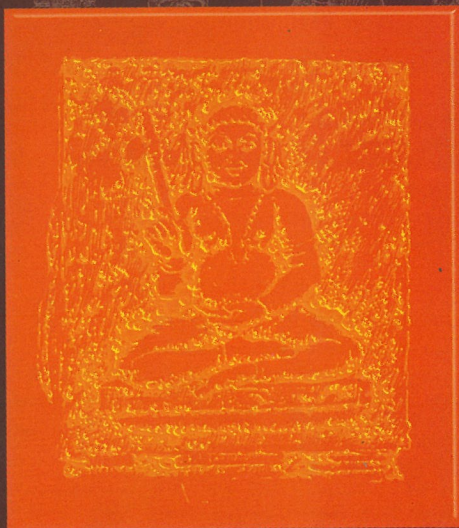


# ŚĀṆKARA AND ADHYĀSA-BHĀSHYA



S. K. RAMACHANDRA RAO



**ŚAṆKARA  
AND  
ADHYĀSA-BHĀSHYA**



Darśanamālā—1

# ŚAṆKARA AND ADHYĀSA-BHĀSHYA

S. K. RAMACHANDRA RAO

2002

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Laid humbly at the sacred feet of my master  
ŚRĪ ŚRĪ ŚRĪ CHANDRAŚEKHARA-BHĀRATĪ  
Jīvanmukta, Siddha and Avadhūta

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।

तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥

— Īśāvāsyopaniṣad

[The face of that Brahman, sitting in the midst of abundance of light, is covered with a golden curtain. O Lord, remove that curtain so that I, a seeker of Truth, may attain to the Supreme.]

Abhijñāna has identified itself with culture, art and literature, and has been active in these areas since 1996. While its main interest is in activities that reflect Indian Culture, it has no less regard for the beautiful aspects of all the cultures of our world. Abhijñāna wishes to place itself at the confluence of oriental and occidental thought-flows, and hence creates for itself a vast canvas on which to work.

Through the present little volume, Śaṅkara and Adhyāsa-bhāshya, Abhijñāna has been bestowed with two great rewards. First — we could devote our maiden English publication to acārya Śaṅkara, one of the greatest philosophers and masters that the world has ever known; second — this work is penned by a well-known polymath of our time, Prof. S. K. Ramachandra Rao.

Prof. Rao is a man of many accomplishments. He has authored more than 150 scholarly books in English, Kannada and Sanskrit on such diverse subjects as Veda, Vedānta,

Buddhism, Jainism, Āgama-s, Music, Sculpture, Tantra, Dance, Āyurveda and Psychology.

We are indebted to Vidyālaṅkāra, Śāstracūḍāmaṇi, Saṅgītakalāratna, Vedāntanidhi, Vidyāvācaspati S. K. Ramachandra Rao for the blessings he has been showering on Abhijñāna. His concern and affection are a perennial source of strength and inspiration in all our endeavours. An attempt to express our heartfelt gratitude to him may sound like cliched words, but all we can say is — हन्त हन्त महतामुदारता! (‘Oh, the generosity of the great!’)

We hope that this book will be enthusiastically received by truth-seekers in general and the admirers of Śaṅkara in particular. This work attempts to remind all of the greatness and of course the uniqueness of the acārya’s philosophy.

Our thanks are due to Sri H. V. Vishwanath who helped us with the proofs. We must remember Sri N. Shankar and Sri K. S. Satheesh also in this regard. We are obliged to Sri Sripad for designing an attractive cover-page. We thank Rashtrōtthana Mudranalaya for having printed this book neatly.

We take this opportunity to render our deepest gratitude to Śatāvadhāni Dr. R. Ganesh, Vidwan Seshachala Sharma, Sri Sudheer Krishnaswamy Kesari, Sri M. V. Sudarshan and Prof. K. S. Kannan for their active co-operation in bringing out this publication.

24.7.2002

Guru-pūrṇimā

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S. Surya Prakasha Pandit

Publisher & Editor



## PREFACE

---

Śaṅkara is one of the most misunderstood thinkers of India. Later writers claiming to be his followers have misrepresented him, and his critics have damned him relying almost entirely on these later writers. Padmapāda's Pañchapādikā (and the glosses over it), Vimuktātman's Ishtasiddhi and to an extent Vāchaspati's Bhāmatī have been responsible for the presentation of Śaṅkara's thought which was attacked by Rāmānuja and Madhva. Had these āchāryas confined their attention to Śaṅkara's own writings, much of the controversy would certainly have been avoided, and sectarian differences would greatly have been minimized.

It is remarkable that despite frequent suggestions over centuries that Śaṅkara might have been misrepresented, inquiry into what may have been his original thought has not seriously been made. During my study of the classical Advaita texts in the traditional manner which commenced in my teens and went on for nearly two decades, it became amply evident to me that there were almost irreconcilable differences among the later exponents of Śaṅkara, principally Vāchaspati-miśra (author of Bhāmatī), Padmapāda (author of Pañchapādikā, the source material for the Vivaraṇa school) and Sureśvara (author of Naishkarmya-siddhi and the Vārttikas). There are thoughts in works like Vedānta-siddhānta-muktāvalī, Ishtasiddhi, Chitsukhī and Pañchadaśī, which are blatantly contrary to the ideas that could be found in Śaṅkara's own works (his Bhāshyas).

Although it was an encouraging thought that Śaṅkara had inaugurated a line of thought which contained enormously significant contributions and which merit the world's attention, it appeared dishonest to me to foist later ideas on the great master. Pañchapādikā is a remarkable treatise, which can answer many of the psychological and metaphysical problems that bother us today; likewise Chitsukhī (Tattva-pradīpa) can throw a lot of fresh light on the problem of consciousness. Advaita-siddhi is another important landmark in the development of Indian thought. Pañchadaśī is a fascinating dissertation on the essential approach of the Indian mind to the higher problems. Valuable as these and other works in the field of Advaita are, they do not correctly represent Śaṅkara's own thought. They cloud the original contribution of Śaṅkara.

Many ideas (like mūla-avidyā, vivarta, mahāvākya, six-fold pramāṇa, avidyā-leśa) which are now major details of Advaita cannot be found in Śaṅkara's own writings. They belong to the development of thought that is post-Śaṅkara. There is a need to examine whether these ideas were necessary to explain some basic conceptions of Śaṅkara, or they have served to camouflage and distort the original thought. Did Śaṅkara really dismiss the world as an illusion? We do not find evidence for it in Vedānta-sūtra-bhāṣya at any rate.

My interest in this direction was aroused when, even as a school-going boy, I heard the then pontiff of the Uttarādi-maṭha (of the Mādhva persuasion), Śrī Satyadhyāna-tīrtha, telling my grandfather that he was writing a new commentary on Śaṅkara's commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra to show that he did not differ much from Rāmānuja or Madhva. I do not know if he completed

that it was the learned pontiff's view that Śaṅkara had been grievously misrepresented.

My interest found a definite direction when I read the Kannada works of Sri Sacchidānandendra-sarasvatī (of Adhyātma-prakāśa-kāryālaya), who held substantially the same views as the pontiff mentioned above. He had undertaken as his mission to correct the misconceptions that abound in the present-day representation of Śaṅkara's Advaita, and had written more than a hundred books designed to present Śaṅkara correctly. I owe him a deep debt of gratitude for the help his works have provided in my getting an insight into the spirit of Śaṅkara's original thought.

When I again studied the commentarial works of Śaṅkara, trying hard to keep out of my mind the details of later interpretations, Śaṅkara emerged in a new light altogether. I was convinced that his major contribution to Indian thought was the 'Introductory critique' to his commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra (known as Adhyāsa-bhāshya), which curiously has not attracted sufficient attention through the centuries. His later interpreters look at it all too casually, and his critics (like Rāmānuja and Madhva) do not appear to have noticed it at all!

Engaged as I was in the recent past, in the study of consciousness in Advaita as a research project (under the auspices of Śri Abhinava-Vidyātīrtha-Swamigal Scientific Research Academy, Madras), I had an occasion to go through once again all the major and minor works in Advaita, both printed and in manuscript, and critically examine their value in understanding Śaṅkara. It was borne on my mind that the best introduction to Śaṅkara's thought was his own introduction to the Vedānta-sūtra, viz. the Adhyāsa-bhāshya.

I have attempted in this book to present the Adhyāsa-bhāṣhya of Śaṅkara, with a running translation in English, so that the student of Vedānta can have ready access to Śaṅkara's own thought. To help the advanced student to form his own idea of what was the original thought-content, commentarial notes have been provided.

If this forms the latter part of the book, the former part presents some of my findings after an earnest involvement with the Advaita system for over fifty years.

I am aware that many of my findings would be unpalatable to many people. In fact, the thought that my own gurus who taught me lovingly the major Advaita classics would probably disapprove of my present book makes me feel depressed, and feel guilty, especially as they are all dead now. I have delayed this book for over ten years with this nagging feeling. I have now decided to send it to the press, prompted by some of my friends who are also, like myself, devoted to Śaṅkara.

I am grateful to my principal teacher, Mahāvidvān Pālakkāḍu Nārāyaṇa Śāstrī, at whose feet I sat and studied the Bhāṣhyas for several years. It was he who enabled me develop a deep insight into what was original in the great master's thought.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my young friend, Suryaprakash Pandit who has gone through the manuscript and the proofs carefully, suggesting corrections and helping me revise the text. He has also kindly undertaken to publish this work, for which again I am indebted to him.

**S. K. Ramachandra Rao**



**PART ONE**

**ŚĀṆKARA**

## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN PART ONE

|         |                                                 |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------|
| AUB     | Aitareya Upanishad-bhāshya (Śaṅkara)            |
| B       | Bhāmatī (Vāchaspati)                            |
| BGB     | Bhagavad-gītā-bhāshya (Śaṅkara)                 |
| BUB     | Brhadāranyaka Upanishad-bhāshya (Śaṅkara)       |
| BUV     | Brhadaranyaka Upanishad-Vārttika<br>(Sureśvara) |
| CHUB    | Chhāndogya Upanishad-bhāshya (Śaṅkara)          |
| EI      | Epigraphica Indica                              |
| JOR     | Journal of Oriental Research                    |
| KU      | Kaṭha Upanishad                                 |
| KUB     | Kaṭha Upanishad-bhāshya (Śaṅkara)               |
| MatiU   | Maitrī Upanishad                                |
| MaU     | Maṇḍuka Upanishad                               |
| Maṇḍ UB | Maṇḍukya Upanishad-bhāshya (Śaṅkara)            |
| MKG     | Maṇḍukya-Kārika (Gaudapāda)                     |
| MuU     | Muṇḍaka Upanishad                               |
| Muṇḍ UB | Muṇḍaka Upanishad-bhāshya (Śaṅkara)             |
| NS      | Naishkarmya-siddhi (Sureśvara)                  |
| P       | Pañchapādika (Padmapāda)                        |
| TUB     | Taittirīya-Upanishad-bhāshya (Śaṅkara)          |
| VSU     | Vedānta-sūtra-bhāshya (Śaṅkara)                 |

# I

## THE PROBLEM

---

There can hardly be any doubt that Śaṅkara (more often known as Śaṅkara-āchārya) was one of the greatest thinkers of this country. Indeed, when understood aright, he would rank among the world's eminent intellectuals. We in this country owe him a deep debt of gratitude: he not only consolidated the classical values of life, and was



instrumental in the formation of what we now call Hinduism, but achieved an enduring synthesis of diverse and disparate strands of philosophical speculations and religious disciplines.

Synthesis is indigenous to India. We have instances of this throughout our cultural history. Social assimilation, racial admixture, political adjustments, and religious integrations have gone on right from the dawn of our history. Otherwise, a pluralistic nation like ours, with a wide variety of races and languages, creeds and customs, practices and precepts could not have survived as a monolithic block.

Not that forces of division have not been active. They have been there periodically and persistently to foul the atmosphere and corrupt man's higher nature. But every time this happened, we have had saviour-giants with a mission providing the necessary corrections and showing the right path to tread. They are hailed by the pious folk as veritable embodiments of divine purpose, descent of divine grace and power (avatāra).

Śaṅkara has been regarded as one of such saviours of the situation. The age, which witnessed his appearance, was an age in which a host of discordant speculations had arisen, confusing the common man and confounding the real issues of life. The classical tradition, which sheltered the common man from the assailing doubts and gnawing indecisions, had been obscured and riddled with conflicting suggestions. Śaṅkara arose as if in fulfillment of the needs of the times. He disappeared only after he had cleared the tradition of its ulcers and wounds.

Unfortunately, however, few thinkers have been more grievously misunderstood. And, ironically enough, the



main source of this misunderstanding has to be traced to the generations of writers who claimed to be his camp-followers. The later commentators and glossators misunderstood him, or deliberately misrepresented him. They were working in a different age, with its own intellectual stresses and social pulls. The crisis that challenged Śaṅkara was no longer there: the issues had become more academic than practical. But the continued reliance of posterity on these later and lesser exponents of the—master rather than on the master's own writings—is indeed astonishing.

Of course, he has also been much maligned by adherents of 'rival' schools of thought, like Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita. But these schools arose long after Śaṅkara disappeared; and they have taken Śaṅkara's Advaita as their common point of departure. Śaṅkara did not have to fight against them, for the simple reason that they did not exist during his days. Whether he would have fought against them, had they been there then, is another matter. Perhaps he would not have. But the later exponents of Śaṅkara, who had already narrowed down the import of the master's mission into a sectarian cult, decided to meet the challenge with emotions and prejudices, although much of the conflict was only academic.

But what was it in Śaṅkara's Advaita that the protagonists of Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita found fault with and protested against? It was not so much the Advaita that can be reconstructed from Śaṅkara's own works, as the variety of Advaita that was foisted on him by the later exponents. It would appear that both Rāmānuja (the systematizer of Viśiṣṭādvaita) and Madhva (the propounder of Dvaita) did not bother to rely entirely on

the original works of Śaṅkara: they relied rather on the later exponents to give them a faithful version of Śaṅkara's Advaita. It is this form of Advaita that gave them cause for dissatisfaction and annoyance.

It is often not recognized that among the philosophical schools that Śaṅkara had to combat with, were included several versions of Advaita itself. However, it is now well known that Vāchaspati—the major, and one of the earliest, exponents of Śaṅkara Advaita—has sought to pass off Maṇḍana's Advaita (as can be reconstructed from his *Brahma-Siddhi*) as Śaṅkara's own. Likewise, Bhāskara's views were fused or confused with Śaṅkara's views. The so-called orthodox interpretation of Śaṅkara's Advaita now occurs in at least three different versions: Sureśvara's, Padmapāda's and Vāchaspati's. We will have occasion to deal with these matters at some length later. But it may be noted here that Śaṅkara's Advaita had already been misrepresented by the time the 'rival' schools of Vedānta emerged.

It cannot be denied that even his intellectual adversaries owed him a debt. He provided not only the necessary stimulation (or irritation), but also much of their methodological armoury. In a sense, the other āchāryas may be said to have continued Śaṅkara's mission to free Vedānta from unwarranted assumptions, and project it as a comprehensive and self-sufficient model for the seekers after spiritual welfare.

It is not by accident that Śaṅkara has the largest following in the country, and that his celebrity has all along been abiding and extensive. No other āchārya, before him or after, has merited such adoration from people belonging to diverse creeds and cults. In this context, it is a curious and unfortunate circumstance that

he has for centuries been presented in a false light, in the light provided by the exponents who were removed from him by centuries. His actual contribution to our philosophical and religious thought has throughout been elusive. There are conflicting statements among his own exponents about what he actually taught.

The typical Indian custom among the minor authors during the medieval times of ascribing their own writings to celebrated authors has helped to bring about this confusion. It is now a problem to extricate the genuine writings of Śāṅkara from the numerous (about 250) works that are usually ascribed to him. And the works so ascribed (prose treatises and poetical compositions) are of such diverse nature that it is difficult to form any consistent picture of Śāṅkara's own thought-system. Indeed, if the same author were to be responsible for all these works, he should have been terribly inconsistent and altogether uncertain about his own ideas and attitudes!

Śāṅkara's celebrity has had an undesirable effect in yet another matter. While historical material concerning his life and work is notoriously meagre, legendary accounts differing from each other in all important details, have been all too numerous. Prepared several centuries after their hero disappeared, these accounts perhaps reflect divergent traditions (concerning the master's life, works and mission) as prevalent in different regions of the country and at different times. Most of them are utterly worthless as tools for reconstructing his life and work. Unless such a reconstruction is made, it would be difficult to appreciate the background of Śāṅkara's mission, or the needs of the age, and thus evaluate his actual contributions.

A further trouble is occasioned by the numerous monastic institutions in the country, each of which claims direct descent from Śaṅkara. While it is doubtful if he ever founded any monastic organization, it is certain that none of the monastic institutions that bear his name goes back beyond the twelfth or thirteenth century, i. e. at least five or six centuries after the master's days. The few institutions that have been rather loud in their claim have managed to spread a feeling among the populace that they are the real representatives of the great master and authentic exponents of his teaching.

The institutions, although probably initially religious, could not help becoming involved in social movements and political stresses from time to time. And naturally the philosophical ideologies and the religious practices of these institutions have been constantly changing, in order to keep pace with social challenges and political pressures. If one looks at the attitudes, ideologies and practices prevalent in the monastic institutions swearing by their allegiance to Śaṅkara, it would not be difficult for him to be convinced that they are all obviously alien to Śaṅkara's own thought-complex. But the institutions have sought to justify their acceptance of these ideologies, attitudes and practices that are so obviously foreign to Śaṅkara, through far-fetched interpretations, clever interpolations and legends, which have served to further cloud the actual contribution of Śaṅkara to Indian thought.

In effect, these factors have so distorted the image of Śaṅkara that one is likely to get an impression that the great master lived in some distant and dark period of human history. Actually, however, the period in which he lived and worked (which will be discussed in the next



chapter) was one of intense intellectual, social and political activity in the country, and we have numerous historical records (epigraphs, monuments, travellers' accounts, and literary works) relating to this period. It is surprising that a man of Śaṅkara's eminence does not figure in any of these contemporary records. Are we to infer that his celebrity was posthumous? Or that he did not care to hobnob with those who mattered for such records? Or that such of the records as there were have not been recovered?

Whatever the reason, we are unable to obtain a contemporary picture of either Śaṅkara or his work. This has made the soil fertile for legendary accounts of his life and misrepresentations of his teaching. It is sad that no serious effort has been made to fix his contribution in a proper historical perspective. The several systems of thought and the several religious practices that he refers to in his writings need to be examined in their contemporary conditions. It is only then that the motivation for his contributions would emerge clearly.

It is unfortunate that Śaṅkara has all long been a victim of traditional scholarship reliant more on devotion than reason, and that his eminence has been confined by polemical enthusiasts within the narrow Vedāntic fold. A re-evaluation of his work in a wider frame of reference, in the light of historical and social events of these days and the philosophical discussions that were then relevant, is an urgent need.



## II

### WHO WAS ŚAṆKARA?

---

We may dismiss as irrelevant to our present discussion the conventional notion that Śaṅkara, the teacher was an incarnation of god Śiva. But a few points need to be

mentioned as they are likely to shed some light on the age of Śaṅkara and on the development of sects in Hinduism.

The present-day followers of Śaṅkara in South India have Śaivite leanings, and they worship Śiva in the form of liṅga in common with another sect, the Vīraśaivas, whose relation to Vedic tradition is uncertain, if not decidedly rebellious.

Śaṅkara's present-day

followers, therefore, seek to affiliate Śaṅkara with Śiva. The inspiration for this has been given by the passages in Śaivite purāṇas<sup>1</sup> and in the legendary accounts of Śaṅkara's life, all of which date later than the twelfth century.



But Śaṅkara's own writings (viz. the Bhāshyas) do not give any evidence of his Śaivite leanings. On the other hand, there are clear indications that he was a votary of Viṣṇu<sup>2</sup>, as were his direct disciples, Sureśvara and Padmapāda. Are we to understand that Śaivism as a sect had not made its mark during his days, at any rate in the South? Or does it mean that Śaivism was still regarded as outside the pale of Vedic orthodoxy? Or did Śaṅkara belong to a Vaiṣṇavā tradition<sup>3</sup>?

Although the cult of Śiva is very ancient, Śaivism as a creed developed only in the early centuries of the Christian era. Kashmir was its original habitat; the Karkoṭa kings (like Lalitāditya) and the Utpala kings (like Avantivarman) patronized the new creed. Avantivarman who ruled from Kanouj and Gwalior around 850 A. D. went to Purandara (or Mattamayūranātha) a Śaiva saint and got formally initiated into Śaivism. Śaivism spread in the northern regions thereafter. It became a popular creed around 1000 A. D. In South India, Tamil Śaivism had taken shape during the reign of the Pallava king Narasimha-varman (c. 630-660 A. D.): the celebrated saints Appar, Sambandar and Siruttonḍar are believed to have been his contemporaries. But it was not until the days of the Chōla king Rāja-rāja (985-1018) that the creed became widespread.

The early Śaiva saints (like Appar and Sambandar) were known for their devotion and poetical genius; they were not academic in their orientation, and did not therefore build a thought-structure with Śaivism as its core. Śaiva-siddhānta came into existence only after the tenth century; it reached a definitive stage with Maikāṇḍa-deva (the first half of 13<sup>th</sup> century), the author of Śiva-jñāna-bodham.

Therefore, the widespread development of Śaivism as a creed was later than Śaṅkara's days. He was, of course, acquainted with the Pāśupata-Māheśvara ideology (which he criticizes in VSB, 2, 2, 37) which is basic to Śaivism. But his acquaintance was but sketchy. His knowledge of the South Indian Śaiva saints also must have been meagre, for much of the teaching of their thought was carried on in local dialects<sup>4</sup>. Although Śaivism had some following in the Tamil country and in Karnataka during the period in which Śaṅkara lived, it was not a strong force anywhere in India, and it had not entered Kerala.

This leaves us with no alternative to dismissing the convention of Śiva's incarnation as Śaṅkara, as a later one, invented to accommodate the master in the growing popularity of the Śaiva beliefs. The convention probably began when the royal families (like the later Rāshtrakūṭas, Chālukyas and Chōlas) in South India were patronizing Śaivism. The monastic institutions that owed allegiance to the memory of Śaṅkara must also have felt the need to distinguish themselves from the Vaishṇava organizations which began to take shape under Rāmānuja. They must have thought it prudent to assume a Śaivite flavour.

It may also be added that the idea of incarnation, (avatāra) which now occurs easily to the Indian mind fed on Purāṇic lore, is altogether absent in Śaṅkara's writings<sup>5</sup>, and from the writings of his direct disciples (Sureśvara and Padmapāda). Thus it would appear that even the incarnation ideology was a later feature in Hinduism, later than Śaṅkara.

Despite this pious convention, it is heartening that Śaṅkara has always been regarded by scholars (both

favourable to him and unfavourable) as a human teacher, who needs to be defended or opposed. It is only in the popular mind that he is an incarnation, either divine or demonic. This detail has rendered the legendary and fanciful accounts of his life also popular. There are more than twenty such accounts that are available<sup>6</sup>, but it is impossible to glean much historical material from them. All these works are comparatively recent, composed between fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, although some among them pretend to be contemporary documents.

These works are essentially poetical in nature, and adopt the Purāṇic style of narration<sup>7</sup>. The details concerning important events in the master's life (like parents, nativity, education, monastic ordination, travel, writings, disputations and death) are so hopelessly various and conflicting that we cannot take them seriously<sup>8</sup>.

The only details that we can reasonably assume as reflecting a persistent tradition is that he hailed from Kerala in the South, that he became proficient in all the philosophical disciplines in vogue at that time at an early age, that he traveled all over the country as a wandering ascetic (sannyāsin), that he wrote works purporting to explain the true import of the Vedāntic lore, and that he passed away at an early age<sup>9</sup>.

His own works, as also the works of his direct disciples, are altogether silent about his life. They do not even mention the name of his teacher, which the legendary accounts give as Govinda. The identification of this Govinda is also vague: he is variously described as a Vedāntin, a tāntrik, a siddha, a yogi, an alchemist and a hermit. He is mentioned in the legendary accounts as a disciple of Gauḍapāda, whose identification again



has been uncertain and conflicting. But Śaṅkara refers to Gauḍapāda, and we will deal with this problem in the next chapter.

The probable date of Śaṅkara has been the subject of considerable controversy. Ignoring the attempts to push his date back to the centuries before Christ (e.g. 44-12 B. C. according to the Srīgeri pontifical reckoning), we may reasonably settle down to five or six centuries after Christ till the eighth century as the probable period. Scholars have adduced various evidences for various datings of Śaṅkara<sup>10</sup>, but they are not conclusive.

Difficulties arise because internal evidences are all too meagre. Śaṅkara mentions the names of some kings quite casually, and in a manner that it is doubtful if they were names of kings that actually existed<sup>11</sup>. The names are common ones, and no further information is forthcoming. And he has not made reference to any historical event, or any dynasty or any city that may suggest an important clue. Nor does the style of his writing suggest any date.

But there are some references to earlier thinkers which may be valuable to ascertain the probable period in which he lived. He quotes a half-verse (kārikā) from Ālambana-parīkshā<sup>12</sup>, a work of the celebrated Buddhist logician from Kāñchīpuram, viz. Diṇṇāga (VSB, 2, 2, 28). Thus he is in any case later than Diṇṇāga. And Diṇṇāga's date has been more or less definitely fixed: about 480 A. D. He also cites another Buddhist philosopher, Dharmakīrti, also from South India, the author of Pramāṇa-vārttika. His direct disciple Sureśvara also quotes Dharmakīrti, by name (BUBV, 4, 37, 53).

There are two references to a ruler Pūrṇa-varma by Śaṅkara (VSB, 2, 1, 8 and 4, 2, 5); and Hiuen-tsāng, the

Chinese traveller who visited Magadha (637-638 A. D.) speaks of Pūrṇavarma, who was not alive then.

The Chinese pilgrim I-tsing who visited India during 671-695 A. D. mentions Dharmakīrti, who was not mentioned by Hiuen-tsāng who had come here around 630 A. D. Thus Dharmakīrti's date may be around 650 A. D. Thus Śāṅkara and Sureśvara must have lived some time after Dharmakīrti, if indeed they were not his junior contemporaries.

The earliest and complete gloss that is available on Śāṅkara's VSB, is from the pen of Vāchaspati-miśra (Bhāmatī). This Vāchaspati who wrote numerous works has fortunately given the date of the composition of one of them, Nyāya-sūcī-nibandha: न्यायसूचीनिबन्धोऽयमकारि विदुषां मुदे । श्रीवाचस्पतिमिश्रेण वस्वङ्कवसुवत्सरे ॥ (about 841 A. D.). This fixes the upper limit of Śāṅkara's age. It may thus be reasonably assumed that he lived some time between 650 and 840 A. D.

It is likely that he was nearer Dharmakīrti than Vāchaspati. Dharmakīrti, who was the pupil of Dharmapāla at Nālandā, was a nephew of the famous Mīmāṃsaka writer Kumārila-bhaṭṭa, according to the Tibetan sources. And the Indian tradition makes Śāṅkara a junior contemporary of Kumārila. The date suggested by T. R. Chintamani, viz. 632-664 A. D.<sup>13</sup> appears to be nearest to the most probable period of Śāṅkara's life.

But we have to reckon with another baffling factor. Vidyānanda-Pātrakesarin (around 800 A. D.), the logician of the Digambara persuasion, who in his Ashta-sāhasrī mentions several eminent thinkers like Diṇnāga, Uddyotakara, Dharmakīrti, Kumārila and Prabhākara, does not mention Śāṅkara; similar is the case with Prabhāchandra (around 825 A. D.) who in his Prameya-

kamala-mārtaṇḍa, mentions besides those mentioned by Vidyānanda, others like Bhagavān Upavarsha (whom Śaṅkara also cites) but not Śaṅkara. Haribhadra-sūri (around 1120 A. D.) who deals with several systems of thought in his *Shad-darśana-samucchaya*, omits Vedānta altogether. His commentator Guṇaratna (about 1409 A. D.) mentions even Udayana and Vāchaspati but neither Śaṅkara nor Vedānta!

Is this not a curious situation? Indeed Vidyānanda mentions Sureśvara and quotes from his BUBV, but does not mention his master Śaṅkara! Was Śaṅkara then not celebrated as a thinker for some centuries after his days? Or were his books not in ready circulation in the country during those days? It would appear that Vāchaspati was the first popular writer to discover Śaṅkara's genius. His *Bhāmatī* on Śaṅkara's VSB probably crystallized the master's contribution to Vedāntic thought and brought it to the notice of scholars.

However, even this work appears to have had to wait for over a century to have its impact. Sarvajñātman's *Saṅkshepa-Śārīraka* (around 1000 A. D.) focussed scholarly attention on Śaṅkara's VSB in an effective manner. But it was not until *Vimuktātman* wrote his *Ishta-siddhi* that Śaṅkara's position was seriously taken note of. By the time Rāmānuja (1071-1137) emerged as an exponent of the orthodox Vedāntic tradition, this *Ishta-siddhi* it was that held the field as the standard Advaita work. Rāmānuja's criticism of the views of Śaṅkara is mainly based on this work. Madhva (1197-1276), another āchārya who opposed Śaṅkara's views, is also said to have begun his Vedāntic studies with *Ishta-siddhi*, in which text he is claimed to have discovered more than thirty errors of argument.



The important point to bear in mind is that due to some uncertain circumstance, Śaṅkara's own works did not for several centuries enjoy the popularity it merited. He does not seem to have been a celebrity until his teachings were criticized and attacked. The Chinese traveler I-tsing resided in Nālandā for ten years (675-685 A. D.); but he had not heard of Śaṅkara, who must have died about a decade earlier. The Rāshṭrakūṭa monarchs, who rose to great political power in South India around 730 A. D. and did much to revive Hinduism for a period of more than two centuries, have left behind numerous inscriptions and monuments; but we have no evidence that they were acquainted with Śaṅkara, his work, or his monastic institutions (if indeed he had established them)<sup>14</sup>.

Likewise, the Eastern Chālukyas (of Veṅgi), the founder of which dynasty (Kubja-Vishṇuvardhana) must

have been a contemporary of Śaṅkara (having died in 642 A. D.) do not give evidence of having known Śaṅkara. They were patrons of Jainism in Āndhra and in the regions adjoining Kerala till 970 A. D. (Parama-māheśvara Amma II), although their personal religion was Purāṇic Hinduism. During the period under notice, there sprang up in South India temples to Brahmā, Śiva, Sūrya, Viṣṇu, Kārtikeya, Śāradā and Kātyāyanī. Tārā-bhagavatī of the Buddhists and Padmāvatī of the Jainas had their own temples, and monastic institutions attached to them. There are again numerous inscriptions relating to the religious conditions of those centres<sup>15</sup>; but we find no mention of Śaṅkara or any of his followers in any of them.

