

Management Lessons from Advaita

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Introduction

THE WORD 'ADVAITA' is very beautiful. It literally means 'non-dual'. Dvaita means 'dual' and the prefix 'a' negates the existence of duality so, there is no 'two' but, 'one'. It could be simpler, if we said 'one', but then, the next question would be, is there 'two'; so by saying non-dual, it conveys the clear and firm message of being just one, that is non-dual.

Acharya Shankara's 'philosophical standpoint can be tried to be summed up in a single word "Advaita"—NonDuality. The objective of Advaita is to make an individual understand his or her fundamental (profound) character with the preeminent reality [sic] "Nirakar Brahm" and reality that there is no "two" yet one and only. Advaita shows us to see the substance of oneself in each one and that nobody is separate from the Supreme Power The GOD.¹

What essentialness does it have for the regular daily life of an ordinary person? Advaita instructs us to see the essence of oneself in each one and that nobody is independent from the supreme power or authority, God, Nature, the Divine power. The teachings and lessons of Acharya Shankara can be summed up in a refrain: '*Brahma satyam jagan mithya jivo brahmaiva na aparab*; Brahman, the Absolute, is alone real; this world is unreal; and the jiva or the individual soul is non-different from Brahman.² This is the core of his way of thinking. The Advaita educated by

Acharya Shankara is a thorough, outright one. As indicated by him, whatever is, is Brahman. Brahman itself is totally homogeneous. All distinctions and plurality are deceptive.³

Dualism, Dvaita; qualified monism, Vishishtadvaita; and Monism, Advaita; are the three different fundamental schools of metaphysical ideas. They are altogether different stages to the final stage of the ultimate Truth, namely, *para-brahma*. They are the steps on the stepping stool of yoga. They are not in any manner conflicting but, in actuality, they are complementary to one another. These stages are amicably orchestrated in an evaluated arrangement of spiritual experiences. Dualism, qualified monism, pure monism—all these come full circle inevitably in the Advaita Vedantic acknowledgement of the Absolute or the supra-normal *trigunatita ananta* Brahman.

Individuals have various personalities and various limits. Thus, various schools of theory are additionally fundamental. The most elevated step is Advaita theory. A dualist or qualified monist in the long run turns into a *kevala-advaitin*. A Dvaitin needs to serve the Lord as a worker. The Dvaitin wishes to attend and serve the Lord. A Visishtadvaitin needs to end up like Lord Narayana and appreciate the heavenly. One doesn't wish to combine oneself or become indistinguishable with the Lord. One wishes to stay as a flash. A *jnani* blends oneself in Brahman. One wishes to end up indistinguishable with Brahman.

The primary orderly proponent of the Advaita was Acharya Gaudapada, who is the grand guru

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of Acharya Shankara. Acharya Govindapada was the disciple of Acharya Gaudapada. He was the guru of Acharya Shankara. Acharya Gaudapada has given the focal teaching of Advaita Vedanta in his *Mandukya Karika*. Be that as it may, it was Acharya Shankara who delivered the final delightful form or version of Advaita theory and gave a rightness and completing tone to it. Cautiously studying Acharya Shankara's commentaries on the important Upanishads, the *Brahma Sutra*, and the Bhagavadgita, one will obviously comprehend his Advaita reasoning.⁴

Maybe the most significant school of Indian spiritual way of thinking, Advaita is viewed as the most powerful and most overwhelming sub-school of Vedanta, one of the six standard schools of Hindu way of thinking. Advaita Vedanta says that the one constant Reality, Brahman, alone exists and that changing elements don't have absolute presence, much as the sea's waves have no separate presence in division from the sea. The waves ascend inside the sea and there would be no waves without the sea. In a similar way, the transient world ascends inside the Reality and owes its reality to the ultimate Reality.⁵

The world has no autonomous presence from Reality and that is the reason why it is said to be an illusion. What is changing must be dependent on something else and thereby unreal. This wonderful universe of names and structures is consistently evolving. Names and structures are liable to rot and demise. Subsequently, they are incredible or ephemeral. What is consistent or changeless should dependably be the Real. The Atman or the Eternal, all-pervading Self, ever exists. It permeates all items like ether. Regardless of whether the pot is broken, the ether that is inside and outside it can't be decimated.⁶

Essentially, if the bodies and all other things die, the eternal Self that swarms them can't be crushed; it is the living Truth and just Reality.

