

ShrIgurubhyo namaH

Advaitic Mananam on Gita shloka 2:12 & 2:13

With a Critique of Dvaita Remarks

*A commentary on
Sri Jayatirtha's (1314-1378 AD) and
Sri Ramatirtha's
references to 'nairAtmyavAda' .*

The following remarks sourced from the site of some followers of the dvaita school have been taken up for a close analysis so as to evaluate the truth and strength of these remarks. It is not the intention of this writer to make counter-charges against the dvaitins as this would not result in any productive fruit for a sadhaka. The purpose of the analysis is to appreciate the Truth that the Scripture holds out and bring this to the fore for all to see. It could also be viewed as a mananam exercise by mumukshus.

From the Page: Bhagavadgita II - 13 (Evidence for the Existence of a soul) in the site:

<http://www.dvaita.org/shaastra/gita/bg213.html>

Quote//[bhAshhya](#) --

ataH kutarkairdhIrastatra na muhyati || 13 ||

Therefore, by perverted arguments, "the intelligent one is not deluded." || 13 ||

pra. dI. --

evaM cha chaturthapAdopayuktaM prameyamuktva tadidAnIM
niveshayati -- `ata', iti | yata evaM nairAtmyavAdibhiH
utprexitAH kutarka atastaiH kutarkaiH dhIraH dhImAn.h tatra
dehAtiriktanityAtmasadbhAvavishhaye na mohamApadyate |
`narake niyataM vAsaH' ityAdyarjunavachanena tasya nityAtma-
pratipattisiddheH prathamapurushhaprayogaH || 13 ||

Then, too, stating the prameya stated in the fourth part of
the
verse, it is explained here, `ata', thus. As it is the case
that
the statement of the ones holding that there is nothing
pertaining to the self is a sophism (*), `dhIraH', i.e., the
wise one, is not deluded on the subject of the existence of
the
soul that is different from the body. As `continued residence
in hell' (I-44), thuslike statements of Arjuna prove the
existence
of an eternal soul, the third person is used (in `dhIraH tatra
na
muhyati'; Arjuna understands this, clearly, so the statement
is
being made about others).

(*) The calling of Advaita as `nairAtmyavAda' is based on the following Shruti:

atha j~nAnopasargaH | rAjan.h mohajAlasyaishha vai
yoniryad.h
asvargaiH saha svargyA Ashlishhyanti | ... atha ye chAnye
ha
mithyAtarkaiH dR^ishhTAntaiH kuhakendrajAlaiH vaidikeshhu
paristhAtumichchhanti taiH saha na saMvaset.h |
prAkAshyabhUta vai te taskarA asvargyA ityevaM hi Aha --

nairAtmyavAdakuhakairmithyAdR^ishhTAntahetubhiH |
bhrAmya.Nlloko na jAnAti vedavidyAntaraM tu yat.h ||

Now, the obstacles to knowledge: O King, this web of
delusion has
its origin in that the pious associate with the impious...
these,
and others who, with illusory logic (or: logic claiming to
show
illusion and illustrations, wish to insert themselves among
Vaidika-s -- do not abide with them. They are indeed
daylight

robbers, and are un-heavenly, for that alone it is stated:

On account of the web of illusory examples and logic of the doctrine that holds that there is nothing concerning the Atman, the world wanders about not knowing the higher, true essence of the Vedas.

This Shruti is cited by Srimad Âchârya in the VTVN ('maitreyIshAkhAyAM cha atha j~JnAnopasargA ityuktVA', etc.); while it may have the flavor of an `aprasiddha-shruti', it is (unfortunately for the Advaitins) actually available, being in the maitrAyaNlya upanishhad.h VII-8 which gives a list of various false doctrines that are to be rejected by the seeker, with the `nairAtmyavAda' being the last, and goes on to state that Brihaspati, the preceptor of the deities, took on the form of Shukracharya, the preceptor of the demons, and created these to destroy the latter and protect Indra: `bR^ihaspatirvai shukro bhUtvendrasyAbhayAyAsurebhyaH xayAyemAM avidyAM asR^ijat.h' (the chArvAka doctrine is also thus called the `bR^ihaspati-shAstra'). The Advaitins claim, and J.A.B. van Buitenen's translation (Mouton & Co., The Hague, Netherlands, 1962; BL 1120. A54B8) says, that this `nairAtmyavAda' is the "doctrine that holds there is no Atman," i.e., the Buddhists. However, this is incorrect on two grounds: one, because as Sri Jayatîrtha points out in the VTVN-Tika, the Buddhists cannot be said to wish to insert themselves among the Vaidika-s ('vaidikeshhu paristhAtuM ichchhanti'), i.e., to pass themselves off as Vedantins, their purpose indeed being to wipe out Vedanta. Second, grammatically, `nairAtmyavAda' is properly read as `Atmasambandhl kimapi nAstIti nairAtmyavAdaH' -- the doctrine which holds that there is nothing other than the Atman, is nairAtmyavAda. Buddhism would have to be referred to as `nirAtmavAda', not as `nairAtmyavAda'. It is significant, therefore, that Sri Jayatîrtha shows that the verse II-13 is actually refuting the claim made by Sri Shankara in his commentary on the previous verse. Hence it is that the Upanishad describes the proponents of nairAtmyavAda as `prAkAshyabhUta vai te taskarA' -- verily daylight robbers, for making bold to propound a doctrine that is openly opposed to the tenets of the texts while claiming to expound them, and thus for taking away the purport of the shâstra-s before one's very eyes.//Unquote

A Response to the above two points made by Sri Jayatirtha:

1. The Maitrayani Upanishad has been commented upon by Sri Ramatirtha. This is also translated into English by Cowell. The book was published by the Asiatic Society, Calcutta in the year 1935. It appears that the commentary is much older, having seen some earlier prints in the 1800's.

The Maitrayani Upanishad along with the commentary of Sri Ramatirtha and English translation by Cowell can be read here: <http://tinyurl.com/5x687b> [File size 18.02 MB] (This file has been uploaded by Sri Sunder Hattangadi whose work in making available numerous scriptural works on the internet is greatly laudable.)