The natural suggestion is that Śaṅkara, far from being the great celebrity that he is now, was almost unknown during his days and for a couple of centuries later. He must have been a quiet scholar, shunning publicity, and engaged in study and writing throughout his brief life. His reinterpretation of the Vedāntic tradition was doubtless of great import: but it had to wait to be discovered long after he passed away. But once discovered, it immediately caught the imagination of the people; and Śaṅkara was hailed as an āchārya, pushing into oblivion all the earlier thinkers of eminence.

A cult must have subsequently grown up around the image of the āchārya as the one responsible for the intellectual resuscitation of the correct Vedāntic tradition. Monastic institutions owing allegiance to him probably were founded several centuries later, in order to propagate his teachings. It is instructive to note that in the Śringeri pontifical list, Sureśvara, the immediate disciple-successor of Śaṅkara in this pontificate (as also claimed by Dvārakā and Kāñchi-Kāmakoti pontificates),



is made to live and continue on the pontifical seat for about 800 years! This would probably mean that the actual founding of the pontificate was 800 years later.

The early monastic institutions were of the Śaiva-Siddhānta persuasion. We have on record the founding of a maṭha by Purandara (the Śaiva teacher who initiated the Utpala monarch Avantivarman into Śaivism) around 850 A. D. at Mattamayūra, and another at Rāṇiprada (the present-day Rāṇod)<sup>16</sup>. Bilvamaṅgala-Līlāśuka, who was a disciple of Īśāna-deva of the Mattamayūra-maṭha, hailed from Kerala and was a Śaiva, although his devotion was exclusively to Kṛṣṇa (as claimed in his Kṛṣṇa-Karṇāmṛta). He was associated with the Tekke-maṭham at Trichūr, which was reputed to have been founded by Padmapāda, another direct disciple of Śaṅkara<sup>17</sup>.

‘Matta-mayūra’ is a subset of the Śaiva Siddhānta, and it had many monasteries in central India as well as in the southern regions from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries. The ascetics of this order were also preceptors to Kings (rājagurus) like the Kalachuris, and were patronized by royal families like the Rāshṭrakūṭas<sup>18</sup>. In any case, the Mattamayūra monastic establishments probably provided the model for the maṭhas of later times.

There is an interesting tradition preserved in the Kāñchi-Kāmakoti pontificate. They reckon five Śaṅkaras. The first one (Ādi-Śaṅkara), who was merely the author of the Bhāṣyas; the second one (Kṛpā-Śaṅkara), who lived long after (28-69 A. D.), was the one who systematized the six religious practices (Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Saura, Gāṇapatya, Śākta and Kaumāra) and remodeled tāntrik form of worship; the third (Ujjvala-Śaṅkara), who lived between 329-367 A. D. and traveled all over the

country; the fourth (Arbhaka-Śaṅkara), whose date is given as 398-437 A. D. and who was connected with the Kāñchi pontificate; and the last one (Bālaka-Śaṅkara), who is usually regarded as the Śaṅkara, and whose life the Śaṅkara-Vijayas recount. This makes some sense, however fanciful the account. And it is significant that the Śaṅkara, the author of the Bhāshyas, has been dissociated altogether from miracles, travel, founding of religious schools, monastic institutions, victories in disputations, and other details generally ascribed to Śaṅkara. We may treat Śaṅkara, the real subject-matter for this book, as nothing more than the bhāshya-kāra.

## REFERENCES

1. E. g. Bhaviṣhyottara-, Vāyu- and Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇas, and Śiva-rahasya.
2. Śāṅkara's Vaiṣṇava leanings are obvious by the following facts:

- i) He describes the Supreme Spirit invariably as Viṣṇu (Vāsudeva or Nārāyaṇa), and nowhere as Śiva.

e.g. BGB. 10, 7 'अहं परब्रह्म वासुदेवाख्यम्'; 14, 26 'मां = ईश्वरं नारायणं सर्वभूतहृदयप्रितं'; 15, 7 'ममैव = परमात्मनः नारायणस्य'; 15, 15 'भगवतः ईश्वरस्य नारायणाख्यस्य'; 18, 57 'मत्परः = अहं वासुदेवः परः यस्य तव स त्वं'; 18, 61 'ईश्वरः = ईशानशीलः नारायणः'; 18, 68 'भगवतः = परमगुरोरच्युतस्य'; 18, 66 'मामेकं = एकं सर्वात्मानं समं सर्वभूतस्थमीश्वरमच्युतं'; 18, 65 'मामेवैष्यसि = वासुदेवे एव समर्पितसाध्यसाधनप्रयोजनः सन्'; 18, 56 'मद्व्यपाश्रयः = अहं वासुदेवः ईश्वरः व्यपाश्रयणः यस्य'

Śiva is not mentioned at all in VSB; and Rudra is (always in plural number) counted among the five 'deva-gaṇas'.

1, 3, 28 'वसवो रुद्रा आदित्याः विश्वेदेवाः मरुतः' 1, 3, 31 'वसवो रुद्रा आदित्याः मरुतः साध्याश्च पञ्च देवगणाः ।'

- ii) He describes liberation in terms of the 'supreme state of Viṣṇu' (Viṣṇoh paramam padam)

e.g. VSB 1, 2, 12; 1, 4, 1; 1, 4, 3 and 1, 4, 4; BGB 6, 31 'मयि वैष्णवे पदे'; 7, 18, 'अहमेव भगवान्वासुदेवः मामेव परब्रह्म गन्तव्यम्'; 18, 62 'sthānam' is explained : 'विष्णोः परमं पदम्' ।

- iii) He often cites Viṣṇu's worship in Sālagrāma, and does not at all mention liṅga, as Śiva's emblem.

VSΒ 1, 2, 7 'यथा सालग्रामे हरिः' 1, 2, 14 'सालग्राम इव विष्णोः  
इत्येतदप्युक्तमेव'; 1, 3, 14 'यथा सालग्रामे विष्णुः संनिहित इति तद्वत्' ॥

- iv) He accepts the Bhāgavata theory of 'vyūhas' (VSΒ, 2, 2, 42) and quotes from their source-book, the 'Nārāyaṇīyam' section in Mahābhārata.
- v) He criticizes and rejects the Pāśupata doctrine.
- vi) He refrains from quoting from any Śaivite purāṇa, or discuss the Kāpālika doctrines.
- vii) The traditional lineage of teachers prior to Śaṅkara commences with Viṣṇu, and does not include Śiva:

नारायणं पद्मभुवं वसिष्ठं शक्तिं च तत्पुत्रपरशरं च ।

व्यासं शुक्रं गौडपदं महान्तं गोविन्दयोगीन्द्रमथास्य शिष्यम् etc.

This has been accepted by the four pontificates also. And in Nilakaṇṭha's Śaṅkarābhyudaya-kāvya (2, 50) also the lineage begins with Viṣṇu and while other teachers are the same, the name of Govinda has been left out.

हरिश्चातृवसिष्ठतत्तनयव्यासशुकैः सगौडपादैः ।

गुरुभिर्गमितां परम्परां परविद्या महतीमवाप सा ॥

The later Advaitins' who became Śaivas in affiliation (after probably Jñānottama-Śivāchārya, the fifth pontiff of the Srīṅgeri centre) invented the blanket-verse :

सदाशिवसमारम्भां शङ्कराचार्यमध्यमाम् ।

अस्मदाचार्यपर्यन्तां वन्दे गुरुपरम्पराम् ॥

This was in the thirteen century when Goḷakī-Maṭha tradition became dominant, and monastic organizations like Hampi-Virūpāksha-Maṭha and Pushpagiri-Maṭha (which were Pāśupata-Māhesvara in orientation) were set up.

- viii) Even iconic worship was in his mind associated with 'Viṣṇu-pratimā-nyāya' in VSΒ 4, 1, 3 (प्रतिमादिष्विव विष्णवादि दर्शनम् । प्रतीकदर्शनमिदं विष्णुप्रतिमान्यायेन भविष्यतीति ॥)

- ix) He refers to veda-vyāsa as an incarnation at the behest of Viṣṇu (viṣṇu-niyoga) VSB 3, 3, 32.

वेदाचार्यः पुराणार्थिः विष्णुनियोगात् ।

कलिद्वापरयोः सन्धौ कृष्णद्वैपायनः संबभूवेति स्मरन्ति ॥

- x) He defines 'jñāni' as 'विष्णोः तत्त्ववित्' BG B 7, 16; and the ultimate reality according to him is Viṣṇu cf. ibid. 7, 17 'ज्ञानिनः आत्मत्वात् वासुदेवः प्रियो भवति'; 7, 19 'सर्वात्मानं मां नारयणाम् ।'; 8, 4 अधियज्ञ = 'सर्वयज्ञाभिमानिनी विष्णुवाङ्मदेवता'; 8, 5 'मामेव परमेश्वरं विष्णुं स्मरन् ।'; मन्त्रावन् = 'वैष्णवं तत्त्वं'; 9, 15 पृथक्त्वेन = 'आदित्यचन्द्रादिभेदेन स एव भगवान् विष्णुरवस्थितः इति ।' 9, 25 'मद्यजिनः = मद्यजनशीलाः वैष्णवाः'
- xi) Three of the four pontificates claiming descent from Śaṅkara are associated with Vaiṣṇava centers, Puri Jagannāth in the east, Dvārakā in the west, and Badarināth in the north.
- xii) The legendary accounts of his life which proclaim him as Śiva's incarnation give Kṛṣṇa as his tutelary deity, make him instruct his dying mother in Viṣṇu-mantra so that she ascends to Vaiṣṇava.
- xiii) The ascetics of the Śaṅkara order have always been in the habit of identifying themselves with 'Nārāyaṇasmṛti'; even now, this is the case.
- xiv) The Mādhavīya-Śaṅkara-vijaya, which is no doubt a later and imaginative work but contains probably an ancient traditional narrative, mentions that Śaṅkara's mother on her deathbed refused to go with the messengers of Śiva and insisted on Śaṅkara's beckoning the dūtas of Viṣṇu to take her to Vaiṣṇava. The story is to be found also in Vyāsāchaliya and Chidvilāsiya. The suggestion is that Śaṅkara's family worshipped Viṣṇu as its tutelary deity.

The object in enlisting all these details is not to highlight Vaiṣṇavism at the expense of Śaivism,



which in fact is an irrelevant issue. Śaṅkara was far above such sectarian prejudices. But it must be noted that the Brahman, the absolute reality without a second, was described by him as Viṣṇu, and that his lead in this matter was followed by Rāmānuja and Madhva, the two āchāryas who are popularly (but mistakenly) regarded as the principal adversaries of Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara was a path-breaker in the realm of Vedānta in every sense of the term. His was the most original contribution, acknowledged and assimilated in all the several schools of Vedānta.

3. There is a tradition in the homeland of Śaṅkara, Kerala, about the Mīmāṃsaka, Prabhākara (who was a senior contemporary of Śaṅkara, and who hailed from the same region as he did, Panniyūr-grāma) having been patronized by Kulaśekhara, the first Vaishṇava Perumāḷ of Kerala. This monarch (different from the Tamil Ālwar of the same name, who ruled over Koṅgu-nāṭṭu from Kollinagar as capital) was the author of the well-known devotional hymn in Sanskrit Mukunda-mālā, and builder of Kṛṣṇa temple at Trikkulaśekhara-puram, a suburb of Cranganore. He was responsible for the spread of Vaishṇavism in Kerala. The family of Śaṅkara had thus come under the influence of Vaishṇavism.

Padmapāda, the direct disciple of Śaṅkara, also hailed from Kerala. He is said to have founded the Tekke-maṭham at Trichūr, which was again instrumental in spreading Vaishṇavism. Bilvamangala-Līlāśuka (the celebrated author of Kṛṣṇa-Karṇāmṛta) succeeded Padmapāda in this pontificate. His fervent vaishṇavism is evident not only from his major poem, above mentioned, but in the colophons of his other works. E.g. at the end of Daivam, a grammatical work, he says—

कृष्णलीलाशुक्रस्येदं कृतिः कृतिमनोहरा ।

पुष्पातु कृष्णसंप्रीतिं भुवनान्यभिपुष्पतु ॥

His association with Padmapāda is evidenced by the following verse—

श्रीपद्मपादमुनिवर्यविनेयवर्य-  
श्रीभूषणं मुनिरसौ कविसार्वभौमः ।  
श्रीकृष्णरूपपरमामृतपानशील-  
श्चक्रे तदीयचरितं बहुधा हिताय ॥

He is reputed to have built the Padmanābha temple in Trivandrum.

4. Cf. Śiva-dharmottara verse—

संस्कृतैः प्राकृतैर्वाक्यैर्यश्च शिष्यानुरूपतः ।  
देशभाषाद्युपायैश्च बोधयेत् स गुरुः स्मृतः ॥

5. Excepting perhaps in the introductory passage in BGB, where he mentions that Viṣṇu, the creator, appeared (sambabhūva) as the son of Vāsudeva, Kṛṣṇa. Cf. also BGB, 4, 6. However, in either of these passages, the expression 'avatāra' is not to be found.
6. Among them, the well-known are: Mādhava's Śaṅkara-vijaya, (claiming to be a summary, Śaṅkshepa, of an earlier and contemporary work Bṛhat-Śaṅkara-Vijaya, which however is no longer available); Anantānandagiri's Śaṅkara-vijaya; Vyāsāchala's work; Chidvilāsa's Śaṅkara-Vijaya-Vilāsa in the form of a dialogue between the author and his disciple Vijñāna-kanda; Govindānanda's Āchārya-Charita; Rāja chūḍāmaṇi-dīkshita's Śaṅkarābhyudaya; Vallī-Sahāya's Āchārya digvijaya; Sadānanda's Digvijaya-sāra; Nīlakaṇṭha's Śaṅkara-mandāra-saurabha; Gurunātha's Śaṅkara-charitra; Nīlakaṇṭha's Śaṅkarābhyudaya; and Mūka-Śaṅkara's Prāchīna-Śaṅkara-vijaya. There is also Kūshmāṇḍa-Śaṅkara-vijaya, where the master is said to have been born out of a pumpkin.
7. Śaṅkara's legendary life has also been incorporated or interpolated in some Purāṇas, e.g. Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa, Skānda-purāṇa, Saura-purāṇa and Śiva-rahasya.

8. His nativity is usually given as Kālaḍi in Kunnattunāḍu taluk in Koṭṭayam division, Kerala, about sixteen miles north of Travancore. The biographical accounts mention Sasala-grāma (Śiva-rahasya), Vṛshabhādri (Mādhava), Kālaḍi (Chidvilāsa) and Chidambaram (Anantānanda-giri). The first two are identified with the present-day Kālaḍi, however with little justification. The present-day Kālaḍi was identified by the late pontiff of Sṛṅgeri, Sacchidānanda-Śivābhinava Nṛsimha-bhārati (1866-1912), and a temple to Śaṅkara and a Br̥ndāvana to his mother was built in 1910. Till then, the place was not associated with Śaṅkara, either by monuments, or in the memory of the people. What evidences the pontiff had in accepting this place as Śaṅkara's birth-place, we do not know.

Likewise, four or five places share the honour of his last days: Kedarnāth or Badarīnāth in the Himālayas (Mādhava), Kāñchi-pūram in the Tamiḻ country (Śiva-rahasya), Trichūr in Kerala (Govinda-nātha), and Vṛshāchala, also in Kerala (Nīlakṇṭha-nambi).

9. Usually given as 32. K. P. Pathak procured fragments of an old MSS in Belgaum, which contained the following verse:

अष्टवर्षे चतुर्वेदी (वेदान्) द्वादशे सर्वशास्त्रवित् (कृत) ।

षोडशे कृतवान् भाष्यं द्वाविंशे मुनिरभ्यगात् ॥

But there are also other accounts which give his life-span as 38 years (Keralotpatti), and as 85 years (according to S. V. Venkatesvara of the basis of a verse in Devyaparādha-kshamā-stotra).

10. Some of the dates suggested are: 4<sup>th</sup> cent. (R. G. Bhandarkar), 6<sup>th</sup> cent. (550-590 K. T. Telang), 7<sup>th</sup> cent. (Fleet), 8<sup>th</sup> cent. (Weber, Gough, Cowell, Jacobi and Wilson), 400 A. D. (Keralotpatti), 509 A. D. (date of birth, T. S. Narayana Sastri, N. K. Venkatesvara Pantulu and K. S. Ramaswami Sastri): bet. 650-670 A. D. (T. Foulkes), bet. 650-740 (Monier Williams), bet. 652-680

(Burnell), 684-716 (Bal Gangadhar Tilak's interpretation of the Vikrama era mentioned in the Śringeri pontifical list), 705-897 (S. V. Venkateswara), 788-820 (K. B. Pathak, C. N. Krishnaswami Iyer, Max Mueller and Buhler), between 800-900 A. D. (Colebroke).

11. E.g. Pūrṇavarman (VSB, 2, 1, 18), Jayasimha (VSB, 4, 3, 5), Bālavarman (VSB, 2, 4, 1; 4, 3, 5), Rājavarman (CHUB, 2, 23, 1).
12. यदन्तर्ज्ञेयरूपं तद्वहिर्वदवभासते ।
13. JOR, Madras III, 1929, pp.39-56. Accepted by S. Kuppaswami-Sastri [Brahma-siddhi, Intro. P. (viii)].
14. Dantidurga (735-755) began building the Ellora shrines; esp. the Daśāvatāra-maṇṭapa. Kṛṣṇarāja I (757-772) built the Kailāsa temple, inspired by the Pallava-Kailāsanātha temple in Kāñchīpuram. Worship of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī, Kṣhetrapāla, Vināyaka and Bhagavatī spread all over the region. Dhruva who ascended the throne in 780 A. D. was a patron of Vedic learning and made grants to Vedic scholars. Kṛṣṇa III (939-966) conquered Kāñchī and Tañjāvūr ('kacchiyum tañjeyum koṇḍa'), built Sundara-Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple in Kāveripakkam (in North Arcot district). When these monarchs were in the thick of such religious activity, it is strange that they had not heard of Śaṅkara's work.
15. Cf. EI, IX, 42; EI, VII 143 etc.
16. Gwalior Museum Inscription (CII, IV, p.294) also cf. P. Jash, History of Śaivism. p.19
17. According to Kerala tradition, cf. the verse—

श्रीपद्मपादमुनिवर्यविनेयवर्ग-

श्रीभूषणं मुनिरसौ कविसार्वभौमः ।

श्रीकृष्णरूपपरमामृतपानशील-

श्रेष्ठे तदीयचरितं बहुधा हिताय ॥

18. E. g. Kṛṣṇa III gave a grant to Gagana-Śiva, a pupil of Īśāna-deva, and head of Valkaleśvara-maṭha in Karahāṭa (958 A. D.).

### III

## WHAT DID ŚAṆKARA WRITE?

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The disability under which the celebrated authors in ancient India suffered was the spurious ascription of works by later and lesser writers to them. More than 250 works have been popular in the country as compositions of Śaṅkara: metaphysical treatises in the nature of commentaries on scriptural texts (bhāṣhya)<sup>1</sup>, minor dissertations (prakaraṇas)<sup>2</sup>, philosophical poems<sup>3</sup>, hymns to divinities (stotras)<sup>4</sup> and advices to spiritual



aspirants (upadeśa)<sup>5</sup>. Many of these works are of considerable literary excellence, and merit the popularity they enjoy. The devotional hymns especially are of undoubted charm, and would bring credit to whoever was their author.

But the contents betray the fact that all of them cannot be the works of the same author. The views expressed in the various works are not only various but frequently inconsistent and contradictory. Many of the ideas contained in them are decidedly of a date much later than Śaṅkara's. It is obvious that these works are by different authors, and were composed at different periods.

The widespread belief that they are all Śaṅkara's was in part due to a series of 20 volumes entitled "The works of Śaṅkara" (Śaṅkara-granthāvalih), published by the Vāṇi-Vilās Press, Śrīraṅgam, during the early years of the twentieth century. The publisher's venture had the seal of approval by the then pontiff of Śrīṅgeri, Sri Sacchidānanda-Śivābhinava-Nṛsimha-bhāratī Swāmī<sup>6</sup>. But we are not told what methods were employed to ascertain the veracity of the claim that all these works were Śaṅkara's. The volumes were no doubt excellent productions, and the publisher brought them out as an act of devotion. There is no doubt that the publisher was a pious, sincere and well-meaning admirer of Śaṅkara, but inadvertently an untruth was set afoot by him. A false tradition of Śaṅkara's authorship of disparate and obviously spurious works has continued since then.

The first twelve volumes contained the major works of Śaṅkara, the commentaries on the Brahma-Sūtras, the Upanishads and the Gītā (conventionally called the Prasthāna-traya). The next sixteen volumes contained 35

minor dissertations (Prakarāṇas) on mainly philosophical themes. This was followed by two volumes containing a large number of devotional hymns (stotras) addressed to various divinities like Gaṇapati, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Devī and Subrahmaṇya. Here was also included a commentary (bhāṣhya) on an earlier work (Lalitā-trīsatī). The last two volumes contained a Tāntrik work called Prapañcha-sāra.

It is to be noted that Śaṅkara has rejected in so many words the Tāntrik approach and the worship of Gaṇapati, Devī and so on as tāmasi and therefore as unvedic. For instance, in his Gītā-bhāṣhya, (9, 25 and 17, 4) we read भूतानि विनायकमातृगणचतुर्भगिन्यादीनि यान्ति भूतेज्याः । And भूतगणांश्च सप्तमातृकादींश्च अन्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ।

The claim that all these were works of Śaṅkara was not accepted even in the orthodox circles of those days. There were serious doubts cast on Lalitā-trīsatī-bhāṣhya and Prapañcha-sāra, which are, to say the least, antagonistic to the spirit of Vedānta. And scholarly tradition has all along ignored all these works, with the exception of his commentaries on the Prasthāna-traya. A very simple test is the citation by the long line of authors belonging to the Advaita fold. None of the earlier authors has ever cared to mention, or cite from, any of the minor dissertations and of course from any devotional hymn contained in the Vāṇi Vilās edition of Śaṅkara's works. A possible exception is Upadeśa-sāhasrī (included in vol.14), which has been quoted by Sureśvara, the immediate disciple of the master, in his Naishkarmya-siddhi.

That no author of any standing has cared to prepare glosses on the works (contained in volumes 13 to 20) is an additional argument. The authorship of the gloss on Prapañcha-sāra by Padmapāda is as doubtful as the

authorship of the original work. The gloss ascribed to Sureśvara entitled *Mānasollāsa*, on *Dakṣiṇāmūrti-stotra*, is certainly not Sureśvara's, despite its excellence. *Mādhūsūdana-Sarasvatī* (around 1500 A. D.) prepared a great work entitled *Siddhānta-bindu*, based on *Daśa-sloki*, ascribed to Śaṅkara, without, however, justifying the ascription.

Besides these, there are other works commonly ascribed to Śaṅkara. *Saundarya-laharī* is the most prominent among them. This is a Tāntrik work, but Śaṅkara has very little use for Tāntrik ideas in the major works (the *bhāṣhyas*), ascribed to him with greater justification. He does not appear to be even sympathetic to the Tāntrik conceptions or practices. The attribution of Śrī-chakra worship to Śaṅkara (in some of the pontificates such as Śṛṅgeri and Kāñchi-Kāmakōṭi, and in some temples like Mūkāmbikā at Kollūr) is likewise an error. A commentary on *Vishṇu-sahasra-nāma*, a popular hymnal sequence, is also ascribed to his authorship. But the work is of a different quality that it would be altogether unfair to associate Śaṅkara's name with it; and it is decidedly a recent work.

Whatever the popular beliefs, scholarly tradition has recognized Śaṅkara only as a *bhāṣhya-kāra*, viz. the author of commentaries on the Upanishads, the *Gītā* and *Vedānta-sūtras*. It is only these works that are looked upon as the self-sufficient source-material for the Advaita as established by Śaṅkara. We would, therefore, confine our attention to the consideration of the authenticity of these works.

It may be noted that Śaṅkara does not describe the viewpoint that he espouses as Advaita. He employs the word Advaita only two times in the whole of his VSB,

and both times the word is only a description of Brahman and part of a citation as e.g. in 2, 1, 9 (अजमनिद्रमस्वप्नं अद्वैतं । from Gaudapāda-Kārikā 1, 16). Śaṅkara no doubt speaks of his belonging to a school of thought (2, 1, 9 'asmadīye darśane'), but he merely calls it the Upanishadic system ('aupanīśhadam darśanam') or the doctrine of emancipation ('moksha-vāda., e.g. 1, 1, 4; 2, 1, 11). And he is convinced that it is the tradition (sampradāya), and cites as his precursors (pūrva-sūris) Gaudapāda (not by name, but quoting from his Kārikā on Māṇḍūkya) and Upavarsha (whom he refers to as 'bhagavān', 'the revered one') (for more details see my book *Consciousness in Advaita*).

The Upanishads, forming the concluding portions of the Vedic corpus in which the ultimate import also is contained, are known as 'Vedānta' and classed as supremely authoritative texts; they are regarded as the bedrock of the Vedāntic tradition. There is a large number of Upanishads that are in circulation, but commentaries ascribed to Śaṅkara are only on ten of them: Īśa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Aitareya, Tittirīya, Brhadāraṇyaka and Chhāndogya. These are not only ancient and integral portions of the Vedic corpus, but are basic to Indian thought. We may dismiss as obviously untenable the claim that the commentaries on two other Upanishads (Śvetāśvatara and Nṛsimha-tāpanī) are his. The style as well as the peculiarity of the views expressed there rule out the possibility.

The commentaries on the ten Upanishads have been frequently quoted by later writers on Advaita. And Sureśvara has written extensive glosses (Vārttikas) on two of them: Brhadāraṇyaka and Taittirīya. Indeed, the commentaries ascribed to Śaṅkara on these two Upanishads share certain unique stylistic characteristics.

It would appear that among the Upanishads, Chhândogya and Brhadâranyaka were rated high even by the author of Vedânta-sûtras: the first 28 adhikaraṇas, which seek to reconcile the apparently diverse Upanishadic passages, rely mostly on Chhândogya (12 references); and only slightly on Brhadâranyaka (4 references); Kaṭha (4 references); Taittirīya (2 references). Correspondingly, the commentary on Vedânta-sûtra-bhâṣhya ascribed to Śaṅkara, cites from Chhândogya as many as 819 times, and from Brhadâranyaka 565 times. It would therefore be quite probable that the author of the commentary on Vedânta-sûtras also wrote commentaries on the two major Upanishads: Chhândogya and Brhadâranyaka.

It is also possible that it was he who wrote commentaries on the other major (viz. the ancient) Upanishads<sup>8</sup>. The probability increases when we note that the general spirit of all the extant Upanishadic commentaries standing in his name is identical, as also their style. One can, of course, point out shifts of position and differences in assumptions among these commentaries, but these are minor, and do not vitiate the main argument that we find in his commentary on Vedânta-sûtras.

The commentary on the Gītā that is ascribed to him may also be truly his, at any rate the major portion of it. Barring the introduction of the idea of devotion (bhakti) in this work (which is not to be found either in the commentaries on the Upanishads or in the commentary on the Vedânta-sûtras), the rest of the arguments and explanations agree in the main with those of the other commentaries ascribed to him (viz. on the Upanishads and on the Vedânta-sûtras.)



There can be no doubt about his authorship of the commentary on the Vedānta-sūtras, for a doubt in this regard would take away the main plank of the whole problem. We have to ascertain the authenticity of the other works ascribed to him only on the assumption that this is his genuine work. In fact, Śaṅkara's abiding celebrity rests only on this work, and the association of his name with this work in the minds of scholars is so strong and continuous that one may reasonably say that whoever wrote this work is Śaṅkara! As a matter of fact, we do not know really anything about Śaṅkara, besides as the author of this work. It is not without some justification, therefore, that 'Ādi-Śaṅkara' ('original Śaṅkara'), whoever he was, was regarded as a bhāṣyakāra in the Kāñchi-Kāmakoti reckoning.

In the history of Advaita, the main trend is the interpretation and reinterpretation of this work alone. From the time of Padmapāda, who is believed to be Śaṅkara's direct disciple, and who wrote a gloss on this work (Pañchapadikā, which is available only for the first four sūtras), the tradition of relying almost exclusively on the Vedānta-sūtra-bhāṣhya for understanding and expounding Advaita has continued to our own day. The major works in Advaita through the centuries have only been in the nature of glosses, annotations, summaries, notes and defences of this work<sup>9</sup>.

In the early works in this field, very little use is seen to be made of the commentaries on the Upanishads and on the Gītā. Among the medieval exponents of Advaita it was only Ānanda-jñāna (also called Ānanda-giri, 14<sup>th</sup> cent.) that wrote celebrated glosses on several works commonly ascribed to Śaṅkara, including the commentaries on Vedānta-sūtras, on the Upanishads and on the Gītā.<sup>10</sup>



Śaṅkarānanda (about 1350 A. D.) was another writer who wrote glosses (vṛttis) on all three commentaries, but they did not become well-known. A more recent writer who did similar work was Sadāśiva-brahmendra (18<sup>th</sup> cent.)<sup>11</sup>.

It is an interesting reflection that the scholarly tradition of Śaṅkara's commentary on the Vedānta-sūtras has had wide appeal in this country, after Vāchaspati-miśra's days (9<sup>th</sup> cent.). Vāchaspati (author of Bhāmātī) himself was from Mithilā; Sarvajñātman (the author of Saṅkshepa-śārīraka) hailed from the extreme South; Madhusūdana-Sarasvati and Gauḍa-Brahmānanda (the celebrated exponents of Advaita) were from Bengal; Sadānanda-Vyāsa (author of Pratyak-tattva-chintāmaṇi) came from Kashmir. Bhaṭṭoji-dīkṣita (author of several works on Advaita) was from Maharashtra. Vidyāranya (author of Vaiyāsika-nyāya-mālā), Amalānanda (author of Śāstra-darpaṇa), Nṛsimhāśramī (author of Vivaraṇa-bhāva-

prakāśikā), Dharmirājādhvarī (author of Padayojanikā)<sup>12</sup> and Appaya-dīkshita (author of Śārīraka-nyāya-rakshamaṇi) were from the southern regions of India.

Important commentaries on Śaṅkara's VSB include:

1. Padmapāda's Pañchapādikā, which crystallized a specific viewpoint known as Vivaraṇa-prasthāna, with several glosses and annotations on it like Prakāśātman's Vivaraṇa, Nṛsimhāśrami's Vivaraṇa-bhāva-prakāśika and Vedānta-ratna-kosha, Sarvajña-Viṣṇu's R̥ju-vivaraṇa, Amalānanda's Pañchapādikā-darpaṇa, Akhaṇḍānanda's Tattva-dīpana, Vijñānātman's Tātparya-dyotini, Ātma-svarūpa's Prabodha-pariśodhini, Rāmānanda's Vivaraṇopanyāsa, Vidyāraṇya's Vivaraṇa-prameya-saṅgraha, Yajñeśvara's Vivaraṇojjīvana, Ānanda-pūrṇa's Tīkā-ratna, Bodhendra's Advaita-bhūṣhaṇa, Chitsukha's Bhāva-dyotanikā, Raṅga-rāja's Vivaraṇa-darpaṇa and Anubhūti-svarūpa's Prakāṭārtha-vivaraṇa (which attacks Bhāmati school).

