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HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE METHOD OF VEDĀNTA

by

SWĀMI SATCHIDĀNANDENDRA SARASWATI

ADHYĀTMA PRAKĀSHA KĀRYĀLAYA
HOLENARSIPUR, HĀSSAN DIST.,
KARNĀṬAKA, INDIA - 573211

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This is the masterly English Introduction to '*Vedānta Prakriyā Pratyabhijñā*', an original work in Sanskrit by Sri Swāmi Satchidānandendra Saraswati Maharāj, on the one comprehensive method which lays bare the true nature of Vedāntic Revelation of the self-existing Reality or Brahman. As all the copies of the first edition printed way back in 1964 have been sold out, this second edition is now printed in response to an ever-increasing demand.

Sri Swāmiji has explained here at some length how the traditional method elucidates the central theme of the Upanishads and convincingly reconciles all apparently conflicting doctrines in these sacred works. He has also given us a brief account of the history of Vedāntic thought as far as available from the remotest times up to the time of Sarvajñātma Muni.

One fact emerges from this brief summary of the different Vedāntic schools prior and subsequent to śaṅkara and his grand preceptor Gauḍapāda. Side by side with the tradition of Absolutism which these two great teachers have indelibly perpetuated in their works, there were other Monistic schools which claimed to represent the original Upanishadic teachings. Except for one honourable exception in Sureśwarāchārya, all other post-Śaṅkara Advaitins, even while professing to explain Śaṅkara, have succumbed either to the influence of the ancient Monists or to that of the later Dualistic Vedāntins and thus lost sight of the only method which holds the key to the right understanding of the Upanishadic teaching. Swāmiji has made this point abun-

dantly clear through his critical appreciations of the various schools examined in the body of the present work. It is our firm conviction that this is the first attempt of its kind, and that it is sure to revolutionize many of the current notions regarding the true nature of Śāṅkara's Vedānta.

The Introduction is thus in itself a solid contribution to Vedāntic thought, and therefore, at the suggestion of some of our friends, we are bringing it out as a separate publication for the benefit of those who would have a handy book at a moderate price containing in a nut-shell the most up-to-date reliable information on Śāṅkara-Vedānta, pure and simple, purged of all later accretions, while also giving a critical account of the distinctive features of the sub-commentaries of the most important Advaitic thinkers.

We hope that this publication will be appreciated by all critical students of Vedānta.

We are thankful to Shri. Dileep B.K., of M/S L.M. Graphics, Opp. Malleswaram Railway Station, Bangalore-21, for typesetting and also to Sri Lakshmi Enterprises, Chamarajpet, Bangalore for printing this attractive edition.

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A.THANDAVESHWAR
Chairman, A.P.Kāryālaya.

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ABBREVIATIONS

N.B. - As a general rule, the Upanishads are indicated by the initial letter or letters, and śaṅkara's Bhāṣhya by the contraction Bh. Thus K. - Kāthaka Upanishad, and K.Bh. = Śaṅkara's Bhāṣhya on the Kāthaka. Page references to the Upanishad-Bhāṣhya and the Gītā Bhāṣhya relate to the Vāṇivilāsa Granthamāla.

Ait.	Aitareya Upanishad.
Ait. Bh.	Śaṅkara's Bhāṣhya on the Aitareya Upanishad.
Br.	Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad.
Br. Bh.	Śaṅkara's Bhāṣhya on the Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad.
Br. S.	The Brahma-Siddhi of Maṇḍana Miśra (Madras).
Br. V.	Sureśvara's Vārtika on the Bṛihadāraṇyaka Bhāṣhya.
Ch.	Chāndōgya.
Ch. Bh.	Śaṅkara's Bhāṣhya on the Chāndōgya-Upanishad.
CPB	The Central Philosophy of Buddhism by Dr T.R.V.Murti (Allen and Unwin).
FCA	Lectures from Colombo to Almora by Swāmi Vivekānanda (Advaita Āshrama).
G	The Bhagavadgītā.
G. Bh.	Śaṅkara's Bhāṣhya on the Bhagavadgītā Vāṇi-Vilāsa Granthamāla, Banāras.
HIP	History of Indian Philosophy by Prof. Dasgupta. (Cambridge University Press).
IP	Indian Philosophy by Prof. S. Radhakrishnan (Allen and Unwin).
IS	The Ishta-Siddhi by Vimuktātman (Baroda).
Ka.	Kāthaka-Upanishad.
Ke.	Kena-Upanishad.

K.F.	Vocab. of Philos. Krauth Fleming Vocabulary of Philosophy.
Ma. Bh.	Śaṅkara's Bhāṣhya on the Māṇḍūkya.
Mu.	Muṇḍaka Upanishad.
MRV	The Māṇḍūkya Rahasya Vivṛiti by Satchidānandendra Saraswati (The Adhyātma Prakāsha Kāryālaya).
Nai.	The Naiṣhkarmya Siddhi by Sureśvara (Poona).
pp.	Pages
PP	The Pañchapādika by Padmapada (E.G.Lazarus & Co., Banaras).
PU	The Philosophy of the Upanishads by P.Deussen (T. & T Clark).
PV	The Philosophy of Vedānta by P.Deussen (Natesan).
SB	Sūtra Bhāṣhya - Śaṅkara's commentry on the Vedānta Sūtras (Nirnaya Sagara Press).
SKh.	Sri Harsha's Khaṇḍana-Khaṇḍakhāḍya (Achyuta Granthamala, Kāśī).
SS	Six Systems of Indian Philosophy by Max-Muller. (Longmans Green & Co.).
SV	The System of the Vedānta P. Deussen, (The Open Court Publishing Company).
Tai.	Taittirīya Upanishad.
Tai. Bh.	Śaṅkara's Bhāṣhya on Taittirīya.
Tai. Bh. V	Sureśvara's Vārtika on the Taittirīya Bhāṣhya.
V	The Vivaraṇa of Prakāśatman (Lazarus & Co., Banaras).
VBh.	Vāchaspati Miśra's Bhāmati, (Nirnaya Sagara Press).
VS	Vedānta Sūtrās popularly known as the Brahma-Sūtrās (The page numbers given in Roman figures are to those of Thibaut's Introduction to his translation of the Sūtrās).
VSa.	The Vedāntasāra by Col. Jacob, (Nirnaya Sāgara Press).

HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE METHOD OF VEDĀNTA

SECTION ONE

THE ORTHODOX VIEW OF THE UPANISHADS

1. QUESTIONS THAT PUZZLE THE STUDENTS OF VEDĀNTA

Modern students of the Upanishads are often bewildered by the numerous conflicting opinions of research-scholars, no less than by the various presentations of the system of thought contained in those sacred works. Which is the genuine system of Vedānta, if there be any, contained in the classical Upanishads, and what is the method, if there be one, adopted therein to develop that system ? Is there any unity of teaching, as claimed by tradition, in these Upanishads, the Bhagavadgītā and the Brahma-Sūtrās ? Would it be possible to determine the system of Vedānta by an independent study of the Upanishads or with the help of the Bhagavadgītā and the Brahma-Sūtrās ? Or, if we are obliged to take any interpreter as a safe guide in this matter, how is he to be spotted ? And on what principles are we to determine his system itself, in case we happen to have various accounts of it clashing with one another ? And finally, if we do light upon a system of Vedānta, what is the value to be attached to it, based as it is on the Vedās, when compared to the advanced philosophies of modern independent think-

ers of the West ?

Both to the orthodox pundits of the several schools of Vedānta, and to that section of our college-educated young men who invariably look to research-scholars for inspiration in such matters, it is a matter of indifference how these and other kindred questions are answered. The former look on their respective Bhāshyakāras as an authority beyond all doubt and dispute, and armed to the teeth with quotations and principles of exegesis and scholastic logic, they are ever ready to defend their views against all opposition. And the latter group rest content with voicing forth the opinion of the particular scholar whom they admire most. The present treatise, however, is intended for the orthodox section of critical students of Vedānta who are not biased either way, but are earnestly seeking after any real help in arriving at a satisfactory conclusion in the matter.

2. INDEPENDENT STUDY OF THE PRASTHĀNĀS FRUITLESS

Scholars are divided in their opinion as to whether or not students of the three Prasthānās of Vedānta - to wit, the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgītā and the Brahma-Sūtrās - should be guided by a particular commentator. In the body of the present work (Chapter two), I have explained why an independent study of these three divisions of Vedāntic works is not likely to be helpful in ascertaining either the system presented therein or the method adopted to work it out. Modern scholars, eastern or western, have come pretty much to the same conclusion though for different reasons. Here are some specimens of their pronouncements :-

(1) "A system of the Upanishads, strictly speaking, does

not exist. For these treatises are not the work of a single genius, but the total philosophical product of an entire epoch.”

P.Deussen, Pu. p. 51

(2) “‘There is little that is spiritual in all this’ ; ‘this empty intellectual conception, void of spirituality, is the highest form that the Indian mind is capable of’.”

Gough, quoted by S.Radhakrishnan, IP. Vol. 1, p. 139

(3) “‘If anything is evident even on a cursory review of the Upanishads - and the impression so created is only strengthened by a more careful investigation - it is that they do not constitute a systematic whole.’”

G.Thibaut, VS. Intro. ciii

“If we understand by philosophy a philosophical system coherent in all its parts, free from all contradictions and allowing room for all the different statements made in all the chief Upanishads, a philosophy of the Upanishads cannot even be spoken of.”

ibid, p. cxiv

(4) “For gaining an insight into the early growth of Indian philosophic thought, this period (the Upanishadic period) is in fact the most valuable; though of systematized philosophy, in our sense of the word, it contains, as yet, little or nothing.”

Max-Muller, SS. p. 6

“With us a philosophy always means something systematic, while what we find here (in the Upanishads) are philosophic rhapsodies rather than consecutive treatises.”

ibid, p. 182

(5) “The Upanishads had no set theory of philosophy or dogmatic scheme of theology to propound. They hint at

the truth in life, but not as yet in science or philosophy. So numerous are their suggestions of truth, so various are their guesses at God, that almost anybody may seek in them what he wants and find what he seeks, and every school of dogmatics may congratulate itself on finding its own doctrine in the sayings of the Upanishads."

S.Radhakrishnan, IP. p. 140

(6) "The difficulty of assuring oneself that any interpretation is absolutely the right one is enhanced by the fact that germs of diverse kinds of thoughts are found scattered over the Upanishads which are not worked out in a systematic manner."

Dasgupta, HIP Vol. I. p. 41-42

"Under these circumstances it is necessary that a modern interpreter of the Upanishads should turn a deaf ear to the absolute claims of these exponents, and look upon the Upanishads not as a systematic treatise but as a repository of diverse currents of thought - the melting pot in which all later philosophic ideas were still in a state of fusion."

ibid, p. 42

So much for the Upanishads independently studied. And what about the Gītā? I shall begin with a quotation from Swami Vivekānanda :

"Than the Gītā no better commentary on the Vedās has been written or can be written. The essence of the Śrūtis, or of the Upanishads, is hard to be understood, seeing that there are so many commentators, each one trying to interpret in his own way. Then the Lord Himself comes, He who is the inspirer of the Śrūtis, to show us the meaning of them, as the preacher of the Gītā, and today India wants nothing better, the world wants nothing better than that method of interpretation."

FCA, pp. 178-179

And yet, this divine commentary, has met with no better fate at the hands of not only indigenous commentators, but also of the scholars who charge them with being warped by pre-conceived notions ! The warring interpretations of the former are well known to our readers. I shall therefore rest content with exhibiting very briefly what the independent interpreters of the Gītā, have got to say. An extract from Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's 'Indian Philosophy', will be quite sufficient, in my opinion, for our present purpose.

1. "Finding that the Gītā is not a consistent piece of doctrine, different writers try to account for it in different ways. Garbe and Hopkins suppose that several writers in different centuries have been at work upon it. According to Garbe the original Gītā was written in the second century B.C. as a theistic tract, based on the Sāṅkhya-Yōga, though in the second century A.D. it was adopted by the upholders of the Upanishad monism. 'These two doctrines - the theistic and the pantheistic - are mixed up with each other, and follow each other, sometimes quite un-connected and sometimes loosely connected. And it is not the case that the one is represented as a lower exoteric and the other as the higher esoteric doctrine.....' Hopkins makes the Gītā a Kṛṣṇaite version of a Viṣṇuīte poem, which was itself a late Upanishad. Keith believes that it was originally an Upanishad of the type of Śvetāśvatara, but was later adopted to the cult of Kṛṣṇa. Holtzmann looks upon it as Viṣṇuīte re-modelling of a pantheistic poem. Barnett thinks that different streams of tradition became confused in the mind of the author. Deussen makes it a late product of the degeneration of the monistic thought of the Upanishads belonging to a period of transition from theism to realistic atheism."

Radhakrishnan himself is of the opinion that "there is no need to accept any of these conjectures. The Gītā is an application of the Upanishad ideal to the new situations which arose at the time of the Mahābhārata. In adapting the idealism of the Upanishads to a theistically minded people, it attempts to derive a religion from the Upanishad philosophy."

ibid, p. 530

2. Prof. Dasgupta writes :

"I suppose it has been amply proved that, in the light of un-contradicted tradition of the Mahābhārata and the Pāñca-Rātra literature, the Gītā is to be regarded as a work of the Bhāgavata school, and an internal analysis of the work also shows that the Gītā is neither an ordinary Sāṅkhya nor a Vedānta work, but represents some older system wherein the views of an earlier school of Sāṅkhya are mixed up with Vedāntic ideas different from the Vedānta as interpreted by Śaṅkara."

HIP. Vol II. p. 550

Let us now turn to the Brahma-Sūtrās. The difficulty in determining their purport independently is too obvious to require any proof. Attempts have been made, however, to ascertain whether or not they faithfully interpret the import of the Upanishads with equally jejune results. I shall quote a few opinions of scholars who have studied the problem, from different stand-points.

1. George Thibaut, who has translated the Vedānta Sūtrās with Śaṅkara's Bhāṣya, says :

"There are, moreover, other facts in the history of Indian Philosophy and theology which help us better to appreciate the possibility of Bādarāyaṇa's Sūtrās already setting forth a doctrine that lays greater stress on the personal character of the

highest being than is in agreement with the prevailing tendency of the Upanishads. That the pure doctrine of these ancient Brāhminical treatises underwent at a rather early period amalgamations with beliefs which most probably had sprung up in altogether different - priestly or non-priestly - communities is a well-known circumstance.... The attempts of a certain (?) set of Indian commentators to explain it (the Bhagavadgītā) as setting forth pure Vedānta i.e. the pure doctrine of the Upanishads, may simply be set aside. But this same Bhagavadgītā is quoted in Bādarāyaṇa's-Sūtrās (at least according to the unanimous explanations of the most eminent scholiasts of different schools) as inferior to Śruti only in authority. The Sūtrās, moreover, refer in different places to certain Vedāntic portions of the Mahābhārata, especially the twelfth book, several of which represent forms of Vedānta distinctly differing from Śaṅkara's teaching, and closely related to the system of the Bhāgavatās.