The following is the relevant portion from the commentary:

(The portion appears in the next page)

कषायकुण्डलिनः कापालिनोऽथ ये चान्ये ह वृथा-
तर्कदृष्टान्तकुहकेन्द्रजालैर्वैदिकेषु परिस्थातुमिच्छन्ति तैः
सह न संवसेत् प्राकाश्यभूता वै ते तस्करा अस्वर्ग्या
इत्येवं ह्याह ।

नैरात्म्यवादकुहकैर्मिथ्यादृष्टान्तहेतुभिः ।

आम्यन् लोको न जानाति वेदविद्यान्तरन्तु यत् ॥ ८ ॥

ग्रहादीनामिति कर्मणि षष्ठी । अर्थं पुरस्कृत्य धनादिकं
स्वजीवनमुद्दिश्य ये यच्चादीन् प्राणिपौडकान् ग्रमयाम उच्चा-
टनादिभिर्निवारयाम इत्येवं ब्रुवाणा मन्त्रयन्त्रपरा इत्यर्थः ।
अथ ये चान्ये वृथा मिथ्या कषायवासमः कुण्डलिनः शङ्खादि-
शकलकृतकुण्डलधारिणः कापालिनः कपालभिचवः ।
अथ ये चान्ये वृथातर्कोऽनुग्राह्यप्रबलप्रमाणशून्यः स्वबुद्धि-
कल्पितः दृष्टान्तः प्रायोदृष्टस्योदाहरणं क्वचिदृष्टस्य वोदा-
हरणं दृष्टान्तः, कुहकं क्लृप्तग्रहः प्रतारणं वा, इन्द्रजालं प्रत्य-
क्षतो मिथ्यार्थप्रदर्शनं । एतैर्द्वारेभ्य वैदिकेषु वेदोक्तमार्गैक-
निरतेषु परिस्थातुं परिपन्थितया स्थातुमिच्छन्ति तैः सह न
संवसेत्, ये च पूर्वाक्तास्तैश्च न सह संवसेदित्यर्थः । तत्र हेतु-
माह, ते वै निश्चितं प्राकाश्यभूता अपरोक्षा एव तस्करा-
श्वोराः परवित्तापहारिणः प्रसिद्धाः यावन्त उक्तास्ते अस्वर्ग्या
यतः, अतो वैदिकानभिभूय ज्ञानमार्गमवरुन्धते इति वैदिकै-
र्वेदोक्तपुरुषार्थार्थिभिस्तत्सङ्गस्याज्य इत्यर्थः, इत्येवं ह्याह ।

The meaning of the expression: ‘vaidikeShu paristhAtum icchanti’ (‘they wish to locate themselves amidst followers of the Vedas’) of the Maitrayani Upanishad 7.8:

The Upanishad, while mentioning the case of those opposed to Vedas, and therefore to be avoided, describes their trait as ‘these (Buddhists), among other things, wish to establish themselves among the followers of the Vedas.’ We can understand this with the help of the following illustration:

Supposing there are some missionaries of a faith ‘X’. Their mission is to enlist maximum converts from faith ‘Y’ into their fold. They understand that they cannot do this by remaining in remote locations. So they identify those localities where people of faith ‘Y’ live in large numbers. They put up their offices/places of worship/outfits in these localities. Having done this, they take up methods of enticing those of faith ‘Y’ by printing literature denigrating the deities of faith ‘Y’, their practices, etc. They hold meetings, give talks directed at creating confusion and bitterness in the minds of their targeted audience and hold out various kinds of allurements for effecting the conversion.

The above could have been exactly the practice of the early Bauddhas. Many early converts to their fold were those who had fairly good knowledge of the Vedas. They became converts and started writing against the Vedic path and culture.

Here is an interesting quote sourced from the Advaita Vedanta site’s page:

<http://209.85.175.104/search?q=cache:U1mrjh5gIpMJ:www.advaita-vedanta.org/avhp/gaudapada.html+Buddhism%27s+criticism+of+Vedanta&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=in&client=firefox-a>

(Or use this url.:

<http://tinyurl.com/5mxr2b>

[\[Open in new window\]](#)

//It is also important to remember that the development of both mahAyAna buddhism and **vedAnta** took place more or less simultaneously, and within the same larger geographical area. It would be foolhardy to expect that there would not have been some interaction between the two most powerful streams (brAhmaNa and

bauddha) of Indian philosophical thought. It is clear from the history of Indian philosophical thought that both brAhmaNa and bauddha sides held steadfastly to their basic axioms, although the individual systems within each stream held diverse opinions on various philosophical issues.//

It is this method of opposing the Vedas and the Vedic culture that the Upanishad means by saying: **‘they wish to locate themselves amidst followers of the Vedas.’**

The commentary of Sri [Ramatirtha](#) to this Upanishad says, for this expression: ‘paristhAtum icchanti’ – **paripanthitayA sthAtum icchanti**. This means: They (Bauddhas, called by this Upanishad by the name: NairAtmya vAdin-s) wish to establish themselves, **as adversaries**, amidst the followers of the Vedas.

Thus, we can see that an adversary can remain amidst his target, either incognito or otherwise, and yet carry on his mission.

For the term ‘NairAtmya vAdaH’ of the Upanishad, Sri Ramatirtha’s commentary says:

नैरात्म्यवादः शून्यचक्षिकविज्ञानाद्यात्मवादः । वेदविद्यान्तरमिति
वेदं विद्यान्तरञ्चेत्यर्थः ॥ ८ ॥

NairAtmyavAdaH = shUnya kShaNikavijnAnaadi AtmavAdaH. This means: The ‘deniers of the Self ‘ are those who hold the self to be a void/momentary consciousness. These are evidently the Bauddhas.

