THE UPANISHADIC APPROACH TO REALITY

By
SWAMI SATCHIDANANDENDRA SARASWATI

ADHYATMA PRAKASHA KARYALAYA
Holenarsipur - 573 211.
(HASSAN DISTRICT, KARNATAKA, INDIA)
1997
Books You Ought To Read

Salient Features of Śaṅkara’s Vedānta

Although many books are very popular probably because their authorship has been ascribed to the great Śaṅkara, they contain tenets in conflict with one another and the various doctrines contained in the three groups of works collectively called the ‘Prasthāna Trayī’, indisputably ascribed to Śaṅkara. As it is not easy for beginners to consolidate and discriminate for themselves the genuine Vedāntic doctrines, an attempt is made by the Swāmījī to solve this problem.

Pages : 110

Intuition of Reality

Another masterpiece from the pen of Shri Swāmi Satchidānandendra Saraswati, who has very ably illustrated as to how the Vedāntic Knowledge is not mere subtle intellectualism, but it is an ‘Intuition’ of the Ultimate Reality arising through Divine Grace. The writer has incidentally refuted the oft-repeated assertion that Śaṅkara’s philosophy is an out-and-out rationalistic system and that he has provided no place for Īśwara in his Advaita Philosophy.

Pages : 110

Śaṅkara’s Clarification of Certain Vedāntic Concepts

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 who possesses an introvert mind as a result of disciplines undergone in his previous 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 this book is expected to be of some assistance in the study of Vedānta.

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PUBLISHERS’ NOTE
SECOND EDITION

This is the substance of the series of lectures delivered by Sri Swāmīji at Mysore during Śaṅkara-Jayanti Saptāha (from 17-5-72 to 23-5-72). It is expected to be complimentary to the lectures delivered by Swāmīji at Bangalore during the same year. The first edition of the book which was published in 1974 was out of stock.

As there was an increasing demand for this enlightening work, of Swāmīji, of revered memory, we have pleasure in bringing out this second edition.

Holenarsipur
11.5.97

Chairman
A.P. Kāryālaya

PREFACE

There is very little to add to what I have written in the preface to the ‘Intuition of Reality’ already published by the Kāryālaya.

The art of interpreting the Upanishads so as to convince the reader that there is really a unique method adopted in these holy revelations, has been preserved by Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara, whose works are fortunately still available.

I hope that this small book contains in a nut-shell the most important principles involved in the method adopted by the Upanishads in presenting Reality and Truth.

The last lecture contains the most important innovations and revolutionary doctrines introduced by Post-Śaṅkara-Advaitins in the guise of sub-commentaries. The reader who is interested in the subject, is referred to my Sanskrit work ‘The Vedānta-Prakriyā-Pratyabhijñā’ and the English Introduction to that publication.

Bangalore
30.1.74

Author
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## ABBREVIATIONS

N.B. - The name of each Upanishad or other work, has been contracted into the initial letter or letters and the Bhāshya thereon has been indicated by the symbol 'Bh'. Thus G-Gītā ; G Bh.- Gītā Bhāshya.

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The Upanishadic Approach to Reality

I

THE WISDOM OF THE UPANISHADS

1. Three Varieties of approach to Vedānta

There are three original sources in Sanskrit, which a student of Vedānta, has to consult for getting basic information about the reflections of ancient seers and sages of India on Vedānta. These are generally known by the collective name of Prasthāna-Traya, the triad of the methods of approach to Vedānta.

The Upanishads are the main springs of Vedāntic Truth. It is from these founts, that several soul-stirring rivulets of Smṛitis and Purāṇas gush forth and flow in various directions. Their way of approach to truth, has been called the Śruti-Prasthāna or the method of approach through listening, because it is the one method that has been handed down to us by an unbroken succession of masters and disciples. The second is the Bhagavad Gītā composed by Bhagavān Kṛishṇadvacipāyana Vyāsa in seven hundred verses called ‘the Gītās’. It is a neat and compact compendium of Vedāntic teachings. It is Smṛiti ascribed to an author (in contrast with Šruti which the orthodox people consider to be eternal), and may be also called the Sādhana-Prasthāna inasmuch as it chiefly deals with the courses of discipline necessary to train the mind to understand the Vedāntic truths. And the third is the VedāntaMīmāṃsā of Bādarāyaṇa, which has been called
the Nyāya-Prasthāna, because the aphorisms of which it is composed, present us with the principles of exegesis of the two other Prasthānas.

In the following pages, it is proposed to give a glimpse of the broad outlines of the matter and method of the principal Upanishadic revelations as understood by Śaṅkarāchārya, the earliest commentator, whose writings are yet extant.

2. References to Vidyā and Avidyā in the Upanishads

There are two texts in the Upanishads themselves wherein Vidyā (wisdom) and Avidyā (nescience) are referred to in general terms:

(१) दूरभेदे विपरीते विशृची अविद्या या च विद्वेदि ज्ञाता।
विद्यासीमिती नविके क्षत्सं मन्ये न त्वा कामा बहोज्जोलोलुप्त।।

का. २-४।

"Wide apart are these two, mutually contradictory, ways moving in opposite directions - to wit, Avidyā (nescience) and that which is known as Vidyā (wisdom). I regard thee, Nachiketas, as one longing for Vidyā; for the very many objects of pleasure, have not enticed thee."

Ka. 2-4.

Here, Mrityu, the God of death, is referring to wisdom as the means to the Good (श्रेष्ठः) in contrast to Nescience which leads to attachment to the pleasant (प्रेयः).

(२) तान् होवाचैतावदेवायम् उत्तर ब्रह्म वेद। नात: परमस्तीतं।।
ते तमर्प्यत्त्तस्य हि न: पिता योज्यस्माकमविद्याय। परं पारं तार्यस्तीति।।

प्र. ६-७, ८।

"He said to them: 'This much alone I know (regarding) this
Higher Brahman; there is nothing beyond this'. They worshipfully replied ‘Thou art indeed our father, for thou hast taken us across nescience to the other shore’. 

Pr. 6-7, 8.

Here Sukesa and the other disciples, already conversant with the knowledge (the art of meditation) of the Lower Brahman, express their gratitude to Pippalāda, who has now initiated them into the wisdom of the Higher Brahman, which abolishes nescience for good.

3. Brahma-Vidyi

The Upanishads are never tired of extolling this wisdom as the culmination of all knowledge vouchsafed to seekers. Here are some texts of this type :-

(१) बहः देवानां प्रथमः संबभूव विश्वस्य कर्ता भुवनस्य गोप्ता ।
स ब्रह्मविद्या सर्वविद्याप्रतिष्ठामथर्यम् ज्येष्ठपुन्माय प्राह ।।

“Brahman was born as the first of the Devas, the producer of the universe, and protector of the world. He communicated the Brahma-Vidyi, the foundation (or the goal) of all branches of knowledge, to Atharva, his eldest son.”

Mu. 1-1-1.

In the above-cited text, we are told that the knowledge of Brahman is the foundation of all branches of learning. The latter are useful only in so far as they lead the seeker to this ultimate wisdom.

(२) शौनको ह वै महाशालोद्धिगर्सं विषिवनुपस्त्रः प्रप्पच ।
कस्मिनु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवतीति ।।
तस्मै च होवाच - द्वे विद्वे वेदितवे हि ह स्म यदमारविदो वदस्ति परा चैवापरा च ।।
तत्त्वापरा ऋग्वेदो यजुवेदः सामवेदोठर्यवेदः शिष्या कल्यो व्याकरण निरुस्थे छन्दो
ज्योतिषमिति । अथ परा यथा तदक्षरमधिगम्यते ।। यत्त्वादेश्यमग्राहः-
The Upanishadic Approach to Reality

"Saunaka, the famous great house-holder approached Angiras in accordance with the direction of the Śāstra, and enquired ‘What is that, O revered sir, which being known, all this becomes known?’

To him, Angiras said: ‘There are two Vidyās to be known as the knowers of Brahman say; to wit, the Para (Higher) and the Apara (Lower). Of these, the lower (Vidyā) consists of the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Sāmaveda, and the Atharvaveda; the Śikṣā (Orthography), the Kṣatras (the code of rituals), Vyākaranā (Grammar), Niruktam (Etymology) Chandas (Prosody), and Jyotishas (Astronomy). And now for the Para (Higher Vidyā). It is that by which the Akshara (the imperishable Reality) is known. (The Akshara which is) unperceivable, ungraspable, without any source or origin, without properties, without the organ of sight or of hearing, without hands or feet, eternal, diverse, all-pervading, extremely subtle and undecaying; that which, discerning persons, see everywhere, as the cause of all beings.’

We learn from this text that the Higher knowledge or Supreme Wisdom of Reality which is absolutely devoid of all specific features and yet the source of all beings, knowing which one would have known the essence of everything else.

(3) उत्तमदेशमप्राप्तो चेनाशुरं श्रूतं स्वत्तमतं मतमविज्ञातं
विज्ञातम् ॥

"Have you enquired after that teaching by the attainment of which, all that is not listened about or studied becomes studied; that is not reflected upon, becomes reflected upon, and all that is not understood becomes understood?"

Here also we are told that knowing the Pure Being or Brahman would result in the knowledge of the essence of everything.
4. Relevance of Vedāntic Knowledge to Practical Life

It is this Brahma-Vidyā that the Upanishads are mainly concerned with. In the following pages, we are going to make an attempt to consider how, according to Śaṅkara, the Upanishads are to be interpreted in order to ascertain the nature of this Vidyā, its means and the effect on the life of those who have succeeded in attaining it.

In the meanwhile, it would be of interest to ponder over the relevance of Vedāntic knowledge to the practical life of mankind in our own times. Some of us may be apt to think that, in view of the rapid march of civilization hand in hand with the progress of discoveries and inventions of physical science, catering to the needs and comforts of people, the modern man is none the worse for the lack of acquaintance with the antiquated Upanishadic thought. But even a superficial study of the human situation at present, would reveal that our civilization which is so much boasted of, is no matter for pride. The Upanishads loudly proclaim: -

असुर्यां नाम ते लोका अचिन्तन तमसाः सः
ताहि प्रेतायपिन्धण्ति ये के चासृत्तमहनो जना: ॥

"Births fit for Asuras, enveloped in blinding darkness - to these (births) verily they repair after departing, whosoever slay the Ātman."

Īṣa 3.

Owing to the fault of not knowing the real Ātman, man is constantly resorting to the round of births and deaths; but modern mankind would appear to have reached the stage of developing a number of races of Asuras or
selfish human beings who are afflicted with internecine and international wars, and groups consisting of individuals jealous and hypocritical, engaged in covertly exploiting one another and at the same time claiming to help and co-operate with their neighbours. Desire and greed of man have now risen to such a pitch, that ‘the Great Powers’ so called, have competitively piled up an appalling quantity of nuclear weapons, which may incite any one of the numerous international powers to unleash a new world-war which could wipe off the whole of humanity on the surface of the earth! What is all this but slaying not only the real universal Ātman, but also the assumed Ātmans that we pretend to be in empirical life?

The Smriti says: -

चोउन्यथा सन्तत्वात्मानमन्यथा प्रतिपवते ।
फि तेन न कृत्य पार्यं चौरिणाः उत्तमापहरिणा ॥

“He who takes himself or pretends to be, what he is really not, what sins has such thief not committed seeing that he has stolen his own real self?”

But this is just what most of the modern human beings have been doing, making a show of what they are really not even to themselves. In family life, education of the young, in social life, or in the production of food and other necessities of life, in economic and political transactions, education, - nay, in every walk of life, man is pretending to behave in a way never fitting in with his real nature and deceiving himself no less than his associates!

This stealth and slaughter of one’s individual self, so
rampant in the modern world, is the abnormal outcome of human selfishness due to an innate ignorance and misconception of Brahman, the genuine Self of all.

5. Qualification necessary for attaining Vidyā

The reader will have seen by now that Brahma-Vidyā taught in the Upanishads is neither the result of some idle speculation, nor something of mere antiquarian interest. It is of immense practical use in shaping human character, and no one who has undergone the rigorous course of discipline recommended in the Upanishads, can ever hope to attain this wisdom. The following extracts should suffice to convince any one of the earnestness with which this indispensable preparation has been stressed in these writings:–

(१) नान्वितो दुस्चरितात्मास्त्तो नासमाहितः।
नाशात्मानसो वापि प्रजानेतैनमापनुवात्॥

Ka. २-२४.

"No one who has not desisted from bad conduct, no one who has no self-control and no one whose mind is not steady and unruffled, can attain this (Ātman) through (this) wisdom."

Ka. 2-24.

(२) परीक्ष्य लोकानु कर्मचितार्क ब्राह्मणो
निर्वेद्यायायास्त्यकृतः कृतेन ॥
तद्विजानार्थ स गुरुमेवाभिभीगच्छत्
समित्याणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठ्यम्॥

Mû. १-२-१२.

"Having examined (the transient nature of) worlds attainable by the performance of (the various) karmas, a Brāhmaṇa should become dispassionate, seeing that the unartificial cannot be produced by some means (undertaken). For a direct intuition of That, he should
respectfully approach with *Samid* (Sacrificial fuel) in hand, a preceptor who is versed in the lore of Śrutis and devotedly staying in Brahman.

Mu. 1-2-12.

(3) नाप्रशान्ताय दातव्यं नापुनन्नाचिष्ट्याय वा पुनः ||
यस्य देवे परा भविष्यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।
तत्स्यैं कथिता द्वारा: प्रकाशान्ते महात्मन: || स्वे. ६-२२, २३।

"(This wisdom) is not to be transmitted to one who has not controlled his mind, nor to any one other than a son or a genuine disciple.

These truths that have been narrated here, reveal themselves to that high-minded one who has developed supreme love for God, and as much love for the preceptor as for God." Sve. 6-22, 23.

(4) तस्यै तपो दमः कर्मेति प्रतिष्ठा
वेदाः सर्वाङ्गगौणी सत्यमाय्यतनम् || के. ४-८।

"Of this wisdom concentration, self-control, and Vedic Karma, are the foothold; so are the Vedas and their subsidiary branches of learning. Truth is its abode." Ke. 4-8.

