Śāṅkara’s Clarification of Certain Vedāntic Concepts

By

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PREFACE

The Contents of this little book constitute an adaptation of the Series of lectures in Kannada delivered by me at Mysore during the Thirtyninth Śaṅkara Saptāham which lasted from 21-4-1969 to 29-4-1969 both days inclusive. The substance of these lectures has been published in the Kannada philosophical monthly, “Adhyātma Prakāśha”.

I have rearranged and somewhat enlarged upon the original speeches in order to make this work self-complete as far as possible. I hope that this attempt will be of some assistance to the critical reader in appreciating Śaṅkara’s interpretation of the Upanishads and their essential teaching. I am grateful to the authorities of the Adhyātma Prakāśa Kāryālaya for having undertaken to publish the work even in its incomplete form. My heartfelt Nārāyaṇa Smaraṇams to all those that have contributed to make this publication a success.

Holenarsipur Swāmi Satchidānandendra Saraswati
25-9-1969

PUBLISHER'S NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In deference to an increasing public demand for this edifying treatise of Swāmiji, of revered memory, we take pleasure in bringing out this second edition.

Holenarsipur Thandaveshwar Arkalgud
20-3-1996 Chairman
(Ugadi Day) A. P. Kāryālaya
INTRODUCTION

THE TWO SETS OF UPANISHADIC TEACHING

The Upanishads contain two sets of teaching regarding Brahman or Reality, addressed to two different levels of the mind. To the highest grade of the aspirants, belongs the disciple who has attained the mental equipment necessary for entering upon the course of study, either in this birth or possesses an introvert mind as a result of discipline undergone in his last lives, qualifying him to grasp the teaching imparted in the Śruti.

This class of seekers comprises two grades. The first needs only reminding of the true nature of one's Self by the Śruti through an experienced adept who has himself experienced the truths of Vedānta, while the second requires guidance for the contemplation of the spiritual steps through which one has ultimately to reach that same Self. It is to this class of both the grades that the present booklet is expected to be of some assistance in the study of Vedānta.

The other set of Upanishadic teachings according to Śaṅkara, consists of injunctions for the meditation of the so-called Apara (lower) Brahman. This meditation is a mystical discipline, quite different from the practice of contemplation or the Adhyātma-Yōga (referred to in the present works on page 84), which leads the seeker to the direct realization of Brahman in this very life. Like the meditation taught in the non-Hindu religions, Upanishadic Meditation of Brahman also assures eschatological benefits in the Highest Heaven, here called the Brahma-lōka. A separate treatise would be necessary for the guidance of the students of this class, whose practice of meditation is to be mainly founded on faith and hope. It may be remarked, in passing, that Upanishadic mysticism is perfectly rational in that it rests on the secure foundation of the proven results that can be experienced in this very life, by disciples of the first class mentioned above.*

* For the benefit of the students who are tolerably well acquainted with Sanskrit, a small book called the "Brahmavidyārahasyavivrti" has been published in the Kāryālaya. It contains instructions in meditation of the Apara-Brahman as well as the method of realizing the Para-Brahman.
THE CORRECT VEDÂNTIC TRADITION

Of the teachers whose Vedântic works have survived up to our times, three famous repositories of this genuine tradition deserve mention here. It was Sri Gauḍapâdâchârya and subsequently Sri Śaṅkarâchârya and Sri Suresvaraâchârya, that clearly pointed to the true line of demarcation between the two sets of Upanishadic teachings to which we have here drawn the student's attention. Before and after the time of those stalwart champions we find that Upanishadic teachings have been uniformly treated by all interpreters as leading to some one of the systems which are mostly a conglomeration of the logical and mystical doctrines with a sprinkling of the Śāṅkya or the Yôga system or both. In controversial works on Vedânta brought out in recent times we find an inclination to succumb to the temptation of using the phraseology of Neo-logic also.

Sri Śaṅkara was perhaps the first Vedântin to lay emphasis on the traditional method of Adhîyâropa-Apa vâda and to disentangle the Upanishad texts purporting to reveal the true nature of Brahman as the non-dual Self of all the phenomenal world from the texts which have the sole purpose of enjoining meditation. He was also the first to extricate the Upanishadic teaching from the exclusively theological trends to which they were drifting in the hands of the ancient Advaitins. His clarification of certain Vedântic concepts and principles of interpretation to be applied to the Upanishadic teaching as contrasted with that of the Karma-kânda (portion of the Vedas treating religious works) has greatly helped us to see how the Upanishads are not mere authoritative mystical utterances to be implicitly believed in, but contain certain revelations which take us to direct intuition here and now of undeniable verities with regard to our Real Self.

It is with the object of drawing the attention of the critical student of Śaṅkara's Vedânta to the genuine aspect of Vedântic reasoning based upon intuitions, that I have been making a sustained attempt by writing a number of books in Sanskrit and English as well as in Kannada. The following pages contain a systematic account of the clarification of certain Vedântic concepts as presented in Śaṅkara's classical writings, especially in his Sûtra-Bhâshya. It is an adaptation of the substance of
the Kannada lectures delivered by me during the Śaṅkara-Saptāham celebrations at Mysore in April this year. I shall feel amply repaid for the trouble taken in its preparation if it adds in any way to a better understanding of the matter and method of Śaṅkara’s Vedānta on the part of earnest seekers of truth.

My heart-felt Nārāyaṇa Smaraṇams to Swāmi Brahmānandendra Saraswati and Sri N. S. Ranga Swamy, who went through the manuscript and offered suggestions for the improvement of the work.

My Nārāyaṇa Smaraṇams also to the authorities of the Adhyātma Prakāsha Kāryālaya, who have undertaken the publication of the booklet as they have done with regard to my other writings. May Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa be pleased with this humble offering of my endeavour to present Śaṅkara’s view of Vedānta, as I understand it.

Holenarsipur Swāmi Satchidānandendra Saraswati
25-9-1969

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1. One of the great obstacles in the way of those who try to understand the real teaching of the Upanishads, seems to be the want of sufficient efforts to determine the exact significance of certain fundamental concepts common to all of them. An attempt will be made in the following pages to discuss some of the most important of such concepts, in the light of Śaṅkara’s Bhāshya, the most ancient one available on the Badarāyaṇa’s Sūtras.

The concept that deserves our foremost attention is obviously that of the Ātman. Śaṅkara introduces his Bhāshya with the declaration that all the Upanishads purport to teach the Knowledge of the Unity of Ātman (Atmaikatvā-Vidyā-Pratipattaye).

2. And this is in harmony with the teaching of the Upanishads themselves. The Mahāyāna Upanishad, for instance, says that Ātman is Brahman (अयमात्मा ब्रह्म) and says that Brahman which is unobjectifiable has to be “realized solely by means of the concept of Ātman
(एकात्मप्रत्ययसारम् भा. 7)”, and Mūndaka declares that Brahman which is the Light of lights, only the knowers of Ātman can know (तत्त्वज्ञानी ज्योतिषां ज्योतिषाः तद्यत्त्वात्मानन्दः किन्तु: Mū. 2-2-10). The Bhāṣya on that Upanishad explains the passage thus: “Only those that follow the trail of the concept of Ātman, can know it and not those that pursue the concepts of external objects, for it is the brightest light within (ते आत्मप्रत्ययानुसाराणि: आत्मप्रत्ययानुसारिण्यां भूस्माद् परं ज्योतिः, तस्मात् त एव तव्य: नेतरे बाह्यप्रत्ययानुसारिण्यां मुन. 2-2-10).” Again the Brhadaranyaka says:

स योजते एकाकमुदास्त न स वेदाकृत्त्वो हृयोजये एकैकेन भवत्यात्मातेव वेदाकृत्त्वो हृयेते सर्वे एकं भवति।

“So whosoever devotes himself to any one of these concepts, he knows not the truth; for he becomes only partial by being tied to these ideas severally. One should therefore regard oneself as the Ātman alone, for herein are comprehended all these ideas.” Br. 1-4-7.

This Śruti says that to regard oneself as the living soul, as a speaker, seer, hearer, or thinker, is to conceive oneself but partially; for these are notions drawn exclusively from the functions of the soul. But the most comprehensive way of regarding oneself is to think of oneself as the Ātman, for in the Ātman all the other aspects are comprehended.

In the Chāndogya again, we find the following text:

स य एषोद्धितात्मानादात्ममिदं सर्वं तत्सत्यं स आत्मा तत्वमसि श्रेष्ठतेतो।

“As for this subtle principle, all this Universe has it for its essence. That is Reality, that is the Ātman, that thou art, O Śvetaketu.” Ch. 6-14-3.
It is obvious that the word ‘Ātman’ here refers to the Reality underlying all the phenomenal world, and that each individual soul is identical with it.

3. The word Ātman is used in Sanskrit as a reflexive or emphatic pronoun also like words compounded with self in English. It then denotes the individual or individuals denoted by the antecedent noun or pronoun. For example, in अहम् आत्मनो गृहं गच्छि (I am going to my house), वच्यम् आत्मनो गृहं गच्छाम: (We go each to his house), देवदत्त आत्मनो गृहं गत: (Devdatta went to his house), त्वम् आत्मनो गृहं गच्छिसि (you are going to your house) etc., the word आत्मन: means my own, our own, his own, and your own. But as used in the above-cited texts, it is clear that the word is no pronoun but denotes the essential real nature of the whole world of animate and inanimate beings.

4. Basing himself on a passage in the Brhadāranyaka (3-9-26) Saṅkara calls this Ātman the Upanishadic person (औपनिषद: पुरुष:) and says,

(१) "येंसौ उपनिषत्वेवाविष्टः पुरुषोऽसंसारी, बहु ..., नासौ नासित्व नाधिगत्यत इति वा शक्यं वदितुथ्यु, 'स एष नेतिनेत्वात्त्वम्' (बृ. ३-९-२६) इत्यात्माविष्टातु, आत्मनेन प्रत्यास्त्वायुपमशक्यत्वात्, य एव निराकर्त्ता तस्यैवात्मकत्वात्।"

“Now this Purusha, who is known only from the Upanishads, and who is not a transmigratory soul but Brahman itself, it is not possible to assert that this Purusha does not exist, or that he cannot be known. For in the passage ‘Now this is the Ātman, described as not this, not this’ (Br. 3-9-26) this Purusha is referred to by the word Ātman (the Self), and it is impossible to deny one’s own Self, because the very denier is himself the Ātman.”

SBh. 1-1-4
Here Śaṅkara says in so many words, that the Ātman is the real Self of each one of us, whether one believes, doubts or denies the existence of this Ātman.

Now, lest it should be supposed that this Upanishadic Ātman is identical with the individual ego of living beings, Śaṅkara brings forward an objection and provides a rejoinder clarifying the Upanishadic concept of Ātman:

(२) "ननु आत्मा अहंप्रत्यविषयतत्वात्, उपनिषत्सेव विज्ञाप्यो इत्यनुपप्पनम्। न। तत्साक्षित्वेन प्रत्युक्तत्वात्। न हा हंप्रत्यविषयकर्त्तव्यतिरेकै तत्साक्षी सर्वमृतस्य:, सम:, एक:, कूटस्थानित्य:, पुरुषो विधिकाण्डे, तर्कसमये वा केनचिदिन्दिगत:, सर्वस्याः सत्त्वा।"

"Objection:— Ātman being the object of the notion 'I', it is not reasonable to say that he is known only from the Upanishads.

Reply:— Not so. For we have refuted this position by saying that this Ātman is the witness of that ego. (To explain):— Other than the agent who is the object of the notion 'I', there is the Witness thereof residing in all beings, the same in all, the one unchanging eternal Purusha, the Self of each and every one, who is never known to any one from the Vidhikānda (Vedic portion enjoining religious works), or from the speculative schools.” SBh. 1-1-4.

This is a bold claim that the Ātman as the Witnessing Consciousness, as distinct from the individual soul is the real Self of each and every creature, and is identical with Brahman or Divinity itself. This Witnessing Ātman, it is claimed, is to be known and can be known only from the Upanishads and that there is no inkling of this concept in any theological writing or speculative
system. While Śaṅkara was referring only to the Karmakānda of the Vedas and to the Darśanas prevalent during his times, it is strange and nevertheless undeniably true of the entire body of theological or speculative systems in the whole world to this day. This self-evident concept of Ātman as the eternal unchanging Witnessing Principle in each one of us, is known only through the Upanishads and can never be traced to any other source. And Śaṅkara, is the only thinker who has clarified this Vedantic concept. With an unsurpassed and unsurpassable spiritual intuition he found that the Upanishadic pronouncement was convincing and contained the only final soul-saving Truth.

(3) एको देव: सर्वभूतेषु गूढः सर्वव्यापी सर्वभूतात्मात्मा।
सर्वाव्यस्तः सर्वभूताधिवासः साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणः॥

“The one Deva (God) is hidden in all beings. All-pervading, the one inmost Self of all creatures, presiding over all, the Witnessing Consciousness residing in all creatures, One without a second and having no qualifying adjuncts.”

Sve. 6-10.
2. Vidyā AND AVIDYĀ

5. The word ‘Ātman’ really means that which pervades (आप्रोति) all. And we have seen that our genuine Ātman is the only Reality underlying all the phenomenal Universe, according to the Upanishads. Indeed the Chāndogya declares:-

अथात् आत्मादेश एवात्माधियस्तादात्मोपवियादात्म पश्चात्तात्म पुरस्तादात्म दक्षिणात् आत्मोत्तरत आत्मेवेदं सर्वपिति।।

“Now, therefore, the teaching concerning Ātman alone is begun. Ātman alone is below, Ātman above, Ātman behind, Ātman in front, Ātman on the right, Ātman on the left. All this is Ātman alone.”

Ch. 7-25-2.

How then is it, it will be asked, that we see this manifold universe in which live so many individual beings? How is that I, you, or anybody else in this world, firmly believes that each one of us is a limited being full of desires and not this great Ātman?

6. The Upanishads reply: It is because of Avidyā or ignorance. When Nachiketas asked Yama, the God of death, to reveal the nature of Ātman to him, the latter replied:

(१) दूरमेते विपरीते विपूची अविद्या या च विद्यति ज्ञाता।
विद्यामित्रित्वं निनिगरेतसं मन्ये न त्वा कामा बहवोलोलुपनम्।।
"These two are wide apart, running in opposite directions, Avidyā and that which is known as Vidyā. I consider thee Nachiketas, as longing for Vidyā, for the numerous desires have not weaned you away from the right path. Resting in the midst of ignorance, but considering themselves discriminative and wise, deluded persons go round and round through crooked ways like blind men led by one who is himself blind."

Ka. 2-4, 5.

How and when is this darkness or nescience to be dispersed? The Upanishad replies:

(2) पुरुष एवेद विश्वं कर्म तपो ब्रह्म परामुतम्।
 एतददो वेद निहितं गुहायं सोपिविद्याश्रन्धं विकिरतीह सोमय॥

"All this karma and tapas is Purusha, the highest immortal Brahman alone. Whosoever knows this as hidden in the cave of the heart, cuts the knot of ignorance, my dear boy."

Mu. 2-1-10.

7. Now what exactly does this 'Concept of ignorance' stand for? Since it is the ignorance concerning Brahman or the real Ātman, the Self of us all, it cannot be, obviously, a function of the mind, which consists in not knowing or misconceiving an object. The Ātman is as we have already seen (p. 5), the Witnessing Consciousness in each of us, and there is nothing of which it is not the witness. So it can never be the object of the intellect, which is itself one of the objects of that Consciousness. But nevertheless, we have no other instrument of knowledge, associated with which we can talk of
ourselves as ignorant of, or knowing anything. What then can the Upanishads possibly mean, when they speak of the ignorance of Ātman?

8. This question of the nature of the concept of Avidyā was never raised by the ancient Advaitins, nor has it received the close attention it deserves, at the hands of the Post-Śaṅkaras. The author of the Pañcapādikā regarded it as a postulate of Vedānta, for he says:-

अवश्येषाः अविद्याशक्तिः, वाहाचार्यात्मिकेशु वस्तुं तत्स्वरूप-सत्तामात्रानुबिधिन्नी अथ्युपगतत्वा। अन्यथा मिथ्याधारविभावसातुप-पते:।

“This power called Avidyā must needs be assumed, as clinging to the very nature of all internal and external things; for otherwise, false appearances can never be accounted for.” P.P., p. 41.

But it is evident that this power is not really a logical necessity, since none of the other thinkers have recognized it and yet their systems have not suffered in any manner just because they dispensed with the postulates.

Śaṅkara’s explanation of this enigmatical concept is as follows:

(१) असमतत्त्वयोगचे विषयविद्विद्वाय चिदात्मके युप्तक्षणयोगचर्या विषयत्व तद्वृत्ताणां चाचाचार्याः; तद्वृत्तयेण विषयविद्विद्वायं च विषयेदाच्छासो मिथ्या इति भवतुं युक्तम्। तथापि अन्योन्यायस्मनू अन्योन्यायात्मकतामू अन्योन्यायाश्च अथ्युपस्य इतरोयं अथितराविवेकेन, अत्यन्तविविद्विद्वायोद्धचर्याविद्विद्वायानुभिन्निति: सत्यार्गूते मिथ्यानुसिद्धं यो साध्यतम: ‘अहुप्तम्’, ‘मपेदम्’ – इति नैसर्गिकोषयं लोकपरंहार:।
The sum and substance of these two extracts, from the famous introduction to Śaṅkara’s Sūtra Bhāshya is this:- Ātman, the real ‘I’ of each one of us, is the Witnessing Consciousness. That alone is really real according to Vedānta, since it is absolutely undeniable as we have seen (p. 4). The non-self which is made up of the body, the senses and the mind is an unreal appearance, set up by ignorance or privation of knowledge. Now the human intellect has an innate tendency to project the non-real Not-self (Un-Ātman) and confound the identity of the real and the unreal whenever it functions. This mixing up of the real and the unreal and the delusion which prompts the mind to submit itself to a mistaken transference of the mutual properties of the Self and the non-self, is what is called Āvidyā. This tendency is so natural to all mankind that no one suspects that he is under the influence of this primary ignorance due to want of discrimination (अविवेकक्रिया) when he talks of ‘me and mine’. It follows that this Āvidyā or ignorance is finally wiped off as soon as one discriminates the real and the unreal and determines their true nature. This discrimination and determination of the true nature of these, is what is termed Vidyā, knowledge.