(Translation of the portion VII.8 of the Maitrayani Upanishad from the site:

<http://everything2.com/e2node/Maitrayani%2520Upanishad%2520Part%2520Tw>
[Q](#)

OR

<http://tinyurl.com/66akdc>

[\[Open in new window\]](#)

(translated by Max Muller) 1884 ‘The Sacred Books of the East’)

8. Now follow the impediments in the way of knowledge, O King! This is indeed the origin of the net of bewilderment, that one who is worthy of heaven lives with those who are not [worthy](#) of heaven. That is it. Though they have been told

that there is a grove before them, they cling to a small shrub. And others also who are always merry, always abroad, always begging, always making a living by [handiwork](#); and others who are begging in towns, performing sacrifices for those who are not allowed to offer sacrifices, who make themselves the pupils of [Sudras](#), and Sudras who know the sacred books; and others who are malignant, who use bad language, dancers, prize-fighters, travelling [mendicants](#), actors, those who have been degraded in the king's service; and others who for money pretend that they can lay (the evil influences) of Yakshas, Rakshasas, ghosts, goblins, devils, serpents, imps, &c.; and others who falsely wear red dresses, earrings, and skulls; **and others who wish to entice** by the jugglery of false arguments, mere comparisons and paralogisms, **the believers in the [Veda](#)** - with all these he should not live together. *They are clearly thieves, and unworthy of heaven.* And thus it is said:

'The world unsettled by the paralogisms of the **denial of Self**, by false comparisons and arguments, does not know what is the difference between [Veda](#) and philosophy.'

2. The term 'NairaAtmyavAdaH' refers to the Buddhist doctrine alone:

In the sequel are shown some instances where the term 'NairAtmyavAda' is used in Buddhist literature by Buddhists themselves to mean: '**doctrine of no-self**'. Even a dictionary of Buddhist terms gives the meaning of this term as what we have been seeing here.

Online book: Hinduism And Buddhism - Volume II by Charles W. Eliot

CHAPTER XIX

MAHAYANIST [METAPHYSICS](#)

//Anyone who reads these treatises and notices the [number](#) of apparently [eternal](#) beings and the [talk](#) about the [universal mind](#) is likely to [think](#) the old [doctrine](#) that [nothing](#) has an [atman](#) or [soul](#), has been forgotten. But this impression is not correct; the [doctrine](#) of [Nairatmyam](#) is asserted so uncompromisingly that from one [point](#) of [view](#) it may be said that [even Buddhas](#) do not [exist](#). **The [meaning](#) of this [doctrine](#) is that no being or [object](#) contains an unchangeable [permanent self](#), which lives unaltered in the same or in different [bodies](#).** On the contrary [individual](#) existences consist of [nothing](#) but a [collection](#) of skandhas or a [santana](#) , a [succession](#) or [series](#) of [mental phenomena](#). In the [Pali books](#) this [doctrine](#) is applied chiefly to the [soul](#) and

[psychological](#) enquiries. The [Mahayana](#) applied it to the external [world](#) and proved by ingenious [arguments](#) that [nothing](#) at all exists. //

Mahayana Lankavatara Sutra
Translated into English by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki :

//The truth-treasure whose principle is the self-nature of Mind, **has no selfhood (nairatmyam)**, stands above all reasoning, and is free from impurities; it points to the knowledge attained in one's inmost self; Lord, show me here the way leading to the Truth.//

----- Original Message -----

From: "[srikanta at nie.ac.in](mailto:srikanta@nie.ac.in)" <[srikanta at nie.ac.in](mailto:srikanta@nie.ac.in)>

To: [advaita-1 at lists.advaita-vedanta.org](mailto:advaita-1@lists.advaita-vedanta.org)

Sent: Saturday, April 26, 2008 1:53:51 PM

Subject: [Advaita-1] Discussion on pratitya-samutpada and Advaita

//In pratitya-samutpada(theory of dependent co-origination) every thing is dependently arisen."sarve nissvabhavah",every thing is without self nature."Sarve **nairatmyam**,sarvam dukkam,nirvanam shantam"so says Buddha.In his book,"vaidalyaprakarana",Nagarjuna clearly defines what is pratitya-samutpada.//

Philosophy of Vasubandhu in Vimsatika and Trimsika

By Surendra Nath Das Gupta

The Indian Historical Quarterly,

vol 4:1, March, 1928 p.36-43

p. 36

(2) It is possible that the awareness of anything may become the object of a further awareness, and that of another, but in all such cases where the awareness is

significant (arthavati) there are no entities or reality as represented by them; but this should not be interpreted as a denial of the principle of intelligence or pure know-

2. Yo balair dharmanam svabhavo grahyagrahakadivh parikalpitas tena kalpitenatmana tesam **nairatmyam** na tvanabhilapyenatmana yo buddhanam visaya iti.
Commentary on Vimsika, p. 6.

AAAA

TỔ ĐÌNH MINH ĐĂNG QUANG

PHẬT HỌC TỪ ĐIỂN

BUDDHIST DICTIONARY

SANSKRIT/PALI-VIETNAMESE

Phạn / Pali -Việt

THIỆN PHÚC

N

Nairatmyam (skt)—**Nairatmya** (p): Vô Ngã—Không có tự ngã—Soullessness—**The fact that there is no Self**—See Vô Ngã.

&&&&&

Having seen the various instances of usage of this term 'NairAtmya...' in the very Buddhist literature, let us now see the derivation of the term **nairAtmyam**:

The word **nairAtmyam** is first derived as: nirgataH AtmA yasmAt saH nirAtmA. [He from whom the Self, Atman, has 'departed' (because of his negating/rejecting it), is called nirAtmA, 'one-without-Atma' or 'no-Atma'].

Then, **nirAtmano bhAvaH nairAtmyam**. [the abstract form of nirAtmaa is nairAtmyam, or in other words, 'no-Atman-ness'.]

Then again, the derivation is: **nairAtmyam uchyate pratipAdyate anena iti nairAtmyavAdaH**. (that system by which this doctrine is preached/established is called the doctrine of 'no-Atman-ness'.)

