

Conceiving Advaita Philosophy as a Bridge between East and West: Some Methodological Issues

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Often research works on Advaita is looked upon with suspicion now a days for multiple reasons: first, exhaustive work has already been done on Advaita and hence anything afresh done on it would only amount to twisting the well set theories of the tradition so popular throughout the globe. Second, there has been a proliferation of research works attempting to uproot Advaita tradition from its cultural milieu and compare it to various other systems and philosophers in ways that contribute to a loss of logical rigor and cultural specificity of the system. These concerns are genuine; it is true that Advaita as a philosophical school has been adequately analyzed and that there is no single concept that remains unturned for clarification. However, in a changing world it is essential that the philosophical brilliance of this land need be placed at par with similar other conceptual exercises elsewhere in the world so that we may understand and evaluate the tradition as one which is eternal and ever refreshing. It is with this intention in mind that the major epistemological and metaphysical aspects of this tradition get discussed in this paper and are, juxtaposed to some of the significant philosophies of contemporary Western world. The paper initially shows how the system makes a fine synthesis of its epistemological and metaphysical concerns. Following this, parallels are drawn between Advaita and some of the major philosophical contributions in the European tradition such as the Greek tradition, the analytic tradition and the Phenomenological tradition.

The Theory of Nāmarūpa in Advaita Vedānta and Buddhism

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Introduction

The theory of Nāmarūpa is of great importance in the development of Indian Religion and Philosophy, especially for the Vedāntic understanding of the Upaniṣads and for Buddhism. In the Vedic lore the terms *nāma* and *rūpa* were treated in separate contexts while in later literature they were seen treated combined as the well-known compound *Nāmarūpa*. Generally *nāma* indicates the individuality in the human case, and individual things in the case of external entities. *Rūpa* represents the matter or its appearance.

Nāmarūpa in Advaita Vedānta

The term *nāmarūpa* occurs in a number of Upaniṣads most notable in Būhadāraṇyaka and Chāndogya.¹ Śaṅkara understands the term to mean the primary stuff out of which the world is made. It is expounded in the Būhadāraṇyaka as : तद्वेयं तर्ह्यव्याकृतमासीत्, तन्नामरूपाभ्यामेव व्याक्रियत, असौ नामायमिदं रूपम् इति ।² For Śaṅkara, the differentiated universe, begins with the five material elements, and continues through all their various combinations, can be referred to as *name and form* or *nāmarūpa*.

There are two kinds of *nāmarūpa* evidenced in the Vedic lore viz. *Vyākūta* and *avyākūta*. The earliest suggestion that *nāmarūpa* is of two kinds is presumably that of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa³ which speaks of *nāmarūpa* as both the two great monsters of the Brahman - ते हैते ब्रह्मणो महत् अश्वे । and two great tempting appearances of the