9. How and when was this mutual superimposition of identity and mistaken transference of properties caused? This question is obviously illegitimate, for we have learnt that it is an innate tendency of the human mind to confound the real and the unreal. All human action and experience of
the fruits of action presuppose intellection and intellection itself is based on this natal error. Human behaviour is on a par with animal behaviour in this respect for both are the result of this natural want of discrimination. Śaṅkara’s dicta on this point are incontrovertible for they are all based upon universal intuition.

(1) तत्मेतत्वविद्याख्यम् आत्मानात्मननिरिगतेतराध्यासं पुरस्कृत्य सर्वं प्रमाणप्रमेयव्यवहारा लौकिका वैदिकाक्ष्य प्रबृत्ता: सर्वाणि च ज्ञानाणि विध्विद्वितिषेष्यप्रक्ष्यपतिणः।

“It is on the presupposition of this mutual superimposition of the Self and the non-self, called Avidyā that all conventions of the means and objects of right knowledge — whether secular or sacred — proceed, as also all the Śāstras dealing with injunction and prohibition or final release.”

Introduction to SBh.

(2) यथा हि पश्चादयः श्रव्दादिधिः प्रोक्तादिना संबृहे सति श्रव्दादिविज्ञाने प्रतिसहि जाते ततो निर्वर्तने, अनुसूक्ला च प्रवर्तने-यथा दक्षोदिकारः पुरस्कृतपुरुषमूच्छितमन् पारहुः हस्तर्नित्यमस्तीति पतलयु पारभने, हरितलुण्णपूर्णपाणिपुललथ्यं प्रत्यभिपुखीष्यवति एवं पुरुषा अथि वोत्स्त्राचिता: क्रूरदृष्टीन्द्र आक्रोशत् खड्डोपायलकरानु बलवत उपलथ्य ततो निर्वर्तने तद्विप्रीतानु प्रति प्रवर्तने, अतिः समानः पश्चादिधिः पुरुषाणां प्रमाणप्रमेयव्यवहारः। पश्चादिना च प्रसिद्धोपविवेकपुरः सर: प्रत्यक्षादिविवहारः। तत्समानवधर्मातु, व्यवहारितामपि पुरुषाणामू प्रत्यक्षादिविवहारसतत्कालः समान द्र्ति निद्रीणाते।

“And because there is no difference between the (lower animals) like beasts and man. (To explain:—) Beasts and other animals run away from any sound etc. that contact their ear and other organs of sense whenever the
knowledge is unfavourable, but proceed towards them whenever the knowledge is pleasant. As for instance, when they see a man approaching them with a raised hand with a club, they begin to run away from him fearing that he intends to beat them, but when they see one with a tuft of green grass in his hands they proceed towards him. So also, even men with intellect developed, turn away when they see strong fierce-looking persons shouting with upraised swords in hand, but come forward towards those who are opposite to this in nature. It is well-known that knowledge through perception of the lower animals presupposes non-discrimination. Since the behaviour of even intelligent persons is seen to be similar to that of animals, their perception etc. also at the time can be concluded to be similar.

[The meaning is that while men do have the faculty of rethinking about their behaviour, the process of behaviour itself is the result of superimposition due to want of discrimination. This shows that all human activity based upon perception and other means of knowledge, is in the field of an innate error due to want of discrimination between the real and the unreal.]

“Thus, this beginningless and endless innate superimposition of the nature of a false notion engenders agency and experience of the fruits of action that all humanity is familiar with. In order to destroy this source of all evil, all the Upanishads are begun to propound the Vidya of the oneness of Atman.”
literature do we find this precision of thought which distinguishes this root—Avidyā, which is responsible for the whole process of human knowledge and activity, from the individual instances of the ignorance of objects in ordinary life. This Avidyā is beginningless not because, as has been egregiously ill-conceived by some followers of Śaṅkara, there is a beginningless series of individual Avidyā flowing in a continuous stream, but because it is itself the conjurer of time in which any series can be conceived to exist. Avidyā is no actual concept of Ātman, because Ātman can never be perceived or conceived by the mind, the mind itself being a superimposition on the Self. So it is a notion having the semblance of a false concept (प्रभृत्या प्रत्ययरूपः). And Vidyā, in its turn, is not knowledge of Ātman in the ordinary sense, for the simple reason that Ātman can never be an object of knowledge. It is rather the intuition of Ātman by Ātman himself. We shall have occasion to discuss the nature of this Vedāntic knowledge later on.
3. CREATION, MĀYĀ AND CAUSATION

II. The concepts of Creation and Māyā demand clarification to justify the monistic systems of Vedānta. Māyā is of especial importance for Śaṅkara’s system, because much ink has been spilt on the question as to whether or not the doctrine of Māyā in Vedānta, is a borrowing from Buddhism.

The following are some of the Upanishadic texts referring to creation:

(1) स प्राणमसुजत प्राणाच्छादों खं वायुज्योतिरायप प्रविधीन्द्रियं
पन: । अत्रमन्ब्राह्मियं तपो पन्त्रा: कर्म लोका लोकेषु च नाम च ॥

“He created life, from life faith, ether, air, light, water, earth, senses, mind and food. From food vigour, tapas, mantras, religious works, the worlds and in the worlds, name.”

Pr. 6-4.

(2) आत्मा वा इदमेक एवाद्व आसीत्रान्यतिक्ष्ण मिष्टु। स
ईक्षत लोकाभु सूजा इति। स इमाल्लोकानसुजत। अभ्यो
परीच्छीर्यमापः ॥

“This was indeed Ātman alone in the beginning and nothing else, sentient or non-sentient. He thought, ‘Let me create the worlds’. He created these worlds:— Ambhas (the upper aquatic regions), Mareechies, Mara, and Apah (the Nether aquatic regions).”

Ai. 1-1, 2.
[The first text simply says that the Purusha created Prāna (life) etc. It is not clear out of what substance he created them. The second expressly says that all this universe was Ātman before creation. The passages quoted below declare that Ātman (or Brahman) himself became all this in the process of creation.]

(3) यशोर्णाभि: सृजने गहनते च यथा पृथिव्यामोक्षय: संभवति।
यथा सत: पुरुषात्केशलोमानि तथाक्षरात् संभवतीह विश्वम्॥

"Just as the spider exudes and withdraws (the thread), just as plants are born out of the earth and just as the hairs (on the head and all over the body come) out of a living person, so comes out all this universe from the Imperishable One."

Mu. 1-1-7.

[The word srj (सृज, literally means to throw out), creation in the sense of giving rise to something out of nothing is unknown to the Upanishads. Akshara without attributes, is itself the stuff of the universe.]

(4) सदेव सोप्येदम्य आसीदेकमेवाविभिन्तियम्।
तद्रैक आदर्श- देवेदम्य आसीदेकमेवाविभिन्तियं तस्मादसत: सज्जायत्।
कुलस्तु खलु सोप्येव स्वादित होवच कथमसत: सज्जायेतः।
सन्नेव सोप्येदम्य आसीदेकमेवाविभिन्तियम्।
तद्रैकत बहु स्या प्रजायेतेऽति
तत्त्वजोगस्नुजत।॥

"This was Being alone in the beginning, my boy, One without a second. Here some say that this was non-being alone in the beginning, and out of that non-being, being was born. How could it be so, my boy? How could being be possibly born from non-being? Being alone, this was in the beginning, One without a second. It thought, 'Let me become plenteous, let me be born as manifold'. It created light."

Ch. 6-1-1, 2, 3.

The passages cited above might, by implication, mean that Primeval Being or Ātman actually modified and transformed itself into the Universe.
But this sort of Self-transformation is repugnant to the Upanishads. For a subsequent text in this self-same Chāndogya Upanishad says:

(५) स य एषोप्रियमैतदात्ममिदं सर्व तत्सत्यं स आत्मा
तत्त्वपरि श्रेष्ठेकातो इति ॥

"Now for this Subtle Being: All this Universe has it alone as its essence, that alone is real, that is the Ātman, that thou art, O Svetaketu!" Ch. 6·8·7.

[It is declared that the Pure Being alone which created the Universe is strictly real, and that alone is the genuine Ātman. By implication, the Universe is comparatively unreal, and the individual selves are not the genuine Ātman.]

Here is another passage which declares that the Paramātman alone is really real:—

(५) सोहकापयत । बहु स्यां प्रजायेवेति । स तपोपत्यत । स
tapasvatva । इदं सर्वं सुजजत । यदि दिनं कि । तत्सृष्टवा । तदेवानु
pravishat । तदनुप्रविशय । सच्च सत्त्वप्रभवः । निरुलं चानिरुलं च ।
prāvīśaḥ । निलयनं चानिलयनं च । विज्ञानं चाविज्ञानं च । सत्यं
चानृतं च सत्त्वप्रभवः । यद्यि दिनं किष्ठ । सत्त्वत्त्वित्यापचक्षते ॥

‘He wished ‘may I become plenteous, may I be born as the manifold’. He thought it over; having thought it over, He created all this, whatsoever we find here. Having created it, He entered the very same (creation). And having entered it He became this (actual) and that, the definable and the undefinable, the substrate and the non-substrate, the sentient and the non-sentient. The Real became both the real and the unreal, whatever there is here. They call it Reality.” Tai. 2-6.

[The really real Paramatman has entered into the created Universe and appears as all the differentiated things, and the individual selves. The distinction of the real and the unreal, is
also unreal from the standpoint of the really real. More of this distinction of views anon.]

12. And now for the concept of *Māyā* in the Upanishads:

> The various Chandas (metres), Yagnas and *Kratus* (sacrifices with and without the *Yūpa*-post), austerities (like the Cāndrāyaṇa), and the existent entities as well as results to be achieved, which the Vedas reveal – all these are born of this (Great Being), The Māyin (magician) creates all this Universe, and in it is another bound by Māyā. Prakriti is to be known as the Māyā, the Great Lord as the Māyin (magician). All this world of moving and non-moving beings is pervaded by (individual souls) which are his parts.”

Sve. 4-9, 10.

Here appears the word ‘Māyā’ which has scared many a scholar. Bhāskarāchārya, Yāmunāchārya and others, took advantage of the employment of this word and argued that Advaitins who employ the Māyā-doctrine are the crypto-Buddhists and some oriental scholars have openly charged Gauḍapāda with having borrowed the doctrine from the Buddhists, while some of them have gone to the length of concluding that the Śvetaśvatara, must be a later Upanishad just because it contains this bugbear of the word Māyā. And yet, what is there in this innocuous epithet of Māyin as applied to Isvara and Māyā, as the material out of which he creates the world? No section of the Buddhists ever postulated
an Īśvara or invested him with Māyā, whether as a power or anything else. And when we closely examine Śaṅkara’s Bhāshya, we find that there is nothing to be afraid or ashamed of when we entertain this highly philosophical doctrine which so satisfactorily explains the phenomena of life while keeping the Advaitic Absolute perfectly intact.

13. First of all, we should dismiss the idea of the Post-Śaṅkaras who have stumbled into the mistake of identifying Māyā with Avidyā, misled by the collocation of those two words in stray passages of Śaṅkara’s Bhāshya, such as the following:

एक एव परमेश्वरः कूटस्थानित्वं विज्ञानान्तरतः अविद्या मायायामायाविवित् अनेकयाविभाव्यते, नान्यो विज्ञानान्तरस्त्यति।

SBh. 1-3-19.

This passage simply means that there is only one principle essentially of the nature of changeless Consciousness, and that is Brahman or the Supreme Lord, and that he is regarded to be many through Avidyā, just as a magician on account of his Māyā, is looked upon to be many, while there is really no sentient entity other than Brahman or the Lord. It has nothing to do with the identity or difference of the Vedāntic concepts of Avidyā and Māyā.

14. And in the second place, some thinkers misled by the word ‘Sakti’ occurring in Śaṅkara’s Bhāshya as well as in the Śrutas, think that Māyā is a power exercised by God to delude souls. The following excerpts not only dispel any doubt as to what Śaṅkara exactly means by this word, but also lay down a clear-
cut principle which enables us to distinguish the concept of Māyā from Avidyā.

(१) परमेश्वरानी विषयसमाप्ति: प्रागवस्था जग्नोध्युपणग्रयते न स्वतन्त्र। सा चावध्याध्युपणगत्वा। अर्थवती हि सा। न हि तथा विना परमेश्वरस्य सहुल्यं सिद्ध्वति। शक्तिरहितस्य तस्य प्रवृत्त्वनूपपते। पुनः च पुनःनृत्वति:। कुतः? विषयं तस्या बीजश्चर्द्धि। अविद्यालिका हि बीजर्श्च। अव्यक्तशाब्दनिर्देशया परमेश्वराशया मायाप्रथी महानुति:, यस्यां स्वरूपप्रतिविनाशः। श्रेष्ठतः संसारिणो जीवा:। तद्विद्येत् कविचित्र आकाशशाब्दनिर्देशम्; ‘एवतं ज्ञाते विमुक्ते कार्यकालं चोत्त्व स्मृत्त’ (बृ. ३-८-११) इति श्रुते:। कविचित्रशश्चर्द्धमिति:। ‘अक्षरार्थतः रत्रः’ (प्. २-६-२) इति श्रुते:। कविचित्रमाया इति सूचितम्; ‘माया तु प्रकृतिः विद्यानामायि तु महेश्वरम्’ (ष्ठे. ४-१०) इति मन्त्रवर्णात्। अर्थता हि सा माया तत्त्वायतनिर्देशस्य अशक्त्वतात्।॥

"What is admitted by us is, however, only a previous state of the world dependent on the Supreme Lord, not independent of Him. And it has to be necessarily admitted, for it serves a purpose. To explain: Without it, the Supreme Lord cannot be a creator, since without this potentiality, He cannot be active. And on this supposition only, the released souls cannot be reborn, for in this case the causal potentiality is burnt up by Vidyā. The causal potentiality is called Āvyakta (or the Unmanifest), having its locus in the Supreme Lord is the illusory universal sleep, in which all the transmigratory souls are sleeping deprived of the knowledge of their true nature. Now this Āvyakta is sometimes denoted by the word Ākāśa (ether), as for instance in the Šruti ‘It is in that Imperishable indeed, O Gargi, that the Ākāśa is woven as the warp and the woof’ (Br. 3-8-11). Sometimes it is denoted by the term Akshara, as for instance in the Šruti ‘He is greater than the great Akshara’ (Mu. 2-1-2). And sometimes it is called Māyā. For the Mantra says Prakṛti is to be known to be Māyā, and the Supreme Lord to be the Māyin.’ (Sve. 4-10)."

SBh. 1-4-3.
[Here it is clear that Śakti is synonymous with Prakṛti, the causal potentiality of the world, and is called Māyā also. The individual souls in that state, are enveloped in ignorance of their true nature, to wit, perfect identity with Brahman.]

The causal potentiality or Māyā is said to be Avidyātmika (of the nature of Avidyā) which expression may be wrongly understood by the unwary to have a meaning identical with Avidyā. The following extract effectively wards off the possibility of such a mistake.

(२) ‘सर्वज्ञयेश्वरस्य आत्मभूते इवाविद्याकल्पते नामरूपे तत्तत्त्वज्ञानित्यनिर्विवचनीये संसारप्राप्तविज्ञि, सर्वज्ञेश्वरस्य माया, शक्ति, प्रकृति: — इति च श्रुतिस्पृष्टीयोरविलयते॥

“Fictitiously imagined by Avidyā as though they were identical with the omniscient Lord, name and form undefinable either as (Īśvara) Himself or distinct from Him, the cause of this manifold world of mundane life, are called in the Śruti and the Smṛti, ‘Māyā’, causal potentiality and Prakṛti.” SBh. 2-1-14.

Here we find Māyā described as the figment of Avidyā, and identified with Prakṛti, the original state of the world before creation. It is called Māyā (illusory appearance) clearly because it cannot be defined to be identical with Īśvara or Brahman or quite distinct from Brahman. Elsewhere, in the Bhāshyas, the expression Anirvacanīya (तत्तत्त्वज्ञानित्यनिर्विवचनीय) has been explained by the illustration of foam which is not quite the same as water, but yet not a different entity either. This expression, by the way, gave rise to the theory of Sadasadānirvacanīya (apparent things which are neither being nor not-being) developed in the sub-commentaries on Śaṅkara’s works. In this
passage, not quoted here at full length, we find variants for the expression *Avidyākalpita*, such as *Avidyāpratyupasthāpita*, *Avidyākṛta*, and *Avidyātmaka* (presented by Avidyā, made up of Avidyā, and of the nature of Avidyā) all of which mean the objective appearance due to Avidyā. Māyā, then, according to Śaṅkara is the illusory causal seed of the world, due to Avidyā (*Adhyāsa* or mutual superimposition of Ātman and un-Ātman, occasioned by want of discrimination).

15. The clarification of the concepts of creation and Māyā is, incidentally, also the clarification of the concept of the Vedāntic concept of ‘causality’. We have seen that the Śrutis speak of Brahman both as the creator and the material cause of the universe. But in what sense precisely is Brahman the cause? In order to be in a position to answer this question, it is necessary to understand the nature of the effect, the Universe itself. Here is Śaṅkara’s picture of the Universe:

(१) अस्य जगतः नामस्तुपाभ्यां व्याकृतिस्य अनेककर्त्त्वोक्तः- 
संयुक्तस्य प्रतिनियतदेशकालनिनिन्दिक्रियाकलाप्रकाश्यं 
मनसान्याचिन्त्य- 
रचनान्वयः ज्ञातिभ्रमितं यतः सर्वज्ञातः, सर्वकारिणां 
भवति तदू ब्रह्म।

“The omniscient and omnipotent cause from which proceeds the origin, sustentation and dissolution of this universe – the universe which is differentiated by name and form, comprehends many agents and experiencers (of the fruits of actions), and is the abode of the fruits of actions regulated by particular places, times and causes (the universe) whose creation is not even conceivable by the mind – that cause is Brahman.”

