

Points of difference between BhAmati and VivaraNam.
Based on the BhUmikA of Polagam Sri Rama Sastri,
(By S.N.Sastri)

Even though the ultimate purport of both BhAmati and VivaraNam is the establishment of advaita, there are differences in the empirical (vyAvahArika) means employed by them. It is intended to bring out the points on which they differ. Even though the prakriyas (methods) adopted by them differ, the ultimate conclusion of advaita vedAnta is not affected in the least. As Sureshvaracharya has said:-- "By whatever method the knowledge of the indwelling self can be attained by men, that method is valid; and such methods are innumerable". Even though there are many points of difference, the main points are ten. These are dealt with below.

1. BhAmati says that karma is for the purpose of generating the desire to know Brahman, and VivaraNam says that karma is for generating the knowledge of Brahman.

BhAmati points out that the br. upanishad says that 'brAhmaNas desire to know Brahman (vividishanti) by studying the vedas, performing yajnas, giving gifts and by performing austerities. In the verb vividishanti which consists of the root vid and the pratyaya 'san' denoting desire, the pratyaya is more important according to the rules of grammar. So the meaning has to be taken only as 'the desire to know'. By the performance of these karma without desire for the fruit and as an offering to God, intense desire for Brahman-knowledge arises. The person has then to seek a Guru and do shravana, etc.

VivaraNam says that the study of the vedas, and other karma, performed without desire for the fruit, themselves lead to jnAna by first creating desire for knowledge. A person who is suffering from some disease wants to eat, but he is not able to eat because of the disease. So he takes medicine to cure the disease and create hunger or desire for food. But the ultimate aim is eating. Similarly, the karmas, by creating intense desire for knowledge, themselves bring about the further steps of getting a Guru and doing

shravaNa, etc. They do not stop with merely creating desire for knowledge. The karmas performed develop vairAgya and result in chitta shuddhi. Knowledge dawns in such a purified mind. Thus these karmas serve as jnAnasAdhana or means of knowledge.

2. BhAmati says that it is the mind that is the cause of the direct knowledge of Brahman. According to VivaraNam, the mahAvAkya itself is the cause.

Both BhAmati and VivaraNam agree that direct realization arises in the mind and that both the mahAvaAkya and the mind are the causes of knowledge. The difference is on the question which of these two is the direct cause. BhAmati says that mahAvAkya which is shabda can only give parokSha jnAna. If one hears from somebody that there is fire on a hill, he has only indirect knowledge and does not know any details about the fire. For getting direct knowledge of the fire he must see it with his own eyes. So only an indriya (which is in contact with the object) can give direct knowledge. In the case of knowledge of Brahman, the mind with the samskAra of the repeated contemplation of the mahAvAkya is the instrument for direct knowledge. This is supported by the upaniShadic statement, “manasaiva anudraShTavyam” which means that Brahman is to be known through the mind. There is another upaniShadic statement which says, “From which speech returns along with the mind, without reaching it”. This refers to the mind without the samskAra of the contemplation of the mahAvAkya. Only a person who has learnt music and has a mind with that samskAra can appreciate the different swaras in a music concert. This shows the importance of samskAra.

VivaraNam says that there is no invariable rule that shabda can give only parokSha jnAna. In the story of the tenth man, the person directly realized that he was the tenth man from the statement alone. Thus shabda can give aparokSha jnAna. An object is parokSha when the mind does not come in contact with it. AtmA is always aparokSha and so shabda can give direct knowledge of it. Even though the mahAvAkya produces direct knowledge, it does

not act straightaway and so the knowledge appears to be parokSha. This is because of obstructions in the form of accumulated sins and vAsanas. shravaNa, manana and nididhyAsana are for removing these obstructions. The upaniShadic statement. “aupaniShadam puruSham pRicchAmi” shows that the upaniShad is the pramANa that reveals the knowledge. This also supports the VivaraNa view. The mind can know Brahman only with the adhyAsa of agency, etc. The upaniShad alone can reveal the pure Brahman. In chandogya upaniShad tat tvam asi was repeated nine times. This was necessary to remove all doubts. Only after that shvetaketu got realization.

The statement, “vedAntavijnAnasunishcitArthAh” also shows that knowledge is attained only through Vedanta.

The statement, “manasaiva anudraShTavyam” means only that the mind is the place where the knowledge takes place.

The MuNDaka up. says, “jnAnaprasAdena vishuddhasattvaH tatastu tam pashyati niShkalam dhyAyamAnah”. Here dhyAnam is mentioned only for attaining one-pointedness of the mind. This cannot be taken as meaning that dhyAna produces knowledge.

