Introduction

The classical Indian theories of consciousness generally involved within a stereological context in which the ultimate goal was same transcendental spiritual state. The goal is liberation for the self from the flawed condition of material world. Indian philosophy is the magnificent effort to probe the inmost being of man and nature. Much of the Indian philosophy is cognitive in the sense that it is a direct inquiry into the elevation of phenomenal consciousness (cit) to higher and higher levels of cognitive activity. This paper examines the description of Consciousness as Saksin in Advaita Philosophy. The Advaita theory of consciousness is not restricted to the analysis of epistemological crises, it also analyses metaphysical issues. Consciousness is one and homogeneous, indivisible and eternal. It is also referred to as self or atman. In Advaita, we can find a phenomenology of levels of consciousness. Consciousness is simply a witness to its own operation and divergent modes. It is eternal, non-dual and remains unchanged. Significant feature of Advaita phenomenology of consciousness is that consciousness at a certain level, simply a witness to its own operation and divergent modes. This idea or level of consciousness is witness consciousness. In the absence of such a consciousness, experience or knowledge would not be possible.

The Elucidation of Saksin in Advaita

In Advaita, the concept of Saksin is the single most important postulate of the principle of revelation operative in experience-cognitive and non-cognitive alike. This principle is a necessary ingredient in any epistemological process. In Advaita, we can find a phenomenology of levels of consciousness. Consciousness is simply a witness to its own operation and divergent modes. It is eternal, non-dual and remains unchanged.

It is wrong to speak of Saksin as knowable, for it is the element of awareness in all knowing, and to assume that it is knowable would be to imply another knowing element - a process that leads to the fallacy of infinite regress. But the Saksin does not therefore remain unrealised, for being self-luminous, by its very nature; it does not require to be made known at all. Its presence is necessarily equivalent to its revelation and it is therefore never missed the pure element of awareness in all knowing.

According to Samkara, the Atman or self is one, pure, self-luminous, self-established, undifferentiated, non-intentional, eternal and timeless consciousness. In his view, one is aware of atman within oneself. It is real present in human experience. It is known directly and immediately. It manifests in every human being as self-awareness or self-consciousness. It is the witness consciousness of all events, physical as well as psychical. Atman is pure consciousness and it persists in empirical experience and is known as the agent and the enjoyer of activities.

We can draw five different characterisations of Saksin provided by Samkara:

1. Saksin as the witness of intellect.
2. Saksin as the non-dual, propertyless Brahman.
3. Saksin as identical to atman.
4. Saksin as the witness of all three states, and
5. Saksin as the same as Isvara.
Sruti also confirms this by the example of the great fish, etc. The form, 'I am that', shows its oneness (in all the three states). From the three states (witnessed by it) and that it is one, pure, and effortless. That the self (i.e. the witness consciousness) is distinct from consciousness and Maya. The jiva is a complex entity consisting of mental cognition as well as the physical objects. According to Samkara’s conception, Saksin has two basic usages, one is that Saksin as simply atman and the other is that Saksin as atman limited by the inner sense. Samkara makes a distinction between two sorts of knowledge in his commentary on Ka.Upanishad. They are knowledge of Brahman and knowledge gained through the mind and senses. The former is the highest knowledge, knowledge of reality or pure consciousness. It is beyond the subject-object dichotomy and is self-luminous and non-relational. The latter is modified consciousness. It is a reflection of pure consciousness through a mode of the inner sense. Thus, it is relational knowledge. In his view each and every empirical cognition is the modification of pure consciousness.

Descriptive Analysis of Consciousness in Advaita

Advaita uses consciousness and the ego by two different terms and there is no mixing up of these two terms. The term used for consciousness is Cit or Caitanya. Self, Atman or Cit signifies one and the same entity. The other, ego referred as internal organ (antah-karana). The internal organ is designat- ed in four different ways as mind, intellect, ego and memo- ry stuff depending upon the function it does. Internal organ differs from consciousness, is material. Consciousness be- comes intentional only because of its presence and function- ing. When it functions giving rise to doubtful cognition of an object, then it is called mind. If it produces definite knowledge of an object, then it is called intellect. When there arise the sense of 'I', it is called ego.

In Samkara’s words:

“That the self (i.e. the witness consciousness) is distinct from the three states (witnessed by it) and that it is one, pure, and unrelated, are proved by the fact of its existence in the three states in succession. Further, the evidence of memory in the form, ‘I am that’, shows its oneness (in all the three states).”

Conclusion

Significant feature of Advaita phenomenology of consciousness is that consciousness at a certain level, simply a witness to its own operation and divergent modes. This idea or level of consciousness is witness consciousness. In the absence of such a consciousness, experience or knowledge would not be possible. There is always a level of consciousness within each one of us where we stand apart at a certain distance and sim- ply observe our experience without getting involved in these experiences. In the absence of this observation there could be
no cognition. Phenomenological analysis used to uncover reality or pure consciousness. They also make use of the idea of ignorance. There is a consciousness that witnesses this ignorance. When ignorance is removed, the consciousness and the object became non-different.

The Vedantic method is phenomenological because its focus is as experience instead of objects. Consciousness is the light that illuminates the objects. In Advaita, the transcendental, pure consciousness is a necessary condition of all phenomena. Saksin is the witness to the object. The Saksin is the presupposition of all knowing; it illuminates all that is known and making knowledge possible.

REFERENCES