SBh. 1-1-2.
This description is so comprehensive, including as it does even time, space and causation, in its scope, evidently forbids the conception of Brahman as the ‘cause’ of the universe in the ordinary sense of the word. Nor can we think of Brahman as the ‘maker’ of the world in the same sense that a carpenter is the maker of a table, for all agents of action are within the universe, and Brahman or Isvara cannot be thought of as an agent who forms an idea, makes a plan of what he is to make, and then executes it. In what sense, then, is Brahman the cause and the world its effect? Here is Bādarāyaṇa’s reply according to Śaṅkara:

(2) कार्यामात्रातिवं बहुपरश्चं जगत्, कारणं परं ब्रह्म।
तत्सात् कारणात् परमार्थोदन-यतं व्यतिरेक्षणाभावः: कार्यस्याव-गयते। कृत? आरम्भणःब्रह्मादिभ्यः।

“The effect is this manifold world consisting of ether etc., and the cause is the Highest Brahman. The non-existence of the effect in reality apart from that cause is concluded. On what grounds? For the reason that Śruti declares that the effect is merely the play of words (वाचारम्भणः) and for other similar reasons.”

SBh. 2-1-14.

The word Ādi (etc.) in Bādarāyaṇa’s Śūtra refers to the texts teaching the identity of the world with Brahman. Accordingly Śaṅkara says:

(3) ‘आरम्भणःब्रह्मादिभ्यः:’ इत्यादिर्शेत, ‘ऐतदात्त्वमेऽव सृवं तत्सां स आत्मा तत्वर्मि’ (छां. ६-८-७), ‘इदं सृवं यद्यमात्मा’ (बृ. २-४-६), ‘ब्रह्मवेदं सर्वं’ (?) , ‘आत्मेवेदं सर्वं’ (छां. ७-२५-२), ‘नेह नानासिद्धिकित्व’ (बृ. ४-४\-१२) — इत्येवमाद्यादि आत्मेवेदप्रतिपादनपरं वचनजातमुदाहर्त्वम।

छू. भा. २-१-१४.
Here the Chāndogya, the Brhadāraṇyaka and other Śrutis teaching essential unity of the world with the non-dual Ātman or Brahman, are appealed to. It follows that this apparent world, as we are aware of, is only the effect of Māyā, and is essentially identical with and has no independent existence apart from Brahman. The following are explicit statements to this effect in the Bhashya:

(४) ननु शब्दादिहिनेन ब्रह्म जगतः कारणम्। बाह्रम्। न तु
शब्दादिप्रत्ययः कारणात्मनं हीनं प्रागुत्तेतिदानीं वा अस्ति।

“Objection:— But (according to you) Brahman devoid of qualities such as sound is the cause of the Universe (full of qualities)!

Reply:— Quite true, but the effect with qualities like sound, never exists except in its essential forms as the cause whether now or before the creation.”

SBh. 2-1-7.

(५) तस्मात् तथा घटकरकायाकाशानां महाकाशान्यत्वम्,
यथा च पृथग्ध्वारिणकोदकादीनामू ऊपरादिव्यो अन्यत्वम्,
हृदन्ध्रस्वरूपत्वात्, स्वरूपणात्मप्राणित्वात्, एवमव्य
भोगवोद्विरादिप्रस्तुतज्ञतस्य ब्रह्मचर्यितेर्केणाभाव: — इति द्वार्ययम्।

“Therefore it must be concluded that just as jar-space and pot-space and other apparent spaces are not other than the one ethereal space, and just as water in a mirage and other appearances are not other than the desert etc. for those ethers and water etc. are of the nature of being perceived and vanishing, undefinable in their apparent nature, so also this manifold world of the experienced and experiences is not other than Brahman in essence.”

SBh. 2-1-14.
This extract places it beyond all doubt that by the Vedāntic word ‘effect’ Śaṅkara understands nothing more than appearance, and consequently the ‘cause’ for him stands for the substrate on which appearances are superimposed. The students must be forewarned, however, that the so-called theory of origination of appearances from Avidyā (प्राणिभासिकवस्तूत्त्वतिवाद:), a pet doctrine of the Post-Śaṅkaras, is conspicuous by its absence in the Bhāshya. The doctrine of three grades of existence transcendental (पारमार्थिकसत्त्वः), empirical (व्यावहारिकसत्त्वः) and apparent (प्राणिभासिकसत्त्वः) is quite unknown to the Sūtra-Bhāshya. On the contrary, Śaṅkara emphatically declares that there are no grades of existence:

(६) यथा च कारणं ब्रह्म त्रिषु कालेषु सत्त्वं न व्यभिचारति, एवं कार्यमयं जगतिः त्रिषु कालेषु सत्त्वं न व्यभिचारति । एकं च पुनः सत्त्वम्, अतोऽध्ययन्यातं कारणात्तू कार्यस्य ॥

"Just as Brahman the cause never deviates from existence in all the three periods of time, so also the effect, the world, never deviates from existence in all the three periods (of creation, sustenance and dissolution). And existence again is only one. So for this reason also, the effect is none other than the cause."

SBh. 2-1-16.

Accordingly Śaṅkara says: ‘तथा च लोकेःत्रुभवः— पुण्यक्षिकाः हि रजस्वल्क्ष्यात्तेन, एकः एकः सद्वन्यवन्यवत् इति।’ 'And such is the experience of the common man – who says ‘it is the nacre that looks like silver’, ‘The one moon appears as though she had a duplicate.’ (Int. SBh. p. 2). So according to him, it is only Brahman, that appears as the world and we have no real origination of the world at all. He avers this in so many words when he says:
(७) अविद्याकल्पितेन च नामसूरुश्लक्षणेन रूपभेदेन व्याकृतानांतः
रूपसूरुलक्षणविनिर्विन्यासीनानां ब्रह्म परिणामादिसर्वः
व्यवहारार्थवस्त्राभ्यां निरूपणस्वार्थम्
अपरिणामाच्छविधाविद्याकल्पितस्य रूपभेदस्य
— इति न निरवधतं ब्रह्म: कृत्यति ॥

"Brahman becomes an object within the purview of empirical thought and expression dealing with transformation etc., in its special aspect of name and form, of the nature of the differentiated or the undifferentiated, which is undefinable either as (Brahman itself) or something other than it. In its own real nature, however, it transcends all empirical thought and expression and is never changed."

SBh. 2-1-27.

This clarification of the concept of Maya is to be found nowhere else except in Śaṅkara’s exposition. Empirically speaking, Maya is the causal potentiality of the world, projected by Avidyā, or Superimposition; it is but a special aspect of Brahman which evolves itself into the world. But Brahman, in its true and real nature, is above all causation.

"And inasmuch as the special aspect of Brahman, fictitiously created by Avidyā, is a mere play of words. The fact of Brahman, being impartible remains, uncontradicted."

SBh. 2-1-27.

16. Before closing this discussion of creation and Maya, we have to answer one more question. If there be really no creation, and causation be wholly Māyic only, a figment of Avidyā, how is it that we find so many different accounts of creation in the Upanishads? Is it a mere waste of words? Here is Śaṅkara’s answer:
(८) न चेयं परिणामशृणिः परिणामप्रतिपादनर्थः, तत्प्रतिपत्ती
फलावगमात्। सर्वज्ञवहार्शीनब्रह्मात्मकप्रतिपादनर्थः लेशा, तत्प्रतिपत्ती
फलावगमात्। ‘स एष नेतिनेत्यात्मा’ इत्युपक्रम्याह ‘अष्टर्न अवें
जनक प्राप्तोदितिः’ (ब्र. ४-२-४) इति। तस्मादस्पष्टतः न कक्षिदपि
दोषप्रस्फूर्तिः॥

“Nor does this Sruti, teaching evolution, really purport
to teach evolution as such; for, no fruit is known to accrue
by that knowledge. It rather aims at teaching the Ātman
of Brahmic Nature, for, its knowledge is known to yield
a good result. (To explain:) Yājñavalkya commences his
teaching with the proposition ‘This is the Ātman that
has been described as ‘not this, not this’ and concludes
‘Fearlessness, O Janaka, hast thou attained indeed, (Br.
4-2-4). So, there is no defect in our interpretation of the
Sruti.’”

SBh. 2-1-27.
4. IŚVARA

17. The concept of Iśvara is as enigmatical as, if not more so than, the conceptions of Māyā and Causation in Advaita to most of the modern critics of Śaṅkara. This is because these are all uniformly influenced by the current discussions of such topics in the light of the later sub-commentaries on Śaṅkara's works. The Vivaraṇa of Prakāśātman, for instance, brings forward several alternative theories about the cause of the world such as these: (1) The original Brahman whose reflections are the individual souls, and which is associated with Māyā, is the cause; (2) Brahman reflected in Māyā-Avidyā is the cause of the world; (3) The individual souls themselves, each of them, manifest Brahman as the world through their private Avidyā; and there are as many worlds projected as there are Ājīvas; (4) Brahman itself changes into the world through its Avidyā, just as individuals manifest a world each. – P.V. p. 232.

And Appayya Dikshitar's Siddhānta-Leśa Saṅgraha, brings forward a theory that Brahman associated with qualities is the cause of the world, and that released souls attain union with the Saguna-Brahman or Ishvara only, until all the souls are ultimately released (SLS. p. 534-535). Unconsciously swayed by such scholastic systems perhaps, the late Dr. Thibaut wrote in the Introduction to his translation of Śaṅkara's Sūtra-Bhāshya as follows:–
“Placing myself at the point of view of a Śaṅkara, I am startled at the outset by the second Sūtra of the first Adhyāya, which undertakes to give a definition of Brahman. ...... What, we must ask, is this Sūtra meant to define? – That Brahman, we are inclined to answer, whose cognition the first Sūtra declares to constitute the task of the entire Vedānta, that Brahman whose cognition is the only road to final release, that in fact which Śaṅkara calls the highest. But here we must object to ourselves, the highest Brahman is not properly defined as that from which the world originates. ...... That from which the world proceeds can by a Śaṅkara be accepted only as a definition of Īśvara –, of Brahman which by its association with Māyā is enabled to project the false appearance of this world and it is as improbable that the Sūtras should open with a definition of that inferior principle from whose cognition there accrues no benefit, as it is unlikely that they should conclude with a discipline of the state of those who know the lower Brahman only.”

Vedānta Sūtras Intro. p. XCI.

In this extract we find a glaring confusion of the connotations of the terms, Īśvara, Para Brahman, and Lower Brahman. But where do we have any warrant either in the Upanishads or in Śaṅkara’s Bhāshya, for the supposition that Apara Brahman is ‘lower’ than the Para Brahman, or that Īśvara is an inferior principle in comparison with Para Brahman? Let us first see what the Śrutis themselves have to say on the subject.

18. We shall first of all cite the text where the terms ‘Para Brahman’ and ‘Apara Brahman’ occur:

(१) एतद्वै सत्यकाम परं चापरं च ब्रह्म यदोक्षकरस्तस्मादिद्रा-

वेतनेवायतनेकतरमभवेति।

“Verily, O Satyakāma, this Omkāra is both the Higher
and the Lower Brahman. Therefore the devotee goes to either of these only through this source.” Pr. 5-2.

Perhaps this is the only text which expressly makes the distinction between the Higher and the Lower Brahman. There is another text in the Muṇḍaka which refers to Paramam Brahman:–

(२) स यो है तत्परं ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मविद्या भवति, नास्य-ब्रह्मविद्यु भवति। तृती शोकं तत्तति पापानं गुहामपियम्यो विमुक्तोष्मो भवति॥

“Whosoever knows that Supreme Brahman indeed, becomes that very Brahman. In his family, no one is born that knows not Brahman. He crosses lamentation, crosses sin; freed from the knots of the heart, he becomes immortal.” Mu. 3-2-9.

[This Brahman whose knowledge results in attaining identity with Brahman, has been called Akshara (the Imperishable), Satyam (Reality), and Purusha (Person) also in this Upanishad.]

We find the word ‘Īśvara’ in the following Śruti:–

(३) तमिःश्राणां परम् महेश्वरं तं देवतानं परमं च देवतम्।
पति पतीनां परमं परस्तात्विनाम्याद् देवं भुवनेश्वरीवद्यम्॥

“Him the Greatest Ruler of all rulers, Him the Highest God of all the gods, the Greatest Protector of all protectors, beyond all of them do we regard that Shining one (देवम्) Praiseworthy Ruler of the world.” Śve. 6-7.

[The next two verses contain the word Śakti (शक्ति:) and Kāraṇam (कारणम:) which we have already discussed.]

It is clear that the Śruti makes no difference between Para Brahman and Īśvara.

19. We may now proceed to consider Śaṅkara’s views on the point. While opening the discussion
about the interpretation of the text ‘स एनानू ब्रह्म गमयति’
(He leads these to Brahman) Śaṅkara writes as follows:–

1) ‘स एनानू ब्रह्म गमयति’ (छान. ४-१५-५) इत्यत्र विचिनकिस्यते – किं कार्यपरं ब्रह्म गमयति, आहोस्वितू परमेव अविकृतं मुखं ब्रह्म? – इति। कुत: संशयः? ब्रह्मशब्दप्रयोगात्, 
गतिश्रुतेश्च। तत्र कार्यपेत्र सन्नुभि अपरं ब्रह्म एनानू गमयत्यमानवः 
पुरुषः: – इति बादरिसाचार्यां मन्यते। कुत: ? अस्य गतियपते: ||

“The doubt arises whether the devotees are led to Kārya (effect), Apara (Lower), or Param (Higher) Brahman itself, Avikṛtam (unmodified), Mukhyam (Brahman in the primary sense). Whence this doubt? Because of the word Brahman, and because of the Śruti teaching movement. Hence the teacher Bādari thinks that it is the Kārya (effect), Sagunā (with qualities), Aparam (Lower) Brahman, for motion is applicable only to this Brahman.” SBh. 4-3-7.

In this context, Śaṅkara gives variants of both the terms Para-Brahman and Apara-Brahman. Now, do these denote two distinct entities or one and the same Brahman? The following excerpt will answer this question:–

3) तत्र परापरब्रह्मविवेकानवधारणेन अपरस्पिनू ब्रह्मणि वर्त- 
माना गतिश्रुतयः: परस्पिनू अध्यायोपने। किं द्वे ब्रह्मणि परमू अपरं 
चेति? बाधौ द्वे, ‘एतलै सत्यकाम परं चापरं च ब्रह्म यदोऽकार:’ 
(प्र. ५-२) इत्यादिदेशानात्। किं पुनः परं ब्रह्म किपपरमित? 
उवयते। यत्र अविद्याकृतनामस्यादिविशेषप्रतिपक्षोतु अस्थूलादिदेशब्रह्मोपदेशार्थ, 
तत्परम्। तदेव यत्र नामस्यादिविशेषण केनचिदू 
विशिष्टमु उपासनाय उपदेशये ‘प्राणविशारदी भारुपः’ 
(छान. ३-१४-२) इत्यादिदेशसः; तदपरम्। नन्वेवमू अन्धितीश्चुति- 
रूपस्येत। न। अविद्याकृतनामस्यादिपाधिकतया परिहत्तवात्। ||
"Here Śrutis teaching movement in the context of Apara-Brahman, have been wrongly applied to Para-Brahman, merely because of failure to discriminate between the Higher and the Lower Brahman.

Question:– Are there two Brahmans then, the Higher and the Lower?

Answer:– Yes, there are two. (This is borne out) by the Śruti: ‘O Satyakāma, verily this Omkāra is both the Higher and the Lower Brahman.

Question:– Which is the Higher Brahman then and which is the Lower?

Answer:– We reply: Where Brahman is taught by means of words like Asthūlam (not gross), negating specific features such as name and form created by Avidyā, that is the Higher Brahman. Where, on the other hand, that same Brahman is taught as qualified by some specific features for the purpose of meditation, as for instance by means of such words as मनोमयः (made up of mind), प्राणज्ञातीरो (having Prāṇa for his body), भारुपः (of the nature of light) etc., that is the Lower Brahman.

Objection:– The Śruti teaching non-duality would be violated in this case, then!

Reply:– No, for this has been obviated by stating that the form with attributes is due to the conditioning adjunct of name and form created by Avidyā."

SBh. 4-3-14.

It is clear that one and the same Brahman is regarded as higher or lower according as specific features are denied in the Śruti or ascribed to it for the sake of meditation in the sphere of Avidyā for the convenience of aspirants who cannot rise to the level of the absolutely featureless Pure Brahman.
Brahman in itself, of course, remains in its pristine purity even when it is meditated upon as endowed with qualities by mediocre intellects. Hence it is that Śaṅkara does not hesitate to style even Brahman meditated upon as ‘Para Brahman’, when the context is clear enough that it is Brahman with qualities. Witness the following quotation:—

(४) ‘अप्राणो हामा: शुभः:’ (मू. २-१-२) इति श्रुति: शुद्धब्रह्मविषया। इत्य तु ‘मनोपथः प्राणशारीरः’ (छ्रा. ३-१४-२) इति समुपङ्क्तब्रह्मविषया इति विशेषः। अतो विवक्षितगुणोपपत्तः परमेव ब्रह्मोपायत्वेनोपद्रश्यितः गम्यते॥

“‘Without Prāṇas, without mind, pure’ – is a Śruti relating to the Pure Brahman, while this Śruti – ‘Made up of mind, having Prāṇa as his body etc.’ (Ch. 3-14-2) refers to Brahman with qualities. This is the difference between the two texts. Therefore since the qualities intended to be taught by the Śruti apply to Brahman only, we have to conclude that it is Para Brahman alone that is to be meditated upon.” SBh. 1-2-2.

