

Unifying Reason and Emotion: A Method to Realize The *Ecological Self*

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There has been an age-old battle between reason and emotion, continued for centuries from the perspective of man; and reflected in the clash of religion and science. Simply we say ‘follow reason not emotion’ but in practice, knowingly and unknowingly we follow emotion. Turning to values, we come to know the astonishing fact that most of the values are rooted actually in emotion not in reason. In the eco-philosophical writings of Arne Naess, this puzzle takes much attention; he tries to discover the connection between reason and emotion. It is very interesting to know that in a branch of Indian Philosophy known as *Advaitism* (Non-dualism) the connection between reason and emotion is studied and explained very beautifully. *Advaitism* holds that the ultimate goal of human life is to realize *Sarvatmata* (Everything is identical with self) and demonstrates a path to realize this *Sarvatmata*. Following the words of Arne Naess, this *Sarvatmata* can be conceived of as the realization of the big ecological self. In the school of *Advaitism*, a systematic way of thinking is found to realize *Sarvatmata*, which may provide a beautiful and firm ground to eco-philosophical thoughts. In this paper, I would like to discuss this concept having an eco-philosophical approach.

The triad of science, religion and philosophy has tried to understand reality but from different perspectives. In the beginning of the nineteenth century a French scientist, Marquis-de-Laplace, had come up with the notion that there would be a set of scientific rules, according to which we would be able to explain the phenomena of reality. The success of classical physics was much dependent on this concept. Coming to twentieth century, this notion was shaken; and it was observed that in the world there is something, which does not seem to be explained. The worldview which science provided, is partial not total, but scientific rationality is dominating all areas of human understanding. Arne Naess observes the hollowness of this scientific rationality and in his brilliant lecture 'The case against science' says, "For the purpose of this lecture, the most important conclusion is that there is no independent scientific rationality. Only total views, such as that of Spinoza, are comprehensive enough to compromise norms of rationality of lasting worth". Actually, science cannot provide a total worldview. It studies nature as an object and exploits nature through its findings. There always has to be a difference between the subject, who is a knower, and the object, which is known. There can be no place of identity between the subject and object, following the path of science. Human beings are seated in the place of subject, and everything left is seen as object. Therefore, the development of science is very anthropocentric; it makes use of everything for the wellbeing of only human kind, because it emphasizes "Humans first" and does not take care of other beings. If something is for the help of man, only to satisfy our insignificant delight we do not care whether it is very harmful for others.

We do not acknowledge other beings as we acknowledge ourselves. We think this world is only for men, not for other beings. The concept that “man is the measure of all” is worsening the present ecological crisis. The present ecological crisis has a deep root in this partial view of world and partial scientific values. Scientific knowledge is produced in the subject-object relationship and therefore bound to be partial. To understand the world through a scientific method seems an impossible task and scientific inquiry an insufficient tool. Arne Naess therefore says, “All world views must go deeper than scientific disciplines, that is, they must include ontology, logic, and of course, general methodology, which itself cannot be ‘scientific’ in the sense of being subject to verification”. He concludes, “Any genuine human rationality is non-scientific, and to reject the so-called scientific world view is perhaps one of the most rational things to do today”.

Western Philosophy too, from the time of her beginning, tried to understand reality from the same direction. The ideal of knowledge was to take mathematical knowledge and following it, was assumed the phenomena of reality would also be explained. Rational knowledge is always ideal knowledge in Western Philosophy and in science. It was thought that everything is knowable through reason. On the other hand, the religion of the West tried to know the world from the different direction which we may say is emotion. Greek Philosophy was free from religious burden, but in the medieval period, Western Philosophy first took the side of religion and coming to the modern age took refuge in science. Between the clash of religion and science,

philosophy could not find her actual role. The role of philosophy should have been to build a bridge between science and religion; and Western Philosophy could not do it. The reason seems to me that the ideals of Western Philosophy, taken to solve the problems of philosophy, were akin to science. First, the concept was accepted that only reason could provide us knowledge; and empiricist philosophers said, turning the table, that all knowledge has its roots in experience. Immanuel Kant in his 'Critique of Pure Reason' set a limit to scientific knowledge, the knowledge achieved using reason. Everything is not knowable by reason. Only phenomena can be known and with some limitations; reality itself would be left unknown. Questions about God and other similar questions are not answerable using reason. Reason itself declares its ineffectuality, leaving us in a state, which are Kantian antinomies. When reason reflects upon itself, it proclaims its own limit. Kant decided that there are certain things we cannot know using our reason, rather we have to take refuge in practical reason i.e. faith. This faith should not be understood very differently from emotion. Here, it seems that at least Western philosophy has realized that a total worldview cannot be achieved using so-called rationality or scientific method. If rationality could not provide us with a total worldview, could faith give us a total worldview? Surely, the answer would be negative because faith is not self-critical, many times it behaves blindly. Faith alone cannot help us in knowing reality, because faith becomes dogma when not handled carefully; and reason leaves us in antinomies. The most important tool to know