Facts of this nature - from entering into the details of which we are prevented by want of space - tend to mitigate the *prima facie* strangeness of the assumption that the Vedāntic Sūtrās, which occupy an intermediate position between the Upanishads and Śaṅkara, should yet diverge in their teaching from both."

VS. Intro. pp. cxxvi-cxxvii

2. Deussen who had explained the Sūtrās in accordance with his own light, had this to say on the subject :

"The Sūtrās become a connected whole only through the explanations interwoven among them by oral or written exposition. For, without this the 555 Sūtrās consisting for the most part of two or three words each, in which our author lays down the whole Vedānta system, are utterly unintelligible, especially as they contain, not so much the

leading words of the system, as the catch words, for the memory to grasp, and these seldom exhibit the main matter, but frequently something quite subordinate, have often a quite general indeterminate form, which fits the most different circumstances and leaves everything to the interpreter.”

SV. Introduction, p. 26

3. And Radhakrishnan writes thus :

“The Sūtrās are unintelligible by themselves, and leave everything to the interpreter. They refuse, Proteus-like, to be caught in any definite shape. Their teaching is interpreted sometimes in the bright hues of personal theism, sometimes in the grey abstractions of absolutism.”

IP Vol. II, p. 431

4. Another Indian scholar writes as follows :

“It seems that Bādarāyaṇa, the writer of the Brahma-Sūtrās, was probably more a theist, than an absolutist like his commentator Śaṅkara.”

HIP. Vol. I p. 422

“A study of the extant commentaries on the Brahma-Sūtrās of Bādarāyaṇa by the adherents of different schools of thought leaves us convinced that these Sūtrās were regarded by all as condensations of the teaching of the Upanishads.”

ibid, Vol. I p. 433

I trust that the above extracts will be quite sufficient to convince the readers that the peculiar method of approach adopted by the research-scholars, has uniformly acted as a self-imposed barrier in their way into the heart of the three Prasthānās. They start, in the first place, with a firm conviction that there can be no philosophy in the Upanishads, and, in the second place, feel sure that a historical development

of thought can be traced from the Upanishadic period down to our own times, and hence that it is a wild-goose chase to go in search of a system common to all the three divisions of Vedāntic works as the orthodox puṇḍits do. They are, moreover, obsessed by the idea that philosophy in the western sense is the only one possible in the nature of things, that speculation is the only means of ascertaining truth and that eternal truths as contrasted with growing theoretical truths are beyond human ken. It is therefore most unlikely that the western way of thinking can ever aspire to appreciate genuine Vedānta, so long as the fundamental attitude and the traditional methods of the Upanishads and kindred writings are not taken into account.

3. PRIMARY IMPORTANCE OF ŚAṆKARA'S BHĀSHYĀS

The impossibility of recognizing a system in the Upanishads by means of an independent study being admitted, it necessarily follows that we should seek aid from some trust-worthy commentator in entering into the spirit of the Upanishadic teachings. In the third Chapter of this work, I have stated my reasons very briefly for relying upon Śaṅkara for his purpose. We have no Vedāntic work of any thinker previous to Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara's Bhāshyās are the most ancient writings available which claim to interpret all the three Prasthānās. Both Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara refer to *Sampradāya* or traditional way of interpretation handed down from their predecessors in the line. A large majority of modern scholars, whether or not they consider Śaṅkara to be faithful to his originals, are one with me in this choice. I subjoin a few extracts in corroboration of this :

1. "The greatest expositor of the philosophy of the Upanishads is Śaṅkara or Śaṅkarāchārya. The teaching of

Śaṅkara himself is the natural and the legitimate interpretation of the philosophy of the Upanishads."

Gough, Preface to the Philosophy of the Upanishads p. viii

2. "It is true that even here in the sanctuary of Vedāntic metaphysics, the realistic tendencies natural to man, have penetrated, producing the misinterpreting variations of Śaṅkara's Advaita, known under the names Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita, Śuddhādvaita of Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha, - but India till now has not been seduced by their voices, and of hundred Vedāntins (I have it from a well-informed man, who is himself a zealous adversary of Śaṅkara and follower of Rāmānuja) fifteen perhaps adhere to Rāmānuja, five to Madhva, five to Vallabha and seventy-five to Śaṅkarāchārya.

P. Deussen, PV¹ pp. 118-119

3. "In the first place the Śaṅkara-Bhāṣhya represents the so-called orthodox side of the Brahminical theology which strictly upholds the Brahman or Highest Self of the Upanishads as something different from, and in fact immensely superior to, the divine beings such as Vishnu or Śiva, which for many centuries, have been the chief objects of popular worship in India. In the second place, the doctrine advocated by Śaṅkara is, from a purely philosophical point of view and apart from all theological considerations, the most important and interesting one which has arisen on Indian soil ; neither these forms which diverge from the view represented by Śaṅkara nor any of the non-Vedāntic systems can be compared with the so-called orthodox Vedānta, in boldness, depth and subtlety of speculation. In the third

1. This is from '*The Philosophy of the Vedānta*' - an address delivered before the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1893. This is incorporated in the '*Aspects of the Vedānta*' (Nateshan & Co., Madras).

place, Śaṅkara's Bhāṣhya is, as far as we know, the oldest of the extant commentaries and relative antiquity is at any rate one of the circumstances which have to be taken into account, although, it must be admitted, too much weight may easily be attached to it. The Śaṅkara-Bhāṣhya further is the authority most generally referred to in India as to the right understanding of the Vedānta-Sūtrās, and ever since Śaṅkara's time the majority of the best thinkers of India have been men belonging to his school. If, in addition to all this, we take into consideration, the intrinsic merits of Śaṅkara's work which, as a piece of philosophical argumentation and theological apologetics, undoubtedly occupies a high rank, the preference here given to it will be easily understood."

Thibaut, VS, pp. xiv-xv

[Thibaut, as is well known, has striven to demonstrate that in some important points their (Śrutis) teaching is more closely related to the system of Rāmānuja than to that of Śaṅkara. Nevertheless, he declares that the Vedānta of Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara "mark a strictly orthodox reaction against all combinations of non-Vedic elements of belief and doctrine with the teaching of the Upanishads." VS, p. cxxvii]

4. "Nor have I been at all convinced that I was wrong in following a text (of the Upanishads) such as it is pre-supposed by the commentaries of Śaṅkara, instead of introducing conjectural emendations, however obvious they seem to be. Scholars should learn that the more obvious their emendations are, the more difficult it becomes to account for the introduction of such palpable corruptions into an ancient text, such as it was at the time of Śaṅkara. My determination also, whenever it was impossible to discover a satisfactory meaning, to be satisfied with Śaṅkara's interpretations, who after all lived a thousand years ago, may be criticised, and

I never represented it as more than a *pis aller*."

Max-Muller, SS. p. 179-180

5. "With his acute feeling of the immeasurable world, his stirring gaze into the abysmal mysteries of spirit, his unswerving resolve to say neither more nor less than what could be proved, Śaṅkara stands out as a heroic figure of the first rank in the somewhat motley crowd of the religious thinkers of medieval India. His philosophy stands forth complete, needing neither a before nor an after."

Radhakrishnan, IP. Vol. II p. 446

"Through the massive and at the same time subtle dialectic of Śaṅkara, there shows forth a vivid, emotional temperament, without which philosophy tends to become a mere game of logic."

ibid, p. 447

6. "Though these Brahma-Sūtrās were differently interpreted by different exponents, the views expressed in the earliest commentary on them now available, written by Śaṅkarāchārya, have attained wonderful celebrity, both on account of the subtle and deep ideas it contains, and also on account of the association of the illustrious personality of Śaṅkara."

Dasgupta, HIP, Vol. I, p. 429

[This writer believes with Thibaut that the dualistic interpretations of the Brahma-Sūtrās (by the Vaishṇavās) have been probably more faithful to the Sūtrās than the interpretation of Śaṅkara.

ibid. Vol. I, p. 421]

4. VEDĀNTIC TRADITIONS ANTECEDENT TO ŚAṅKARA

Were there different schools of Vedānta before Śaṅkara?

To which traditional school of Vedāntins does Śaṅkara belong? It appears to me that this important question has not received the attention it deserves at the hands of either Indian or foreign scholars. Śaṅkara-Vijayās (poetical works treating of Śaṅkara's life and teachings) declare with one voice that Śaṅkara's work consisted in reviving the Advaitic interpretation of the Sūtrās and therefore of the Upanishads as well as in effecting certain reforms in the Hindu society of his times. Oriental scholars, mostly, do not seem to have taken up for discussion the question whether or not there were any Advaitins belonging to schools other than that of Śaṅkara, and if so, in what respect this particular school differed from them in expounding the Upanishadic teachings.

Professor Radhakrishnan, indeed, who sums up Śaṅkara's life according to the biographical accounts available, observes that 'many of the facts mentioned in these (Śaṅkara-Vijayās) are legendary and of doubtful historical value.'

Footnote IP, Vol. II. p. 448

His own estimate of Śaṅkara is that the latter (Śaṅkara) 'appeared, at one and the same time, as an eager champion of the orthodox faith and a spiritual reformer. He tried to bring back the age from the brilliant luxury of the Purāṇās to the mystic truth of the Upanishads.' (ibid. p. 449). Besides Gauḍapāda, the only predecessors of Śaṅkara mentioned by the professor are Bhartṛhari and Bhartṛprapañcha.

ibid., pp. 465-466

Dr. Dasgupta is quite definite in the matter. He writes "I do not know of any Hindu writer previous to Gauḍapāda who attempted to give an exposition of the monistic doctrine (apart from the Upanishads), either by writing a commentary as did Śaṅkara, or by writing an independent work as did

Gauḍapāda.”

HIP, Vol. I, p. 422

The above is no doubt in deference to the opinion of Thibaut who remarks “Śaṅkara does not on the whole impress one as an author particularly anxious to strengthen his own case by appeals to ancient authorities” (VS. Intro., p. xx) and this implies, perhaps, that Śaṅkara had no traditional line of previous teachers worth-mentioning. He indeed questions Gough’s¹ position when the latter maintains that Śaṅkara is the generally recognized expositor of true Vedāntic doctrine, that that doctrine was handed down by an unbroken series of teachers intervening between him and the Sūtrakāra, and that there existed from the beginning only one Vedānta doctrine, agreeing in all essential points with the doctrine known to us from Śaṅkara’s writings.

ibid., pp. xvii-xviii

He believes, on the other hand, that Rāmānuja’s System rests on an old and weighty tradition. (ibid., p. xvii) Both Thibaut and Dasgupta are of opinion that the Vṛttikara criticized by Śaṅkara is Bōdhāyana who wrote an extensive commentary on the Sūtrās according to the tradition of Rāmānuja and that the Vākyakāra Taṅka and the Bhāṣhyakāra Dramiḍa quoted by Rāmānuja were earlier² than Śaṅkara and should therefore be equated with Bramhanandin and Draviḍa who are admitted by the followers of Śaṅkara as preceding their

1. A. Gough’s *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, pp. 239 ff.

2. Examination of Rāmānuja’s tradition is outside the scope of the present volume of *Pratyabhijñā*. In the meanwhile, I refer the reader to my introduction to the *Māṇḍūkya Rahasya Vivṛiti* (p. 20) with regard to the Vākyakāra and Brahmanandin and Draviḍāchārya.

Bhāṣhyakāra.

Thibaut VS. Intro., pp. xxi and xxii; Dasgupta HIP. Vol. I, p. 433

Dr. T.R.V.Murthi, however, admits that there were monistic schools of Vedānta before Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara, though he surmises that the latter two reformulated the Upanishadic ideal in the light of the Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda dialectic.

CPB., pp. 13, 110-117

Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan, the editor and translator of the *Sambandha Vārtika* of Sureśvara, stands alone among modern scholars in actually recognizing some Vedāntic monistic schools opposed to Śaṅkara's. Anyone who goes through the *Vārtika* cannot but take cognizance of these schools, since the very subject-matter of the work is a criticism of different views with regard to the teaching of the Upanishads. But as the editor was discussing only the relation between the two *Kāṇḍās* of the Vedā according to Śaṅkara and Sureśvara, perhaps, he failed to notice what exactly was the difference in outlook between Śaṅkara and his opponents, and hence passed by the important question of the existence or non-existence of Śaṅkara's tradition before Gauḍapāda. Nor has he considered the equally important question of the existence or non-existence of non-Advaita Vedāntins during the time of, or even antecedent to, Śaṅkara.

It is passing strange that scholars, who have been strenuous in their efforts to determine the nature of the main features of the Vedānta anterior to Śaṅkara, should have searched for information in every quarter other than the one which ought to have been the very first to be looked into. What has Śaṅkara himself to say on the subject? Had he a traditional line of ancient teachers to appeal to for his posi-

tion ? Or has he ushered in a revolution in Vedāntic thought by striking out a new line for himself ? If so, what induced him to do so, and what were the new ideas he brought into the system ? I have shown in the third chapter of the present work that the nature of ancient traditions other than that of Śaṅkara has to be inferred only from references to them in Śaṅkara's or Sureśvara's works, since no exegetical literature belonging to these other schools is extant. I have also pointed out that Gauḍapāda, whose Kārikās on the Māṇḍūkya are reverently studied by Advaita-Vedāntins till today, has been referred to by Śaṅkara as one 'conversant with the tradition of Vedānta.' Gauḍapāda himself refers to those 'clever in the knowledge of the Vedāntins' (GK., 2-31), thus rendering it highly probable that a school of Absolutism akin to that of Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara did flourish before them. I have also drawn the reader's attention to the anxiety with which Śaṅkara frequently refers to *Sampradāya* (tradition) in his various works. In my introduction to the *Māṇḍūkya Rahasya Vivṛiti*, I have shown at length that it is not only probable but absolutely certain that Śaṅkara and Gauḍapāda did have a tradition of teachers of Advaita-Absolutism who had been contending to hold their own against other monistic schools.

Intro. MRV., p. 21

Were there any dualistic or non-Advaitic schools of Vedānta prior to or during the time of Śaṅkara ? This seems highly improbable. In his Bhāṣya on the Brahma-Sūtrās, Śaṅkara says:

अपरे तु वादिनः पारमर्थिकमेव जैवं रूपम् इति मन्यन्ते ; अस्मदीयाश्च केचित् ।

SB., 1-3-19 p. 115

‘Other theorizers again, and among them some of ours, are of opinion that the nature of the individual soul as such is real.’ Thibaut rightly remarks that the term ‘ours’, here made use of, can denote only the Aupanishadās or Vedāntins” (Intro. VS., p. xx) and it stands to reason that Śaṅkara was referring to one of the numerous monistic schools which he has frequently taken up for refutation in the Bhāṣhya. But can non-Advaitins also be taken to come under the meaning of that term ? I think not. There is not, in the first place, a single instance of the Vedānta of the type of Rāmānuja, Madhva or of any other Vaiṣṇava Vedāntin, for that matter, being alluded to by Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara or even Sureśvara in all their extensive writings. There are, in the second place, express statements to be found in Śaṅkara’s writings which preclude any such probability. I subjoin two such extracts :

(१) सर्वोपनिषत्सु हि विज्ञानात्मनः परमात्मना एकत्वप्रत्ययो विधीयत इत्यविप्रतिपत्तिः सर्वेषामुपनिषद्वादिनाम् ॥

“There is no disagreement among all the followers of the Upanishads that the knowledge of the identity of the individual self with the supreme Self is taught in all the Upanishads.”

