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## HISTORIC-PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD AS A WAY OF INTERPRETING A CONCEPT OF BRAHMAN IN THE EARLY VISHISHTA-ADVAITA SCHOOL\*

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The paper deals with the concept of Brahman in the early Vishisht-Advaita-Vedanta School, particularly in Yamunacarya's treatise "Ishvarasiddhi", the main passages of which are lost.

**Key words:** Yamunacarya, Brahman, nyaya, Ramanuja, Ishvara, anumana, shabda, "Ishvarasiddhi".

The early period of Vishisht-advaita-vedanta school was formed on the base Yamuna's works. The main philosophical ideas of this school are elaborated in the famous philosophical trilogy "Siddhitraya", which includes the part devoted to the concept of individual soul nature ("Atmasiddhi", or "Realization of Atman"), the part devoted to the concept of the Highest Reality ("Ishvarasiddhi", or "Realization of Personal God") and the part devoted to the concept of self-realization or salvation of Atman ("Samvitsiddhi", or "Realization of the Highest knowledge"). Unfortunately most of these texts have been lost and now we have no possibility to know exactly the full content of Yamuna's works. The part devoted to the concept of the nature of Brahman, or Ishvara, has been saved only in several fragments, which contain only the polemics between a mimansaka and a nayayaka (Mimansa school and Nyaya school). In other words the arguments of Yamunacarya concerning the concept of Brahman and his ideas have been lost and we cannot restore them, basing on the text. We have to reconstruct his ideas on the nature of Brahman on the base of the treatises of the later philosophers of Vishisht-advaita school: mainly from the references and interpretations of Yamunacarya's ideas, contained in the works of Ramanuja and Venkatanatha. This fact was the main reason, why "Ishvarasiddhi" was not investigated deeply and, we dare to say, adequately: it is rather difficult to study the fragments of the text, the subject of which (or clue passage) is lost. All translations and interpretations of the philosophical trilogy "Siddhitraya" are devoted mostly to two other parts of it: "Atmasiddhi" and "Samvitsiddhi".

The saved fragment of "Ishvarasiddhi" is a purvapaksha, which contains some arguments of the other schools on the problem of existence of Ishvara. This purvapaksha presents a dialogue between a mimansaka, who tries to refute the idea of the existence of Omniscient God, and a nayayika, who tries to prove this idea.

The basic argument of a mimansaka is that Personal God, or Ishvara, cannot be perceived and that is why we cannot demonstrate His existence. If we take a sensual

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perception (*laukika pratyaksha*) or even a supersensual perception (*alaukika*, or *yogika pratyaksha*), we can see that no one of these two types of perception can overcome the sensual borders and, consequently, become a base of proving that Personal God exists. The same principle can be applied to *anumana*, or logical syllogism. “A man, who doesn’t know what the fire is, how can he say that the smoke is its attribute?” (the argument of *Mimansa*). And the same principle is applied to *shabda*, or the Sacred Books. To summarize *Mimansa* arguments we can say that, according *Mimansa*, the idea of Brahman is surplus or it is not necessary.

The *Nyaya* argumentation defends the opposite point of view. The main argument of *Nyaya* is that the world is a result of God’s creation. That is why we can conclude, says a *nayayika*, that the Creator exists, because we can see His creature, like all human handmade work proves human existence. But to this argument a *mimansaka* notices in a very right manner that Personal God is Omniscient and Omnipotent and that He has no desire, nor necessity to create anything because He is Perfect Being. And here, says a *mimansaka*, a question arises, why this God creates the world, for what reason? He cannot do it because of His love to human beings: we see that this world is imperfect and that human souls are suffering in it. A *nayayika* tries to refute this argument and he begins to do it, but the text of “*Ishvarasiddhi*” is cut on this idea. Thus we haven’t the lost *siddhanta* of *Yamuna* (his point of view) and the end of the *purvapaksha*. This great loss or defect of “*Ishvarasiddhi*” became a reason why many scholars, for example, S. Dasgupta or W. Neevel, confirmed that *Yamunacarya* had followed a *Nyaya* method, trying to prove that existence of Personal God is a subject of *anumana* (or logical syllogism). But other scholars radically insist that it is a great mistake or absolute misunderstanding of *Yamuna*’s philosophical position on this point.