It is obvious that Saguna Brahman intended for meditation has been itself styled Para Brahman, as nobody would fall into the error of imagining that Brahman without qualities is meant by that term. As to the propriety of applying the epithet ‘Higher Brahman’ here, it has to be noted that qualified Brahman is higher relatively as compared with the individual self. That this line of reasoning is justifiable according to Śaṅkara, is vouched by the following:

(५) ननु अपरब्रह्मपरिषुण्ड ‘परं पुरुषम्’ इति विशेषयं जोय-पद्यते। नैष दोषः। पिण्डपाल्यम् प्राणस्य परत्वोपपत्तः॥

“Objection:— If the lower Brahman is taken to be meant in this passage (Pr. 5-5), the epithet ‘Param Purusham’ (the higher Person) would not be consistent.
Reply—This fallacy cannot be imputed here. For Prāṇa may himself be well regarded as ‘higher,’ relatively in comparison with Virāt.” SBh. 1-3-13.

This is a discussion devoted to the interpretation in the Prashna Upanishad (5-2-5) where it has to be determined which Brahman is meant by ‘the Higher Purusha’ to be meditated upon through the symbol Aum. The prima facie view that it is the lower Brahman is sought to be justified by arguing that the word ‘higher’ is only relative.

20. So much for the apparent inconsistency in the use of the adjectives ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ with respect to Brahman. We have found that lower Brahman is not, according to Śaṅkara, either distinct from or inferior to higher Brahman in any way. It is identically the same Brahman that is sought to be known by the seekers of the highest grade or to be meditated upon by the middling aspirants. That Brahman is regarded as that from which the Universe originates, cannot militate against its being regarded as the higher Brahman, is readily seen from Śaṅkara’s clarification of the concept of causation already discussed in the previous section. Without tarrying any more to discuss this objection, we may now proceed to an examination of the concept of Īśvara as understood by Śaṅkara.

21. In his commentary on the second Sūtra of Sārīraka, Śaṅkara writes:

(१) अस्य जगत: नामस्वाभावान्वितव्याकृतिः, अनेककूटोपकृतसंयुक्तस्य, प्रतिनिधिदेशकालनिमित्तक्रियायादिश्रयस्य मनसाय-चिन्तयचनारुपस्य जन्मस्थितिभूतं यत: सर्वज्ञातु सर्वशक्तियोऽस्मिन् ध्यायेत भवति तदुद्भवं ....। न यथोत्तरविशेषणस्य जगतः यथोत्तरविशेषणायः ईश्वरं मूल्या अन्यत: प्राध्यानातु अचेतनातु, अणुध्योतभावातृ संसारिणो
The first sentence which describes the nature of the Universe has already been translated on page 20. The second sentence says that,

“The origination etc. of the Universe with these characteristics cannot be possibly conceived to be effected by any cause other than the Isvara possessing these qualities.” SBh. 1-1-2.

It is clear that the secondless Brahman is equated here with Isvara (Ruler) who is omniscient and omnipotent.

This apparent self-contradiction – that Brahman is featureless and at the same time possesses the qualities of omniscience and omnipotence – is what puzzled Thibaut and made him remark: “Placing myself at the point of view of a Śaṅkara, I am startled at the outset by the second Sūtra of the first Adhyāya” (Vs. Int. p. XCTI). But Śaṅkara persists in this identification of the absolutely featureless Brahman with Isvara in the body of his Bhāṣṭya throughout. Take for instance, the following extract:–

(२) एवं प्राप्ते अभिव्यक्ते। योंयमहयतवादिगुणको भूतयोगिः, स परमेश्वर एव स्वात्मान्य इति। कथमेतदवाग्यते? कथमेकै भिन्नहृदयवादनात्। ‘यः सर्वज्ञ: सर्वविद्’ (२४७. १०-१०) इति॥

“To this objection we reply: This source of all beings, the possessor of qualities like invisibility etc. is the highest Lord only and nothing else. How is this conclusion arrived at? Because His attributes have been cited. (To explain:) The clause ‘He who is all-knowing and all-perceiving’ evidently refers to the exclusive attribute of the Highest
It is evident that negations of specific features has been here spoken of as though they were qualities, and that very Brahman without features has been styled as the Highest Īśvara.

22. The derivative meaning of the word Īśvara is ‘ruler’. It would be interesting to enquire how Śaṅkara, an Absolutist who postulates One Brahman without a second, reconciles himself to the idea of a ruler and admits the distinction of an omniscient ruler and the ruled into his system without self-contradiction. The following extract throws abundant light on this point:

(१) कृत्स्न्यज्ञात्मवादिन: एकलवैकान्त्यातु, ईश्वरीश्चित्वा-भावे, ईश्वरकारणप्रतिज्ञाविरोध इति चेतु, न; अविद्यात्मकनामरूप-बीजव्याकरणप्रेषणात्म सर्वज्ञतस्य। ‘तत्सान्तः एतस्मादत्त्वम आकाशः संभूतः’ (तै. २-१) इत्यदिवाकर्यं नित्यशुद्धबुद्धपरमेश्वरपुत्र। सर्वज्ञातु, सर्वशक्तिः, ईश्वरातु, जगज्ञानिनिष्ठितील्या नाचेतनातु प्रथानातु, अन्यसाधां इत्येवोऽधर्मः प्रतिज्ञातु: ‘ज्ञानायुर्य यतः’ (वेद.सू. १-१-२) इति। सा प्रतिज्ञा तदवस्त्रैव न तद्विद्वधार्थः: पुनरिष्ठोच्चये कथं नोच्ये अत्यत्तमभ्यं: एकाद्वार अद्वितीयत्वं च बृजना? श्रुणु यथा नोच्ये। सर्वज्ञायुश्चत्तत्त्वायु आवृत्त्वं हिवाविद्याकाल्यं नामतुये तत्त्वायुवाच्च अनिवर्तनीये ज्ञानात्मके सर्वज्ञायुश्च श्वाय, शक्ति:, प्रकृति: — इति च शृङ्गत्त्वायुम्योऽर्भित्ये। ताभ्यायमय: सर्वज्ञ ईश्वर: ‘आकाशो वै नाम नामरुपयोनिर्विन्धिता’ (छां. ८-१६-१) इति श्रुते:।}

एवमविद्याकृत्तनामरुपपद्यातुनुरोधी ईश्वरो भवति, व्योभे घटकराकादवाक्यातुनुरोधी। स च स्वात्मपुत्तातुने घटाकारणशास्त्रीयानु अविद्याप्रत्ययस्तःतपतनामरुपकृतरूपकरणस्कृतत्तुनुरोधिनो जीवायुसः विज्ञानात्मनः: प्रतीते व्यवहारविषये। तदेवमु अविद्यात्मकोपाधि-
The objection is started here that for one who holds the doctrine of the unity of the one changeless Brahmatman, there can be no distinction of a ruler and something ruled, and hence, this would counter the fundamental tenet of accepting Isvara as the cause of the world. And the answer is that the doctrine of Causality is Māyic, but the omniscient Isvara himself is distinct from the Māyic name and form. We have quoted this portion of the Bhāshya already (on p. 19), in connection with the clarification of the concept of Māyā.

The sequel to this portion has now to be reviewed in connection with the concept of Isvara, which is the subject-matter of the present section. Śaṅkara here says:

"Thus (Brahman) conditioned by name and form set up by Avidyā becomes Isvara, just as universal ether limited as it were by jars, pots etc. And empirically speaking, He (the Isvara) rules over the souls conditioned by individual consciousness (Vijñānātmanah) called Jīvas, who are really one with Himself, but who like the jar-spaces of the illustration depend upon aggregates of the body and the senses effected by name and form presented by Avidyā. Thus the Lordship of the Lord, his omniscience and omnipotence are only relative to the limitation caused by the conditioning of adjuncts of the nature of Avidyā. But in the Ātman, really divested of
all conditioning factors, on the dawn of Vidyā, there cannot be any room for conceptions like the ruler and the ruled, omniscience etc. Accordingly, it has been declared in the Śruti: ‘That is the Infinite, where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, knows nothing else’ (Ch. 7-24-1) and also by the text beginning with – ‘But when for this one all has become the Ātman alone, then what could one possibly see and with what?’ (Br. 4-5-15).” SBh. 2-I-I4.

23. If Brahman alone is really real, and without a second, in what sense is it Sarvajña (omniscient), Sarvaśakta (omnipotent)? Is it not a contradiction in terms to say that there is no act of knowing on the part of Brahman and yet it is all-knowing, it exercises no power and yet it is all-powerful? How can Brahman know at all before creation since it has no corporal adjunct then and, as we all know, body is a necessary pre-requisite for consciousness to arise?

The Śruti says in reply to all this:

(१) न तस्य कार्यं करणं च विद्वते न तत्समवभ्यधिक्ष द्रव्यते।
पराभवं ज्ञातिविविधिः श्रूयते स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानवलक्ष्याय च।।

“He has no body and no senses. There is none equal to or greater than Him. His supreme power is heard to be variously described, and belonging to His very nature is His knowledge, strength and act.” Śve. 6-8.

[Consciousness is here described as Brahman’s very nature, and so is His power.]

The following extracts from the Bhāshya, pondered over, would throw abundant light on the true nature of the consciousness and power ascribed to the changeless Brahman without a second:
(2) यस्य हि सर्वविषयार्थाभासन्भवं ज्ञानं नित्यपरिति, सोह- 
सर्वज्ञ इति विपरितिश्चुद्। अनित्यते हि ज्ञानस्य क्षत्रियार्थाति, 
क्षत्रियेऽ ज्ञातीत्यसर्वज्ञात्मणि स्यातु, नासी ज्ञानित्यते दोषोऽपि।

“It is a self-contradiction to maintain that one who 
possesses eternal Consciousness capable of throwing light 
on everything, is not omniscient. If His knowledge were 
impermanent, He could know things sometimes, and 
could not know at other times, and consequently it would 
follow that He may not be omniscient. This defect is 
inconceivable in case His Consciousness is eternal.”

SBh. 1-1-5.

[Consciousness being His very nature, it is inconceivable 
that He does not know certain things on certain occasions.]

(3) शक्तिः कारणस्य कार्यनियमशायं कालयमाना नात्या, 
असती वा कार्यं नियंत्रस्तु। असत्त्वाविशेषताः, असत्त्वाविशेषाचः। 
तस्मात्, कारणस्यादिभेदं शक्तिः, शक्तिःकार्योऽस्मां कार्यम्।

“The power which may be supposed to inhere in the 
cause in order to ensure a particular effect (and no other), 
cannot ensure the production of the particular effect if it 
is other than the cause, or non-existent. For in that case, 
it would be quite like any other thing which is non- 
existent or other than the cause (and there could be no 
valid reason why that cause alone should produce the 
particular effect). Hence we have to conclude that the 
power is identical with the cause, and the effect is 
identical with the power.”

SBh. 2-1-18.

24. To sum up, Sankara’s concept of Para 
Brahman, Apara Brahman and Īśvara is that the same 
Brahman is called Higher Brahman when it is made 
the subject of enquiry as Reality, Lower Brahman 
when it is recommended in the Śrūtis as an object of 
meditation, and Īśvara or the omniscient and 
omnipotent when it is thought of as the cause and
ruler of the phenomenal world containing individual souls. The distinction is admitted only from the thought-position of the student of Vedānta and there is no distinction or difference allowed in Brahma itself. The so-called Consciousness and power of the Divine being are eternally identical with the Being and it is only relativity that makes Vedāntins speak of God's knowing or being the potential cause of an effect, just as it is in empirical life when we say 'fire burns the faggot', 'the river flows' or 'the sun shines upon the snake when it creeps out of the anthill'. It is clear that the Absolutism of Advaita is in no way affected by these conventional ways of thinking or speaking.
5. BONDAGE AND RELEASE

25. We have seen that Śaṅkara’s clarification of the concept of Īśvara demands the supposition of two distinct stand-points. Īśvara controls the destiny of individual souls only in the sphere of the common-sense view (जीवात्मानः विज्ञानायतं: प्रतीतः व्यवहारविषये); from the standpoint of the really real, however, there is no distinction of the ruler and the ruled, or omniscience and limited knowledge at all. (न परमार्थत: ... आदिनि ईशिब्रूल्लाञ्चसर्वेऽवादिव्ययहार उपपादते।) On what basis this distinction of the two view-points is formed, we shall consider later on. Meanwhile, if we grant that the distinction of the Ruler and the ruled is true on the empirical plane only, it follows as a corollary that the idea of bondage and release for the soul is also true on that plane only. The Śruti sanctions this deduction:–

(1) संपुत्तमेतापि स्वरामकारं च व्यक्तायन्तं भरते विपश्चिमीशः।
अनीश्चात्मा कुच्छ्यो भोजन्यावत् ज्ञात्वा देवं पुच्छ्यते सर्वपाणः॥

“This changeful and the changeless, both the evolved and the involved Universe mutually correlated, the Īśa supports. The helpless individual Ātman is bound on account of being an experiencer (of fruit of action). By knowing that Shining One, however, he is freed from all bonds.” Śve. 1-8.

(2) पुरुषेकादश्वास्मज्ञानायक्षचेदतस:।
अनुभाव न जोचति विपुलाः विपुच्छते॥
“This citadel of eleven gates belongs to the Unborn whose nature as Consciousness is never crooked. Meditating on Him through knowledge, one grieves not. And being freed, he is freed for ever.” Ka. 5-1.

26. Texts like the ones we have just now quoted, teach in the clearest manner that knowledge of the true nature of Ātman alone can release the soul, thereby implying that it is Avidyā or primeval ignorance only that binds the soul. The following Śruti is explicit on this latter point:

(3) ते तपर्यंनतस्त्वं हि न: पिता योक्यमाकविद्वाया: परं पारं तारवसि II

“Worshipping him (Pippalāda), Bhāradvāja and others gratefully said: ‘Thou art indeed our real father, for thou hast taken us across our ignorance (Avidyā) to the other shore.” Pr. 6-8.

27. Śaṅkara appeals to Upanishadic texts of this type when he propounds his doctrine of Mōksha (Release):–

(1) एवमविद्वादिद्विधेण धर्माधर्मतात्त्तात्त्तमनिमितं शरीरोपादामूवेकं सुखुःखाद्वारमय अनिन्यं संसाररूपं श्रुतिस्मृतिन्यायप्रा मिदम॥ तथा च श्रुति: ‘न ह वै सार्वरस्य सत: प्रियाप्रियोपहितातिसि’ (छान. 8-१२-१) इति यथार्थितं संसाररूपं अनुवदति। ‘अश्रीरं वाव सन्तनं न प्रियाप्रियं स्युः’ (छान. 8-१२-१) इति प्रियाप्रिय्यस्यप्रश्र्वल्प्रतिविधात, चोदनाल्क्षणाभ्यत्कार्यं पोक्षार्यस्य अश्रीरत्वस्य प्रतिविधात इति गायते॥

“This nature of Samśārā (mundane life), the ephemeral experience of pleasure and pain of changing degrees by assuming different bodies due to gradation of meritorious and unmeritorious deeds of beings subject to defects like Avidyā, is well-known from Śrutis, Smrtis and reasoning.
Accompanyingly the Śruti reaffirms this nature of Sāṁsārā as described above when it says: ‘There is indeed no freedom from the oppression of pleasure and pain for a being so long as it is embodied’ (Ch. 8-12-1), and since contact of pleasure and pain is denied for the liberated one by the Śruti, ‘Pleasure and pain, indeed, do not touch one who is without a body’ (Ch. 8-12-1), it can be inferred that unembodiedness called Mōksha is not an effect of meritorious deeds (धर्मे) known through the Vedic injunctions.” SBh. 1-1-4.

(२) अश्रीरित्वमेव धर्मकार्यम् इति चेतुः, न। तत्स्य स्वाभाविक-ल्यावत्। अश्रीरित्वमेव शरीरित्वमेव स्वतंत्रतम्। महानं विभुपत्तानां प्रज्ञा

ध्रीरो न शोचति’ (का. २-२२), ‘अप्राणो ध्रुवम्: शुभः’ (मु. २-१-२), ‘अस्मृते हायं पुरुषः’ (श्र. ४-३-१५) इत्यादि-श्रुतिः। अतः

एव अनुपेक्षकर्मफलविलक्षणं ग्रोहारङ्गम् अश्रीरित्वमेव नित्यं इति सिद्धम्।

"Objection: Unembodiedness may be itself the effect of Vedic Dharma.

Reply: No, for that is the very nature of Ātman. Witness the following Śrutis: The wise person who knows the Ātman that is unembodied even while he is in the bodies, changeless among the changeful bodies, one who knows this great and all-pervading Ātman never grieves’ (K. 2-22), ‘He is indeed without Prāṇa (life-breath) and without Manas (mind) and pure’ (Mū. 2-1-2), ‘This Purusha (Person) is indeed never tainted by anything’ (Br. 4-3-15). For this very reason, it is to be concluded that unembodiedness called Mōksha (Final Release) is quite unlike any effect of religious work which has got to be performed.” SBh. 1-1-4.

28. Śaṅkara reinforces his argument that final release is only the dispersal of ignorance and no more, by appealing to Śrutis that teach immediate release as soon as enlightenment dawns.
CLARIFICATION OF CERTAIN VEDÂNTIC CONCEPTS

(1) अधि च ‘ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मवेद भवति’ (मु. ३-२-९), ‘श्रीयन्ते
चाय योग योग्याणि तस्मान् द्वे परावर्त’ (मु. २-२-८), ‘आनंदे ब्रह्मणो
विद्वन्न। न विद्वतर कृतमयन’ (ले. २-९), ‘अथवं वै न जनक गा०सी’
(ब्रु. ४-२-४) ‘तद्वाब्राह्मदेववेदमें ब्रह्मार्केति तस्मात्सारस्वर्भवतः’
(ब्रु. १-४-१०), ‘तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमुपश्यतः’ (ई. ७)
- इहयेवमाया: श्रुत्यः, ब्रह्मविद्यान्तरं योक्तं दर्शयत्यः, मध्ये
कार्यान्तरं वारःवरति॥

"Moreover, Śrutis like these point out that Mōksha
accrues immediately after the dawn of the knowledge of
Brahman, and thus precludes the necessity for anything
else to be done in the interval before Release. ‘One who
knows Brahman, becomes Brahman itself’ (Mu. 3-2-9),
‘When that Brahman which is the Higher as well as the
Lower is seen, all his residual works perish’ (Mu. 2-2-8),
‘Knowing the bliss of Brahman, one fears nothing
whatever’ (Tai. 2-9), ‘O Janaka, fearlessness, indeed, hast
thou attained’ (Br. 4-2-4), ‘It knew itself in the form ‘I am
Brahman’ and thence it became all’ (Br. 1-4-10), ‘What
delusion, and what lamentation can there be for one who
has realized oneness? (Īs. 7.)’"

