object itself. It shows the dissimilarity between knowledge and action. Knowledge of an object is concerned only with the things or objects as they actually exist and it is not possible to generate knowledge of an object or not to generate it or generate it in another way because knowledge entirely depends on the object itself and has no connection with an individual’s choice. But action requires will of an agent. For instance, a person may chant *mantra* two times a day or one time or may not chant at all. Similarly, a person may give oblation after or before sunrise.

On the contrary, in the case of knowledge of an existing object, there is no scope of the injunctions. The intuition of the Self (all-pervading) does not depend on an agent’s will or intellect but upon the Self itself. A person may meditate thousands time, but unless the Self illumines, individual’s own efforts or choice cannot bring the intuition of *Brahman*. The intuition of *Brahman* is a kind of *vṛtti* (modification) of mind that has *Brahman* as its content, i.e., mind assumes the form of the *Brahman* through constant and sustained meditation. The *vṛtti* depends on the intuition of *Brahman* and this intuition has no dependence on any type of activity. Moreover, in

the scriptural statements, 'a man O Gautama is *Agni*, the women O Gautama is *Agni*.' Here to imagine a man or women as fire is a mental act and depends on teaching and the person's academic training and capabilities. But to conceive of ordinary fire does not depend upon explicit teaching instruction, rather it exists independently. It is the object of perception and is subject to the right means of knowledge. Similarly, knowledge of the *Brahman* does not depend upon any teaching, injunction, instruction or even imagination. Consequently, it can be said that liberation or knowledge is entirely dissimilar to action and cannot be the result of action.

An objection is further raised. If self-realisation is not the result of action then why do scriptures assert that the self is to be seen, heard and so forth? NDV holds that these instructions are the aspirants of liberation in order to divert an individual's mind from the external object of the transitory pleasure (*preyas*) and focus the mind, body and senses toward innermost self which (Self) he thinks is the highest goal of human life. An aspirant can attain his goal by directing his stream of mind towards the Universal Self (*Brahman*). (Satchidanendra, 1989)<sup>vii</sup>. Thus, knowledge is intended to provide the objective truth about what exists and action intends to tell what is worth achieving, what is worth discarding, what is worth doing. Action thus lacks the aspect of truth or objectivity that knowledge has.

But it cannot be denied that the implications of past actions cannot be affected by knowledge alone. There is a need for *karma* or purificatory acts which destroys the previous sins. Knowledge of the Self can only prevent the accumulation of *karma*, but *karmas* already performed can expire only when their fruits have been reaped. There is then further no birth of the body because no *karma* is left for reaping the fruits whereof the body should come into existence. So, says *pūrvapakṣin* (the contender – Mīmāṃsā) that knowledge alone cannot liberate man independently of the action. Both are needed to be combined in order to liberate an individual. Since, the knowledge can take place only when the antecedent condition, i.e., all the fruits of actions have been enjoined, even the *jīvan-mūkta* (liberated while living) has to perform the actions. Thus, knowledge of the Self is said to be subservient to actions and

both are necessary for liberation. So they are needed to be combined. The combination of knowledge and action is refuted by NDV.

#### 4. Refutation of *jñāna-karma-sammuccāya-vāda*

Mīmāṃsā advocates the combination of action and knowledge for attaining liberation. This doctrine is called *jñāna-karma-sammuccāya-vāda*. Maṇḍana Mīśra, a noted exponent of Mīmāṃsā School writes that knowledge and actions need to be combined for attaining the Self-realisation. *Jñāna* of the Upanisadic truth and the *aśrama karma* when combined brings Self-realisation (Sankaranarayana, 2004). It is asserted that the performance of Vedic sacrifice, charity when combined with the knowledge, provides an effective way to attain the supreme Good (Satchidanendra, 1989). Similarly, performance of various rituals, sacrifices enables the aspirant to move towards the path of knowledge.