VAmadeva attained realization while in the womb, without any dhyAna.

Once brahmasAkShAtkAra has arisen, that itself is liberation. shravaNa etc., have to be continued till realization is attained.

3. There is no vidhi (injunction) in shravaNa, manana and nididhyAsana according to BhAmati. The tavyapratyaya is used in two senses—one to indicate a vidhi and the other in praise of some thing. So shrotavya means that the AtmA is worthy of being heard about. Here it is not a vidhi, though it is similar to a vidhi in the sense that it induces the person to know about it by saying that it is worth knowing. This is the position in the statement, “Atmetyeva upAsIta”. This means that avidyA should be removed by getting aparokSha jnAna of Brahman. For this the mind should be made free from bad vAsanas and filled with good samskAras. This can be attained by continued nididhyAsana. No vidhi is

necessary for this. It is like a person being able to appreciate music by learning music and getting the samskAra of music in his mind. The mind should be turned away from its natural tendencies and towards the AtmA.

In Bhamati, under sarvApekShAdhikaraNa (3.4.6), the nature of shravaNa, etc., is described as constituting four steps towards the knowledge of Brahman. The first is that which arises merely on hearing the upaniShads. This is known as shravana. The second is what arises on enquiry into the upaniShadic statements with the help of the brahmasUtras. This is called manana. The third arises on constant contemplation of these statements. This is called nididhyAsana. The fourth is in the form of the vRitti which results in Self-realization. Then liberation inevitably follows. There is no vidhi for any of these four, though they appear similar to vidhi because of the tavyapratyaya.

VivaraNam, on the other hand, holds that there is niyama vidhi. This vidhi operates when there are more than one alternative and only one of them is prescribed. For example, dehusking of paddy for getting rice powder for making the material for oblation can be done by pounding in a mortar or by using one's nails or by a machine. The shruti lays down that pounding in a mortar is the only method to be used. This is niyama vidhi. The shruti says, "shrotavya" and this restricts the choice to shravaNa of advaita Vedanta, and excludes other means such as mere contemplation on the nature of the AtmA and the study of other spiritual texts. This niyama generates adRiShTa which is useful for the rise of knowledge. Manana and nididhyAsana are subsidiaries of shravaNa which is the main step. BhagavatpAda has only said that there can be no vidhi for jnAna. There can be vidhi for shravaNa. shravaNa, manana and nididhyAsana are for removing the defects of asambhAvanA and viparItabhAvanA.

4. BhAmati says that nididhyAsana is the main means and shravaNa and manana are subsidiary to it. VivaraNam says that shravaNa is the main means and the other two are subsidiary.

BhAmati considers nididhyAsana to be the main means of realization because realization occurs only after nididhyAsana and not after shravaNa and manana. He takes the example of the study of music. A person may go on hearing music with the ear, but is not able to distinguish the various swaras. He is able to do it only after he has studied the science of music and filled his mind with that samskAra. Similarly, AtmajnAna arises only when the mind has been filled with the samskAra of the AtmA by nididhyAsana. It is well known in the world that anyone who wants to understand any science must study it. Thus shravaNa is well known as the means to study VedAnta and no vidhi is necessary for this. Realization can take place only through a pramANa. shabda pramANa can give only parokSha jnAna. Mind is the indriya which can make the knowledge aparokSha. The mind should be suffused with the samskAra of the AtmA and this can be done only by nididhyAsana. So nididhyAsana is the main means.

The author of VivaraNam does not accept the BhAmati view that the mind is the pramANa that produces aparokSha jnAna. He holds that shabda pramANa can give aparokSha jnAna as in the story of the tenth man who got direct knowledge when told that he was the tenth. So shravaNa of the shruti is the pramANa that produces sAkShAtkAra. Manana and nididhyAsana are not pramANa. They are only for understanding the correct meaning. They remove the defects of asambhAvanA and viparItabhAvanA. It is shravaNa that produces jnAna, the result. It is therefore the main means and the other two are subsidiaries which help in producing the final result. The mind is only a co-operating factor (sahakAri). shravaNa is the ascertainment that the purport of vedAnta is Brahman. Manana is determining the correct meaning by means of reasoning to remove doubts. Keeping the mind fixed on the purport of vedAnta is nididhyAsana.

In the view in which only parokSha jnAna arises at first, manana and nididhyAsana help as subsidiaries in producing aparokSha jnAna. In the view in which shravaNa itself produces aparokSha jnAna, manana and nididhyAsana remove the obstructing vaasanas, and defects such as asambhAvanA and viparItabhAvanA by generating the necessary samskAras in the mind.