Just as a swan lives in water, yet its quills are never grimy by water, likewise an Advaitin lives on the planet, however, she or he is free from the influence of illusion. Advaita Vedanta is in the meantime, a school of reasoning, a religion, a religious philosophy, and a tenet of moksha. Its essential reason is all that eventually exists is the absolute Reality, *nirguna* Brahman, without characteristics.

The phenomenal world has experiential legitimacy. Be that as it may, it has no supreme reality. It is at last maya, an enchanted show, and *mithya*, false, neither genuine nor stunning. All that exists is only Brahman. One's individual self is at last, the same as Brahman, consequently the significance given to the Upanishadic statements like 'I am Brahman'⁷ and 'You are that'.⁸ It is just a kind of powerful numbness, *avidya*, that keeps us from understanding our actual nature as one with the Absolute, in certainty, the Absolute itself.

Once *avidya* is evacuated, there emerges the experience of the Atman's identity with Brahman. One moves towards becoming *jivanmukta*, freed while in the body, and after death achieves moksha, identity with the Absolute. Advaita metaphysics coordinates the later *Mandukya Upanishad*, *Sankhya*, and various thoughts around that time. The Advaita thought of edification or freedom depends on an extremely significant knowledge. Not 'merging with God', as is normally misconstrued, yet realising the Absolute. By realising the Absolute one rises above the cosmic order; one is never again a limited being, rather, one rises to the level of the absolute Reality, Atman-Brahman identity. The limits of oneself vanish and one emerges into the infinite.⁹

Management Lessons

A management expert says: 'The central challenge in all management is realizing the nature

of oneself. The advancement of humankind is best served when a human being connects with his or her own divinity. This is in sharp contrast to the Western view where helping others is viewed as the penultimate purpose of human existence. In Indian spirituality, the world is best served when self-understanding precedes helping others. The world is changed for the better when we change ourselves. The key to a better world is self-realisation.¹⁰

Dimensions of Advaita Vedanta

Acharya Shankara says that whatever exists is Brahman, only pure consciousness. All difference and plurality are illusory, just as you see plurality in the ocean, in the waves, but the waves are water and the ocean is water. The pot is not the clay. If the pot is the clay, when the pot disappears the clay must also disappear, but it doesn't. This is very important to understand. Essence can exist without the form, but form cannot exist without the essence. When we say 'neti, neti', it does not mean that this form is Brahman. The form is never Brahman, but it never exists apart from Brahman.

As indicated by Acharya Shankara, Brahman, the supreme cosmic Spirit, is separated from everyone and is the ultimate truth. Other than Brahman, everything else, including the universe, material articles, and people, is unreal. Brahman, depicted as the One who is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient, is the heavenly ground of all Being. Brahman is likewise depicted as 'neti, neti', signifying 'not this, not this', as it is *adrishya*, past the compass of the materialistic eyes. It is the premise of the material world, which thus is its illusionary change, *maya*. Brahman isn't the impact of the world while, this world is only crafted by Brahman. Brahman is said to be the source of limitless information in its most flawless structure. Brahman isn't an

item; Brahman isn't another. It is all-full, unbounded, constant, self-existent, self-amuse, self-learning and self-joy. It is *svarupa*, nature; *nirakara*, formless. It is the pith of the knower. It is the seer, *drashta*; transcendent, *turiya*; and silent witness, *sakshi*.

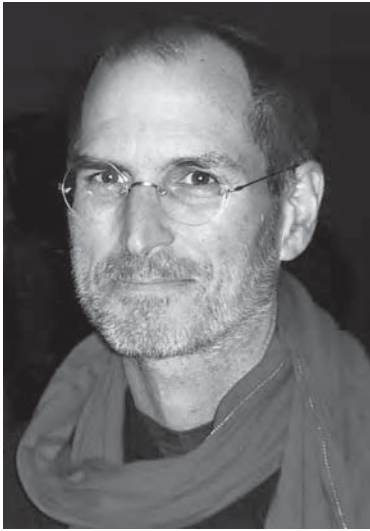
Maya is the complex illusory power of Brahman, which makes Brahman to be viewed as the material universe of independent structures: *nirguna* Brahman seems to be *saguna* Brahman.