SBh. 1-1-4.

(2) तथा ‘तद्वैतत् पञ्चयन्तिर्वादैव: प्रतिपदे अहं मञ्जरवन् सूर्यशः’
(ब्रु. १-४-१०) इति ब्रह्मदेवक्षेत्रस्मिन्तथा कर्त्त्वत्वात्तरवारणाय
उदाहर्यम्। यथा ‘तिष्ठतु गायति’ इति तिष्ठतिगायत्ययद्वैव तत्कार्यं
कार्यान्तरं नास्तीति गमये॥

“We might likewise quote the passage (Br. 1-4-10)
‘Seeing this same Brahman Rśhi Vāmadeva discovered
(the Mantra) ‘I have been Manu and Sūrya’ to show how
the Śruti wards off the idea of something to be done in
the interval between realization of Brahman and
becoming all this Universe. This passage is analogous to
the statement ‘He sings standing’ where it is conclusive
that there is no action intervening between the acts of
standing and singing.”

SBh. 1-1-4.
29. There is a special advantage, in thus conceiving Mōksha, for as Śaṅkara shows:

अतोपिदाकाल्पितसंसारित्वनिविवतने नित्यमुक्तित्वस्वरूपसमर्पणात्‌
मोक्षस्यानिविवतदेशः ||

“Hence as the Śāstras remove the idea of one’s being a transmigratory soul imagined by Avidyā and reveal one’s nature as the eternally free Ātman, no blemish of impermanence can be attached to Release.”

SBh. 1-1-4.

It is a tenet acknowledged by all schools of Vedānta, that Mōksha is eternal, but no school other than that of Śaṅkara, can escape the charge of the so-called Final Goal being impermanent, seeing that all these schools treat the Summum Bonum as the effect of some religious act of discipline enjoined in the Śrutis. Śaṅkara’s tradition is unique in treating the bondage of mundane suffering as the figment of nescience and Release as the result of right knowledge arising from the teaching of the Upanishads.
6. **THE VALIDITY OF ŚĀSTRA**

30. ‘Śāstra’ is a name assigned by Vedāntins to the Vedas in general and to the Upanishads in particular. Thus in commenting on the third Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa, Śaṅkara writes

(१) 

Brahman is the source, the cause of the great Śāstra consisting of Rigveda etc. enlarged by various branches of learning which illumines all things like a big lamp, and which is almost omniscient. For the origination of such a Śāstra consisting of Rigveda etc., which is accompanied by the quality of omniscience, can hardly be conceived to proceed from anything but from an omniscient Being.”

SBh. 1-1-3.

[In the sequel to this para, it is argued that omniscience reaches its culmination only in the Great-Being from whom Rigveda etc. comes forth spontaneously like an expired breath.]

31. The present section is exclusively devoted to a consideration of the validity of the Śāstra in its aspect as the Upanishads. How are the Upanishads to be considered as a valid means of right knowledge? Are they the source of knowledge regarding Brahman, in the same way that the Vedas are with regard to heaven (स्वर्गः), the gods (देवता:) etc., whose existence is to be taken for granted on the exclusive authority of
the Vedas enjoining certain rituals which lead to them, the performer of those religious works after death? Here is Śaṅkara’s answer:

(1) न धर्मज्ञासायामिव श्रुत्यादयां एव प्रमाणं ब्रह्मज्ञासायाम्, किं तु श्रुत्यादयोऽसुभवादयस्य यथासभवस्य प्रमाणम्। अनुभवसातस्य भूतवस्तुविषयत्वाच्य ब्रह्मज्ञानस्य कर्तव्ये हि विषये नानुभवालेक्ष्यास्वतित सत्याविद्याज्ञानस्य प्रमाणं स्यात्। पुरुषब्रह्मबलद्व्याच्य कर्तव्यस्य ...। न तु वस्तु एवम्, ज्ञेयम्, अति, नाति — इति वा विकल्पयते। विकल्पनात्तु पुरुषबुद्धयेषाः। न वस्तुवाशात्म्जां पुरुषबुद्धयेषाम्, किं ताहि वस्तुनिर्मितेऽतत्।।

“Śruti etc., alone are not the means of knowledge in the case of the enquiry into the nature of Brahman, as it is in the enquiry with regard to the nature of Dharma (religious work), but Śruti etc. and intuition etc. also as the case may be, are here the means, for the Knowledge of Brahman is to culminate in Intuition, and relates to a factual existent Entity. (To explain:) With regard to a religious duty, there being no need of any Intuition, Śruti etc. alone can be deemed to be the valid means, and this for the additional reason that the origination of religious duty entirely depends upon the will of a person ...... but an existent thing cannot in this manner be conceived alternatively to be such, or not such, existent or non-existent at one’s will. Alternative thoughts with regard to a thing depend entirely upon the imagination of a person, but the truth of a thing does not depend upon the will of a person but depends entirely upon the nature of the thing.” SBh. 1-1-2.

Elsewhere Śaṅkara makes his view clearer with regard to the matter in hand:—

(2) कर्षाले हि स्वर्गादी अनुभवावालोऽस्य व्याधाद्व्यात् भवेद् न वा इति। अनुभवालोऽस्य तु ज्ञेयावाद्व्यात्, ‘तत्साहादीप्राशायत्वं’ (बृ. 3-4-१) इति श्रुते:। ‘तत्वपार्थि’ (छात्र. ६-८) इति च सिद्धवुद्धवदेशात्।
"In the case of the results of religious works, which is not within the range of Intuition, a doubt may possibly arise as to whether it would come true or not. But the result of knowledge is within the range of Intuition, for the Śruti refers to it as 'That which is actual and directly known' (Br. 3-4-1), and teaches the identity of the individual self and the Universal Self, in these words 'That thou art' (Ch. 6-8-7) as an ever-existing fact. Surely the sentence 'That thou art' cannot be stretched to mean 'That thou shalt become after death.'"

SBh. 3-3-32.

32. A doubt may possibly rear its head here: How can the Upanishadic texts convey an idea of what Brahman is to us? Sentences are made up of words and words can denote or connotate only objective things which possess predicables like genus, quality, action or relation. But in the Upanishads, Brahman is not only denied all attributes, but also declared to be strictly inexpressible by words and unthinkable by the mind:

(१) एत्त्हैं तद्गुरुं गार्ग ब्राह्मणं अभिवदन्त्यस्यूलन्मण्य-हुस्यस्यस्यक्षार्थमलोहितयम्नेहङ्कार्यवतंत्रोऽवाढ्यनारायणस्यक्ष्यमस्यमात्मस्य-धृत्रां भ्राम्रम्भवान्नाशोऽते ज्ञस्क्षमप्रणालमुरध्वभाग्यन्तरभार्यं न तद्विपाति किंतु तदस्माति किंतु ॥

"This indeed, O Gārgi! Brāhmaṇas regard to be the Akṣhara (the Imperishable). It is neither gross nor subtle; neither short nor long; not red, not viscid, without shadow or darkness, not air, not ether, unattached; without taste, without smell, having no eyes, having no ears, having no organs of speech, having no mind, having no light, having no life-breath, having no opening, having no measures and having neither inside nor outside. It eats nothing whatever. No one eats it."

Br. 3-8-8.
(2) यतो वाचो निवर्तने। अप्राप्य पनसा सह॥

"Whence speech (and other organs of sense) return unable to reach it, along with the mind." Tai. 2-9.

It is ineffable not because words are inadequate to describe it, but because it is the eternal subject which objectifies everything else and so can be objectified by no words.

(3) यद्याचारण्युद्विन्ते येन वाग्मयुक्ते॥ ......
चमनसा न मनुले येनाहुयनो मतमु ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्यं विद्य नेदें यदिद्दमुपासते॥

"That which speech cannot express, but which itself expresses speech ...... That which the mind cannot think of, but which itself, they say, thinks of the mind. Know that alone to be Brahman, not this which they meditate upon as an object." Ke. 1-5, 6.

Thus, Brahman is beyond the region of the senses and the mind which alone are the instruments through which one can know objective things in ordinary life. On the other hand, it is of such a nature that it shines forth by its own inherent light and lights up both the senses and the mind and enables them to throw light on their respective objects. If so, it will be asked, how can even the Śruti describe Brahman which is the light of eternal Witnessing Consciousness, which is the prerequisite to know even the Vedas as such?

33. Śaṅkara points out that there being no need for any means to establish the existence of Brahma-Atman (Brahman that is our very Self), the Śrutis are
called Pramāṇa (means of knowledge) by courtesy insofar as they remove the distinctions superimposed upon Brahman by Avidyā. We have seen that Avidyā is the mutual superimposition of the Self and the not-Self, and it is only through ignorance that we speak of the means and objects of knowledge:

(१) तत्त्वतः अविद्याभ्याम् आत्मानात्मानोरितेनार्थायं पुरस्कृत्य सवं प्राभावमेत्यवहारं: लौकिका वैदिकाल यद्वा: , सर्वी च शास्त्राणि विद्विप्रतिषेधप्रकृतपराणि।

"It is by presupposing this mutual superimposition of the Self and the not-Self, called Avidyā, that the conventions both secular and sacred of the means and object of right knowledge obtain in life, and so do the Śāstras dealing with injunctions and prohibitions and even with final Release." SBh.

(२) न ह्यात्मा आग्नेय: : कस्यचित्त, स्वयंसिद्धवत्।

"Ātman or Self, as is well-known, is no adventitious thing for any one, for He is self-established." SBh. 2-3-7.

(३) अविश्वतेव ब्रह्मणे : शाश्वयोनिन्त्यानुपतिरिति येतु, न; अविद्याकपिलमेवतिद्वृत्तपतिपतिपतिचायस्य। न हि शास्त्रमेव प्रतिपतिपतिरिति, कि ताहि, प्रतिपतिपतिचाय अविश्वतेव अविद्याकपिलमेवतेत्र-प्रतिपतिपतिचायस्य।

"Objection: If Brahman is not an object of any action, then it cannot be maintained that the Śāstra is the means of knowing It.

Reply: Not so, for the Śāstra purports to wipe off the distinctions superimposed on Brahman by Avidyā (To explain:) The Śāstra does not indeed propose to teach Brahman as such and such an object, but it teaches
Brahman as no object at all, being the inmost Self and removes all distinctions created by Avidyā such as the knowable, knower and knowledge.” SBh. 1-1-4.

The word आदि (‘such as’) in this passage includes the distinctions of (1) desired object, desirer, and desire, (2) deed, doer and doing, and (3) experienced fruit of action, experiencer and experience. All of these, being superimposed on Brahman, vanish the moment that Brahman is Intuited as Reality devoid of all distinctions and differences. Appearances, as is well-known, have no existence of their own apart from the substrate on which they are superimposed and their sublation merely means the knowledge of their essential oneness with the substrate.

34. The Śāstra therefore, is a valid means of knowledge regarding Brahman insofar as it brings on the Intuition of Brahman by showing how all distinctions and differences are mere appearances superimposed on Brahman. Even the empirical means of knowledge, like perception, are held to be valid for this very same reason that they ultimately produce actual intuition of their object. Our effort to see a thing, for instance, ends with the dawn of sight, the intuition of the thing sought to be seen. But then there is this difference between the ordinary means of right knowledge and the Śāstra as a means of knowing Brahman: Even after we have perceived or inferred the existence of a phenomenal thing, the distinction of the knower, knowable and knowledge stays on as before; whereas when the Knowledge of Brahman-Ātman dawns, this distinction is sublated for good. The following remarks of Śaṅkara about this final Intuition
are worthy of note:—

(१) अपि चात्तिमंद्र प्रमाणम् आत्मकारवेयः प्रतिपादकम्, नात: परं किकृदाकारसत्सिताः। यथा हि लोके ‘यज्ञ’ इत्युक्तके किम्?
केन? कथम्? — इत्याकारसत्सिते, नैवं ‘तत्त्वसित’, ‘अहस्व ब्रह्मायिष’
इत्युक्ते किकृदात्त्वादिशुचित्म् असित, सर्वात्तैक्कल्विषयत्वावगते:। सति हि
अन्यस्मिनंविषययागे अर्थं आकार्ष्य स्पद्त; न त्तत्त्वात्तैक्कविषयके गणाविषययागाद्योर्वद्वस्ति य आकार्ष्येत।।

“Moreover, this means of knowledge revealing the unity
of Ātman is final; and there is nothing else that can be sought
to be known subsequently. (To explain) When, for instance,
in common usage it is laid down that ‘One should sacrifice’,
it is at once sought to be known, what, by what means, and
how (one is to sacrifice); but there is nothing else to be sought
to be known when it is said ‘That thou art’, ‘I am Brahman’;
for the resulting Intuition relates to the Unity of the Self of
all. It is only when something else remains, that the desire
to know it can possibly arise. But there is nothing else which
remains to be known over and above the Unity of Ātman.” SBh. 2-1-14.

(२) न चेष्यपवर्गित्तोयक्ति इति शक्यं वक्तुपू। ‘तत्त्वात्स्तिकेये
विज्ञाने’ इत्यादिशुभित्तिः।।

“Nor is it possible to maintain that no such Intuition
is ever produced, for there are Śrutis like the following
‘He was convinced of this instruction of his father’
(Ch. 6-13-3).” SBh. 2-1-14.

[The Śruti is not quoted here as a mere authority, for
preceding this statement there is a series of questions and
answers in the train of arguments based upon Intuition.]

(३) न चेष्यपवर्गित्तिरनिधिका भ्रान्तिवा इति शक्यं वक्तुपू;
विविधानिवृत्तिफलदश्नानात, बाणकज्ञानात्रामाणावत्। प्राक्षचार्यक्षकावर-
गतेर्वाहित: सर्वः सत्यानुत्त्वयाः लौकिको वैदिक्ष: — इत्योवचाम।।
“Nor, again, is it possible to assert that this Intuition is useless, or that it is a hallucination, for we do see that Avidyā is effectively removed, and there is no other knowledge to sublate it. We have already remarked that all talk of the true and the false is only before the dawn of the Knowledge of the Unity of Ātman.”

SBh. 2-1-4.

[There can be no question of error in the sphere of non-duality.]

35. This unique conception of the finality of knowledge and extinction of all means of knowledge, the Śāstra no less than the other ordinary means, at the dawn of enlightenment, has been expressly stated in so many words elsewhere by Śaṅkara:

(१) तस्मात् अहं ब्रह्मासिम—इत्येतद्वसाना एव सर्वं विधयं, सर्वाणि चेतराणि प्राप्ताणि। न हि अहेकतुषपदेयादितत्तात्मावङ्गतौ निर्विषयवाणि अप्राप्तात्काणि च प्राप्ताणि भवितुमहत्तीति ॥

“Therefore, all injunctions and all other means of knowledge, end with the dawn of the Intuition ‘I am Brahman’. For when the Intuition of the secondless Ātman, neither to be accepted or shunned, arises, Pramāṇas (or means of knowledge) cannot continue to thrive, since there will be neither a knower nor objects to be known then.”

SBh. 1-1-4.

(२) ‘अन्त यितारपिता भवति’ इत्युपक्रमस ‘वेदा अवेदा’;
(ब्र. ४-३-२२) इतिवचनात् इत्यत एवास्माभि: शृंगेतरप्रवाहः प्रबोधे ॥

“Since there is the text beginning with “Here the father ceases to be the father’ which says ‘the Védas are no Vedas’ (Br. 4-3-22), non-existence of even the Śruti is certainly accepted by us in the state of Enlightenment.”

SBh. 4-1-3.
36. As a corollary from the validity of the Śāstra it follows that the words of a duly qualified teacher are as valid a means as the holy revelation itself, not because he is an authority on the subject, but because he has become one with the Supreme Ātman. One would reach at the truth provided that he follows the line of reasoning shown by such a teacher, but not by any independent ratiocination:–

(3) नैषा तर्कान्त मतिरापनेवा प्रोक्तांवैनेव सुज्ञानाय प्रेष्ट॥

“This knowledge, my dearest boy, cannot be acquired or refuted by speculation, but only as revealed by a teacher other than a speculator, can it lead to conviction.”
Ka. 2-9.

(४) न नरेशावरेण प्रोक्त एव सुविज्ञेयो बहुधा चिन्त्यमानः।
अपनयोगितेन गतिरत्न नास्ति अणीयान्तङ्कर्च्यमणिप्रमाणात्॥

“Taught by a person of inferior knowledge, this Ātman cannot be well-ascertained even if one should reason in various ways. There is no not-knowing, however, when taught by a teacher who has become one with this Ātman. For, He (this Ātman) is subtler than even the subtlest thing and beyond all reason.”
Ka. 2-8.
7. THE EMPIRICAL AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL VIEWS

37. Avidyā is the most fundamental of all the concepts we have so far considered. Man, as he is born, including the most intelligent of his kind who can distinguish truth from error, least suspects that deep down in his mind there might be a wider ignorance which engulfs within its range both the truth and error which he recognizes in ordinary life. That is why Śaṅkara begins his Introduction to Vedānta Sūtras with a concise and brisk statement of the nature of that error:—

(१) सत्यारूढ़े मिथुनीकृत्य ‘अहमिदम्’ ‘समेदम्’ इति नैसर्गिकोज्यं लोकव्यवहारः !