(5) सत्येन लघुस्थपसा ब्रह्म आत्मा
सम्यग्द्वानेन ब्रह्मचर्येन नित्यम् || मु. ३-१५।

"This Ātman is to be attained through constant truthfulness, by concentration, by sound knowledge and by (a vow of) Brahmacharya (Abstinence from sensual pleasure)." Mu. 3-1-5.

6. Fruits of Brahma-Vidyā

And now for the immediate fruits of this Vidyā: The following two verses declare that the attainment of intrinsic immortal nature, is the foremost of such results :-
(1) यदा सवे प्रमुच्छते कामा प्रेमस्य हृदि श्रिता: ।
अथ मत्योपमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समस्तुते ॥

(2) पिनाते हृदयप्रमिशिष्ट्यते सर्वसंशया: ।
क्षीयते चास्य कर्माणि तत्सिनौ दूष्टे परावरे ॥

(3) तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपस्थतः ॥

"When all the desires seated in the heart drop off, the mortal being becomes immortal and attains Brahman here and now. When the knots of the heart are untied here, then and there, the mortal being becomes immortal. Only thus much is all the teaching."
Kā. 6-14, 15.

That is to say, when all misconceptions due to want of discrimination, have been removed for good, there would be no room for any proneness to good or bad deeds entailing successive births and deaths. The moment Avidyā is wiped off by Vidyā, one comes to know that one has been always the one inmost Ātman without a second.

"The knot of the heart, is untied, all doubts are solved, and all Karmas of this (seeker) waste away, when that which is both higher and lower has been intuited."
Mu. 2-2-8.

When Brahman which has manifested Itself as both the cause and the effect, is recognized as one’s own Self, all one’s nescience, desire and Karmas (the cause of repeated re-incarnation) vanish altogether.

"What delusion, what lamentation could there be to one who has recognized the Absolute Unity?"
Īṣa. 7.
(4) तसै पृद्दितकषयाय तपसः पारं दर्शिति भगवानू सन्तकुमारः।

“To that (Nārada) whose passion for (outward objects) had been completely washed off, the revered Sanatkumāra, now pointed out the other shore of darkness (of ignorance).”  

Ch. 7-26-2.

All ignorance and outward proclivities of the mind, disappear the moment one intuits Brahman as one’s own self.

(5) एत्यो ह वाव न तपति। किमहर्गु साधु नाकरवम्। किमहं पापमकरणंति। स य एवं विद्यानेते आत्मानां स्मृतुते। उपे द्वेषीय एते आत्मानां स्मृतुते। य एवं वेद॥

“This one, indeed, the remorse ‘Why did I not do a good deed ?, Why did I commit sin ?’ does not afflict at all, (this one) who knows Brahman ; He knows thus, regards both of these as Ātman. Aye, this one verily regards both of these as Ātman, (this one) who knows Brahman thus.”  

Tai. 2-9.

(6) स वा एव महानज्ञ आत्मांजरोपमरोपमृतोपभयो ब्रह्म॥

अपयं च ब्रह्माभयं हि च ब्रह्म भवति य एवं वेद॥

“This (Vijnānatman), indeed, is really the great, unborn, Ātman, never aging, undying, immortal Brahman. Brahman is well known to be fearless ; he who knows this, becomes verily the fearless Brahman.”  

Br. 4-4-25.

(7) तद्द्वारं वेदयते यस्तु सोम्य स सर्वज्ञ: सर्वभेदविवेशति॥

“He who knows that Imperishable (Brahman), O my dear
young man, that omniscient person, enters verily into the All.”

(8) स यो है तत्तपरं ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मेव पवति। नास्याभ्राहवितू
कुले पवति। तरति शोकं तरति पापां गुहामन्सिंह्यो विभुक्तो
पवति॥

"He who knows that Supreme Brahman, indeed becomes that very Brahman. No one who does not know Brahman, would be born in his line. He crosses over grief, he crosses over all sin; becoming free from all knots of the heart, he becomes immortal.”

Mu. 3-2-9.

(9) संविष्टात्मतात्मां य एवं वेद॥

"He enters into Ātman as Ātman, whosoever knows this.”

Ma. 12.

II
PRACTICAL LIFE CONFINED TO THE SPHERE OF AVIDYĀ

1. Brahman, the Cause of the Universe

The Upanishads make use of the concept of cause as generally recognized in common life, and making it a device for teaching the sole reality of Ātman, they lead the enquirer to the intuition of Ātman, the one metaphysical Entity without a second. Thus in the Chāndāguya, Uddālaka starts with a question addressed to his son, who
has just returned from his teacher’s academy, proud of his
learning after having undergone a course of instruction
for twelve years :-

क्रेतकेतो यठु सोप्येदं महामना अनुचानमानी सत्योज्युत
tमादेशमप्राक्ष्यो येनाश्रुतं श्रुतं भवत्यमतं मतमविज्ञातं विज्ञातमिति। कथं नु
भगवं स आदेशो भवतीति॥

“O Śvetaketu, my dear boy, now that you are thus proud and
conceited, considering thyself well-read, you have probably enquired
about that teaching, by virtue of which even the unstudied becomes
studied, even what is not reflected upon becomes reflected upon, and
even that which is not ascertained becomes ascertained? And
Śvetaketu, asks with surprise : ‘What possibly, sir, could that teach­
ing be like?”

Uddālaka, now explains the nature of that teaching
by means of some illustrations. The following is a
specimen :-

यथा सोप्येकेन मृत्तिण्डेन सर्व मृत्तयं विज्ञातगुं स्वाद्ध्वाचारभणं
विकारो नामवेयं मृत्तिकेत्येव सत्यम्॥

“Just as, my dear boy, everything made of clay, becomes
known by the knowledge of a single lump of clay, - all effect being
mere play of words and only a name, and what is called clay, is
the only real thing....”

Similar illustrations of an ingot of gold and a pair
of nail-cutting scissors, are also adduced to show how in
each case, the so-called effects are in their essence the
material cause only, and consequently the cause is the
only reality underlying all effects.

2. Causality employed as a device to teach Reality

This device of teaching that Brahman is the material
cause of all the universe, has been used in most of the
Upanishads merely to show that while the effects in
empirical life, are treated to be real in the sense that they
possess some causal efficiency, causality from the tran-
scendental view, is really the outcome of ignorance, and
that the ultimate cause Brahman or Ātman alone is the
only Reality. It is for this reason that Bādārāyaṇa defines
Brahman as ‘जन्मात्मय यथा’ (वे. सू. २-१-२) ‘That which is the
cause of the origin, sustentation and dissolution of the
universe’, and finally abrogates all causality in the apho-
rism :

तदन्नयत्वार्थमण्यशब्दादिद्धः ॥

‘They are not different, because of the Śruti teaching; the effect
as a mere play of words and for other reasons.”’ २ २-१-२-२.

Śaṅkara explains this as follows: “As a matter of
fact, there is no such thing as what is called the effect.
For, it is unreal, being a mere play of words, a mere
name .... Here the other reasons referred to by the word
आदिद्धः should be explained by quoting the type of texts
teaching the unity of Ātman, such as ‘All this has for its
essence this Pure Being. That alone is real, That is really
the real Ātman, That thou art’ (Ch. 6-8-7), ‘All this is
really this Ātman’ (Br. 2-4-6), ‘All this is Brahman alone’
(Mu. 2-2-11), ‘All this is exclusively Ātman’ (Ch. 7-25-
2), ‘There is no difference here whatsoever’ (Br. 4-4-19).

3. No Practical Life when the Unity of Ātman has
been intuited

There is a text in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upanishad in
which it is declared that all our practical life involving
functions of the organs of sense, as well as activities
involving the functions of the organs of activity, is possible only in the field of duality due to ignorance:—

Where there is duality, as it were, there one sees another, there one smells another, there one tastes another, there one speaks to another, there one listens to another, there one thinks on another, there one touches another, there one understands another. Where, however, everything has become Atman alone, there who can possibly see another and with what? There who can smell whom and with what? There who can taste another and with what? There who can speak to whom and with what? There who can listen to whom and with what? There who can think on whom and with what? There who can touch whom and with what? There who can understand whom and with what? Him with whose consciousness one understands all this, with what can one understand Him?"

Br. 4-5-15.

We are all familiar with the first step of this reasoning, for every one is familiar with practical life permeated by duality. The universe before us is pluralistic, and as Śaṅkara describes it, it is differentiated into names and forms, and is the field of a number of agents of this action, who are experiencers of the fruits of actions. (अस्य जगतः नामसृपायं व्याकृतस्य, अनेककर्मोऽकारसंयुक्तस्य), and is the scene of actions whose fruits are produced and invariably determined by place, time and regulated by causes
Practical Life Confined to The Sphere of Avidyā

But how do we know that where there is Ātman alone, there is no room for practical life involving the relation of subject and object, that there is a state wherein there is no knower, no means of knowledge or any knowable object? The Brhadāraṇyaka refers us to a state which is universally experienced. This is the state of deep sleep where one has no desires, and sees no dream (यथ चुप्ते न कजन्व कार्य कामयते न कजन्व स्वयं पश्चिमन्ति || ब्र. ४-३-२१). The text showers the highest encomiums on this state in the following lines:-

तद्धा अस्यैतदतिच्छन्दा अपहतपापाभय रूपम्। तद्यथा प्रियया स्मित्वा सम्परिष्वको न बाह्यं किन्यन्व वेद नातरमेवपेवायं पुरुषं प्राप्यनाशतथा सम्परिष्वको न बाह्यं किन्यन्व वेद नातरं तद्धा अस्यैतदपापामात्मकामकामं रूपं शोकान्तरम् || ब्र. ४-३-२१।

"Now this nature of the person is beyond all desire, where sin is done away with and where it is free from fear. Just as one embraced by one's spouse, is aware of neither outside nor inside, this Purusha (man) is aware of neither outside nor inside, being firmly embraced by the intrinsically conscious Ātman. This form of his, is one where all desires have been fulfilled, where Ātman alone is all desires, and which is absolutely free from all desires, free from all grief."

Br. 4-3-21.

But, one might naturally ask, how is this a state where everything has become Ātman? How do we know that the knower, (knowing self) is present there? Whoever knew anything at all in deep sleep? To this the Śrutī replies:

यद्दै तत्र विज्ञानाति विज्ञाननू वै तत्र विज्ञानाति न हि विज्ञातुर्विज्ञाते विपरितोपयो विद्यतेदविनाशित्वात्र नु तद्धितीयमस्ति
"That one does not know (anything) there as is well known, means that being certainly a knower, he does not know; for there can be no destruction of the knowing (nature) of the knower, for it is indestructible; only there is no second thing distinct from him which he could know."

Br. 4-3-30.

4. Grief and Delusion are sure to be experienced wherever there is duality.

On the other hand, we have examples to certify that there are sure to be effects of Avidyā (ignorance) wherever there is even a semblance of duality. A text thus describes such effects of Avidyā experienced in a dream:

स्वप्नान्तः उच्चवस्मियमानो रूपाणि देवः कुस्ते भहूनि।
उतेव स्वैभवः सह सोदमानो जख्कुर्देरवापि भयानि पश्यन्।।

"In the dream state, this Deva (the shining one), is confronted with ups and downs, assumes a number of forms. He feels as though he were (actually) delighting in the company of women, or as though he were laughing, and even as though he were confronted with frightful things."

Br. 4-3-13.

Another text says:

प्रत्यत्स्वेर्दैव विभादवय्यविद्याप्रियवेदेव भवत्यपि रूपेदितीय।।

"They do kill him, as it were, chase him, as it were, (he) becomes experiencer of something unpleasant, as it were, and he even weeps, as it were."

Ch. 8-10-2.

Evidently, even seeming duality leads to experiences of the effects of Avidyā.
5. Reasoning adopted in the Upanishads

It will be observed that the Upanishads do not resort to mere speculation or syllogistic reasoning in convincing the enquirer of the Unity of Ātman. They merely appeal to the several states of consciousness and show how we do have insight of states where there is Ātman by Himself free from all duality and where we are identical with that non-dual Ātman free from all the ills of mundane life. The argument pursued in this chapter, may be best summed up by quoting an extract from Śaṅkara’s Sūtra-Bhāshya:

श्रुत्यनुग्रहीते एव छत्रृ तकोणजुष्वाङ्गत्वेनाःश्रीयते -
स्वप्नात्वाचार्योरुप्योप्यविश्राणात्मनवागतत्त्वम्,
संप्रसादेन च प्रपञ्चपरित्वागेन सदात्मना संपर्से: निःस्पम्यवत्तत्त्वम्।
प्रपञ्चस्य ब्रह्मप्रभमत्वात् कार्यकारणान्यतत्त्वन्यायेन ब्रह्मायतिरेक:
-इत्येवप्रात्तीयः।

“For it is the reason offered by Śruti itself that is resorted to here, as being subservient to intuition, reasoning of the following type for instance: (1) Dream and waking lose their identity, each of them when the other appears and so Ātman is not followed up by the defects of either, and inasmuch as the individual self is freed from all multiplicity and becomes one with the Ātman as Pure Being, he is really of the Nature of Pure Being devoid of all multiplicity. (2) The manifold world being born from Brahman, is really not other than Brahman according to the principle of the non-difference of the effect from the cause.”

S. Bh. 2-1-6, pp. 188, 189
III

THE NATURE OF VIDYĀ
AND AVIDYĀ

1. Unjustifiable clinging to the not-self, is Avidyā

The word ‘Avidyā’ in Sanskrit, literally means not knowing a thing correctly and wrongly taking a thing to be what it is not. Naturally, doubt also has to be included in what we understand to be ‘not knowing’, for the moment we know a thing correctly, all doubts about it disappear for good. In Vedānta, as understood by Śaṅkara, however, it is chiefly misconception that is understood to be signified by the word Avidyā; for, that is the direct source of the evils of mundane life. Accordingly, the Śruti describes the unjustifiable clinging to the not-self on the part of those that do not know the truth of their Self, as follows:

स वा अयमात्मा ब्रह्म विज्ञानमयो मनोमयः प्राणयश्चक्षुर्मयः
श्रोत्रमयः पृथिवीमयः आपेमयो वायुमय आकाशमयस्तेजोमयोद्वेजोमयः
काममयोऽकाममयः क्रोधमयोऽक्रोधमयः धर्ममयः धृतयद्वेजमयः सर्वमयः
स्तद्यदेवदिदमयोऽद्वेजमयः धृति यथाकारी यथाचारी तथा भवति साधुकारी
साधुर्भवति पापकारी पापौ भवति पुण्यः पुण्येन कर्मणा भवति पापः
पापे यो खलवाहुः काममय एवां युज्य हृति स धारकायो भवति
तत्तुर्भवति यत्तुर्भवति तत्कर्म कुस्ते यत्कर्म कुस्ते तदमोऽविषये ॥

३-४-५, पा. ९१३.