[Note: words like 'naiShkarmyam' , 'aitadAtmyam' (occurring in Chandogya Upanishad VI.Chapter (Tattvamasi portion) can also be derived in the above manner, with the 'bhAva' pratyaya. Shri Shankaracharya does this in the Bhashyam for the Bhagavad Gita verse 3.4 as:

'NaiShkarmyam niShkarma-bhAvam karmashUnyatAm...'

and in Gita verse 18. 49 as:

'NaiShkarmyasiddhim nirgatAni karmANi yasmAnniShkriyabrahmAtmasambOdhAt sa niShkarmA, tasya bhAvO naiShkarmyam, ...'

Thus, the very word **nirAtmA** that Sri Jayatirtha proposes in the first instance, when taken one/two steps further for derivation, results in the most suitable, **grammatically acceptable**, term to denote the Buddhists. And this is the word used in that Upanishad.

The other point made by Sri Jayatirtha is:

//Second, grammatically, `nairAtmyavAda' is properly read as `AtmasambandhI kimapi nAstIti nairAtmyavAdaH' -- the doctrine which holds that there is nothing other than the Atman, is nairAtmyavAda.//

A comment on the above:

It is another matter that what is said by Sri Jayatirtha above is **indeed the depiction of the correct position of the Vedanta**. Since Brahman/Atman is 'asanga'(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.16) and adviteeya/advaitam, as borne out by

several Shruti passages, there can be no 'sambandha' in true terms, between Atman/Brahman and anything else since nothing else apart from Brahman truly exists. For this reason also the reason given by Sri Jayatirtha to consider 'nairAtmyavaadinaH' to mean only the Advaitins is incorrect.

Let us consider the following '**statement**' on **Tattvavada**, sourced from a site:

<http://www.indiadinivine.org/articles/218/1/Philosophy-of-Dvaita-Vedanta/Page1.html>

OR

<http://tinyurl.com/56co4g>

[[Open in new window](#)]

“Though **Brahman can do very well without prakriti or purusa** (Dependent Realities), it prefers, in its infinite glory and inexorable will, 'to do with them'. Such dependence (apeksa) of Brahman on things which are in themselves dependent on It, is **no mark of inferiority or limitation**”

(emphasis mine)

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This '**statement**' on **Tattvavada** very clearly translates into: 'Brahma satyam jagan mithyA, jIvo Brahmaiva na aparaH' (Brahman alone is Real and the world is unreal. The jiva, soul, is none other than Brahman) and implies 'AtmasambandhI kimapi nAsti' (There is nothing other than Atman).

An Advaitin would see the above 'statement' as largely depicting the essence of the Advaita Brahman. In Advaita, Brahman is One Only without a second in its absolute nature, Paramarthika. By the association of Maya, prakriti, the world is created. Yet, since this creation is only maayika, Brahman remains asanga always. The very accepting of the possibility of **Brahman doing very well without prakriti or purusha (jiva)** implies Its eternally asanga and essentially Advaita svabhAva. Again, accepting this possibility of Brahman being a 'Great Stand-Alone' results in the natural conclusion of a situation where the prakriti and jiva are not there. And Its 'preference' to 'do with them' is not difficult to explain as it is due to Brahman's icchA. Brahman's icchA and mAyA are one and the same. Advaita views the 'dependents on It' ([paratantra](#)) as what is/are superimposed on It and hence the substratum Brahman is not limited by the superimposed prakriti and the samsara born of it. Such a Brahman/Atman is not related to anything, in reality, is borne out by the above 'statement.' Again, the purport of the words '....

is no mark of inferiority or limitation’ of the above ‘statement’ is expressed by Sri Shankaracharya in the preamble to His Bhashya on the Brahmasutras thus:

//tatraivam sati yatra yadadyAsaH, tatkRtena doSheNa guNena vaa
aNumAtreNApi sa na sambadhyate...// [‘This being so, the locus
(Atman/Brahman) is not affected in any way either by the merits or demerits of the
things superimposed.’]

Thus, even though the language used to give expression to the
‘Brahman/jagat/jiva triad’ is different in the two schools, essentially they mean
the same. Recognizing and accepting this would lead to harmony; the opposite is
only acrimony. (*This is one area where scholars could focus upon so as to work
out a harmony.*)

Now, since Sri Jayatirtha has made a distinction between the terms ‘nirAtmavAda’
(applicable to Buddhists) and ‘nairAtmyavAda’ (applicable only to Advaitins) we
conclude that Sri Jayatirtha clearly distinguishes the Advaitins from the Buddhists.
From his suggestion:

// ‘Atmasambandhl kimapi nAstIti nairAtmyavAdaH’ -- the doctrine which holds that
there is nothing **other than the Atman**, is nairAtmyavAda. Buddhism would have to be
referred to as ‘nirAtmavAda’, not as ‘nairAtmyavAda’.

it is clear that according to Sri Jayatirtha, the Advaitins accept, that is, do not deny, the
Atman but only deny any other entity apart from Atman. This admission on the part of
Sri Jayatirtha amounts to absolving the Advaitins of the charge, of being ‘pracchanna
bauddha-s’, ‘Buddhists in disguise.’ For, in Sri Jayatirtha’s opinion while **the Buddhists
are the ones who have denied the Atman itself, the Advaitins accept the Atman
but only deny anything that could be related to Atman.**

[An aside note: In his Kannada book ‘Mata traya sameekshA’, Dr.Anandatirtha
Vysampayanacharya Nagasampige, Director of the Purnaprajna Samshodhana
Mandiram, Bangalore, includes a section in the Chapter on Advaita darshana, titled:
// **‘Are the Buddhists only Vaidikas in disguise?’** It is the view of Advaitins that since
the Buddhists have adapted the concept of ‘nirvisheSha (attributeless) Brahman of the
Upanishads, and have formulated their theory, they are ‘pracchanna vaidika-s.’//]

From the stated admission on the part of Sri Jayatirtha, the objection that Sri Shankara
has denied a soul in the Gita 2.12 is also proved to be futile, being self-contradictory.
This is because, while Sri Jayatirtha accepts that Advaitins have not denied the Atman
while arguing the case of the Maitrayani Upanishad, he charges that Advaitins have
denied the Atman in the Gita 2.12. (This is stated here because the remarks of the

Dvaita school appears under the section '[Evidence](#) for existence of a soul'.)