Bri, Bh., 2-1-20 p. 738

(२) सम्यग्ज्ञानात् मोक्ष इति सर्वेषां मोक्षवादिनामभ्युपगमः ।

“All those who teach the final release of the soul are agreed that it results from right knowledge.”

SB., 2-1-11 p. 193

There is cumulative evidence, therefore, for concluding that Vedānta upto the time of Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara has always been Monistic or Absolutistic in its nature.

5. HOW TO DETERMINE THE SYSTEM AND METHOD OF THE UPANISHADS

I have presumed in the following pages that the Upanishads do contain a very valuable message to mankind, and according to Śaṅkara, they are uniformly guided by a well thought-out method in presenting the truth they reveal. And in trying to persuade the reader to adopt my line of thinking, I shall not follow Thibaut and others who have started with the foregone conclusion that the Upanishads have no systematic philosophy to present and who yet undertake 'to indicate the outlines of a philosophy of the Upanishads' (VS. Intro., cxv) without making any effort to ascertain whether or not there is a common method uniformly employed in all the classical Upanishads. Nor shall I suppose that a comparison of the various commentaries on the Upanishads or the Brahma-Sūtrās and the Gītā would be of any avail in this matter. For, it is not a question of the majority of opinions on Vedānta or the independent judgment of any single person regarding their comparative merit that we want to decide here. We only wish to know if any clue could be found to the genuine teaching of the Upanishads when we are guided by the oldest traditional commentator available.

Again, we shall, in the first instance, leave the sub-commentaries on Śaṅkara out of consideration for our present purpose. The reason is obvious. Interpreters of Śaṅkara are not agreed, or rather, they are, as often as not, mutually opposed on many essential points of Śaṅkara's system. It may or may not be true that, as Dr. Dasgupta asserts, in Śaṅkara's works (the commentaries on the Brahma-Sūtrās and the ten Upanishads) many ideas have been briefly incor-

porated which, as found in Śaṅkara, do not appear to be sufficiently clear, but are more intelligible as elaborated by his followers (HIP. Vol. I, p. 430). Anyway, to take the Vedānta system, not as we find it in Śaṅkara but 'as elaborated by his followers' would be only to court confusion and create needless obstacles in our way. I have therefore been satisfied with restricting myself to the classical commentaries of Śaṅkara on the three Prasthānās in determining his views on the Upanishadic teachings, the opinions of the most important of his followers being postponed for a detailed consideration in later chapters.

For a similar reason, I have mostly abstained from discussing ideas found in the numerous *Prakaraṇas* or minor works generally ascribed to Śaṅkara.

These and other principles to be observed in determining the system and method of Vedānta have been set forth in detail in the first *Kāṇḍa* (pp. 1-10) of the *present work*.

SECTION TWO

THE SYSTEM AND METHOD OF VEDĀNTA

1. THE SIGNIFICATION OF THE NAMES VEDĀNTA AND UPANISHAD

Vedānta is the system of philosophy contained in the Upanishads. Śaṅkara in explaining the phrase 'साङ्ख्ये कृतान्ते' (*Sāṅkhye Kṛtānte*) in the *Gītā* writes :

साङ्ख्ये । ज्ञातव्याः पदार्थाः संख्यायन्ते यस्मिन् शास्त्रे तत् सांख्यम् वेदान्तः ।

अतः तस्मिन् आत्मज्ञानार्थे सांख्ये कृतान्ते वेदान्ते ... ॥

Sāṅkhyā : The Śāstra in which things to be known are expounded is Sāṅkhyā, i.e. Vedānta ; so the phrase means 'in that Sāṅkhyā or Vedānta wherein all action comes to a close.'

G.Bh., 18-13, p.262

The word itself rarely occurs in the classical Upanishads on which Śaṅkara's Bhāṣyās are available except for the *Śvetāśvatara* वेदान्ते परमं गुह्यम् (*Vedānte Paramam Guhyam* 6-22) and the *Muṇḍaka* वेदान्तविज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः (*Vedānta-Vijñāna-Sunischitārthāḥ* 3-2-6) where, according to Śaṅkara, it has to be taken as signifying Upanishadic texts. The word in the latter sense is generally used in the plural¹ as witness the concluding

1. Max-Muller (SS., p. 111) draws attention to a curious distinction made in a commentary on the *Gautama-Sūtras* where (3-1-12) Haradatta writes:

उपनिषदः रहस्यब्राह्मणान्याध्यात्मिकानि । तद्व्यतिरिक्ताः आरण्यकभागा वेदान्ताः ॥

thus distinguishing the Upanishads from the Vedānta. Of course, this solitary usage need not disturb our position with regard to Śaṅkara's opinion.

sentences of the Adhyāsa Bhāṣhya :

अस्यानर्थहेतोः प्रहाणाय आत्मैकत्वविद्याप्रतिपत्तये सर्वे वेदान्ता आरभ्यन्ते । यथा चायमर्थः सर्वेषां वेदान्तानाम् तथा वयमस्यां शारीरकमीमांसायां प्रदर्शयिष्यामः ॥

“All ‘Vedāntās’ (or the Upanishads) are begun with a view to destroying this (Adhyāsa, the) cause of all evil, through the attainment of the knowledge of the unity of Ātman. We shall show in this *Śāṅkara Mīmāṃsā* how all Vedāntas have this one purport.”

The name ‘Upanishad’, however, is found to be used in the classical Upanishads in various senses.

1. “Whichever of these two - Devās or Asurās- take this for their Upanishad ‘Yatara Etadupanishadō Bhavishyanti ’ (यतर एतदुपनिषदो भविष्यन्ति) they shall be defeated.

“ Virōchana went over to the Asurās and to them communicated this Upanishad : the body alone is to be worshipped, is to be served. ” Ch., 8-8-4.

[Here evidently, the word means doctrine.]

2. Its Upanishad is ‘the real of the reals’ - ‘Tasyōpanishat Satyasya Satyamiti ’ (तस्योपनिषत् सत्यस्य सत्यमिति)

Br., 2-1-20

Śaṅkara explains this as follows : the word denoting a thing is called ‘Upanishad’, because it takes one nearer to the thing expressed by it.

[So ‘Upanishad’ here means a name.]

3. “That which one performs with knowledge (Vidyayā), with faith (Śraddhayā) and with Upanishad - that becomes more efficacious. ” Ch., 1-1-10.

Śaṅkara explains ‘उपनिषदा’ (Upanishadā) to mean with devoted attention ‘Yōgena Yuktah Sun Ityarthah ’ (योगेन युक्तः सन् इत्यर्थः).

4. "Revered sir, please teach me the Upanishad."

Kc., 4-7

Śaṅkara explains that the word 'Upanishad' here referred to is the Knowledge of Paramātmān and that what follows is only to point out the means to the attainment of that Knowledge.

This last is the most important meaning attached to the word as is clear from the Taittirīya which closes the teaching with the words 'Iti Upanishad'. Accordingly, Śaṅkara explains it thus :

इति इयम् एवं यथोक्ता अस्यां वल्ल्यां ब्रह्मविद्या उपनिषत्, सर्वाभ्यो विद्याभ्यः परमरहस्यं दर्शितम् इत्यर्थः । परं श्रेयोऽस्यां निष्पन्नम् इति ॥

"Thus has been set forth this Brahma-Vidyā as has been explained in this Vallī ; the Upanishad, the most supreme secret of all the Vidyās. This is Upanishad, because the highest good resides in this." Tai.Bh., p.312

According to Śaṅkara, Upanishad or Knowledge of Brahman is so called "because for those that are devoted to It the evils of being conceived, birth, old age etc. are curtailed निशातनात् (Niśātanāt) or destroyed तदवसादनाद् वा (Tadavasādanād Vā) or because it brings Brahman very near to the aspirant (Brahmanō Vā Upanigamayitṛtvāt - ब्रह्मणो वा उपनिगमयितृत्वात्) or because the highest good rests in it ' Upanishadnam Vā Asyām Paramam Śreya Iti ' (उपनिषदं वा अस्यां परमं श्रेय इति)

Tai. Bh., p.260

Similar derivations of the word may be seen in Śaṅkara's Commentary on the Katha (p. 58) and the Muṇḍaka (p. 142). The literary works treating of Brahma-Vidyā are also called the 'Upanishads' only in a secondary sense (K. Bh., p. 58).

2. IN WHAT SENSE IS THE UPANISHAD A SECRET ?

Owing to the circumstance, perhaps, that the Upanishads have been called by an alternative name 'Rahasya' (secret doctrine) Deussen infers that the word Upanishad comprehends, within the range of its connotation, the idea of secrecy also. He says (PU., p. 16) that the word occurs with three distinct meanings, '*secret word*', '*secret text*', and '*secret import*'. And upon this basis, or perhaps to substantiate this interpretation, he propounds the theory that the Upanishadic doctrine was cultivated primarily not by Brāhmaṇās but in a narrow circle of Kshatriyās; that it was studiously withheld from the Brāhmaṇās, by whom it was first adopted in later times (ibid., p. 19). He further concludes with a postulate : "We may therefore assume that the doctrine of the Ātman as the first principle of the universe was fostered and progressively developed by the Kshatriyās in opposition to the principles of the Brāhminical ritual : whence the new knowledge was expressed in brief words or formulas, intelligible only to the initiated, such as '*Tadvānam*', '*Tajjalān*', '*Satyasya Satyam*', '*Sāmyadvama*', '*Vāmani*', '*Bhāmani*' etc. A formula of this kind was then called an '*Upanishad*' inasmuch as the condition of its communication and explanation was the absence of publicity. Such formulas were naturally accompanied by oral explanations which also were kept secret, and from these were gradually developed the earliest texts that bore the name of Upanishad. " (ibid p. 20).

This plausible theory, however tempting to students of historical research, we shall ignore for our present purpose. It will be noticed that most of the formulas adduced by Deussen relate to the *Upāsanās* (meditations) and as such do

not really pertain to the principal teaching or the Ātman doctrine of the Upanishads, which does not always involve meditation. This division of the Upanishadic texts into two classes, we shall take up for consideration later on. For the present it will be enough to go into the question as to how far the Upanishads enjoin secrecy to be observed in the transmission of their teachings. There is no doubt that certain qualifications are pre-supposed to be quite necessary for an aspirant to the Knowledge of Ātman - witness the *Kena*: 'Tasyai Tapō Damah Karmeti Pratishtha तस्यै तपो दमः कर्मेति प्रतिष्ठा 4-8'; the *Katha* : 'Nāviratō Duscāritannāśānto Nasamāhitah नविरतो दुश्चरितान्नाशान्तो नासमाहितः 1-2-24' ; the *Praśna* : 'Bhūya Eva Tapasā Bramacharyeṇa Shraddhayā Saṃvatsaram Saṃvatsyatha भूय एव तपसा ब्रह्मचर्येण श्रद्धया संवत्सरं संवत्स्यथ 1-2' ; the *Muṇḍaka* : 'Tasmai Sa Vidwānupasannāya Samyak Praśanta Chittāya Śamānavitāyā तस्मै स विद्वानुपसन्नाय सम्यक् प्रशान्तचित्ताय शमान्विताय 2-13' ; the *Taittirīya* : 'Tapasā Brahma Vijijñāsasva तपसा ब्रह्म विजिज्ञासस्व 3-2' and the *Chāndōgya* : 'Tasmai Mṛditakashāyāya तस्मै मृदितकषायाय' - but these qualifications never imply that the doctrine is to be jealously guarded from any section of people. On the other hand, the Bṛhadāraṇyaka expressly states that whosoever - whether among the gods, the Ṛshis or men - realizes his identity with Brahman reaps the fruit of that knowledge (Br., 1-4-10). There is of course the orthodox initiation ceremony (Upanayanam) to be gone through before the doctrine - knowledge or Upāsana - is taught, whence it follows that only the three higher castes were given this teaching. The Brahma-Sūtras (VS., 1-3-36)

therefore decide that Śūdras are excluded from this privilege. Śaṅkara, however, relying on the Mahābhārata and other Smṛitis, observes that “ in the case of Vidura, Dharmavyādha and others (who do not belong to any one of the first three Varṇās) we cannot deny that they got the fruit of Brahma-Knowledge owing to the effects of a previous birth, since the latter invariably brings about its fruit. Moreover, all the four castes are declared eligible for the knowledge of the Itihāsa and the Purāṇās; in the Smṛiti ‘he shall teach the four Varṇās’ (M.Bh. Śānti, 327-49). Only it has been decided here that the Śūdrās are not entitled to get Knowledge through the medium of the Vedās.”

SB., 1-3-38, p. 539.

Nevertheless, Knowledge of Brahman as well as meditations taught in the Upanishads or the Gītā, has been rightly designated ‘secret’ (Rahasya) in the sense that it is not accessible to everyone that is qualified to study the Vedās, inasmuch as it relates to the innermost Self of man. The following quotations will bear this out :

(१) तत्रैतस्मिन् अद्वैतप्रकरणे अभ्युदयसाधनानि उपासनान्युच्यन्ते ।
कैवल्यसंनिकृष्टफलानि च अद्वैतात् ईषद्विकृतब्रह्मविषयाणि ‘मनोमयः प्राणशरीरः’
इत्यादीनि ; कर्मसमृद्धिफलानि च कर्माङ्गसंबन्धीनि । रहस्यसामान्यात्,
मनोवृत्तिसामान्याच्च॥

Ch. Bh., Intro.

(२) इदं तु ते गुह्यतमं प्रवक्ष्याम्यनसूयवे ॥ G. 9-1

(३) सर्वगुह्यतमं भूयः शृणु मे परमं वचः ॥ G. 18-64

It is clear that the orthodox Vedāntins regard each one of the Upanishads as well as Brahma-Knowledge as an open

secret. It is closed only to those who cannot or will not take the trouble of entering into the interior spiritual realm.

3. IN WHAT SENSE DO THE UPANISHADS CONTAIN A SYSTEM OF PHILOSOPHY ?

I think that the reader had better be forewarned as to what I mean when I say that the Upanishads point to a definite system of philosophy. It is well-known that etymologically the word 'philosophy' means 'love of wisdom' leading to the search for it. So interpreted, it is best represented by the Sanskrit word Jijñāsā, or Anveshaṇā ; compare the *Chāndōgya* text Sō'nveshtavyah, Sa Vijijñāsitavyah, (सोऽन्वेष्टव्यः स विजिज्ञासितव्यः Ch., 8-1-1). It now means knowledge resulting from the search of the general principles - elements, powers or causes and laws - as explaining facts and existences. A western writer says that it is " the product of human thought, acting upon the data given by the world without, or the world within, and eliciting from these data principles, laws and system." (H. B. Smith, *Faith and Philosophy* Essay i, p. 5). In this sense, of course, Vedānta is no philosophy, for one of the fundamental principles adopted here is 'Naishā Tarkaṇa Matirāpaneyā -- नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया ' (This Knowledge is not attainable through speculation, K. 1-2-9).