"Now, this Ātman who is verily Brahman, is imbued with the intellect, imbued with thought, imbued with the vital force, imbued
with the organ of sight, imbued with the organ of hearing, imbued with the elemental earth, imbued with the elemental water, imbued with the elemental air, imbued with the elemental ether, imbued with the elemental light, imbued with desires, imbued with desirelessness, imbued with wrath, imbued with absence of wrath, imbued with virtue and imbued with vice, imbued with everything - that is to say, imbued with this or imbued with that. As he does, and as he behaves, so he becomes. Doing a good deed, he becomes good; and doing an evil deed he becomes vicious. He becomes good through virtuous act and sinful through vice. And others say: 'This Purusha is imbued exclusively with desire. With whatever desire he is beset, he wills according to it; whatever be his will, he engages himself in accordance with that, and attains the result accordingly.'

Br. 4-4-5, p. 913

The passage cited above sets forth vividly the details of the results of one's Avidyā, or identification with this not-self, and the inevitable consequence thereof. This error of wrong identification, enslaves a man, and overpowered by desire, he inclines to act, and falls into the pit of repeatedly experiencing pleasure or pain accordingly.

2. The Result of Kāma, or hankering after Objects:

Here is a Mantra describing the effects of desire:

तदेष श्लोको भवति। तदेव सकः सह कर्मणैति लिङ्गं मनो यत्र निष्कृतस्य। प्राप्यान्तं कर्मणस्तत्तथ यल्किन्येह करोत्ययम्। तस्माल्लोकात् पुनरैत्यस्मै लोकाय कर्मण इति नु कामयमानः।

ब्र. ४-४-६, पा. ९१६.

"To this effect is this Mantra: That surely he arrives at, to which the Liṅga (the subtle body), the mind of his has been attached. Having exhausted the result of whatever karma he has done here, he comes back from that world to this world for doing further work. So much for one who is given to desire." Br. 4-4-6, p. 916
3. Freedom from desire is the only path to attain Brahman

Avidyā or identification with the not-self leads to Kāma (desire) and Karma. And conversely, when wisdom dawns, and desirelessness ensues, one naturally rests in one’s own nature as Brahman, and as a result, all transmigratory life comes to an end. We shall now quote some texts which declare this truth. First of all the sequel of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka text quoted in the previous paragraph deserves citation here:

(१) अथाकामयमानो योजकायो विज्ञाम आप्तकामो न तत्स्य प्राणा उड़क्रामन्ति ब्रह्मव सनूँ ब्रह्माप्येति ॥

Br. 4-4-6, p. 916.

"And now for a person who does not desire (external objects). He has no desire, free from all desires, has attained all desires, and to him, Ātman is all the desired objects. His Prānas (organs) do not depart. Being Brahman Itself, he is merged in Brahman."

Br. 4-4-6, p. 916

Transmigration from body to body, takes place only in the case of one who on account of ignorance, is subject to desire and karma. But one who has intuited one’s eternal Brahmic nature has no cause to be moved by desires or to act which (desire or act) is the only reason why one transmigrates.

(२) यदा सर्वेऽप्रमुच्यते कामा येतस्य हृदि श्रिता: ।

अथ मत्योऽमुष्टो भवत्सत्र ब्रह्म समस्सुत इति ॥

Br. 4-4-7, p. 920.

“When all the desires that stick to his heart are released, then
immediately the mortal (man) becomes immortal, and he attains Brahman in this very life.”  

Br. 4-4-7, p. 920

Evidently, it is only the desires of the mind that make a person bound to the aggregate of body and senses which are subject of pleasure and pain. But when he is detached from the body on account of Wisdom (Vidya):

(3) तद्धयादहिनिल्वयनी चल्मीके मृता प्रत्यस्ता शयीतेवमेवेदं
शरीरं शोधेऀयायमस्तीरोरेदमृतः प्राणो ब्रह्मेव तेज एव 

Br. 4-4-7, p. 920.

“Just as the lifeless slough of a snake which is cast off would lie in an ant-hill, so does this body lie. Henceforth this (knower) is bodiless, immortal, Prāṇa, Brahman alone, Light alone.”

Br. 4-4-7, p. 920.

A person is embodied merely because of his ignorance, but the moment he realizes his Brahmic nature, he comes to see that he has been always the Real Brahman which never had a body.

(4) अशरीरं शरिष्णववस्थे श्वस्थितम्।

महान्तं विशुलमात्मां मल्ला धीरो न शोचति॥

Kā. 2-22.

“Having intuited the unembodied Ātman within the bodies, the same changeless One within (the bodies which are) ever-changing, having intuited Him as the Great and Pervading One, the wise one never grieves.”

Kā. 2-22.

(5) अप्राणो ह्यमन: शुभ्रो ह्याक्षर्तमशः परः 

मु. 2-1-2.

“Without Prāṇas (organs), without mind, pure, beyond the Akshara (undifferentiated seed of the universe) the Highest.”

Mu. 2-1-2.
The Absolute Ātman has no body or organs, though ignorant people suppose that they are beings with body, mind and senses.

4. **Avidyā defined by Śaṅkara**

Śri Śaṅkara defines what exactly is meant by Avidyā and Vidyā in the following sentences and brings it home to us how Avidyā is the only source of all evils of mundane life and how Vidyā leads to the attainment of Brahman:

(1) तपेतेत्वैवलक्षणमच्छास्व पञ्चितता अविद्येति मन्यते। तद्विरके क वस्तुस्वरुपविद्यार्थं विद्यामाहुः॥

"Now this superimposition (of the self and the not-self on each other), the wise consider to be Avidyā. And the ascertainment of the true nature of Reality as It is, they call Vidyā." Intro. SBh.

(2) देहादिद्वेषनात्मसु ‘अहमस्मि’ इत्यात्मबुद्धिरविद्या।
	तत्त्वपूजनादी रगः, तत्परिवादादी द्वेषः, तदुच्छेददर्शनाद् भयम्, मोहश्च -
	इत्येवमयमन्त्रं प्रदोषकचर्यात् संततः सर्वेणां न प्रत्यक्षः। तद्विद्विहये अविद्यार्गदेषार्थ्यम्बदोपसृत्य गम्यमेतत् हृति च हुप्याध्यायतं प्रकृत्य
	व्यपदेशो भवति॥

"Avidyā is the idea of self-identification with not-selves such as body, thinking ‘I am verily this’. From this (Avidyā), results one’s attachment for the respect to be shown to these, and dislike for their being disrespected or otherwise disregarded.

When one becomes aware of the destruction of the body, fear and delusion rear up; this series of evils with its infinite varieties, is so well known to all of us. It is stated in this context that ‘this Support of heaven and earth is to be reached by those who are free from these evils such as Avidyā.”

SBh. 1-3-2, p. 95.
(3) अस्तान्यभिहोः प्रहाणायात्मैकत्वविद्याप्रतिपत्तै सवें चेदान्ता आरण्यते।।
अध्यासपाध्यायः।।

“All the Vedantas (Upanishads) are begun to show how the Wisdom of the Unity of Ātman is to be attained for getting rid of this source of all evils.”

Intro. SBh.

5. How man transcends embodiedness?

एष संप्रसादोस्माच्छरीरात् समुच्छय परंत्योतिरिप्रम्पणं स्वेन
रूपेणाधिभिन्नते, स उत्तमपुरुषः।।

च्छं. 8-१२-३।

“This ‘Samprasadā’ (Jiva), rising above this body, comes into being in his own nature, that is the Supreme Person (Uttama Purusha).”

Ch. 8-12-3.

This is a text from the Chandogya, which relates how a person is in a foreign guise as long as he has identified himself with the body, and how, transcending it, he reattains his own nature as Brahman, the Supreme Light. Śaṅkara says ‘विद्वेकविईकल्माणे जातमोहाससामाजस्य सवर्षवलं च।’

It is only through discrimination and want of discrimination that Ātman is ‘without a body’ or ‘has a body’. In the very introduction to his Sūtra-Bhāshya, that Āchārya writes :-

तपेत्पविद्यायग्यात्मानात्मनोरितराध्यासं पुरस्कृतः सवेन प्रमाण-प्रमेयव्यवहारः तोळिका वैदिकद्वपं प्रवृत्ताः, सर्वाणि च शास्त्राणि
विद्वितियनिष्ठोपकारणः।।
अध्यासपाध्यायः पा. २।

“Now, it is this mutual superimposition of the Self and not-Self, called Avidyā, that all conventions of means of right-knowledge and their objects, secular or Vedic, obtain in life; and so do the śāstras devoted to the treatment of injunction, and prohibition as also to Final Freedom.”

Intro. SBh. p. 2.
In answer to a question as to how all conventions of Pramāṇas presuppose this Avidyā of the nature of this mutual superimposition, Śaṅkara writes:-

देहेन्द्रियादिजु अहंमामिमांसारहितस्य प्रमातृत्वानुपप्त्ति प्रमाण-प्रवृत्तनुपप्ते: ॥

“This is so because Pramāṭṛutva (or being a cognizer who undertakes to know something) is impossible for one who does not treat the body as ‘me’ and the senses and other instruments as ‘mine’ and in the absence of Pramāṭṛutva the Pramāṇas (or valid means of right-knowledge) cannot function at all.” Intro. SBh.

Looking upon oneself as embodied through ignorance, then is, according to the Upanishads, the very foundation of all practical life, secular or Vedic.

IV
THE LANGUAGE AND STYLE OF THE UPANISHADS

INTRODUCTION

Those who would try to ascertain the teaching of the Upanishads, have to equip themselves not only with the principles of exegetics relating to textual criticism and of the principles of the method adopted, but also make themselves familiar with the language and style adopted there.
1. Introductory Narratives

Frequently, truths concerning meditation and knowledge are introduced through certain narratives in the shape of conversations, discussions or debates or instructions by spiritual teachers to their disciples or dear relatives who are interested in the subject.

The bearing of these introductory narratives on the subject matter to be discussed will have to be understood for the right understanding of the subject matter in each case. The dialogue between Bālāki and Ajātashatru (Br. 2-1), the conversation among the three experts in the Udgitha - doctrine (Ch. 1-8), the debate between each of the learned Brāhmaṇas and Yājñavalkya in Janaka’s sacrifice (Br. chapter three), the questions by the six disciples answered by Pippalāda in the Prashna, Yājñavalkya’s initiation of Maitreyi in the Brīhadāraṇyaka, and Varuṇa’s teaching to his dear son Bṛigu in the Taittirīya, are some of such narratives.

2. The word Upānishad

First of all, the student should note that the word ‘Upānishad’ itself is used in four different senses. In the first place (1) it may denote a doctrine :-

असुराणां ह्रोषोपपिषतू प्रेतस्य शरीरं भिक्षया वसनेनालक्ष्यकरणेति संस्कृतन्त्येतेन हस्यं लोकं जेष्ठत्तो मन्यते ॥ चौः ८-८-५.

“This is the Upānishad (lustive faith or doctrine) of the Asuras, that they embellish the corpse of a departed person with food, clothes and ornamentation etc. and by this means they believe they are going to gain that other world.” Ch. 8-8-5.

(2) Another meaning of the word is ‘name’, a significant name :-
"His (Upanishad) name is Satyasya Satyam (the real of the real). The Prāṇas are well-known to be Satya (real). He is the Real of that real."

"Such is the secret (teaching)."

"Wisdom is called ‘Upanishad’, because the derivative meaning of the word is, that it shatters, kills or destroys the seed of Saṃsāra such as Avidyā (ignorance) pertaining to those seekers of final release, who devoid of thirst for enjoying objects seen (in this world) and heard of (as being in the other world), approach the wisdom to be hereinafter explained, and persevering to contemplate on it with continued devotion to it. ...or (2) it is called ‘Upanishad’, because of its derivative meaning that it leads the seekers to the Highest Brahman by taking them to Brahman."
The Bhāshya on the Muṇḍaka also explains the word Upanishad as applied to Brahma-vidyā very much like the above-cited passage. As for the treatise dealing with this subject, Śaṅkara says:

प्रयस्यापि तादध्येन तत्त्वबद्विद्योपपति: ‘आयुर्वेद भृतम्’ इत्यादिविल।

का. भा. अव., पा. ५८।

"The work dealing with it also, may be called by that name (Upanishad), because it is meant for teaching that wisdom. The usage of the word in such a secondary meaning is justified by such statements as ‘Ghee is verily life’." Kā. Bh. Intro. p. 58.

3. The Use of Illustrations

There are a number of examples taken from common life to illustrate the truth relating to transcendental Reality. Of course, it goes without saying that these examples are adduced just to make the student convinced of the truth only in so far as some point of comparison, is concerned. For example:

(१) यथा विलीनपेषाद्गामस्तादाचामेति कथयिति लण्डमिति
मध्यादाचामेति कथयिति लण्डमित्यन्तादाचामेति कथयिति लण्डमिति।

छ्र. ६-१३-२।

In this example, Uddālaka illustrates how salt dissolved in water, can neither be perceived with the eye, nor felt by touch and yet by sipping it with the tongue, one can very well be convinced that it is there in every drop of it. The point of comparison intended, is of course that Ātman as Pure Being can be intuited directly even while He is not perceivable by the senses. The example of a lump of salt, is given in the Bṛhadāranyaka in another
context to illustrate the nature of Ātman :-

(२) स यथा सैन्यविलय उदके प्रास्त उदकमेवानुविलीयेत न हास्योदग्रहणायेव स्थात् । यतो यत्रस्तवादीत लवणमेवैव वा अर इदं महदूतमनन्तमपारं विज्ञानन एव । एतेह्यो भूतेह्यः समुत्थाय तान्येवानुविनाश्यति न प्रेत्य संज्ञास्तीत्ये ब्रवीमीति होवाच याज्वाल्वयः ॥

Br. २-४-१२.