As Acharya Shankara has clarified, *nirguna* Brahman is generic. It turns into an individual God, *saguna* Brahman, just through its relationship with *maya*.

Saguna Brahman and *nirguna* Brahman are not two unique Brahman. *Nirguna* Brahman isn't the differentiation or inverse of *saguna* Brahman, and neither the other way around; if at all They were, it would be totally opposing to the Advaita Vedanta. The equivalent *nirguna* Brahman shows up as *saguna* Brahman for the devout love of enthusiasts. It is a similar Truth from two unique perspectives. *Nirguna* Brahman is the higher Brahman, the Brahman from the supra-normal perspective, *paramarthika*; *saguna* Brahman is the alleged lower Brahman, the Brahman from the relative perspective, *vyavaharika*.

Maya has two primary functions—one is to 'conceal' the Brahman from common human discernment and the other is to show the material world in its place. Maya is additionally said to be incredible, since the major reality of basic tangible recognition is totally covered up, despite the fact that all sense information entering one's mindfulness through the five faculties are *maya*. Another motivation behind why it said to be odd is that it is neither totally genuine nor totally stunning.

Maya's safe house is Brahman, however Brahman itself is safe by the hallucination of *maya*; simply like the swan and the lotus, unaffected by



Steve Jobs

its environment, which is a delineation of the Advaita Vedanta.

The Upanishads broadcast, 'Brahman alone is genuine', however we see this material world to be genuine. In what manner or capacity?

Acharya Shankara clarified this peculiarity by the idea of maya.

As indicated by Advaita Vedanta and as clarified by Acharya Shankara, when a person attempts to know or comprehend the amorphous, the unbelievable Brahman, with one's psyche and affected by maya, the Brahman that one sees, is *ishvara*. *Ishvara* is the impact of the reconciliation of maya with Brahman.

Adi Shankara utilises an analogy wherein he says that when the impression of the cosmic Being is seen through the reflection of maya, the supreme Being, *ishvara*, shows.

Ishvara is saguna Brahman or Brahman utilising maya as the apparatus or instrument. The *ishvara* can be acknowledged or seen by the profoundly edified. *Ishvara* might be even respected to have a character. The *ishvara* is the subject of worship. The *ishvara* is the premise of profound quality and supplier of the products of one's karma. Notwithstanding, *ishvara* is beyond the past wrongdoing and legitimacy. *Ishvara's* relationship with maya does not influence the flawlessness of *ishvara*. *Ishvara* dependably knows the solidarity of the Brahman substance and the maya-nature of the world.

Advaitins likewise have faith in the hypothesis of rebirth of jivas as plants, creatures, and people according to their karma. They accept

that bondage and suffering because of maya and just knowledge, jnana, of Brahman can obliterate maya. When maya is expelled, there exists positively no distinction between the jiva and the Brahman. Such a condition of joy, when accomplished while living, is called *jivanmukti*.

While one is in the even-minded dimension, one can revere God in any capacity and in any structure. Yet, Acharya Shankara accepts that while Vedic penances, puja, and reverential worship can lead one towards jnana, genuine learning, they can't lead one straightforwardly to moksha. One needs to endure the outcomes of one's past activities. Regardless of what number of good deeds an individual does to conceal one's wrongdoings, despite everything, one needs to confront them some day.¹¹

Management Lessons

Steve Jobs said: 'Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma—which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.'¹²

A management teacher says:

The 'inner voice' which Steve Jobs talks about is the Atman or Self and the 'heart or intuition' symbolizes the Brahman (Universal Self or God consciousness). When you follow your heart and intuition and listen to your inner voice, you actually link your 'Atman' with the 'Brahman' and hence can unleash the infinite power to succeed. No doubt, Steve Jobs above quote is in tune with the Advaita philosophy of '*Aham Brahmasmi*' which means 'I am the Brahman or God'.

