

Pluralistic Philosophy of Saiva Siddhanta – 2

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Advaita Relationship

To understand Kauai's monistic Siddhanta and its misleading notion, it is useful to understand the relationship between soul and God as given in Vedanta and Siddhanta philosophies. The relationship between God and soul is spoken of as **advaita relationship** by both the Siddhantists and Vedantists. In this relationship there is no duality. Dvaita means 'two' and advaita means 'not two'. Sankarar considered 'not two' as 'one' and gave his interpretations in his Advaita Vedanta. 'Not two' needs not mean 'one', and it can even mean more than one. On this basis Saiva Siddhantists found its advaita relationship.

Saiva Siddhanta speaks of three kinds of relationship between God and the soul. God is one with the soul, along with the soul, and different from the soul. (*onraai, udanaai, veraai*). These relationships can be explained with an analogy. Like the soul is one with the physical body, God is one with the soul. Like the soul is along with it and animates it, God is along with the soul and animates it. Like the soul being different from the body, God is different from the soul. These are the kinds of relationship called as Advaita relationship in Saiva siddhanta.

Many Vedic views are not clear, and inconsistent and contradictory among them. With an idea of clearing the confusions and contradictions in them, the book **Brahmasutra**, also called **Vedantasutra** was written. However this book could not be understood clearly and gave rise to varying interpretations. Sankarar developed his philosophy called Advaita Vedanta. Another Vedantit, Ramanujar, refuted it and developed his philosophy called Visishdatvaita Vedanta (qualified Avaita Vedanta). Matwar, another Vedantist developed yet another philosophy called Dvaita Vedanata (dualistic Vedanta). It is interesting to note that the basis of all these three Vedanta schools is Brahmasutra and Vedas.

According to Sankarar's Advaita Vedanta, God or Brahman is the only reality. Soul is not different from it. Individual soul is Brahman Himself. Also soul is only one, but seen as many because of certain defect in us. Here certain questions arise. How did we (souls) break away and come to worldly existence? If we are part of Brahman, then why is it that we do not have the divine qualities? If it is said that *maya* or *avithai* is the cause, does it not mean that Brahman is not all powerful?

Such questions find no rational answers. Only answer generally given is, 'they cannot be explained by words in this worldly existence' (*'anirvachaniyam'*). Hawaii Adfheenam also has the same Vedanta views and yet it calls its philosophy as Saiva Siddhanta.

Vedic literatures are vast and voluminous, and it is not possible for anyone to study and master them. Also their views are seen not clear, contradict among themselves and allow varying interpretations. Because of these problems few Vedic sentences were chosen and given as ***Veda Mahavakyas***. It is believed that understanding them amounts to understanding the Vedas. These Vedic sentences find their importance both in Vedanta religions and Siddhanta Saivism. But the import and interpretation differ in them.

To understand the significance of these sentences in Saivism, one should understand certain spiritual *sadhanas* (practices) in Saiva a religion. *Sivohambhavana* (Siva + aham + bhavana) is an important sadhana. In this practice, the guru and the aspirant imagine themselves in mind (*aham*) as Siva and enter into sadhana of turning the mind towards Siva. It is more of a psychological nature where one becomes the 'shadow of his thoughts'. Veda Mahavakyas facilitate this exercise. Three of these Mahavakyas and their meanings are given below.

1. Aham Brahmasmi – I become Brahman
2. Tat tvamasi – You become That

3. Ayamathma Brahman – This athma is Brahman.

The Siddhantists who consider the soul as separate from God, find the meanings of these sentences as (1) I become like Brahman, (2) You become like That, & (3). This soul becomes like Brahman.

These sacred sentences were used by the Guru (Vedic Rishis) to guide his disciple in his sadhana. The Guru and the disciple keep themselves in Siva consciousness while teaching and learning. Guru thinks of the disciple in front of him as “this athma is Brahman” (3rd sentence). He points out to his disciple, “you become That” (2nd sentence). The disciple, who realizes that he is divine, thinks of himself as “I am God” (1st sentence). These are practices of Sivohambhavana in Saiva religion.

The Vedantists who consider the soul as part of God, find the meanings of these sentences as (1) I become part of Brahman, (2) You become part of That, & (3). This soul is part of Brahman. These views were refuted long ago by the Saiva saints, and found not acceptable. Now, the Hawaii Adheenam is introducing these Vedanta views into Saiva Siddhanata and carving out a new brand of Siddhanta philosophy.