'The object matter of Philosophy', it has been observed, 'may be distinguished as God or Nature or Man. But underlying all our enquiries into any of these departments, there is a first philosophy which seeks to ascertain the grounds or principles of knowledge and the causes of all things. Hence, philosophy has been said to be the science of causes and principles. It is the investigation of these

principles on which all knowledge and all being ultimately rest' (K. F. *Vocab. Philos.*, p. 388). It will be noted that the Upanishads do treat of God, Nature and Man - and all other creatures for that matter - and from this point of view, may be said to cover the entire field of 'the objective matter of philosophy' as herein described. It may not lay claim to be the 'first philosophy' as seeking to ascertain the principles of knowledge and causes of all things, since it is no speculation, but nevertheless, in its own way, it does present very definite ideas as to the nature and limitations of discursive knowledge, no less than the ultimate cause of all things. If the reader is liberal enough to bear with this slight difference, he will be willing to bring even Vedānta under the connotation of the word 'philosophy'.

But is there a system of philosophy here ? A number of suggestions seems to be thrown out in these writings out of which later interpreters try to evolve something like a system. But where do we find a connected account of either knowledge or being in all these writings ? Says Thibaut : "If anything is evident even on a cursory review of the Upanishads it is that they do not constitute a systematic whole. They themselves, the older ones, give the most unmistakable indications on that point" (VS., ciii). This sceptical view is quite justified so long as we choose to ramble in these woods without a guide. We shall see presently how, according to Śaṅkara, the Upanishads do present their teachings systematically. But what is system itself, in the first place ? This is how the dictionary defines it : "Orderly combination or arrangement as of particulars or elements into a whole ; especially such combination according to some rational

principle or organic idea giving it unity and completeness'' (*The New Standard Dictionary*). This definition may not wholly apply to the Vedānta of the Upanishads, since it is not a rational system, as has been already admitted. But here is a more general description : "System is an organised body of truth, or truths (K.F. *Vocab. Philos.*, p. 505). Now, the meaning of this description may be taken to be wide enough to justify the view that the Vedānta philosophy is systematic inasmuch as it brings everything under one and the same idea, that of Paramārtha or Reality and inasmuch as all truths are comprehended by the one grand Truth *Samyagjñānam* (सम्यग्ज्ञानम्) that is revealed by one and the same method of ' *Adhyārōpa-Apavāda* '. I shall now proceed to explain in the following pages what I mean by this brief statement.

SECTION THREE

THE VEDĀNTA DOCTRINE OF REALITY

1. HARMONY OF UPANISHADIC TEACHING - HOW DISCOVERED

I have said that while Vedānta as expounded by the Upanishads may not be 'philosophy' as generally understood in the West, it nevertheless has very definite views concerning Being, Knowledge and values. While it is not a closely reasoned system attempting to prove everyone of its doctrines, it none the less is in possession of a comprehensive view of *reality* in all its aspects, a view based upon universal *Intuition*. It has also a traditional method of suggesting the view to the earnest enquirer, who has the necessary qualification to assimilate the truth. To recognize this method is to recognize the *harmony* of all Upanishadic teachings. Instead of following the modern critics, who stand aghast on looking at some of the apparent inconsistencies or certain unscientific statements made in individual cases, the earnest student will do well to be guided by traditional interpreters like Śaṅkara and recognize this method. There is much truth in what Dr. Radhrkrishnan writes about these sacred writings: "Notwithstanding the variety of authorship and the period of time covered by the composition of these half-poetical and half-philosophical treatises, there is a unity of purpose, a vivid sense of spiritual reality in them all, which become clear and distinct as we descend the stream of time." (IP., p. 139)

2. THE TRADITIONAL METHOD OF VEDĀNTA

And what is this method which, when recognized, transforms the all-seeming chaos into cosmos with regard to

these sacred writings ? Śāṅkara was perhaps the first after Gauḍapāda to refer to it in the Gītā Bhāṣhya by name. That its employment for revealing the nature of Reality was known long before him, is disclosed by a quotation of his in that commentary:

तथा हि संप्रदायविदां वचनम् 'अध्यारोपापवादाभ्यां निष्प्रपञ्चं प्रपञ्च्यते' इति ।

“Accordingly, knowers of the traditional method have declared ‘That which is devoid of all distinctions and details is explained through deliberate Super-imposition and Rescission’ ” (G. Bh. 13-14). Super-imposition (Adhyārōpa) literally means laying something on something else, falsely imputing the nature or property of something to something else. It is a postulate of Vedānta that, owing to a natural tendency of the human mind, a beginningless Super-imposition called *Avidyā* compels us all to look upon Reality as infected with manifold distinctions. Now, in order to educate the mind to interpret Reality as It is, the Upanishads uniformly employ the aforesaid method of Adhyārōpāpavāda or deliberate Super-imposition or provisional ascription and subsequent Rescission or abrogation. An example taken from the Gītā will illustrate the principle :

सर्वतः पाणिपादं तत् सर्वतोऽक्षिशरोमुखम् ।

सर्वतः श्रुतिमल्लोके सर्वमावृत्य तिष्ठति ॥

सर्वेन्द्रियगुणाभासं सर्वेन्द्रियविवर्जितम् ।

असक्तं सर्वभृच्चैव निर्गुणं गुणभोक्तृ च ॥¹

G. 13-13, 14.

In the first of the above two Ślōkās, Reality or Brahman is said to possess hands and feet, eyes, heads, faces and ears on

1. These Ślōkās are a verbatim reproduction of Śvetaśvatara III-16-17 except for the second half of the second Ślōkā.

all sides; whereas in the second, it is declared to be devoid of all senses even while it appears to be able to perform all sensory functions. Śaṅkara observes that “the special features noticed in the Kshetrajña (the Self) owing to the limiting conditions caused by the different forms of Kshetra (the body etc.) being unreal, have been rescinded in the previous Ślōka, and Kshetrajña has been taught to be realized as neither being nor non-being. But here (in Ślōka 13), even the unreal nature manifested through the limiting conditions has been treated as though it were the property of the knowable, just to bring its existence home, and hence the knowable Kshetrajña is spoken of as ‘ possessed of hands and feet etc., everywhere ’. Accordingly, there is the well-known saying of the knowers of tradition : ‘ That which is devoid of all details is set forth in detail through deliberate Superimposition and Rescission. ’ Hands and feet and the rest which seem to be limbs of each and every body, owe their respective functions to the presence of the power of Consciousness inherent in the Ātman to be known. So, they are evidential marks indicating the presence of Ātman and are therefore spoken of as pertaining to It in a secondary sense” (G. Bh. 13-13, p. 204). Śaṅkara means to say that Brahman is first brought to our notice by the Śruti as the one Self of us all, which functions through all our senses. The Self seizes things with our hands, walks with our feet, sees through our eyes and hears through our ears, as it were. This way of describing It is for convincing us of Its undeniable existence. Once we recognize this, the Śruti revokes the wrong ascription of sensory acts, to enable us to interpret Reality as it is, as the one Universal Self. The ascription of the sensory activities was merely a device to familiarize our mind with the existence of the Self, very much like the temporary

scaffolding used for the erection of a building, to be altogether removed after that object is accomplished. Accordingly, Śaṅkara summarizes the purport of the second Ślōka thus :

उपाधिभूतपाणिपादादीन्द्रियाध्यारोपात्, ज्ञेयस्य तद्वत्ता शङ्का माभूदित्ययमर्थः
श्लोकारम्भः॥

“ Lest it be supposed that this Brahman to be known is really possessed of the senses such as hands and feet etc., just because they have been imputed to It, the next verse is begun.”

3. SPECIAL VARIETIES OF THE VEDĀNTIC METHOD

I have shown in greater detail, especially in the third chapter (pp. 26-117) of the present work,¹ how this one scheme works in all the modes of approach employed in the Upanishads to lead the aspirant to the intuition of Reality. Reality as such transcends all our concepts of the objective world, for all conceptual reasoning pre-supposes the fundamental Super-imposition or *Adhyāsa* already (p. 29) mentioned. Hence it follows that the only legitimate method of realizing It is to wade through this Super-imposition. Hence the concepts of cause and effect, the universal and the individual, the knower and the known, the Self and its limiting sheaths, Consciousness and its states - these and other general notions like them, are all discussed in the Upanishads merely to teach the seeker how to transcend all such distinctions and attain what is *forever attained*, to wit, *union* with Reality. This can be verified by noticing the fact that in each one of such discussions, the Upanishads invariably rescind the initial ascription at the close.

1. Present Work : ‘Vedānta Prakriyā Pratyabhijñā’

Thus in the *Chāndōgya*, after positing Being or Brahman as the cause of Fire, Water and Earth - the primordial elements which produce the world - Uddālaka concludes :

एवमेव खलु सोम्यान्नेन शुक्लेनापो मूलमन्विच्छद्भिः सोम्य शुङ्गेन तेजो मूलमन्विच्छ तेजसा सोम्य शुक्लेन सन्मूलमन्विच्छ सन्मूलाः सोम्येमाः सर्वाः प्रजाः सदायतनाः सत्प्रतिष्ठाः ॥ छां. ६-८-४.

“ Through the off-shoot of food (the Earth), my dear son, seek out the root Water, through the off-shoot of Water, my dear son, seek out the root Fire, and through the off-shoot of Fire, my dear son, seek out the Real. All these creatures, my dear son, have the *Sat* (Being or Brahman) for their source, the *Sat* for their abode, the *Sat* for their dissolving goal.” (Ch. 6-8-4) That is to say, there is nothing that is not born from Brahman, that does not subsist in Brahman, that is not finally dissolved in It. So then the substance of all things created is Brahman only. Accordingly, Uddālaka in this Upanishad, reiterates this one statement at every step of his teaching “ Aitadātmyam Idam Sarvam Tat Satyam Sa Ātmā Tat Twamasi Śwetaketō ” (ऐतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वं तत्सत्यं स आत्मा तत् त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो ।) “ That is why too he illustrates what he means by citing clay etc, where he emphasizes that the material cause such as clay alone is real while its effect is unreal, its name being a mere play of words - *Vāchārambhaṇam* (वाचारम्भणम्). That what is meant to be proved is the *unreality* of the so-called effect as distinct from the cause or rather the *sole reality* of the cause as the *substance* of its effects, is evident from texts like the one already quoted from the *Chāndōgya*.

यदने रोहितं रूपं तेजसस्तद्रूपं यच्छुक्लं तदपां यत्कृष्णं तदन्नस्यापागादग्नेरग्नित्वं वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयं त्रीणि रूपाणीत्येव सत्यम् ॥ Ch. 6-4-1.

It is clear that fire, a product of the original non-tripartite Bhūtās after being mentally resolved into the original factors, is here stated to become 'no fire (Apāgāt Agneragnitvam), modification being only a name arising from words, and the three colours alone being real. Accordingly, Śaṅkara explains "Before the dawn of the discriminating knowledge of the three colours, you entertained the notion that it was fire; that notion of fire as well as the name fire, has now gone away." We thus see that the *narration of creation* was intended only to show that the world as an *effect* is merely a *name* 'constructed by speech' and that *essentially* it is nothing other than Brahman. This interpretation is quite in consonance with Bādarāyaṇa's Sūtra : " It is not other than the cause, as can be seen from the texts like the one teaching Ārambhaṇa, the construction (of the effect) by speech."¹ (VS., 2-1-14)

Of course, Śaṅkara never meant to say that pots and other modifications of clay are not there when we see and use

1. Thibaut, however, has a different interpretation to offer : 'We, including Uddālaka, may surely say that all earthen pots are in reality nothing but earth - the earthen pot being a special modification (Vikāra) of clay which has a name of its own - without thereby committing ourselves to the doctrine that the change of form, which a lump of clay undergoes when being fashioned into a pot, is not real but a mere baseless illusion' (VS., p. cxviii); 'What is capable of being proved and manifestly meant to be proved', he remarks, 'is merely that this whole world has Brahman for its causal substance, just as clay is the causal matter of every earthen pot' (ibid.)

I fail to see whence he gets his clue for 'the causal substance' and how, on his interpretation, he justifies the solemn repetition of the statements 'Vāchārambhaṇam Vikāro Nāmadheyam (वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयम्) ; and 'Mrīṭṭiketyeva Satyam', (मृत्तिकेत्येव सत्यम्) ; 'Apāgādagneragnitvam (अपागादग्नेतन्निवम्)- etc., where the reality of the cause and the unreality of the effect are equally emphasized.

them for practical purposes, or that our senses deceive us when they report that there are such objective existences. But nobody would venture to assert that these so-called modifications are distinct from clay and have reality of their own apart from that of clay of which they are different forms. From this point of view, then, the world we see is no '*baseless illusion*' for it has for its basis the original Being (Sat) or Brahman with which it is essentially one (Aitadātmyam Idam Sarvam ऐतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वम्). And we shall never be doing injustice to the essential reality of the world when we declare with Angiras of the *Muṇḍaka* :

ब्रह्मैवेदममृतं पुरस्ताद् ब्रह्म दक्षिणतश्चोत्तरेण ।

अधश्चोर्ध्वं च प्रसृतं ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदं वरिष्ठम् ॥

“ All this spread out before us, behind, to the right and to the left, above and below, is but the immortal Brahman, all this universe is the Supreme Brahman”. Mu. 2-2-1

As Śaṅkara sums up, “ The notion of non-Brahman is merely Avidyā just like the notion of a serpent in a rope, Brahman alone being the Highest Reality. Such is the teaching of the Vedās. ”

This rather protracted discussion of causality and creation will be enough, I hope, to illustrate the method of *Adhyārōpa* and *Apavāda* (Imputation and Rescission). The Upanishads do not undertake to examine the concept of causality as such and to pronounce their judgement in the matter. They rather take up the concept as accepted in the empirical world and utilize it to teach us that the *real nature* of Brahman is above the notions of cause and effect.

Similarly, the concept of the universal is applied to Brahman to warn us against taking it as one among several

individuals, and then this ascription is cancelled (37).¹ It is presented as the *knower* of all just to dissuade us from treating it as an object and when this end is achieved, Brahman is shown to *transcend* the *distinction* of knower and known also (38). The doctrine of the five sheaths (*Pancha-Kōśās*) is only to obviate the mental tendency to regard the body, the vital principle, and other objective existences as the Self and after this is done, the real Self is revealed as transcending all these sheaths (39). And the method of *Avasthās* or the three states of Consciousness has a similar aim. The individual self, seemingly experiencing the three states, is step by step shown to be identical with the Universal Self in its three aspects of *Virāj*, *Hiranyagarbha*, and *Avyākṛtātman* and finally revealed in its *true nature* as the Turiya or the Secondless Supreme Self transcending all the states.