"As a lump of salt dropped into water dissolves becoming like unto water itself, and no one could actually pick it up, but whence so ever one takes it, it would (taste) salt alone, even so, my dear, this Supreme Being, infinite and having no shore beyond, is Pure Consciousness throughout. Coming out of those elements as an individual, the notion of individuality is destroyed along with them. After departing (from and transcending them), there is no more (this finite) consciousness."

Br. २-४-१२.

The above-cited example is to illustrate how Pure Consciousness itself pervades throughout, it being unlike finite consciousness of some object; for, the latter is finite, being born at some point of time and then disappears. There is no distinction of knower, knowable and knowledge in Pure Consciousness.

Here is another example :-

(३) स यथा दुन्दुपेघेन्यमानस्य न बाह्याश्वाद्वाअशक्त्यादग्रहणाय दुन्दुपेघस्तु ग्रहणेन दुन्दुपापातस्त्य न शब्दो गृहीतः ॥

Br. २-४-७.

"As for example, while a drum is being beaten one cannot conceive the sounds in themselves, but seeing them as pertaining to the drum, or to the beating of the drum, the sound is conceived. ......."

Br. २-४-७.

In this and the two subsequent examples, Yājñavalkya
tries to illustrate how every phenomenon in waking or dream is perceived or conceived only as dependent on \( \text{Atman} \), but not apart from \( \text{Atman} \) as having an existence of its own. As for the various sounds heard while a drum is being beaten or while a conch is being blown, or while a lute is being played on, the individual notes arising in each case, can never be heard as distinct and existing for themselves, but are uniformly heard and distinguished to be notes pertaining to the particular instrument which is being operated upon. Similarly every phenomenon has to be known only as depending on \( \text{Atman} \)'s consciousness which uniformly reveals it.

4. Parables

And frequently we come across some parables to typify spiritual truths. They also must, of course, be understood to illustrate the truth with reference to a particular point of comparison. This may be clarified by one or two citations:

\( \text{1) यथा सोम्य पुरुष गन्धरेश्वोपधिनद्वारामानीयं तं ततोपनिजने विसृज्जेत् स यथा तत्र प्राद्वं वा उद्वं वा अधराद्वं वा प्रत्यक्षं वा प्रभावयतीपधिनद्वारामानीयं विसृज्जः।। तस्य यथाउपनिजनहं प्रमुखः प्रज्ञायादेतां दियं गन्धारा एतां दियं वजैति स ग्रामाद्वायं पृथ्वी

\( पण्डितो मेधावी गन्धारानोपरस्येत्तैवमेवेवः चाचार्यवान् पुरुषो वेद तस्य ताबदेव चिरं यावन्त्व विमोहयेऽथ संपत्त्य इति।। \) छः. ६-१४-१, २.

"Just as, my dear boy, some one, would bring a person with blind-folded eyes from the Gandhāras and leave him in a place where there are no human beings, and as that person would start towards the east or towards the north or towards the west, saying 'O! I have been brought here with blind-folded eyes and left with
blind-folded eyes!". And as some one would untie his bandage and tell him 'The country of Gândharas, is in this direction. Go this way!' and he being shrewd and well-informed, would enquire his way, and at last reach the country of Gândharas itself; so also, here, a person who has an (adept) teacher, would know the truth. And for him, the delay is only so long as he is not released, and immediately he will become one with Reality.” Ch. 6-14-1, 2.

This parable aptly explains how an ignorant person feels himself left in the lurch so long as he suffers from the evils of mundane life without a teacher who would guide him on the way to attain Ātman, and how when a real guide has shown him the way to the Truth, his eyes are opened and by dint of self-effort, he attains oneness with his real Ātman.

We may refer the reader to another parable in the Brāhadāraṇyaka which relates how Prajāpati taught the Devas, men and Asuras by pronouncing a single syllable ‘da’ and each of the three groups of disciples understood this single syllable as an exhortation to exercise self-control (Dāmyata), to be charitable (Datta), and to be merciful (Dayadhvam) respectively. The Śruti concludes:

\[ \text{तदेतत्वैः दैवी चागु गुदति स्तत्नयिलुर्द द द इति दाम्यत दद्} \]
\[ \text{द्यध्याति तद्दतत् जयं शिष्केत् दम् दानं द्ययाति} \]

“This divine voice, thunder, repeats this very thing when it says ‘Da, Da, Da’ (that is), Dāmyata (control yourselves), Datta (give), Dayadhvam (be merciful). Therefore one should learn this triad - self-control, charity and mercy.” Br. 5-2-3.

5. Epigrams and Paradoxes

And then there are certain epigrams crisp and paradoxical texts in the Upanishads, out of which the reader can make little or nothing unless he has had
initiation in the traditional way of interpretation. For instance:

(1) सर्वत: पाणिपादं तत्सर्वतोषिक्षिसिरोमुखम्

सर्वत: श्रुतिमल्लोके सर्वमात्रृत्व तिष्ठति

सर्वेन्द्रियारुपां सर्वेन्द्रियविवर्जितम्

सर्वस्य प्रभुमीशान्तः सर्वस्य शरणं सुहृत्

श्रे. ३-१६, १७.

“It has hands and feet everywhere. It has eyes and faces everywhere. It has ears everywhere in the world, and stays enveloping everything. It displays the functions of all the senses, but is devoid of all senses. It is the Lord and Ruler of all. It is the refuge and well-wisher of everyone.” Śve. 3-16, 17.

These verses teach how devoid of all characteristic features, Brahman is the nearest and dearest Self of each one of us.

(2) स होवाचैतहे तदक्षरं गांगि ब्राह्मणा अभिवद्यस्यूल-मनणवहस्तमदीर्मलोहितभस्तनमच्छायमतमोसवायवानाकाशमसंगन-रसमगन्यमच्छुक्षमश्रोतनववगमोतेजस्कमप्राणमुखमात्रमंतरमबाध्यं न तद्दानि किज्जन न तद्दानि करवन

बृ. ३-८-८.

“And he said: ‘O Gārgī, this is indeed that Aksharam the Brahmanas say ‘It is neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long; neither red nor oily, neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor ether, untainted, has neither taste nor odour, without eyes and without ears, without vocal organ and without mind, without light, without vital forces and without mouth, without measure, without interior and without exterior. It does not eat anything, nor is it eaten by any one.”

Br. 3-8-8.

Evidently, the Śruti wants to negate all conceivable characteristics and features. In fact, there is an oft recurring text which denies every feature ascribed to Reality and
says ‘स एव नेतिनेत्त्वात्मा’ ‘Now this One is the Ātman, who has been described as Neti Neti (not such, not such).’

6. Texts with the same Refrain

There are certain texts which repeatedly draw our attention to some particular nature of Brahman. For instance, in the Kena Upanishad:

यहाचाचात्मन्युदितं चेन वागभुदाते ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विभिन्न नेदं यदिद्यमुपासते ॥

यम्मन्सा न मनुस्ते चेनाहर्म्मो मतम् ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विभिन्न नेदं यदिद्यमुपासते ॥

यच्चषुष्णा न पमावत्स चेन चक्षूणि पमावति ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विभिन्न नेदं यदिद्यमुपासते ॥

यच्छोज्जेण न श्रुणोति चेन श्रोत्रमिदं श्रवतम् ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विभिन्न नेदं यदिद्यमुपासते ॥

यत्रापेन न प्राणिति चेन प्राणः प्राणीयते ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विभिन्न नेदं यदिद्यमुपासते ॥

के १-५तः ९.

Here each of the verses ends with the refrain ‘नेदं यदिद्यमुपासते’ (Not this which they meditate upon as ‘this’) to emphasize the fact that, just as Brahman or the Real Self of all, is no object of the act of knowing, it is no object of meditation in Its own nature as Consciousness whose light alone is the eternal subject of speech, and the function of the mind and of the several organs of sense.

Similarly, ‘एतद् वै तत्’ (का. ४-३) ‘This is verily that’ is a
refrain which recurs in a number of verses in the Kāṭhaka Upanishad while describing the nature of the Truth about which Nachiketa asked the God of Death, which even the Gods do not know, which is beyond the sphere of religious virtue and vice, beyond casuality, and beyond the past and future, that Truth regarding the Highest Heaven of Viṣṇu beyond which there is nothing else to be known or attained.

7. Metaphors

And then there are a number of metaphors, which are interspersed in these revelations to make some particular Vedāntic truth more intelligible. We give here some texts which may serve as a specimen:—

(I) Ātman rādhān viśdhyā sārīraṃ rathamēv tu

budhī tu sārāṇīḥ viśdhyā manā prabhamev cha

indrāgniḥ haṇatārjīvīryaṃ vāṃstevu gocchāna

ātmanātipi yo yugāntaḥ phoekatvāhurmanīśitaṁ

Ka. 3-3, 4.

"Know Ātman to be the master of the chariot, and the body to be, verily, the chariot; know the Buddhi (intellect) to be the charioteer, and Manas (the mind which takes note of things) to be the reins verily. The sense-organs, they say, are the horses, and the sense-objects are the routes for them. And the one who is joined to the body, senses and the mind, the wise say, is the experiencer."

Ka. 3-3, 4.

Here a human-being is represented as a traveller who has to reach his destination.

(II) acaśāyakaṃ lohitākulaṃkūrṇaṃ

bhujī: prajā: caśāyakāṃ sarvāmānāḥ

II
THE UPANISHADIC APPROACH TO REALITY

अनं छोको जुषमाणोऽनुशोऽते

जहातेनां भुक्त्योगामजोठन्यः।। 
श्रे. ४-५।

(There is) a she-goat (of a variegated colour) - red, white and black - bearing kids similar in form. A he-goat lies by the side of her enjoying her company, while another goat discards her because of her having been enjoyed. 

Sve. 4-5.

This is an imagery used to describe how unwise Jīvas enjoy the Prakṛti, and as a result of this combination, beings movable and immovable are produced while a wise man gives up all attachment to that Prakṛti.

(३) अथ य आत्मा स सेतुविभृति:। 
छान. ८-५-१।

“Nor for this Ātman, This is the embankment the sustainer.”

Ch. 8-4-1.

अमृतस्येष सेतु:। 
मुं. २-२-५।

“This (Ātman) is the dam leading across to immortality.”

Mu. 2-2-5.

8. Symbols and Fanciful Derivations

There are certain symbols such as the syllable ‘Ōm’ and the Vyāhṛutis Bhūḥ, Bhuvah, Suvah, which are used for meditation and teaching Vedāntic truths, and therefore it is necessary to understand their real significance for those who wish to practice meditation as prescribed or to intuit the truths indicated by these symbols.

(१) प्रजापतिलोकान्तम्यतप्तेब्योगितयात्यन्त्रविद्या संप्रासवत्
ताम्यतप्तस्य अभित्तात्या एततान्यक्षरणि संप्रासवत्, भूर्भुव: स्वारित।।

(२) ताम्यतप्तप्तेब्योगिततेध्य ओढ्कारः संप्रासवत् तदथा श्रुंकुना
"Prajapati contemplated upon the worlds, and from them (thus) contemplated upon, the Trayi Vidya (the wisdom of the Triad of Vedas) issued forth. He contemplated upon it, and from that thus contemplated upon, these three syllables issued forth, to wit, ‘Bhūh’, ‘Bhuvah’ and ‘Swah’. He contemplated upon them and from them thus contemplated upon, issued ‘Omkāra’. Just as all leaves are pierced by a stalk, so also is all speech pierced by ‘Om’. All this is the syllable ‘Om’ alone, Yea, all this is ‘Om’ alone."

Ch. 2-23-2, 3.

[This one syllable Om and Vyahrtis - ‘Bhūh’ etc., are again referred to for meditation in other Upanishads like the Taittiriya.]

(2) अमान्त्रस्तुऽधौवायवहायः: प्रपन्वोपशमः शिवोऽहैत एव-मोऽक्कार आतैच्व सवशित्यात्माःसत्त्माय एवं वेद य एवं वेद। मां. १२.

“In this mantra, Reality Absolute, is suggested as ‘Omkara’ (the syllable Òm) which should be intuited as beyond all speech and thought (Vyavahāra) without all distinctions and differences, the Good, non-dual. One who intuits It as such has entered wholly the Absolute Ātman as Ātman. Those who cannot rise to the level of this eternal Intuition, have often fallen into the error of imagining that this is the ‘Fourth mystic Mātra’ of Òm, just like those that credulously imagine that Turiya is a mystic state beyond waking, dream and sleep.”

9. Fanciful Derivations

There are some fanciful derivations of words intended to serve as mnemonic symbols for denoting spiritual truths. For instance:
"This Ātman, indeed, is in the heart. This is, verily, his etymological name, to wit, ‘हृदयम्’ (This one is in the heart); therefore this is Hridayam. Whoever meditates upon him as such, he verily goes to Swargaloka (the world of Bliss or Brahmaloka) day by day.”

Ch. 8-3-3.

Here the practice of meditating on Ātman as residing in the human heart (or mind) as the Witness thereof, is eulogised. The very word Hridaya denoting the mind, is a mnemonic. By splitting it into Hrudi (in the heart or mind), Ayam (this one) the text says that this meditator, really goes to the Brahmaloka full of bliss during deep sleep, unlike other persons who do not practise this meditation.

"When a person is spoken of as ‘Swapiti’ (he sleeps), then, my dear boy, he is merged in Being, that is, dissolved into his own Self. So, they call Swapiti (he sleeps), for he is then verily dissolved into his own Self.”

Ch. 6-8-1.

This derivation of the Sanskrit name ‘Swapiti’ (sleeps) is a mnemonic, which, borne in mind, would keep on reminding us of the spiritual truth that every creature drops its egoity and is actually one with Pure Being (or Brahman) in dreamless sleep.