2. Vāchaspati-miśra's Bhāmatī, which marks another prasthāna, differing from the above in many details, with Amalānanda's Vedānta-kalpataru, Achyuta-Kṛṣṇa's Bhāmatī-bhāva-prakāśikā, Allāla-sūri's Bhāmatī-tilaka, Appaya-dīkshita's Parimala, Tāraka-brahma's Parimala-saṅgraha, Lakshmī-nṛsimha's Ābhoga, Akhaṇḍānanda's R̥ju-prakāśikā and Anṇā-Vājapeyin's Bhāmatyuktārtha-saṅgraha.

3. Besides these partisan explanatory works, there are many general works seeking to explain the ideas in VSB.

Ānanda-giri's Śārīraka-nyāya-nirṇaya, Govindānanda's Bhāshya-ratna-prabhā with Pūrṇānanda's gloss on it, Sarvajñātman's Saṅkshepa-Śārīraka (a poetical work) with glosses on it like Siddhānta-dīpikā (Viśva-veda),

Tattva-bodhinī (Nṛsimha), Anvayārtha-prakāśikā (Rāma-tīrtha), Subodhinī (Agni-chit-purushottama) and Śaṅkshepa-Śārīraka-sambandhokti (anonymous).

Chitsukha's Bhāva-prakāśikā attempts to reconcile the views of the Bhāmati and Vivaraṇa prasthānas. Rāmachandra-yatī's Subodhinī, Advaitānanda-sarasvatī's Brahmadevyābharaṇa, Śaṅkarānanda's Brahma-sūtra-dīpikā, Appaya-dīkshita's Śaṅkara-nyāya-rakshāmaṇi, Nārāyaṇa's Śārīraka-mīmāṃsā-bhāshya-vārttika, Raghunātha-sūri's Śaṅkara-pāda-bhūṣaṇa, Jñānottama-bhaṭṭāraka's Vidyāśrī, Vāñchheśvara's Sūtrārtha-chintāmaṇi (poetical work), Chokkanātha's Vedānta-dīpikā, Bālakṛṣṇānanda's Bhāshya-Vārttika-ṭīkā, Amalānanda's Śāstra-darpaṇa, Kṛṣṇādhūta-paṇḍita's Advaita-sūtrārtha-paddhati (which seeks to reconcile the views of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva), Brahmānanda's Advaitāmṛta (vṛtti), and Sukha-prakāśa's Adhikaraṇa-ratna-mālā are the more prominent among independent glosses on VSB.

## REFERENCES

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1. Bhāshyas on the Upanishads, the Gītā and Vedānta-sūtras.
2. Sanatsujātiya, Viveka-chūḍāmaṇi, Upadeśa-sāhasrī, Vākya vṛtti, Aparokṣhānubhūti, Sarva-Vedānta-Siddhānta-Sāra Saṅgraha, Prabodha-sudhākara, Advaitānubhūti, Yogatārāvalī, Daśa-śloki, Brahmānuchintana, Anātma-srī-vigarhaṇa-prakaraṇa, Hastāmalakīya (a bhāshya), Pañchikaraṇa etc.
3. Svātma-prakāśikā, Manīshā-pañchakam, Dhanyāshṭaka, Jīvan-muktānanda-laharī, Svarūpānusandhāna, Ātmabodha, Yati-pañchaka, Nirvāṇa-mañjari etc.
4. Stotras to Gaṇapati, Subrahmaṇya, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Devī and miscellaneous.
5. Tattvopadeśa, Sadāchārānusandhāna, Upadeśapañchaka etc.
6. The manner in which the works were included in this series has been given: "Swami Narasimha Bharati directed him (Sri T. K. Balasubrahmanya Iyer) to get all the manuscripts of the works of Ādi Śaṅkara and print them as a single complete edition. Mr. Iyer advertised in all the papers in India and abroad, and nine sets of manuscripts were received; among these one was from Germany. Unable to find out which were authentic and which were not, he laid them before the Jagadguru for a decision. The latter selected the correct versions and approved them for printing" ('The works of Ādi Śaṅkara', Tattvaloka, 1978, Vol.1, p. 29. Sri Abhinava Vidyatīrtha Educational Trust Pub.). The Publisher, T. K. Balasubrahmanya Iyer, had no pretensions for any scholarship, much less for the academic training that is required to spot the authentic manuscripts.



7. Suresvara's Vārttika in the opening verses mentions that 'his teacher' had prepared a vṛtti on this Upanishad —

यां काण्वोपनिषच्छलेन सकलाम्नायार्थसंशोधिनीम् ।

संचक्रुर्गुरवोऽनुवृत्तगुरवो वृत्तिं सतां शान्तये ॥

Interestingly, the commentary on Brhadāranyaka ascribed to Śaṅkara also claims in the opening sentence to write a Vṛtti on this Upanishad — तस्या इयमल्पग्रन्था वृत्तिरारभ्यते ।

8. On Īśāvāsya, Kena, Katha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, and Aitareya. It may be noted that Kena has two commentaries, both ascribed to Śaṅkara: Pada-Vākya and Bhāshya-Vākya. But the views expressed in these two are not identical; indeed some of them are conflicting. Vākya bhāshya appears to be later and less mature. Māṇḍūkya is equipped with Gauḍapāda's Kārikā, on which too there is a commentary ascribed to Śaṅkara.
9. Besides Padmapāda's Pañchapādikā, here are some of the major works on Advaita following Śaṅkara's VSB: Vāchaspati's Bhāmātī (a complete annotation of VSB); Sarvajñātman's Saṅkshhepa-śārīraka, (a poetical work of 1,240 verses in four chapters arranged according to the four divisions of VSB) ; Anubhūti-svarūpa's Prakāṭārtha vivaraṇa; Govindānanda's Bhāshya-ratna-prabhā (a popular exposition of VSB); Chitsukha's Bhāva-prakāśikā, Adhikaraṇa-mañjarī and Adhikaraṇa-saṅgati (analytical works on VSB); Śaṅkarānanda's Brahmasūtra-dīpikā; Sukha prakāśa's Adhikaraṇa-ratna-mālā; Amalānanda's Śāstra-darpaṇa; Vidyāranya's Adhikaraṇa-ratna-mālā (or Vaiyāsika-nyāya-mālā); Sadāśivendra's Brahma-tattva prakāśikā; Nāgeśa bhaṭṭa's Vedānta-bhāshya-pratipadyāni; Gauḍa-Brahmānanda's Vedānta-sūtra-muktāvali; Appaya-dīkshita's Śārīraka-nyāya-rakshāmaṇi (only till the end of the first chapter of VSB); Nārāyaṇa-sarasvatī's Bhāshya vārttika; Bālakṛṣṇānanda's Bhāshya-vārttika-ṭīkā; Advaitānanda's Brahnavidyābharāṇa; Vāñchheśvara's Brahma-sūtrārtha chintāmaṇi; Durgāprasāda's Advaita prakāśa (expounding the teachings of VSB in the form of a dialogue, in nine parts);

Sanmitra-bhava-deva's Vendānta-sūtra-vyākhyā-chhando-ṭikā; Prajñātmanmuni's Brahma-sūtra-sāra-saṅgraha; Raghunātha sūri's Śaṅkara-pāda bhūṣhaṇa; Brahmānanda's Bhaṣhyārtha Saṅgraha; Kṛṣṇāvadhūta's Advaita-sūtrārtha-paddhati (in the form of a vṛtti) and Rāmachandra-yati's Subodhinī (a simple exposition of VSB, but only for the first four sutras).

These works range from the ninth century till the eighteenth. After this period also have been some important works on VSB, like Vedānta-nava-mālikā (Nīlamegha-Śāstri), Śārīraka-sūtra-dīpikā (Viṭṭhala-Budha-Kāṇe), Bhāṣhya gāmbhīrya-nirṇaya (Venkaṭa-rāghava-Śāstri) Vidvan-mano-hāriṇī (Raṅganātha), Vidvan-mukura-bhūṣhaṇa (Venkaṭādri), Śārīraka-chatus-sūtrī-vichāra (Ballam Koṇḍa Rāmarāya-Kāvi), Vyāsa-tātparya-nirṇaya (Ayyappa-dīkshita), Śārīraka mīmāṃsā-rahasyam (Paṅganāḍu-Gaṇapati-Śāstri), Adhikaraṇa-chatusṭayi (Kurungulam Kṛṣṇa-Śāstri) and Śārīraka-bhāṣhya-ṭippanī (Nūraṇi Anantakṛṣṇa-Śāstri).

10. Also on Gauḍapāda-kārikā-bhāṣhya, Upadeśa-Sāhasrī, Vākya-vṛtti and Harimīde-stotra. He has also annotated Sureśvara's 'Vārttika' on Bṛhadāraṇyaka- and Taittirīya-Upanishads.
11. Author of a large number of works, including Brahma-sūtra-vṛtti on VSB, glosses on some Upanishads, and Gītā-sundara on Bhagavad-gītā.
12. But his Vedānta-paribhāṣhā is the more popular work; it provided the logical and epistemological basis for Advaita system. He set before himself the task of answering the challenge:

किम् अद्वैतं आगममात्रेण प्रतिपत्तव्यं,

आहोस्वित् तर्केणापि, इत्यत आह शक्यते तर्केणापि ज्ञातुम् ॥

## IV

### WHAT WAS ŚAṆKARA'S MISSION?

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The Vedānta-sūtras (also called Brahma-sūtras) are so called because they deal with the essential import of the concluding portions of the Vedic lore (Veda-anta), viz. the Upanishads. Śaṅkara knew the text as 'Vedānta-mīmāṃsā' (a respectful investigation into the Upanishadic teaching) or 'Śārīraka-mīmāṃsā' (an investigation into the nature of the embodied Self)<sup>1</sup>. The text is well-known as



Bādarāyaṇa's, although who this Bādarāyaṇa was is not known, and despite the fact that Bādarāyaṇa himself is cited in the text as many as nine times. This Bādarāyaṇa was later identified with Vyāsa (Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana), the compiler of Mahābhārata and the author of the Bhagavad-gītā. But Śaṅkara is silent about this.

The text that Śaṅkara had before him consists of 555 aphorisms (sūtras), distributed in 191 topics of discussion (adhikaraṇas), which are arranged in four sections (pādas), which are again grouped under four chapters (adhyāyas)<sup>2</sup>. The aphorisms are all too brief and cryptic, and are for the most part unintelligible by themselves. A commentary, therefore, becomes an indispensable aid for understanding the text. But then, the understanding is necessarily dependent upon the initial bias of the commentator.

There are more than twenty-eight major commentaries (bhāṣhya) that have been mentioned by later writers. However, not more than seven or eight are available now and are popularly studied<sup>3</sup>. Of them Śaṅkara's is the earliest. But he refers to still earlier commentaries, which, however, are no longer extant. There must, therefore, have been a fairly ancient tradition of commentarial literature on the Vedānta-sūtras. And there also must have been an orthodox trend of thought that some of the commentaries sustained and advocated. Śaṅkara refers to this as Scriptural tradition (āgama-sampradāya), and mentions some earlier thinkers (Gauḍapāda, Upavarsha, Kāśakṛtsna, Dravidāchārya, Sundara-pāṇḍya and Bādarāyaṇa<sup>4</sup>) as belonging to this tradition. He also upholds the view that it is the knowledge of this tradition that makes learning meaningful at all<sup>5</sup>.

Śaṅkara's purpose in writing his commentary on the Vedānta-sūtras was to explain this traditional viewpoint and defend the validity of this viewpoint. We may assume that there were other viewpoints current during his days, and that they were not entirely in agreement with the traditional viewpoint. Alternatively, what the traditional viewpoint really was had become vague and almost lost. Unless a situation like this was prevalent, it is irrational to assume that Śaṅkara would have been motivated to write this precious commentary. His commentary clearly reveals his eagerness to defend some view, and oppose some other views.

What did he seek to defend? The purpose of the Vedānta-sūtras, according to him, was to string together (sūtra) the Upanishadic passages that enlighten us on the unitary nature of the Self (the embodied and the supreme), so that the irritating worldly involvement may cease<sup>6</sup>. He makes it clear that Bādarāyaṇa's text is in fact an authoritative philosophy of the Upanishads. He identifies himself with the 'votaries of the Upanishads' (aupanishada)<sup>7</sup>. He isolates the Upanishadic portion of the Vedic lore from the rest of that lore, and narrows down scriptural authority to these ten or twelve Upanishadic texts<sup>8</sup> (on which commentaries ascribed to him are extant). He does not, as Rāmānuja does, extend the scope of authoritative scripture to include the ritualistic portions of the Veda, much less to include, as Madhva does, other auxiliary literature like the Smṛtis, Purāṇas and epics. He relies exclusively on the authority of the authentic Upanishads.

The teaching of these Upanishads, according to him, is the unitary nature of the Self<sup>9</sup>. This fact had to be stressed because the apparent distinction between the



transactional state of existence (samsāra) and the liberated state (mukti) would naturally lead us to presume that the Self is dual in its nature.

The context in which the problem gained relevance was the possible relationship between the empirical, embodied Self (jīva or vijñāna-ātmā) and the transcendental, Supreme Self (parama-ātmā). There were those who held that the two aspects of Self were really distinct from each other in the transactional condition, but got identified in the liberated state. There were others who held that the two aspects were both distinct and non-distinct (bheda-abheda) in the transactional condition, but only non-distinct in the liberated condition. There were still others who held that the distinction between them even in the transactional level was only apparent and owing to ignorance (avidyā), and that the distinction was unreal in the transactional condition as well as in the liberated state.

Śaṅkara lent his weight in favour of the third group of thinkers, and, according to him, they alone represented the correct tradition. He refers to Gauḍapāda, Kāśakṛtsna, Sundara-pāṇḍya and Upavarsha as belonging to this group. But it is important to note that all these groups of thinkers were non-dualists (advaitins), in the sense that they accepted non-distinction between the two aspects of Self in the liberated state. There were then no 'qualified non-dualists' of the later Rāmānuja type or 'dualists' of the later Madhva type for Śaṅkara to combat with. He had to challenge only the non-dualists (advaitins), but who deviated from the mainstream of tradition in varying degrees. Thus it was only a family feud that he was engaged in.

The author of the Vedānta-sūtras had perhaps

undertaken a similar task. While trying to establish the validity of Scriptural tradition, he had to involve himself in a confrontation with Vaiśeṣikas, Naiyāyikas, Mīmāṃsakas, Sāṅkhyas, the Yogins, Pāśupatas and Pāñcharātras who accepted Scriptural authority but flouted the Scriptural tradition. He had also to contend with others who were outside the traditional fold and did not accept Scriptural authority at all, viz. Jainas and Buddhists: they had different traditions to follow and different Scriptures to rely upon. These are all then the dualists (dvaitinah), outside the traditional non-dualist (advaita) stance. To silence such critics of the Upanishadic tradition, one cannot possibly quote the Upanishadic passages, while that would be enough for the deviants within the traditional fold.

The goal held out by the Upanishadic tradition is liberation from worldly involvement (moksha); Śāṅkara styles himself an adherent of the doctrine of moksha (moksha-vādi)<sup>10</sup>. But is the study of Upanishads the only road to this destination? Is it a sine qua non for moksha? While Śāṅkara concedes, and in fact commends, the study of Upanishads, he recognizes that such a study is not indispensable or a necessary precondition for the attainment of the goal<sup>11</sup>. Nor is such a study by itself sufficient to lead one to the goal. He even boldly denies that the Vedic authority is binding after one attains the goal<sup>12</sup>.

He recognizes that it has its limitations<sup>13</sup>. But he was working within the traditional fold, and was attempting to establish or re-establish the correct tradition for those who relied upon tradition. Naturally, therefore, he accepted the validity of Scriptural authority, and sought to interpret the final phase of the Vedic lore (the Vedānta

or the Upanishads, and the Sūtras thereon). He also appeals to reason, and to personal experience, wherever indicated<sup>14</sup>. His vision, however, is not confined to those who are within this fold (belonging to the varṇa-organization and thus being eligible for Scriptural study). He very pertinently points out that even those who are outside this fold are as eligible to the highest wisdom as those who are within<sup>15</sup>.

It can be seen that the Mīmāṃsakas who advocated the primacy of rituals in the Vedic tradition, and thus claimed that they represented the correct tradition, come in for frequent and sharp criticism at Śāṅkara's hands. This criticism involved not only the rejection of rituals as necessary or sufficient aids to the accepted goal of total liberation, but the rejection of the absolute or ultimate authority of the Scripture. Śāṅkara's mission was to rid the people of the ritualistic prejudices engendered by the Mīmāṃsakas, and to project the idea of liberation by wisdom (jñāna) alone as the true import of the Upanishads.

Śāṅkara, in popular imagination, was the hero of Hinduism who drove Buddhism out of India. This is altogether inaccurate. Historically, Buddhism had lost its vigour a couple of centuries before the emergence of Śāṅkara, and had already moved into the Himalayan neighbourhood. The battle that Śāṅkara was obliged to fight against the Buddhist schools (like Mādhyamika and Vaibhāṣika) was purely metaphysical and doctrinal, and not religious. And Buddhism (mahāyāna) itself had moved closer to the Upanishads (which in fact was the source from which Buddhism took shape), and the chasm that yawned between Buddhism and Vedānta was indeed narrow and negligible.

How else can we explain the intriguing and compromising position that Gaudapāda, the traditional precursor of Śaṅkara, assumed in his Kārikā? It is impossible to ascertain whether he was more of a Buddhist than a Vedāntin, for Buddhism and Vedānta were not irreconcilable opposites. He could be both a Buddhist and a Vedāntin, as we would show in a later chapter. Śaṅkara's picture as a saviour of Hinduism from the onslaught of Buddhism is both ill-conceived and inaccurate.

Śaṅkara's commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra (1, 1, 1)

opens with a clear statement of his mission. He begins the discussion of the very first word "atha" in that book, by attacking the Mīmāṃsaka position of Scriptural study and ritualistic orientation. The magnificent prelude that he has composed for this discussion (called 'Adhyāsa-bhāṣya') leaves us in no uncertainty about his higher vision and purpose, vision higher than Scriptural authority and purpose higher than the rewards of rituals.

No thinker earlier than Śaṅkara was able to formulate, demonstrate



and defend this position as effectively as Śaṅkara did. It is the success with which his efforts were crowned that brought him lasting, although a little belated, glory. Curiously, however, those who claimed to be his successors forgot the significance of his thought, or found that his mission was unpractical, and sought to reconcile Vedānta with Mīmāṃsā. They compromised the liberating wisdom with the performance of rituals.

The sect that got formed at a later date with the image of Śaṅkara as the rallying force came to be distinguished by the very ideology that Śaṅkara strove to extinguish: the amalgamation of rituals with wisdom (jñāna-karma-samucchaya). It inclined more in favour of the Mīmāṃsā position with regard to Scriptural authority and the value of rituals than with the 'Vedānta' as envisaged by Bādarāyaṇa and Śaṅkara. There was thus an obvious disparity between the Advaita theory that Śaṅkara expounded and the actual religious practices of not only the laymen but even the elite in the sect.

It was but natural that persistent efforts were made to tone down the rigour of Śaṅkara's standpoint by subsequent writers. The numerous sub-commentaries and glosses that came to be written on Śaṅkara's works reflect the spirit of accommodation of a ritualistic attitude with the monistic inclination of the master. The result was a distortion of Śaṅkara's position, thus opening him to unjust attacks by 'rival' schools of Vedānta. It is an uncomfortable realization when we find that the philosophical position of Śaṅkara that Bhāskara, Rāmānuja and Madhva attacked is what was foisted on Śaṅkara at a later date, and not what can be substantiated by his own writings!



## REFERENCES

1. cf. Bhāmatī on Adhyāsa-bhashya: शरीरमेव शरीरकं तत्र निवासी शरीरको जीवात्मा । तस्य त्वंपदाभिधेयस्य तत्पदाभिधेयपरमात्मरूपतया या मीमांसा सा तथोक्ता ।
2. The number of aphorisms and the topics of discussion vary with different commentators. The aphorisms according to Rāmānuja were 545 in number, according to Madhva 534, according to Nimbārka 540, according to Vallabha 554 and according to Śrīkaṇṭha 544; and the number of topics of discussion were 140, 123, 161, 171, and 182 respectively.
3. Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha, Nimbārka, Śrīkaṇṭha, Vijñāna-bhikṣu, etc.
4. Gauḍapāda, cf. VSB, 1, 4, 14; 2, 1, 9; BUB, 2, 1, 20; CHUB 7, 12, 1 and 2, 23, 1; Upavarsha, cf. VSB 1, 3, 28; Kāśakṛtsna VSB, 3, 3, 53; Draviḍa, cf. CHUB, 3, 10, 3; Sundara-pāṇḍya VSB, 1, 1, 4 and GB, 313; Bādarāyaṇa, VSB, 2, 1, 14 etc.
5. cf. GB, 3, 2 असम्प्रदायवित् सर्वशास्त्रविदपि मूर्खवदुपेक्षणीयः।
6. cf. Adhyāsa-bhāshya, अस्यानर्थहितोः प्रहाणाय आत्मैकत्वविद्याप्रतिपत्तये सर्वे वेदान्ता आरभ्यन्ते । यथा चायमर्थः सर्वेषां वेदान्तानां तथा वयमस्यां शरीरकमीमांसायां प्रदर्शयिष्यामः ।
7. cf. BUB, 2, 1, 20 (सर्वेषामुपनिषद्वादिनाम्)
8. cf. 'Sarva-vedānta-pratyayādhikaraṇa', VSB, 3.
9. IB. Introduction सर्वासामुपनिषदां आत्मयाथात्म्यनिरूपणेनैव उपक्षयात् ; also Adhyāsa-bhāshya passage quoted above (note 6).
10. VSB 2, 1, 11 सर्वेषां मोक्षवादिनामभ्युपगमः ।  
and 1. 1. 4 सर्वैर्मोक्षवादिभिरभ्युपगम्यते ॥

11. cf. VSB, 1, 1, 1. His explanation of the expression 'atha' in the very first aphorism rejects the idea of necessary involvement of Vedic study or the performance of rituals prescribed by the Veda, before one seeks to inquire into the nature of Brahman. Cf. also VSB, ('apaśūdrādhikaraṇa'), and ('Vidhurādhikaraṇa'). Cf. also GB, 18, 40. He includes अश्रुतवेदान्तानां along with other expressions that suggest a wider framework, गुरुसंप्रदायरहितानां... अत्यंतबहिर्विषयासक्तबुद्धीनां सम्यक्प्रमाणेषु अकृतप्रमाणां....
12. VSB, 4, 1, 3 'वेदाः अवेदाः' इति वचनात् इष्यत एवास्माभिः श्रुतेरस्याभावः प्रबोधे । also GB, 13, 2 यथा द्वैतिनां सर्वेषां बन्धावस्थायामेव शास्त्रार्थवत्वम् न मुक्तावस्थायाम् । also MKG 2, 32 सर्वोऽयं लौकिको वैदिकश्च व्यवहारो विधिविषय एव ।
13. VSB, 1, 1, 2 न धर्मजिज्ञासायामिव श्रुत्यादय एव प्रमाणं ब्रह्मजिज्ञासायां, किंतु श्रुत्यादयोऽनुभवादयश्च यथासंभवम् इह प्रमाणम् ।
14. cf. VSB, 4, 1, 15 कथं होकस्य स्वहृदयप्रत्ययं ब्रह्मवेदनं देहधारणं चापरेण प्रतिक्षेपुं शक्येत ।
15. VSB, 3, 4, 36 अनाश्रमत्वेन वर्तमानोऽपि विद्यायामधिक्रियते ।

## V

### WHOM DID HE FOLLOW?

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Śaṅkara's major work being the commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra ascribed to Bādarāyaṇa, it follows that Śaṅkara followed him principally. Śaṅkara does refer to the 'revered Bādarāyaṇa' (bhagavān)<sup>1</sup>, 'the author of the Sūtra' (sūtrakāra)<sup>2</sup>, in respectful terms. But it is a curious circumstance that the Vedānta-sūtra itself refers to Bādarāyaṇa as if he were an authority, different from the author<sup>3</sup>. Śaṅkara does not, explicitly at least, identify the author of the Vedānta-sūtra with Vyāsa or Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana. The identity of the author of the Vedānta-sūtra is thus a matter of some uncertainty. And from the literary style of the work, it is difficult to reconstruct what precisely was the philosophical or religious position of that author. The multiplicity of interpretations that are extant makes such an ascertainment more difficult.

Thus, to say that Śaṅkara followed Bādarāyaṇa would not be very meaningful, and would not help us understand what Śaṅkara really taught. We must look for his affiliations elsewhere, if we do not want to suppose that his teachings were entirely novel (navīna, as Bhāskara has supposed).

The legendary lists of succession of teachers of Advaita include Gaudapāda, who is described as Śaṅkara's teacher's teacher. Śaṅkara's own teacher is said to be some Govinda who lived on the banks of Narmadā, or in Badari.

However, he is altogether unknown, apart from being thus associated with Śaṅkara. And Śaṅkara himself does not mention him either as his teacher or as his predecessor anywhere in his bhāṣhyas. Even if we concede his historicity, his role in the development of Advaita thought is obscure<sup>4</sup>.

However, Gauḍapāda was something of a celebrity. Although the later Jaina and Buddhist writers, who quote from Upavarsha, Bhartṛhari, Kumārila, Prabhākara and even Sureśvara among orthodox authorities<sup>5</sup> do not refer to him; and although his views are not referred to in contemporary writings<sup>6</sup>, he is quoted by Śaṅkara himself twice in VSB, though not by name<sup>7</sup>. In both of these citations, the introduction is in terms of great reverence. He is extolled by Śaṅkara as the 'knower of tradition' (sampradāya-vit). Śaṅkara's direct disciple Sureśvara also quotes from Gauḍapāda and refers to him as "a great teacher who was thoroughly conversant with the final import of the Vedic lore"<sup>8</sup>. Further, the same Sureśvara elsewhere definitely associates Gauḍapāda's name with Śaṅkara's, suggesting their united leadership in the field of Vedānta at that time<sup>9</sup>.

Śaṅkara refers approvingly of other teachers who lived before his days in reverential terms, like Upavarsha, Kāśakṛtsna, Sundarapāṇḍya and Draviḍa<sup>10</sup>. But we hardly know anything about them, and their works are almost irretrievably lost. Śaṅkara's debt to them cannot therefore be satisfactorily ascertained. His reliance on Gauḍapāda was apparently considerable, for his references to Gauḍapāda are more numerous than to others who preceded him, and he thought it fit to write a commentary on the Kārikā ascribed to Gauḍapāda.

While there are four or five works that are commonly

ascribed to Gauḍapāda<sup>11</sup>, one of them is consistently ascribed to him from a remote period: Kārikā on Māṇḍūkya Upanishad, also called 'Āgama-śāstra'. Māṇḍūkya Upanishad is not a major Upanishad, and Śaṅkara, who has written a commentary on it, does quote from it in his VSB. It deals with a part of the problem: the consideration of the three normal states, the state beyond it, and the parallel of the sacred syllable Aum. That Gauḍapāda should have undertaken to employ this brief text as his starting point appears rather strange. But the freedom that such a text gives to one who wants to write a more or less independent treatise on it (like the Kārikā) is a consideration.

Śaṅkara has commented on the Upanishad as well as on Gauḍapāda's Kārikā on it, although Śaṅkara's authorship of the latter has been doubted, and not without





reason. The extant commentary on the Kārikā describes it as 'a treatise in four sections' (prakaraṇa-chatusṭayam), and as 'the epitome of the import of the Upanishads' (vedāntārtha-sāra-saṅgraha-bhūtam).

The four sections of the work lack an obvious unity of theme, and Vidhusekhara Bhattacharya rightly guesses that they were originally four independent treatises, which were later put together under the general title 'Āgama-śāstra'. Even the commentary ascribed to Śaṅkara knows it only as 'a collection of four books' prakaraṇa-chatusṭayam; and the commentator is not aware of the general title it came to have later. It was Ānandagiri, who employed this expression for the first time<sup>12</sup>. The meaning of the word 'Āgama' is not just Scriptural authority, but "the traditional manner of arriving at the truth of Self"<sup>13</sup>, in the words of the commentary.

It is this method adopted by Gauḍapāda to expound the import of Vedānta that must have struck Śaṅkara as original and of far-reaching significance. It is "particularly significant", as Surendranath Dasgupta notes, "that Śaṅkara should credit Gauḍapāda and not Bādarāyaṇa with recovering the Upanishadic creed"<sup>14</sup>. In fact, the commentary ends with a reverent note: The commentator falls at the feet of the 'great teacher' (paramagurum, also means 'teacher's teacher'), who is the worthiest among the worthies (pujyābhipūjyam), and who, out of compassion for the suffering folk, churned the great ocean of Scriptures by his wisdom, and recovered the nectar that lay hidden within the waters of the Veda<sup>15</sup>.

If the commentary on Gauḍapāda's Kārikā is indeed Śaṅkara's, and if the concluding verses are really the compositions of the commentator (for it is quite unusual for Śaṅkara to compose such or any verses at the end of

his commentaries), it is obvious that Śaṅkara followed Gauḍapāda. Why then does he not acknowledge this fact, or at least suggest it, anywhere in his VSB, which is his magnum opus, if not indeed his only work? It is a fact that, apart from the two references to Gauḍapāda that we have cited above, he does not seem to have relied on Gauḍapāda at all. There are, of course, correspondences between the arguments of Gauḍapāda and those of Śaṅkara. But correspondences need not necessarily mean borrowals.

Śaṅkara's canvas is much larger than Gauḍapāda's. His affiliation to the Upanishadic tradition is more intimate and committed. His loyalty to Bādarāyaṇa or whoever is the author of the Vedānta-sūtra is more positive and meaningful. In fact, Gauḍapāda does not even refer to Bādarāyaṇa, or make use of the Vedānta-sūtra in any way. But for Śaṅkara's reference to him as the 'knower of tradition' (sampradāya-vit, VSB, 1, 4, 14) and 'one who was conversant with the traditional import of the Upanishads' (vedāntārtha-sampradāya-vit, VSB, 2, 1, 9), we would find it hard to identify him with the Vedāntic tradition at all.

Gauḍapāda has unmistakable leanings towards Mahāyāna-Buddhism. And Śaṅkara's association with him has earned for Śaṅkara an unjust epithet: 'Buddhist in disguise'<sup>16</sup>. The influence of Nāgārjuna on Gauḍapāda cannot in any way be explained away; borrowals from Yogācāra, Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda texts have been identified in Gauḍapāda's Kārikā by scholars<sup>17</sup>. T. M. P. Mahadevan, who is an authority on Gauḍapāda and is an exponent of Vedānta, concedes that Nāgārjuna's Mūla-mādhyamika-kārikā, and that the terminology used in Gauḍapāda's Kārikā, are Buddhist (although he

explains the latter as probably due to the exigencies of the time).