4. THE BASIC SUPER-IMPOSITION

These and other varieties of the '*Adhyārōpa-Apavāda*' method have to be systematically graduated in order to appreciate its value as a pedagogical instrument in the hands of a skilful teacher of Vedānta. I have attempted in the body of the present work (20) to indicate the general line of procedure adopted in Vedāntic writings and its significance. While Brahman is devoid of all distinguishing features and, as the very Self of us all is *eternally attained*, some texts *temporarily* superimpose *attainability* on It and from that position deny that It can be attained through any means other than Knowledge. Some texts super-impose *knowability* and

1. The numbers within brackets, in this para, indicate the corresponding paragraphs in the body of '*Vedānta Prakriyā Pratyabhijñā*'

deny that any other thing is knowable in the real sense of the word. Some other texts presume that it is a *knower* and hence unknowable, while other texts assert that, being the *Witnessing Principle* in us, It cannot be considered to be a knower. Yet other texts deny that it can ever be *described* in positive terms. Some texts again, say that Brahman is *known* only *through instruction* from the Vedās or a teacher, and hence beyond the *reach of perception* and other means of knowledge, while other texts aver that Brahman being *self-evident*, is *no object* of speech or thought. In short, the *very soul* of this method consists in *pre-supposing* some characteristic as pertaining to Brahman, just to *discard* its correlate or opposite and then *annulling* the pre-supposition itself.

Now, the Upanishads teach that there is a basic superimposition called *Avidyā* which is the root of all the various particular super-impositions that obtain in empirical life, and hence that all evils of life can be uprooted by seeing through this fundamental error and Intuiting Brahman as It is. This *innate error* in the human mind as well as the *Knowledge of Brahman* attainable through Intuition are referred to in the following Śruti : “दूरमेते विपरीते विषूची अविद्या या च विद्येति ज्ञाता ” “These two, the error of *Avidyā* and that which is known as *Vidyā*, are far apart from each other, mutually exclusive, and proceed in opposite directions’ (K. 1-2-4).

Śaṅkara explains in the Introduction to his Sūtra-Bhāṣya that this *Avidyā* consists in the mutual superimposing of the Self and the not-self, and a mistaken transference of their properties to each other. This *Avidyā* is not an *event in time or place* and therefore, not to be likened to temporary individual errors that men are liable to commit, as for instance, when they mistake a rope for a snake or the

mother-of-pearl for silver. It is rather an *inherent natural tendency* on the part of the human mind to *fuse* these two, the Self and the not-self, into one and form the fundamental concepts of 'me' and 'mine'. It is this basic error of the ego which is *responsible* for all the *processes of thinking and experiences* in ordinary life. It is now clear how Vedānta is primarily concerned with the *exposing* of this basic error and not with *offering* Pramāṇās or means of proof for its propositions, nor yet with determining the nature of the objects of our knowledge. No Pramāṇās are adduced in all the Upanishads to prove the *existence* of Reality and no arguments put forward for *establishing* Its nature. In fact, as Śaṅkara tells us, they rather aim at demolishing all talk of Pramāṇa and Prameya, means of proof and objects of knowledge, this distinction being, in their view, only due to Avidyā or primary ignorance.

यत्र हि द्वैतमिव भवति तदितर इतरं पश्यति तदितर इतरं जिघ्रति तदितर इतरं रसयते तदितर इतरमभिवदति तदितर इतरं मनुते तदितर इतरं स्पृशति तदितर इतरं विजानाति यत्र त्वस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत् तत्केन कं पश्येत् तत् केन कं जिघ्रेत् तत् केन कं रसयेत् तत् केन कमभिवदेत् तत् केन कं शृणुयात् तत् केन कं मन्वीत तत् केन कं स्पृशेत् तत् केन कं विजानीयात् ॥

“For, where there is duality, as it were, there one sees something, one smells something, one tastes something, one says something, one hears something, one thinks something, one touches something, one knows something. But when to this (Knower of Brahman) everything has become the Self, then what can one possibly see and with what (sense) ? What can one smell and with what ?....”

Br., 4-5-15

This text evidently avers that all details of knowledge,

the distinction of the knower, means of knowledge, as well as the objects of knowledge and the resultant knowledge, belong to the sphere of *seeming duality* and not to the *transcendental Ātman*, for “that is the Ātman described as ‘Not this, Not that’ (Sa Esha Neti Netyātma स एष नेति नेत्यात्मा)”. Even the Śruti is considered a Pramāṇa only figuratively. Śaṅkara says

‘अत्र पिताऽपिता भवति’ इत्युपक्रम्य ‘वेदा अवेदाः’ (बृ. ४-३-२२) इति वचनात्, इत्यत एवास्माभिः श्रुतेरप्यभावः प्रबोधे ।नन्वहमीश्वर एवोक्तः श्रुत्या । यद्येवं प्रतिबुद्धोऽसि नास्ति कस्यचिदप्रबोधः ॥

“We do accept the position that even the Śruti ceases to be at the dawn of Knowledge, since there is a text which declares that ‘the Vedās are no Vedās’ (Br., 4-3-22) in the Absolute..... If you are thus awakened to the Truth, there is none to whom Avidyā pertains.”

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

“न हि आत्मस्वरूपाधिगमे सति पुनः प्रमाणप्रमेयव्यवहारः संभवति । प्रमातृत्वं हि आत्मनो निवर्तयति, अन्त्यं प्रमाणम् । निवर्तयदेव च अप्रमाणीभवति स्वप्नकालप्रमाणमिव प्रबोधे ॥

“There can be no talk of the distinction of the means of knowledge and the object thereof when one realizes the nature of the Self, for the final proof (the Śruti) removes the knowing nature of the knower and while so doing, becomes no longer a means of knowledge, much in the same way as the apparent means of knowledge in a dream ceases to be such, so soon as one awakes.” G. Bh., 2-69.

It is thus clear that by employing this method of Superimposition and Rescission, the Upanishads lift us above the *sphere* of both *knowing* and *being* at one stroke, as they reveal

the *eternal transcendental nature* of our true Self.

5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NEGATION IN VEDĀNTA

Failure to recognize this method in all its bearings has led modern scholars to interpret the negative propositions in the Upanishads according to their own predilections. Thus, for instance, Deussen believes that Brahman is described as 'Neti Neti' because It is beyond time, place and causality. He is convinced, however, "that those ancient times were frequently unable to formulate the idea of a spaceless, timeless, causeless existence in its abstract simplicity" as Kant has done in recent times. PU., p. 150.

Radhakrishnan thinks that the negative definitions are intended to point out the inadequacy of the positive attributes as applied to the highest. IP., 178,

Dasgupta is nearer the truth when he says : "The way to indicate It is thus by *Neti, Neti*, it is not this, it is not this. We cannot describe by any positive context which is always limited by conceptual thought." He also repeats Deussen's view when he remarks : "He (the Ātman) is independent of all limitations of space, time and cause which rule all that is objectively presented and therefore the empirical universe (IP., 45)". The Professor's position, however, is that "they (the Vedic poets) had only a dim and dreamy vision of It in the deep craving of the souls which could not be translated into permanent terms (ibid., p. 44)".

The reader who has followed our account of the Vedāntic method will readily see that neither the inability to formulate the idea of Brahman, nor 'the dim and dreamy vision of the R̥shis, nor yet the inadequacy of positive attributes, was responsible for the adoption of the so-called

‘negative method’ in the Upanishads. In the first place, Brahman as our own Ātman or Self is never in need of any definition or proof for Its being known, for It is the one light, with the help of which all human activities are conducted. As the Śruti says :

‘आत्मैवास्य ज्योतिर्भवतीत्यात्मनैवायं ज्योतिषास्ते पल्ययते कर्म कुरुते विपल्येतीति ’

‘The Self alone serves as one’s light, it is solely through the light of the Self that one sits, goes out, works and returns’ (Br., 4-3-6), ‘It is the light within the mind’ (Br., 4-3-7), ‘Here in dream, the Purusha is his own light’ (Br., 4-3-9), ‘ (Here in deep sleep, he is) transparent like water, the one witness without a second’ (Br., 4-3-9). Surely, this is no ‘dim and dreamy vision’ of the Self ! In the second place, it is impossible to define in words or to formulate an idea of Brahman, for the simple reason that It is beyond speech and mind. (Yatō Vāchō Nivartante Aprāpya Manasā Saha यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह Tai., 2-9), being the enlightener of both. In the words of the Upanishad, it is ‘the mind of the mind, and the speech of speech’ (Manasō Manō, Yad Vāchō Ha Vācham मनसो मनो यद् वाचो ह वाचम् Ke., 1-2).

Why then do the Upanishad Rshis use the ‘negative’ or rather, the negation method ? Let us listen to Śaṅkara :

तस्मात् बाह्याकारभेदबुद्धिनिवृत्तिरेव आत्मस्वरूपावलम्बनकारणम् । न ह्यात्मा नाम कस्यचित् कदाचित् अप्रसिद्धः प्राप्यो हेय उपादेयो वा । अप्रसिद्धे हि तस्मिन् आत्मनि सर्वाः प्रवृत्तयो व्यर्थाः प्रसज्येरन् ॥

“Therefore it is that the abolition of the concepts of the several external object-forms is the only means of resorting to the true nature of the Self. For, what is called the Self is not something unknown to anyone, to be newly reached, to be got rid of or acquired at any time. Indeed, if that were

altogether unknown, all efforts for one's own benefit would be meaningless.”

G. Bh., 18-50, p. 281.

Again,

योऽसावुपनिषत्स्वेवाधिगतः स्वप्रकरणस्थोऽनन्यशेषः, नासौ नास्ति नाधिगम्यत इति वा शक्यं वदितुम् । ‘स एष नेति नेत्यात्मा’ इत्यात्मशब्दात् आत्मनश्च प्रत्याख्यातुम-
शक्यत्वात् । य एव निराकर्ता तस्यैवात्मत्वात् ॥

“Of that non-transmigratory Purusha, to be known exclusively through the Upanishads, that is, Brahman altogether different from the four classes of substances--to be produced etc....., which is taught in a context of its own, and not as subordinate to something else, of that Purusha, it is impossible to say that He is not existent or cannot be known since there is the word Ātman (Self) in the text, now this is the Self (already) described as ‘Not this, Not this’, and since the Self cannot be denied inasmuch as the denier himself is the Self.”

SB., 1-1-4, p. 19-20.

One more quotation :

अविषयत्वे ब्रह्मणः शास्त्रयोनित्वानुपपत्तिरिति चेत् । न ।
अविद्याकल्पितभेदनिवृत्तिपरत्वात् शास्त्रस्य । न हि शास्त्रमिदंतया विषयभूतं ब्रह्म
प्रतिपादयिषति, किं तर्हि प्रत्यगात्मत्वेन अविषयतया प्रतिपादयत्, अविद्याकल्पितं
वेद्यवेदितृवेदनादिभेदमपनयति ॥

“If it be objected that in case Brahman is no object (of speech or mind) the Śāstra cannot possibly be the means of its knowledge, we say no; for, the Śāstra only purports to remove all distinctions fictitiously constructed by Avidyā. (To explain) : the Śāstra does not intend to teach Brahman - particularly as this or that by objectifying It, but only to teach that It is no object at all being one's own inner Self and

thus to remove distinctions like that of the knowable, knower and knowledge, distinctions fictitiously constructed by Avidyā.”

SB., 1-1-4, p.16.

It is obvious from the above that the method of negation is adopted, not because of the inability of the Ṛshis to teach or form a true concept of Brahman, not because words and concepts are inadequate to present the true nature of Brahman, but because the very nature of Brahman as the self-luminous light of the *Witnessing* Consciousness in us all desiderates this one method to the exclusion of all empirical modes of teaching or knowing. And this method reveals the *self-revealed* Brahman by merely removing the *imaginary veil* of wrong thought-constructs thrown over It by Avidyā.

We can now understand the significance of the Upanishadic *negation*. The Upanishads constitute the only revelation of the universal Witnessing Ātman as *distinct* from the ego known to the Mīmāṃsākās and the rationalist philosophers of India (SB., 1-1-4, p. 20) and Brahman as this Witness or Ātman in all beings, uniform, One without a second, eternal and unchanging, can never be objectified in any manner, since It is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker, the unknown knower and ‘there is no other seer, no other hearer, no other thinker, no other knower than this One (Br., 3-8-11). The negation of empirical properties in It, therefore, can neither imply the absence of something which enjoys Its being elsewhere, nor the affirmation of something else different from or opposed to the one negated. It is solely intended to dissuade one from attributing any *reality* to the properties *imagined* by ignorance. This ignorance or *Avidyā* itself, again, is the basic

Super-imposition which is responsible for its own appearance as well as that of all other derivative super-impositions issuing forth from it. Brahman or the *Absolute* Reality ever remains the same, unaffected by the Super-imposition of Avidyā or its removal. It is for this reason that the Śruti utilizes different devices suited to remove particular impositions and this accounts not only for the special instances of the 'Adhyārōpa-Apavāda' method, but also for the different modes of negation employed in different Śrutis. A teacher, who has *realized* Brahman as his own Self, can therefore select any one of these or any other similar devices suited to the requirements of his individual disciple, the only test of the negation being that it works and leads the seeker to the Intuition of the Real. It is important to remember that it is not the seeker who *negates* the *super-imposed* appearance. For, he is not conscious of Reality as such at the time of enquiry, and no amount of critical reflection would take him to the Truth so long as his mind is extrovert. It is the Śruti or the Āchārya, preferably the latter, that gives him the *inward lead*, and in doing so the Śruti or the Guru consciously uses one or more of the aforesaid devices suited to the seeker's frame of mind. It is not a question of *listening to* an external teaching, and then *using some logical dialectic* to remove misconceptions. The Śruti or the teacher merely gives an *inward turn* to the mind of the seeker, who under the guide of the former, *attends to the nature* of his own Self and by a gradual process of co-ordinating his *partial intuitions* as suggested by the Śruti or teacher, he finally *rests* in the Intuition of Brahman after abolishing the super-impositions.¹ But how is the seeker to follow the lead of the

1. Prof. T.R.V. Murti seems to miss the point when he writes 'In the

Śāstra or the teacher ? Does he already know Brahman before he strips It of false ascriptions in accordance with the suggestion of his guide ? The answer is both yes and no. He does know It as his Self. 'Sarvasya Ātmatvāccha Brahmāstitva-prasidhihi सर्वस्य आत्मत्वाच्च ब्रह्मास्तित्वप्रसिद्धिः (SB., 1-1-1, p. 6). He does not entirely rely on either the teacher or the Śāstra, for either of these can only suggest to him what is already in him. As Śaṅkara puts it 'Vachanam Nāma Yathābhūtasya (Arthasya) Jñāpakam Na Avidyamānasya Kartṛ वचनं नाम यथाभूतस्य ज्ञापकम्, न अविद्यमानस्य कर्तृ (Tai. Intro., p. 276), a text can only make known anything as it is; it cannot create anything *de novo*. And in the case of one's own Self, ever-known and self-effulgent, there is nothing to be made known by positive definition, and hence there can be only the removal of false notions created by Avidyā.