10. Recapitulation

Before concluding this section, we wish to draw the
attention of the reader to the most important peculiar ways of teaching adopted in the Upanishads. These are mostly necessitated by the nature of Reality to be taught here.

(1) Foremost of all, there is the *Negative Method* of teaching Reality. Reality being devoid of all specific feature, has to be described mainly by negating the characteristics that may be imputed to It. This accounts for the frequent way of describing It as the नेतिनेत्यात्मा. ‘The तमृतम् who is neither this, nor that’.

(2) We have already noticed the *mnemonic derivations*. Here is one more example:

सर्वेन हसिद्वं ब्रह्म तत्त्वलाविनि शान्त उपासीत || छा. ३-१४-१.

“All this is verily Brahman; for it is ‘Tajjalan’ (= तत्त्वल, तत्त्व, तदन्) born out of It, is dissolved in It, and moves about in It. Therefore one should meditate upon It in peace.” Ch. 3-14-1.

(3) *Applying empirical epithets to Reality in metaphysical senses* :-

सत्तपान (Real), ज्ञानम् (Consciousness), आनन्दः (Bliss) used in the Taittiriya, are some instances of this type.

(4) *Using empirical illustrations with extension of meaning* :-

यथा सोम्येकेन मृत्तिपिण्डेन सर्व गृन्तायं विज्ञातं स्थानाचार्यं विकारो नामशेषं मृत्तिकेत्येव सत्तपान ||

“Just as, my dear boy, by a lump of clay (known) all (effect) made of clay, would become known, the effect being a mere play of words, a mere name, clay is the only (thing) real........

Ch. 6-1-4.
While a pot or a pitcher (in empirical life) is also considered to be real inasmuch as it possesses causal efficiency, the Śruti has declared it to be unreal from the Paramarthic stand-point since what we call a pot or some other effect, is essentially none other than clay. The illustration is then made use of to bring out to the seeker of the truth that the universe being an effect (a mere superimposition on Brahman), is really no other than the Cause (or substrate), to wit, Brahman as Pure Being.

(5) Clothing some universal truth in Past Tense:

(a) ब्रह्म वा हदभ्र आसीत्वदात्मामेवावेत्। अहं ब्रह्मास्मीति
tasmātu tat-svarṇamahat

“This was verily Brahman in the beginning. It knew Itself ‘I am Brahman’, then It became the all.” Br. 1-4-10.

(b) सदेव सोप्येदभ्र आसीदेकमेवाह्नित्वम्।

“This was Being alone in the beginning, my boy, One only without a second.” Ch. 6-2-1.

Here the truth that Brahman or Pure Being is the All, has been clothed in the past tense so that the seeker may not mix it with the empirical truth of multiplicity.

We shall take up the peculiar method of exposition uniformly employed by the Upanishads later on.
VEDANTA-SASTRA AS THE ONLY MEANS OF RIGHT-KNOWLEDGE

1. Validity of Pramāṇas, Secular and Śāstraic

Indian Schools of Philosophy, insist that nothing can be established in a discussion without the aid of Pramāṇas or canons of evidence. The Mādhyamikas alone is an exception, for he has no particular doctrine to defend.

The Mīmāṃsakas hold that the Vedas being eternal, are the only Pramāṇa with regard to results of good and bad deeds to be enjoyed in another birth or in another world where pleasure or pain has to be experienced as a consequence of one's deeds in this world, these effects being wholly beyond the ken of perception and other Pramāṇas. The Vedāntas also acquiesce in this view of the eternity of the Vedas from the empirical stand-point. That is why Bādarāyaṇa confirms Jaimini’s view in this respect, in his aphorism 'अत एव च नियमयम्' (वे. सू. २-३-२९) "And hence, it is that eternity of the Vedas has to be accepted" (V.S. 1-3-29). Śaṅkara explains this as follows :-

"The eternity of the Vedas, established by reasons such as the absence of any śrutis naming any original author etc., is confirmed by this Śūtra."

So from the Vyavahāric point of view, we may suppose that this teacher also upholds the doctrine of this eternity.

2. The Purpose of the Śāstras

The Vedas as a Śāstra, however, have two distinct purposes to serve. As Śaṅkara rightly says :-
The knowledge of Dharma (taught in the Karma-Kanda) has Abhyudaya, prosperity, for its fruit, and it is dependent on the performance (of a religious duty). The Vijñana (knowledge) of Brahman, however, has the Highest Good (Final Release) for its fruit, and does not demand any performance.

Moreover, the functions of the texts teaching Dharma and Brahman are quite different. As Śaṅkara says:

"As for the text, which is the Pramāṇa (means of knowledge) concerning Dharma, it enlightens a person simultaneously urging him (to engage in the duty) which is its object of teaching; the text concerning Brahman, however, merely enlightens a person (about It). The enlightenment having been born, the person is not urged to engage in that enlightenment, since that is born (of its own accord) by the text (itself) in the same way as a person (is not urged to engage in the knowledge) arising from the contact of the sense-organ and its object."

3. The distinct nature of the Subject-matter of the two Mimiśas

There are two different exegetical works on the two entities which serve as the subject-matter of the two sets of texts referred to above. The Pūrva-Mimiśa of Jaimini deals exclusively with the knowledge of Dharma, which as already remarked demands something to be done. The
Vedânta-Mîmâṃsa of Bâdarâyaṇa, treats of the knowledge of texts teaching Brahman. The striking difference between these two entities (Dharma and Brahman) which constitute the subject-matter of the two Mîmâṃsas, should be vigilantly borne in mind by the student who aspires to appreciate the exact nature of the Prâmâṇya (validity) of the Vedânta-Śâstra according to Śaṅkara.

In the first place, while Dharma and Brahman, are both super-sensuous, the former cannot be directly experienced in this life, while the latter can.

(१) भव्यश्च धर्मो जिज्ञास्यो न ज्ञानकालेपस्ति, पुरुषव्यापारत्त्वात्
; इह तु पूर्तं ब्रह्म जिज्ञास्यम्, नित्यत्त्वात् न पुरुषव्यापारत्त्वम् ॥

सू. भा. १-१-१।

"Dharma, the subject-matter of the former enquiry, has to come about in future, and so is not present at the time of its knowledge. But here Brahman to be enquired into, is an already existent entity and being eternal, does not depend upon the will of a person."

SBh. 1-1-1.

And in the second place, while both Dharma and Brahman are necessarily to be known with the help of the Śâstra, the knowledge of Brahman demands direct intuition and its accessories also.

(२) न धर्मजीज्ञासायामिव श्रुत्यादय एव प्रमाणं ब्रह्मजीज्ञासायाम्
; किं तु श्रुत्यादयोऽनुप्रवादयश्च यथासंप्रवादयमिह प्रमाणम् ॥ हनुभवाव- सान्त्वात्, भूतवस्तुविविषयत्वाच्च ब्रह्मज्ञानस्त।॥

सू. भा. १-१-२।

"Śrutis and other (holy works) are not the only means of knowledge in the enquiry into Brahman, as they exclusively are in the case of enquiry into Dharma, but Śrutis etc. and intuition and the like, are also the means of knowledge here according to the
context. For the knowledge of Brahman has to culminate in (final) Intuition and treats of an already existent entity.” SBh. 1-1-2.

4. **Why Brahman is not accessible to the Secular Pramāṇas**

It might be objected by some one that while 'Dharma' is something to be produced in due course at some distant time, and hence the claim that Śāstra alone is the valid means of knowledge in its case, there is no reason why Brahman, an existent entity, should not be known with the help of other secular means like perception or inference. Here is Śaṅkara's reply to this :-

(१) ननु भूतवस्तुते स्वयमः प्रमाणान्तरविषयत्वमेव - इति वेदान्तवाक्यविचारण अर्थिष्कैव प्राप्ता । न ; इन्द्रियाविषयत्वेन संबन्धायान्ग्रहणात् ॥

"(Objection :-) If Brahman be an already existent entity, it necessarily follows that It is an object of the other means alone, and so the enquiry about the purport of the Vedānta-texts becomes altogether useless."

(Answer :-) No, for Brahman being no object of sense-organs, the relation (between Brahman and the Universe) cannot be grasped."

SBh. 1-1-2.

The objection here mainly aims at showing that Brahman may as well be inferred as the cause of the Universe, and so, trying to understand it by ascertaining the meaning of the Upanishads, is futile. The answer is there is no scope for syllogistic inference here, since the latter demands an invariable relation between what is to be proved and the means of its proof as in the case of 'fire and smoke' in the common world. This is another
express-denial of the possibility of Brahman being the object of secular Pramāṇas:

(२) यतौक्त परिष्पण्तत्वात् प्रज्ञानि प्रमाणान्तरणि संभवेयुरिति, तदपि मनोरथमात्रम्; रूपाच्यवादव हि नायमर्थः प्रत्यक्षस्य गोचरः, लिङ्गाच्यवाच्च नानुमानादीनाम्; आगमात्मसविचित्त्वं एव तु अयमर्थों घर्मवत्। तथा च श्रुतिः - 'नेशा तर्काद मतिरापनेया प्रोक्तान्येनैव सुज्ञानाय प्रेष्ट' (का. २-९), 'को अद्वा वेद क इह प्रवोचुतः ....... इत्यं विसृष्टियत् आवभूव' (ऋष. १०-१२९-६) स्त्रति चैते ऋचै चिन्द्रानामप्रिश्चारणा दुर्पियतां जगत्कारणस्य दर्शयतः।

सू. पा. २-१-६, पा. १८८।

“As for what was said (by the opponent) that Brahman being an already existent entity, Pramāṇas other (than Vedānta texts) may apply to it, that is only a fancy. For having no form and the like (qualities), and being devoid of a Liṅga (sign indicating something connected with it) etc., It is no object of inference and other Pramāṇas. It is to be known exclusively through Āgama (Śāstra) like Dharma. So says the Śruti: ‘This knowledge is not to be got (or refuted) through speculation; it leads to right intuition, my dear boy, when taught by a person, quite other than the speculator’ (Ka. 2-9), ‘Who knows clearly, and who can express it by words, from whence this variety of creation has issued forth?’ (Rig. 10-129-6). These two Riks show how the cause of the Universe is difficult to conceive even for perfect men.” SBh. 2-1-6, p. 188.

Of course, ‘आगमात्मसविचित्त्वं’ (to be attained through Āgama alone) is obviously intended not only to exclude the empirical Pramāṇas, but also to presume that ‘अनुपवादवः’ (intuition etc.) expressly mentioned in the quotation cited in the previous paragraph are to be accepted. The special feature of the Vedānta-Śāstra as a means emphatically is that it invariably demands intuition. That is why Śaṅkara proclaims with assurance:-
Seeing that the knowledge of Brahman (actually) culminates in its effect (Moksha), the validity of the Śastra dealing with that (Jñāna) cannot be denied.” SBh. 1-1-4, p. 12.

“It is not possible to say that this (Purusha) does not exist, or that He cannot be known (through the Śastra), for the word ‘Ātman’ (Self) is used (in the text) ‘Now this is the Ātman described as not this, not this’ (Br. 3-9-26); and because the Self is undeniable, and whoever would be the denier is himself that Ātman.” SBh. 1-1-4, p. 19, 20.

VI

THE METHOD OF SUPERIMPOSITION AND RESCISSION

1. The Nature of Brahman

Brahman or Absolute Reality being devoid of all specific features, can neither be expressed by words nor thought of by the mind, like an object. In fact, all distinctions concerning
subject and object relation (प्राच्याक्षरकाव्य) and those of all action, factors of action, and the result (क्रियाकारकफलकाव्य) are essentially the One Ātman. As a text frequently quoted by Śaṅkara, says :-

यत्र त्वस्य सर्वगत्याक्षरावतृत्व तत्केन कं पश्चात्तकेन कं जिज्ञेयत्केन कं रस्येत्तकेन कमभिवद्यत्केन कं श्रुण्यात्तकेन कं मन्त्रीत तत्केन कं स्पृशेत्तकेन कं विजाल्पित्यात्।।

"When to this knower of Ātman, everything has become Ātman alone, then what could one see and with what, then what could one smell and with what, then what could one taste and with what, then what could one hear and with what, then what could one think and with what, then what could one touch and with what, then what could one understand and with what?"

Br. 4-5-15.

It is evident that, from this transcendental level, there could be no world of multiplicity and not even the distinction of Śāstra and teaching. Accordingly Sri Gauḍapāda says :-

प्रपञ्चो यदि विद्यत निवर्ततेन न संशयः।
मायामात्रमिदं द्वैतमद्वैतं परमार्थेष्ठ।।

विकल्पो विनिवर्ततेन कल्पितो यदि केनचित्त।।
उपदेशाद्यं चादो ज्ञाते द्वैतं न विद्यते।। गौ. का. १-१७. १८।

"If the manifold universe were actually there, it would have to be banished before attaining Advaita. This duality is only a magical appearance; in truth, there is Non-duality alone. The distinction (of Śāstra etc.) would have to actually disappear, if it were a real thought-construct of some one person. This doctrine of distinctions is only a device for the purpose of teaching, and when the Reality is known, there is no duality whatever." (iK. 1-17, 18.
2. The method of teaching devised by the Upanishads

This nature of non-dualistic Ātman, therefore, has necessitated a particular device to make the Absolute truth intelligible to seekers. This device is to deliberately impute to Reality some empirical characteristic, and when the truth has been brought home, to rescind the imputed characteristic. Sri Gauḍapāda illustrates this device by citing an example in the following verse:-

(२) स एष नेतिनेतीति व्याख्यातं निहृते यतः ।
सर्वमप्राणपावेन हेतुनात्त्वं प्रकाशते ॥ गौ. का. ३-२६.