That Buddhism was an offshoot of the Upanishadic outlook, and that Mahāyāna was a return to the Upanishadic idea of the Absolute are facts. But that does not deny the independent development of Buddhist thought. The nihilistic and negative notions of Śūnya and Vijñāna are aspects of this independent development; Yogāchāra, Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda thought-systems were undoubtedly deviations from the original ideology that we can discern in the Upanishads. The critique of reason and experience which blossomed into a dialectic became the major concern of the Buddhist philosophers like Nāgārjuna, Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti. Gauḍapāda's Kārikā reflects this trend unmistakably.

But Gauḍapāda was not a Buddhist; he was a Vedāntin. The very framework that he chose for his Kārikā is sufficient argument for his traditional affiliation. However, there can be little doubt that he attempted to accommodate the Mādhyamika dialectic and the Vijñānavāda analysis of illusion into the framework of Vedānta. The Māṇḍūkya Upanishad which confines its attention to the analysis of empirical experience was an excellent peg on which to hang his reflections. His reflections, however, were not mere borrowals from the Buddhist books, but reinterpretations of the Vedāntic text in the light of the Buddhist dialectic and experiential analysis.

It was an original contribution that Gauḍapāda made, and it was readily acceptable to the people within the Vedāntic fold. Even Maṇḍana-miśra, a contemporary of Śaṅkara who held views different from him, and whose loyalty was divided between Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta,

thought it fit to quote a verse from Gauḍapāda's Kārikā in his Vedāntic work, *Brahma-siddhi*<sup>18</sup>. Gauḍapāda's work was in the nature of a rediscovery of the essential and original teaching of the Upanishads.

It will be obvious to anyone who reads the Kārikā that Gauḍapāda takes an extreme view as regards the illusory nature of the world around (the waking objects being proved to be as unreal as the dream-objects) and the absolute non-involvement of the 'unoriginated' (ajāti) Self in the phenomenal world (nishprapañcha). While following the general drift, Śāṅkara does not accept this extreme position, and differs from Gauḍapāda by pointing out the experiential variation of the waking state from the dream state<sup>19</sup>. Scholars like Surendranath Dasgupta have pointed out inconsistencies in the views Śāṅkara expressed in his commentaries on the Kārikā and on the Vedānta-sūtra<sup>20</sup>. They are also inclined, on this account, to doubt if the commentary on the Kārikā is really Śāṅkara's.

It is clear that Śāṅkara has his own reservations, and his own convictions (like Satkāryavāda, the idea of Brahman as the real foundation for the world however unreal, and the value of religious discipline in bringing about the liberating wisdom). He does not go along with Gauḍapāda the whole way. While conceding that Gauḍapāda had an understanding of the import of Upanishadic tradition, he does not sympathize with his dialectic or heavy absorption of nihilistic ideas. That is why he does not make much of Gauḍapāda in VSB, apart from quoting two verses from the Kārikā. It is interesting that the commentary on the Kārikā does not make any reference to the 'tradition' that Gauḍapāda is said to have known (as the two references in VSB make out).

There are instances of Śaṅkara recognizing the significant contributions of his predecessors, without however wholly accepting their positions. He refers, for instance, to Upavarsha as 'revered' (bhagavān), and approvingly cites his views<sup>21</sup>. But this Upavarsha, who is the same as Bodhāyana<sup>22</sup> and wrote annotations on both Pūrva-mīmāṃsā, called by Śaṅkara 'prathama-tantra', and Vedānta-sūtra, believed in the conjoint discipline of rituals and wisdom (jñāna-karma-samucchaya), which Śaṅkara opposes with all his might. Draviḍa, whom Śaṅkara refers to in respectful terms as the knower of tradition<sup>23</sup> must have been a dialectician, if we can rely on the evidence of Ānandagiri<sup>24</sup>. His relating the positive and negative aspects of the dialectic by a sūtra<sup>25</sup>, however, is not approved by Śaṅkara.

The truth of the matter is that Śaṅkara was not a follower of anyone, but a leader. He followed his own genius, and carved out a system of thought that was truly his own, within the broad framework of Vedāntic tradition.



## REFERENCES

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1. VSB, 3, 4, 8.
2. VSB, 2, 1, 14; also 3, 14, 40.
3. Ref. to Bādarāyaṇa : e.g. VSB 1, 3, 26; 1, 3, 33; 3, 2, 41; 3, 4, 1; 3, 4, 8; 4, 3, 15; 4, 4, 7 and 4, 4, 12.
4. There are works ascribed to Govinda (who is spoken of as bhagavat-pāda), but we cannot be sure that this was indeed the teacher of Śaṅkara; and these are not works on Advaita. One is a work on alchemy (Rasa-hṛdaya-tantra) and another is on tantra (Jayadratha-yāmala).
5. E.g. Vidyānanda-Pātrakesari's Ashta-sāhasrikā (about 800 A. D.) mentions all of them; Prabhāchandra's Prameya-kamala-mārtaṇḍa (about the same period) also mentioned all them excepting Sureśvara; Dharmabhūṣaṇa's Nyāya-dīpikā (1600 A. D.) refers to Kumārila, Prabhākara and Bhartṛhari.
6. Like Dharmakīrti's works Pramāṇa-vārttika-kārikā, Pramāṇa viniśchaya, Nyāya-bindu, and Sambandha-parīkṣhā (635-650 ?); Śānta-rakṣita's Tattva-saṅgraha (about 749 A. D.) which discusses many Vedāntic issues (although the Upanishadic account given here appears to have been taken from Gauḍapāda); Kumārila-bhaṭṭa's Śloka-vārttika; Prabhākara's Brhatī, Maṇḍana-miśra's Vidhi-viveka and Bhāvanā-viveka, all of whom were immediately anterior to Śaṅkara, as Gauḍapāda is claimed to have been.
7. VSB, 1, 4, 14 and 2, 1, 9. The quotations from Kārikā 1, 16 and 3, 15 are introduced with तथा च संप्रदायविदो वदन्ति and अत्रोक्तं संप्रदायविद्भिराचार्यैः respectively. He is also quoted in CHUB, 1, 12, 1 and 2, 23, 1 (where he is called 'smṛtikāra').

8. BUBV, 2, 1, 386 : निःशेषवेदसिद्धान्तविद्वद्भिरपि भाषितं ।

गौडाचार्यैरिदं वस्तु यथास्माभिः प्रपञ्चितम् ॥

9. NS, 4,44. एवं गौडैर्द्राविडैर्नः पूज्यैरयमर्थः प्रकाशितः । The expressions “Gauḍa” and “Draviḍa”, used in reverent plural, refer to their native region, Bengal and South India. They are together described as “our revered elders”.
10. Upavarsha described as ‘bhagavān’, VSB, 1, 3, 28 and 3, 3, 53; Kāśakṛtsna, styled—‘achārya’, VSB, 1, 4, 22; Sundara-pāṇḍya (not by name), called ‘sampradāya-vit’, GB, 3, 13; three verses from his work are quoted in VSB, 1, 1, 4; and Draviḍa (not by name) called ‘knower of tradition’, CHB, 3, 10, 10; BUB, 2, 1, 20 and AUB, 2, 32.
11. A commentary on Īśvara-kṛshṇa’s Sāṅkhya-kārikā, a gloss on Uttara-gītā, a commentary on Nṛsimhottara-tāpanīya, Subhagodaya and Śrī-vidyā-ratna-sūtra.
12. In his ṭīkā on Śāṅkara’s commentary on Kārikā: आगमशास्त्रस्य व्याख्यानस्य प्रणेतृत्वेन etc.
13. तत्र तावदोक्तैर्निर्णयाय प्रथमं प्रकरणं आगमप्रधानं आत्मतत्त्वप्रतिपत्त्युपायभूतम् ।
14. A History of Indian Philosophy. Vol. I, P. 423
15. colophon. Verse 2 —

प्रज्ञावैशाखवेधधुभितजलनिधेर्वेदनाम्नोऽन्तरस्थं

भूतान्यालोक्य मग्नान्यविरतजननग्राहघोरे समुद्रे ।

कारुण्यादुद्वेगधामृतमिदममरैर्दुर्लभं भूतहेतो-

र्यस्तं पूज्याभिपूज्यं परमगुरुमुं पादपातैर्नतोऽस्मि ॥

16. E.g. Bhāskara: महायानिकबौद्धगाथितं मायावादं व्यावर्णयन्तो लोकान् व्यामोहयन्ति ।

(Vedānta-sūtra-bhāṣya), Yāmuna: ..... सौगताः प्रकटाः प्रच्छन्नाश्च ।

(Siddhi-traya); Padma-purāna: मायावादमसच्छास्त्रं प्रच्छन्नं बौद्धमेव च ।

17. Like Vidhusekhara Bhattacharya, T. R. V. Murti, Surendra-nath Dasgupta, and Haraprasad Sastri.
18. He has quoted MKG, 1, 11. This was the only Vedāntic work. His works on Mīmāṃsā are Vidhi-viveka and Vibhrama-viveka.
19. cf. VSB, 2, 2, 29.
20. A History of Indian Philosophy, vol. II, p. 28.
21. VSB, 1, 3, 28, and 3, 8, 53.
22. cf. S. Kuppusvami Sastri, Proceedings of III Oriental Conference, Madras, 1924. A passage is quoted वृत्तिकारस्य बोधायनस्यैव हि उपवर्ष इति स्यान्नाम (Tattva-ṭikā on Śrī-bhāshya) quoted in S. N. Dasgupta, op.cit. p.43 fn. Rāmānuja claims that he relies entirely on Bodhāyana.
23. CHUB, 3, 10, 10; BUB, 2, 1, 20 and AUB, 2, 32.
24. Gloss on BUB, 2, 1, 19.
25. सिद्धं तु निर्वर्तकत्वात् इत्यागमविदां सूत्रम् (ASB, 2, 32). The two aspects are एतद्वै तत् (positive) and नैति नैति (negative).

## VI

### WHAT DID HE RELY ON ?

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Śaṅkara claims to be an exponent of the Upanishadic tradition. He naturally attaches great importance to the texts that constitute this tradition, and his mission in life was to provide a correct interpretation of the Vedānta-sūtra, which had undertaken to represent the genuine Upanishadic tradition. The author of the Vedānta-sūtra had relied primarily on the Upanishadic texts, as the most relevant and meaningful portions of a much wider mass of texts generally known as the Vedic lore (or Śruti). He had given them the status of the highest canon of authority, or the most valid means of knowing, similar to direct perception (pratyaksha), for they needed no other authority to confirm their credibility. Secondary to them were the mass of 'remembered' texts (Smṛtis), which while offering fresh modalities to knowledge, depend on the former texts. These were taken as 'inferential' (anumāna). He had thus resolved the problem of revelation versus reason.

Śaṅkara, following his lead, accepted the Scriptural texts (Śruti) as paramount authority, so far as such authority is needed or is relevant. But he made a distinction between the portions of the Scripture which dealt with praises of gods and rituals concerning them ('karma-kāṇḍa') viz. the Mantras and the Brāhmaṇas, and the portions that emphasized wisdom as the means of

release (jñāna-kāṇḍa), viz. Upanishads<sup>1</sup>. It would appear that this distinction had already been made, although it is uncertain who made it or when. Śaṅkara himself refers to Upavarsha (whom he called 'venerable', bhagavān) as having written commentarial works on the former division ('prathama-tantra') and on the latter (Śārīraka, the portions dealing with the embodied soul)<sup>2</sup>. This Upavarsha was hailed as a respected personage even by the great exponent of the ritualistic division, Śabara-svāmin<sup>3</sup>. The division made by an authority acceptable to both camps naturally holds the ground and came to stay.

Śaṅkara means by Scriptural authority mainly the Upanishadic texts, in fact only ten or twelve classical ones, as already mentioned. His attitude towards the several Upanishadic texts can be gleaned from the following table giving the number of times the texts are quoted in VSB<sup>4</sup> —

|               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| Chhāndogya    | 810 |
| Bṛhadāraṇyaka | 567 |
| Taittirīya    | 142 |
| Muṇḍaka       | 129 |
| Kaṭha         | 103 |
| Kaushītakī    | 88  |
| Śvetāśvatara  | 53  |
| Praśna        | 39  |
| Aitareya      | 22  |
| Jābāla        | 13  |
| Īśāvāsya      | 8   |
| Kena          | 5   |

Of these, the commentaries consistently ascribed to him are not available on Kaushītakī, Śvetāśvatara and



Jābāla. And Māṇḍūkya, on which we have a commentary attributed to him, has not been quoted at all by him. Besides the above, he has quoted passages from 'Agnirahasya' (Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa), 'Nārāyaṇīyam' (Taittirīya-āranyaka), 'Paingī-rahasya-brāhmaṇa', as if they also have the same status as the Upanishads.

Śaṅkara is found to quote from the other Scriptural divisions also (e.g. Ṛgveda-samhitā, Sāma-veda-samhitā, Vājasaneyā-samhitā, Atharva-samhitā, Aitareya-kaushītakī, Taittirīya, Pañchavimśa, Shaḍvīmśa and Gopatha-brāhmaṇa). But his reliance on them is less frequent and less deliberate. It is obvious, both from an analysis of these citations and from his own acknowledged preferences, that Scripture (Śruti) for him means the concluding portions of the Vedic lore which also contain the final import of the Scriptural tradition viz. the Upanishads (or the Vedānta).

As one belonging to the doctrinal fold well within the broad Vedic tradition, he also relies on some secondary sources like the Sūtras of Āśvalāyana, Kātyāyana and Āpastamba, the two great epics Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, some Purāṇas (e. g. Mārkaṇḍeya), and some socio-religious treatises (dharma-śāstras like the one by Manu). His reliance on them, however, is negligible and casual. The exception is the Bhagavad-gītā, from which he quotes frequently, and which he looks upon as an important source. It is well-known that there is a commentary on this work ascribed to him. But he does not recognize it as a part of the epic, Mahābhārata, as it is usually understood.

We must note that Śaṅkara following the author of the Vedānta-sūtra employs the primary Scriptural texts (Śruti) as highest appeals to authority. But he also makes

generous use of two other 'means of valid knowledge' (pramāṇa): observation (pratyaksha) and inference (anumāna), in the same sense that other systems have used them. Unlike Bādarāyaṇa, he appeals to observation, apart from Śruti, and to inference apart from the Smṛti-texts. He holds the conjoint operation of the three means (Scriptural testimony, observation and inference) as sufficient for the contemplated investigation into Brahman<sup>5</sup>.

Śāṅkara frequently speaks of another criterion of judgement, comprehended in a sense by observation and inference, but not usually regarded as a means of valid knowledge: personal experience (anubhava). What precisely he means by it has not been made clear, but he holds it as important. In fact, he would reject the evidence of all other means of knowledge, if personal experience



warranted a detail. He also recognizes that in such matters as spiritual attainments one's own experience is solely authoritative: it cannot be disputed by another<sup>6</sup>, with all the armour of correct knowledge at his command. He uses in this connection a significant expression: 'presented to one's own heart' ('sva-hṛdaya-pratyayam'), carrying conviction unalterably. He also points out that while the rewards of rituals are not matter of direct experience, wisdom which is the fruit of Vedāntic wisdom is verily mounted on immediate and personal experience<sup>7</sup>; and one would not have to wait for the reward, or be in doubt whether the reward would or would not come.

Now, this experience has two dimensions which are equally factual and meaningful. One is the transactional and relative experience; all individuals partake of it, and it refers to the common details of observation (like the fire being hot). Śaṅkara roundly declares that a hundred Scriptural passages to the contrary will not carry conviction<sup>8</sup>. Śaṅkara calls this as 'innate, unlearned (naisargika) common transaction' (loka-vyavahāra)<sup>9</sup>. The other dimension is the experience of the individual who has undone the effects of ignorance (avidyā) and has become wise. This is the experience of the Absolute: Śaṅkara calls it 'sensing the Brahman' (brahma-vedana)<sup>10</sup>. It is this that is figuratively called 'the condition of release' (mukti-avasthā).

Śaṅkara is careful to point out that the two dimensions are only experiential variations, and that they do not suggest two different orders of reality. They are only two perspectives; they may be described as different experiential 'reals': transactional or empirical (vyāvahārika) and transcendental (pāramārthika). However, they do not bring about a dichotomy in the Real.

There can be little argument about this notion of dual perspective being borrowed from Gauḍapāda, who in turn borrows it from Nāgārjuna<sup>11</sup>. The Buddhist expression 'samvṛti' for the transactional dimension (called by Śaṅkara Vyavahāra) involves the idea of 'covering' so that it can be thought of, spoken about, and experienced even by lay-folk. Being covered, it gets distorted; the mind does it naturally and unavoidably. The other dimension is described by the Buddhists as 'undistorted and factual' (akṛtrimam vastu-rūpam), and therefore un-utterable (anabhilāpya), viz. beyond speech and mind. But it is well within the experience of the wise sage. It can by no means be regarded as "counter-reality". Gauḍapāda introduces the concept of māyā as dialectic device to explain the experiential variation of the one reality as transactional and transcendental.

Gauḍapāda was inclined to emphasize the illusory character of the transactional dimension apropos the transcendental. He dismisses the 'lay reality' of our wakeful experience as like unto the stuff of which the dreams are made<sup>12</sup>. While Śaṅkara recognizes the validity of the two-dimension theory of Gauḍapāda, he refuses to take, like him, an extreme idealistic position that looks like nihilism. It is an error to imagine that for Śaṅkara, as later writers on Advaita made out, the world is unreal. We would have occasion to discuss this error in a later section.

It is important to recognize that Śaṅkara relied on experience, common as well as extraordinary, to build up his theory of the unitary Brahman. This experience, according to him, was in perfect agreement with Scriptural testimony. He saw no need to consider the problem of possible divergence of experience from



Scripture. The value of Scripture consists in its being experientially valid. Scripture and experience can be complementary to each other.

But reason (*tarka*) has a different status. It cannot be denied that for any philosophical system to be constructed or defended, reason plays a necessary role. Often, even the system that relies solely on Scriptural authority employs reason to such a large extent that Scriptural testimony comes to occupy but secondary significance. Śaṅkara, however, minimizes the role of reason, although he does employ it effectively. He is aware of the limitations of reason which is essentially a function of human intelligence<sup>13</sup>.

As intelligence admits of enormous individual differences, reason can never be final or universally convincing. It cannot be a satisfactory guide to investigate into the nature of Brahman, or to have an intuitive understanding of it, much less to attain the condition of release, which is the real purpose of Vedāntic involvement. Reason can be valid, meaningful and effective only if Scripture illumines it, when it becomes in fact an aspect of experience<sup>14</sup>. Reason bereft of such Scriptural framework is described by him as 'dry logic' (*śuṣka-tarka*).

We spoke of the two-fold division of Scripture (ritual-oriented and wisdom-oriented), and of Śaṅkara's reliance on the latter division. But we must note that he did not regard them as contradictory. While it is a fact that he relegates the rituals and the Vedic passages dealing with them to a lower position in comparison with wisdom, and denies their immediate relevance to the condition of release, he does not altogether dismiss the usefulness of rituals<sup>15</sup>. They are meant to wear out the accumulated

blemishes, and in so doing they render the inner constitution fit for the wisdom that is the subject-matter of the Upanishads. In this context, the division of the Scripture that deals with rituals is not in effect (although it is in spirit) contradictory to the Upanishads<sup>16</sup>. However, it may be noted that this is the view expressed by Śāṅkara in the commentaries on the Upanishads, especially the Taittirīya which has obvious ritualistic associations. We do not find such explicit statements in the VSB.

In any case, Scripture is regarded by Śāṅkara as unitary in import, and as an important aid in the investigation into Brahman. It is the ground on which helpful reason can be reared. Śāṅkara does not look upon Scripture as mandatory in character, at any rate for the pursuit of wisdom. The Mīmāṃsakas held that the real purport of the Scripture is to provide injunctions and prohibitions, and that the texts which relate to wisdom are only 'spill-overs' (śeṣha); and that they were also mandatory in a secondary manner. Śāṅkara rejects this position and argues that the Scripture (viz. the Upanishads) deal with the Brahman that cannot be the subject-matter of injunctions and prohibitions<sup>17</sup>. Whatever the usefulness of rituals and the value of the Scriptural passages that deal with them, the real purport of the Scripture is to describe reality as it is.

It is in this context that Scripture and experience can and must function together; and it is but natural that reason to be useful has to operate within this frame of reference. Reason outside this framework can be erratic and inane; Śāṅkara calls it 'dry'.

Scripture, then, is valuable as a method of approach. The method that Śāṅkara recognized in the Scripture is that of 'initial presentation and subsequent sublation'



(adhyāropa-apavāda)<sup>18</sup>. He refers to this method as a feature of acceptable Vedāntic tradition<sup>19</sup>, in order to drive home the absolute and unitary nature of Self, disabusing it of all the provisional and transactional attributions. The common error of construing the physical body as the Self being sought to be corrected by this method is given as an example<sup>20</sup>. This is in fact an attempt to resolve the apparent contradictions in the Scriptural passages, which also was that inspired the composition of the Vedānta-sūtra.

## REFERENCES

1. cf. TUB, Introduction नित्यान्यधिगतानि कर्माणि उपात्तदुरितक्षयार्थानि च काम्यानि च फलार्थिनां पूर्वास्मिन् ग्रन्थे । इदानीं कर्मोपादानहेतुपरिहाराय ब्रह्मविद्या प्रस्तूयते ।
2. VSB, 3, 3, 53 अत एव च भगवता उपवर्षेण प्रथमे तन्त्रे आत्मास्तित्वाभिधानप्रसक्तौ शारीरके वक्ष्याम इति उद्धारः कृतः ।
3. On Jaimini, 1, 1, 5.
4. Based on the account given by Paul Deussen, *The System of the Vedānta*, (Transl. Caries Johnston) Chicago, 1912, Delhi, 1972, pp. 30-31.
5. Later Advaita accepted six *pramāṇas*; it adds to the three recognized by Śaṅkara: analogy (*upamāna*), presumption (*arthāpatti*) and negation (*abhāva*). Cf. *Dharma-rāja-adhvarin's Vedānta-paribhāṣhā* for a discussion of *pramāṇas*.
6. VSB, 4, 1, 15 कथं ह्येकस्य स्वहृदयप्रत्ययं ब्रह्मवेदनं देहधारणं च अपरेण प्रतिक्षेप्तुं शक्येत?
7. VSB, 3, 3, 32 कर्मफले हि स्वर्गादौ अनुभवानारूढे स्यादाशङ्का भवेद्वा न वा इति । अनुभवारूढं तु ज्ञानफलम् ।  
Also VSB, 1, 1, 2 अनुभववसानत्वात् भूतवस्तुविषयत्वाच्च ब्रह्मज्ञानस्य ॥
8. GB, 18, 66 नहि श्रुतिशतमपि 'शीतोऽग्निः अप्रकाशो वा' इति ब्रुवत् प्रामाण्यमुपैति ।  
cf. also VSB, वेदा अवेदाः, इति वचनात् इष्यत एव अस्माभिः श्रुतेरप्यभावः प्रबोधे ।
9. VSB, 1, 1, 1 Introduction.
10. VSB, 4, 1, 15 (above).
11. *Mādhyaṃika-kārikā*—

द्वे सत्ये समुपाश्रित्य बुद्धानां धर्मदेशना ।  
लोकसंवृतिसत्यं च सत्यं च परमार्थतः ॥

12. MKG, 1, 17-18 and 3, 29.

13. VSB, 2, 1, 11 पुरुषोत्प्रेक्षामात्रनिबन्धनास्तर्काः अप्रतिष्ठिता भवन्ति ।

14. VSB, 2, 1, 6 श्रुत्यनुगृहीत एव हि अत्र तर्कः अनुभवाङ्गत्वेन आप्रीयते ।

cf. also KUB, 1, 2, 9 तार्किको हि अनागमज्ञः स्वबुद्धिपरिकल्पितं यत्किञ्चिदेव कल्पयति ।

15. TUB, 1, 11 यथाप्राप्तमेव कारकास्तित्वमुपादाय उपात्तदुरितक्षयार्थं कर्माणि विदधत् शास्त्रं मुमुक्षूणां फलार्थिनां च फलसाधनं न कारकास्तित्वे व्याप्रियते ।

16. BUB, 2, 1, 20 यच्चोक्तं कर्मकाण्डप्रामाण्यविधातकृत् उपनिषद्वाक्यं इति तत्र । अन्यार्थत्वात् । ब्रह्मैकत्वप्रतिपादनपरा हि उपनिषदः नेष्टार्थप्राप्तौ साधनोपदेशं तस्मिन् वा पुरुषनियोगं वारयन्ति ।

17. cf. VSB, 1, 1, 4 औपनिषदषट्त्वविशेषणं पुरुषस्य उपनिषत्त्वेव प्राधान्येन प्रकाशयमानत्वे उपपद्यते । अतः भूतवस्तुपरो वेदभागो नास्तीति वचनं साहसमात्रम् ।

cf. also VSB, 1, 1, 2 एवं भूतवस्तुविषयाणां प्रामाण्यं वस्तुतन्त्रम् । तत्र एवं सति ब्रह्मज्ञानमपि वस्तुतन्त्रमेव भूतवस्तुविषयत्वात् ।

18. VSB, 3, 2, 17 दर्शयति च श्रुतिः पररूपप्रतिषेधेनैव ब्रह्म निर्विशेषत्वात् ।

19. BGB, 13, 13 तथा हि संप्रदायविदां वचनम् 'अध्यारोपापवादाभ्यां निष्प्रपञ्चं प्रपञ्च्यते इति ।'

20. VSB, 3, 3, 9 अपवादो नाम यत्र कस्मिंश्चित् वस्तुनि पूर्वनिविष्टायां मिथ्याबुद्धौ निश्चितायां पश्चादुपजायमाना यथार्थबुद्धिः पूर्वनिविष्टायाः मिथ्याबुद्धेर्निवर्तिका भवति । यथा देहेन्द्रियसंघाते आत्मबुद्धिः आत्मन्येव आत्मबुद्ध्या पश्चाद्भावित्या निवर्त्यते । यथा दिग्भ्रान्तिबुद्धिः दिग्याथात्म्यबुद्ध्या निवर्त्यते ।



## VII

### IS HE UNDERSTOOD ARIGHT?

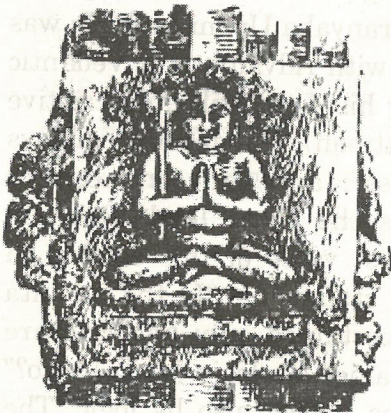
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In the impressive list of Advaita teachers who preceded Śaṅkara, it is only Gauḍapāda who has a ring of certain historicity about him. He boldly championed the cause of Vedāntic tradition, despite his marked Buddhist leanings. His Kārikā was more in the nature of an independent treatise than an explanatory appendage to the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad. Of the four sections of the work, one bears the name of 'Advaita'. And thus began the career of this intriguing expression, which originally had a distinct Buddhist flavour and which has stuck to Śaṅkara and his followers with remarkable consistency.

It is curious that Śaṅkara, as mentioned earlier, has used this expression Advaita in VSB only twice<sup>1</sup>, and in both cases he was only quoting: once from Gauḍapāda's Kārikā, and then from Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad. He was thus altogether unacquainted with Advaita as a Vedāntic doctrine (vāda); it was, during his days, still a descriptive expression for Brahman (or Ātman). Gauḍapāda employs the expression in this sense<sup>2</sup>; and the commentary ascribed to Śaṅkara follows the same lead. But the commentary prefacing the first verse of this section in the Kārikā has a perplexing statement: "Is the advaita (oneness of Atman) to be ascertained only by Scripture (Āgama)? Or can it be ascertained by logic (tarka) also?" The answer is: "Yes, it can be known also by logic. The

section begins by telling us how"<sup>3</sup>. What we have in this section is a dialectic, heavily leaning on reason and approaching the nihilistic position. This is not the method of ascertainment that Śaṅkara usually commends, at any rate in VSB. He does not recognize logic (tarka) that is independent of Scripture (Āgama) as a valid means of knowledge.

But the logical ascertainment of the oneness of Ātman appears to have appealed to the successors of Śaṅkara. They made this an 'argument' (Advaita-vāda), to be distinguished from the arguments of different types of 'dualists' (dvaitinah), who may have emerged after Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara was not aware of any 'dualists' within the fold of Vedāntic tradition<sup>4</sup>. The only 'dualists' that he mentions are the followers of the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems<sup>5</sup>. Further, he does not seem to have set out to expound or defend any 'argument' (vāda) in VSB, or for that matter in the commentaries on the Upanishads or on the Gītā. He intended merely to present the correct interpretation of the Vedāntic tradition. And in this task he did not have to contend against any dualistic tendencies within the tradition.



The Advaita-argument was obviously a post-Śaṅkara development. We do not find this nomenclature even in Bhāmatī, the most popular commentary on Śaṅkara's VSB, prepared nearly a century after Śaṅkara's days. But we find here a clear tendency to make an



argument out of the reflections of Śaṅkara. In fact, the author of Bhāmatī calls this 'investigation into Brahman' (Brahma-mīmāṃsā) a logical procedure (tarka)<sup>6</sup>, and treats it as such. It has been suggested earlier that it was Vāchaspati, the author of Bhāmatī, who first recognized Śaṅkara's genius and brought him to the focus of scholarly attention.

Vāchaspati-miśra, who lived around 841 A. D.<sup>7</sup> and who probably hailed from Mithilā in North India was a master of all the systems of thought prevalent during his days, but did not affiliate himself to any of them (sarva-tantra-svatantra). He wrote excellent glosses on the Sāṅkhya system (Sāṅkhya-tattva-kaumudī), the Yoga system (Tattva-vaiśārādī), the Nyāya school (Nyāya-vārttika-tātparya-ṭīkā and Nyāya-sūchī-nibandha), and the Mīmāṃsā school (Nyāya-kaṇikā); and he selected as representatives of the Vedānta schools two works to comment upon: Maṇḍana-miśra's Brahma-siddhī (Tattva-samīkshā) and Śaṅkara's VSB (Bhāmatī). Although both Maṇḍana and Śaṅkara belonged to the same Vedāntic tradition, they held different views on many issues.

It is difficult to believe that this polymath had any special regard for Śaṅkara, or for that matter for the Vedāntic tradition. Śaṅkara's VSB was but one of the many pegs on which he hung his commentarial enterprises. His glosses on Īśvara-kṛṣṇa's Sāṅkhya-kārikā, Vyāsa's Yoga-sūtra-bhāṣya and Uddyotakara's Nyāya-vārttika would make us believe that he sympathized with all these systems, the basic tenets of which were rejected by the Vedāntic tradition. And his choice of Maṇḍana's Brahma-siddhi as a companion volume to Śaṅkara's VSB is also intriguing. We know for

certain that Maṇḍana's views were severely criticized by Śaṅkara's direct disciple Sureśvara in his *Naishkarmya-siddhi* (which in fact was written as an answer to Maṇḍana's work). We also know that while interpreting Śaṅkara's views, he has introduced many ideas borrowed from Maṇḍana.