It is sometimes supposed that mere negation cannot give us complete knowledge of a thing unless our false judgement is replaced by a positively correct one. It is not enough to know that I misjudge a thing to be a snake ; it is necessary to complete it by knowing positively what the thing I perceive is in its *true nature*. Hence, it is urged that positive Upanishadic statements defining Brahman are more forceful than negative ones. But the argument ignores the fact that Brahman as our own Self is in no need of enlightenment as

Vedānta, negation applies to becoming and difference, which are falsely ascribed to Pure Being' (CPB., p. 158). For, Reality or Brahman is neither being as opposed to becoming, nor one as opposed to many. Negation in Śrutis applies, as we have seen, to all Vikalpās, including the empirical being and number. Compare the Gītā 'Na Sattānnā-saduchyate न सत्तान्नासदुच्यते' and a saying ascribed to Śaṅkara 'Na Chaikam Dvitiyam Kutah Syāt' न चैकं द्वितीयं कुतः स्यात् ॥

to Its existence or nature. Moreover, as Śaṅkara observes, the only *function of knowledge* is to *remove the ignorance* which envelops the true nature of a thing :

न हि क्वचित् साक्षात् वस्तुधर्मस्य अपोद्धी दृष्टा कर्त्री वा विद्या । अविद्यायास्तु सर्वत्रैव निवर्तिका दृश्यते । तथा इहापि अब्रह्मत्वम् असर्वत्वं च अविद्याकृतमेव निवर्त्यतां ब्रह्मविद्याया, न तु पारमार्थिकं वस्तु कर्तुं निवर्तयितुं वा अर्हति ब्रह्मविद्या ॥

‘ Knowledge has been never noticed either to remove or to create actually the property of anything. It is found, however, to destroy ignorance in every case. So here also let us accept that Knowledge of Brahman removes the non-Brahmic nature and limited nature created by ignorance only, and not that, Knowledge of Brahman can create or remove an actually existent thing. ’ (Br. Bh., 1-4-10, p.669). Indeed, we are said to know more and more of a thing in proportion to the removal of ignorance concerning it. Śaṅkara therefore humorously remarks :

येषां पुनस्तमोऽपनयनव्यतिरेकेण फलाधिगमे प्रमाणं व्याप्नियते, तेषां छेद्यावयवसंबन्धवियोगव्यतिरेकेण अन्यतरावयवेऽपि छिदिव्याप्नियत इत्युक्तं स्यात् ॥

“Those who affirm that knowledge, besides removing ignorance, enables one positively ‘to know’ the thing itself, would be affirming that the act of cutting - besides severing the connection of the parts of a log - operates on each of the parts also. ”

Ma. Bh., 7, p. 187.

6. APPLICATION OF THE NEGATION METHOD

A study of the different forms of negation employed in the Śrūtis would reveal how the one method of Superimposition and Rescission operates in all the specific instances.

1. "It is the One that never moves and is yet swifter than mind. The senses never overtake It, for It will have arrived at the destination before them ; resting, It outstrips all in a race."

Iśa., 4.

[Opposite predicates mutually super-impose and rescind each other and thus reveal the transcendental nature of the Self.]

2. "It is verily other than the known, and above the unknown. "

Ke., 1-4.

[The known or the manifold world of names and forms is first denied and, lest it be presumed to be the unmanifest world, that is also expressly negated. In the result, the seeker is led to the Intuition of Ātman untainted by the knowable or conceivable objective world.]

3. "That which has no sound, no touch, and no colour, that which is undecaying , tasteless, eternal, and scentless ; that which has neither beginning nor end, that which is beyond the *Mahat*, that which is constant - realizing That, one is released from the jaws of death. "

Ka. 1-3-15.

[Here the cancellation of the super-impositions proceeds gradually from the grosser to the subtler till one finally realizes Reality in all Its nakedness and is thereby freed from death, that is, from ignorance, desire and action as Śaṅkara explains it.]

4. "He who is of divine splendour, formless, the Puruṣa (all-pervading), unborn without or within, without Prāṇa, without mind, pure, beyond even the imperishable (undifferentiated seed of the world) - from this One, is born Prāṇa, the mind, all the senses, the air, the fire, the water and the earth that supporteth all. "

Mun., 2-1-2.

[From Brahman, which knows no birth and which is without Prāṇa, without mind, without senses, and without the elements, are born Prāṇa and other effects, that is to say, everything is super-imposed on it. Hence it is that the Śruti can declare that all this is Brahman. See Mun., 2-1-11.]

5. "Not inwardly conscious, not outwardly conscious, not conscious bothways, not solidified consciousness, neither conscious nor unconscious, unperceived, not an object of human dealings, ungraspable, uninferable with the aid of a sign, inconceivable, inexpressible, Intuited only through the notion of the one Self, free from all distinctions, tranquil, the highest good, non-dual - That, they call the Fourth, That is the Self, That is what is to be known. " Man., 7.

[Here not only the three states of consciousness and their contents, but also all possible conceptual determinations are denied, implying thereby that what is called the Knowledge of Brahman is only Intuition and not any intellectual judgement of the empirical nature.]

6. "That is the Infinite (Brahman) in which one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, knows nothing else. And that in which one sees something else, hears something else, knows something else - that is the finite. That which is Infinite is verily immortal, and that which is finite, is mortal. 'On what does the Infinite rest, revered sir ? ' 'On its own glory, or rather, not even on its glory.'" Ch., 7-24-1.

[The very idea of a second is denied here, implying that the Infinite should not be likened to the mathematical infinity, one opposed to the finite. It is the Absolute, knowing no distinctions within It or allowing no second outside It. It is neither different from nor opposed to anything else, for there is nothing else beside It.]

7. "This is verily that *Akshara* (the imperishable Reality), O Gārgi, which the knowers of Brahman say is neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long, not red, not oily, not a shadow, not darkness, not the air, not the ether, not adhesive, without taste, without smell, without eyes, without ears, without the vocal organ, without mind, without light, without the vital power, without mouth, without

measure, without interior or exterior. It never consumes anything ; nor is It consumed by anyone.” Br., 3-8-8.

[Here the negation of opposites is for suggesting that whenever some attribute is denied, its opposite should not be taken to be implied. Further, negations are meant for warning against the assumption that It is a substance or quality, or It is something unsubstantial like a shadow or darkness; that It should never be taken to be akin to one of the five Bhūtās or elements that constitute the universe, or to have the nature of some internal organ. In fact, as Śaṅkara says, nothing is to be attributed to or predicated of It, since It is the One without a second.]

We need not multiply instances any more to convince the reader of the true import of negations in the Upanishads as applied to the Absolute. All that is intended is that no positive description of Reality is possible and no proof is needed to establish the existence of Ātman. No description of the Absolute is possible for the simple reason that It is beyond the range of both words and concepts which can only objectify empirical things. And there is no need whatever of any evidence to prove Its existence inasmuch as It is self-established as being the Self of everyone and everything. The negations are merely to annul the false ascriptions of Avidyā obscuring Its true nature. I shall close this section by citing a few instances from the Gītā and the Brahma-Sūtrās to show how both of them endorse this view.

BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

(1) “He is never born, nor does he ever die. This one is not going to cease to be, after having *been* once. Unborn, eternal, everlasting, primeval, He is not slain when the body is slain. ” G., 2-20

(2) “This One, weapons cannot cut ; this One, fire

cannot burn ; this One, water cannot moisten ; this One, the wind cannot dry. ” G., 2-23.

(3) “He is unperceivable, He is inconceivable, and He is unchangeable, they say. ” G., 2-25.

(4) “ Beginningless is that Supreme Brahman. It is said to be neither being nor non-being. ” G., 13-12.

(5) “ While appearing to discharge the functions of all the senses, It is devoid of all the senses ; having no contact, It supports all ; devoid of the Guṇās, It experiences the Guṇās.” G., 13-14.

(6) “It is both within and without all beings. It is both the moving and the unmoving. It is both far and near. ” G., 13-15.

(7) “It is undivided, yet appears as though It were divided in beings. Supporter of beings too is that knowable, both absorbing and generating.” G., 13-16.

[These negations and predications of the opposites are all to be explained in the light of our observations on the Śruti texts.]

BRAHMA-SŪTRA

(1) “Then, therefore, the enquiry into Brahman.”

VS., 1-1-1.

(2) “(Pradhāna cannot be supposed to be denoted by the word *Sat*) because of *Svāpyaya* or merging of (the individual self in its own Self).” VS., 1-1-9.

[Here enquiry of Brahman is recommended in 1-1-1 thereby implying that the enquirer is different from Brahman since the latter is to be enquired into. But in 1-1-9 the ‘Sat’ (Being) spoken of in Ch., 6-8-1 is concluded to be Brahman Itself since the individual soul is taught there as being merged in its own Self, thus cancelling the difference implied in 1-1-1.]

(3) “(Indra) advises (Pratardana to meditate on Him

alone) from the standpoint of Śāstra, like Vāmadeva.”

VS., 1-1-30.

[Here the perfect identity of the individual self and Brahman is declared to be the Vedic view, or the right view, thereby implying that the difference between the two is only from the empirical view, the outcome of Avidyā.]

(4) “Not even on account of states (Upādhis) can the Highest Brahman be regarded as possessing a two-fold character.”

VS., 3-2-11.

(5) “It is formless emphatically for (the texts teaching That) are of that direct import.”

VS., 3-2-14.

[While Brahman is admitted to be with form and specific properties in Sūtrās like 1-1-20 and 1-2-1, it is emphasized here that Brahman is devoid of all characteristic features and forms, for the texts teaching forms and features do not aver that Brahman is really invested with these properties, while texts that deny specific features have that denial as their main purport.¹]

1. This point will be discussed in greater detail in the next Section, under the title ‘The Two Aspects of Brahman’.

SECTION FOUR

THE TWO STANDPOINTS

1. THE USES OF THE EMPIRICAL VIEW

From the foregoing exposition of the method of Vedānta, it will be clear that the teaching of Śrutis presupposes two different points of view in its procedure. One of these is the natural view, the empirical view which persuades a man to look upon himself as an ego endowed with mind and senses, and stationed in a manifold universe along with other embodied beings like himself, knowing, acting, reaping and experiencing the fruits of his actions good or bad. This view the Śruti calls the view of *Avidyā* in contrast to the correct view, the view of *Vidyā*, from the standpoint¹ of Ātman as He is. The Upanishads, however, do make use of the empirical view to a very large extent in connection with their peculiar method, the *Adhyārōpāpavāda*, employed as a device to reveal the absolutely Real.

It must not be supposed that the Śrutis condemn the empirical view altogether as wholly illusory and useless. For, they utilise it to prescribe not only the modes of conduct and discipline necessary to qualify the seeker for acquiring the correct Knowledge of Brahman, but also certain meditations (*Upāsanās*) and adaptations of Vedic rituals which would indirectly help the aspirant to prepare himself to attain Self-Knowledge later on. There are minor Upāsanās too prescribed from this point of view, which would be instrumental in securing, for the qualified followers, fruits similar to those vouched for rituals in the Karmakāṇḍa portion.

1. For Śruti texts making this distinction the reader is referred to the previous section dealing with the Basic Super-imposition (p. 36).

2. THE TWO ASPECTS OF BRAHMAN

These two views account for the double character of Brahman as presented in the Upanishads. Certain passages present Brahman as totally devoid of all specific features, while others describe It as possessing a number of distinctive attributes. How is this apparent contradiction to be resolved? Bādarāyaṇa in his Vedānta Sūtras and Śankara in his commentary on the same have laid down a principle to be observed in interpreting such texts : 'It has been established in VS. 1-1-4 that passages like Br. 3-8-8, K. 1-3-15, Ch. 8-14-1, Mu. 2-1-2, Br. 2-5-19 etc., have for their purport the Reality which is differenceless Brahmātman and do not principally aim at teaching anything else. So in passages of this nature, Brahman should be definitely understood to be devoid of all forms. As for the other passages which treat of Brahman with form, they are not primarily meant to teach It, for their main purport is to lay down injunctions for meditation. As long as they are not opposed to the former texts, they have to be taken to mean what they say; where, however, there is contardiction, the texts whose purport is to teach the nature of Brahman would be of greater force than those whose ultimate purport is not the determination of the *nature* of Brahman. This is the reason why Brahman is to be regarded as altogether without form and not otherwise, even while texts of both the classes are to be found in the Upanishads.'

SB., 3-2-14.

Thus, from the highest standpoint, Brahman has no attributes whatever of Its own, has no second to It and is, in fact, the sole Reality. But yet, from the empirical standpoint, the same Brahman is also to be meditated upon as endowed

with attributes. As, for instance, in the passage : “All this is verily Brahman, since it originates from It, dissolves into It and moves in It. So let a man meditate upon It in peace. ‘Made up of mind, having *Prāṇa* for his body, of the nature of effulgence, having a will never thwarted, all-pervasive like ether, creator of all, possessing all pure desires, all sweet odours, all delicious tastes, all-pervading, without any sense-organs as that of speech and without flurry. This is my Self within the heart, This is Brahman, and This, I am going to attain after departing from here.’ Whoever has such firm conviction and entertains no doubt, attains this goal. So says Śāṇḍilya, yea, Śāṇḍilya.” Ch., 3-14-1, 2, 4.

Brahman may even possess a form, such as the one described in Ch., 1-6-6. ‘Now the golden person who is seen in the sun, the Purusha with a golden beard and golden hair, everything golden to the very tips of his nails.’

It is not to be supposed that such attributes and forms are illusory and no more, since they are to be regarded as unreal from the *Paramārtha* standpoint. For, being enjoined in the Śruti for meditation, they are as real as anything that we see and touch, as any real ideas that we entertain in the empirical world. Śāṅkara observes : “When one is told to bring the king’s man or the owner of the variegated cow, one makes no effort to bring the attribute—the king or the cow also. Lest it be thought that the same principle applies here, the attributes such as ‘creator of all’ are repeated here for meditation.” Similarly, with regard to the form of Brahman, that commentator remarks, ‘Even the Supreme Lord may, at his pleasure, assume a bodily shape formed of *Māyā* in order to favour his devotees. Accordingly, the *Smṛti* says ‘O Nārada, that thou seest me in this form is the *Māyā* projected

by me; you should not think that I am really endowed with the properties of the five elements.' Moreover, where the *essential nature* of the Supreme Lord devoid of all specific features is taught, only then would apply the Śāstra such as 'without sound, without touch, without form, undecaying.' As the cause of all, however, the Highest Lord is described as possessing some of the properties of the effects also for purposes of meditation by texts like the following one : 'The creator of all, possessing all desires, all odours, all tastes.' The text representing Him as having a golden beard etc. may be treated likewise. As to the objection that He cannot be the Highest Lord since the Śruti speaks of an abode, we reply, even the Lord who rests in His own glory, may be taught as having an abode just for meditation, since being all-pervasive, Brahman may be taken to be within everything like ether. And the Śruti teaching a limitation to his authority is also for the sake of meditation, the limitations taught being relative to the Adhyātma (the sphere of the human body) and the Adhidaiva (the sphere of the gods, respectively.)"

SB., 1-1-20.