Here Gauḍapādāchārya refers to the Bṛhadāraṇyaka which first teaches Brahman (in Br. 2-3-6) by the text ‘भयात ब्रह्म नेति नेति’ ‘Now, therefore, this is the teaching not this, not that’, and subsequently in the same Upanishad, several ways of assuming and negating the ascriptions occur (in 3-9-26, 4.2.4 and 4-4-22) in different contexts. In each of these texts there is this refrain :-

(२) स एष नेतिनेत्रात्मारूपुः न हि गृह्यात्माशयो न हि
शीतितुसङ्गो न हि सम्यतेरसितो न व्यञ्जने न रिष्यति ॥ बृ. ३-९-२६.

“This is the Ātman described as ‘Not this, not this’, He is unobjectifiable, for He is never objectified ; undecaying, for He never decays ; untaintable, for He is never tainted ; unfettered, for He is never pained and is never injured.” Br. 3-9-26.

Gauḍapādāchārya says that by this device of repeated negation of the description, because of the Reality being unobjectifiable, the Unborn reveals of Its own accord.

Śaṅkarāchārya refers to this device as belonging to a hoary tradition.
In His commentary on the Gītā verse (13-13), which is itself almost a verbatim repetition of (Sve. 3-16), the Āchārya writes:—

(3) उपाधिकृतं मिथ्यारूपायं अस्तित्वादिगमाय स्मृतयथावर्त्
परिकल्प्य उच्चते ‘सर्वायामिषादम्। इत्यादि; तथा हि संप्रदायविदं
वचनम् ‘अধ्यात्मापापवादाभ्यं निष्णुपच्छं प्रपन्न्यते’ - इति।

गी. पा. १३-१३।

“Even the false form due to the conditioning associate, has been treated as though it were the real property of the Knowable (Ātman) so that Its being may become intelligible in the Śloka beginning with ‘Having hands and feet everywhere’. This is in accordance with what those conversant with tradition say: ‘By deliberate superimposition and rescission, that which is devoid of specific features, is to be explained.’

3. Some Examples of the Method

It should not be supposed that this Adhyārōpa so-called is altogether unreal and is merely an assumption for convenience sake. Empirically, it is real enough. But it may be used even as it is to make some spiritual truth more intelligible.

(a) We have already cited the example of the causal relation between clay and its effects, wherein the Upanishad shows how the so-called effect in the empirical life, is really not other than the cause. This example has been given in illustration of the metaphysical causal relation between Brahman and the Universe.

(b) Similarly, the empirical states of consciousness, and the empirical body, vital force, mind etc. have been also used to reveal the really real nature of the Ātman of Vedānta.
(c) The Māṇḍūkya Upanishad, for instance, mentions the Waking State as the conditioning associate of Ātman, and says that the true Ātman is the Witness of the whole universe covered by that state. The ego of outward-consciousness, all the senses and other factors that are included in the ego-complex no less than the objective phenomena there, - the whole of this panorama constitutes the conditioning associate of the Witness called Vaiśvānara by the Śrutī. Similarly the whole of the dream state is the conditioning associate of the same Witness who has been styled Taijasa, while the same Witness with the conditioning associate of deep sleep, has been called Prajñā by the Śrutī. This same Witness in and for Himself - for the associates change their self-identity while the Witness is constant - has been called the Fourth (चतुर्थ) relatively to the three relative Ātmans. Thus by successive Adhyārōpa or superimposition of the states and Apavāda or negation - we arrive at the Real secondless Ātman. Of course, each of the states, depending as it does on the real Ātman, is unreal from the stand-point of Paramārtha (really Real).

(d) The same is the case with regard to the five Kōsas (sheaths) taught in the Taittirīya Upanishad. Says Gauḍapāda:

रसादयो हि ये कोशा व्याख्यातासैतित्तीयके ।  
तेषामात्मा परो जीव: खं यथा संप्रकाशितः ॥  गौ. का. ३-११।

"Beyond the (five) Kōsas beginning with the अर्बसमय (made up of the juice of food), which have been explained (successively as 'Ātman') in the Taittirīya - beyond these there is their Jīva, their living Self, who has been revealed by us through the illustration of the ether."

GK. 3-11.
Gauḍapāda has already explained in his previous verses how Jīva is really the one Paramātman, though He appears to be manifold owing to the conditioning associates the body, life-force etc. He has cited there how one and the same ether (ākāśa) appears to be many and various owing to the different conditioning associates such as jars and pitchers, the latter themselves being really all products of ether itself. He says here that the Annamaya (made up of food), Prāṇamaya (made up of life-force), Manomaya (made up of mind), Vijnānamaya (made up of intellect), and Ānandamaya (made up of pleasure) - each successively called Ātman (self) just to cancel the notion of self-hood superimposed on the previous sheath, - as merely sheaths tentatively treated as the self, just to lead the seeker to the intuition of the Real Ātman beyond them all. The idea of individuality of Jīva is finally overpassed, so that he is now seen to be really the Supreme Self.

4. Recognition of the method in the Sūtras

That the author of the Vedānta-Sūtras did recognize this method, may be inferred from the way in which he presents the exegesis of the Upanishads. For example, (1) he defines Brahman as the cause of the birth, sustentation, and dissolution of the Universe (in VS. 1-1-2). (2) And he proceeds to say that the Brahman is not only the efficient cause of the Universe, but also the Material Cause.

प्रकृतिः प्रतिज्ञादृष्टान्तानुपरोपहारः ॥ वे. सू. १-४-२३।

"(Brahman is to be regarded) as the Material Cause also, so that the (initial) enunciation and the illustration in the Śruti, may not be contradicted."
[This Sūtra says that Śāstraic enunciation of teaching about Brahman viz. that knowing Brahman one would have known everything, would be in the fitness of things, only if Brahman is taken to be the material cause also. And illustrations like that about clay, a nugget of gold or a nail-cutter would also be apt in this case alone.]

And finally (3) he rejects the reality of the effect as such in the Sūtra,

तदन्यत्वमारम्यःशब्दादिभ्यः ॥

"The effect is not other than its cause, because of texts like those declaring it to be only a play of words." VS. 2-1-14.

[This Sūtra negates all causality, for it points to the text, which says the effect is only a play of words, as also the texts which declare that all the universe is really Brahman.]

Again (4) he actually refers to the method in the Sūtra :-

हेयत्वाचनाच्यः ॥

"(Pradhāna is not the cause) also because there is no text teaching its rejection." VS. 1-1-8.

[This Sūtra says that the Śruti declaring ‘The Sat (Being) is the Ātman’, (the Self) and ‘That thou art’ (Ch. 6-8-7) does not subsequently abrogate it lest it be taken seriously. Therefore this Sat is not Pradhāna.]

Śaṅkara explains the spirit of the Sūtra thus:

यद्यनात्मावै प्रधानं सच्छब्दवाच्यं ‘स आत्मा तत्त्वमसि’ (छां. ६-८-७) इति होपिदिए न्याय, स तदुपदेशक्रमणात् अनात्मज्ञतया तत्त्रिष्टो मा भूत्त्व इति पुख्यमात्मानमुपपदिदिश्ये: तस्य हेयत्वं ब्रूयात् । यथा अरुन्तरं दिदर्शियत्वः:
"If the Pradhāna, which is not the self at all, were what is denoted by the word Sat (Being), and if that alone had been taught by the text 'That is the Self, that thou art', then (the father) intending to teach the Ātman in the primary sense, would have said (something implying) its rejection, lest the son being ignorant of the real Ātman, should stick to it after hearing it taught. (This is to be expected) as for instance (in the illustration) where some one going to point out the Arundhati star, would first point to a (secondary) bigger star near it calling it Arundhati, and then negate it and then show the real primary Arundhati. Similarly here also the teacher should have said 'this is not your Self'; but he has not said so."

SBh. 1-1-8, p. 31.

[Evidently, Bādarāyaṇa according to Śaṅkara, expects that the usual procedure of śruti in teaching the subtle Ātman, is to point out something grosser as the Ātman and then by negating it to lead the seeker to the real Ātman.]

This is with reference to Brahman treated as the cause by Adhyārōpa, to be abrogated later on. We shall cite another example where this method seems to have been recognized by Bādarāyaṇa:-

"Not even on account of the circumscribing situation, can there be a two-fold characteristic, for everywhere (It is taught to be without specific features)."

VS. 3-2-11.

This aphorism categorically denies that Brahman can be conceived as happening to be endowed with specific features also owing to some conditioning association.
Śaṅkara says:—

न द्वापाधियोगादि अन्यादृशस्य वस्तुनो अन्यादृशं स्वप्रावः संभवित ॥

Not even owing to some conditioning associate, can the nature of a thing, happen to have some other nature.

SBh. 3-2-11, p. 356.

न हि स्वच्छः सनू स्फटिकः अलककाद्वापाधियोगात्, अस्वच्छो प्रवतिः; प्रममात्रत्वात् अस्वच्छताप्रिविज्ञेयस्य ॥

“A crystal while perfectly clear, cannot be sullied, even because of an associate like red lead etc. For the perverse notion that it is unclear, is a mere misconception.” SBh. 3-2-11, p. 356.

Here an objection has got to be met: ‘If as the traditional method of interpretation is to be strictly maintained, how are we to reconcile ourselves to the fact that, in the case of the various meditations enjoined by the Śruti, different forms of Brahman, are taught? There is, for instance, ‘the Brahman with four quarters’ (Ch. 3-18-2) taught in one context, ‘the Brahman with sixteen digits’ (Pr.) in another, ‘the Brahman characterized as Vāmanī’ (Ch. 4-15-3), Brahman called Vaiśvānara, with the three worlds as its body (Ch. 5-18-2) and so on. How could it be that Brahman is altogether different from characteristics even when conditioned by associates? Bādarāyaṇa replies:—

न प्रेद्धिति चेत्त प्रत्येकमत्तद्दचनात् ॥

If it be objected that this cannot be on account of
difference of forms taught, we say no, for in each case of a conditioning associate, the Śāstra teaches non-difference alone. As for example:

"He, the person who is in the earth, effulgent through and through, immortal through and through, and he who is within the embodied person, effulgent through and through, and immortal through and through, he is verily this same who is the Ātman."

Br. 2-5-1

(अष्टाधिकारण) वे. सू. ३-२-१३.

"Moreover, so say the followers of certain Śākhas."

VS. 3-2-13.

Here Śaṅkara explains how (in the Kāthaka) the Śruti disparages the person that sees difference and how the Śvetāsvatara (Śve. 1-12) recites a text which teaches that the experiencing self, the object to be experienced and the inspiring Isvara, are all Brahman in one. The most important Sūtras in this Adhikāraṇa (topic for discussion) are:

(a) अरुपवदेव हि तत्प्राधानत्वात् वे. सू. ३-२-१४.

"Brahman is really without any feature whatever; for (the texts) teaching it, have that as their main purport."

VS. 3-2-14.

(b) आह च तन्मात्रम् वे. सू. ३-२-१६.

"(The Śruti) also says that It is purely of the nature of that (Pure Consciousness.)"

VS. 3-2-16.

The Śruti referred to according to Śaṅkara is कृत:
(c) दर्शयति चायो अपि स्मरति ॥

"The Śruti describes (by merely negating the foreign form Br. 2-3-6.....), and so is It described in the Smṛti (G. 13-12)." VS. 3-2-17.

Śaṅkara refers to the Vedāntic parable-how Bādhva taught Bāshkali by perfect silence, and refers to the narrative in the Mahābhārata, where after showing His Universe-form, Nārāyaṇa warned Nārada not to think that He had actually a form.

The reader must have been convinced by now that Bādarāyaṇa seriously believed that the Upanishads do use this same method of Adhyāropa-Apavāda throughout to teach the real nature of Brahman without characteristics.

VII

INNOVATIONS OF SUB-COMMENTARIES

INTRODUCTION

The student of Vedānta who has gone through the pages of this booklet, must have been convinced by now that the Upanishads uniformly aim at teaching that Brahman or the one Reality without a second, is the real Self of
every creature in the universe. Whatever be the gradation of Jīvas with regard to their knowledge, will-power, capacity to work, and the pleasure and pain they have inevitably to feel in their transmigratory life from the empirical stand-point, they are all really one with the Absolute Reality.

In order to guide the earnest seekers of absolute Truth, the Upanishads, according to Bādarāyaṇa as interpreted by Śaṅkara, employ empirical facts and step by step, they direct the aspirants to this inner life, and appealing to universal intuition, and reasoning in harmony with that intuition, they point to the innermost Self, as the Witness in all beings, and reveal how this real Self of each one of them, is really that very same Brahman whom tentatively they have treated as an object of enquiry. The one method employed is to use a series of Adhyārōpas or deliberate superimpositions for the purpose of teaching, and to reveal gradually how all means are really (1) the object of the notion 'me' and as such quite distinct from the outward superimposed selves, such as one's son or wife, are not one's self. (2) Then by taking the seeker inward they show how the body, the senses and the mind with all its functions are really not their self. And (3) as the third step to reveal how even the ego is not their real self inasmuch as there is a distinct Witnessing Self, the innermost Self of all. The last step is to show how all the Universe is really a superimposition on this Witness which is really the One Reality without a second.

1. Vidyā, Avidyā and Māyā

It is clear that this method is employed to disperse the ignorance involved in the empirical view and to induce the enquirer to see eye to eye with the sages who
have been already enlightened about the Truth. The Śrutis frequently use the terms Avidyā and Vidyā in contrast to each other. As for instance in the Kāthaka Upanishad,

दूरस्ते विषरीते विषूची अविद्या या च विद्येति ज्ञाता ।
विद्याभीषणं निचिकतत्सं मन्ये न त्वा काम भवोज्लोलुप्त ॥

का. २-४.

Here the words ‘Avidyā’ (ignorance) and ‘Vidyā’ (wisdom) are used in connection with one who does not know the truth with reference to death and who desires to know it. Nachiketa wants to know the exact nature of Reality beyond death, and Yama praises his desire to know the secret of death. We have no information as to what exactly the forerunners of Śaṅkara’s tradition meant by this word ‘Avidyā’.

The only predecessor whom Śaṅkara expressly styles as conversant with the Vedāntartha Sampradāya, is Sri Gauḍapāda. That teacher writes in his Kārikās :-

अन्यथा गृह्णत्: स्वप्नो निद्रा तत्त्वमस्तानत्: ।
विषरीते नयो: क्षीणे तुरीयं पदमस्तुते ॥
अनादिमायणा सुप्तो यदा जीव: प्रवृत्तस्ते ।
अज्ञानिन्द्रमस्थपमदेहतुं बुध्यते तदा ॥

गौ. का. १-१५, १६.