A question is raised in this context as well: if liberation is nothing but the realisation of Self as *Brahman* then why expect *karma* for its emergence? Maṇḍana responds that though a permanent one expects for its manifestation, the act of removing the adjacent *upādhi*, similarly, the all-pervading Self needs *karmanas* like *agnihotra* for its manifestation. But it can be said that every action produces its result and is performed in the lower level of reality, i.e., at the empirical level, so that it cannot affect the higher level of reality. According to Śāṅkara, action helps the generation of knowledge (Śāṅkara, 1960) but action cannot be combined with knowledge as both have different nature and cannot be combined. The former produces the results which are transitory in nature, while the latter is permanent in its nature. According to him, action only produces results in the realm of manifest name and form, as experience teaches and Veda proclaim. It cannot be supposed to have any effect on liberation, which is the very negation of name and form (*nāma-rūpa*). Knowledge alone is the cause of the supreme good for through the removal of the differences born out of error or ignorance it (knowledge) culminates in liberation. The action does not constitute the means to the supreme good nor do knowledge and action in combination be combined (Ranganathan, 2007). The realisation of the Self may be described as 'deliverance' or

'liberation' from ignorance, from the realm of *samsāra* - of indefinite births, deaths, and rebirths. Transmigration is said to be beginningless, it cannot be said to have begun at any particular point of time because that point must have been the result of fruition of *karma* that preceded it, and so on; the fruits of *karma* in the form of merit and demerit are earned through action (in the widest sense). The action qua bondage arises on the basis of false identification with the body-mind complex. Moral actions thus belong to and operate in the world of false identification. In his commentary on Bhagavadgītā Gitā, Śāṅkara asserts that devotion to knowledge and action are taught for different classes of persons. A person cannot devote to both paths at the same time because of their opposite nature (Śāṅkara, 1977). In the practice of scriptures ordained *karma*, a person is not eligible to perform any *karma* because of the eligibility restriction. For example, a householder is eligible to perform certain *karmas*; a celibate student is not qualified to perform them. What a *kṣatriya* (a warrior) is eligible for, a *brahmana* (a priest) is not. Action thus operates on the basis of distinction and special requirement in respect of these distinctions. These distinctions do not operate at all in the pursuit of *mokṣa* by spiritual aspirants.

In his note work *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, Śāṅkara asserts that truth cannot be known by donation, oblations, hundreds of *prāṇāyāma* (controlling of breath) but can be revealed by reflection and instruction of the teachers (Datta, 1888). Just as in the case of rope-snake illusion, one does not know what is there on the ground, cannot one make it sure the object of cognition by walking closer to the object concerned? The answer is that it is not by walking closer to the object that one could come to know the truth, but it is right cognition alone that constitutes the truth of the object in place (Chakravarthi, 2007). The fear caused by rope-snake illusion can be removed, neither by medicine, nor by *mantra*, but only by the knowledge of the object in front. From here it is easy to see that liberating knowledge is not an action. But such a position of NDV devaluates the ethical actions. If knowledge is not an action, then does it mean that actions must be discarded? The later cannot give rise to the former because of the antithesis between the two. In NDV the indispensable role of action is not denied, but the system

only denies that liberation or knowledge is not the result of an action.

## 5. The Relation between Knowledge and Action in NDV

Action occupies a significant role in the realisation of the self. It is the first and foremost step leading towards self-realisation. Action helps indirectly to attain liberation by generating the conditions which are suitable for liberation. NDV admits the importance of action as remote aid to the origination of knowledge. Disinterested performance of action in a spirit of dedication purifies the mind and the knowledge of Brahman will dawn only on one whose mind is purified (Balasubramanian, 2004). Performance of the *aśrama* karma (duties according to the stages of life) is emphasised in NDV. In BSB, Śaṅkara states that “knowledge does not require the help of *aśrama* karma for bringing about its result; but it requires them for its own origination” (Śaṅkara, 1960, p. 750). He quotes the śruti text, “The Brahmanas (priests) seek to know it through the study of the Vedas, sacrifices, charity, and austerity consisting in a dispassionate enjoyment of sense-objects” (Balasubramanian, 2004, p. 117). The text connects “sacrifices” with the “seeking to know” - the *aśrama* karmas are the means to the origination of knowledge. Śaṅkara asserts that “just as a horse is used for drawing a chariot and not for ploughing, even so the *aśrama* karmas are required for the origination of knowledge and not for producing the result of knowledge, i.e., liberation” (Śaṅkara, 1960, p. 750). Thus, actions are regarded as indirect aid to the liberating knowledge. The threefold discipline of *śravaṇa* (study of scriptures), *manana* (clearing the doubt) and *nididhyāsana* (intense meditation) constitute the proximate means to liberation. The practice of *śravaṇa* and *manana* are necessary for practice of *nididhyāsana*. The latter cannot be carried out without the former two. Moreover, the latter culminates into the immediate intuition of the Self. Immediate intuition of the Self is directly related with the *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. This immediate intuition (knowledge) requires following *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana* for removing the obstacles such as doubt and erroneous cognition. Again, before following the threefold discipline the performance of actions for purification of the mind and body are preliminary so that the intuition could take place. As