"It is a natural procedure on the part of man to base his conduct on the notions of me and mine, mixing up the real and the non-real.”

Introduction to Sūtra Bhāshya.

And the set purpose of the Upanishads is to blot out this fundamental error.

(२) अस्थानबाहितो: प्रहाणाय, आत्मेकतविद्याप्रतिष्ठो वर्णे वेदान्ताय आराध्यते !

"To destroy this basic cause of all evils, all the Vedāntas (or Upanishads) are begun in order to teach the Knowledge of the Unity of Ātman.”

Intro. to SBh.
38. This leads us to a consideration of the distinction of naive view of Reality and Truth and the Vedāntic view of the same. Śaṅkara contrasts these two viewpoints by the terms *Loka-dṛṣṭi*, and *Śāstra-dṛṣṭi* respectively, as for instance in the following passage:

In the Sūtra 2-1-24, the illustration of the milk was adduced to show that there may be a change in the substance of a thing even without an external cause, and that was only from *Lōkadrṣṭi* (the commonsense view). But from *Śāstra-dṛṣṭi* (the Vedāntic view), however, which entails the uniform dependence of an effect upon the Lord is not discarded.”

*Sbh. 2-2-3.*

Śaṅkara, however, uses another pair of names for these views, the *Vyāvāhārika* (the practical) and the *Pāramārthika* (Really Real), as in the following statement:

“The previous rejoinder, citing the illustration of the sea and its waves, was given while granting this *Vyāvāhārika* distinction (of practical life), of the experiencer and the experienced, but from the *Pāramārthika* (Really Real) stand-point, however, there is no such distinction.”

*Sbh. 2-1-14.*

We shall use these more familiar terms in our further discussion of these two stand-points.
39. The Sanskrit word *Vyavahāra* comprehends not only thought and expression but also conduct based upon them. To think and talk of mother-of-pearl as silver, and proceed towards it with the intention of taking up the supposed silver, is *Mithyā-vyavahāra* (wrong behaviour), while treating actual silver as silver in these three ways is *Samyag-vyavahāra* or right behaviour. Now the Vedāntic view is that all our ideas, speech and conduct based upon practical life (*vyāvahārik*) are really due to ignorance from the *Pāramārthika* (transcendental, Really Real) stand-point. So then, *Vyāvahārika* view is the same as the view of ignorance (*ājīva-vyākhyānta* or the view that distinguishes the knower and the known (*prameyavāda*), or the view of ordinary life (*loka-vyākhyānta*), or the view based upon waking life (*jāmātya-vyākhyānta*). It is on the inborn tendency of the human mind to falsely superimpose the Self and the not-Self (the body, the senses and the mind of the waking state) upon each other that this *Vyāvahāric* view is based.

40. How is the waking point of view known to be the result of an error? We have already seen how this view takes the body and the organs of sense etc. to be real without any warrant, and mixes up the real Witnessing Ātman and the unreal not-Self. The following description of waking as *Laukika* rehearses the same idea at full length.

(1) सवस्तु संवृत्तिस्त वस्तुना सह वर्तति इति सवस्तु। तथा च उपलब्धि: उपलम्भः। तेन सह वर्तति इति सोपलम्भः च। शास्त्रादिः सर्वव्यावहारास्पद्ग्राह्माया कल्पष्टं हवं लौकिकं। लोकादन्तैं लौकिकं। जागरितं इत्येतत्। एवंलक्षणं जागरितमिथ्यते वेदान्तेऽऽ।
“‘With a thing’ means that it contains objective things which are real from the stand-point of Avidyā. And ‘with knowledge’ means that it contains the knowledge of these things. That which is the field of all Vyavahāra including that of the Śāstra, the duality consisting of the knowing subject and the knowable objects, is called Laukika, the ordinary life, which is the same thing as the waking state. This is waking as described in the Vedāntas.”

GKBh. 4-87.

41. It may appear to be a bold statement to say that even the Śāstraic Vyavahāra has reality only in the field of Avidyā. Is it not self-stultifying to say that the unreal Śāstra reveals Reality? And why should we shamelessly call perception and other means of knowledge unreal while we have to deal with them all our life willy-nilly? Śaṅkara replies:

(१) नैष दोषः। सर्वव्यवहाराणामेव प्राण ब्रह्मात्मताविज्ञानातु सत्यलोपनते, स्वाज्ञव्यवहारस्येव प्राक्यबोधातु। यावदूः स सत्यतैज्ञप्रतिष्ठाति, तत्तु प्रयाणप्रयोगसिद्धक्षणेषु विकारेषु अनुत्त्वुप्तान्तरं कस्यचिदुपया। विकारानेव तु अहं मम - इत्यविद्यया आत्मालीयेन भावेन सवेण जन्नु: प्रतिष्ठरेत, स्वाभाविकहि ब्रह्मात्मतं हितवा। तस्मात् प्राक्यबोधात्मताप्रतिष्ठातु उपपत्त: सवेण लौकिको वैदिकद्वारा व्यवहारः। यथा सूक्ष्मस्य प्राक्यस्य जनस्य स्वक्षे उच्चावचारानु भावानु पञ्चवतो निष्ठप्रयुव प्रत्यक्षार्थमं विज्ञानं भवति प्राक्य प्रबोधातु, न च प्रत्यक्षार्थासामायार्थस्तक्तकालेभवति, तथात्।"

“This fault cannot be imputed to our position; for, all the Vyavahāras can be consistently real before Enlightenment dawns, like the Vyavahāra in a dream before waking. (To explain) So long as the Knowledge of the one real Ātman has not arisen, the idea of the unreality of the effects, that is, of the nature of the means of knowledge, objects of knowledge and the resultant knowledge never occurs to any one; on the other hand, every one takes the effects alone to be himself and his own and says ‘this is me, this is mine’, forgetting his own
true nature of being Brahmātman. Therefore all Vyavahāra (procedure), secular and Vedic, is consistent so long as one is not awakened to the Knowledge of one’s being the Ātman of Brahmic nature. This is just like the case of an ordinary person seeing all sorts of phenomena in a dream. He is sure that he actually perceives those things before he is awakened, and does not suspect they are only simulacra of perception.”
SBh. 2-1-14, p. 198.

Add to this the conception of Śāstra as the ultimate means of Knowledge as described in the previous section (p. 50) and we have a complete picture of Śāṅkara’s distinction of the empirical view and the transcendental or Śāstraic view.

42. It would be interesting and profitable to contrast the significance of the several concepts we have discussed so far, from these two distinct points of view. To aid the memory of the beginner, the results of such a contrast are subjoined in a tabular form.

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<td>Śṛṣṭi</td>
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8. MATTER AND METHOD

43. Since, according to Vedānta, Brahman is absolutely void of all distinctions, and that secondless Entity is the only Reality, one might well wonder: (i) how there could be a Science of Reality, (ii) how there could be any teaching of Brahman, (iii) to whom that teaching could be addressed and (iv) what purpose the teaching could possibly serve. These four primary considerations, called Anubandhas in the realistic Darśanas cannot gain entrance in the Advaita which knows no distinctions or differences. How is then a Science or Philosophy of Advaita possible at all?

44. This difficulty is obviated in Vedānta by adopting a method of teaching called the Adhyārōpāpavāda Nyāya. This method consists in the device of deliberately superimposing something on Reality for the time being, in order to remove some other superimposed characteristics, and then to rescind the presumed characteristic as well. That this is the only method adopted in the Upanishads has been shown by Śaṅkara in his commentaries on the Upanishads and explained in so many words in his commentary on the Bhagavadgītā. Thus in the course of explaining the meaning of Ślokas (verses 13 and 14 of Ch. XIII), which are by the way a virtual reproduction of Śvetāśvatara (III, 16 and 17), he writes:-
MATTER AND METHOD

(1) क्षेत्रोपाध्येदकृतं विशेषज्ञातं मित्रयैव क्षेत्रज्ञस्य — इति तदपनवने
क्षेत्रप्रमुखः 'न सत्यासाप्रत्येक्यते' इति। उपाधिकृतं विश्वासर्पणाय
अस्तित्वाभिगमयि भेद्धर्मवत् परिभाष्योद्धते ‘सर्वं: पाणिपादपम्’
इत्यादि। तथा हि संप्रदायविदं वचनम् ‘अध्यात्मायापादाद्याय निश्चितं
प्रपोज्यते’ इति।

“The several special features noticed in the Kshetrajña
(the Self) owing to the limiting conditions caused by the
different forms of Kshetra (the body etc.) being unreal,
have been rescinded in the previous Slōka, and Kshetrajña
has been taught to be realized as neither being nor non­
being. But in this verse (13), even the unreal nature,
manifested through the limiting conditions, has been
treated as though it were the property of the knowable
Self just to bring its existence home, and hence the
knowable Kshetrajña is spoken of as possessing hands
and feet etc. everywhere. Accordingly, there is the well­
known saying of the knowers of tradition: “That which is
devoid of all details is set-forth in detail through deliberate
superimposition and rescission.”

GBh. 13-13.

(2) उपाधिभूतपर्याणादात्मानंक्षेत्रस्यतदात्मानंक्षेत्रस्य
भूद्विधेयबिष्यं श्लोकारणम्: — ||

“Lest it should be supposed that this knowable Ātman
is really possessed of the senses such as hands and feet,
just because they are imputed to It, this next verse is
begun (to negate them).”

GBh. 13-14.

45. We shall try to show how here this device of
Adhyātma-rūpa-pāvāda (ascription and subsequent
negation) has been applied in the Upanishads in the
case of each of the concepts we have discussed in
the preceding pages:

(1) (a) अगोरणीयानोऽस्य
हलो महायानात्मा गुहायं निष्कितोधथस्य
जतो: ||
“Subtler than the subtlest, greater than the greatest, the Ātman is hidden in the cave (of the heart) of this born being.”

Tai. Na. 10.

Here Ātman is described as residing within the heart of the Jīva, who desires to know the truth about the Self. Hence this is an ascription of a place to the Ātman who being omnipresent cannot be located. This is done with the intention of withdrawing an extrovert mind which is naturally attracted by external objects of sense.

(b) एको देव: सर्वभूतेऽपु गूढः सर्वव्यापी सर्वभूतात्मानां ।
कर्माध्यक्षः सर्वभूताधिवासः साक्षी चेता केवलो निगुणं ॥

“The one Deva (God) is hidden in all beings. All-pervading, the one inmost Self of all creatures, presiding over all, the Witnessing Consciousness residing in all creatures, the One without a second, having no qualifying adjuncts.” Śve. 6-11.

This predication of omnipresence to Ātman as the Self of all, rescinds the ascription of its location in the heart of born creatures.

(२) (a) अविद्यायामत्रे वर्त्तमाना: स्ववः धीरा: पण्डितंत्मन्यायान: ।
दुस्त्रस्यामाा: परिवर्ति पूुढः अथ्यैव नीपया वच्चास्या: ॥

“Living in the midst of Avidyā but priding in their discriminating power and learning, the perplexed fools whirl round and round in Sāṁsāra like blind men led by one who is oneself blind.” Ka. 2-5.

Here it is presumed that there are persons who do not know the real nature of the Brahman-Self. Of course, it is on this supposition of the ignorance of Brahman-Ātman, that the enquiry into the nature of
Brahman is begun. It should be noted that the student of Vedānta is granted to be ignorant of his true Brahmic nature, and that Brahman is the object of enquiry. Both of these assumptions are quite necessary before the Śāstra or the teacher proposes to propound the real nature of Brahman. It is from this Adhyārōpa (deliberate superimposition) standpoint that Śaṅkara writes in his commentary on the first Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa:—

“‘एवं बहवो विप्रातिप्रण युक्तिवाक्यतद्भाससमायश: सत्न:।
तत्राविचार्य युक्तिक्षितू प्रसिद्धप्रयायो नि:श्रेयसातू प्रतिहयेत, अनर्घ च
इयाय।। तस्मातू बाह्जिज्ञासोपयासपूर्वः वेदान्तवाक्यमांसा
तद्विरोधितकोपकरणा नि:श्रेयसप्रयोजना प्रस्तुययते।।’’

“Thus there are many thinkers who differ from one another on this subject, some of them depending upon sound arguments and genuine texts while others depend on those of seeming validity. One who would accept any one of these opinions at random without seriously pondering over the matter, would be not only prevented from attaining the highest good, but even run the risk of becoming a prey to evil consequences. Therefore through proposing the enquiry into Brahman, this sacred investigation of the meaning of Vedānta texts, with the ancillary reasoning unopposed to them, is begun with the aim of showing the way to the highest good.”

SBh. I-1-1.

Here evidently besides the ignorance of Brahman, the validity of the Śāstra as a means to Release, and the efficacy of sound reasoning subservient to it, as also duly qualified aspirants for the final goal, are all taken for granted to be factual from the Adhyārōpa-standpoint of view.
“All this Universe consisting of religious works, Knowledge and Brahman supremely immortal, is verily Purusha. One who knows this to be concealed in the recess of his heart, verily cuts this knot of Avidya here and now, my dear boy.”

Mu. 2-1-10.

Here there is the Adhyārōpa of Vidyā and its efficiency in completely destroying Avidyā. Now, from the really real point of view, there is always only Brahman and nothing else. What is the correct view to take about these concepts of Vidyā and Avidyā? The following excerpt from Śaṅkara will clarify this:

(c) कर्म पुनरथप्रभोभ इति चेतु, यत्वं पूर्वसि तस्य ते—
इति वदामः। नवहम् ईश्वर एवोक्त: श्रुत्या। यथेवं प्रतिमोहसि
नस्ति कस्यचिद्प्रभोः। योरपरि दोषायादः कैश्चिदविवधया किलार्ज्ज्ञमः
सद्वित्यवस्तु अझ्मानुपपतितिति, सोऽपेते श्रुतुः।

Objection: But to whom does the Aprabōdha (ignorance) pertain?

Reply: We reply — To you who are asking this question.

Objection: But I am taught by the Śruti to be Īśvara Himself!

Reply: If you are thus awake, then there is no Avidyā attaching itself to any one. And by this reply the additional fault laid at the door of the system by some objectors may also be regarded as having been set aside. They say that Ātman having Avidyā as a second entity beside Him, Advaita would cease to be a fact.

SBh. 4-1-3.
Gauḍapāda has summed up this *Apavāda* (abrogation) of the assumption of Vidyā and Avidyā in the following verse:

अनादिमायया सुलो यदा जीवः प्रबुध्यते ।
अजजननिद्रप्रवधायेता कुयते तदा ॥

“When this Jīva awakes from his beginningless illusory dream, he then realizes the unborn, sleepless, dreamless, secondless Self.” GK. 1-16.

[Here ‘sleep’ is the name given to not-knowing, and ‘dream’ to wrong conception or Adhyāsa.]

46. Avidyā is the most fundamental concept used as a device for showing the illusory nature of all other concepts: It is to be itself overpassed when enlightenment dawns. We may now take up the other concepts to show how they serve as devices to teach the Truth applying this self-same principle of *Adhyārāpāpavāda*.

Ātman is assumed to be an individual self in order to explode the delusion that the body, the senses or the mind may be the self. Thus proceeding from the body one rises to the Consciousness of the true Self by taking for granted that the inner and more subtle non-Self is the actual Self and rejecting the grosser non-Self which was previously mistaken for the Self. Ordinarily man’s idea is so vague and confounded that he takes any one of the physiological or psychic forces or organs as his own self for practical purposes. This process is thus described by Śaṅkara:

(१) अध्यायो नाम अत्तिस्मस्ततुद्धिः: - इत्यथोधप:।
तद्यथा पुत्रभार्यादिपु विकलेपु सकलेपु वा अहमेव विकलः
सकलो वा इति
बाह्यस्मात्मान आत्मायथस्यति।
तथा देहपर्यंत श्वेतोष्ठम: तद्गःोष्ठम:।

*Śaṅkara's commentary on the Upanishads*
We have already stated that superimposition means mistaking one thing for another. To explain by citation of specific instances: A man superimposes properties of external persons such as those of his son, wife or others on himself and thinks that he himself has a maimed body or a sound and perfect body while they (the wife, son or others) are maimed or possess a sound and perfect body. Similarly, attributes of the body are superimposed when he thinks ‘I am stout, lean or frail’; ‘I am standing, I am going, I am jumping’. He superimposes the properties of the senses on himself, when he thinks ‘I am dumb, blind of one eye, deaf or impotent. So also he superimposes the properties of the internal organ (the mind) such as desire, will, doubt, certainty, etc. In the same way he superimposes the ego on the inner Átman who is the Witness of all its modifications and vice versa that inner Átman, the Witness of all, on the internal organ etc.’

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Elsewhere, Śaṅkara writes:

‘It is true that the Self to be known is partless, but there are many parts superimposed on him, such as the body, the senses, imagination, intellect and feeling or the experience of objects of sense. Now by one specific concentration, he discards one such part as the not-Self, and by another some other part. And so there is the possibility of gradual knowledge of the true Self.”

SBh. 4-1-2.
Thus by means of the assumption of particular pseudo-selves as the real Self, certain other such selves may be relegated to the class of not-selves, and the process might continue till at last one arrives at the genuine Ātman, the one Self in all beings.

47. Similarly the world is taught to be a creation or transformation of the Supreme Ātman in such Śrutis as (१) सोड़कापयत। बहु स्यां प्रजायेयत। स तपोधतयत। स तपस्तप्ता। इदं सर्वमयुञ्जत। (Tai. 2-6. ‘He desired that he might become plentious and be born as many, and created all this’); but in another place, the material of the universe may be declared to be Māyā मायाः तु प्रकृति विद्यात् (Śve. 4-10) thus denying real causation and elsewhere the whole Universe may be pronounced to be Brahman alone ब्रह्मांवेदं विश्विवं वरिष्ठ्यू ('All this indeed is verily Brahman itself' Mu. 2-2-11), while in a fourth place the whole manifestation of Brahman as with form and formless may be emphatically denied अयात्त आदेवो नेति नेति न हेतस्यादिति नेत्य्यथस्यक्षस्ति (Now for the teaching of the real Brahman, ‘Not this, not that’; there is no other way of describing Brahman except by negation (Br. 2-3-6).