something seems reason itself. If using reason reality cannot be grasped, what is the way to know then? What should be the method to realize the true nature of world, nature, and *self*?

The Indian tradition of philosophy was not driven by any ideal of mathematics or science.

Nagarjuna had come here about two thousand years ago, and declared, like Kant, the ineffectuality of reason. Reality is not graspable by reason; it is beyond reason as well as beyond our conceptualization. Taking for granted the ineffectuality of reason some of the schools of Indian Philosophy, the schools of Buddhism *Shunyavada* and *Vignanavada*, and *Vedic Advaitavada*, advocate other means to know reality. Here I would limit my discussion to only a special branch of Indian philosophy i.e. *Advaitism*, which has very deep roots in *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. *Advaitism* looks upon The *Vedas* (the *Shruti*) to solve this problem. According to *Advaitism* the *Vedas* or *Shruti* are not written by man or by God. They are only seen by the seers. In my opinion, it should be understood in such a way that as poetry is not written intentionally but done; these texts are seen by seers, not composed. In poetry there is a very essential role of emotions; without emotions poetry would not be poetry. The seers of *Vedas* are called '*kavi*' (poet). This part of our internal faculty known as emotion has to play a very important role in the conceptualization, in the process of understanding the world. The *Vedas* are not written by one person at once, but seen in a long interval of time by many different seers, who have realized the truth. In the *Vedas* there are many different types of thinking; and there are many hymns to pray to different gods. Nevertheless, one thing given much importance is that "*Ekam sad vipraa*

Bahudhaa vadanti” ‘the reality is one, the scholars talk about it in many styles’. *Advaitism* sees that the way to know the *Atman* (the self) is self-realization. It combines both reason and emotion to know the reality. There is not any other path to know. Although we never doubt about our existence, we are not aware of ourselves. We misconceive ourselves as the body, the air known as *prana*, the sense organs, Hindu, Christian, man, woman and so on. Due to our ignorance, we always make ourselves confined in these small boundaries. Reason does not permit us to cross these borders and limitations. Therefore it does not give us knowledge about ourselves; rather providing only information it keeps us in a cage, made by our beginning-less ignorance. This is our beginning-less ignorance that we confine ourselves in these small boundaries; and we do not realize our true nature, which is all including, all pervading and identical with everything. Insofar, the true nature of self is not realized and our ignorance is not removed; we act only for the well-being of this small limited ego *self*; we do not take care of others; we stake other beings for the sake of this small ego *self*. But, when the true nature of the *self* is realized, this limited *self* becomes unlimited; small ego *self* grows to be all pervading, all inclusive unlimited *self*. This is very similar to the thinking of Arne Naess. He similarly accepts that “The Self to be realized for humans is not the ego self (small s), but the larger ecological Self (cap S).” In the view of Arne Naess too, there is only one way that is self realization. *Advaitism* suggests a method to realize the small ego *self* as larger ecological *self*, however, it does not use the term “*Ecological self*”. To know reality one will have to go beyond reason.

Advaitism holds that what you call reason, is not different from emotion; both are two facets of same thing, of same internal faculty of knowing. There are four facets of this internal faculty—*mana*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahankara*. It is *mana* when we doubt; this face of our internal faculty comes into play. When we determine something, the face of our internal faculty known as *buddhi* has a role to play. Using the face of this faculty known as *chitta* we think. Moreover, using the face of the internal faculty known as *ahankara* we cognise ourselves as ‘I’. This *ahankara* is in fact what we call the small ego. The realization of small ego as the larger ecological and all pervading ego is actually done through this *ahankara*. In fact when we cognize ourselves in our daily usage we misconceive ourselves; we do not know the real nature of ourselves. There is a simple way to realize the true nature of self, that is to purify our *antahkarana*, our mind performing *Shama*, *Dama*, and *etc* .. Here *Titiksha*, *Uparati*, *Samadhana* and *Shraddha* are also included. The self is pure consciousness and self-luminous. It makes the small ego *self* know other things, nothing else is required to realize and know the *self*. How one can throw a reflective light upon the sun using a mirror. The sun would be seen if our eyes are opened; the mirror would be of no use. Correspondingly, the only method to know the *self* is making our mind free from impurities i.e. infatuation, aversion, attraction, craze etc. These all are products of our ignorance. As one cannot see his face in a mirror whereon dust is present; equally, given that these impurities are there the self is not known. However, as the dust is removed, one sees his face very clearly. Similarly, as these impurities are removed, one clearly realizes that he is not