intuition is possible with the aid of mind and unless mind is purged of all impurities it cannot get the insight of the inner self. Therefore, following the discipline becomes antecedent condition for generation of the knowledge of the Self. It reveals that action is pre-requisite for attaining knowledge. But on the same line it cannot be denied that knowledge or final intuition of the *Self* does not depend on action for its arousal. Knowledge of the *Self* does not depend on the individual, it is not subject to volition of the person to have it, or not to have it, or to have it in an entirely different way. Nor does it come under the control of action. Knowledge reflects the *Self* and therefore is dependent on the *Self* to get reflected or realised. Thus, knowledge alone is the direct and immediate means of liberation. Moreover, knowledge can never be subservient to action (as the Mīmāṃsā School of thought holds).

## 6. The Celebrated Dichotomy

The above debate is obviously rooted in two different positions – knowing process is a mental action, i.e., cognitive function is like any other affective function as it involves will, effort and conscious engagement and the other view is that the entire cognition is shaped by the existence, status and nature of the knowable object which is cognised when the cogniser is just aware and passive. The former view of Mīmāṃsā addresses action in the epistemological and moral realm and uses hermeneutical tools to corroborate the position with scriptures as Śaṅkara also does. The reason behind is that the Mīmāṃsā has a doctrinal resolve that all Vedic statements induce into action. When the question about scriptural statements appreciating pure knowledge arises, Mīmāṃsā has to resign to advocacy of its position that knowledge too is a mental action. The latter is NDV's view and rooted in its doctrinal position that *Brahman* is the only reality and knowledge of it is the only means to realisation. Then it has to come out of the realm of action. Through the unique interpretation of superimposition, Śaṅkara is successful in establishing that action presupposes duality. His treatment of knowledge and action both are thus ontological and epistemological, but not moral. Action is ontologically a product of superimposition. The knowledge that dispels superimposition is thus opposed to action.

If one rescues the above positions from their doctrinal rooting and compulsions generated thereby, one can really engage in an independent question if knowing can be defined as an act, a cognitive function. If yes, then deliberation upon the concepts like moral agency, human choice, responsibility and criteria for judgment of action etc. will be imperative. And if no, then the passive awareness of the knower will be important and enough for the revelation of the reality. The object of knowledge itself determines the nature and course of knowledge. Knower's passivity asserts that knowledge is not action. One has to be careful about distinction between action and mental action too. Mental action is not same as other actions which involve motor effects, movements, desire, will etc. Mental action, if defined best, is the engagement of mind or mere consciousness. But, Śaṅkara's point is that cognition is not produced by such engagements, it is produced and determined by the object which is being cognised. The very ontology of the knowable (object) has the key role in production of cognition. This argument is extrapolated to establish the role of knowledge in liberation and further identification of knowledge and liberation as same.