5. AvacchedavAda and pratibimbavAda.

These are known as limitation theory and reflection theory. These theories are intended to explain the meaning of the mahAvAkya 'tat tvam asi'. The jlvAtmA and the paramAtmA have totally opposite characteristics. A doubt therefore arises as to how there could be identity between them. This doubt is resolved by these two theories, by pointing out that the space inside a pot is the same as the total space and a reflection is not different from the original that is reflected. In the case of reflection there is the additional feature that the reflection is affected by the qualities of the reflecting medium. Thus the jlva seems to have acquired the qualities of the mind which is the reflecting medium. In this sense the reflection theory is preferable to the limitation theory which does not have any such feature.

BhAmati prefers the limitation theory while VivaraNam prefers the reflection theory. But neither of them positively rejects the other view. Both agree that the apparent difference between jlvAtmA and paramAtmA is only due to the upAdhis of the mind and mAyA.

BhAmati describes the jlva as pratibimbakalpa, i.e., similar to a reflection. This shows that he is not in favour of the reflection theory.

BhAmati says that there can be a reflection only when both the object to be reflected and the reflecting medium have colour. Sound, smell, taste, etc., cannot be reflected. Both Brahman and the reflecting medium, mind, have no colour. So there cannot be a reflection of Brahman in the mind. It is thus seen that BhAmati does not accept pratibimbavAda. In adhikaraNa 3.2.3 BhAmati says that the pot-space is not different from the total space, but appears as if different as long

as the pot exists. In adhikaraNa 2.1.7 BhAmati says the same paramAtmA appears as if different, like pot-space because of the upAdhi of avidyA. In adhikaraNa 2.3.11 also the same point is stressed by BhAmati.

VivaraNam supports pratibimbavAda. In PancapAdikA it is said that 'tat' refers to Brahman which is the bimba and 'tvam' refers to the jlva who is the reflection. The scriptural statement, "He should not look at the rising sun or the setting sun, nor at the sun during an eclipse, nor the reflection of the sun in water nor the sun at mid-day" shows that the reflection of the sun in water is identical with the actual sun. PratibimbavAda has been explicitly stated there by the statement, "The jlva is like a reflection and is directly seen by all of us as sentient, not affected by the inert nature of the mind. The jlva considers his nature as that of an agent (karta) and not as Brahman. When he realizes that he is Brahman, the wrong understanding ceases". In VivaraNam, in the first varNaka, the contention that, if the jiva is a reflection, then he cannot know his identity with Brahman, just as a reflection cannot know its identity with the original, is rejected. The reflection in a mirror cannot recognize its identity with the original because the reflection is insentient, and not because it is a reflection. The jlva, who is the reflection of Brahman in the mind is sentient and so he can realize his identity with the original, Brahman (because the jlva, being sentient, is capable of attaining Self-knowledge). In the case of the reflection of a face in a mirror, the delusion is in the person whose face is reflected and not in the reflection. It is he who doubts whether it is his face or not. On this analogy, an objection may be raised that the delusion should be in Brahman who is reflected and not in the jlva who is the reflection. This is answered by pointing out that the delusion is actually in the jlva and that is what has to be removed. Even though a person, Devadatta, may see his reflection in another person's eye as very small, he is not perturbed because he knows the truth. Similarly, Brahman, who knows the truth, is not deluded even while seeing that his reflection, jlva is a samsAri.

Ishvara is the antaryAml in all bodies. Thus in each body there is a jlvAtmA and ishvara -- two, as stated in the upaniShads. In the reflection of space in water, there is the reflection of space and also

space itself, since space is all-pervading. Thus there are two, as in the body, and so the reflection theory is more appropriate than the limitation theory. In contrast, in pot-space there is only one space. Space which is formless is reflected in water along with trees, stars, birds flying, etc. Similarly Brahman which is formless can also be reflected. Even when there is only knee-deep water, the reflection of the sky makes it appear very deep. The sun's reflection in water also has brightness like the sun. Thus the reflection is real. The reflection may have some features which are not present in the original. These are only due to the upAdhi and they are not real. Similarly, the transmigratory nature of the jIva is only due to the upAdhi of the mind.

Some criticise advaita on the ground that after realization there is no jIva and so there is no one who is released. The answer is that the jIva is always Brahman even before release and jIvahood is not real. Because of different minds, jIvas appear as different. The implied meaning of both 'tat' and 'tvam' is the same, namely, Brahman.

The upaniSads sometimes start with Brahman and end with jIva and sometimes the reverse. This is to emphasize the identity of both.

6. BhAmati says that the jIva is the locus of ajnAna, but the content (object) of ajnAna is Brahman. VivaraNam holds that Brahman is both the locus and the content of ajnAna.