[Advaita accepts the jiva, the sharIri, in samsara and their nAnAtva (being many in number), and the created universe, and all that could be related to the Atman, in the plane of vyavahara, born of ignorance. The Gita and other bhashyams bring out this idea clearly. After all, the vyavahara pertaining to punya, papa, transmigration, etc. will have to be accounted. All this requires accepting the jiva, the karta, bhokta, and their nAnAtva. The karma-phala dAtA, [Ishwara](#) too is accepted as different from the jiva/s. In the very ShAnkara Bhashya (for Gita verse 2.12) passage that Sri Jayatirtha has taken up for critical analysis, there occur these words:

'tathA na chaiva na bhaviShyAmaH, kim tu bhaviShyAmaH eva sarve vayam ato asmAt dehavinAshAt param uttarakAle api. triShvapi kAleShu nityA AtmasvarupeNa ityarthaH'

[So, **neither shall we cease to exist**; on the other hand, **we shall all certainly continue to exist even after the death of these bodies. As the Self, the Atman, we are eternal in all the three periods of time** (past, present and future.)]

In fact, in the very first verse for which Sri Shankara has commented in the Gita, (2.11), He says:

//Such people as Bhishma and Drona deserve no grief for they are men of good conduct and **are eternal in their real nature**://

[Note the **plural number** used in the Bahshyam quotes above]

Therefore, there is no question of Sri Shankara 'denying the Atman' in the Gita 2.12. Nor is it true that 'Sri Shankara's contention is refuted by the Lord in the subsequent verse.' A perusal of Sri Shankara's commentary on the verse 2.13 too will reveal that Sri Jayatirtha's criticism is not based on the factual situation.

There can hardly be any reason for Bhagavan to refute what Sri Shankara has remarked in the commentary for the Gita verse 2.12. Sri Shankara has remarked:

//dehabhedAnuvRttyA bahuvachanam, na AtmabhedAbhiprAyeNa//

[The plural 'us' is used (by Bhagavan) with reference to the bodies that are different; it does not mean that there are more than one Self.]

A Short analysis of the Bhagavad Gita Verse: 2.13:

The above verse reads:

Dehino'smin yathA dehe kaumAram yauvanam jarA

tathA dehAntaraH prAptiH dheeraH tatra na muhyati

[In the body of the Self (dehi, sharIri, Atman) there are the transformations namely childhood, youth and old age. So too there is the transmigration by acquiring another body upon the death of the present body. A discriminating one does not become deluded by this phenomenon.]

From these words of the Lord we see there are these elements:

- There is a soul, self, Atman.
- There is a body.
- The body is 'connected' to the Atman.
- There are transformations in the body.

What is this 'connection' sambandha? Is it like a person saying: 'This is my car'? No. This is a unique type of sambandha. There is a very deep identification of the Atman with the body. It is not like the one in the case of one's car. This identification, the wrongly taking the body to be oneself, is the cause of moha, delusion, that results in samsara. How do we know this? From the Lord's words: 'dheeraH tatra na muhyati' [A discriminating one does not become deluded by this phenomenon]. Many are the Astika-s, believers, who know/believe that the soul is different from the body, that it exists eternally, death does not mean the end of the soul, etc. (Arjuna himself is an example. He displays this knowledge in the first chapter of the Gita. Yet, why does he grieve on the prospect of the killing of Bhishma, etc.?) Does this much conviction make them Jnanin-s, Mukta-s? No. One needs to be equipped with the knowledge arising out of answers to these specific questions: **Whether the Atman is:**

- one or many
- different from Brahman/ParamAtmA or not
- with or without attributes
- karta, bhokta (doer, enjoyer) or akarta, abhokta (non-doer, non-enjoyer)
- dependent or independent
- atomic in size or infinite
- intrinsically/eternally pure or impure
- endowed with a mind/instruments of knowledge or not

A general knowledge pertaining to the soul is not sufficient for freedom from delusion and its resultant grief. The above questions require an Acharya to expound to an aspirant. It is this that Lord Krishna, the Acharya, is teaching to Arjuna, and through him, the others.

The unshakable conviction that the Atman is never connected with anything that is perishable/anAtmA is the only means to [Moksha](#). It is his attachment to the near and dear ones that makes Arjuna grieve. He asks: Even if we were to win the war, what use is that joy in the absence of our near and dear ones? This shows that despite the

knowledge, born of ShAstra study, that the soul is eternal, different from the body, etc., ultimate freedom from shoka/moha is possible only by aparoksha jnana of the **asanga** Atman.]

Thus, taking the body to be oneself, that is, taking the body as one's sambandhi, is delusion. Not considering the body to be the Atman is viveka. While the former leads to samsara, the latter liberates a person. So, the Lord is teaching this viveka to Arjuna through this verse. By taking the body as oneself, one also takes the 'happenings' to the body as also happening to oneself. This is the next level of 'Atma-sambandha' with the body's properties. Once a person takes his body to be his self, then, the 'other' bodies that he contacts in the world are also 'other selves'. When the body is seen as anAtmA, there is no recognition of others as different from oneself. There will be nothing either to bring about the feeling of 'others, many' as it is only the finitude of the body that causes the plurality. It is this realization alone that ensures freedom from moha, delusion and its resultant shoka, sorrow.

Thus, the Lord's teaching is: There is nothing that could be related to Atman, 'Atmasambandhi kimapi nAsti'. This Atman that is 'free-of-any-relationship' can be Only One: 'aham AtmA guDAkesha sarvabhUtAshayaH..' (Gita 10.20) [I am the Atma, O Arjuna, residing in all the beings'. And this is what is meant by the remark in Sri Shankara's commentary for the verse 2.12 :

//dehabhedAnuvRttyA bahuvachanam, na AtmabhedAbhiprAyeNa//

[The plural 'us' is used (by Bhagavan) with reference to the bodies that are different; it does not mean that there are more than one Self.]

From the above we are able to conclude that the Lord in 2.13 is only **confirming** what Sri Shankara has commented in 2.12. To reiterate: 'I am the body' is moha, leading naturally to plurality. 'I, the Secondless asanga Atman, am not affected by the transformations of the body' is viveka, dheeratva.