In the circumstances, it is strange that his gloss on VSB (*Bhāmatī*) has been regarded as an authoritative work by generations of scholars whose loyalty to Śaṅkara is an unquestioned creed. Study of Śaṅkara in orthodox circles is almost exclusively based on *Bhāmatī*, the annotation on it by Amalānanda (*Vedānta-kalpataru*, between 1247-1260 A. D.), and notes on the latter work by Appaya-dīkshita (about 1550 A. D.) entitled *Kalpataru-parimala*. These three works together with *Bādarāyaṇa's* *Vedānta-sūtra* and Śaṅkara's *Bhāshya* on it constitute the holy pentad of basic Advaita literature (*pañcha-granthi*).

The subsequent Advaita literature generally follows *Bhāmatī* in interpretations and arguments. Akhaṇḍānanda's *Rju-prakāśikā*, Ānandagiri's *Śārīraka-nyāya-nirṇaya* (about 1400 A. D.) and Govindānanda's *Bhāshya-ratna-prabhā*, which are even now studied in orthodox circles, regard the author of *Bhāmatī* as the official spokesman for Śaṅkara. But what is lost sight of by these enthusiasts is that *Bhāmatī* revels in dialectic and relies on the *Mīmāṃsā* approach, in both details quite unlike Śaṅkara. It deliberately twists the intended meaning of words, and unjustifiably elaborates on issues that we find casually mentioned in VSB. Many of the ideas found in *Bhāmatī* would appear strange to Śaṅkara, were he to read this grand and complex gloss on his own simple *Bhāshya*!

But *Bhāmatī* is not the only possible interpretation



to Śaṅkara's VSB. There is another work, incomplete and forbiddingly terse, ascribed to a direct disciple of Śaṅkara, Padmapāda. Pañchapādikā is a running annotation on Śaṅkara's VSB on the first four aphorisms. We are not sure if the work is really by a direct disciple of Śaṅkara, in which case it would be the most authoritative interpretation of Śaṅkara. And we cannot be sure whether the available work is part of a larger work, now lost, or it was left incomplete owing to some reason. The work does not seem to have been very popular at any time; it was not studied in the orthodox circles as Bhāmatī was.

But a distinct school of Śaṅkara's thought has grown with this work as the nucleus. The work that inaugurated this school was Prakāśātman's Vivaraṇa, an explanatory treatise on Pañchapādikā. The precise date of this work cannot be ascertained, but a gloss on it by Akhaṇḍānanda-muni (Tattva-dīpana) is assigned to around 1350 A. D. There are many valuable works in this line of thought, but the most influential work that made the viewpoint of this school popular was Pañchadaśī, a work ascribed to the celebrated Vidyāraṇya, who also abridged the Vivaraṇa (Vivaraṇa-prameya-saṅgraha).

Between Bhāmatī and Pañchapādikā, the thought of Śaṅkara has come down in two distinct lines. It is an irony that the philosopher who pleaded for the unitary conception (advaita) suffered a dichotomy (dvaita) at the hands of his followers. And these two works followed by numerous glosses, annotations, notes and digests have introduced concepts and problems to which Śaṅkara was a total stranger. The result is that few philosophers in the world are as misunderstood and misrepresented as Śaṅkara has been. The rise of sects and the prevalence of sectarian prejudices in the country after the tenth

century have further contributed to the confusion concerning Śāṅkara's thought.

There are, however, independent treatises not entirely guided either by Bhāmatī or by the Vivaraṇa school, like Prakāṭārtha-vivaraṇa (by Anubhūti-svarūpa), Śārīraka-nyāya-nirṇaya (by Ānandagiri, 13<sup>th</sup> cent.), and Bhāshya-ratna-prabhā (by Govindānanda, 14<sup>th</sup> cent.). Works like Advaitānanda's Brahma-vidyābharāṇa (15<sup>th</sup> cent.?) sought to reconcile the two points of view. Prakāśānanda, the author of the famous Vedānta-siddhānta-muktāvali (early 16<sup>th</sup> cent.) struck a new path altogether, making Advaita positively favouring the Vijñāna-vāda position. He seems to have continued the tradition of Gauḍapāda, especially adopted in Yoga-vāśiṣṭha (of uncertain authority) and claims that Sureśvara belonged to this line of thinking. He complains in his work that during his day, the essence of Vedānta had become lost to the people<sup>8</sup>. But his work did not elicit ready recognition<sup>9</sup>. It can thus be seen that the field of Advaita had been sufficiently complicated and confused over the centuries.

A vast polemical literature attacking Śāṅkara and defending him has grown, especially in South India. During the course of these attacks and defences, convenient but unwarranted ideas have been foisted on him, and the original spirit of VSB has almost been completely lost. It would now be a difficult job to recover the original Śāṅkara from the mass of accretions that have collected during centuries. That he came to be regarded as a cult-hero, and as the rallying figure for a sect that struggled to retain its identity in the face of other contending sects has added a fresh dimension to this difficulty.



Among the misconceptions that have grown around Śaṅkara, the most persistent and also the most erroneous is that he regarded the world as an illusion. It is the later reliance on Gauḍapāda, from whom Śaṅkara differed, that has spread the illusory idea. The acceptance by Śaṅkara of the two-fold perspective (transactional and transcendental) also has given rise to some loose thinking on the part of the later writers regarding the realistic orientation of Śaṅkara apropos his idealism. The concept of phenomenal projection (adhyāsa) which is basic to Śaṅkara's thought has been seriously misunderstood. And the misunderstanding of this basic idea has resulted in numerous problems concerning the nature of the Brahman and of the world, the function of avidyā and mayā, the validity of Scriptural authority, the status of individual soul (jīva), the significance of liberation (mukti), the role of rituals, the distinction between the states (avasthā), and the idea of God.

Certain cryptic sentences from Upanishadic passages have been elevated in later Advaita thought to the position of mahāvākyas (like 'tat-tvam-asi', 'aham brahmāsmi' etc.), and Śaṅkara's thought is sought to be accommodated within this narrow framework. It is surprising that such great reverence is accorded to the four or five mahāvākyas, when we consider the fact that Śaṅkara has nowhere in his VSB used this expression, mahāvākya, or selected some such sentences as especially significant as shibboleths of the doctrine. Needless issues have been whipped up, to exercise the intelligence and emotions of orthodox scholars who consider it a part of their religious duty to attack or defend Śaṅkara.

The misconceptions have largely arisen to reconcile the wisdom-oriented teaching of Śaṅkara with the



practical details of ritual, worship, study, sectarian practices and customs. The gulf that yawned between the metaphysical position of Śaṅkara and the Scriptural injunctions and prohibitions (which alone constituted the practical Vedic tradition) was too wide to be bridged without prejudice to the teachings of the great master. The words of Śaṅkara had therefore to be reinterpreted. The eagerness to do this is apparent in most of the later works on Advaita. And it presupposes some twisting, pulling and pushing of words and intents. The question therefore looms large: Can he be understood aright at all?

That there is a divergence of views between Śaṅkara and his commentators (principally Vāchaspati and Padmapāda) is obvious to most students of Advaita. But does the divergence consist merely in interpretation and explication? Are the views that we find in the later and popular works on Advaita already implicit in Śaṅkara's own works? Or do they mark a development of thought, and go beyond Śaṅkara's position? The latter seems to be the case.

The involvement of human intellect becomes increasingly evident in the traditional chain of texts: Vedānta (the Upanishads) - Sūtra (Bādarāyaṇa) - Bhāṣhya (Śaṅkara) - Vyākhyānas (commentaries, glosses and notes on the Bhāṣhya). With this, there is also corresponding diminution of the role of intuition. The Upanishads belong to a class of literature that is described as 'revelation' (Śruti, which is *apaurusheya*, 'of non-human origin') and therefore are presupposed to be free from the limitations and defects of ordinary human reason. The Sūtra, despite the high status it enjoys, does not belong to this class; it is a work of human intellect, a product of reason<sup>10</sup>. It is

lower in the matter of authoritativeness. It is a dependent prasthāna, dependent upon the Upanishads. But being the composition of an ancient sage who had his own share of intuition, we attach an especial value to it; we regard it as only next in authority to the 'revealed texts' (Śruti).

The Bhāshya being the work of a human being, however evolved and enlightened, is naturally dependent to an extent on reason, and therefore subject to the limitations of human intellect. But the author of the Bhāshya was an extraordinary human being, whose facility to intuitively understand the essential import of the 'revealed texts' was as great as his intellectual powers to analyse and expound.

While Śaṅkara may be lower in status to Bādarāyaṇa, he is incomparably superior to all commentators and glossators. The latter were not sages like Śaṅkara, but scholars. Therefore their claim to intuitive understanding was necessarily weak; their success as writers depended solely on their intellectual powers. We cannot expect them to have understood Śaṅkara as Śaṅkara himself understood Bādarāyaṇa, much less as Bādarāyaṇa understood the Upanishads.

When the chain reaches our own level, it becomes necessary for us to depend on some reliable authority, suited to our own understanding. The Upanishads by themselves are beyond our reach; the atmosphere in which they took shape, and the exalted mood in which the ideas were enshrined were obviously very different from what we can imagine now. We cannot therefore get into the spirit of the Upanishads unless it is explained to us. Bādarāyaṇa did not undertake to explain the Upanishadic texts; his purpose in preparing the Sūtra was



different. It was Śaṅkara who addressed himself to the task of explaining the Upanishadic texts as well as interpreting the work of Bādarāyaṇa for the sake of posterity. Gifted as he was with extraordinary powers of comprehension and exposition, he did the job exceedingly well. And this is the source of his celebrity.

The success achieved by Śaṅkara in restoring the correct interpretation of the Vedāntic tradition was complete in the sense that his arguments were forceful and convincing, that his philosophical position was purposeful and unassailable, and that his writing was lucid and comprehensive. Further commentaries and glosses, by obviously lesser minds, do have a purpose to serve, but they cannot be more important than the original work of Śaṅkara. They cannot, as most of these works do, presumptuously suggest that Śaṅkara left many ideas vaguely expressed for these expositors to define or unravel!

It may historically be inaccurate to assert that what Śaṅkara wrote on the Vedāntic tradition was the last word, and we cannot be blind to the fact that other teachers (as respected by people as Śaṅkara is) have also written on what they variously regarded as the correct Vedāntic tradition. And it cannot be denied that there is a development of Advaita thought during the centuries that followed Śaṅkara thus inaugurating a line of thought, distinguished by some major and some minor ideas, images, and arguments collectively designated as Advaita. But the point at issue is whether all these ideas, images, and arguments could truthfully and justifiably be foisted on Śaṅkara.

Would it be correct to equate the entire mass of Advaita thought that is prevalent now with Śaṅkara's

teachings? It is important to keep in mind that even earlier, Śaṅkara's mission included the demonstration that many of these did not represent the tradition correctly. It would not be unnatural if many of the ideas that Advaitins anterior to Śaṅkara held, found supporters among the later followers of Śaṅkara. Such a situation is not unusual in the history of thought. We find often that quite ironically the followers of a master come to support the very doctrines and practices that the master disapproved and dismissed.

This appears to have happened in the case of Śaṅkara. His teachings have mainly flown, as already mentioned, in two distinct channels: (1) Pañchapādikā-vivaraṇa-tattvapradīpikā, and (2) Bhāmatī-kalpataruparimala. And the lines of interpretations betray numerous differences<sup>11</sup>, many of them irreconcilable despite efforts in that direction<sup>12</sup>. If both lines are taken to correctly interpret Śaṅkara, he would then be self-contradicting; and he would keep company with an odd assortment of nihilists, ritualists, theists, obscurantists and idealists.

The wiser course would be to leave these later lines of thought alone, and return to Śaṅkara's own text to ascertain what his teachings really were.

## REFERENCES

1. VSB, 2, 1, 9 quoting MKG, 1, 16 अजमनिद्रमस्वप्नमद्वैतं बुध्यते तदा ।  
and 4, 14, 15 quoting BU, 4, 3, 32 सलिल एको द्रष्टाऽद्वैतो भवति ।
2. MKG, 3, 18 अद्वैतं परमार्थो हि द्वैतं तद्भेद उच्यते । Śaṅkara on it quotes the passages "one without a second" and "that created the fire".
3. MKG, 3, 1 अद्वैतं किमागममात्रेण प्रतिपत्तव्यं? आहोस्वित् तर्केणापि? इत्यत आह - शक्यते तर्केणापि ज्ञातुम् । तत्त्वमिदं इति अद्वैतप्रकरणम् आरभ्यते ।
4. BUB, 2, 1, 20 सर्वोपनिषत्सु हि विज्ञानात्मनः परमात्मना एकत्वप्रत्ययो विधीयते इत्यविप्रतिपत्तिः सर्वेषामुपनिषद्वादिनाम् ।
5. VSB, 2, 1, 3 द्वैतिनो हि ते सांख्या योगाश्च नात्मैकत्वदर्शिनः ।
6. On VSB, 1, 1, 1 ब्रह्ममीमांसाख्यतर्कतर्कव्यतानुज्ञातविषयैः ।
7. This was the year in which his Nyāya-sūchī-nibandha was composed.
8. वेदान्तसारसर्वस्वम् अज्ञातम् अधुनातनैः ।
9. There is commentary on this work by Nānā-dikshita, entitled Siddhānta-pradīpikā, where there is a reference to Prakāśānanda being honoured even by ascetics (यतिभिर्वन्द्यं प्रकाशानन्दभास्वरम्).
10. cf. Bhāmatī. 1, 1, 1, वेदान्तमीमांसा तर्क एव ।
11. E. g. the locus of ignorance: the individual soul (B), the Absolute (P); plurality of ignorance (B), unitary character with manifold aspects (P); the Absolute enveloped being the content of intuitive knowledge (B),



unenveloped (P); contemplation (nididhyāsana) being the principal means of realization (B), listening to Scriptures (śravaṇa) (P), and so on.

12. E. g. Rāmādvaya's Vedānta-kaumudī, Chitsukha's Bhāva-prakāśikā on VSB.

## VIII

### WHAT WAS NEW IN HIS THOUGHT?

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Śaṅkara does not claim to be an original thinker. As a commentator (bhāshya-kāra), the task that he undertook to accomplish was only to restore the correct interpretation of the Vedāntic tradition, as contained in the Vedānta-sūtra (which in its turn had attempted to define the philosophy of the Upanishads). Nevertheless, the significance of his commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra (VSB) is not exhausted in mere interpretation or reinterpretation of a traditional text. It marked the beginning of a new line of thought.

In fact, the idea of a major commentary (bhāshya) goes beyond mere 'annotation' (vṛtti), and conveys a meaning different from 'independent critique' (vārttika), or a 'descriptive digest' (vivaraṇa)<sup>1</sup>. It is a constructive criticism within the broad traditional and textual framework. It cannot avoid being original to a considerable extent, either in the matter of fresh evaluation of old ideas or redefinition of worn-out concepts, and in the employment of new arguments.

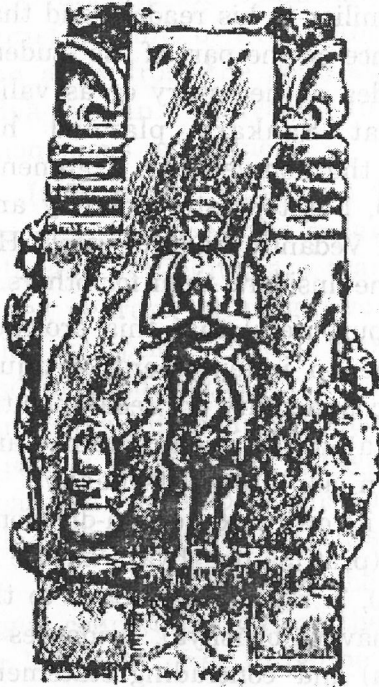
Śaṅkara's achievement consists not only in such conceptual restructuring, but in the discovery of new dimensions of the traditional framework. His VSB is in this sense a truly original contribution to Indian thought. Many an idea that was already in vogue during his days

(like Brahman, māyā, avidyā, adhyāsa, jñāna, and even mukti) acquired in this work a deeper significance, a wider context and a greater relevance. He made the philosophy of the Upanishads more meaningful, more rational and more practical. He rendered the Vedāntic tradition acceptable to diverse temperaments by providing an inclusive and profound base for it.

His most original and significant contribution was the idea of adhyāsa, which sought to explain the disparity between reality as indicated in the Upanishadic tradition, and the reality of our common experience. The chasm that yawned between the two viewpoints, one occasioned by the study of Vedāntic texts (śāstra-dṛṣṭi), and the other necessitated by our inborn inclinations (loka-dṛṣṭi),

had not been satisfactorily bridged until he crystallized this concept. It is not for nothing that he chose to preface his commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra with a fairly elaborate discussion of this problem, bringing out the usefulness of the concept of adhyāsa.

It is also significant that during this discussion he carefully avoids citing the traditional texts in support of his argument. It is true that the expression adhyāsa is not



to be found in any of the Upanishads on which he relied, or in the Vedānta-sūtra which he set out to interpret. But he did not coin that expression or invent that idea: it was already there in the Sāṅkhya school of thought, and in the Buddhist systems. It was also known to the Pāśupata and Pāñcharātra divisions. The idea must have been rather a familiar one, at any rate to the students of philosophy and religion of that period. Śaṅkara suggested that this idea was an essential aid to understand the validity of Vedāntic tradition.

It cannot be ascertained if the earlier commentators on Vedānta-sūtra had employed the expression or idea of adhyāsa. There are no explicit references or citations available. But the manner in which Śaṅkara commences his discussion of this issue strongly suggests that the idea was not by any means unfamiliar to his readers and that there was also some reluctance on the part of the student of Vedānta to accept this idea as necessary or as valid. We must remember that Śaṅkara planned his commentary not to combat the non-vedāntic arguments (as is commonly supposed), but to restore clarity and confidence within the fold of Vedāntic tradition itself. His work was meant more for the 'insiders' than for others.

It was deliberate and purposeful that this prologue to VSB was planned to be an independent critique. Although it is a part of his commentary on Vedānta-sūtra as an introduction (upodghāta), it has a self-contained and complete structure, known as 'Adhyāsa-bhāṣhya' (a critique on Adhyāsa). It has its own next section-divisions: 'statement of the problem' (pratijñā-bhāṣhya), 'nature of adhyāsa' (lakṣhaṇa-bhāṣhya), 'a rational approach to the problem' (upapatti or sambhāvanā-bhāṣhya), 'evidences of adhyāsa' (pramāṇa-bhāṣhya) and 'concluding statement'



(upasamhāra-bhāshya). The critique, while not relying explicitly on any Vedāntic text, ends with a promise that the significance of this initial discussion will be demonstrated in the treatise which seeks to define the import of all the Vedāntic texts, and on which the commentary will begin.<sup>2</sup> The concluding statement suggests that adhyāsa is an idea that is implicit in the Vedāntic tradition.

Śaṅkara also promises to bring fresh light to bear on the idea. He took it as the starting point of his line of thinking, as the point of departure for the reinterpretation of the Vedāntic tradition that he was now offering. The whole of Vedānta-sūtra being devoted to vidyā (the effective means for the realization of the highest goal of human life, moksha), which is the positive contribution of the Upanishads, he found it useful to give a brief account of avidyā (or the obstacle that weaned man away from the goal) even before the inquiry into vidyā began. Adhyāsa and avidyā for him were synonymous expressions.

It is hard to give an English word that would adequately convey the meaning of the Sanskrit word 'Adhyāsa'. "Illegitimate transference" (Paul Deussen) comes nearest, although words like 'super-imposition', 'false ascription', 'wrong apprehension', and 'projection' also help to understand the full significance of the Sanskrit word. In fact, Śaṅkara himself uses the words avidyā ('ignorance'), adhyāropa ('super-imposition'), viparyaya ('false apprehension'), moha ('delusion'), bhrānti ('illusion') and tamas ('darkness') as synonyms for adhyāsa.

It is impossible that the word adhyāsa itself had a vague connotation during the days when Śaṅkara lived, for he undertakes to define the word in answer to an

assumed objection "What now is this thing called adhyāsa?" The first paragraph of the introductory critique, in which the objection is supposed to be contained, argues that this adhyāsa, which learned people generally talk about, does not actually exist. And the initial answer to this objection is that the adhyāsa is nevertheless in everyone's experience. Śaṅkara thus refers to adhyāsa as something which cannot be logically demonstrated, but which is nevertheless experientially real. It is in this context that he comes up with a definition of the expression.

Avidyā is a word that occurs (but not often) in the Upanishadic passages<sup>3</sup>. But it is used almost invariably as the opposite (pratiyogi) of vidyā<sup>4</sup>. That there was no unanimity in how these words were understood becomes clear if we consider the various interpretations given to these words. Generally, however, vidyā is taken in the sense of effective discrimination (viveka), and avidyā as the absence of it. Śaṅkara notes that the value of the Upanishads consists in the removal of avidyā<sup>5</sup>. As an exposition of the integrated teaching of the Upanishads, the Vedānta-sūtra dealt with the implications of vidyā. Śaṅkara as a commentator thereon had therefore to grapple with the several dimensions of the vidyā that the Upanishads talked about.

Śaṅkara's vidyā is neither activity-oriented nor achievement-valued. He does not look upon vidyā and avidyā as opposite forces engaged in a tug-of-war. Avidyā is a passive affair, although indirectly responsible for the phenomenal occurrences. It is not an enemy fully armed and ready to fight. It is more in the nature of darkness and delusion. Therefore, to look upon vidyā as a positive and violent activity directed against the attack of avidyā

would be irrelevant. Śaṅkara, time and again, points out that vidyā (or brahma-vidyā as he calls it) can neither produce a thing that was not there, nor eliminate what was there<sup>6</sup>. It can, however, remove an error.

Being wisdom, it can eliminate ignorance, but the ignorance it eliminates is not real. Even as the wisdom is not something that 'comes into being' as a result of some other thing or condition, the ignorance it eliminates is not something that is there as a fact; it is only an error. This is what avidyā means, in the context of vidyā. And the Upanishads and the Vedānta-sūtra are not explicit about the dynamics or 'mechanics' of this avidyā as an error. It was given to Śaṅkara to explain the implications of this idea as relevant to the Vedāntic tradition.

This was doubtless his original contribution to Indian thought. The Vedāntic tradition had emphasized the idea of moksha as utter isolation from all phenomenal involvement, as freedom from all miseries contingent upon common human existence, and as undying and absolute happiness. But the ideal had faded into an obscurantist and theoretical postulate, because a rational explanation for it was not spelt out. The ideal of heaven (svarga) which the earlier phase of Vedic thought had commended continued to hold the imagination of the 'insiders', because the rituals (which people could indeed perform and wait for the results thereof) were specified as the effective means. Aspirations and expectations, rituals and their rewards were things which lay-folk could readily understand. The goal of liberation from the rounds of births and deaths was abstract, and wisdom as means for that end was even more ununderstandable.

The struggle between the ritualistic way (karma) and the way of wisdom (jñāna) was thus unequal. Although

the Vedāntic tradition inclined towards wisdom as the sole means, there were thinkers who preferred to dilute this rigorous position by involving a ritualistic element in wisdom. This was the classical position known as 'wisdom and rituals together' (jñāna-karma-samucchaya). And this was natural, and also necessary as long as the relation between the goal of liberation and the instrumental value of wisdom was not adequately understood. Śaṅkara exercised his genius in this direction. He sought to unravel the mystery surrounding the twin concepts of vidyā and avidyā, and thus justify the importance that the Upanishads gave to the ideas of liberation and wisdom.

Śaṅkara, therefore, had to be critical of the Mīmāṃsā insistence on rituals. He had to establish that the Vedāntic tradition broke away from the earlier ritualistic orientations. Even Upavarsha, whom Śaṅkara refers to in tones of hushed reverence, appeared to have believed that the ritualistic 'Mīmāṃsā' and the wisdom-oriented 'Śārīraka' (viz. Vedānta) were teachings in a continuum. This must have been the widely prevalent outlook during the days of Śaṅkara. And there is little doubt that Śaṅkara strove to correct this mistaken notion. He argued that rituals can in no way bring about wisdom, and much less lead to the final goal. However, even now, despite Śaṅkara's insistence to the contrary, more or less the same outlook prevails among the very people who profess to be his followers!

In his efforts to play down the prominence given to rituals by the Mīmāṃsakas, Śaṅkara relied on the idea of avidyā (adhyāsa). All the rituals, and all the Scriptural sanctions were roundly relegated by him to the realm of this 'error'. This will become evident during our review

of the Adhyāsa-bhāshya. Śaṅkara was prepared even to dispute the absolute validity of Scriptural authority<sup>8</sup>.

The reliance he placed on reason was also limited. He had no patience with the usual methods of ratiocination, formal logic and display of intelligence. These are of little value for ascertaining the Real, for even these mental exercises are only within the realm of error<sup>9</sup>. He pointed out that the real test of reason is its experiential correspondence or culmination<sup>10</sup>. Avidyā cannot be demonstrated to be a fact by any reasoning process or by a logical method: but its existence is vouchsafed in one's own experience. This was a new understanding that Śaṅkara brought to bear on the intriguing problem of phenomenal error.

In this context, the most valuable, outstanding and enduring contribution that Śaṅkara made to Indian thought was his introductory critique on Adhyāsa (as a supplementary section to VSB, 1, 1, 1). This critique has been described as containing the unarticulated import (arthikartha) of the first aphorism: 'Then, therefore, the investigation into Brahman'. 'Then' means 'after the four-fold equipment'<sup>11</sup>, and 'Therefore' means 'Because without wisdom, the desired goal of liberation cannot be accomplished'. The four-fold equipment prepares the seeker to distrust the value of the phenomenal world and get into the proper mood for making the necessary distinction between avidyā and vidyā. This is heightened and augmented by what the expression 'therefore' implies. It is in order to bring home to the aspirant the value of vidyā that Śaṅkara prefaces the discussion with an inquiry into the nature, scope and effect of adhyāsa.

This part of the commentary is not in nature commentarial; it is original and prefatory in character. It



would therefore, not be correct to call this part 'Adhyāsa-bhāṣhya', although it is popularly known so. Some glossators have called it 'adhyāsa-grantha', which is a better nomenclature. Śaṅkara has not quoted at all from the traditional texts in this part of his VSB, and this makes it clear that Scriptural sanction is not at all wanted for what is founded on empirical experience and common-sense, albeit it is of the nature of error. This is 'loka-dṛṣṭi' or merely 'loka' (transactional world) as Śaṅkara frequently describes it (loke vede cha). However, we have retained the name 'Adhyāsa-bhāṣhya', because it is celebrated as such. It forms the 'adhyāsa' prologue for the Bhāṣhya.

## REFERENCES

1. A bhāshya is described thus: सूत्रार्थो वर्ण्यते यत्र वाक्यैः सूत्रानुसारिभिः । स्वपदानि च वर्ण्यन्ते भाष्यं भाष्यविदो विदुः । It explains the meaning of the aphorism by sentences which are in agreement with the aphorism, and also the words used by the commentator himself. If it is only सूत्रार्थो वर्ण्यते, then it is called an 'annotation' (vṛtti); if it is not this, it is an independent critique (vārttika); and 'also the words used by oneself' indicates that it is not a mere 'descriptive digest' (vivarāṇa).
2. यथा चायमर्थः सर्वेषां वेदान्तानां तथा वयमस्यां शारीरकमीमांसायां प्रदर्शयिष्यामः ।
3. E.g. KU. 2, 1, 4 and 5; MuU. 1, 2, 8 and 9; MaU. 7, 9.
4. cmp. KU. 2, 1, 4 Śāṅkara on it महतान्तरेण एव विपरीते अन्योन्यव्यावृत्तरूपे विवेकाविवेकात्मकत्वात् तमः प्रकाशाविव..... संसारमोक्षहेतुत्वेन .....अविद्या प्रेयोविषया विद्येति च श्रेयोविषया.....! and on MuU. 1, 2, 8 अविवेकप्राया.....!
5. BUB, 1, 4, 10 सर्वा हीयमुपनिषत् विद्याऽविद्याविभागप्रदर्शननैवोपक्षीणा । यथा चैषोऽर्थः कृत्स्नस्य शास्त्रस्य तथा प्रदर्शयिष्यामः ।
6. Ibid. 1, 4, 10 न हि कश्चित्साक्षाद्वस्तुधर्मस्यापोद्धी दृष्टा कर्मी वा ब्रह्मविद्या । अविद्यायास्तु सवैव निवर्तिका दृश्यते । तथेहापि अब्रह्मत्वम् असर्वत्वं च अविद्याकृतमेव निवर्त्यतां ब्रह्मविद्या । न तु पारमर्थिकं वस्तुम् निराकर्तुं निवर्तयितुं वाहीति ब्रह्मविद्या ॥
7. VSB, 1, 1, 12 तत्र अविद्यावस्थायां ब्रह्मणः उपास्योपासकलक्षणः सर्वो व्यवहारः ।
8. VSB, 4, 1, 3 'वेदा अवेदा' इति वचनात् इष्यत एवास्माभिः श्रुतेरप्यभावः प्रबोधे ॥ Also BUB, 1, 4, 10 नन्वेवं शास्त्रोपदेशानर्थक्यम् इति? बाढमेवम्, अवगते अस्त्वेव आनर्थक्यं etc.

9. Adhyāsa-bhāṣhya अध्यासं पुरस्कृत्य सर्वे प्रमाणप्रमेयव्यवहारा लौकिका वैदिकाश्च प्रवृत्ताः ।  
also BUB, 2, 1, 20 स्वविषयशूराणि हि प्रमाणानि । also VSB, 4, 3, 14  
सर्वव्यवहारलोपप्रसङ्गः प्रत्यक्षादिप्रमाणाप्रवृत्तेः इति चेत् । न, प्राक्प्रबोधात् स्वप्नव्यवहारवत्  
तदुपपत्तेः । also VSB, 2, 1, 11 निरागमाः पुरुषोत्तेश्चामात्रनिबन्धनास्तर्काः अप्रतिष्ठिता  
भवन्ति ।

10. VSB, 2, 1, 6 अत्र तर्कः अनुभवाङ्गत्वेनाश्रीयते । cmp. also discussion  
in 1, 1, 2.

11. VSB, 1, 1, 1 साधनसम्पत्त्यनन्तरं..... ॥

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES

## PART TWO

# THE CRITIQUE ON ADHYĀSA-BHĀSHYA

## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES

|        |                                 |
|--------|---------------------------------|
| B      | Bhāmatī                         |
| BGB    | Bhagavad-gītā-bhāshya           |
| BU     | Bṛahadāraṇyaka Upanishad        |
| BUB    | Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad-bhāshya |
| BV     | Bhāmatī-vivaraṇa                |
| CHU    | Chhāndogya Upanishad            |
| IU     | Īśāvāsya Upanishad              |
| K      | Kalpataru                       |
| KP     | Kalpataru-parimala              |
| KU     | Kaṭha Upanishad                 |
| KUB    | Kaṭha Upanishad-bhāshya         |
| Muṇḍ U | Muṇḍaka Upanishad               |
| P      | Pañchapādikā                    |
| PU     | Praśna Upanishad                |
| RP     | Ratna-prabhā                    |
| TU     | Taittirīya Upanishad            |
| VSB    | Vedānta-sūtra-bhāshya           |



# ADHYĀSA-BHĀSHYA

## THE TEXT

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Adhyāsa-bhāshya is the introductory critique appended to the first aphorism of the Vedānta-sūtra-bhāshya (VSB) by Śaṅkara. It also serves as a constructive summary of the entire commentary that he has undertaken to write. He introduces here the idea of Adhyāsa (super-imposition) which is a metaphysical as well as psychological construct. It is fundamental to the variety of Advaita that Śaṅkara regards as the correct traditional import.