BhAmati says that, if the locus and content of ajnAna are not accepted as different, all evils such as adhyAsa and samsAra will come to ParamAtmA. AjnAna cannot be in Brahman which is jnAnasvarUpa. In the bhAShya on sarvatraprasiddhAdhikaraNa (1.2.1) it is said that ajnAna is parameshvarAshraya. This only means that paramAtmA is the viShaya or object of ajnAna. The tArkikas describe the ajnAna of a pot as 'ghaTASHraya', i.e., the pot is the Ashraya of ajnAna by being its object. In the same way the word parameshvarAshraya has to be interpreted as meaning 'having parameshvara as object'.

The VivaraNam view is that Brahman is both the locus and the content of ajnAna, just as darkness has the same place as locus and content. The jlva who is under the control of ajnAna cannot be the locus of ajnAna. Jlvahood is dependent on ajnAna since it ceases when ajnAna is removed by jnAna. Pure Brahman is the Ashraya of ajnAna. Brahman illumines and reveals ajnAna as the witness. So there is nothing contradictory in Brahman being the locus of ajnAna. For jnAna the locus and content have to be different. On this ground it cannot be said that the same rule applies to ajnAna which is the negative of jnAna. Taking the example of the verbs gacchati and tiShThati which are opposites, the first is a transitive verb while the second is an intransitive one. So the same rule need not apply to opposites.

Now the question is raised, where does avidyA produce difference? A mirror makes the face appear as two, as the original and the reflection. But avidyA does not separate caitanya. The answer is that dirt in a mirror is seen only in the reflection and not in the original face. Similarly, ajnAna is there only in the jlva who is the reflection. Thus it is established that ajnAna has pure consciousness as locus and content, but it affects the jlva only.

7. Is mUIA avidyA one or many? According to BhAmati the mUIA avidyAs are different for each jlva. VivaraNam holds that there is only one mUIA avidyA for all jlvas.

BhAmati says that, if mUIA avidyA is accepted as one for all jlvas, then when one jlva gets Self-knowledge all jlvas would become liberated. This is the defect in the sAnkhya view which holds that there is only one pradhAna or mUlaprakRiti. To avoid this BhAmati says that the mUIA avidyA is different for each jlva.

VivaraNam accepts the iShTasiddhi view that Brahman appears as the world by its own avidyA. The avidyA that causes the appearance of shell-silver, etc., is a mode of mUIA avidyA. Only these modes are removed when shell etc., are recognized. The mUIA avidyA continues until Self-knowledge is attained. The modes are innumerable. Even though the mUIA avidyA is only

one, there is no possibility of all jivas getting liberation when one jiva is liberated. Only that part of mUIA avidyA that relates to the liberated jiva gets destroyed. The mUIA avidyA relating to the other jivas continues.

8. The object of the akhaNDAkAra vRitti is Brahman with upAdhi according to BhAmati. It is pure Brahman according to VivaraNam. BhAmati says that pure Brahman cannot be an object of a vRitti. The vRitti itself is an upAdhi. So Brahman with upAdhi is the object.

VivaraNam points out that the bhAShya says, “The Self is not absolutely beyond apprehension, because it is apprehended as the content of the concept ‘I’”. This shows that pure Brahman can be the object of knowledge. Ignorance and knowledge should have the same content. The knowledge should be about the object about which there is ignorance. Since ignorance is about pure Brahman, knowledge should also have pure Brahman as object.

There is no essential difference between the views of BhAmati and VivaraNam on this point. The vRitti is there, but it does not become an object of knowledge. So both views can be reconciled. The author of Advaitasiddhi reconciles these two views by saying that Brahman becomes the object of knowledge without the vRitti which is an upAdhi becoming an object (but not without the vRitti).

9. One of the items in SADhanachatuShTayam according to BhAmati is satya-asatya-vastuvivekah. According to VivaraNam it is nitya-anitya-vastuvivekah.

BhAmati view—Every one knows that things in the world are anitya, ephemeral, but that knowledge does not generate detachment, because ephemeral objects also give happiness. Detachment will arise only if one knows that all objects are unreal and the happiness they produce is also unreal. So satya-asatya-vastuviveka is necessary for generating detachment.

VivaraNam says that one should reject anitya with the knowledge that thereby one can get the nitya. By this one will acquire detachment.

10. Study of the vedas means not merely learning by rote but also understanding the meaning, according to BhAmati. This is the pUrvamImAmsaka rule and this applies to vedAnta also.

VivaraNam says that study of veda means only learning by rote. Those who wish to do karma may then study the meaning. For those who take up vedAnta, shravaNa will lead to understanding of meaning.