Why Atman cannot be many?

When we have 'many' of anything, we distinguish them from each other on the basis of certain factors. In the case of many (gross) bodies, for example, we distinguish them on the basis of height, weight, complexion, age, etc. In the case of many subtle bodies, the mind/intellect/ego, we can distinguish on the basis of comprehending power, sharpness of intellect, subduing of ego, etc. What factors exist, in the case of the Atman, to distinguish one Atman from the other?

Any 'factor' that helps distinguish one from another has to be a product of action, of the body, mind or speech. It is recognized/accepted by all aastika systems that the attributes like beauty, complexion, health, efficiency, power of comprehension, creativity, etc., of the body, mind, intellect, sense organs, etc. are all results of one's

(past /present) karma. The very 'svabhAva', innate 'nature' of a person too is the result of karma alone. (The 17th chapter of the Gita details the svabhAva in terms of 'shraddhA' on the basis of sattva, rajas and tamas.) The Gita teaching on the need to cultivate daivi sampat (divine qualities) and eschew Aasuri sampat (demoniac traits) is a proof of this.

Atman is admitted to be distinct from the body, distinct even from the mind, intellect, etc. The Gita (3.42) teaches this:

//The senses are superior; superior to the senses is mind; superior to mind is reason; one who is even superior to reason is He, the Atman. //

The Kathopanishat 1.3.10,11 and 2.3.7,8 too give this same teaching.

Since Atman transcends all the instruments that could be employed in producing a result of action, karma phalam, no karma or its phalam could touch Atman and make Atman attributed. The karma phalam can only affect the body, mind, intellect, etc., but never the Atman. Therefore Atman can have nothing that can make it different from 'another' Atman. If it is said that each Atman has its own unique characteristics, guna or dosha, even these should be deemed to have resulted from karma alone and never otherwise. But since karma can never enter Atman that is never born, all samsara is in the realm of action and results which are possible only in the domain of the ego-mind-body.

There is no deha-sambandha or manas-sambandha or vAk/indriya sambandha for the Atman. Therefore, no karma sambandha and thus no guNa/doSha sambandha. The Gita (5.19) says: nirdoSham hi samam Brahma. (Brahman is free of any blemish and is one and the same everywhere). Atman is free from any relation with anything in all periods of time. Atman is ever pure. It is for this reason that Atman knowledge is taught as the means to liberation.

An 'acid test' to grasp the above concept:

Supposing three persons are sitting in a park on a bench. They do not know each other. One is engrossed in a newspaper, another, immersed in a book and the third, gazing at the vast blue sky. That the three are silent is evident. There are three persons alright. But are there three **silences**? No. One can experience just the silence there. No counting of this silence is possible. It is not possible to apportion the silence among the three. It is only when they start talking that we can say the difference on the basis of voice, the topic of their talk, language, slang, tone, etc. But when they are all silent, no such distinguishing marks are available to us with respect to the silence. The 'silence' obtaining here is **only one and cannot be many**. Just as there can be many ornaments made of gold but gold is only one. Even so the bodies are many but Atman is only one. Atman is like the silence in this illustration. 'ShAntam Shivam Advaitam' says the MandUkya Upanishat 7th mantra about Atman. Samsara is akin to the

talking in this example. It is only in samsara counting and distinction is possible but not in Atman/Moksha.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishat (4.3.22) gives a similar illustration, of deep sleep (to finally teach the state of liberation). It says:

"In this state a father is no more a father, a mother is no more a mother, the worlds are no more the worlds, the gods are no more the gods, the Vedas are no more the Vedas. In this state a thief is no more a thief, the killer of a noble brahmin is no more a killer, a chandala is no more a chandala, a paulkasa is no more a paulkasa, a monk is no more a monk, an ascetic is no more an ascetic. "This form of his is untouched by good deeds and untouched by evil deeds, for he is then beyond all the woes of his heart."

While in the waking all identities are available in tact and all distinctions are possible, the state of deep sleep affords no room for any identities and distinctions. Deep sleep is the same for all beings.

The case with the Atman is also similar. It is only after creation that one can make distinctions but not when Atman is not related with/to creation. In the Mundakopanishat (1.2.12) 'pareekshya IOkAn karmachitaan...' there is a description of the seeker of Atman knowledge. He examines the world and concludes that 'the Uncaused cannot be attained by the means of the caused. (The **silence** of the above park illustration is uncaused, obtaining naturally in the park; the **talking**, however, is caused. Again, the sleep in the above illustration is similar. The Mandukya Upanishat teaches the third paada, the sleep state, as the cause of the other two, waking and dream states. One returns to his natural state of sleep.) The Upanishat uses the terms 'akRtaH' to denote that Truth that is not caused by anything and 'kRtaH' to denote that which is other than the Truth. That which is produced, caused, is what can have attributes and is anitya and therefore asatya. This cannot form the means to attaining the Truth, the one free of attributes and is nitya and is therefore satya. In the 'caused' there will be plurality but not in the Truth that is uncaused. This is because anything caused can happen only with parts assembled, joined together. That which is uncaused is not an assemblage.

It is only when prakriti and purusha, the jiva, come together that any thing is caused. Thereafter emerges this universe of diverse forms and attributes but not in the absence of such a creation. What obtains without the state of creation is best said thus:

//...**Brahman** can do very well without prakrti or purusa (Dependent Realities)// The MandUkya Upanishat 7th mantra calls this 'prapanchopashamam', One free of the world.

Thus, whenever we use the plural number, it can refer only to the body, etc. and not the Atman that is ever One. Questions and answers in the world, in the field of secular and religious/spiritual vyavahara, will be possible only by using the language that is understandable. It is in keeping with this rule that the Lord in the Gita verse 2.12 uses

the plural referring to Arjuna, Himself and the other kings. It is in recognition of this inevitability that Sri Shankara makes that comment about the plural referring to the bodies alone and not the Atman. In the absence of such a clarificatory comment there is the possibility of a reader mistaking the teaching of the Lord and concluding that there are many Atmans, all different from each other and different from the Lord, Brahman.