Can there be a possible connection between action and cognition like the modern psychologists argue for an intertwined enterprise of conative-affective (*samuccaya-vāda*)? The objection, on behalf of NDV, of the compulsory duality with regard to action whatsoever would be difficult to unpack. If duality is a metaphysical sin, then one, of course, will acknowledge the importance of NDV's position and move the moral questions into the realm of superimposition. Not that the moral questions will not be given its due, but they will be debated differently and under a different schema of thought and reality. If liberation is the highest human end, then morality will have a penultimate value and, that is very much recognised by Śaṅkara in his commentary on the first sūtra of Brahma-Sūtra Bhaṣya interpreting the meaning of *atha (ānantarya)*.

## 7. Conclusion

The above discussion, which mainly covers refutation of Mimāṃsā's view of knowledge as mental action and *jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vāda*, suggests that there is a fundamental difference

between action and knowledge. The will of the agent is the cause of action, whereas knowledge though arises by the conscious perceiving or engagement of mind, but the object of knowledge is the determiner of the knowledge, not the attributes of the perceiver. In the case of attainment of liberation or Self-realisation, the revelation of the true nature of the Self, which is of the nature of knowledge, is the key factor, not the action or efforts. However, it does not imply that action whatsoever has no role altogether, but its role is secondary towards the initial efforts for the purification of mind. Though, it is a different debate.

Since Mīmāṃsā and NDV, both corroborate their doctrines with scriptures, and there are statements in the scriptures asserting the importance of both action and knowledge, Śaṅkara through his best hermeneutical skills demonstrates that Self-realisation is the main intent of the scriptures and not the action. To establish so, he proposes a higher hermeneutics (*tattu samanvayāt*). His hermeneutics is not based upon the admission of a hierarchy of action and knowledge that one can best argue from the side of Mīmāṃsā but is based upon a great leap or detachment from the realm of action. This detachment creates two different categories of philosophical debate – moral and epistemological, for treatment of action and knowledge. This identification of radical difference in the category of action and knowledge accounts for their incongruity, and that is why a combination of both (*samuccaya-vāda*) as the Mīmāṃsā school proposes, is not tenable.

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## End Notes

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- <sup>i</sup> Universal Self or *Ātman*, in Non-dualistic Vedānta is none other than *Brahman*. This *ātman/Brahman* is the ultimate reality. In this paper Self with capital 'S' is *ātman* or *Brahman*. Self with small 's' is the individual self. *Ātman* when gets limited by mind-senses and the body becomes the individual self. Individual self is limited in knowledge power and other respects.
- <sup>ii</sup> All realist Schools of Indian philosophy like Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā etc regards knowledge as manifestation of the object present in the place. However, they differ in their opinion on the nature of knowledge.
- <sup>iii</sup> *Heya* is anything one wishes to avoid and *Upadeya* is anything one desires to have
- <sup>iv</sup> Most of the actions are undertaken in order to fulfill or attain the desire objective. For example; a person performs *agnihotra* sacrifice in order to attain heaven, he may attain heaven but when the period of enjoying the heaven is completed then man has to be born again in the empirical world. Thus the cycle of birth and rebirth never ends. Man remains involved in the chain of transmigration. But in NDV, the knowledge of the Self which is termed as liberation enables a man to break the fetters of bondage and realise the immortality of the self. After attainment of liberation there is no question of returning back to the earthly existence.
- <sup>v</sup> Duality is an error while non-duality of the individual soul and the *Brahman* is the ever abiding truth. To realise the non-duality is the only objective of human life.
- <sup>vi</sup> *adhyaśam puraskṛtya sarve prameya pramāṇa vyavahārāḥ laukikāḥ vaidikā ca pravṛttāḥ sarvāṇi ca āstrāṇi vidhi-pratiśedha mokṣaparāṇi* - Śaṅkaraçārya. (1960). *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* (trans. V.M Apte). P. 6. 1-1-1.
- <sup>vii</sup> In this connection Suresvaracharya also holds a strong position that the sentence "it should be seen" does not involve injunction since one has to see the inmost self which is the inmost self of all. Here the seer and the inmost self are one and the same so seer cannot act in order to see itself. In simple words there cannot be act of seeing if one is the both seer and to be seen. Thus the statement "Self is to be seen" does not proposes injunction but gives some information about something the hearer is not aware of. (see Swami Satchidanendra, pp-360-361).