different from other beings, but identical with them. If one sees with an anthropocentric attitude, being led by ignorance, he thinks only for the well-being of human kind not of every one. When, one sees having an approach of a particular religion, being led by ignorance, he thinks only for the well-being of those people who belong to that religion. Any type of prejudice actually fortifies our ignorance, and does not let us realize our true nature. Therefore, it is necessary that we should give up all these prejudices first, and then rethink. However, it is not so easy to give up these prejudices because those are deeply rooted in our beginning-less ignorance. There are some more basic things to be performed first to give up these prejudices. These are known as *Yama, Niyama, Aasana, Pranayama, Dharana, Dhyana* and *Samadhi*. Amongst them *Yama* is of five types *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), *Satya* (truth), *Asteya* (not-theft), *Brahmacharya* (self-restraint), and *Aparigraha* (without possessions) and it is most necessary and primary. These are understood as very primary steps to be taken to free up the knots of all these prejudices. Insofar as we do not give up the mentality “Humans first” the situation will not be changed. These five *yamas* provide a firm ground so that one may realize the necessity of giving up this anthropocentric attitude. In the view of Arne Naess, humans have this capacity to transcend their ego to identify with the other living beings. Uniformly, *Advaitism* also holds that only human beings can realize their true nature. The reason is, *Advaitism* tells, that only humans have the capacity to give up the prejudices rooted in their ignorance and can free themselves from their narrow-mindedness, not others. A link of this thought can be seen in the view of Arne Naess

regarding the path of non-violence. Shama is a calm, tranquil state which the mind acquires after withdrawing from its limited waking activity to abide inwards in self-poise. Dama is self-restraint which ensues from control over the senses. Uparati is the calmness of renunciation which ensues after satiety in the enjoyment of sense-objects. This concept of *Advaitism* is very contrary to the concept of development, where those countries are accepted much developed in which per capita consumption of natural resources is high. As Buddhist economists suggest, “...the aim should be to obtain the maximum of well-being with the minimum of consumption” *Advaitism* strongly advocates that our needs should be minimized. The reason for clash between nature and human kind are growing greed and expectations. There is no end of greed, and no end of expectations. To quench the thirst of superficial human need and ever-expanding greed Nature is exploited. It seems that the third principle of the Deep Ecology movement ‘Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs’ is reflected in this concept of *Advaitism*. Unless one accepts most situations, both pleasure and pain happily, one cannot be a true follower of the Deep Ecology movement. Science discovered and can discover many new laws related to the world, but it seems no way possible that science could discover the true nature of the *self*. Beginning from the Vedas, it is accepted that worldly pleasure is not the goal of life but to know the *Self*. The *self* is one and identical with all. One who realizes this truth, the true nature of *self*, for him every one is identical with himself; he does not harm anybody, nobody harms him. He gets engaged in the well-being of everyone, every living being,

and every creature (*Sarvabhutahite ratah*) without caring about anyone's birth, caste, gender etc. In the *Vedas* it is said many places “Perceive all creatures with an eye of a friend”. For him there is no difference of any type. He conceives everything as an all-pervading *self*, what Arne Naess calls *Ecological Self*. He does not understand anything different from himself. In the *Gita*, the Lord *Krishna* says, “Earth, water, fire, air, sky, *mana*, *buddhi*, and *ahankara* these are my own nature divided in eight forms”. Here the triad of *mana*, *buddhi*, and *ahankara* are taken as different modes of the same consciousness. This concept turns into a way of worship, which is known as *Sarvatmabhavana* (thinking that everything is identical with *self*, nothing is different). Knowing this truth, knowledge itself becomes worship, and every work becomes worship of God. We love ourselves much; nobody is beloved more than we are to ourselves. If God is different from ourselves then it would be difficult to conceive that one can love God more than one loves himself. However, if God is not different from the *self* then He would surely be beloved more than everything else. There is only a need for realization. This realization is not possible, however, in a general cognitive process. Therefore, this special way of worship is accepted in *Advaitism* as *Sarvatmabhavana* (thinking that everything is identical with the *self*). According to Hinduism there are many ways to worship the God, but this form of worship is propounded as the highest. In the Shree-Dakshinamurti hymn, the propounder of *Advaita* philosophy *Acharya Shankara* bows down to his teacher saying:

“The earth, the water, the air, the fire, the sky, lord of day— the sun, the moon and the Man (the Knower) this *chara* (movable, the creatures who can move themselves) and *achara* (immovable, the creatures who cannot move by themselves like trees), all these eight images are like perceptible images of which, and nothing is left other than all-pervasive whose-self, I am bowing down to that Lord *Dakshinamurti* in the image of my *guru*— teacher”.

Acharya Shankara is not the first person who propounded this type of thought; there is a long tradition to worship God in the form of the above-said eight idols. The great poet Kalidas in the beginning of his masterpiece “*Abhignanshakuntakam*” bows down to God in eight forms—the Earth, water, fire, the worshiper, the sun, the moon, the sky and the air. In the many places in the *Upanishads*, it is taught “Everything is *Brahman*” and the *Brahman* is not different from the self “The *self* is *Brahman*”. This type of notion is deeply rooted in the *Vedic* and *Upanishadic* thoughts. In the *Purusha Sookta*—“All this is verily the *Purusha*. All that which existed in the past or will come into being in the future (is also the *Purusha*). In addition, he is the Lord of immortality. That which grows profusely by food (is also the *Purusha*)”. This very clearly suggests that everything has come into existence from the same *purusha*. The process of cosmogony is understood as a *Yagna* (a ritual sacrifice) performed to praise the *Yagna*. Science understands the process of creation as a natural evolution through the collision of different forces; on the other hand, the Vedic tradition understands it as a *spanda* (the pulsation of

Purusha) and as a *Yagna* (a ritual sacrifice). When Arne Naess says that Nature has intrinsic values, it seems to echo the words of *Vedas*. What we understand as nature and see as diversity and duality is actually pure *chit* (consciousness). The same *Purusha* is manifested in the form of many. In the *Mundakopanishad* also, in the same way, it is personified very beautifully, “The fire is the head, the sun and the moon are eyes, the space is ears, the Vedas are the speech, the air is breaths, this world is the heart and the earth is feet of that *purursha*; this is the soul of everybody”. The entire universe is seen as one living organism. As there is equilibrium in a living being, in the same way there must be equilibrium in the world as a whole. The world is not a collection of different types of things and forces; it is not a group of chaos; it is unity in diversity. There is no conflict or clash between nature and living beings, because these are only two sides of the same coin. This is the continuity of Vedic thoughts reflected in the *Advaitic* interpretation of *Brahman*. Coming to this point the *Advaitic* philosophy becomes a religion. Deep ecology opposes the concept of humans first, and fights to give the same importance to other living beings too. This is the very essence of *Advaitism*. The *Gita* clearly states, “The scholar sees identical, a learned and humble, *Brahman*, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcast”. Every living being has the same right to live; humans have no right to snatch this right from other creatures. Deep ecology opposes anthropocentrism; *Advaitism* would also oppose that. Accepting that everything is *Atman*, nothing is different from the self, neither any type of discrimination nor any type of worship would be possible except one way of worship thinking

that everything is identical with the *self*. This is the highest goal of human beings; to realize this universal truth. Who has achieved this knowledge, for him there is no sorrow anywhere, all the world would become only his expansion, and his every work would become the worship of God. *Gita* clearly says, “For him there is nothing with the works done, nothing with the works to be done; he has no self interest with any creature.” Actually, he does everything for the sake of the well-being of the whole world, not for himself. This is the reason that in the Hindu tradition life is taken as a *Yagna* (a sacrifice). Who has engaged himself only in enjoying, not taking this life as a *Yagna*, his life is worthless, and he lives without any aim. The Lord Krishna says to *Arjuna*, “*Mogham partha sa jeevati*” he lives in vain. Actually, to come out of the present ecological crisis, it is most necessary to realize the aim of life. By uniting reason and emotion *Advaitism* points out the aim of life in the realization of the *self* as an ecological all-inclusive *Self*.

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End Notes—

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