This long extract is very instructive with reference to some important points in Śaṅkara Vedānta. (1) Brahman as It is in Itself as well as Its special aspect taught for meditation has been designated by the same word '*Īśvara*'. (2) The attributes or forms of Brahman recommended for meditation are, notwithstanding that they are the products of Māyā, no more illusory than any concrete things that one deals with in the empirical world, inasmuch as they are assumed by the Lord for favouring the devotees. (3) The meditation of Brahman as qualified by these limiting conditions, does lead ultimately to the highest result or *Mōksha* where the devotee

attains the same Brahman which is his very Self. 'Esha Ma Ātmā Etad Brahma Etam Itaha Pretya Abhisambhavitāsmi, एष म आत्मा एतद् ब्रह्म एतम् इतः प्रेत्याभिसंभवितास्मि', (4) There is a relatively higher value attached to the qualities, forms, abodes etc., ascribed to Brahman than to those of embodied beings, including the gods, since the Lord is taught to be emphatically distinct and different from these Jīvās 'Bhedavyapadeśācchanyaha' (भेदव्यपदेशाच्चान्यः VS., 1-1-21).

Two different epithets 'Para' Brahman and 'Apara' Brahman have been used in the Śrūtis to enable the student to distinguish these two aspects of Brahman :

(१) एतद्वै सत्यकाम परं चापरं च ब्रह्म यदोङ्कारः । प्र. ५-१

(२) एतद्व्येवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्व्येवाक्षरं परम् । का. १-२-१६.

This distinction of the aspects is also recognised in the Vedānta Sūtrās :

“कार्यं बादरिरस्य गत्युपपत्तेः ” (वे. सू. ४-३-७)

The 'Apara' or Lower Brahman is also called the Kārya Brahman. The variants for 'Apara' and 'Para' (Brahman) are to be found in the following Bhāṣhya : “With regard to the passage 'He leads them to Brahma' the doubt arises whether he leads them to the Kārya (effect), Apara (lower) Brahman or to the Para (higher), Avikṛta (not effected), Mukhya (principal) Brahman. Whence this doubt ? Because the common name Brahman is used without any qualifying epithet, and because this particular Śruti speaks of 'going'. Here the teacher Bādari is of opinion that the person who is not a man, leads them only to the Kārya (effect), *Saguṇa* (qualified), *Apara* (lower) Brahman.” SB., 4-4-7, p.495. Hence it is evident that Śaṅkara uses the words *Para* (higher), *Mukhya* (principal), *Nirguṇa* (having no qualities), and

Kāraṇa (cause) for Brahman as It is, while *Apara* (lower) *Gauṇa* (secondary), *Saguṇa* (having qualities), and *Kārya* (effected) for Brahman recommended for meditation. This is clarified further on where Śaṅkara observes : “Owing to its proximity to the Higher Brahman, it is not inconsistent to use the word Brahman, with reference to the lower Brahman also. For it is the same Higher Brahman which is designated as the Lower (Brahman) when it is sometimes recommended to be meditated upon as endowed with certain qualities, such as being ‘made up of the mind’ (Ch., 3-4-12)”.

SB., 4-3-9, p. 495.

Or again :-

“But would not such (distinction of a higher and a lower Brahman) militate against the Śruti text teaching non-duality? No. For, we have removed this objection by the remark that (the distinction) is only due to the limiting conditions of name and form created by Avidyā. ” SB., 4-3-14, p. 502.

Readers will have been convinced by now that the epithets *Para*, *Mukhya*, *Nirguṇa* etc. (in contrast to *Apara*, *Gauṇa*, *Saguṇa* etc.) are merely convenient terms used to point to Brahman as It is, and are meant neither for sharply distinguishing It from the lower Brahman, nor for disparaging the rank of the latter. These contrasting epithets should never be supposed to interfere with the identical nature of Brahman in whichever context the Śruti may present It. This explains why Śaṅkara uses the appellations *Parameśwara* and *Paramātmān* indifferently for both the aspects of Brahman. This is why, too, that Śaṅkara does not hesitate to make use of the term *Para Brahman* even while he is discussing Brahman as the object of meditation,¹ for there he has only

1. As for instance in VS., 1-2-1, 1-2-2, 1-3-15 etc.

to contrast Brahman with Jīva or some other entity, and not with Brahman to be known as such. Failure to notice this subtle distinction has been responsible for many uncalled-for criticisms of Śaṅkara by G. Thibaut and Col. Jacob² consideration of which has to be postponed as not germane to the present discussion. Students who wish to steer clear of similar pitfalls will do well to rivet their attention upon the following important passage in Śaṅkara's Sūtra Bhāṣya :

एकमपि ब्रह्म अपेक्षितोपाधिसंबन्धं निरस्तोपाधिसंबन्धं च उपास्यत्वेन ज्ञेयत्वेन च वेदान्तेषूपदिश्यत इति प्रदर्शयितुं परो ग्रन्थ आरभ्यते ॥

“ One and the same Brahman is taught in the Vedānta as an object of meditation, when It desiderates certain limiting conditions or as an object of knowledge when It is regarded to be free from all limiting conditions. The sequel is begun to show how this is.”³

SB., 1-1-12.

2. VIDYĀ AND AVIDYĀ

The apparently indiscriminate use in the Upanishads of the terms *Vidyā* and *Avidyā* in various senses, has to be

2. Thibaut (VS., xcii, xxxviii, xci, xciv) ; Jacob (VSa., viii, ix).

These and other criticisms will have to be duly considered in the second volume of the present work in connection with Rāmānuja's system.

3. Śaṅkara does not mean to say, as alleged by Thibaut (VS., xxxii, xxxiii) that all the passages discussed hereafter will be devoted to settle the question whether the Saguṇa Brahman or the Nirguṇa Brahman is meant in each case, but only whether certain passages refer to Brahman or something else. Whether in any individual text Brahman is to be taken as an object of meditation or not, depends entirely on an express injunction or its absence, and not upon what appellation the Śruti or Śaṅkara uses to designate Brahman.

justified by the context in which they occur.

A few passages may be cited to illustrate this :-

1. 'These two, what is known as *Avidyā* and what as *Vidyā*, are wide apart proceeding in different directions.'

Ka., 1-2-4.

[We are here dealing with the 'Knowledge of Brahman' in contrast to works and meditation leading to prosperity in this or the other world.]

2. '*Vidyā* and *Avidyā* are different. That which one performs with *Vidyā*, faith and concentration, that alone would be more effective.'

Ch., 1-1-10.

[Here we have to do with the 'meditation' on the Udgeetha.]

3. 'He attains immortality through *Vidyā*, after crossing death through *Avidyā*.'

Īśā., 11.

[This is in the context of ends and means. Hence *Avidyā* here refers to Vedic ritual and *Vidyā* to meditation.]

4. 'In the same way, this Ātman having cast down the body and sent it into *Avidyā*, takes hold of another support and withdraws himself.'

Br., 4-4-3.

[This is in the context of Jīva's transmigration. Hence *Avidyā* here means unconsciousness.]

Now Śaṅkara has reserved the term *Parā Vidyā* for the Higher Knowledge, which results in immediate release as contrasted with *Aparā Vidyā* (lower knowledge) which leads to gradual liberation after death. The terms being only relative, no stigma need be supposed to be attached to the *Aparā Vidyā* just on the score that it has been called 'lower'. The remarks that have been made with reference to the terms *Para-Brahman* and *Apara-Brahman* apply here *pari passu*.

Whenever Brahman is presented as something to be known, it is to be considered to be absolutely free from the taint of the *Upādhis* or limiting conditions through which It

is taught. These conditions are, of course, empirically real as is the distinction of the known, knowledge, and the knowable. All this is, however, nullified by true Knowledge, or spiritual Intuition, of Brahman which knows no second. This is therefore *Parā Vidyā*, the highest Knowledge vouchsafed to the soul in the Upanishads. The *Aparā Vidyā* is not Knowledge in this sense, for it is only *Upāsana* or *Dhyāna* (meditation). Lest the two be confounded, Śaṅkara has defined them as follows :

“Dhyāna or meditation, though mental, can yet be done, or not done, or even done in a different way altogether by a person, for it is dependent on the (will of the) person (performing it). Knowledge, on the other hand, has to be produced by a *Pramāṇa* or means of right knowledge. A means of knowledge, again, relates to something really existing and as such cannot be done, not done, or done in a different way ; for it depends solely upon the objective thing which really exists but not upon a Vedic injunction or on the will of a person. Hence, though mental, Knowledge is widely different from meditation.”

SB., 1-1-4, p. 18.

Bearing this distinction in mind, the critical reader can now decide, whether or not there are two *Vidyās* - the *Aparā Vidyā* or meditation enjoined and the *Parā Vidyā* or knowledge properly so-called - pertaining to Brahman formally recognized by the Upanishads. This is what Thibaut remarks in this connection : “ ‘Brahman’ is indeed sometimes described as *Saguṇa* and sometimes as *Nirguṇa* (to use later terms), but it is nowhere said that thereon rests a distinction of two different kinds of knowledge leading to altogether different results.”

(VS., p. cxvi).

I fear, he misses the point altogether. The name *Parā* or

Aparā may or may not be there expressly inserted in each passage. But do we find or do we not find, two distinct sets of texts - one set enjoining meditation, and the other simply revealing the nature of Brahman ? And is there or is there not, a difference of fruits taught in respect of the two Vidyās, the result of *Parā Vidyā* or Knowledge of Brahman without any attributes being - not 'immediate absorption in Brahman on death' as Thibaut (VS., p. lxxxviii) believes, but - what Śāṅkara calls *Sadyōmukti*, immediate release through Knowledge 'Atra Brahma Samaśnute - अत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते', 'Taddhāsya Vijajñou तद्भास्य विजज्ञौ' (vide K. 2-3-14, Ch., 6-11-3), while the result of the *Aparā Vidyā* is *Krama-Mukti* (gradual release), that is to say, reaching Brahman through the way of the gods, thence no more to return ? 'Esha Deva Pathō Brahma Patha Etena Pratipadyamānā Imam Mānavam Āvartham Nāvartānte एष देवपथो ब्रह्म पथ एतेन प्रतिपद्यमाना इमं मानवमावर्त नावर्तन्ते' (Ch., 4-15-5)? If there is such a distinction, then even granting for the nonce that the words 'Parā Vidyā' and 'Aparā Vidyā' do not occur in the Upanishads, Śāṅkara's system enunciating the doctrine of two truths will have to be admitted to be the only system recognized in those scriptures.

As a matter of fact, however, one Upanishad at least, does expressly refer to the two Vidyās, as Thibaut himself admits. Thibaut thinks that "in several places we find the knowledge of the sacrificial part of the Veda with its supplementary disciplines contrasted as inferior with the Knowledge of the Self, to which latter distinction the Muṇḍaka Upanishad (1-4), applies the terms *Aparā* and *Parā Vidyā*" (VS., p. cxvi). Now, is this interpretation true to fact? I think not. For in the first place, there is no mention of 'the sacrificial part of the Veda' in the Mantras 4 and 5

The Upanishad simply states that the *Aparā Vidyā* consists of the Ṛgveda, the Yajurveda, the Sāmaveda, the Atharvaveda, Śikshā, Kalpa, Vyākaraṇa, Nirukta, Chandus, and Jyotisha (Mu.5). No school of Vedānta in India excludes the Upanishads from the Vedic literature, and hence it could never be exact to say that only the sacrificial portion of the Veda comes under the *Aparā Vidyā* referred to here. Śaṅkara, has the support of the Upanishad itself when he insists that the *Aparā Vidyā*, the knowledge of the Vedic injunctions (*Vidhi Vishaya*), on the one hand, is contrasted here with the *Parā Vidyā* or the Knowledge of the *Akshara* or the eternal Para-Brahman, on the other. For, this Upanishad classes the meditation of the Lower Brahman also along with the knowledge of the sacrificial rites (Mu., 1-2-11) before undertaking a detailed consideration of the *Parā Vidyā* (from Mu., 1-2-12 onwards). That this verse really contains a reference to the *Aparā Vidyā* is borne out by the indication of the fruit of meditation. "They go through the sun, freed from all defilement, where that immortal and undecaying Purusha resides." (Mu. 1-2-11) And in this very same Upanishad we are definitely told the fruit of *Parā Vidyā* thus: "He who knows the Highest Brahman becomes that very Brahman." (Mu., 3-2-9).

4. THE TRANSCENDENTAL NATURE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF BRAHMAN

That the Upanishads do not undertake to prove the existence of Brahman by an appeal to Pramāṇās such as sensuous perception, is evident from passages like the following : "All this is Brahman alone" (Mu., 2-2-1), "All this is Ātman alone" (Ch., 7-25-2), "Where there is duality, as it were, there one sees another, one smells another ; but

where, to this knowing one, all has become Ātman, then how can one see anything else, and with what organ ? ” (Br., 4-5-15). This is what prompts Śaṅkara to make this apparently sweeping statement :

तमेतम् अविद्याख्यम् आत्मानात्मनोरितरेतराध्यासं पुरस्कृत्य सर्वे प्रमाणप्रमेयव्यवहारा
लौकिका वैदिकाश्च प्रवृत्ताः, सर्वाणि च शास्त्राणि विधिप्रतिषेधमोक्षपराणि ॥

“All the talk of Pramāṇās and their objects whether relating to the ordinary life or to Vedic action and all scriptures relating to injunctions and prohibitions of actions, or to Mōksha, pre-suppose this mutual Adhyāsā or Superimposition of the Self and the non-Self, called *Avidyā*, before they function.” (SB., p. 21). And he makes this good by drawing our attention to the fact that no one could consider himself competent to perceive or think before presuming that he is identical with the body in which the senses and the mind function (Dehendriyādishu Aham-mamābhimānarahitasya Pramatr̥tvānupapattau Pramāṇapravṛtṭyanupapatteḥ देहेन्द्रियादिष्वहंममाभिमानरहितस्य प्रमातृत्वानुपपत्तौ प्रमाणप्रवृत्त्यनुपपत्तेः ॥ SB., p. 2.)¹

That Vedānta is not a speculative system is borne out by the Upanishad texts which warn us that “This Knowledge of Brahman is un-attainable by ratiocination” (Naishā Tarkēṇa Matirāpaneyā नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया K., 1-2-9). Śaṅkara gives an alternative interpretation of this text, which assures us that the Intuition of Brahman transcends the entire sphere of logic. “Or this text may also mean that this Intuition cannot be dispelled by logical reasoning.” Reasoning based upon

1. A student of the Upanishads is struck by the conspicuous absence of the word ‘Pramāṇa’ in all the Upanishads. This circumstance alone should be sufficient for a discerning scholar to arrive at the conclusion that Vedānta as taught by the Upanishads is not based on the ordinary canons of knowledge.

Intuition, however, is by no means precluded in arriving at the ultimate Knowledge ; for “The Knowledge of Brahman is taken to culminate in a result to be experienced in this very life, for only as culminating in an Intuition dispersing all Avidyā It serves as a means to final release.” (SB., 2-2-4, p. 84). And Śruti itself lays down that Ātman is to be thought over (Mantavyaha) besides being heard (studied through the Śāstras). Only, dry speculation not based upon experience has no place here (Nānena Mīṣeṇa Śuṣkatarkasya Atrā Ātmalābhaha Sambhavati नानेन मिषेण शुष्कतर्कस्य अत्र आत्मलाभः संभवति SB., 2-1-6, p. 180).