Let us now examine the aptness of Sri Shankara's above remark, in the context of the overall teaching of Bhagavan in the Gita, in the immediate context of the specific teaching in the Second Chapter of the Gita and in the overall context of the entire Upanishadic teaching.

In the Gita, 18.20, the Lord teaches the Knowledge that constitutes **Saattvic Jnanam**:

sarvabhUteShu yena **ekam** bhAvam avyayam IkShate
avibhaktam vibhakteShu taj jnAnam viddhi saattvikam.

[That by which a man sees the One Indestructible Reality in all beings, inseparate in the separated, that knowledge know thou as Sattvic.]

Sri Shankara comments: ...That Reality, the Self, is not different in different bodies; like the AkAsha, the Self admits of no division. Know thou this direct and right perception of the non-dual Self as sAttvic.

In the subsequent two verses the Lord mentions, *as that which has to be given up*, the Rajasic and Tamasic knowledge where the *vision of difference in Atman* is characteristic. Evidently, the Saattvic knowledge alone is conducive for Liberation.

Again, in Gita 13.16 we have:

Avibhaktam cha **bhUteShu** vibhaktamiva cha sthitam..

[And undivided, yet remaining divided as it were in beings; ... too is That, the Knowable...]

Here again, Sri Shankara comments: It is undivided in the different bodies, It is one like the AkAsha. Still, It *appears* to be different in all the different bodies, inasmuch as It manifests only in the bodies.

In the Kathopanishad 1.2.22 the Guru, Yama, teaches:

asharIram sharIreShu anavastheShu avasthitam
mahAntam vibhum AtmAnam matvA dhlro na shochati

[The Self is Bodiless in the midst of bodies, is Permanent in the midst of the impermanent ..]

In the BrihadAraNyaka Upanishad 2.4.14 and 4.5.15 occurs this mantra with some variations:

Yatra hi dvaitamiva bhavati taditara itaram jighrati....yatra vA asya sarvamAtmaiva abhUt tat kena kam jighret...yena idam sarvam vijaanAti tam kena vijAnlyAt vijnAtaram arey kena vijAniiyAt..

[14. "For when **there is duality, as it were**, then one smells another, one sees another, one hears another, one speaks to another, one thinks of another, one knows another. **But when everything has become the Self**, then what should one smell and through what, what should one see and through what, what should one hear and through what, what should one speak and through what, what should one think and through what, what should one know and through what? Through what should One know That owing to which all this is known—through what, my dear, should one know the Knower?"]

[It is to be noted that the above Upanishadic teaching of the Non-dual vision does not preclude the Jnanin's vyavahara of seeing, smelling, etc. All these go on but with the realization that they happen only in the realm of the sense organs and their objects. This has been clearly stated in the Gita verses: 5.8,9: 'I do nothing at all' thus would the Truth-Knower think, steadfast, though seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing, speaking, letting go, seizing, opening and closing the eyes, remembering that the senses move among the sense-objects.]

In the Chandogya Upanishad , there is the teaching of BhUma vidyA. Mantra 7.24.1 says:

Yatra nAnyat pashyati nAnyat shRNoti ..sa bhUmA. atha yatra anyat pashyati....tadalpam. yo vai bhUmA tadamRtam atha tadalpam tanmartyam...

[1. "**Where one sees nothing else**, hears nothing else, understands nothing else—that is the **Infinite**. **Where one sees something else**, hears something else, understands something else—**that is the finite**. The Infinite is immortal, the finite mortal."]

The Kathopanishad in the mantras 2.2.9 to 13 clearly teaches, with examples, the One Atman that is available in many bodies.

Even the Maitrayani Upanishad that is being studied, although in parts, in the present write-up, gives [this](#) kind of teaching.

Keeping in view the above teachings contained in the Gita and the Upanishads, Sri Shankara makes that remark in the context of Bhagavan's teaching of the nature of Atman to Arjuna. It is not that this remark is out of the context of the second chapter, for close at hand, in 2.17 the Lord says:
avinAshi tu tad viddhi **yena sarvam idam tatam...**

[Know That to be imperishable by Which **all this is pervaded...**]

How does the Atman pervade 'all this'? The answer is found in the Gita itself:

Bahirantashcha bhUtAnAm acharam chameva cha
sUkShmatvAt tadavijneyam dUrastham cha antike cha tat (13.15)

The Atman pervades this entire creation, in and out, of all beings. Being extremely subtle, It is not knowable as an object by the senses.

This is akin to the Narayana suktam declaration: 'antar bahishcha tat sarvam vyApya NaarAyaNaH sthitaH' (Lord Narayana pervades in and through all this created universe of names and forms,)

That which pervades all this, consisting of the separate bodies, the entire world of variety, can be Only One. It cannot be many. (The logicians, Nyaya shastra, accept manas, atma, Akasha, etc. as nityam. But in Vedanta the One Atman/Brahman Alone is nityam, 'ekam eva adviteeyam' as taught in the Chandogya Upanishad Ch.VI.)

So, what Sri Shankara has remarked about the plurality of the bodies and the Unity/Singularity of the One Undivided Atman is actually upholding the ambrosial teaching, the Parama SiddhAnta, of Bhagavan, the Upanishads and the unassailable anubhava, experience, of the Atma Jnanin. For, the Gita teaches:

Samam sarveShu bhUteShu tiShThantam parameshvaram
Vinashyatsu avinashyantam ya: pashyati sa pashyati (13.27)

Samam pashyan hi sarvatra samavasthitam Ishvaram
Na hinastyAtmanA AtmAnam....(13.28)

The Jnani gets the vision of the **One Atman** that resides in all the **separated bodies** that are perishable. Such a Jnani, by virtue of this Knowledge of His Own Self that is present in every one else, does not bring grief either to himself or to others.

It is such a vital component of the teaching of Bhagavan that Sri Shankara is giving expression to in His commentary to the Gita verse 2. 12:

//dehabhedAnuvRttyA bahuvachanam, na AtmabhedAbhiprAyeNa//

[The plural 'us' is used (by Bhagavan) with reference to the bodies that are different; it does not mean that there are more than one Self.]