The Bhāshya is divided, by later glossators, into five sections:

1. Pratijñā-bhāshya, presenting the common sense objections to the concept of adhyāsa, and also the author's view that Adhyāsa is a fact of common experience.
2. Lakṣhaṇa-bhāshya, giving an operational definition of adhyāsa and showing that this definition does not contradict the three major theories concerning adhyāsa.
3. Upapatti-bhāshya (also called Sambhāvanā-bhāshya), dealing with the doubt about the possibility of the adhyāsa in matters beyond observation, viz. the Self.
4. Pramāṇa-bhāshya, inquiring into the methodological problems concerning the understanding of adhyāsa and

showing the limitations of the normal means of knowledge.

5. Upasamhāra-bhāṣya, concluding the discussion by explaining the nature and effect of adhyāsa, and pointing out that the Vedānta discipline seeks to undo the ill-effects of adhyāsa.

The last sentence in the text brings out the relation of this introductory essay to the main commentarial work (VSB); the author promises to show how this notion of adhyāsa and its elimination is the prevailing theme of the Vedānta-sūtra.

## १. अध्यासप्रतिज्ञाभाष्यम्

### शङ्काग्रन्थः

युष्मदस्मत्प्रत्ययगोचरयोःविषय-विषयिणोः तमःप्रकाशवद्विरुद्धस्वभावयोः  
इतरेतरभावानुपपत्तौ सिद्धायां, तद्धर्माणामपि सुतराम् इतरेतरभावानुपपत्तिः इत्यतः अस्मत्-  
प्रत्ययगोचरे विषयिणि चिदात्मके युष्मत्-प्रत्ययगोचरस्य विषयस्य तद्धर्माणां च अध्यासः,  
तद्विपर्ययेण विषयिणः तद्धर्माणां च विषये अध्यासः मिथ्या भवितुं युक्तम् ।

### परिहारग्रन्थः

तथापि, अन्योन्यस्मिन् अन्योन्यात्मकताम् अन्योन्यधर्माश्च अध्यस्य, इतरेतराविवेकेन  
अत्यन्तविविक्तयोः धर्मधर्मिणोः मिथ्याज्ञाननिमित्तः सत्यानृते मिथुनीकृत्य 'अहमिदम्', 'ममेदम्'  
इति नैसर्गिकः अयं लोकव्यवहारः ॥

## 1

## REALITY-TRANSFER AS FACT

### (REALITY JUDGEMENT<sup>1</sup>)

What corresponds to the expression "Thou" is the object of experience; and what corresponds to the expression "I" is the experiencing subject<sup>2</sup>. The two are distinct in their nature<sup>3</sup>, as darkness and light are<sup>4</sup>. It is evident that one of them cannot be the other<sup>5</sup>. Such being the case, it is all the more evident that the attributes of one can never be the attributes of the other<sup>6</sup>.

Thus, therefore, the reality-transfer of the

experienced object referred to by the expression "Thou" and of the attributes inhering in it onto the subject, which is referred to by the expression "I", and which also is the reality defined by consciousness would be unreal; and, contrarily, the reality-transfer of the experiencing subject and its attributes onto the experienced object, would also be unreal<sup>7</sup>.

### FEELING OF REALITY<sup>8</sup>.

Even so<sup>9</sup>, there is this natural<sup>10</sup> transaction of the common-folk<sup>11</sup>, such as "I am such-and-such", "This is mine" etc., caused by incorrect apprehension<sup>12</sup>, which in its turn arises from welding together of the real and the unreal<sup>13</sup>. The reality-transfer of one of the attributes of the other, occurs, owing to non-discrimination between substances of the attributes which are altogether distinct<sup>14</sup>.

### NOTES

1. B calls this subsection: 'portion dealing with the doubt about reality-transfer' (śāṅkā-grantha). It is also usual to take this portion as the prima facie view (pūrva-paksha), or as 'objection' (ākshepa). The spokesman here is described as the hard-core realist, who accepts the reality of all our transactions, physical and mental (sarva-pratyaya-yāthārthya-vādin).

P makes a further subdivision in the first subsection: the first part stating the reason why there can be no reality-transfer, and the second part dismissing reality-transfer as unreal (or impossible).

But it is uncertain if this really is so. The manner in which the next sub-section (the so-called parihāra-

grantha) is worded suggests that the argument contained in the previous subsection is not disputed at all, but accepted (except perhaps for the last words, *mithyā bhavitum yuktam*). It does not appear like an objection or a refusal to accept the idea of reality-transfer.

2. The expression (*pratyaya*) means whatever intends, refers to, or indicates. It is not merely a verbalized intention, but the very psychological process of intending (*pratīyate anena iti*); it is reference as an act. There is a polarity in this reference: "I" and "Thou". Thus I-reference indicates the experiencing subject (*vishayin*). This subject, then, cannot be the real (or impersonal and transcendental) Self (*ātman*), for the subject would indeed be an object of this reference. P would take I-reference as indicating only the ego (*ahaṅkāra*), which operates as a mirror for the real Self, which is defined by contentless consciousness.

B, on the other hand, would resolve the difficulty by pointing out that the phenomenal Self (*jīva*, the incarnated spirit), which although is identical with the real Self, is intended (or revealed) by the "I", in the sense of personal subjectivity (involved alike in reception-perception and action-manipulation, as *bhoktr* and *kartr*).

Why is the expression "Thou" used and not the expression "This" (*idam*) or "It" (*tat*)? Would the "I-It" polarity not bring out better the distinction between the consciousness-activity (*chaitanya*) that underlies subjectivity and the materiality-inertness (*jadatva*) that distinguishes objectivity? The answer given by the glossators is that the "I-It" polarity is not as indicative of contrariety as "I-Thou" polarity (*yathāhyahāṅkāra-pratīyagoitvam-kāro naivam idāṅkārah*, B). The idea of the two expressed by "I-Thou", for one can hardly



meaningfully make a statement such as "I am you", whereas we are familiar with statements like "I am this" and "We are these". "I" and "This" can fuse in a common intent, while "I" and "Thou" are always distinct. Besides, "I-Thou" is psychologically valid for the transactional world.

Experience (anubhava) is tripartite: awareness of the world outside in space and time, awareness of one's own physical body, and awareness of one's own Self (Self-consciousness). Usually, it is the first awareness that is characterized as 'this' (idam) or 'thou' (tvam). The second awareness is strictly an aspect of the first. But it is taken as an extension of the third (viz. Self-awareness); and it is usually referred to as "I" (aham), the 'embodied Self' (śārīraka), the Self expressing itself through the body. When the Mīmāṃsakas like Kumārila-bhaṭṭa defined the Self as that which is referred to by the "I"-notion (aham-pratyaya-vishaya), they were speaking only of this 'embodied Self' (bodily awareness as extended in space). Vedānta, however, regards the Self as beyond body-awareness, and points to Self-awareness as the only valid awareness, not sublated by the other two aspects of awareness. In fact, it is the purpose of Śaṅkara to show how an inquiry into the notion of body-awareness (śārīraka-mīmāṃsā) will reveal the primary awareness of Self as self, beyond the context of both the world-awareness and body-awareness (which involve the transactional multiplicity). This is what he calls 'ātmaikatva-pratipatti', "understanding that the Self is one".

The ātman is not 'aham', it is not characterized as "I", but is the foundation for that 'I'-notion (asmad-pratyaya), which is projected on the body and the world

(yushmad-pratyaya) by what is called 'reality-transfer' (adhyāsa). It is in this sense that the Self is transcendental (paramārtha), beyond, but basic to, the body and the world which constitute the transactional context (vyavahāra). The latter is not unreal (asatya), but variable (anṛta), unlike the Self which is real (satya) and constant (ṛta) (See note 13).

This in fact is the justification for the dual viewpoint (dṛṣṭi-dvaya) that Śāṅkara indicates: the transactional (vyāvahārika) and the transcendental (pāramārthika). Both are real, but the transactional reality is 'definite' (in the sense that it is mechanically or biologically determined) while the transcendental reality is 'infinite' (everlasting and unitary). The Self in the former context is the 'śārīraka' (embodied Self); it encounters the world around. But the Self in reality is not 'śārīraka'; this is the transcendental position (aśārīra). The 'infinite' Self (ātman) appearing as the 'definite' Self (jīvā) is what Śāṅkara calls 'adhyāsa'. The inquiry into this apparent transformation is the theme of Śārīraka-mīmāṃsā. How the Being (sat or ātman) becomes the being-in-the world and being-of-the world (jīvā) is explained by 'adhyāsa'.

3. The "object" refers to the meaningful world around us consisting of our physical bodies, sensations, thoughts as well as the material things. The subject is the Self as defined by consciousness, to which the "object" (vishaya) is presented. The Sanskrit word vishaya signifies the act of relating the articulated world to the experiencing Self ('visinvanti vishayaṇam svena rūpeṇa nirūpaṇīyam kurvanti'—Sāṅkhya-tattva-kaumudī).

4. Darkness and light are distinct from each other in the sense that their natures as well as functions are opposed. Darkness, which is not a positive something but

merely the absence of light, hinders vision, while light, which is a positive something, helps vision. They can in no sense co-exist or share their functions or natures.

Some glossators (e. g. P), however, regard darkness also as a positive something (bhāva), for otherwise the analogy would not be complete.

5. The attributes of the experiencing subject include being conscious (chaitanya), recipient (vishayitva) and immutable (avikāritva). The "object", on the other hand, is inert (jaḍa), sensed (vishaya) and changing (vikāri).

6. This paragraph is taken by P to be in the nature of maṅgala (for the work has no formal or explicit maṅgala), on the ground that it has its theme as the Ātman as the innermost reality of all of us (pratyagātman), free from all impediments (sarvopaplarahita) and mass of consciousness (vijñāna-ghana).

7. 'Unreal' (mithyā) has two possible meanings (P): empty or non-existent (apahnavā-vachanah), and ineffable (anirvachanīyatā-vachanah). Here the word is claimed to be used in the former sense. Later, there is an instance, according to P, of its being used in the latter sense. However, the actual idea is that of false presentation (cf. yad asad bhāsamānam tanmithyā' (Sāṅkhya-pravachana-bhāshya). And this idea would hold good in the present context as well as when later the word is used in a compound (mithyā-jñāna-nimitta).

The glossators who take this subsection as the objection (ākshēpa) or doubt concerning reality-transfer being a fact, argue that the view represented here denies the very possibility of reality-transfer (abhāva eva adhyāsasya), or refuse to recognize it as a hypothesis that is warranted (na sambhavatīti yāvat, BV).

8. The glossators describe this subsection as 'Resolving the Doubt' (parihāra-grantha). The previous subsection having pointed out the impossibility of the idea of reality-transfer or its being unwarranted, the present subsection is taken as an answer to that contention. The view expressed in this portion is said to be the author's own. Here, the author points to the fact of experience, which reveals the operation of reality-transfer.

9. 'Even so' (tathāpi) B suggests that we should read this as 'Albeit' (yadyapi). The idea is: "Although the above reasoning is that reason does not justify, it is a fact of experience, and as such it cannot be argued away".

This interpretation presumes that what was said earlier ('mithyā bhavitum yuktam") presents the objector's position. But it would make more sense if the entire section is taken as the author's own view. Instead of dismissing reality-transfer as an assumption that is empty or unwarranted, we should regard it as a false presentation: an occurrence in the face of odds like its logical inconsistency and rational impossibility. Reason may not be able to explain it, but experience confirms it. In spite of all the evidences of reason against reality-transfer, it is an experiential fact. This appears to be the force of the expression 'Even so' (tathāpi).

10. 'Natural' (naisargika) in the sense that the behaviour entailing the function of reality-transfer is unlearned and evident from the very birth of an individual (svābhāvika). One does not go about looking for reasons and explanations for it, nor does one try to ascertain the validity or error in such behaviour (avichārīta-siddha). There is an inborn will to make the world around us as meaningful as possible. It is spontaneous, and requires no effort.

'Naisargika' is, however, taken by some glossators to signify the beginninglessness (anāditva) of phenomenal transactions, not its naturalness (svabhāvatvam), for if it were natural like consciousness, it can never be undone:

नैसर्गिकपदेन अनादित्वं विवक्षितं, न स्वभावत्वम् । नैसर्गिकत्वे चैतन्यवत् स्वभावत्वे न उच्छेद्यतासंभवात् ॥

It is beginningless in the sense that no cause (kāraṇa) can possibly be adduced to it; its occurrence is only in the unexamined or raw state of beings (avichārīta-daśā), which is the natural attitude of all beings. The world appears only for the Self, and since the Self is beginningless (anādi), the tendency for the world to disappear is also beginningless.

11. 'Transaction of the common folk' (loka-vyavahāra). B resolves the compound thus: 'lokānām vyavahārah' (the transaction or behaviour of the people). The word 'loka' here is taken to mean ignorant folk ('avivekinām loka iti vyavahārah', BV). The glossator intends that we should note the distinction between the attitudes of the unlearned (loka-dṛṣṭi) and the attitude of the Scriptures (śāstra-dṛṣṭi). Reality-transfer is an assumption that is relevant only for the common folk. The expression 'loka' signifies actions that the creatures are engaged in (lokyate iti lokah, loka-śabdasya karma-paratvāt). The world is a process, dynamic in character, and altogether different from mere existence; it is a transaction.

But P takes the compound word to signify the transaction as people (loka iti vyavahārah). All people fondly identify themselves as human beings (loka iti manushyo'ham iti abhimānah) and begin to behave on this foundation. The 'world' (loka) is explained as referring to the entire group of living beings (prāṇi-nikāya), where in fact reality-transfer operates.

The expression refers to the naive everyday realism,



or the natural attitude of all of us who live in the world and deal with the objects around us. The doubt is suspended and we come to terms with the reality as it confronts us.

The word 'vyavahāra' is synonymous with 'abhijñā' (recognition) and appropriation of objects with desire and passion (abhimāna). This vyavahāra is unreal only when viewed transcendently (lakṣhaṇataḥ mithyā) but not in common transaction.

12. 'Caused by incorrect apprehension' (mithyā-jñāna-nimittah). Reality-transfer is of the nature of false ascription; it is mistaking one thing for another, owing to the non-discrimination between the real and the unreal. This expression seeks to explain how the transaction of the common folk is all too 'natural' (note 10). Incorrect or false apprehension is opposed to correct apprehension (samyagjñāna), which distinguishes a wise man from the common folk. The incorrectness here refers to the mixing up of the real and the unreal, the confusion between the subject and the object.

The frame of reference for the 'incorrect apprehension' is the transactional world (lokavyavahāra). B means by 'mithyā-jñāna' knowledge that is unreal or false (mithyābhūtam tat jñānam). But P strains the compound word into an unusual resolution: 'false ignorance' (mithyā cha tad ajñānam cha). The meaning is further complicated by strangely interpreting the other word in the compound, nimitta, as "material cause" (upādānam). The word mithyā is also curiously taken to mean 'ineffable' (anirvachanīyatā): incapable of being expressed or communicated in words, inability to verbalize. Ignorance, in this context, is described as inert and material and as a sort of energy (jāḍātmikā avidyā

śakhti); and as the physical foundation for the world in which we transact. It is obvious that the entire intellectual exercise is unwarranted.

13. 'Welding together the real and the unreal' (satyānṛte mithunīkṛtya). The real is the Self (the subject, defined as consciousness), and the unreal is the phenomenal presentation (the body, sense-organs, mind and the objects of the world). P views the real as consciousness that is not predicated as 'this' (anidam chaitanyam), and the unreal as whatever that can be presented by 'thou' (yushmad-arthah).

'Welding together' (mithunī-karaṇa) is explained by B as 'uniting two distinct attributes' (dve dharmaṇī yugalīkṛtya), which are not naturally united. It is an organizing activity, inter-connecting, and making a whole of discrete elements and units. The elements would become then phenomenologically of the world as well as in the personal organization of the individual.

The import is summarized as अध्यासमिथुनीकरणात्मको लोकव्यवहारः । It is the welding together of the Self (ātmā) and the non-Self (anātmā).

| ātmā                                                     | anātmā                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| chaitanya (consciousness)                                | jaḍa (inert)                                                 |
| kūṭastha (changeless)                                    | vikāri (changing)                                            |
| vishayi (subject)                                        | vishaya (object)                                             |
| satya (real)                                             | mithyā (unreal)                                              |
| niramśa (devoid of parts)                                | sāmśa (composed of parts)                                    |
| sukha-duhkha-vidhura<br>(devoid of pleasure<br>and pain) | sukha-duhkhātmaka<br>(of the nature of<br>pleasure and pain) |

Anṛta is taken by the glossators as synonymous with mithyā. Although both expressions convey the idea of

unreality, the latter emphasizes the involvement of appearance or presentation. The compound 'satyānrta' brings out the constant confrontation between the perceiving subject and the phenomenological presentation.

14. The construction of the sentence (yojanā) would be:

सत्यानृते मिथुनीकृत्य अत्यन्तविविक्तयोः धर्मधर्मिणोः इतरेतरविवेकन अन्योन्यस्मिन् अन्योन्यात्मकताम्  
अन्योन्यधर्माश्च अध्यस्य मिथ्याज्ञाननिमित्तः नैसर्गिकः 'अहमिदं', 'ममेदं' इति लोकव्यवहारः ॥ (BV)

## २. लक्षणभाष्यम्

आह — 'कोऽयमध्यासो नाम?' इति ।

उच्यते — 'स्मृतिरूपः परत्र पूर्वदृष्टावभासः ।

(१) तं केचित् 'अन्यत्र अन्यधर्माध्यासः' इति वदन्ति ।

(२) केचित्तु 'यत्र यद् अध्यासः तद् विवेकाग्रहनिबन्धनः भ्रमः' इति ।

(३) अन्ये तु 'यत्र यद् अध्यासः तस्यैव विपरीतधर्मत्वकल्पनाम् आचक्षते' इति ।

सर्वथापि तु अन्यस्य अन्यधर्मावभासतां न व्यभिचरति ।

तथा च लोकेऽनुभवः — 'शुक्तिका हि रजतवद् अवभासते', 'एकश्चन्द्रः सद्वितीयवत्' इति ॥

## 2

### CONCERNING THE DEFINITION OF REALITY-TRANSFER<sup>1</sup>

It is asked<sup>2</sup> — 'What now is this reality-transfer?'

It is answered<sup>3</sup> — 'Of the form of recollection<sup>4</sup>, it is the appearance<sup>5</sup> elsewhere<sup>6</sup> of what is seen earlier' <sup>7 8</sup>.

(i) Some say: 'It is the reality-transfer on one object of the attributes of another object<sup>9</sup>;

(ii) Some others say: 'It is illusion occasioned by non-discrimination as what is reality-transferred from the object on which the reality-transfer is made<sup>10</sup>;

(iii) Still others say: 'It is the ascription of an opposite attribute to the object on which something is reality-transferred'<sup>11</sup>.

In any case, this fact is not gainsaid: an object appears as possessed of an attribute it does not really have, and which belongs to another object<sup>12</sup>.

So also is our experience in the world<sup>13</sup> – as the shell appearing as silver<sup>14</sup>, or as the one moon appearing as being two<sup>15 16</sup>.

## NOTES

1. This section is meant to demonstrate the nature and possibility of reality-transfer (till कथं पुनरविद्यावद्विषयाणि I) and to prove its reality (P).

2. The 'asking' is both for inquiry (praśna) and objection (ākshepa); the question-answer form has been employed to drive home the point easily (śrotrīṇām sukha-prabodhārtham) (P). The previous section points out that reality-transfer is a fact of common experience, although reason may not justify it. The objection raised here is, if it is a fact of experience, then why bother about its nature and possibility? The 'question' would be: We have been talking about some reality-transfer; what now is that so-called reality-transfer. B also takes the sentence as an objection (ka ityākshepah).

Whatever appears cannot be unreal; the body, sense-organs, mind and the objects do appear, even as the conscious Self. How then can there be the talk of welding of the real with the unreal? And if there be no welding, who and how can one fail to discriminate? If that is not there, can reality-transfer occur?



It is better to take it as a question, for the author introduces this sentence only to prepare the ground for his definition of the concept. When we remind ourselves that the expression 'reality-transfer' does not occur in any Upanishadic passage or anywhere in the Vedānta-sūtra, we would appreciate the need for some definite idea about it.

3. This is the author's view. What follows is the general definition of reality-transfer (sāmānya-lakṣhaṇa). Later in the text, the definition is recalled and paraphrased ('atasmin tad-buddhih'). But it is important to note that in the definition as recalled, the first part of the general definition (about the reality-transfer taking the form of recollection, 'smṛti-rūpaḥ') is omitted. The glossators generally take the entire sentence as the definition, and attempt to explain recollection in the context of reality-transfer. However, this seems to be unnecessary, for the idea of recollection is not indispensable for defining reality-transfer.

4. 'Of the form of recollection'. B resolves the compound thus: "whose form is like unto the form of recollection" (smṛteḥ rūpaḥ iva rūpaḥ asya). P interprets the compound as meaning: "whose form is like unto the form that is recollected" (smāryamāṇa-rūpaḥ iva rūpaḥ asya). The intention of both the glossators is to distinguish reality-transfer from mere memory, for the latter implies the absence of the object at the time (asañnihita-vishayatvaṇ cha smṛti-rūpaḥ, B), and also from recognition (pratyabhijñā), where the object and its recollection co-exist in time and space.

5. 'Appearance' (avabhāsa). This is the key-word in the definition (saṅkshipta-lakṣhaṇam). B gives two alternative meanings for this word: termination

(avasāda) and depreciation (avamāna). अवसन्नः अवमलो वा भासः । K and KP explain 'termination' as an act of obstruction (ucchheda), or inhibition of the arousal of a mental process other than the one involved in illusory appearance; and 'depreciation' as bringing about an inability of functions like volition and engagement. RP points out the difference between the two expressions: the former is what can be eliminated as soon as the ground of the appearance is realized (adhiṣṭhāna-tattva-sākshātkāreṇa nivṛttih), and the latter is what can be dispensed with by rational understanding (yaugika-jñānena tiraskārah). Both are sublated by other processes, and hence only appearance (pratyayāntara-bādhita).

While all this complicated explanation is quite irrelevant and unnecessary, K rightly emphasizes that the expression 'avabhāsa' is really synonymous with mithyājñāna. Śāṅkara probably meant by this word nothing more than 'presentation' or 'projection' that does not correspond with reality. It is helpful to remember that avabhāsa, adhyāsa, bhrānti, mithyājñāna and viparīta-jñāna are expressions that are synonymous in Śāṅkara's writings. Avabhāsa as appearance involves the mistaking of one thing for another.

6. 'Elsewhere' (paratra), in another object (B); 'another' in the sense of "not of that particular form" (parasya-atadrūpasya). This word emphasizes the reality of the object on which the reality-transfer is made (āropa-vishaya-satyatā-sūchanārtham). Appearance is unreal, but not the ground thereof. P understands by this word the appearance of another object (parasya avabhāsamānatā). This gloss takes the words 'smṛti-rūpa' and 'paratra' as qualifying 'avabhāsa'. The point to be noted here is that

there is an appearance of a thing in another thing not having that identical form.

7. 'What is seen earlier' (pūrva-dṛśhṭa). This expression is introduced to suggest that an earlier cognition is the cause of the appearance (avabhāsa) (B). The illusion of silver in a piece of sea-shell occurs for one who has in his mind memory-traces of silver; one who has never seen silver in reality cannot possibly see silver as appearing (P).

To see a real object (such as snake) would not constitute an illusory appearance; it would be a factual experience, a recognition and not a mere recollection. But even when that real object corresponding to the idea of snake (or justified by the memory-trace) is not present in the subject's immediate surrounding, if he should 'see' a snake in an object that only resembles a snake (such as rope), then it is a case of reality-transfer or illusory appearance (adhyāsa or bhrānti).

The qualifying word 'paratra' is expressly employed to deny the validity of *asat-khyāti* theory of the Buddhist nihilists while the word '*smṛti-rūpa*' denies the *sat-khyāti* of realists (B and P).

8. Two varieties of reality-transfer are recognized: (i) primary (*mūla*), viz. caused by the confusion between the 'real' (Self) and 'unreal' (the body, mind, sense-organs and the objects of the world), and with no ascertainable origin (*anādi*), for it is coeval with phenomenal presentation, which includes time; (2) secondary, based on the memory-traces (*samskāras*) of individuals who are dealing with the world (which has been brought about by the former variety) and which has its identifiable origination (*sādi*).

9. This is the theory of 'reality-transfer' known as

‘anyathā-khyāti’ (perverted apprehension) held by the Naiyāyikas and Vaiśeṣikas, viz. tārīkas and as ‘viparīta-khyāti’ held by the Bhaṭṭa School of Mīmāṃsakas. It is partially accepted by the Sāṅkhyan and Yoga philosophers. In this view, both that which is conveyed by the reality-transfer and that on which the reality-transfer is made are real. In the familiar example of seeing silver in a piece of sea-shell, the silver that is seen is not unreal, for in that case there would be no appearance of it; but it is not in the shell. It is not the whole of silver that is involved here, but only one of its attributes (viz. the shining, glittering characteristic). Both the basis and content of the reality-transfer are real. And only the attributes (bhrama) are subjected to reality-transfer.

10. This theory of ‘reality-transfer’ known as ‘akhyāti’ (non-apprehension) is advocated by the Prābhākara school of Mīmāṃsakas, and is accepted by the Sāṅkhya and also by the Mādhyamika philosophers. According to this view, there is a non-discrimination between what is reality-transferred (e. g. silver, the āropa) and on what the reality-transfer is made (e. g. shell, the basis or adhiṣṭhāna). The former is a memory-trace while the latter is a perceived fact. There is a failure to distinguish between recollection (smaraṇa) and perception (anubhava), which is the essential feature of ‘reality-transfer’. The basis of reality-transfer is real, while the content is unreal. And the secret of reality-transfer is inability to distinguish between objects (dharmī).

11. This theory of ‘reality-transfer’, known as ‘mithyā-khyāti’ (or a variety of ‘asat-khyāti’) (‘illusory apprehension’ or ‘unreal apprehension’), is held by a group of Buddhists, the Śūnyavādins (nihilists). That on which

the reality-transfer is made is ascribed an attribute that neither belongs to it nor is real, but is a figment of imagination (kalpita). That on which the imaginary attribute is transferred may also be unreal. Both the basis and content of the reality-transfer may in this case be unreal. And the objects themselves (dharmī) are subject to reality-transfer.

12. Śaṅkara does not identify these views, and has nowhere discussed the 'khyāti' theories. The suggestion that we find here is that three variant view-points on 'reality-transfer' were current during his days. He does not seem eager to enter into any disputation concerning these views; he does not pronounce his judgement on them, nor does he undertake to propound his own theory. The 'anirvachanīya-khyāti' view, that later writers on Advaita ascribe to Śaṅkara, does not go well with the stand that he has taken here.

13. Śaṅkara also brings to our notice that the 'reality-transfer' is also a matter of our common experience and not merely a theoretical assumption, as the previous discussion may mislead us. B makes a distinction between inquirers (parīkshaka) and laymen (laukika), for both of whom the 'error' (anṛtatā) is alike valid. Śaṅkara is not as much concerned about this distinction as pointing out that common experience also supports this notion. In fact, Śaṅkara does not suggest such a distinction. He seems to hold strongly that what is in one's own experience cannot be disputed, on the maxim 'na hi dṛśṭe anupapannam nāma'. This is consistent with his previous stand "naisargiko'yam loka-vyavahārah" (Sect. I). He has used the two expressions 'mithyā-jñāna-nimitta' previously (Sect. I) and 'avabhāsa' here as synonymous.

14. This example is given, according to B, to show



that reality-transfer is a common experience. The complete sentence would be: The shell appears like silver, but not as silver 'itself' (na punah rajatam idam iti). The very import of the idea of 'reality-transfer' is missed in this interpretation. The shell is seen as silver during the illusory appearance. The illustration is meant to show that silver, although not present in the shell at that time, is a real thing, existing elsewhere. It is the memory-trace of silver in the person that is responsible for the 'reality-transfer'.

This is a common experience, not involving any disability on the part of the individual and may represent the primary reality-transfer.

15. This example is, according to B, in answer to an objection: "It may be that it is in common experience that one thing is mistaken for another. But an object that is strictly one only cannot appear as illusorily divided (bheda-bhrama). How then can there be this illusion of plurality among the individual selves, which are essentially not different from the one Self, who is of the nature of consciousness?"

The force of the second example is as follows: In the previous example, the silver seen in the shell, illusorily, does exist elsewhere. It may be thought that in all cases of reality-transfer, the thing seen must likewise really exist somewhere. It is to shake off this suggestion that the experience of the moon appearing with a double is given here.

This experience is not a common one, as the above is, but is contingent on an optical defect. This may therefore be an illustration of secondary reality-transfer.

16. In all instances of reality-transfer, there is a disparity between an objective feature of the world and

the subjective experience with regard to it. The individual who is viewing the object will create or set up his own conditions for phenomenologically adequate experience. Some of these conditions are built into the human constitution, while others are acquired owing to habit or defect.

Śaṅkara's refusal to align himself with the three theories of reality-transfer mentioned above shows that he neither takes the objective world as it is experienced to be real, nor denies its reality altogether. The essential involvement of the notion of reality-transfer, as he views it, is the distinction and disparity between the figure (āropa) and the ground (adhishṭhāna); the figure is the appearance (avabhāsa).