“Dream is for him who sees things as other than what they are, and deep sleep is for him who knows not this truth. When the misconception in these two cases is removed, one attains the Fourth.”

GK. 1-15, 16.

It is clear that Gauḍapāda treats both ignorance and seeing things quite the other way as misconceptions. He
says that one should awake from this two-fold long magical dream before one sees Non-duality. It was left to Śaṅkara, as his one pre-eminent representative to state precisely what this Viparyāsa (misconception) consists in. As we have already seen, he defined Avidyā as the mutual superimposition of the Self and the not-self and the mistaken transference of their properties to each other. Gauḍapāda also used the word Māyā to denote some unreal appearance such as that of what is produced by a magician or the appearance of some dream phenomena. Śaṅkara alone, clearly defined the undifferentiated seed of differentiated names and forms of the universe as Māyā or Prakṛti. (SBh. 2-1-14, p. 201)

2. Avidyā and Māyā confounded

It is a tragic travesty of Śaṅkara’s teaching, introduced by the earliest sub-commentator on Śaṅkara’s Sūtra-Bhāshya, who makes Avidyā and Māyā identical in the following extract:

In this description of Avidyā, the postulated ignorance is not only identified with Māyā or Prakṛti, but is
said to cover up the Brahmic nature of Reality and transform It into a transmigratory Jīva. A residue of it, is said to remain in sleep. All these three doctrines have been foisted upon Śaṅkara, without a shred of evidence in the Bhāshya.

3. Avidyā as the Material Cause

To add to this woeful twisting and torturing the Bhāshya, this very sub-commentator popularly believed to be Padmapāda, the direct disciple of Śaṅkara - is responsible for importing another doctrine and ascribing it to the fair name of Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara has not only defined Adhyāsa (which he says is the essence of Avidyā), as पत्र पुर्वद्वयोऽपि (the knowledge of a previously seen thing in relation to something else), but also reiterates what he means by this definition when he writes अध्यासो नाम अतस्मिस्तुद्विदित्ववचयम (We have said that what is called ‘Adhyāsa’ is mistaking something for what it is not). It is crystal-clear that according to that teacher, Adhyāsa is a species of wrong knowledge. Yet this sub-commentator twists Śaṅkara’s statement to mean what it really cannot. The Bhāshya says :-

मिथ्याज्ञाननिमित्त: सत्यानुष्ठे मिथुनीकृत्य ‘अहमिदम्’, ‘मनेदम्’ -
इति नैसर्गिकः लोकव्यवहारः।।
अध्यासभाष्यम्।

"It is natural for human beings to believe (think and say) ‘this is me’, ‘this is mine’, mixing up the real and the unreal owing to a misconception."  Intro. SBh.

Ignoring this straightforward interpretation of Śaṅkara’s statement, the sub-commentator writes :-

मिथ्या च तद्द्वारां च मिथ्याज्ञानम्। मिथ्या इत्यनवचनीयता उच्चते,
"Mithyājñāna" is to be resolved into ‘Mithyā-ajñāna’. Here by the word ‘Mithyā’ is meant undefinability and by ‘Ajñāna’ is meant the inert Avidyā-potentiality as opposed to consciousness. ‘Vyāvahāra’ has this (Avidyā-potentiality) for its ‘Nimitta’ or material cause!

Here every word in the original sentence, has been twisted to mean something other than what it actually does.

(1) Vyavahāra (procedure in practical life) has been turned into Adhyāsa (the superimposed thing), (2) Ajñāna (ignorance) - has been twisted to mean some inert potentiality. (3) Mithyā (wrong knowledge) has been forced to mean undefinable either as being or non-being. And (4) Nimitta निमित्त (reason) has been tortured and made to signify the material cause. The interpreter would compel the reader to understand just what Achārya Śaṅkara does not mean: ‘All wrong appearance is a transformation of a material cause, the Avidyāśakti. And this Ajñāna is neither being nor non-being’. If Śaṅkara were present at the time of this interpretation, he would certainly cry ‘Oh! save me from this friend!’.

4. The Locus of Avidyā

The earliest importer of the Avidyā-doctrine, postulated Avidyā not only as attached to Jīvas but also as attached to inert things in the external world. For, according to him, this Avidyā-Śakti alone can give birth to unreal appearance. Only in the case of external things, this Avidyā has a single purpose to serve, viz., that of giving
rise to false appearance. With regard to sentient beings, however, it has a double function to perform, viz. it covers up the Brahmic nature of Jivas, and causes them to look like transmigratory beings.

We shall not enter into a consideration of the controversy about whether or not the Avidyā which is supposed to pertain to insentient beings, is quite a different species of Avidyā or whether it is only a modification of the original Avidyā. We may also ignore the controversy as to whether this Avidyā resides in the Jīva or in Brahman, or even as a third alternative, where it resides in Pure Consciousness without any distinction. It is enough to note that all this is, according to Śaṅkara, a wild-goose chase since this Avidyā is, according to the first promulgator of the novel doctrine, only a postulate assumed to account for unreal appearances. The theory that the unreal appearance itself, is an undefinable thing born out of Avidyā, may also be dismissed as an attempt to build a castle in the air. The last wild theory to be dismissed in this connection, is the number of Avidyās, whether it is only one or as the number of Jivas!

Let us only remind ourselves that, according to Śaṅkara, there is Avidyā or mutual superimposition of the Self and the not-self, only in the empirical field. What has Śaṅkara to say about the locus of this Avidyā, may be clearly seen in the following extract from his commentary on the Sūtras :-

कस्य पुनर्यमप्रभोषः? – इति वेत्, यस्तवं पृच्छसि, तस्य त इति वदामः। नवहम् इत्थर एवोकः श्रुत्या। यदेवं प्रतिविद्योऽसि, नास्ति कस्यचिदप्रभोषः॥

मू. भा. ४-१-३, ४६५.
“If it be asked ‘To whom does this non-enlightenment pertain?’, we reply, ‘To you, who ask this question’.

(Objection :-) ‘But the Śruti says that I am verily Īśvara Himself!’

(Reply :-) If you are thus enlightened, then we say ‘There is no ignorance, belonging to any one.”

SBh. 4-1-3, p. 465.

[Sāṅkara here proclaims that there is no nescience at the transcendental level at all.]

5. Brahman and Īśvara

Inasmuch as the controversy about the object of Avidyā is closely connected with that about its locus, we need not enter into details about it any more. We may be quite satisfied with Śaṅkara’s remark that Brahman, as the real Self of the seeker, is the very object of enquiry here at the empirical level of thought. When Brahman is intuited as one’s own Self, the question does not arise at all.

We may now pass on to the question of the difference between Brahman and Īśvara. Śaṅkara says in his commentary on the second Śūtra :-

अस्य जगत: .... जन्मस्थितिपद्गङ्ग यतः सर्वज्ञात्सर्वशक्तेः कारणादभवति, ‘तद्भव’ ह्वति वाक्यशेष: । .... न यथोक्तविशेषणस्य जगत:, यथोक्तविशेषणम् ईश्वरं मुक्तवा अन्यत्: - प्रशानात् अचेतनात्, अगुष्ठ:, अभावात्, संसारिणो चा - उत्तप्त्यदि संप्रभावितूं शक्यम् ।।

Śū. Bh. १-१-२, पा. ७.

Here the Achārya first defines Brahman as the cause of the birth, sustentation and dissolution of the universe. He also says in the same breath, that, it is not possible
to conceive that the cause can be anything other than this Brahman or Īśvara omniscient and omnipotent. He repeatedly uses terms like Īśvara, Parameśvara and Maheśvara for the non-dual Brahman throughout his discussion about the cause of the universe.

This word Īśvara, has been a stumbling block for some followers of the sub-commentators, who have tacitly assumed that the epithet Īśvara is uniformly reserved for the Sagunēśvara (Brahman with qualities presented for meditation by the Śrutis). While it is true that the Brahman to be known as the enquirer’s Self is not different from Brahman to be meditated upon, it is not right to say that Brahman is always qualified by attributes. Śaṅkara’s statements are crystal clear on this point:–

(1) तत्तत्वाभावस्थायां ब्रह्म: उपास्योपासकादिलक्षण: सवें व्यवहारः।।

“New, conventions like distinction of the meditated and the meditator, are all at the level of Avidyā.” SBh. 1-1-12, p. 35

(2) रूपान्याकारर्थितमेव हि ब्रह्म अवधारणितत्त्वम, न रूपादिपति।

‘अस्युलयं’ हत्त्वादीनि वाक्यानि निष्पपन्वव्रहस्याभिसृत्तव्यवधानानि

नार्थान्तरप्रभानानि .... हत्तराणि तु आकारवद्व्रहस्यविषयाणि वाक्यानि न

तत्प्रभानानि । उपासनाविधिप्रधानानि हि तानि।।

Sū. Pha. 3-2-14, Pha. 357.

We are told here that texts teaching Brahman without specific features, mainly purport to reveal the nature of Brahman, whereas texts describing Brahman with qualities, have not that very description as their main purport, for, the real aim of the latter set of texts, is to enjoin meditation.
So, it is not whether or not there is the word Īśvara in a text that settles the question, but whether a particular text prescribes meditation or not.

6. Brahman, the Omniscient and the Omnipotent Being

Similarly, some interpreters of texts, are likely to be misled by the epithets Sarvajña (Omniscient) and Sarvaśaktimat (Omnipotent) in connection with Brahman the first cause Mūlakāraṇam. But the Śrutis according to Śaṅkara, are not very particular even about these epithets. As that Achārya writes:-

एवमविद्याकृतनामसूपोपाद्यनुरोधी Īśvara भवति, व्योमेव षटकर कालुपाद्यनुरोधी। स च स्वात्मपूतानेव ठटकासस्मानीयानविद्याप्रवृत्तस्य पितनामसूपकृतकार्यकरणसंवासनुरोधिने जीवाध्यानू विज्ञानात्मन: प्रति ईते व्यवहारविषये। तदेवमविद्यात्मकपार्थिवपरिच्छेदवेय ईश्वरस्य ईशरत्य, सर्वज्ञत्यम्, सर्वशक्तित्वं च; न परमार्थतो विद्या अपास सम्पविशिष्टरूपे आत्मनि ईश्वरशिष्ट्यसत्यप्रबलविद्वाहः उपपद्धते।

वृ. प. २-१५, पा. २०२।

“In this way, He becomes the Īśvara, (only) in conformity with the conditioning associate of name and form created by ignorance, in the same way as ether conforms to conditioning associates like pots, jars etc. And He rules over the Vijñānātmans called Jīvas, who correspond to the pot-ethers etc. of the illustration in so far as they are limited by the associates of aggregates of body and senses, which essentially are of the nature of Avidyā, but in reality are His own self. This Īśvara-nature of Omniscience and Omnipotence, is only relative to the conditioning associate which is of the essence of Avidyā, but there can be no consistent talk of the relation of the Ruler and the ruled or Omniscience etc. from the transcendental stand-point.”

SBh. 2-1-14, p. 201
7. Īśvara as the Omnipotent Cause

That Brahman is the ‘cause’ of the birth etc. of the universe, and as such owns ‘a variety of powers’, is therefore only within the domain of Vyavahāra. This will be obvious from the following two extracts from the Sūtra-Bhāshya.

(१) सर्वशक्तियुक्ता च परा देवता इत्यनुपगतव्यम्, कुंत: ?
तदर्शनात्। तथा हि दर्शयति श्रुति: सर्वशक्तियोगेऽपर्यऽदेवताया: ॥

Sū. Pa. २-१-३०, Pa. २१५।

"It should be taken for granted that the Supreme Deity is possessed of all powers. Why? For it is revealed so. The Śruti reveals that it is so, that the Supreme Deity is possessed of all powers.”

This is from the Vedāntic convention of teaching that Brahman is the cause. But, at the higher level of teaching, what is the Paramarthic Truth? Here is Śaṅkara’s dictum :-

(१) जगद्विभिच्यतिप्रलयहेतुत्वशुद्धेत:; अनेकशक्तित्वं ब्रह्म: इति
चेतुः, न; विशेषितसिद्धार्थसुतीनामां अनन्यार्थत्वात्।
उत्पत्तविद्याशुद्धिनामपि
समानमन्यार्थत्वम् इति चेतुः। न; तासामेकसिद्धार्थपरत्वतात्।
मृदादिदुष्टानौहि सतो ब्रह्मण एकस्य सत्त्वत्वम्, विकारस्य चानृतत्वं
प्रतिपादयतु शास्त्रं नोपत्तपादिपरं भवितुमहति। ॥

Sū. Pa. ४-२-१४, Pa. ४९८।

"(Objection :-) Because of the Śruti teaching that the Universe is born from, sustained by and dissolved in Brahman, we have to conclude that Brahman has a number of powers."
(Reply :-) No, because the Srutis negating specific features (of Brahman) do not aim at teaching anything else.

(Objection :-) This having no other purport, is common to Srutis teaching origin etc. (of the Universe) also.

(Reply :-) No, for they have the purport of teaching Unity. (To explain :-) By means of illustrations like that of clay, the Sāstra teaches that Being or Brahman is real and every effect is unreal, and as such, cannot reasonably be said to have origin etc. for its (main) import.” SBh. 4-3-14, p. 498.

[Here it is expressly stated that the Sruti is not aiming at teaching the origin etc. as such; this teaching is only to lead us to the conclusion that all effect is really one with Brahman.]

Here is another reason to show that causality is not taught for its own sake :-

(2) कस्मात् पुनरस्तपत्त्यादिश्रुतीनां विशेषनिराकरणश्रुतितशेषव्यतम, न पुनरितस्थेषत्वमितायसामिति ? उच्चये - विशेषनिराकरणश्रुतीनां निराकाश्चत्वात्। न द्वृत्तमन एकलनित्यत्त्वमुद्वहल्यायगताः सत्यं भूयः काचिदाकाश्च उपजायते; पुरुषार्यसमाप्तिविद्युपपथे: ..... । ैैच-मुल्यपत्त्यादिश्रुतीनां निराकाश्चार्यप्रतिपादनसामयम्यपस्ति। ।।।।। (विद्वानो तत्थैव दृष्ट्यनुपवदर्शनात्) सू. भा. ४-३-१४,पा. ४६८.