The different ways of creation, described by different illustrations are only a device to take the aspiring mind to the realization of the real Ātman. So says the Revered Gauḍāpāda:-

मूल्योहविस्फुलिन्द्र्ये। सृष्टियो चोदितान्यथा।
उपायः सोड़कताराय नास्ति भेदः कथान्॥

"By illustrations like those of clay, gold and sparks, creation has been described in various ways by the Śrutis. All that is only a means to take the mind to Truth. There is no difference or distinction whatever in Brahman due to creation."

GK. 3-15.
48. We may now turn towards the concept of Īśvara. The word in Sanskrit literally means a ruler and hence it is only a relative term. Brahman is spoken of as Īśvara only when contrasted with the Jīvas from the empirical point of view. The apparent inconsistency of admitting the distinction of a God and the individual souls in the Absolutism of Vedānta, has been explained by Śaṅkara by postulating Māyic conditioning adjuncts (see para 16, p. 24) invariably by citing the illustration of the distinction of the Universal Ether (Akāśa) and ether conditioned by jars, pots, etc. And the seeming anomaly in using one and the same epithet Īśvara and even (Para-Brahman) for both the Higher and the Lower Brahmanas, has been cleared up (p. 31) by drawing the attention of beginners to the fact that one and the same Reality is meant in all these cases; only one has to keep in mind the context – whether of Jñāna (Knowledge) or of Upāsanā (meditation) in which the term is used to avoid confusion.

49. Bearing this in mind, we may now proceed to see how the Adhyātma-kopādhiṣṭhāna-dvāpaśraya, is applied to this concept of Īśvara. The following extract from Śaṅkara may be studied with profit in this connection:

(1) तदेवम् अविद्याभिधि;धिष्ठयित्स्थुत्देशतेष्यं पर्यत्तं सर्वात्मां सर्वस्वतितं च न परमायते विद्या अपातस्वाध्यायित्वम् आत्मानि ईश्वरैस्वर्त्तविद्वद्यवाहार उपमहते ।।

“Thus the Īśvarahood of Īśvara, has omniscience, omnipotence etc. are all due to the limitation caused by the adjuncts set up by Avidyā, while from the Paramārtha stand-point there cannot be reasonably āny thought of the distinction of the ruler and the ruled or omniscience
etc. in the Ātman whose essential nature is altogether free from all limiting adjuncts.”

SBh. 2-1-14.

And Śaṅkara shows how even the Śruti constantly makes use of the concepts like Īśvara from the standpoint of practical life:—

(२) व्यवहारार्थां तृत्त: श्रुतावपि ईश्वरादिव्यवहार:— ‘एष सर्वेष्ठर एष भूताधिपतिरेष भूतपाल एष सेतुविधिरण एष लोकानाम प्रसंभेदाय’ (३४. ४-४-२२) इति॥

“In the state of practical life, in the Śruti also the convention of Īśvara etc. has been enunciated: ‘This is the Ruler of all, this is the one Lord of all beings, this is the protector of all beings, this is the dam that maintains the boundaries so that there may not be any intermixing of the duties of these men.’ (Br. 4-4-22).”

SBh. 2-1-14.

And the Śruti elsewhere rescinds this assumption in the following words:—

एतत्ज्ञयं नित्येवात्मसंस्कृत्य नात: परं वेदितव्यं हि किद्विभूतः॥
भौला भोगयं प्रेरितारं च मलवा सर्व प्रोक्तं त्रिविधं ब्रह्मेततु॥

“This, which is eternally in one’s own Self has got to be known; for there is nothing else to be known beyond this. The experiencer, the object of experience and the Inspirer must be contemplated and known. All this, the threefold distinction mentioned here, is really Brahman.”

Śve. 1-12.

Here God, who guides the individual soul, is declared to be no other than Brahman in the same way as the soul itself. The distinction between Īśvara and the soul being based upon limiting adjuncts projected by Avidyā, disappears simultaneously with the Knowledge of their eternal Unity. So says Śaṅkara in another context:
Moreover, when non-duality is revealed by texts of the type of ‘That thou art’ by pointing out non-difference, then both Jīva’s liability to experience mundane life and Brahman’s creative aspect disappear, because all conventions of differences, being the display of delusion, are then banished by right Knowledge.

SBh. 2-1-22.

50. And now for the concept of Bondage and Release. The following Śruti refers to the Self in both these states:

(1) अनीश्चाताः सत्यं बध्यते भोक्तामावात् ज्ञात्वा देवं मुच्यते सर्वपापेऽः ॥

“The self, not being able to do anything of his own free-will, is bound because of its nature of being an experiencer of the fruits of action, but on knowing the Deva, the self-shining Brahman, he is freed from all his bonds.” Śve. 1-8.

It is evident that the text implies that bondage is due to ignorance, since Knowledge of the divine nature is declared to be the liberator. And how is Bhōktṝṭva the cause of bondage? We learn from another Śruti:

(2) आमेवद्विययं युक्तं भोक्त्रेत्वाहुर्मनोष्णः ॥

“The wise ones call him Bhōkta (experiencer) who is conjoined to the body, the senses and the mind.” Ka. 3-4.

And this so-called conjunction, we have seen
(p. 41), is the result of ignorance. So then from this Apavāda (rescission) view release becomes synonymous with the Knowledge of one’s eternal nature as having no body. This point Śaṅkara makes clear in the following words:

(3) अंगरेत्वमेव धर्माकार्यम् इति चेतु, न, तस्य स्वाभाविक-त्वात्। 'अश्वरीयं श्रीरिह्रनन्वयर्वश्रवस्थितम्। यहान्तं विभुमात्रामं मत्ता धीरो न शोचति' (का. २-२२), इत्यादिश्रुतिः॥

Objection: But this state of being freed from a body, is itself the effect of Vedic works!

Reply: No, it cannot be so. For, that is one’s eternal nature. For this, we have the authority of texts such as ‘The wise one who knows the bodiless One in all the bodies, Himself remaining changeless in all the changeful (bodies), as the great omnipresent Atman, never grieves.’ (K. 2-22).” SBh. 1-1-4.

So then the idea of one’s being bound by the body and obtaining Release from that Bondage ultimately, resolves itself into being ignorant of the nature of Ātman and dispelling that ignorance by means of right Knowledge. And we have clearly seen that the teaching of ignorance and Knowledge is also in its turn an instance of Adhyātropapāvāda.

Gauḍapāda who knows the spirit of Vedānta tradition, rightly remarks:

न निरोधो न चेत्तिति बझो न च साधकः।
न मुयुषुर्वः वै मुक्तः इत्येषा परमार्थत।॥

“No dissolution, no origin; no one bound, no one really practising the acts of discipline. Neither one who longs for Release nor indeed one who is Released. This is the true nature of things.” GK. 2-32.

51. The next concept to which this principle of
deliberate superimposition and rescission has been applied, may be now taken up. How is the conception of the validity of the Śāstra justifiable from the standpoint of Advaita? Adopting the Adhyārōpa point of view, the Śruti says:

(1) ‘सर्वे वेदा यत्तेदायकमानि’

“That Goal which all the Vedas teach.” Ka. 2-15.

(2) नावेदविन्मुते तं बृहनत्॥

“No one who is not proficient in the Vedas, can know that Great One.” Tai. Brā. 3-12-9-7.

This is of course from the Adhyārōpa point of view. From the Apavāda point of view, however, they proclaim:

(3) अन्तः पिताजिति भवति पातालपाति लोका अलोका देवा अदेवा वेदा अवेदा: ॥

“Here the father becomes no father, the mother no mother, the worlds no worlds, the gods no gods, and the Vedas no Vedas.” Br. 4-3-22.

[Where everything merges in the one Ātman, even the Vedas are no longer Vedas.]

It is only in the field of Avidyā that the Vedas are conceded to be a valid source of Knowledge. But when the Goal is reached there is no need for this concession, for then all is seen to be the one Ātman.

52. The concept of Vyavahāra (thought, expression and deed) is conceded only where we see duality, but there is no distinction whatever in the one Ātman and hence the concession is retracted in
the context of Reality:

(१) यत्र हि द्वैतपिव भवति तत्वित इतरं पश्यति तत्तितर इतरं
जिग्नित तत्तितर इतरं रसये तत्तितर इतरमभिवद्वति तत्तितर इतरं भौगोतित
तत्तितर इतरं मनुः तत्तितर इतरं शृंगारित तत्तितर इतरं विज्ञानाति यत्र
त्वस्य सर्वभावत्वाश्चूत् तत्तकन कं पर्यावलक्षेन कं जिग्नेतत्क न कं रसयेतु
तत्कन कर्मभिवदितत्क न कं शृंगुयातत्क न कं मन्दीत तत्कन कं स्पृशतत्क न
कं विज्ञानियासि।।

"Where it is as if it were duality, there one sees another, there one smells another, there one tastes another, one speaks to another, there one hears another, there one thinks of another, there one touches another, there one knows another. But where to this (enlightened one), all has become the one Ātman, there who is to see whom, there who is to smell whom, there who is to taste whom, there who is to speak to whom, there who is to hear whom, there who is to think of whom, there who is to touch whom, and who is to know of whom?"

Br. 4-5-15.

The Sruti says that even while seeing another and carrying on other functions of the sensory organs, it is duality as it were, for in reality it is Ātman all the while, and so the distinction of the ordinary view and the transcendental view is itself abrogated here.
9. SANNYĀSA AND YŌGA

53. We have so far dwelt upon Śaṅkara’s clarification of the most important Vedāntic concepts relating to the central teaching of the Upanishads regarding Reality. We have now to pass on to a consideration of two other concepts, Sannyāsa (renunciation) and Yōga (contemplation). These constitute the important steps of discipline which qualify an aspirant to enter upon the study of the cardinal doctrines of Vedānta.

54. The word Sannyāsa as popularly understood is associated with the mendicant life of a certain order of monks who wear ochre clothing. The significance of the Vedāntic concept of Sannyāsa is so variously understood by commentators that it is necessary to examine it more closely in order to shed light upon its precise nature as taught in the Upanishads. Here are some texts from the Muṇḍaka and the Brhadāraṇyaka:

(१) तपःश्रद्धे ये हृष्टवस्त्रमये
शान्ता विद्वांसो भैश्चर्याचरनः।
सूर्यद्वारे ते वरजा: प्रयाति
यात्रामृतः स पुरुषो हृष्टवयात्मा॥

“As for those who devote themselves to Tapas and Śraddha (discipline proper to their station of life, and meditation) in the forest with self-control and wisdom, and living on alms and unsullied by desire, they go
through the solar-door to where the immortal Purusha
of undecaying nature dwells.”

Mu. 1-2-11.

[The ‘solar-door’ represents the Devayâna-path along which
devoted souls travel to reach the Brahma-Lôka.]

This life is common to both Vânaprasthas and
Sannyåsins who have renounced the house-holder’s
order as directed by the Smrtis. This is quite different
from the Paramahâmsa-Sannyåsa enjoined in the
Upanishad texts like the following:

(2) एतते वै तपायानं विदितं ब्राह्मणं: पुरुषार्थाय विद्वेशणाय
यथा वै लोकार्थाय भिक्षणार्थं चरति।

“Knowing this Âtman well-known to Vedântins,
Brahmaṇas transcend longing for offspring, longing for
wealth and longing for the (three) worlds, and live on
alms.”

Br. 3-5-1.

The Bhâshya on this text remarks:–

(3) विज्ञानसमानकूटकात् पारिव्राज्यात् एव युक्ता अनुभावान्
पारित्राज्यान्यानं वेदमय, तदात्मानादृढ़, आत्मनिवृत्तोपरिव्रज्यापारिभ्रमण प्राप्तता।
अविष्कृतविषयाङ्कणायाः। तदात्मानोऽर्थिते आश्रयमहने 
पारिव्रज्यं 
ब्रह्माण्डलकार्यरत्नप्राप्तिसाधनम्, यद्विष्णु यक्षोपवृत्तप्राप्तिसाधनानं लिङ्गतिनानं 
च।

“For there may be reasonably a Pârivrâjya (going away
from home, Sannyåsa), other than that which belongs
to the knowing person, and is of the nature of transcending
all desires. To explain: The Pârivrâjya, which is of the
nature of transcending the desires (Eshaṇâs), is ancillary
to the Knowledge of Âtman, for it is of the nature of
renunciation of the desire opposed to the Knowledge of
Brahman, and desire is only in the sphere of Avidyā. And
other than that, there is a Pârivrâjya in the form of an
Âśrama (order of life), a means to the attainment of
Brahmaloka and other fruits of action. It is in connection with this Sannyasa that wearing Yajnopavita etc. are enjoined and that the Liṅga (the characteristic uniform of the order) is enjoined."

Br. Bh. 3-5-1.

[The sacred thread or wearing the cloth in a particular form is necessary for worshipping the gods, or the manner of carrying on human activities in accordance with religion. This Yajnopavita, wearing a saffron cloth, carrying a staff, a water-pot, and other items distinguishing a Sannyasin is Liṅga.]

This description of a Smārtha Sannyasin, must be sufficient to assure us that a real Paramahamsa has no characteristic marks of a particular Āśrama. Accordingly the Jābālōpanishad says:

(4) अव परिव्रात विर्षन्वासा मुण्डोंपरियहः शूचिरच्छोहि भैक्षणायो ब्रह्मपूयाय भवतीति।।

"And now for the Parivrāt, wearing a slightly coloured cloth, shaven, having nothing in his possession, clean, malevolent towards none, living on alone, he attains Brahman-hood." Jāb. 5.

55. So much for the outward form of a Sannyasin. And what would be the nature of his mind? Here is what Lord Sri Krishna says:

(1) असन्तुब्धः सर्वत्र जिततत्वा विगतस्यः।
नैक्षर्प्पिसिद्धं परमां संन्यासेनाधिगच्छति॥

"Possessing a mind unattached to everything, self-controlled, void of all desires, he attains the accomplishment of perfect actionlessness, through Sannyāsa." G. 18-49.

Here Śaṅkara’s commentary explains that Sannyāsa is either right Knowledge, or the
renunciation of all actions through that Knowledge (सम्बुद्धिन तत्त्वने वा सम्बिकार्मसंयासेन). And what this internal renunciation of all actions consists in, is thus explained by the Lord himself:—

(२) सम्बिकार्मणि मनसा संय्यासते सुखं वशी।
नवन्दरे पुरे देही रैव कुर्वन्न कारण्य।

“Having mentally renounced all actions, the self-controlled embodied one rests happy in the fortress of nine doors, himself doing nothing and engaging no one else in any action.”

G. 5-13.

(३) रैव कित्तित्त करोमीति युक्तो मन्येतत्त्वविद्।
पश्चयथ्यवन्नं युस्शानं जिद्धश्चनं गच्चनं स्वपनं श्रद्धानं।
प्रलय्यन्त विसूजन्न गुह्यानुनुमिषणत्वविद्यिते श्रद्धानं।
इन्द्रियाणिन्द्रियार्थे वो तेन इगुत्त धारण्य।

“The Knower of Truth would think that he is doing nothing while he sees, hears, touches, smells, eats, moves about, sleeps, breathes, speaks, excretes (waste matter), grasps, opens or shuts his eyes; he would always bear in mind that only the senses function on their objects.”

G. 5-8, 9.

This is the real Sannyāsa (renunciation), through Samyāgiñāna (right Knowledge). The right Knowledge itself, as we have seen, has been (in Śaṅkara’s commentary on Gīta 18-49) considered Sannyāsa par excellence. And what that right Knowledge consists in relation to action, is summed up in the following verse of the Bhagavadgītā:—

(४) कर्मकर्म यः पश्चेदकर्मणि च कर्म यः।
स बुद्धिमानु मनुष्येऽः स युक्तः: कृत्तकर्मक्रृत् ।१८॥

“He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, he is the wisest of all men; he has a poised mind, and he alone has done all that had to be done.”

G. 4-18.
Here Śaṅkara explains:

"The wise one sees action in inaction, and inaction in action, seeing that all thought of action, means of action etc., are in the field of Avidyā alone, since engagement in action or desisting from it both depend on the doing agent, and never affect the Reality of Atman."

GBh. 4-18.

56. Genuine Sannyāsa then consists in one’s realizing the eternally actionless Ātman as identical with one’s own Self. The effect of such Realization on one’s empirical life is obvious. The normal mind which recognizes gradations of fellow-beings as regards their physique, wealth, intellect and social position, naturally finds it difficult to adjust itself to the varying factors or to react with equanimity in all cases. But the genuine Sannyāsin, by dint of the mental equilibrium gained through his Intuition and the Sannyāsin who tries to emulate him in his accomplishments for the sake of acquisition of right Knowledge (विविद्धता), on the other hand, is unique in his equable behaviour towards all. I shall quote a few more verses from the Bhagavadgītā in illustration of this:

(१) प्रजाहाति यदा कामानु सर्वानू पार्थ मनोगतानू।
आत्मनेरवात्मना तुष्टे सिद्धत्रस्तरस्त्रोऽवये।

“One is said to be a Sthitaprajña (equanimous) when one abandons all desires that pertain to the mind, being perfectly satisfied in and for one’s own Self.”

G. 2-55.

[The perfect one is never elated or dejected by pleasure or pain due to sensory contact of external objects, for he ever rests in his Real Self.]
SANNYĀSA AND YÖGA

(२) विद्वानविनयसंपन्ने ब्राह्मणे गविहस्तिनि
शुनि चैव ब्रह्माण्यं च पण्डिताः समर्थेनि।
उपेत्तातुसर्गः येषां साये स्थितः पनि।
विरोधं हि समं ब्रह्म तस्मादब्रह्मः ते स्थितः।

"The wise look upon a learned Brāhmaṇa of reputed
demeanour, a cow, an elephant, a dog or an outcaste with
equal regard. They have indeed overcome birth in this
very life, whose mind is fixed upon the one and the same
Brahman in all. Brahman in all is, as is well-known,
perfectly stainless and so they rest in Brahman alone."