Such being the case, why would Bhagavan ever 'refute' this remark of Sri Shankara? What the Lord says in the subsequent (2.13) verse is about the changes that occur, in the natural course, to the body of an embodied being. These changes will not affect the Atman that is Immutable. As seen earlier, Advaita accepts the plurality of the embodied beings in the state of ignorance. For, it is ignorance that causes one to consider oneself to be finite, take the attributes of the body/mind to be of his Self, take himself to be a

samsari, different from others and different from Brahman. This is graphically taught in the Mundaka Upanishad (3.1.1) mantra '[dvaa suparNaa](#)' through the two-bird imagery. When the Truth is discerned, all this finitude and difference ceases. Hence, it is incorrect to charge that the Lord has 'refuted' Sri Shankara's remark pertaining to plurality.

Over and above all that is said in the foregoing, it has to be noted that the Maitrayani Upanishad itself, in the VI prapAthaka, 7th mantra, says:

//And it is said: 'When the knowledge is twofold (subjective and objective), then he hears, sees, smells, tastes, and touches (something), for it is the Self that knows everything.'

But when the knowledge is not twofold (subjective only), without effect, cause, and action without a name, without a comparison, without a predicate - what is that Knowledge? It cannot be uttered by words..//

And also, in the 3rd mantra says:

//3. There are two forms of Brahman, the material (effect) and the immaterial (cause). The material is false, the immaterial is true. //

Through the above mantras, this Upanishad clearly denies everything other than the Atman. This is the teaching of the Katha Upanishad too, in the mantra (2.4.11) neha nAnAsti kinchana (There is no diversity here at all) and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad teaching (4.4.19) 'MRtyoH sa mRtyumAproti ya iha nAneva pashyati' (He goes from death to death, who sees diversity, as it were, in It.). It would be illogical, improper, for this very (Maitrayani) Upanishad to censure a viewpoint as unworthy of accepting what it itself upholds as its core teaching. The commentary of Sri Ramatirtha for these portions could also be seen.

A synopsis of the above presentation:

- The term 'nairAtmyavAda' used in the Maitrayani Upanishad 7.8 is decidedly directed at the Bauddha thought. The derivation of this term is shown, in grammatically unflawed terms, in the foregoing.
- The expression, **vaidikeShu paristhAtum icchanti' (they wish to locate themselves amidst followers of the Vedas)** is to be understood as ' they wish to locate.....as adversaries of the followers of the Vedas').
- The term '**nairAtmyavAda**' is quite commonly/popularly used in Buddhist literature to mean the doctrine of 'no-Atman'.
- Advaita accepts the plurality of the souls in the realm of ignorance. Hence there can be no contradiction with the parlance (vyavaharika) usages of plurality of (jiva)Atman in the Gita.
- The Ultimate Teaching of the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita is the Oneness of the Atman that is also known as Brahman. The several passages cited in the foregoing bring out, at the same time, the **plurality of the bodies** and the

Singularity of the Atman abiding in them. Therefore, the question of Bhagavan 'refuting' Sri Shankara's remark does not arise.

- The Maitrayani Upanishad itself contains as its core teaching, the [Paramartha Tattva](#), the Non-dual Brahman and the falsity of everything else that is encountered in parlance/vyavahara.

In conclusion, it may be noted that the most natural and direct meaning of the term 'nairAtmyavAda' is the *doctrine of no-Self*. This is borne out by the various commentary/translations of this Upanishad. Disregarding all these if anyone attempts to read the meaning of Advaita doctrine into this portion (VII.8) of the Upanishad, it only shows that anyone else too, using similar grammar and logic (reasoning), can very easily demonstrate to the world that this mantra is directed at the Dvaitins alone and not the Advaitins and not even the Buddhists. The amenability of the Sanskrit language to yield itself to any meaning one desires ought not to be unduly exploited. Instead of clinging to such archaic practices of [attacking](#) other [schools](#), it would benefit one to refrain from such mudslinging and devote one's time and energy towards bringing about harmony among the various schools of Vedanta. This is what the present times are crying for. Dr.Nagasampige's book quoted above is a welcome step in this direction.

Om Tat Sat
SrlsadgurucharanAravindArpaNamastu

Here are some views about the Maitrayani Upanishad:

Maitri Upanisad

The Maitri or Maitrayaniya Upanisad, belongs to the Maitrayaniya shakha or branch of the Black Yajur Veda. (1) Maitri is the principal teacher and Maitrayana is the name of the shakha to which the Upanisad belongs. It contains seven chapters of which the last two are comparatively modern. The whole Upanisad is later in date than the classical Upanisads which it quotes frequently. (2)

We have a reference to the trimurti conception Brahma, Vishnu and Siva in IV. 5, which also indicates the late date of the Upanisad. The three forms are traced to the three gunas, rajas, sattva and tamas in V. 2. Suggestions of the illusory character of the world, momentousness of phenomenon show the influence of Buddhist thought. **Ramatirtha's commentary on the Upanisad is of much interest.**

Views of Trimurti within Hinduism

Vaishnavism



Trimurti, Painting from Andhra Pradesh

Vaishnavism generally **does** not **accept** the Trimurti concept. For example, the [Dvaita](#) school holds Vishnu alone to be the supreme God, with [Shiva](#) subordinate, and interprets the [Puranas](#) differently. For example, Vijayindra Tîrtha, a Dvaita scholar interprets the 18 [puranas](#) differently. He interprets that the Vaishnavite puranas as [satvic](#) and Shaivite puranas as [tamasic](#) and **that only satvic puranas are considered to be authoritative.**^[15]

Maurice Winternitz notes that there are very few places in Indian literature where the Trimurti is mentioned.^[12] The identification of Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma as one being is strongly emphasized in the *Kūrma Purana*, where in 1.6 [Brahman](#) is worshipped as Trimurti; 1.9 especially inculcates the unity of the three gods, and 1.26 relates to the same theme.^[13]

Om Tat Sat