To really manage ourselves and connect with our Atman, we need to first gain complete control over our senses. For that we need to

completely detach ourselves from all material temptations through self-abnegation. As the great Indian mystic sage Ramakrishna (who was the 'guru' or master of Swami Vivekananda) said: "The world is water and the mind milk. If you pour milk into water they become one; you cannot find the pure milk any more. But turn the milk into curd and churn it into butter. Then, when that butter is placed in water, it will float. So, practice spiritual discipline in solitude and obtain the butter of knowledge and love. Even if you keep that butter in the water of the world the two will not mix. The butter will float."¹³ ...

In the context of modern management it means that every manager should be focused on his work and at the same time be "in-sync" with the organization's vision and mission. When every worker and manager is in-sync with the Organization's Vision and mission, then it ultimately leads to excellence. This is the true essence of management by objectives as preached by Drucker.¹⁴

Acharya Shankara's preeminent Brahman is *nirguna*, without the gunas; *nirakara*, formless; *nirvisesha*, without qualities; and *akarta*, non-doer as expressed previously. Brahman is over all needs and wants. Adi Shankara says, this Atman is plainly obvious. The Atman is the premise of a wide range of insight and wisdom. Advaita basically alludes to the character of the Self, Atman and the Whole, Brahman. He stated: '*Ekameva advitiam brahma*; Brahman is only one, without a second.'¹⁵ There is no second, yet there is the presence of a huge variety. There might be numerous stalks of sugarcane, however the juice from every one of them has a similar sweetness. Creatures are many, however their breath is the equivalent. Countries are many, however the earth is one. As such, Acharya Shankara announced to the world that it is solidarity that underlines the obvious decedent variety.¹⁶

Management Lessons

The vision or goal of an organisation should be holistic and above all the diversities, adversities, and limitations. All efforts should be oriented for the overall growth and development and for the betterment of society and sustainable living. Continuous development, learning, upgradation with a focussed energy, and a dynamic leadership to overcome the diversities, adversities, and limitations makes an organisation a vibrant entity being an asset for the economy and society.

Five Tenets of Practical Advaita

The five tenets of practical Advaita are:

1. The belief, 'I am not this body, mind, and intellect.'
2. The belief, 'I am not the doer.'
3. The belief, 'I am not the experiencer.'
4. Efficiency in action.
5. An equanimous view.¹⁷

Management Lessons

These are five key policies to be followed for sustainable management practices:

1. Participative-style management.
2. Team work, giving credit to teammates and taking responsibilities and challenges for team building and getting work done.
3. Alignment with the organisational vision and goals.
4. World-class managerial practices.
5. A holistic approach.

The Impact of Advaita Vedanta

Advaita is interesting as it claims to our obligation to locate an immediate knowledge into our unique nature through the intensity of insight and comprehension. Advaita is a statement of extraordinary spiritual intellectualism, which has anchored our soul and imaginative knowledge to non-double authoritative opinion, blocking us



Shankaragaurishvara Temple at Patan

from finding the living truth of higher duality. Advaita revived quite a bit of Hindu idea and reasoning and furthermore affected discussion with the two fundamental mystical schools of Vedanta theory that were formalised later, namely, Vishishtadvaita, qualified non-dualism and Dvaita, dualism.

Advaita Vedanta further helped the converge of the old Vedic religion with famous cliques or divinities, henceforth framing a connection between higher kinds of training, for example, jnana yoga, *kriya* yoga, and so on.

In Vedanta, *satyam*, Reality, is in all respects obviously characterised and has a particular essentialness. That is to say, what exists in all the three timeframes, past, present and future, without experiencing any change; and furthermore in all the three conditions of awareness, waking state, dream state, and profound rest. It is in this manner that the supreme Reality—birthless, deathless, and unchanging—alluded to in the Upanishads as Brahman.

The world seems genuine just in the waking state; yet it is invalidated, it vanishes, in the

fantasy and profound rest states. Thus, it isn't genuine, as indicated earlier. Along these lines, the world is said to be *mithya* by Acharya Shankara. Be that as it may, numerous individuals appear to be hypersensitive to *mithya*, when it is utilised to allude to the recognisable world. Consequently, maybe, Acharya Shankara calls it *vyavaharika satta*, relative reality or *pratibhasika satta*, imaginative reality, as though to suit them.