### ३. संभावनाभाष्यम्

कथं पुनः प्रत्यगात्मनि अविषये अध्यासो विषय-तद्दर्माणाम् ? सर्वो हि पुरोऽवस्थिते एव विषये विषयान्तरम् अध्यस्यति । युष्मत्-प्रत्ययापेतस्य च प्रत्यगात्मनः अविषयत्वं ब्रवीषि ।

उच्यते — न तावदयम् एकान्तेन अविषयः, अस्मत्-प्रत्ययविषयत्वात्, अपरोक्षत्वाच्च प्रत्यगात्मप्रसिद्धेः ।

न चायमस्ति नियमः पुरोऽवस्थिते एव विषये विषयान्तरम् अध्यसितव्यम् इति । अप्रत्यक्षेऽपि हि आकाशे बालाः तल-मलिनतादि अध्यस्यन्ति । एवम् अविरोद्धः प्रत्यगात्मनि अपि अनात्माध्यासः ॥

### 3

### CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY<sup>1</sup> OF REALITY-TRANSFER

It is asked<sup>2</sup>—The Inner Self<sup>3</sup> is not an object. You speak of the non-objectness of the Inner Self, which is outside the scope of the notion of "Thou". Everyone will reality-transfer one object only on another object which is right in front of him<sup>4</sup>. How then can there be reality-transfer of objects and their attributes on the Inner Self?

It is replied—The Inner Self is not invariably a non-object, for it is an object of the notion of "I"<sup>5</sup>; and the Inner Self is known to be evident in immediate experience<sup>6</sup>.

Nor is there a rule that an object can be reality-transferred only onto another object which is right in front us<sup>7</sup>. Do not common people<sup>8</sup> reality-transfer ground and dirt<sup>9</sup>

10

Thus,<sup>11</sup> it is not inconsistent that there should be reality-transfer of non-Self (viz. the objects)<sup>12</sup> on the Inner Self.

## NOTES

1. This section is also called "Upapatti-bhāshyam", as it brings reason (upapatti) to bear on the thesis of reality-transfer. 'Sambhāvanā' (possibility), however, implies that there is a doubt whether reality-transfer can occur at all with reference to the Self, and that the doubt is cleared by an argument that it is well within the bounds of possibility. According to P, "Well, even if we accept your definition of reality-transfer, how does it become relevant here? It does not occur here (iha na sambhavati), because reality-transfer in a non-object has never been seen before, nor is it possible" (na hi avishaye adhyāsaḥ dṛṣṭa-pūrvah sambhavi vā).

2. The objection raised here depends on two suppositions: (a) that the Inner Self, by definition, is a subject (vishayin) in contradistinction with all objects (vishaya); and that he can never be an object; and (b) that reality-transfer is a transaction only between two objective details (things or attributes), both of them being outside the Inner Self and presented to him.

The answer dismisses the former supposition as not absolute (ekānta), and the latter as not invariable (niyama). The main argument is that it is not true that



there can be no reality-transfer unless there is objectivity (vishayatvābhāve adhyāso na syāt, BV).

3. 'The Inner Self' (pratyagātman). B explains: "This very light, which is self-luminous, unitary, absolute and eternal, unstructured (without parts: whole), is the Inner Self". It is so called because it knows (añchati = jānāti) itself to be different in direction (pratīpam, K explains as prātilomyena) from the body, sense-organs, mind and the objects of the world. The latter are indeterminate inasmuch as we can never ascertain their nature apart from the Self (aśakya-nirvachanīya), while the former is determinate (nirvachanīya) as the subject of all experience. Being itself light and being unstructured, it cannot be an object.

4. An object in front of us depends for its appearance on some light (parādhīna-prakāśa), is composed of parts (structured, amśa-vat). Its general nature may be grasped, while particular details may not be noticed, owing to some defect in the light or in the sense-organs. Hence the object may appear as something different from what it really is (anyathā-prakāśatā). This is what we call reality-transfer. We cannot speak of reality-transfer in the Inner Self, which is not dependent on any outside light, which does not need any sense-organ in its knowing of itself (svajñāna). The defects in the light or in the sense-organs cannot possibly vitiate its self-knowledge. Being unstructured, it cannot be that some particulars of the Inner Self are grasped, and others not (B).

5. P would interpret 'asmat-pratyaya' as indicating the ego (ahaṅkāra): it is in everyone's experience that the ego contains within itself all things of the nature of "this" and "not this" (sa cha idam anidam-rūpa-vastugarbhah sarva-loka-sākshikah). P would equate ego with



the notion of "I" (ahañkāra-granthih asmacchabda-samsābditah). This may not be precisely what Śaṅkara had in mind; he appears to mean by 'asmat-pratyaya', the Ātman.

B explains thus: it is true that the Inner Self cannot really be an 'object', for it is self-luminous. But owing to the limiting adjuncts (like mind etc.) brought about by avidyā (which is without an origin and which cannot be determined), it appears like a doer (karṭṛ) and enjoyer (bhokṭṛ), in short as a Personal Self (jīva). It is a non-object in its own nature as consciousness (chid-rūpa) but an object insofar as it assumes the form of mind etc. It then becomes an object of the notion of "I". It is called in this condition 'the ground of ego' (ahañkāārāspada), an individual Self (jīva), a living being (jantu), and the 'knower of the bodily field' (kshetra-jña). However, it does not become different from the Self as pure consciousness (chid-ātmā).

B also raises a doubt whether the Inner Self 'becomes' an object only after, and as a result of, reality-transfer or the Inner Self is subjected to reality-transfer only after he has 'become' an object; or whether it amounts to a defect in reasoning known as reciprocal dependence (anyonya-āśraya). The doubt is resolved by calling attention to the fact that both the Inner Self and reality-transfer are without origin (anādi), and their relationship is like that of egg and hen. This is what, according to B, was meant by describing the transaction of the world (loka-vyavahāra) as natural (naisargika).

The import of the passage is that reality-transfer is involved when the Inner Self is identified as "I". The Inner Self being known as an object (vishaya) and the objects (such as the body, mind, sense-organs etc.) being identified

as the subject (vishayin) are both constructs; and as such they are aspects of reality transfer.

6. This statement anticipates an objection that if we should regard the Inner Self as an object, as suggested by the previous sentence, it should be evident to us in that manner. Is the Inner Self seen as a concrete object anywhere or by anyone? No, indeed. But just because of that, one cannot argue that it does not exist or that it is not well-known to anyone. On the contrary, it cannot be denied that it is in the direct (immediate) experience of everyone. P adduces the evidence that were it not so there would be no difference between what is known by oneself and what is known by another (na hi ātmani aprasiddhe sva-para-samvedyayor viśeshah). When an individual knows something, he knows that he has known it, and not another.

We should also note that the original expression 'prasiddheh' has been construed in the case by B, meaning that the celebrity or appearance of the Inner Self is immediately experienced.

7. It is the Naiyāyika position that is referred to here.

8. 'Common people' (bālāh): "those who cannot see things as they are" (ayathārthadarśinah) (P); those who are unable to discriminate between the real and the unreal (avivekinah), and those who see things only as others show them (paradarśita-darśinah) (B).

9. 'Ground' (tala): 'like unto the indranīla gem or tamarind leaves' (P); 'like an immense bowl made of blue indranīla gems, being inverted' (B). 'Dirt' (malina): 'like smoke, like the colour of a water-lily' etc. (P); 'sometimes colour of the earth, sometimes whiteness, sometimes like flames of fire etc.' (B). Common people see the sky as

blue, like the water-lily, or as white like the row of swans. Such sights are prompted by recollections (B).

10. 'not directly perceived' (apratyaksha), "perceived without the employment of sense-organs" (aksha-vyāpāram antarāpi) (P).

11. 'Thus' (evam), 'likewise' (B) and having answered the objection (B). I would take 'evam' and 'aviruddhah' together, and explain 'thus the possibility is established' (iti sambhāvanām nigamayati).

12. E.g. mind etc. (buddhyādīnām) (B).

तम् एतम् एवंलक्षणं अध्यासं पण्डिताः अविद्या इति मन्यन्ते । तद्-विवेकेन च वस्तुस्वरूपावधारणं विद्याम् आहुः ।

तत्र एवम् सति, यत्र यद्-अध्यासः, तत्-कृतेन दोषेण गुणेन वा अणुमात्रेणापि स न संबध्यते ॥

<sup>1</sup>This reality-transfer so described<sup>2</sup>, is regarded by the wise<sup>3</sup> as ignorance<sup>4</sup>. And as distinguished from it<sup>5</sup> is the determination of the nature of things, called wisdom<sup>6</sup>.

Such being the case here, that on which the reality-transfer is made is not in the least affected by the demerits or merits occasioned by it (reality-transfer)<sup>7</sup>.

## NOTES

1. This subsection is planned, according to P, to drive home the possibility (sambhāvanā) of reality-transfer. But some would regard this as the commencement of the fourth section of Adhyāsa-bhāshya ('Pramāṇa-bhāshya'). However, the view of P appears acceptable.

The subsection deals with the distinction between wisdom and ignorance (avidyā), the latter resulting in the ills of life while the former leads to liberation from them. The purport of the Vedānta-sūtra being 'wisdom concerning Brahman' (brahma-vidyā), an initial discussion about ignorance becomes thus relevant. The bondage of the lay-folk being brought about only by ignorance, release can be obtained only by wisdom.

2. 'So described' in the previous section (Sect. II): as its postulation being acceptable to all schools ('sarvathāpi' etc.), and as being confirmed by common experience ('tathā cha loke' etc.) According to B, described as 'the source of the ills of life' (anartha-hetu); but this description comes later in the text.

3. 'The Wise' (pañḍitāh), as distinguished from 'the lay-folk' (bālāh). cmp. 'learned in Scriptures' (śāstra-kuśalāh', KUB, 2, 5); 'those who have the wisdom concerning the Brahman or Self' (also 'avikriyam brahma drashtum śīlam yeshām te', BGB, 5, 18).

4. 'Ignorance' (avidyā). It is not a positive term; but signifies the absence of wisdom. The Upanishads appear to suggest its positive side (as, e. g. KU, 2,4, MuU., 1, 2, 8), but the employment of the imagery is only figurative. The word has been used in different senses in several schools of thought (Buddhist, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and other dualistic darśanās). But in Vedānta it is only the negation of vidyā; it does not have an independent existence. Later Vedāntins, however, have misrepresented it as a positive entity.

5. The distinction between 'ignorance' (avidyā) and 'wisdom' (vidyā) has been drawn in the Upanishads, e. g. KU, 2, 4, where the two are described as sharply opposed to each other, directed towards opposite ends.

'As distinguished from it' (tad-vivekena). This expression also suggests that the bondage of human beings is the result of lack of discrimination between the real and unreal. If we have to represent the chain of reactions, lack of such discrimination (aviveka), mix up of real and unreal (mithunī-karaṇa)—reciprocal reality transfer (paraspara-adhyāsa)—phenomenal transaction. But the term avidyā, as explained earlier, is more specifically the process of reality-transfer. Therefore, for the chain of reaction to be broken, so that the ills of phenomenal transaction would be eliminated (which is the goal of Vedānta), ignorance needs to be undone by wisdom.

According to B, this clause referring to viveka is introduced to affirm that there is a method to suppress the ignorance (tan-nirodhopāyam), which is unoriginated, dense, deep-rooted and tangled with innumerable impressions. This method consists of study (śravaṇa), reflection (manana) and so on. When by such means, non-discrimination (vivekāgraha) is eliminated, wisdom (which will undo reality-transfer) will arise. The discrimination is of the nature of recognizing that "the Self is real (satya) and the non-Self is unreal (anṛta)" (BV).

6. 'Wisdom' (vidyā), viz. 'Wisdom concerning the Brahman' (brahma-vidyā). It consists of the correct appreciation of the precise nature of things (the ātman and the anātman, the real and the unreal, the subject and the object). It is 'ascertainment without doubt' (nirvichikitsam jñānam) (B). The expression 'vidyā' has been used in the Upanishadic passages in two other senses : devotion (upāsānā) and branch of study (as e.g. BU, 2, 4, 5; 4, 1, 2; IU, 11 etc.). It is curious that Śaṅkara while commenting on IU, 11, explains vidyā as



“knowledge of deities” (devatā-jñāna) and avidyā as “rituals” (karma, agnihotrādi). He has nowhere in VSB employed the two expressions with these connotations, although he does relegate rituals to the confines of avidyā.

Vidyā, it must be remembered, is a positive and deliberate process of discriminating between the real and the unreal, and ascertaining the exact nature of the real. Avidyā is a passive, spontaneous and natural process, to be undone by the opposite process, vidyā. Both are processes, events, occurrences; neither of them is to be mistaken for an entity. Vidyā is what is revealed by the mental process of ascerainment of the reality of the Self, and the unreality of the non-Self (avadhāraṇātmakavṛttyabhivyaktam, saiva vidyā) (BV).

7. ‘Not in the least’. That on which the reality-transfer occurs is technically termed ‘ground’ (adhishtāna). This refers to the ‘real’ (viz. the Self, which is of the nature of pure consciousness). Merits and demerits occasioned by the reality-transfer are collectively referred to as ‘superimposed’ or ‘projected’ (āropita) or ‘reality-transferred’ (adhyasta). This latter term refers to the body-mind-object complex, which is by assumption, false (mithyā); it is only an appearance. It cannot, therefore, bring about any change in the ‘ground’, for the notion of reality-transfer does not involve the ideas of change or evolution. Nothing that was not there already can come into being; and nothing that is there can ever cease to exist.

The bondage thus is only apparent and unreal; caused by ignorance and not by an actual transformation. Therefore, it can be corrected by wisdom, which consists of the ascertainment of things as they are. Nothing else is needed.

The 'demerits' (dosha) are what appear as a result of reality-transfer of the non-Self on the Self; and 'merits' (guṇa) as a result of reality-transfer of the Self on the non-Self.

The analogy given is that of a pond which is clear and undisturbed. One can then see the bottom. This is vidyā. When, however, pebbles are thrown into the water, the water gets disturbed, and the bottom cannot be seen at all. This is avidyā. The bottom, however, is there all the while, and does not change when the water is disturbed or remains undisturbed. The water of the pond is the transactional world, and the bottom is the transcendental reality.

#### ४. प्रमाणभाष्यम्

तम् एतम् अविद्याख्यम् आत्मानात्मनोः इतरेतराध्यासं पुरस्कृत्य सर्वे प्रमाण-प्रमेय-  
व्यवहाराः लौकिकाः वैदिकाश्च प्रवृत्ताः । सर्वाणि च शास्त्राणि विधि-प्रतिषेध-मोक्षपराणि ।

### 4

## CONCERNING THE MEANS OF VALID KNOWLEDGE<sup>1</sup>

Following<sup>2</sup> this so called ignorance<sup>3</sup>, which is the reality-transfer of one on the other, between the Self and the non-Self, have come into being all worldly as well as Scriptural transactions<sup>4</sup> pertaining to the means of knowledge and objects of knowledge<sup>5</sup>; so also all Scriptures dealing with injunctions, prohibitions and release.<sup>6</sup>

### NOTES

1. It is suggested by some glossators (P) that this section sets out to offer proofs, such as perception, inference, presumption and verbal testimony for the possibility of reality-transfer (pratyaksha...pramāṇa-pradarśana-param). It can be seen that the section does not do anything of the sort. On the contrary, the section rejects the absolute validity of all means of knowing. It does not invoke any authority, not even Scriptural; it

shows that it is improper to ask for any proofs for 'reality-transfer'. The only reliable authority is personal experience.

This section is planned to elaborate on what was briefly indicated as 'loka-vyavahāra' in Sec. I. Worldly transactions depend upon the objects that are known and the means of such knowledge (observation, inference etc.). It is common procedure among laymen that they believe only in a thing that they see or hear, or reasonably infer. To know that something is true or untrue, they rely on the evidence of the senses and of the mind. How can the idea of reality-transfer commend itself to them, for they cannot ascertain it by any means of knowledge known to them? This question is sought to be answered by pointing out that the very means of knowledge on which they rely is due to the reality-transfer. Reality-transfer, thus, cannot be demonstrated or ascertained by any rational or logical procedure; its validity consists in its being evident in experience. Besides, one cannot see any sense in these conventional methods of knowing, unless the fact of reality-transfer is assumed.

2. 'Following' (puras-kṛtya), literally 'keeping it in front', viz. having it as the cause.

3. 'So called ignorance' (avidyākhyam). The author is definite that avidyā is only another name for adhyāsa. He does not suggest any other cause for the worldly transactions. Later Vedāntins postulated some sort of "primary ignorance" (mūla-avidyā), the supposition of which is not borne out by VSB.

4. 'Worldly as well as Scriptural transactional' (vyavahārah laukiko vaidikaścha). The word transaction comprehends all human behaviour. Such aspects of our behaviour that are natural in the world are 'worldly' (loke



bhavanti), while those actions that depend upon Scriptural injunctions and prohibitions are 'Scriptural' (vede bhavanti). It is important to note that Śāṅkara does not exclude religious sanctions from the scope of reality-transfer. This is because, like our natural behaviour, Scripturally relevant conduct also presumes various desires, aspirations and fears. The two types of behaviour are equally 'natural' (naisargika).

5. 'Means of valid knowledge' (pramāṇa). Valid knowledge (pramā) is the ascertainment of things as they are; whatever leads to this is the means or instruments thereof (pramāṇa). The conventional reckoning includes perception (pratyaksha), inference (anumāna) and Scriptural authority (śabda or āgama). The 'objects of knowledge' (prameya): whatever is ascertained by the means or instruments of knowledge. The transaction involving the objects and means of knowledge, means the approach and withdrawal behaviours based on the desirability, validity, factuality and other values assigned to objects. The objects themselves do not impel a human being to action of any sort; the action is contingent on evaluation of the objects.

6. This sentence presumes a doubt whether Scriptural texts also belong to the same category of our normal behaviour. Scriptural texts have as their purpose guidance of man, with an obvious interest in his well-being (purusha-hitānuśāsana-parāṇi); and therefore they should seek to undo the ignorance which causes misery to man (avidyā-pratipakshatayā). Such being the call, can they be classed among things of ignorance? (B).

The answer is yes. How that is so is explained in the next portion of the section. But here the general description of Scriptural texts is given. The Scripture is



two-fold: ritualistic (karma-kāṇḍa), dealing with injunctions (like 'juhuyāt', "Thou shalt offer into the fire...") or with prohibitions (like 'na himsyāt', "Thou shalt not injure..."); and wisdom texts (jñāna-kāṇḍa, viz. the Upanishads) emphasizing devotion (like 'upāsita') and knowledge (like 'viddhi', "Thou shalt know" 'śrotavyo mantavyah', "must be heard and thought about" etc. The latter have liberation as their goal.

कथं पुनः अविद्यावद्-विषयाणि प्रत्यक्षादीनि प्रमाणानि शास्त्राणि च इति?

उच्यते — देहेन्द्रियादिषु 'अहं' - 'मम' - अभिमानरहितस्य प्रमातृत्व - अनुपपत्तौ प्रमाण - प्रवृत्ति- अनुपपत्तेः । न हि इन्द्रियाणि अनुपादाय प्रत्यक्षादिव्यवहारः संभवति । न च अधिष्ठानमन्तरेण इन्द्रियाणां व्यापारः संभवति । न च अनध्यस्त-आत्मभावेन देहेन कश्चित् व्याप्नियते ।

न च एतस्मिन् सर्वस्मिन् असति असंगस्य आत्मनः प्रमातृत्वं उपपद्यते । न च प्रमातृत्वमन्तरेण प्रमाणप्रवृत्तिरस्ति ।

तस्माद्-अविद्यावद्-विषयाणि एव प्रत्यक्षादीनि प्रमाणानि शास्त्राणि च ॥

How now can it be that all means of valid knowledge (like perception)<sup>1</sup> and the Scriptures<sup>2</sup> pertain only to objects wherein ignorance operates?<sup>3</sup>

It will be replied: when there can be no knowerhood<sup>4</sup> in one who is bereft of the identification of his body, sense-organs etc.<sup>5</sup> as 'I' and 'mine'<sup>6</sup>, there can obviously be no meaning in the functioning of the means of valid knowledge<sup>7</sup>. In fact, there can be no transaction<sup>8</sup> such as perception independent of the sense-organs<sup>9</sup>. And independent of some ground<sup>10</sup> there can be no functioning of the sense-organs. And no one can utilize his body unless he reality-transfers Self on it.<sup>11</sup>

If all these<sup>12</sup> are not there, the Self which is by nature unassociated with anything can never be described as the 'knower'<sup>13</sup>. Nor can the means of valid knowledge function in the absence of 'knower-hood'<sup>14</sup>.

Therefore it is that all means of valid knowledge and the Scriptures<sup>15</sup> pertain only to objects wherein ignorance operates.

## NOTES

1. The means of valid knowledge accepted by later Vedāntic writers are: perception (pratyaksha), inference (anumāna), analogy (upamāna), verbal testimony or Scriptural authority, (śabda), presumption (arthāpatti) and non-apprehension (anupalabdhi). But Śaṅkara recognized only perception, inference and verbal testimony.

2. Even if we suspect the validity of the normal means of knowledge such as perception and inference (which rely to a great extent on our intelligence and capacity to reason, and which may mistake appearances for real), we cannot possibly degrade Scriptural authority to this level. Scripture is, by definition, independent of human intelligence and not composed by human beings (apaurusheya). It is impossible that it should mislead us, or be erroneous. How then can Scriptures be grouped with other means of knowledge, and described as pertaining to the field of ignorance?

3. The objection contained in this question is: The means of valid knowledge are universally employed in order to ascertain the exact nature of things. We have no other way of knowing things. The objects wherein ignorance operates, as was described earlier, involve only appearances caused by reality-transfer; the exact nature



of those objects are therefore concealed or distorted. How then can the means of valid knowledge be said to pertain to the field of ignorance? Do we employ the normal means of knowledge to obtain ignorance?

4. 'Knower-hood' (pramāṭṛtva) is defined in B as the agency with regard to the knowable objects (pramām prati kartṛtvam), and agency implies freedom (svātantryam) with regard to any process of knowledge. Freedom means being independent of all other instruments of knowledge, and being able to stimulate all instruments of knowledge (such as sense-organs and mind). The knower deliberately employs the means of knowledge in order to know. The pure and changeless consciousness (that the Self is) cannot properly be described as a 'knower'; he becomes a 'knower' only so far as the reality-transfer associates him with the instruments of knowledge.

5. 'In body, sense-organs etc.' (dehendriyādishu); implies body, sense-organs, experience (upalabdhi), transaction (vyavahāra), association with the result (phalābhisandhi), feeling of pleasure and pain (sukha-duhkha-vedanam). 'Etc.' signifies the inner-organ (antah-karṇa) (BV).

6. 'Identification' (abhimāna), or appropriation of the body as the Self ('I, ayam dehaḥ aham), and of the sense-organs as 'mine' (indriyādīni mama). It is only by such identification that our transactions in waking state and dream are conducted; but in deep sleep, when such identification is not there, there is no transaction either. The glossators offer this reasoning of 'correspondence and difference' (anvaya-vyatireka) as an argument.

7. This sentence is the brief statement (saṅgraha-vākya), and what follows is an elaboration thereof.

8. 'Transaction' (vyavahāra), by means of which the

transactions are carried on (vyavahriyate anena), viz. the goal-direction (phalam), which is involved as the result of all means of knowledge, is dependent upon the activity of the sense-organs.

9. It is well-known that perception is consequent upon the contact of a sense-organ with an object outside; inference is consequent on perception; even so, these and other means of knowledge are dependent upon the activity of the sense-organs.

The expression 'upādāna' is here taken in the sense of activation (preraṇā) (BV).

10. 'The ground' (adhiṣṭhāna), viz. the physical body, which is the seat of all behaviour and sense-activities (cmp. Nyāya-sūtra, 1, 1, 11 चेष्टेन्द्रियार्थप्रत्ययः शरीरम् ॥). B gives the example of the weaver (kuvinda), without whose activating presence the cloth cannot be woven by the loom (vema); it is the weaver that sets the inert loom into action. Even so, the physical body functions as the agent (kartr̥). The tools by themselves (sense-organs; loom) do not begin to function. The body is the ground on which the sense-organs occur as structures, and begin to function. When the bodily prop is withdrawn, sense-organs can neither occur, nor function.

The import of the above is: dependent upon the body, the sense-organs function; and dependent upon the function of the sense-organs the several means of knowledge (like perception) occur; and as a result of these means of knowledge, knowledge of the world (pramā) comes into being. This is how the individuals transact with each other and with the world (vyavahāra). Therefore, the transaction of knowables and means of knowledge is contingent upon the body.



'The ground' refers to the activity of consciousness (chetenā-vyāpāra-vishayatvam). The body, being inert, can never by itself activate; it activates when the Self is reality-transferred on it (BV).

11. But the body itself is inert, and is a tool. It cannot function as the ground for the sense-organs, unless it is appropriated by the Self (which is of the nature of consciousness). The appropriation cannot be an actual (or real) association; the two are entirely dissimilar. The appropriation can only be apparent; the relation between them is by way of reality-transfer.

The appropriation of the body by the Self is spoken of as the notion that the body is the Self (ātma-bhāva = ātmano bhāvah). The body functions like the Self, activating the sense-organs and preparing the ground for transaction. It acquires a sort of reality of its own.

Thus, whenever we speak of transaction in the world, we necessarily imply that the physical bodies function like Selves; and this is due to reality-transfer.

12. 'All these', viz. mutual reality-transfer of objects (parasparādhyāsa) and their attributes (paraspara-Dharmādhyāsa).

13. 'Knower' (pramātr), or one who can employ the means of valid knowledge, viz. the body functioning as the Self. This cannot happen really, for the Self is by nature 'un-associated with anything' (asaṅga). The paradox can be resolved only by the phenomenon of reality-transfer. B explains 'asaṅga' as 'bereft of all association with objects and attributes, in any manner or at any time' (sarvadā, sarvathā sarva-dharma-dharmi-viyukta).

14. This sentence seeks to conclude that all means of valid knowledge are dependent upon reality-transfer



(B). The knower is, by definition, independent with regard to valid knowledge. Valid knowledge (pramā) is of the nature of awareness located in the subject (kartṛsthaḥ chit-svabhāvaḥ), and which is a modality of the mind which is object-oriented (prameya-pravaṇaḥ). Mind, being inert, can never become aware, unless the conscious Self is reality-transferred on it; and the Self can never be said to be aware of an object unless the mental mode is reality-transferred on it. Thus there is reciprocal reality-transfer when we talk of Self as the 'knower' (pramātr) (B).

We read in Nyāya-bhāṣya: यस्य प्रेक्षाजिह्वासाप्रयुक्तस्य प्रवृत्तिः स प्रमाता । स येनार्थं प्रमिणोति तत्प्रमाणम् । योऽर्थः प्रमीयते तत्प्रमेयम् । तदर्थविज्ञानं सा प्रमितिः ॥

It is only on the foundation of this knowerhood the means of knowledge acquire reality and validity.

15. Scriptural texts (śāstrāṇi), like the other means of valid knowledge, acquire meaning only on the assumption of a 'knower' (pramātr), who is indeed subject to ignorance. Not only the Scriptural texts that pertain to rituals, but even the Upanishads address themselves only to the one who is subject to ignorance (vedāntā api avidyāvat puruṣa-vishaya eva), for unless there be a division of the knower and the knowable objects, they cannot be understood (B).

पञ्चादिभिश्च अविशेषात् । यथा हि पञ्चादयः शब्दादिभिः श्रोत्रादीनां संबंधे सति, शब्दादिविज्ञाने प्रतिकूले जाते ततो निवर्तन्ते, अनुकूले च प्रवर्तन्ते । यथा दण्डोद्यतकरम् पुरुषम् अभिमुखम् उपलभ्य 'मां हनुम् अयम् इच्छति' इति पलायितुम् आरभन्ते । हरिततृणपूर्णपाणिम् उपलभ्य तं प्रत्यभिमुखीभवन्ति, एवं पुरुषाः अपि व्युत्पन्नचित्ताः क्रूरदृष्टीन् आक्रोशतः खड्गोद्यतकरान् बलवतः उपलभ्य ततो निवर्तन्ते, तद्विपरीतान् प्रति प्रवर्तन्ते ।

अतः समानः पश्वदिभिः पुरुषाणां प्रमाणप्रमेयव्यवहारः ।

पश्वदीनाम् च प्रसिद्धः अविवेकपुरःसरः प्रत्यक्षादिव्यवहारः ।

तत्सामान्यदर्शनात् व्युत्पत्तिमताम् अपि पुरुषाणाम् प्रत्यक्षादिव्यवहारः तत्कालः समानः  
इति निश्चीयते ।

And<sup>1</sup> human behaviour is not different from animal behaviour. The animals, consequent on contact with objects (sounds etc.) with their sense-organs (ear etc.)<sup>2</sup>, withdraw if their knowledge of the objects is unfavourable, and approach if favourable. When (for instance) the animals sight a man who flourishes a cudgel in hand, they begin to run away, with the thought "He wants to beat me!"<sup>3</sup> When however the animals sight a man who carries in his hands plentiful of green fodder, they go towards him.

Likewise, even the intelligent human beings<sup>4</sup> withdraw on seeing strong men with fierce eyes, who come brandishing swords and shouting wildly. Contrarily, they approach the people who are different.

Therefore, the transaction involving means of knowledge and objects of knowledge is common to human beings and beasts<sup>5</sup>.

It is well-known that the transactions like perception among animals proceed from lack of discrimination, and it becomes clear that corresponding behaviour even of intelligent human beings is of the same type in such situations<sup>6</sup>.

## NOTES

This passage which is an elaboration of the brief



statement (saṅgraha-vākya) given above seeks to demonstrate that although human beings are endowed with intelligence (and thus the capacity to discriminate between Self and non-Self), their behaviour in certain situations (which are common to other animals) is not different from that of other animals, which is characterized by natural propensities like instincts and impulses (not by intelligent discrimination). Human behaviour is at times as natural as animal behaviour: the tendency to approach what is desirable, and withdraw from what is not, is common to both. It is not always that human behaviour betrays discrimination between what is real and what is unreal. Thus, it stands to reason that the employment of the means of knowledge does not necessarily imply discrimination and intelligence. It can be natural, and therefore subject to the influence of impulses and instincts, like the animal employment of those means of knowing.

The eligibility of human beings to Scriptural knowledge does not constitute any difference in such behaviour. What is important for common transactions is not the ability to discriminate but an understanding of what is desirable (anukūla) and what is not (pratikūla), for all transaction consists of approaches (pravṛtti) and withdrawals (nivṛtti) (and indifference audāsīnya, P). It is therefore unreasonable to argue that merely because human knowledge relies upon means of valid knowledge, it is not preceded by ignorance (avidyā-purassara). Like animals, human beings also engage themselves with regard to the objects in the world, on the basis of knowledge obtained from their sense-organs etc. (which are subject to ignorance).

1. The expression 'And' (cha) signifies the continuation of the reason given above.

2. This is an instance of perception as the means of valid knowledge (pratyaksham pramāṇam darśitam) (B).

3. This indicates inference (anumāna) (B). It also involves a love of oneself or egoity (aham-māna) settled on the body (P).

4. 'Intelligent human beings' (vyutpanna-chittāh), equipped with intelligence, discrimination and eligible to study Scriptures.

5. 'Common' (or similar, samāna), in the matter of obtaining what is desirable to oneself and avoiding what is undesirable, and in the approach and withdrawal tendencies. Both human beings and lower animals are alike concerned about their welfare and safety (eka-rūpa-yoga-kshemā hi), from their very birth (janmata eva) (P).

