

## Parmenides and Gauḍapāda's *Vision*\*

There is an unchanging, eternal, ever-present and actual Reality without generation and extinction, devoid of cause-effect and of space-time, having no contradiction, One without a second. As Reality is constant and perfect unity, all that is differentiation, multiplicity, fleetingness and change cannot be ultimate and supreme Reality but only *appearance*, representation which may seem to be real if observed from the point of view of opinion...

The world of names and forms is nothing but mere appearance... it is a *continuum-discontinuum* which may be interrupted [as soon as]<sup>1</sup> the supreme Knowledge of identity (*paravidyā*) unveils within ourselves... According to Gauḍapāda all pairs of opposites, not being absolute, dissolve into the One-without-a-second.

For Parmenides too the Teaching is based upon the above postulates. For [the divine Master there is only one Way (ὁδός) and a sole Reality which solves the existential enigma]: Being in that It *is*. It is unity, actuality, permanency, not subject neither to birth nor to death, one and indivisible...

«That Being is non-generated and imperishable, in fact It is, in its entirety, whole, immobile and without end. Not was It once, nor will be, since It is now altogether everything, One, continuous. In fact, what origin of It will you look for? How and where could It have been born? Of non-being I shall not allow you to speak or think. In fact, what is not cannot be uttered or thought of. And even so, what need could have urged It, which rises from nothing, to be born, before or after? Therefore it is necessary for It to be either wholly or not at all. And never shall the force of true conviction allow that anything different from It be born of Being».

It can be known through the noetic knowledge (*nḍesis*)... that unveils only the supreme intelligible...

For Parmenides too the world of names and forms (empirical world) is simple *appearance*, and is presented (as in Gauḍapāda) as a dialectical moment and not as absolute necessity.

«Therefore they will be just *names* (ὄνομα), which mortals have established, convinced that they are true: birth and death, being and non-being, change of place and mutation of brilliant color».

Becoming, contingent and change seem, from a false standpoint, to be and exist.

«But from this way [of opinion which believes that things that are not are] of research remove your thought... This cosmic order, *apparent* as it is, I shall reveal to you in detail, so that non opinion of any mortal may overcome you».

... Parmenides [however] does not negate in absolute the world of δόξα (empirical world), but he sets it in its proper place as 'appearance', as phenomenon,

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\* Extract from, *The Pathway of Non-duality*, by Raphael (Āśram Vidyā Order), Cp. Parmenides and His Vision. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1992.

<sup>1</sup> Square brackets are ours.

because it is resolved and transcended by the superior and supreme certainty of Being. The fact that the Goddess explains to Parmenides the structure and the workings of the world-δόξα means that this must have a ‘degree’ of recognition, because there can be no talk of nothing, of things that do not exist, of ‘the barren woman’s child or the hare’s horns’, to use Gauḍapāda’s and Śaṅkara’s expressions.

«However, you will also learn how appearance must be judged by who in all directions investigates everything».

On the other hand, Parmenides himself says that of non-being as such there is nothing to be said:

«... in fact one can neither utter nor think of what is not».

Parmenides [disproves] only those who take the relative for the Absolute, becoming (το μή ὄν) for Being (το ὄν), opinion (δόξα) for Truth (ἀλήθεια); and again, he [disproves] those who place Being and becoming upon the same plane... The world of δόξα is appearance, similar to a dream when compared with the supreme Reality of Being which is its very foundation...

Here same Gauḍapāda’s *kārikā*<sup>2</sup>:

«Now I shall speak of That (*Brahman*), free of limitation, non-born and always in a state of equilibrium, and listen how nothing is in anyway born although it may seem to have been born».

«The dualists affirm the birth of what is non-born, but how can what is non-born and immortal become mortal?»

«The immortal cannot become mortal, nor can the mortal become immortal because there can be no change of nature».

...

«A datum which already exists cannot be reborn and a datum which never existed cannot come into being...»

«By the word nature is meant what is permanently acquired or intrinsic, innate; that which is not produced, that is immutable in its essential characteristics».

«The unreal cannot have unreal as its cause, nor can the real be born of the real, nor, again can the real be born of the unreal, nor, finally, can the unreal be born of the real».

...

«It is of account of *māyā*, with the exclusion of every other possibility, that this Non-born (*Brahman* without a second) may differentiate. If differentiation were real, then the immortal would become mortal».

According to Parmenides, opinion... is an erroneous vision of men «in which true certainty does not dwell», and which makes Being seem to be generated and multiple. According to Gauḍapāda it is *avidyā*, which can also be taken to mean sensory perception... which makes appear things that are not.

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<sup>2</sup> Gauḍapāda, *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, III, 2, 20, 21; IV, 4, 9, 40; III, 19...

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