In this case we should mention the introduction to “*Siddhitraya*”, written by the Indian scholar *Ramanujachari*, who radically insists on the idea that *Yamunacarya* confirmed that God could be got to know only on the base of the Sacred Books or *shruti*, and that no *anumana*, nor *pratyaksha* could be useful in His being got to know. The same confirmation we can find in *Mesquita*’s investigation of *Yamunacarya*’s works. In other words it means that the saved passage of “*Ishvarasiddhi*” doesn’t include *Yamunacarya*’s point of view. As a corroboration to this idea we can remember *Ramanuja*’s “*Shribhashya*”, where the philosopher reproduces the basic ideas of *Yamunacarya* and where he says that God could be known only by the base of the Sacred Books. The Sacred Books (such as *Upanishads*, *Bhagavadgita* etc) say that the Supreme Reality is a multitude of all good qualities. In other words it means that we can describe Brahman only positively or by enumerating His good qualities, and negatively or by denial any imperfections in His nature. But in this case we can see the ontological abyss or precipice between the Perfect God and the imperfect world. This ontological abyss cannot be explained: it should be overcome by faith that the Sacred Books are true. *Ramanuja* refutes *Mimansa*’s argument that Brahman could create the world by the following argument. *Ramanuja* says that the motive or reason of creation could be two types: 1) for one’s sake; 2) for the good of the others. Both of these motives are impossible for God, *Ramanuja* says. Consequently, the only motive, why God creates the world is a *lila*

(a play). It means that God creates the world as a child plays his play. The specific feature of Ramanuja's philosophy is that Brahman is the center of all his worldview, of his doctrines (be they ontological, or gnoseological or soteriological). We can understand Vishishtadvaita system only in prism of the notion of Brahman. And the main definition of Ramanuja, by means of which he describes the nature of Brahman, is that Brahman is free from any imperfections. He is absolutely good and perfect. It's very important that Ramanuja always emphasizes the highest position of Brahman, His exclusiveness and uniqueness. And that God has a personality: He is Purushottama, who rules everything in this world, the Inner Ruler (antaryamin) of all creatures. Ramanuja named Him Vishnu, some places Shiva or Indra. He says that even jiva or individual soul could be named as Brahman, because jiva is a part of Brahman, the last forms an essence of jiva, rules from inner his body. According Ramanuja, Vishnu-Narayana is efficient and material cause of the world. Above all of this Brahman has plenty of perfect good attributes which are necessary to be known for adequate understanding of Brahman. Here we should mention that Ramanuja in his description of svarupa or true nature of Brahman depends on Vishnu tradition (Pancaratra texts). The final definition of Brahman, according Ramanuja, is that Brahman is the Highest "ego", "aham", the main attribute of which is knowledge and bliss. And a man, who knows Brahman or His true nature acquires all His attributes. In other words he becomes identical with or like Brahman.

In any way Ramanuja saved in different names he uses to denote Brahman (Vishnu, Paratattva, Narayana, Sat, Paramatma etc.) His exclusive High Perfectness, and thus tries to widen or enlarge human experience, or to pull out, to ennoble a human nature, to make it closer to Brahman's nature. That's why we cannot be saved from sansara's sufferings without help of the Personal God, or personal understanding of true nature (svarupa) of Brahman. This is main conclusion of Ramanuja which explicates very well the sense of the lost passages of Yamunacharya's "Ishvarasiddhi".

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## **ИСТОРИКО-ФИЛОСОФСКИЙ МЕТОД ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИИ КОНЦЕПЦИИ БРАХМАНА В РАННЕЙ ВИШИШТА-АДВАЙТА-ВЕДАНТЕ**

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**Ключевые слова:** Ямуначарья, Брахман, ньяя, Рамануджа, Ишвара, анумана, шабда, «Ишварасиддхи».