What is common is the knowledge of what will help in the achievement of a desired object (iṣṭa-sādhana-tā-jñāna). This is the motivating factor (prayojaka) in all approach and withdrawal behaviour.

6. Such situations (tatkālāh), viz. when one is wanting to obtain the desirable objects or avoid the undesirable ones; while one is approaching or withdrawing.

Because, says P, we see similar behaviour among the human beings and lower animals, we have to assume that the appropriation of their own bodies as their very Selves (ātmābhimānah) is also similar (samāna).

शास्त्रीये तु व्यवहारे यद्यपि बुद्धिपूर्वकारी न अविदित्वा आत्मनः परलोकसंबन्धम्  
अधिक्रियते, तथापि न वेदान्तवेद्यम् अज्ञानायाद्यतीतमम् अपेतब्रह्मक्षत्रादिभेदम् असंसार्यात्मतत्त्वम्  
अधिकारे अपेक्षते । अनुपयोगात् अधिकारविरोधाच्च ।



प्राक् च तथाभूतात्मविज्ञानात् प्रवर्तमानं शास्त्रं अविद्यावद्-विषयत्वं न अतिवर्तते । तथा हि — 'ब्राह्मणो यजेत' इत्यादीनि शास्त्राणि आत्मनि वर्णाश्रम-वयोऽवस्थादि-विशेषाध्यासम् आश्रित्य प्रवर्तन्ते ॥

Now as for the field of Scriptural transactions<sup>1</sup>, it is true that the intelligent man who engages himself in rituals will not become eligible to such transactions without knowing that such rituals will lead him to the other world<sup>2</sup>. Yet, such an eligible person need not seek to know the truth about the Self which is known only by the Upanishadic texts<sup>4</sup>, which is beyond the impulses like hunger<sup>5</sup>, and which is devoid of distinctions like the brāhmaṇa, the kshatriya and so on<sup>6</sup>, and free from transmigration<sup>7</sup>. That is because such knowledge is useless for him<sup>8</sup>, and it would be contrary to his eligibility to rituals<sup>9</sup>.

The Scripture that comes prior to such knowledge<sup>10</sup> about the Self cannot go beyond the matter that is subject to ignorance. For, Scriptural passages like "A Brāhmin must perform sacrifices" proceed only on the basis of the specific reality-transfer of caste, stage of life, age, condition of living and so on, onto the Self<sup>11</sup>.

## NOTES

1. It has already been pointed out that activity arising from Scriptural prescriptions is as much subject to ignorance as the common transactions of human beings and animals. The subject has been taken up again for a further review.

2. This sentence involving "it is true" (yadyapi) is in the nature of a doubt (śaṅkā) raised, and the next



sentence commencing with "yet" (tathāpi) is an answer (parihāra) to it. The doubt or objection (ākshepa) is as follows. It may be that common people involved in worldly transactions employ means of knowledge that are subject to ignorance. But the wise ones who engage themselves in rituals as prescribed in Scriptures (viz. the Veda) cannot be operating in this field of ignorance. For the Scriptures do enlighten its student about the nature of the Self as distinct from the body-complex; it is such a Self that is the framework for a person that is eligible (adhikāri-purusha). Is this not a piece of relevant knowledge? How then can Scriptures pertain to the field of ignorance? (B)

The Scripture pertains to those who have known the nature of Self (pratipannātma-vishayam eva), and therefore their inclinations are not preceded by reality-transfer (adhyāsa-pūrvika-pravṛtṭih) (P).

3. 'Yet' (tathāpi), viz. even though the knowledge of Self as beyond the body-complex is contained in the Scripture, the Self is here construed only as 'the performer of the sacrifice' (kartṛ) and the enjoyer of the rewards thereof (bhokṛ). It is only on the tacit assumption that he is eligible to the rituals (karmādhikāra), being desirous of rewards like heaven, that the Scripture acquires relevance. Such an assumption is impossible without the reality-transfer of body-complex. Therefore, the Scripture of this sort is coloured by ignorance.

4. 'Known only by the Upanishadic texts' (vedānta-vedyam) contrary to the personal Self that is eligible to rituals and rewards, which depend upon ignorance, the Upanishads teach knowledge of the Self (vidyā), which will eliminate this ignorance.

5. 'Beyond impulses like hunger' (aśanāyādyatītam). This description shows that the Self cannot be an agent (kartṛtvānvayanishedha, P; kartṛtva-vaiparītya, KP). Tormented by hunger etc., all living beings lose their balance and begin to act; in the absence of such motivation, they settle down and neither approach nor withdraw (P). cmp. BU, 3, 5, 1.

6. 'Devoid of distinctions like the brāhmaṇa and kshatriya' (apeta-brahma-kshatrādibhedam), implies that the Self is devoid of all forms of eligibility (adhikāratva-nishedha, P; adhikārarūpa-vaiparītya, KP). The significance is that the Self is free from multiplicity, and is of one taste (prapañcha-śūnya, eka-rasa) (P). cmp. BU, 2, 4, 6.

7. 'Free from transmigration' (asamsārī), viz. the Self cannot be an enjoyer of rewards (bhoktrānvaya-nishedha, P; bhokṛtva-vaiparitya, KP).

8. 'Useless for him' (anupayogāt), viz. useless for according to him, the eligibility to rituals (adhikāre anupayogāt) (B).

9. 'Contrary to eligibility' (adhikāra-virodhāt). Eligibility to rituals derives from convictions such as "I am the performer of rituals", "The rituals are the means for rewards like heaven", and "I shall obtain the rewards in this or next life". Such convictions imply the reality-transfer of the body-complex on the Self.

The Self taught in the Upanishads (aupanishada-purusha) is not 'eligible', for it does not prompt rituals or obtain rewards thereof. Not only that, this knowledge that he is a non-agent (akartṛ) and non-enjoyer (abhokṛ) can also undo the eligibility for rituals (B).

10. 'Prior to such knowledge' (prāk cha). Bhāva-prakāśikā reads: 'prāk tu'. P suggests: "before



understanding the import of sentences like 'Tat tvam asi' (tattvamasīti vākyārthāgamāt arvāk.....)

11. The person who is eligible to rituals and rewards would have to think of himself in terms of caste to which he belongs, the stage of life he is in (āśrama), his age and so on. And these are all matters of reality-transfer e.g. varṇādhyāsa, āśramādhyāsa, vayo-vasthāyoradhyāsa. The Self has neither a caste, a stage or age. 'And so on' (ādi) implies the injunction that one must perform rituals all through life ('yāvajjīvam juhuyāt'). This is reality-transfer of the life-span (jīvanādhyāsa) (P). The expression 'And so on' includes several regulations concerning major and minor sins, defilement etc. (B).

The Scriptures dealing with rituals, their eligibility, their reward, the regulations concerning the performer and the performances, and the prohibitions are addressed only to a human being who is subject to ignorance and identifies his body-complex with his Self (B). They occur only prior to the real knowledge of the Self, and have no validity after such knowledge arises. Occurring as they do before the dawn of knowledge, they are properly matters within the field of ignorance.

#### ५. उपसंहारभाष्यम्

अध्यासो नाम 'अतस्मिन् तद्-बुद्धिः' इति अवोचाम । तद्-यथा पुत्रभार्यादिषु विकलेषु सकलेषु वा, 'अहम् एव विकलः सकलो वा' इति बाह्यधर्मान् आत्मनि अध्यस्यति । तथा देहधर्मान् — 'स्थूलः अहम्', 'कृशः अहम्', 'गौरः अहम्', 'तिष्ठामि', 'गच्छामि', 'लङ्घयामि' च इति । तथा इन्द्रियधर्मान् — 'मूकः - काणः - क्लीबः - बधिरः — अन्धः अहम्' इति । तथा अन्तःकरणधर्मान् — काम - सङ्कल्प - विचिकित्सा - अध्यवसायादीन् ।

एवम् अहंप्रत्ययिनम् अशेषस्वप्नप्रचारसाक्षिणि प्रत्यगात्मानि अध्यस्य, तम् च प्रत्यगात्मानम् सर्वसाक्षिणम्, तद्विपर्ययेण अन्तःकरणादिषु अध्यस्यति ॥

### 5

## CONCLUDING SECTION

We have said that reality-transfer is 'taking something for what it is not'<sup>1</sup>. That<sup>2</sup> is like this: when the son or wife is ill or well, one will think "I am myself ill or well", and thus reality-transfers the attributes of things other than oneself on oneself<sup>3</sup>. Even so the attributes of the body like "I am fat", "I am lean", "I am fair-complexioned", "I stand", "I go", "I leap"<sup>4</sup>. So also the attributes of the sense-organs, like "I am dumb, one-eyed, impotent, deaf or blind"<sup>5</sup>. So also the attributes of the mind like desire, resolve, doubt, ascertainment etc.<sup>6</sup>

Thus<sup>7</sup>, reality-transferring the subject identified as



'I' on the Inner Self<sup>9</sup> which is the immediate witness of the entire field of its processes<sup>10</sup>, and then in a reverse manner one will reality-transfer that Inner Self which is the immediate witness of all<sup>11</sup>, on mind and other details.

## NOTES

1. This is the succinct definition of reality-transfer. (saṅkshēpābhīdhānam) (B). It must be noted that two conditions given in the previous definition (Sect. II) viz. 'smṛti-rūpam' and 'paratra pūrva-dṛṣṭah' are not repeated here. The suggestion is that the two conditions are not necessarily involved in reality-transfer. In the earlier definitions, instances of reality-transfer which are obvious in one's everyday experience were being considered, whereas now the essential nature of reality-transfer is being thought of. The former are 'secondary' (sādi) while the latter is 'primary' (anādi).

On the Self which is not of the form of body-complex, the ideas of body-complex are reality-transferred. And, contrarily, the idea of Self is reality-transferred onto the body-complex. The expression 'buddhi' here indicates the "way of looking at things".

P explains that 'atasmin' means 'in that which is not the object of "Thou"' viz. the consciousness that cannot be predicated as 'this' (anidam-chaitanya), and that 'tad-buddhih' means the "projection of the object of Thou" (yushmad-arthābhāṣah).

2. This part of the commentary sets out, according to P, to show in what manner the 'object of Thou' (yushmadartha) and the 'object of I' (asmadartha) are

reciprocally reality-transferred. The definition here speaks of the reality-transfer which is primary (nirupacharita) and projection of not-that (atad-āropa).

3. This is an instance of the reality-transfer of attributes ('ill' or 'well'), resulting in the appropriation of objects outside oneself to oneself ("mine", mama-kāra). The identification of 'I' (dharmī-tādātmya) alone will not explain the miseries of the world; it is the emergence of the 'mine' that is the source of all mischief (B). The 'I' is the 'object' wherein the attributes inhere (dharmin), while 'mine' is reality-transfer (sambandha). The former illustrates the reciprocal reality-transfer (anyonya-adhyāsa) while the latter is relational, and assumes the relation between oneself and the external objects in terms of owner and possessions. The owner appropriates to himself the merits or demerits of his possessions.

4. These illustrate the reality-transfer of the attributes of the body (deha-dharma) on the Self. This reality-transfer of the body as 'I' is fundamental to all other reality-transfers; it is the prime condition for the phenomenal involvements.

5. 'Sense-organs', which are subtler and more internal than the body (dehād-api antaraṅgam) (B).

6. 'Mind' (antaḥ-karaṇa), meaning the power of understanding which is an aspect of the ego (ahampratayino vijñāna-śakti-vibhāgāḥ) (P). This factor is subtler and more internal (tato'pi antaraṅgasya) than the sense-organs (B). The attributes of mind are desire etc.

7. 'Thus' (evam). Having illustrated the reality-transfer of attributes (dharma), the author proceeds to describe the reality-transfer of the subject wherein the attributes inhere (dharmin), which is basic (mūlam) to the former (B).

8. 'The subject identified as "I" (aham-pratyayin), or the object of the mental process that inclines to the subjective. The notion of 'I' is a process (vṛtti), and it is a function of the mind; it is directed towards the subject. P understands by 'pratyaya' mental activities like desire; and by 'aham-pratyaya' apprehension of the object to which these activities belong (dharmi-grahana). BV would take the expression to mean ego (ahaṅkāra). It is the ground (āśraya) for the notion of 'I'; in transactions, it is known as the initiator of behaviour (kartr) and the enjoyer of the results thereof (bhoktr).

That the notion of 'I' is a mode of the mind is the significance of this expression; it is not to be taken as an attribute of the Self. But the mind, owing to the immediate presence of consciousness (Self), becomes the basis for the notion of 'I' as subjective awareness. The inability to distinguish in common transaction the mental mode of subjective awareness (aham-pratyaya) which is actually of the nature of this 'this' (idam) from the Self that makes it possible is technically styled 'non-discrimination' (aviveka), which occasions reality-transfer.

9. 'The Inner-Self' (pratyagātman). See note 3 in Sec. III. The Self is distinguished by its inner direction (prātilomyena añchatīva) from the body-complex which acquires an outward-orientation (bahirbhavanam āpādyamāneshu); entire mass of objects subject to reality-transfer appears outside, while the Self always appears as an insider (nirupacharita-svābhāvāt) (P).

10. 'In the immediate witness of the entire field of its own processes' (aśeṣa-sva-prachāra-sākshiṇi). The field of processes refers to mental modifications of the mind such as desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, the 'I' notion, the appropriation of objects as 'mine', resolve,

agency in action and so on. It is because of this network of processes that all the living beings of the world go about busily engaged in diverse activities "as if their heads have caught fire" (pradīpta-śira-iva) (B).

The expression 'its own' (sva) refers to the ego-complex (ahaṅkāra-granthi), which is the main pillar supporting this world-stage (samsāra-nṛtya-śālā-mūla-stambha) (P). The word refers to mind (antahkaraṇa) (B).

The immediate 'witness' (sākshin) is the immediate perceiver (sākshād-drashtā), who however is altogether uninvolved (asaṅgī) in whatever is being perceived, and is beyond the possibility of any change (avikārī) as a result of such perceptions; and in whom the tendencies to accept and reject (hānopādāna) are absent. This is the direct shining of consciousness without any dependency or instrumentation (sākshād avyavadhānam avabhāsayati cheti-dhātuh) (B).

11. 'The immediate witness of all' (sarva-sākshin). The employment of the same expression 'witness' in this context indicates that it is also the witness of the subject commonly referred to as 'I' (aham-pratyayin or asmat-pratyaya-vishaya).

The idea that is sought to be conveyed by this sentence is that there is reciprocal reality-transfer between the uninvolved and immediate witness (the real Self, ātman) and the transactional Self answering to the pronoun 'I'. It is also suggested that owing to this reality-transfer there is no sort of change in the immediate witness: its transcendental nature is not interfered with, despite its appearance in the phenomenal context.

एवम् अयम् अनादिः अनन्तः नैसर्गिकः अध्यासः मिथ्याप्रत्ययरूपः कर्तृत्व-भोक्तृत्व-प्रवर्तकः सर्वलोकप्रत्यक्षः ।



Thus<sup>1</sup>, this natural reality-transfer, which is without a beginning<sup>2</sup> or end<sup>3</sup>, which is of the form of false notion<sup>4</sup>, and which sets into being agency in activity, enjoyment of rewards and so on<sup>5</sup>, is evident in the experience of all people<sup>6</sup>.

## NOTES

1. The discussion has taken the form of (i) preliminary statement (pratijñā) about the reality-transfer of Self on the body-complex, and of the body-complex on the Self, (ii) definition of reality-transfer (lakṣhaṇa) as mistaking one thing for another, (iii) justification (sambhāvanā) for reality-transfer bringing about objectivity to the Self; and (iv) demonstration (pramāṇa) that the field of means of knowledge and objects of knowledge pertain to ignorance. This discussion is being concluded here.

2. 'Without a beginning' (anādi). An objection is raised that this is a new element in the definition of reality-transfer added here (adhikāvāpa). The answer is that this is no new element, but only an explication of what is implied in the expression 'natural' (naisargika). The Self is without a beginning, and the reality-transfer of ego on it is a natural transaction in the world. Therefore, the reality-transfer which depends upon the beginningless Self is also without a beginning (P). Alternately, reality-transfer is the effect of ignorance, which is beginningless; therefore it is also beginningless.

The significance of the expression is that the individual soul (jīva) is consequent upon this. The two are in the relation of seed and sprout (bijāṅkuravat), which has no known beginning (B).

Beginning is a matter of time, and time itself is a detail brought into being by the phenomenon of reality-transfer. It is absurd therefore to consider reality-transfer as having a temporal dimension like beginning and end. Reality-transfer is essentially mistaken apprehension (mithyā-jñāna), which cannot be thought of in terms of an effect in time.

3. 'Without end' (ananta). The reasons given above hold here also. But the objection raised is: If this reality-transfer is without end, how do the Upanishads set about to destroy it? Is it not only what has an end (sānta) that can be destroyed? It is true that the author mentions in the next sentence that all the Upanishads proceed only to destroy this source of all misery (caused by reality-transfer). The significance of this sentence is that only this (the Upanishadic wisdom) can destroy it, and nothing else can. Were it not for this (the Upanishadic wisdom), reality-transfer would be interminable (esha eva prahāṇa-hetuh; asati tasmin anantah) (P).

It is without end, in the sense that it cannot be destroyed by anything other than knowledge of the Self as it is (BV). Also B (tattvajñānam-antareṇa-aśakya-samucchedah).

It is not absolutely (sarvathā) without an end. It is so only in the sense that unless knowledge destroys it, it would continue without end. And knowledge does not destroy it in a physical or realistic sense; for knowledge is not an instrument for achieving a practical end (kāraṇa-sāmagrī). Knowledge only tells us about what is there already; it does not bring about any new objects or events.

The description that reality-transfer is without beginning or end applies only to the primary reality-

transfer (mūla-adhyāsa) viz. reciprocal reality-transfer between Self and the body-complex, and not to the secondary false appearances like silver in the shell, snake in the rope, and redness in the transparent crystal. The latter do have moments of their occurrence and elimination. The former refers to an innate and spontaneous disposition (naisargika), an unlearned tendency of human constitution. Why it is without beginning or end is because it is innate and spontaneous.

4. 'Of the form of false appearance' (mithyā-pratyaya-rūpaḥ). According to B the expression means indescribability (anirvachanīyatā), which is the form of all incorrect notions (mithyā-pratyayānām rūpaḥ).

P emphasizes that the employment of the word 'form' (rūpa) suggests that the false appearance is not appearance that in common transaction is regarded as false, because all appearances are real as appearances. It turns out to be false when it is carefully considered (rūpagrahaṇam lakṣhaṇataḥ tathā rūpyate, na vyavahārataḥ iti darśayitum).

It may be recalled that reality-transfer has been described in the very beginning of the dissertation (Sec. I) as mithyā-jñāna-nimitta.

The doctrine of the Naiyāyikas points out that false appearance (mithyā-jñāna) leads to defects (doṣa), which in turn lead to 'activity' (pravṛtti), which brings about birth (janma), which in turn causes misery (duḥkha) – thus is the cause of transmigration (saṃsāra).

5. 'Agency in activity' etc. (kartṛtva.....). This description is meant to drive home the involvement of the Self in the world, which results in misery. One who initiates activity (kartṛ) will preliminarily decide upon what is desirable and what is not. And resolves to do

something in preference to another. This is fundamentally consequent upon reality-transfer of body-complex on the Self and Self on the mind. Likewise, he who experiences the outer world and also the results of his own activities will experience pleasure, pain or some emotion. This is possible only when the body-complex is reality-transferred onto Self.

The doctrine of the Tārīkikas holds that there are some inherent attributes of the Self (like intelligence, pain, pleasure, desire, aversion, effort, merit, demerit) which naturally make him *kartr* and *bhoktr*.

6. 'Evident in the direct experience of all people' (*sarva-loka-pratyakshah*). The word 'pratyaksha' (perception) is here used in the general sense of direct apprehension or immediate experience (*anubhava*). This concluding sentence reminds the reader of how the first section of the dissertation closes (*naisargiko'yam lokavyavahārah*). The author insists that the proof for the presence and operation of reality-transfer is only the intuitive experience of the common folk (*anubhava*), and that no other evidence is possible or necessary.

It is a special feature of Śāṅkara's thought that he regards personal and intuitive experience (*anubhava*) as an independent and most convincing evidence. The Self is prior to all means of knowledge, and therefore it is absurd to expect the normal *pramāṇas* (like perception, inference etc.) to prove the Self. In fact, the *pramāṇas* acquire validity, and are possible at all, because of the Self. Besides, no other evidence is necessary, because it is self-evident (*svayam-siddha*), luminous by its very nature. Nor is Scripture meant to prove the Self; it is as irrelevant as the other *pramāṇas*. But its merit consists in pointing out that it is the Inner Self, and thus not an



object of knowledge (but the source of knowledge). It seeks to eliminate the distinction between the knowable, the knower and the knowing process, the distinction created by ignorance.

cf. VSB 1, 1, 4 न हि शास्त्रमिदंतया विषयभूतं ब्रह्म प्रतिपिपादयिषति । किं तर्हि? प्रत्यगात्मत्वेन अविषयतया प्रतिपादयत् अविद्याकल्पितं वेद्य-वेदिदु-वेदनादिभेदं अपनयति ।

The Self is not regarded as an object to knowledge (prameya), or as accessible to any means of knowledge (pramāṇa). Nor is really the knower identified as 'I' (pramāṭr), for knowledge relies on the duality of the internal subject and the external object. Being a knower of this sort implies the operation of ignorance, not of the external objects, but of the real knower, the Self. The Self is, according to Śaṅkara, the immediate witness of the knower (sākshi), the undifferentiated and essential and invariable awareness that is all too evident in our very being, and without which our being itself would be impossible and imponderable. Śaṅkara points out that this has not been recognized either in the portions of Veda dealing with rituals or in the rational systems based on logic (cf. VSB, 1, 1, 4 न हि अहंप्रत्ययविषयकर्तृव्यतिरेकेण तत्साक्षी सर्वभूतस्थः समः एकः कूटस्थनित्यः पुरुषो विधिकाण्डे तर्कसमये वा केनचिदधिगतः) The witness is its own experiential evidence in every living being (cf. also BUB, 2, 5, 19 अयमात्मा ब्रह्म सर्वानुभूः)

अस्य अनर्थहितोः प्रहाणाय आत्मैकत्व-विद्या-प्रतिपत्तये सर्वे वेदान्ताः आरभ्यन्ते ॥

It is in order to reveal<sup>1</sup> the knowledge concerning the unity of the Self<sup>2</sup>, so that the cause of miseries<sup>3</sup> (viz. ignorance or reality-transfer) may be completely undone, that all the Upanishads proceed<sup>4</sup>.

## NOTES

This is the concluding sentence of the dissertation bringing out the relevance of the Upanishadic wisdom to the topic of reality-transfer. How can the cause of miseries be eliminated unless by something that is contrary to it? Knowledge is contrary to ignorance (avidyā), which is another name for reality-transfer. The false appearance cannot be an attribute of anything; it does not have an objective or positive existence. It is only what conceals knowledge of something that is already there. Therefore, ignorance is not something that has actually to be struck down or fought against. It will dissolve by itself upon the emergence of knowledge (vidyā). Knowledge thus is the necessary and sufficient condition for the elimination of ignorance, and thereby for the avoidance of miseries.

1. 'Reveal' (pratipatti). B interprets the Sanskrit word as 'obtainment' (prāpti), and explains that the Upanishadic texts are not meant only for chanting (japa), or for prompting one to rituals. This interpretation appears unjustified in the context. The intuitive knowledge concerning the unity of the Self is not 'obtained', or brought into being by an effort; it is a matter of discovery and not of invention. The force of the explanation, however, stands.

P argues at length that the expression, means 'attainment' of knowledge, that even after the attainment, false appearance may continue to survive, and that reasoning (tarka) is necessary to establish the knowledge already attained. The whole discussion appears unwarranted.

2. 'Unity of the Self' (ātmaikatva). 'Unity' means the utter absence of all plurality in the real Self whose own nature is bliss (vigalita-nikhila-prapañchatvam ānandarūpasya satah). The direct experience of Self as

the unchanging witness of the knower (the 'I'), the known and the knowledge is indicated here. It is the one light which shines by itself, and illumines the plurality of the world, not however losing its own unity (cmp. VSB, 2, 1, 14 अपि च अन्त्यमिदं प्रमाणं आत्मैकत्वस्य प्रतिपादकं नातः परं किञ्चिदाकाङ्क्ष्यमस्ति । The revelation or the immediate experience is here described as the final evidence). The expression may also mean "uniting with the Self" figuratively, cf. VSB, 1, 2, 8. False knowledge (mithyā-jñāna) brings about the manifold world of experience, while correct knowledge (samyag-jñāna) enables one to perceive unity (विशेषो हि भवति मिथ्याज्ञान - सम्यग्ज्ञानयोः । मिथ्याज्ञानकल्पितः उपभोगः, सम्यग्ज्ञानदृष्टमेकत्वम् ।)

Sometimes the expression is used in the sense of "one without a second", beyond the scope of difference and duality (VSB, 1, 1, 4; 2, 1, 14 etc.).

'Ātmaikatva-vidyā' is knowledge of the unity of Self. The knowledge that the Self is not identical with the phenomenal presentation which is spread out in myriad forms; that it is nishprapañcha. The word is often used synonymously with 'avagati', 'vijñāna', 'anubhava' and 'samyag-jñāna' (as opposed to 'mithyā-jñāna' which is avidyā). It is an intuitive apprehension or direct experience. (cf. VSB, 2, 1, 14 प्राक् च आत्मावगतेः अव्याहतः सर्वः सत्यानृतव्यवहारः लौकिको वैदिकश्च इत्यवोचाम । 1, 1, 4 मिथ्याज्ञानापायश्च ब्रह्मैकत्वविज्ञानाद् भवति; 1, 1, 5 वेदान्तवाक्यानां ब्रह्मावगतिप्रयोजनानाम् ।)

3. 'Miseries' (anartha). Śaṅkara explains that owing to ignorance (mistaking the body to be Self), there comes about desire for its well-being, aversion for its disease or discomfort, fear of its destruction, and delusion, and thus a host of miseries, in infinite variety (VSB, 1, 3, 2 देहादिषु अनात्मसु 'अहमस्मि' इत्यात्मबुद्धिरविद्या । ततः तत्पूजनादौ रागः, तत्परिभवादौ द्वेषः, तदुच्छेददर्शनाद् भयं मोहश्च, इत्येवमयं अनन्तभेदोऽनर्थव्रातः सन्ततः सर्वेषां नः प्रत्यक्षः ॥)

The anartha is due to the projection of Kartṛtva and bhokṛtva on the atman which is neither, by adhyāsa.

4. The Upanishads emphasize the distinction between knowledge and ignorance, and bring out the value of knowledge (KU, 2, 4; PU, 6, 7 cmp. also TU, 2, 7, BU, 1, 4, 7 and CHU, 7, 1, 3). B explains that the seeker should contemplate on the nature of the Self with the aid of the Upanishadic texts, in order to strike at the root of reality-transfer.

There are controversies concerning the absolute or instrumental value of the Upanishadic texts, the role of study (śravaṇa) apropos contemplation (manana) and intense and effective meditation (nididhyāsana), the value of attention to mahāvākyas (like tattvamasi), whether ignorance can be eliminated without a trace while still living, and so on. The discussion of these topics is irrelevant for our present purpose. The main point is that the Upanishads deal with the knowledge of the Absolute (brahma-vidyā), and give us an insight into the essential nature of the Self which is identical with the Absolute.

(cf. VSB, 1, 1, 5 एवं तावद् वेदान्तवाक्यानां ब्रह्मात्मावगतिप्रयोजनानां ब्रह्मात्मनि तात्पर्येण समन्वितानाम् अन्तरेणापि कार्यनुप्रवेशं ब्रह्मणि पर्यवसानम् उक्तम् ॥)



## EPILOGUE

This portion of the Bhāshya is, as said earlier, in the nature of a prologue. After this the author has this opening sentence for the Bhāshya proper:

यथा चायमर्थः सर्वेषां वेदान्तानां तथा

वयमस्यां शारीरकमीमांसायां प्रदर्शयिष्यामः ॥

“That this is the import of all the Upanishads will be shown by us in this investigation concerning the embodied Self.” The investigation that Śaṅkara refers to is the one occasioned by the Vedānta-sūtra (called by Śaṅkara, Śārīraka-mīmāṃsā-sūtra) ascribed to Bādarāyaṇa. That is to say, the purpose of the Upanishads is only to provide the knowledge (vidyā) that will eliminate ignorance (avidyā) which is of the nature of ‘reality-transfer’ (adhyāsa). Śaṅkara has thought it proper that at the very outset what this ignorance (or reality-transfer) is must be explained. Hence his critique.

Śaṅkara intends in this critique to show that adhyāsa is not an intellectual construct (kalpanā-viśeṣha) but an experiential detail (anubhava). Although all the āchāryas accept the postulation of adhyāsa (or avidyā), they try to ascertain its role on Scriptural authority (śruti), or on reason (tarka) or on pramāṇas like pratyakṣa and anumāna, and not on the basis of common human experience as Śaṅkara has done.

Adhyāsa has its synonyms like avidyā, adhyāropa, viparīta-pratyaya, viparyāsa, bhrānti, ajñāna, anyathā-

jñāna, mithyā-jñāna, anavabodha, and apratibodha, which are used frequently and interchangeably in the Upanishads as well as in the Bhāshya. This is in contradistinction to correct knowledge (vidyā), transcendental appraisal (paramārtha-sad-vailakshanyam mithyā-śabdārthah), or wisdom (jñāna).

In conclusion, the words of my master, Sri Sri Chandraśekhara Bhāratī Mahāsvāmi may be recalled: once an earnest devotee approached him with a request that he may be blessed so that he would obtain 'brahma-sākshātkāra' (realization of Brahman) in this very life. The Master replied: "Where is the difficulty in realizing Brahman? Do you not remember what the great Āchārya has said in his Gītā-bhāshya—"The only means of attaining to our own nature is the elimination of the notion of externality.' Therefore, one must not make efforts towards acquiring knowledge. But one must strive of get rid of the notion of Self in what is non-Self. That will make knowledge easily accomplished!"

(ब्रह्मसाक्षात्कारे कः श्रमोऽस्ति ? न स्मरसि वा भगवत्पादीयं गीताभाष्यगतं वचनं—  
'बाह्याकारभेदबुद्धिनिवृत्तिरेवात्मस्वरूपालम्बने कारणम् ।' इति ? तस्मात् ज्ञाने यत्नो न कर्तव्यः ।  
किन्तु अनात्मन्यात्मबुद्धिनिवृत्तौ एव । तस्मात् ज्ञाननिष्ठा सुसम्पाद्या ॥) (Reminiscences of  
Panditapravara S. Subrahmanya Sastri in Smṛti-Kusumāñjali,  
Sringeri Souvenir, 1963, Sanskrit Section, page 34).

This underlines the importance of Adhyāsa-bhāshya.