Jiva alludes to the aware rule in every single living being, including human beings. In the profound rest state, *sushupti*, the body, psyche, and keenness are altogether discredited, rendered absolutely insufficient or insentient. Subsequently, the jiva is unified with the aware, internal life-standard, which restores the body, brain, and mind after rest. This life-guideline is the unadulterated cognisance that is equivalent in all creatures. The all-invading Brahman of the Upanishads is that unadulterated cognisance present in all jivas as their *antaryami*, inward soul.

Management Lessons

Managers and CEOs can practise, rehearse, and implement the lessons of Advaita by considering an association with oneself and partners as one and the same, and not two distinct substances, which means considering in this manner the objectives, objects, or vision of an association and avoiding segregation between people. Besides, Advaita trains managers to conduct themselves properly and treat their subordinates in such a manner that they do not feel they are subordinates and find no distinction between the vision or objective of an association and herself or himself. There must be an extraordinary synchronisation between every one of the components of organisational dynamics and working personnel.

Conclusion

Acharya Shankara 'was not only a great thinker

and the noblest of *Advaitik* philosophers, but he was essentially an inspired champion of *Hinduism*.¹⁸ He set a model in thinking and exposition which subsequent philosophers in India have striven to follow. His Advaita reasoning is grandiose, brilliant, and special. It is an arrangement of intense way of thinking and sensible nuance. It is exceedingly fascinating, rousing, and lifting. No other way of thinking can remain before it in strength, profundity, and unobtrusive reasoning. Acharya Shankara's way of thinking is finished and flawless.

Acharya Shankara was a compelling, heavenly virtuoso. He was the greatest logician. He was a significant scholar of the principal rank. He was a sage of the most astounding acknowledgment. He was an avatara of Lord Shiva. His way of thinking has brought comfort, harmony, and enlightenment to endless people in the East and the West. The Western masterminds bow their heads at his lotus-feet. His way of thinking has relieved the distresses and burdens of the most pitiful people, and brought trust, delight, knowledge, flawlessness, opportunity, and comfort to many. His arrangement of theory commands the profound respect of the entire world.

Acharya Shankara was a scholarly and profound genius. He could encounter that radiant, supernatural state, *turiya*, wherein the jiva realises its identity with Brahman, simply like the Upanishadic soothsayers. Along these lines, the incomparable Acharya Shankara could affirm and legitimately outline the vision of the old rishis of Sanatana Dharma, the reality of Advaita. Before he left his human loop, he immovably settled this way of thinking by his skilful discourses on the *prasthanatraya*, the three essential branches of Vedanta, namely, Upanishads, Gita, and the *Brahma Sutra*. Acharya Shankara made the edifice of Hindu religion strong and sturdy by his scientific exposition of



Entrance to Acharya Shankara's Cave, Srinagar

the Upanishadic philosophy so that even today Sanatana Dharma can face modern challenges. Indian philosophy has always come to be identified with Acharya Shankara's Advaita Vedanta.¹⁹

A philosopher says:

Advaita system(s) can be divided on the basis of four doctrines 1. Nirguna-brahmavada, 2. brahma-vivartavada, 3. anirvacaniya-khyativada and 4. jivanmuktivada. In post-Shankara Advaita, these four doctrines go hand in hand. The first two doctrines have metaphysical implications, the third has both metaphysical and epistemological implications and the fourth has great soteriological significance. The works of Shankara and post-Shankara Advaitins are meaningful only when viewed against the metaphysical background of the nature of the self and the theory of the identity of self and Brahman.²⁰

Acharya Shankara believed that all the schools, except Advaita Vedanta, had misinterpreted the Upanishads and missed their actual spirit. Shankara's main intention was to produce

the correct interpretation of Upanishads. In order to do this, Shankara skilfully drew from the religious and philosophical concepts of his predecessors as well as his opponents. In this manner, he created a varied and complex philosophical structure of his own, the Advaita Vedanta system. Thus, Adi Shankara is best characterized not as a Hindu thinker or a 'crypto-Buddhist' but as an Upanishadic Indian philosopher.²¹



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