“(Objection :-) Why again, should the texts teaching origin etc. (of the universe) be regarded as subservient to the texts which negate all characteristics (to Brahman), rather than take the other texts themselves as subservient to these texts?

(Reply :-) This is our answer :- It is so, because texts negating all characteristics, teach (something) which leaves no room for further enquiry. After the intuition of the unity, eternity, purity and the like (nature of Ātman), surely there can be no more room for any further enquiry, for (then) there is the idea of one's having ultimately
reached the Highest Goal of human life and because the enlightened ones are seen to have the feeling of contentment etc. (after such intuition). But the texts teaching origin etc. have no capacity to teach anything that leaves no room for further enquiry."

SBh. 4-3-14, p. 498.

8. What is the Cause of the Universe?

The definition of Brahman as the cause, being disposed of as a device to teach the Unity of Ātman, the discussion of what exactly is the cause of the universe, loses its further importance according to Śaṅkara’s interpretation of the Upanishads. We have already seen (para 2, p. 13) that, empirically speaking, Brahman has all the necessary powers for the creation, sustentation and dissolution of the world. This is further explained in another context by Śaṅkara himself, and his ultimate dictum in the matter is disclosed thus:--

अविद्याकल्पित्येन च नामरूपलक्षणेन रूपपेदेन व्याकृताव्याकृतात्म-केन तत्त्वात्मत्वायामयनिर्वचनीयेन ब्रह्म परिणामादिद्विव्यवहारस्मद्वियो प्रतिपद्धते; पारमाधिकेन च रूपेण सर्वव्यवहारातीतिमु अपरिणातमु अवतिष्ठते। वचारमभाणमात्रत्वाच्य, अविद्याकल्पितस्य नामरूपपेदस्य इति न निरववत्वं ब्रह्मण: कृष्णति॥

Sū. Bh. 2-1-27, p. 214.

"Brahman in its special aspect conjured up by Avidyā, viz. the aspect of name and form, undefinable either as quite its own nature or something quite distinct from it, (name and form) undefinable either as quite its own nature or something quite distinct from it, (name and form) both differentiated and not differentiated, (of Brahman in this special aspect) lends itself as subject to all conventions like evolution; and, in its real nature, remains transcending all such conventions. This special aspect conjured up by Avidyā, being only a play of words, the fact that Brahman is indivisible, remains unaffected."

SBh. 2-1-27, p. 214.
In the face of this unambiguous statement of Śaṅkara, Post-Śaṅkara Advaitins fell into the error of vain disputation as to whether Brahman is the sole cause or whether there are other causes too! Thus writes the author of the Pañchapāḍikā-Vivaraṇa:—

(१) तत्र विम्बस्थानीयं ब्रह्म मायाशक्तिमात् कारणम्, जीवास्तु प्रत्येकमविद्यानुवर्तनां: — इति केवलः। मायाविद्याप्रतिद्विपिं ब्रह्म जगत्कारणं, विशुद्धम् (ब्रह्म) अमूल्यत्वालम्बनम्; जीवाद्वित्तीयविद्याबद्धः: —

इत्यत्ने। जीवा एवं स्वाविद्याया प्रत्येके प्रपंचाकारणेऽप्राज्ञाविर्भावयति। सादृश्यज्ञ प्रपंचैकतावधानः; अनेकर्तविन्दुर्तीयवचन्द्रतः, स्वरूपपेक्षाया च ब्रह्म सर्वज्ञात्मकारणम् इत्यपि। ब्रह्मैकमेव स्वाविद्याया जगद्धकारण विवर्तते; स्वप्नादिवसौः — इति मतान्तरम्॥

पं.वि. २३२

Here are a number of fanciful theories all based on the hypothetical Avidyā:—

(1) Brahman (the original of reflection), endowed with the power of Māya.

(2) Brahman reflected in the Avidyā-Māya.

(3) Jīvas themselves manifest a world cause through this Avidyā the unity of the world being illusion.

(4) Brahman itself appears as the world through Its Avidyā as one does in a dream. All these flights of fancy on the basis of the hypothetical Avidyā!

9. Mahāvākyya, the source of Final Release

Śaṅkara in his Sūtra-Bhāṣya again and again writes what sentences like Tat-tvam-asī mean:—
In all the above cases, whatever be the nature of the illustrations cited, Śaṅkara’s contention is that sentences which teach the identity of the individual self with Brahma, invariably propose to remove the transmigratory nature of the individual self.

The later Vedāntins that follow the systems of sub-commentarēies, however, have given the name of ‘Mahāvākyas’ to such texts and have insisted that in interpreting these sentences, the primary meanings of both the words Tat (Brahman) and Tvam (Jīva) have to be abandoned and what has been called the Jahadajahat
Lakshaṇa (giving up and retaining) or Bhāga Tyāga Lakshaṇa (giving up a part of the primary meaning) has to be resorted to as in the case of understanding the meaning of a sentence like ‘सोज्यं वेदस्तः’ ‘This person is the same as that’, where we give up all distinctive features such as time, place etc. and retain the only person meant by the statement. All this is quite foreign to Śaṅkara’s way of interpretation as we have already explained.

Again, Śaṅkara has used illustrations like Ghaṭākāśa (Pot-ether) and Jala-Sūryaka (Reflection of the sun in water). Strangely enough, these later interpreters have taken sides with schools that insist that the Jīva is Avachhinna (limited) by conditioning associates like the mind or that the Jīva is an actual reflection of Brahman in Avidyā (Avidyā-Pratibimba-Vāda)!

Worse than all, is the belief of later Vedāntins, which has been handed down to our own times, that the so-called ‘Mahāvākyas’ are actually Mantras in which the disciples have to be initiated by an adept Guru. What is most ludicrous about it, is that even credited representatives of Śaṅkaraśāhārya, do continue to believe that Śaṅkara has founded four different Maṭhac or monasteries in the four cardinal points of Bharata Desh, and the heads of each of such Maṭhas have been exhorted by him to propagate, in an unbroken traditional line of teachers and disciples, one of the four Mahāvākyas; each of which stands for one Veda! All this, in blissful ignorance of the fact that Śaṅkara had never called them Mahāvākyas! Internal quarrels are not wanting among the followers of Maṭhas, and even among Maṭhādhipatis, about deciding the genuineness of Maṭhas, mainly on the basis of the
10. Differences about Śravaṇa and other means to knowledge

One of the strong pillars on which Śaṅkara’s traditional school of interpretation stands unshaken, is that Brahman is not taught as subservient to any injunction. He proclaims at the top of his voice that words like दृष्टव्यः, प्रोत्तव्यः though seeming to convey some injunction.

"We say that they are for the purpose of turning one, back from the object towards which the mind naturally tends to proceed. SBh. 1-1-4, p. 19.

And in the face of this certain sections of sub-commentators persist in holding that these are really enjoined :-

दृष्टव्यः - इत्यन्नुस तद्यत्तेवन मनननिद्यासनायां फलोपकार्यः- ड्गायां सह श्रवणं नामाभिं विषीयते इति । ..... तं च जिज्ञासु पुरुषार्थकाममू उपलभ्यानो भगवान् बादरयणः साधनचतुष्टयसंपन्नस्य मोक्षसाधनंब्रह्मानाथ वेदान्तवाक्यविचारं विद्धतो विषेः; अपेक्षितार- धिकारविषयफलानुबंद्रत्रयमागमिकपि न्यायेन निर्णेतुं सूत्रयामास अयातो ब्रह्मज्ञासा' - 'इति ॥

The above excerpt clearly states that the very first Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa, proposes to decide the subject-matter, the qualified student called to study, and the result
of such study of the injunction of Śravaṇa, even while the Bhāshya does not smell of it! The author of Pañcapādika on which the above is a commentary, actually says that Śravaṇa and other means are recommended in this eulogistic statement!

Another sub-commentator sees in these means the steps leading to Samādhi (trance) as recommended by Patanjali:

अत्र श्रोतव्यो मन्त्रव्य इति धारणोपदेशः, निदिष्यासितव्य इति ध्यानोपदेशः, द्रुष्टव्यः - इति समाधेपुरुपदेशः।। भामती पा. ६१५।

How he managed to imagine reference to these items of Yogic discipline, even while there is no inkling of any reference to them in the original Śruti, passes one’s understanding!

We may ignore the internal quarrel among the sub-commentators concerning the question of the principal means to Jñāna, to which the other two are subservient. But we must not forget to note that Śaṅkara himself declares that Śravaṇa alone is quite sufficient to produce Jñāna in the case of the most highly qualified seekers:

येषां पुरान्तपुण्यमतीनां नाज्ञानसंशयविघ्नविलक्षणः पदार्थविधयः प्रतिबंधोऽस्ति, शक्तिनित्य सकुटुकमेव तत्तथपरिवाक्यार्थमनुपिठुम्।।

सू. भा. ४-१-२, पा. ५६२।

Here we are told that the only obstacles to the intuition of one’s identity with Brahman, are ignorance, doubt and misconception and no such thing as the hypothetical ‘Avidyā-Śakti’ surmised by the sub-commentary schools, is hinted at. Again, we are told by
Śaṅkara in so many words, that a single suggestion by the text ‘That thou art’ is quite sufficient to enlighten those that have no difficulty to overcome about the true meaning of the words ‘That’ and ‘thou’ used in the text. And there is no insistence of the practice of all the three means in the case of the highly qualified students. This unequivocal declaration has been ignored by the later Śaṅkarites.

11. Final Release

There is no ambiguity whatever with regard to Final Release, either in the Śrutis or in the Bhāṣyā. Śaṅkara quotes three texts and writes :-

(१) इति चैवमाण्डा: श्रुतयो मोक्षप्रतिवन्धनिवृत्तिमात्रेव आत्मज्ञानस्य फलं दर्शयन्ति ॥

“These and other Śrutis teach that the effect of Ātmajñāna, is only the removal of (nescience) the obstable to Release.”

SBh. 1-1-4, p. 15.

[Release which is already there, manifests itself as soon as ignorance is removed. Knowledge does not create Release.]

(२) हदद तु पारमार्थिकं कूटस्थनित्यम्, च्योपवत् सर्वव्यापि,

This, however, is really real, unchangingly eternal, all-pervading like the ether, devoid of all modifications, ever-content, without parts, self-effulgent by nature. This is that unembodiedness called Release, wherein good and bad deeds together with their effects and
time, consisting of the three periods of time, never flourish."

SBh. 1-1-4, p. 14.

(3) अथ विद्वासाथन स्ववीर्यविशेषातु स्फल एव विद्वायां
कर्मिनिधित्वायसाधारणं न विद्वायले मुक्ति।
तद्वि असाच्चन
नित्यसिद्धस्वभावमेव विद्वया अविविधायत इत्यसकृद्वोचाम ।
न च तस्यामयुक्तकर्मनिविष्टत्वमकोेतिष्यः उपसंधाते,
निकृष्टाय विद्वात्यावावात्।
उत्कृष्टैव हि विद्या भवति।
तस्मातस तस्यां चिराचिरोगतिरिसौतिष्यो भवन्
भवेत, न तु मुक्ति कर्मिनिधित्वायसाधारणं भवेत ॥

सू. प. ३-४-५२, पा. ४७२.

Here Śaṅkara expressly declares that neither in the knowledge of Brahman, nor in the Final Release, can there be gradations. Strictly speaking, Mukti or Release is already there, for it is of the very nature of Brahman, which is ever-existing. And the knowledge of Brahman, being of the very stuff of intuition, is absolutely changeless being beyond time and no effect of any religious deed performed.

Nevertheless, followers of the sub-commentary schools have imagined gradations in the knowers of Brahman - Brahmadvid (knower), Brahmadvidvara (better knower), Brahmadvidvariya (still better knower), and Brahmadvidvarishtha (the best of knowers)!

As for Mukti (Freedom), it is obvious that according to Śaṅkara, knowledge reveals Mukti instantly. Empirically speaking, however, he says that misconception even after sublation, may continue to appear like the knowledge of the double moon occurring to some one owing to cataract :-
Unable to distinguish the two stand-points of view, empirical and transcendental, the Post-Śaṅkara Vedāntins have built up various theories in this respect.

(१) कारणविगमेन्द्रिय कार्यशेषानुवृत्ति: संस्कारात्; अतों लघुवृत्तिकर्मसंस्कारात्, तद्विपक्षसंस्काराद् वा विदुषोऽपि शरीरस्थिति: इ।

ब्र. सि.पा. १३२।

Here the living-free knower of Brahman is said to continue to bear his body, because of the initial velocity of fructified Karma - according to Maṇḍana. Being a realistic Vedāntin, he could not appreciate Śaṅkara’s discussion of ‘the continuance of the misconception’ though sublated by correct knowledge.

(२) अज्ञानलेशोहस्त्येव विदुषोऽपि कस्चित्, कस्चित् कालं शरीरस्थितेर्खित्वात्।

इ. सि., पा. ७४।

The author of Iṣṭa-Siddhi believes not merely in Saṃskāra, but also a little bit of it!

(३) अविद्यालेशो वा कर्मलेशवत् संस्कारश्वेतापिलपित इति निरवधयम्।

पं. वि., पा. १०६।

The author of the Vivaraṇa admits Saṃskāra or, as an alternative, a bit of Avidyā!

How the undefinable Avidyā-Śakti happens to be a real material cause of something and how it persists affecting even a free knower, is really passing strange.
On the whole, the Post-Śaṅkara Advaitins may be said to lean towards the doctrine of Bhartṛu-Prapañcha, who held that Mōksha was of two kinds, one being realization of Brahmic nature during this life, and the other merging in Brahman after the fall of the body. In any case, they have completely ignored Śaṅkara’s teaching that Mōksha is self-established, and has only to be intuited by the wisdom of the secondless Ātman.
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