G. 5-18, 19.

The wise stay their mind on Brahman only everywhere and
are for ever unaffected by the external conditioning adjuncts
superimposed by Avidyā.

57. The real aim of Sannyāsa being the
Realization of the immortal Self of all, it is evident
that acquisition of worldly possessions can be but a
serious obstacle in the way of the aspirant for that
Supreme Goal. The Śruti says:

‘न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन त्यागेनेके अमृतवमानशः।

“Not by religious works nor by progeny, nor yet by
acquisition of wealth, but only through renunciation did
the great ones attain immortality.”

Tai. N. 12-3.

It is strange and regrettable that this ideal of
Sannyāsa taught by the Great Śaṅkarāchārya, both
by precept and example, has been almost lost sight
of in these days, and even upstarts putting on the
ochre cloth and parading with staff and Kamandalu
(water-pot) through busy streets or haranguing from
platforms to eager crowds on the verities of Vedānta,
are often admired as the harbingers of a new Vedāntic
age. One cannot guess what other ulterior motives may be lurking behind the scene!

Those that are sincere aspirants for genuine Sannyāsa, however, will refuse to be admitted into this cadre of charlatans and escapists. For such candidates there are secondary types of Sannyāsa recommended in the Śrutis and Smṛtis:

(1) The first Thyāga or Sannyāsa is giving up prohibited immoral acts (निषिद्धत्याग):—

'नाभिरतो दुःशरितात्'

"One who has not abstained from bad conduct, cannot attain Ātman through Knowledge." Ka. 2-24.

Then (2) renouncing the Karmas enjoined for the various fruits thereof (कामायकर्मत्याग), and then (3) giving up the desire for the enjoyment of fruits of all acts whatever:—

कामानां कर्माणां यासं सन्यासं कवयो विदु: ।
सर्वकर्मफलत्यांग प्राहुस्त्यांग विचक्षणा: ॥

"The far-seeing regard the renunciation of Kāmya-karmas as the Sannyāsa and the wise call that Thyāga which consists in the abandonment of the fruits of all actions." G. 18-2.

(4) The fourth step in the ladder is to perform one's own proper Karma – the duty enjoined by the Śāstra as proper to his station in life:—

यत: प्रवृत्तिपूर्वानां येन सर्वमिदं तदम् ।
स्वकर्मणां तमथयच्छर्य सिद्धं विद्यति यानवः ॥
“By worshipping that God from whom all creatures are born and in whom all beings live and move, and by whom all this Universe is pervaded, by worshipping that God through the performance of one’s own duty, man attains perfection.”

G. 18-46.

When one has taken these successive steps, the final step can be scaled without difficulty. It is this final step that enables one to realize the goal at last.

(5) सर्वभर्मानू परित्यज्य मायेकं शरणं व्रज।
अहं त्वा सर्वापेष्योऽपेक्षानि य शुचः।

“Giving up all actions, take refuge in me alone. I shall free thee from all stains; do not grieve.”

G. 18-66.

58. The Vedāntic concept of Yoga, has been mistaken for so many practices advocated by different schools, that many gullible people are taken in by the display of certain miracles by unscrupulous imitators who would have us believe that their ‘Yoga’ is a free pass entitling them to be considered as the only Vedāntins. The doctrine of the post-Śaṅkaras, stating that experience of Advaita is possible only in Samādhi, has added strength to this current belief.

Vāchaspati Miśra, for instance, says:

(१) समाधित्वम् संयमम् उपलब्धवति। धारणाव्याससमाधायो हि संयमपद्विदनियता।।
कथाहूः ’त्रयमेकंत्र संयमः इति। अत्र ’श्रोतवो मन्त्वः’ इति धारणोपदेशः।
’निद्राव्यासित्वः’ इति धारणोपदेशः।
’द्वे्ः’ इति समाधेवविषयः।।
कथाहूः — ’तेवं ध्यानम् अर्थात्मनिर्वासं स्वरूपशून्यविविध समाधिः’ इति।
सौरायणीक कर्त्तव्यम् समाधी उपदिशयानः।
आत्मनः कर्त्तित्वम् आवहतीति सूत्रशः।।

This is Miśra’s comment on Bādarāyaṇa’s Vedānta Sūtra 2-3-39. Here evidently the author of the sub-
commentary on Śaṅkara’s Śūtra Bhāshya is seeking to interpret the Vedāntic text ‘आत्मा वा अरुः दृश्य: श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्य: निदिष्यासितव्य:’ (Br. 2-4-5). wherein Yājñavalkya is explaining to his wife how Ātman is to be seen, i.e., Realized. Of course, Ātman being one’s own Self can never be literally ‘seen’. The whole dialogue between the sage and his wife is devoted to show how the universe originates from Ātman, rests in Ātman while it appears and finally dissolves into Ātman, and is therefore essentially identical with Ātman. There is absolutely no reference to Yōga at all anywhere in this context and yet the author of the Bhāmati is anxious to interpret this text as though it were a passage from Patanjali, and concludes by explaining that दृश्य: (Ātman is to be seen by means of experience in Samādhi or mystic trance)!

59. And the author of Vivaraṇa (commentator of the Pañchapādikā) writes:

(२) नन्तु ब्रह्मात्मातुपवदैत्तदर्शनयोऽक्त: साहित्यमुच्चते? न वर्ष साहित्यं बुमः। कदाचित्तु हस्तमित्वात्मांत्यक्तद्वद्वादशमं, कदाचित्तु आरबनक्योपस्थापितदोषानिपिताद्वादशं वेति। PV. p.284.

In this passage Prakāśātman is offering an explanation for the apparent inconsistency that one who has already intuited the non-dual Ātman still continues to perceive the manifold world. His explanation is that the intuition is in the Yōgic trance of Asampraṇāta-Samādhi while the perception of duality is due to the defect engendered by the Prārabdha-karma (Karma whose effects are still fructifying and can subside only after the mortal coil is shuffled off).
60. Other writers on Vedānta up to our own times also follow in the foot-steps of these way-showers and seem to think that experience of Vedāntic truths is reserved for adepts in Pātanjala-Yōga. It is therefore meet that we examine what the Ārūḍhas themselves have to say on the subject and how Śaṅkara himself has clarified this concept.

61. We shall first advert to the Brhadāraṇyaka text which the author of the Bhāmāti feels to be redolent of the Yōga-Samādhi. I have drawn the attention of the reader to the fact that in the entire body of the dialogue, Yōga is conspicuous by its absence. As for the word ‘Nididhyāsitavyaḥ’ where Vāchaspati Miśra smells the Yōgic Dhyāna, it reveals itself to be perfectly innocent of this denotation or connotation, when the sentence is examined as a whole. For it runs thus:

(3) आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्ट्व: श्रोत्वः मन्तव्यो निदिद्यासिततव्यो मेतेव्यात्मनो वा अरे दर्शने श्रवणं मत्या विज्ञानेनेते सर्व विदितम्।

“Ātman alone, O Maitreyi, is to be seen, to be heard, thought over and dwelt upon; by seeing, thinking over and understanding of Ātman, O my dear, all this becomes Known.” Br. 2-4-5.

Here it will be observed that the original word निदिद्यासन (‘Nididhyāsana’) has been subsequently paraphrased by विज्ञान (‘Vijñānā’) which means to understand and Know. That this is the significance to be attached to this term is confirmed by a previous sentence in this connection:

(४) स होवच याज्ञवल्क्यः प्रिया बतारेन: सती प्रियं भाष्यसे एत्यास्व य्यायायामी ते य्याच्यायात्य तु मे निदिद्यासात्मेति।
“And that Yājñavalkya said: ‘O how dear is my wife! Your talk is most pleasing to me, come on and take your seat and I will explain it to you. Listen and understand while I expatiate on the subject.”  Br. 2-4-4.

Here it will be observed that the very word Nididhyāsana is employed to denote attentive listening and understanding the drift of what is spoken.

62. We may now take up Vedic passages which refer to Yōga expressly. The Upanishad that arrests our foremost attention in this connection is the Śvetāśvatara wherein we read:

(१) तत् कारण साल्यव्योगनिष्ठमेय ढाला देवं मूच्छते सर्वपारीः

“That cause known through Sāṁkhya and Yōga, knowing that Deva, one is liberated from all bonds.”  Śve. 6-13.

Here Śaṁkhya and Yōga are expressly declared to be the means of Release.

(२) त्रिन्द्रतं स्थायत समं शरीरं हृदीन्द्रियाणि मनसा संविशयः

The second and the third of these Mantras (Śve. 2-8, 9, 10) refer to Prāṇāyāma (control of breath) and Āsana (posture) respectively. These practices are very much the same as those laid down by Patañjali. But

* Śaṅkara’s reading is ‘Sāṁkhya-yogābhipannam’.
that the result aimed at is quite different here is clear from the first verse which says:

"After keeping the body erect and straight, and restraining the senses and detaining them by means of the mind in the heart, the wise one should cross all the dangerous currents by means of the boat of Brahman."

Śve. 2-8.

It is obvious that it is not the mere suppression of the modifications of the mind that is aimed at; nor are the means confined to the usual eight steps of Yōga, for Brahman is the chief means here.

63. Śaṅkara expressly warns us that it is not the Sāṁkhya or the Yōga recommended in the schools named by these words that are meant in the text cited above:

(१) यतु दर्शिन्युक्तम् 'तत्कारणं साधुचयोगाभिषेकम्' इति, वैदिकमेव तत्र ज्ञानं ध्यानं च साधुचयोगः ब्रह्माध्याम् अभिलमेव प्रत्यासते: —

इत्यवगतविम्॥

"As for the realization referred to in the text ‘That cause attained through Sāṁkhya and Yōga, it must be concluded that it is the Vedic Knowledge (of Ātman) and the Vedic meditation that are denoted by the words Sāṁkhya and Yōga, since that alone would be a mere direct reference in the context.”

SBh. 2-1-3.

64. And now let us see if any other Upanishad refers to this ‘Vedic’ Yōga. We find the following texts in the Katha:

(१) पुत्युपेक्षा निच्छेदतैः लोकव

विद्यामेवां योगविद्या च कृत्स्नम्।

बह्य प्रात्यो विरजोभ्रुमिहीतु—

रन्योपपेक्षे यो विद्याभाप्ते॥

"Nachiketas got this Knowledge as well as the way of Yōga as taught by Mrtyu, (the God of death), attained Brahman and became free from all the taint of actions
and from death. And so would he also become whoever knows this Adhyātmic Truth.” Ka. 6-18.

[Here is a reference to Yoga as a means to the Knowledge of Brahman.]

(२) अध्यात्मयोगाधिष्ठिते यद्व धीरो हर्षशोकी जहाति।।

“There is a wise one who knows that Deva through the attainment of the Adhyātma Yōga gets rid of elation and grief.” Ka. 2-12.

Here the Yōga is specifically named Adhyātma Yōga (the Yōga of Ātman), implying that the Yōga is intended for those who would Realize the Ātman taught in Vedānta. And the details of this Yōga are to be found in the following verses of the Katha Upanishad:

(३) एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गृहोद्भवत्ता न प्रकाशते।
द्रष्टातो लोक्ययुज्या बुद्धया सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिष्यः।१।
यथेष्टौ वायुपनसी प्रव्रतयथ्येज्ञान आत्मनः।
ज्ञानपार्यन्त महति नियत्येज्ञात्येज्ञातं आत्मनः।।

Ka. 3-१२, १३।

“This Ātman is hidden in all beings, and therefore does not show himself. But with the help of the keen concentrated subtle mind, He can be seen by those who persist in the practice of observing the subtle entity.” Ka. 3-12.

For those that are extroverts, who identify themselves with the senses, this Ātman is hidden, covered up with the Māya projected by Avidyā. For the introverts, however, who habitually look within, and concentrate the mind, He reveals himself without difficulty. This process of looking within and concentrating the mind is detailed in the next verse:
“The discriminating aspirant should merge speech and other organs in the mind, and that mind in the intellect. This intellect should be dissolved in the individual self (or Hiranyagarbha’s intellect) and that again in the Śānta-Ātman, the real Ātman, free from all specific features.”

The senses, the common mind, the intellect, the individual self, are successively to be merged, the grosser in the more subtle, till at last everything else is seen to be one with the Real Self, hidden in all beings. When all these apparent selves are realized to be merely appearances, and are finally dissolved into the Reality which is the substrate of all, that would be seen to be the aim of the whole process.

65. It will be noted that this Yōga, elsewhere described in the Upanishad as firm holding of the senses (स्थिरतामितज्ञात्वारणाय ६-११), is no creative imagination like Upāsanā (meditation). It is an effort to see subtle things as they are as, for instance, the concentrated effort on the part of a scientist when he observes minute things through a microscope. On turning inwards and closely examining, the senses are seen to be no more than functions of the mind (भन्स्त) and that the mind is nothing but the intellect (बुद्धि) the determining aspect of the mind. The thoughts of a thinker are then discerned to be the thinker himself. This thinker again is really the Universal Ātman who is the changeless Witnessing Principle in each one of us.

66. This Adhyātma Yōga has been designated as Dhyāna Yōga in the Bhagavadgītā. It would be profitable to quote the relevant Ślōkas here:
The same process of merging the senses in the mind, and the mind (in all its aspects) in Atman is summarized here. The Yogin is said to wash off all dross of foreign thought and contact Brahman (ब्रह्मसंप्रभृत्यम्) without any difficulty by dint of constant practice. And the ultimate result of this concentrated Yoga, is the Realization of the Atman described in the Upanishads:

सर्वभूतस्यमात्राः सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि।
ईश्वरे योगयुक्ताया सर्वेऽ समर्द्धेऽ॥

“One who has attained the balanced mind through Yoga, sees the Atman in all beings and all beings in the Atman, for he sees the same Reality everywhere.”

G. 6-29.

सुहृत्मित्रांशुदासीनमहस्यहुम्बुद्धुपु।
साखुचपि च पापेषु समपुज्जविश्वायते॥

“One who treats a well-wisher, a friend, an enemy, a neutral person, a mutual friend, a hateful person, or a relative, a saint or a sinner with the same regard is really the best of Yogins.”

G. 6-9.

[This is the best test in empirical life through which one can satisfy oneself as to whether or not he has been a perfect Yogārūḍha.]
CONCLUSION

67. We have now exhausted almost all the fundamental concepts according to Śaṅkara. The two most primary concepts of all are the concept of Ātman and that of Avidyā. The discussion of the concept of Ātman, starts from the generic idea of the empirical self, and ultimately leads the critical enquirer to the axiomatic notion of the Paramātman or Mahān Ātman who is the Universal Witnessing Consciousness or Brahman, as is evidenced by the Jyotirbrāhmaṇa of the Brhadāraṇyaka which expatiates on the subject in the form of a narration of the dialogue between King Janaka and Yāgñavalkya.

The sage Yāgñavalkya initiates the King into the mystery of the concept of Ātman by saying that even when all the external lights are extinguished, it is the Light of Ātman alone that continues to serve as the guide for all human procedure in life. The first set of questions and answers there, is as follows:–

(1) कतम आत्मेति योऽद्यं विज्ञानमयः प्राणेषु हयनज्योतः।
पुरुः स समानः सनुभौ लोकावनसश्रावध्यातीव लेलायतीव स
हि स्वनो भूतेयं लोकमतिक्रयाषित यूक्तो रूपाणि॥

"Question: Which is that Ātman?

Answer: He who is of the nature of Consciousness among the Prāṇas (or the organs of sense) and is the
Light within the heart. Identifying himself with the mind, he traverses both the regions. He thinks as it were, and moves about as it were. Becoming indeed a dreamer, he crosses beyond this region and transcends the forms of death.” 

Br. 4-3-7.

Here is a clue to the fact that Ātman does not really own the aggregate of the body and the senses which make him mortal; for he transcends this mortal coil so soon as he enters the dreamland. After subsequently showing how every soul that goes into the state of deep sleep, crosses beyond ignorance, desire and action and extricating itself from the toils and moils of mundane life it is beyond all desire and grief (आत्माकामयात्मकामकामयो शोकाज्जातमृ ४-७-२८) even through this temporary merging in Brahman (4-3-32) – and after narrating the vicissitudes of the transmigratory soul, the sage finally concludes:–

(२) स वा एष महानज आत्माकर्षणलोकत्वन्वयं वै ब्रह्माधिवं हि वै ब्रह्म भवति य एवं वेद वै (४-४-२५)

“This great unborn Ātman indeed is unaging, undying, immortal Brahman. Brahman, as is well-known, is fearless. Verily whosoever knows It thus, becomes the fearless Brahman indeed.”

Br. 4-4-25.

The other concept, to wit, that of Avidyā, is unlike the concept of Ātman, only a concession to the naive mind which longs to attain final Release. Avidyā, according to Śaṅkara, is as we have already seen, the instinctive notion of me and mine entertained by all human beings owing to the mutual superimposition of the Self and the non-Self. Nobody suspects it to be ignorance till the Śāstra and a Vedāntic teacher
discloses its *delusive nature*. The concept is a device employed by the Upanishads for the purpose of teaching the Truth. All other concepts such as causation, creation, Ṣvāra, spiritual discipline including Sannyāsa and Yōga and the validity of the Śruti itself as a means of right Knowledge as well as the distinction between the empirical and the transcendental views, all these presuppose the concept of Avidyā. There can be no talk of the Science of Vedānta, or of the relation of a master and the pupil aspiring for a course of instruction in that Science without the concept of Avidyā as the *prius*. The moment one rises to the mental level of Vidyā which discloses the true nature of Brahman as the only Reality, all these concepts are invalidated and the Intuition of the non-dual Brahman alone remains as the eternal Truth and Reality in one.

*Om Tat Sat*
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