That Vedāntic Knowledge of Reality transcends all the concepts and limitations implied in the empirical view--efforts, means and fruits of actions ; cause and effect, and time itself--is rendered clear from the following Upanishadic text in the form of a question posed by Naciketas :

“That which thou seest as being beyond good and bad deeds, beyond that which is effected and which is not the effect, beyond past and future, please tell me that.” K., 1-2-14.

And lastly, that the Highest Reality and goal taught by the Upanishads transcends all concepts and verbal symbols, is revealed by the following text :

यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते । अप्राप्य मनसा सह । आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् । ना बिभेति कुतश्चेति ॥

“That from which all words fall back along with the mind unable to reach It, one knowing that bliss of Brahman, is not afraid of anything whatever.” Tai., 2-9.

How then are we to know this Brahman ? The senses are the only doors open to mankind for perceiving phenomena, concepts are the means to grasp things as they are and there

is no means other than language to communicate our ideas to others. If the only means available are pronounced incompetent to know or to teach Brahman, will that not be tantamount to confessing that Vedānta has no Truth to propound to its votaries ? This objection betrays ignorance of the fundamental doctrine as well as the unique method of Vedānta.

The Upanishadic teaching is

तदेतद्ब्रह्मापूर्वमनपरमन्तरमबाह्यमयमात्मा ब्रह्म सर्वानुभूः ।

“Now this Brahman has neither a before nor an after, neither a within nor a without ; this Self, the Knower of everything is Brahman. This is the teaching.”

Br., 2-5-19, p. 780.

The senses and concepts are no doubt the means of knowing the objective phenomena of this world, but the knower in general being the pre-supposition of all the processes of knowing, must be granted to be self-evident and can never be thought of in any way as desiderating some ‘means’ of knowing Him. Now the fundamental doctrine of Vedānta is that this Self as the universal Knower who Intuits everything Sarvānubhūhu सर्वानुभूः is essentially Brahman, and, as such, altogether transcends the sphere of empirical knowledge, the sphere which comprehends the distinctions of the knower, means of knowledge and the object of knowledge. It is a radical error therefore which assails each one of us when we assume that we are individual knowers endowed with intellect and other means of knowledge which enable us to know objects. It is to dispel this inherent error, that the Upanishads employ the unique method known as the *Adhyāropa-Apavāda*, where word-symbols used need not

directly denote the Self or Brahman but only serve to suggest what is not really characteristic of It, while the human mind naturally takes it to be such. Brahman as the Witnessing Principle in us all, being of the very nature of Consciousness, needs no extraneous means to *know* It. It has to be Intuited by the Self in Itself as something devoid of all determining features, as the all in reality. (Ātmanyevātmānam Paśyati Sarvamātmānam Paśyati आत्मन्येवात्मानं पश्यति सर्वमात्मानं पश्यति)

Br., 4-4-23.

5. THE HIGHEST GOAL OF LIFE

Even the statement that one has got to dispel a beginningless error which obstructs one's Intuiting oneself as Brahman, is of course only a truth from the lower standpoint. The only way, therefore, to gain our freedom which is already attained is to raise ourselves to a position from where we see that we have been ever-free. There are texts in plenty interspersed among the Upanishads which make this abundantly clear. One such from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka will quite suffice here. In summing up the entire teaching of the Upanishad, this text most un-equivocally declares :

स वा एष महानज आत्माऽजरोऽमरोऽमृतोऽभयो ब्रह्म । अभयं वै ब्रह्मभयं हि वै ब्रह्म भवति य एवं वेद ।

“Now this (soul) indeed is the all-pervading birthless Self, ageless, undying, immortal, fearless Brahman. Brahman of course is fearless, and he becomes indeed the fearless Brahman, whoever knows this” (Br., 4-4-24). To this end, we have only to abandon the self-imposed obstacle of habitual wrong thinking which makes us extrovert. The part to be played by the Śrutis or a teacher in this process has been thus stated by Śaṅkara :

“Whoever is extrovertly inclined and seeks to attain what he would welcome, and to avoid what he would dislike, but cannot reach the absolute fulfilment of his desires, such a person longing for the attainment of the highest goal, Śrutis like ‘Ātman alone is to be seen’ divert from the object of the natural activity of the aggregate of the body and the senses, and turn the stream of his thoughts towards the inmost Self. Then for him who has set about in search of this Self, the real nature of the Ātman as neither to be courted nor to be shunned is taught by Śrutis such as ‘All this is the Ātman’ (Br., 2-4-6), ‘Where to this knowing one, everything has become Ātman alone, then how can one see another and with what (means) ? How can one know another and with what ? With what can one possibly know the knower (himself) ?’ (Br., 4-5-15). ‘This Ātman is Brahman’ (Br., 2-5-19).

SB., 1-1-4, p. 19.

Now the path thus recommended by the Śrutis is known as the Nivṛtti-Mārga, the way of beating back and coming to our own real Self. The steps in the process of this return are thus pointed out :

1. “Therefore, one who knows it thus, and has a calm mind, control of the senses, and forbearance and has secured an unruffled state of mind, can see the Self in his own self, and everything as Ātman.”

Br., 4-4-23.

2. The discerning seeker should merge speech (and other senses) in the mind, sink that mind in the knowing self (or intellect), and this intellect he should merge in the great Ātman (the knower), and the (knower) in the Ātman free from all mundane disturbances.” K., 1-3-1.

And the fruit of this practice is this : “Contemplating

on that Self, one no longer bewails ; having been already free,
he becomes free.”

K., 2-2-1.

SECTION FIVE

THE TRADITION BEFORE ŚAṆKARA

1. GAUḌAPĀDA

Śaṅkara is the earliest teacher whose extant Bhāṣhyās give us a picture of the unique method of Vedānta in all its working details. But he is by no means the first discoverer of the method. In fact, he remembers with great reverence the ancient teachers¹ who wrote commentaries on all the Upanishads even before him. Of such teachers, it is some satisfaction to know that there is at least one whose work is extant till today ; and that is Gauḍapāda who has summarized the teachings of the Upanishads in his Kārikās or expository verses on the Māṇḍūkya. For a fuller information regarding this work, the reader is referred to my Sanskrit commentary, the Māṇḍūkya Rahasya-Vivṛti. Here I shall merely indicate in outlines how Gauḍapāda was perfectly aware of this traditional method.

In the Āgama Prakaraṇa, or the first chapter of his work, so named because it expounds the traditional method adopted in the Śruti, he shows how the three different aspects of Ātman - outwardly conscious, inwardly conscious or Pure Consciousness - are merely super-impositions on the *Turiya* or the Real Self, which is forever untainted with *Svapna-Nidrā* (dream sleep or wrong knowledge) or *Asvapna-Nidrā* (dreamless sleep or absence of knowledge 1-11 to 15) and closes his teaching with the observation : “That when the soul wakes up from its beginningless illusory slumber, then it becomes aware of the truth that it is really the Secondless One unborn, forever unsullied by the sleep of ignorance or

1. The second opening verse, Tai. Bh.

by the dream of wrong knowledge'' (1-16). Incidentally, in the examination of the Self conditioned by sleep, he discusses the question of creation and declares himself in favour of the theory that all creation is like unto dreams or magic (1-7).

In the second chapter, entitled the *Vaitathya Prakaraṇa*, Gauḍapāda exhibits the first step of Rescission of the *Avasthās*. Availing himself of the identical epithets *Saptāṅga* (seven-limbed) *Ekonavimsāti Mukhaha* (having nineteen doors of knowledge) applied by the Śruti to the Self conditioned by waking or dream, he adduces *Śrutyānukūla-Tarka* (reasoning in consonance with the spirit of the Śruti) to establish the identical nature of waking and dream in all respects (2-5 to 10), thus deducing the corollary that the Self is bound by neither of the two illusory states (2-12). He then proceeds to show how this line of reasoning compels us to conclude that the Self is really non-dual and on It are Super-imposed both the subjective and the objective phenomena encountered in either state. They are, in fact, the Ātman Himself mis-conceived, very much like an imaginary serpent or a line of water super-imposed on a rope seen in the dark (2-17, 18). This leads him to the further conclusion that all distinctions - like those of creation and dissolution of the world, or of a soul bound by Saṃsāra, means employed for Liberation, or even the distinction of one seeking Liberation and another Liberated - are quite unreal from the *Paramārtha* or the highest stand-point (2-32). In fact, says Gauḍapāda, all that is, whether within or without, is the *Tattva* or Reality alone. One who realizes this is himself the Reality and for ever revels in It. He can never slip down from Reality (2-38).

The *Advaita Prakaraṇa* or the third chapter deals with the concept of the creation of individual souls and their

limiting conditions. Evidently, Gauḍapāda here intends to teach that the epithet '*Prabhavāpyayau Hi Bhūtānām* प्रभवाप्ययौ हि भूतानाम्' (the origin and dissolution of beings), as applied to Prājña in the Śruti, should not be literally construed as implying an actual creation of souls who are actually to attain Brahman after practising meditation. While he does not deny the efficacy of Upāsana from the empirical standpoint for mediocre aspirants (3-16), he is anxious to hold up the ideal of the unborn Brahman, and therefore frankly dubs the Upāsaka as narrow-minded (Kṛpaṇa) since one who practises Upāsana stays in the region of the 'born-Brahman (Jāte Brahmani Vartate जते ब्रह्मणि वर्तते 3-1). The one important topic for discussion here, therefore, is creation. Some of his contemporaries evidently supposed that Brahman has really transformed Itself into the world of Jīvās and other things and that there will be a real re-transformation of the world into Brahman again. This cannot be, since that would mean that the immortal Brahman becomes the mortal Jīva and that the mortal Jīva again becomes the immortal Brahman, an impossible tenet, since nothing can really change its nature on any account (3-21). The only conclusion, therefore, to be drawn from the accounts of creation taught in the Śrutis, is that all origination is illusory from the highest point of view (3-24) and that the Śrutis, which teach by illustration of 'clay', 'iron', 'sparks' and the like, are only using a device to introduce the inquirer to the Intuition of the one Ātman (3-15). The Upanishad, moreover, which again and again (Br., 3-9-26, 4-2-4, 4-4-22 and 4-5-15) repeats '*Sa Esha Neti Netyātmā* स एष नेति नेत्यात्मा' (This is the Ātman who has been described as Not this, Not that'), thereby rescinding whatever explanation it has offered, evidently aims at revealing

the *transcendent unborn* Brahman (3-26).

It will thus be seen that Gauḍapāda explains all negations in the Śruti as an *Apahṇava* or Rescission of *Vikalpās* (ascriptions) from the *transcendental* point of view. He also refers incidentally to the Panchakōśa Prakriyā (3-11) and the Madhu-Brahmaṇa (3-12) to illustrate this traditional method.

Gauḍapāda teaches that the direct Intuition of the Highest Reality (*Atmasatyānubōdha* आत्मसत्यानुबोध 3-32) or the Yōga of non-contact (*Asparśayōga* अस्पर्शयोग 3-39) is meant only for the highest class of aspirants, while he recommends (3-40) what he calls *Manō-Nigraha* (the same as *Nididhyāsana*, and the *Dhyānayōga* of the Bhagavadgītā) to less-developed souls.

Gauḍapāda concludes that the highest Reality is that which changes never a bit. This is the gist of the chapter. The other details, given here being merely means to realize this, are only empirically real (3-48).

The fourth chapter, called the *Alāta Śānti* begins with pointing out how the conflict of views held by the Vaiśeṣikās and the Sāṅkhyās (4-3, 4) as also by the Sarvāstitva-Vādin among the Buddhists, on the one hand, and the Vijñānavādin, on the other, (4-24 to 27) indirectly points to this same Unborn Reality (4-28 to 71).

It will be noted that the author lays special emphasis throughout on the fact that Reality is 'Ajamanidram Asvapnam अजमनिद्रं अस्वप्नम्' (1-16, 3-36, 4-81), unborn, sleep-free and dream-free ; that is to say, free from all changes, ignorance and mis-conception. This uniform formula sums up all Upanishadic teaching concerning the Absolute, according to Gauḍapāda, which he invariably brings home to the minds of his hearers by the one method of Adhyārōpa-Apavāda.

2. OTHER ANCIENT VEDĀNTINS OF THE TRADITION

It is sometimes urged that Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara are the two first Āchāryās by whom a revolution in the *Aupanishada* thought was ushered in. Prof. T. R. V. Murthy, for instance, explains the nature of this *revolution* thus : “Advaitism is the conscious rejection of duality and difference as illusory. Brahman is established, not positively, but by the denial of duality.” (CPB., p. 111). It would be perhaps more accurate to say that Brahman, being the Self of everyone, need not be established at all ; only the Superimpositions on It have to be discarded by the negation of all duality by the method of Adhyārōpa-Apavāda. Looked at from this viewpoint, it is obvious that this method is the very pith and marrow of the procedure in the Upanishads as we have already seen. The *revolution* in thought, if any, has to be ascribed to the Upanishad-Ṛshis themselves rather than to Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara.

Col. Jacob, again, writes : “To me, therefore, it seems impossible to come to any other conclusion that the Viśishtādvaita-Vāda or some similar school were in possession of the field in Śaṅkara’s time, and that his own mind was so saturated with their doctrines as to be unable to shake them off even when propounding an antagonistic system (VSa., p. xx). This conjecture of Jacob’s that Śaṅkara was propounding a new system of his own as against the prevailing one is based on the supposed inconsistency in Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣhya of mixing up the terms *Param Brahma*, *Apāram Brahma* and *Īśvara* in disregard of the distinction propounded by himself. I have already shown how this *alleged inconsistency* is purely *fanciful*. Apart from this fact, however, it could have been easily seen that Śaṅkara was no inventor of a system

of his own, since he had at least one predecessor in Gauḍapāda whose work had fore-shadowed almost all the essentials of the system. A glance, moreover, at the Sūtra-Bhāṣhya, wherein Śaṅkara refers to Vṛttikāras¹ of his tradition, either approving or suggesting improvements on their exegesis, would have been sufficient to convince the critic that Śaṅkara was only rehearsing the principles of a tradition already well-established. As I have already explained (pp. 38, 48), references to the tradition, Sampradāya, are seen interspersed in the Bhāṣhya on the Gītā as well as on the Upanishads, no less than in the Sūtra-Bhāṣhya. Special mention may be made here of a reference to the so-called 'Negative Method' in the Aitareya Bhāṣhya (Introduction to the second chapter, p. 342), where the traditional story is recounted of a stupid man who could not understand the drift of the teaching that he was not a 'not-man' (Nāsi Twam Amanushyaha). In any case, the three Ślōkās quoted by Śaṅkara in his Bhāṣhya at the end of the fourth Sūtra provide us with a clincher on this point :

गौणमिथ्यात्मनोऽसत्त्वे पुत्रदेहादिबाधनात् ।

सद्ब्रह्मात्माहमित्येवं बोधे कार्यं कथं भवेत् ॥१॥

अन्वेष्टव्यात्मविज्ञानात् प्राक्प्रमातृत्वमात्मनः ।

अन्विष्टः स्यात् प्रमातैव पाप्मदोषादिवर्जितः ॥२॥

देहात्मप्रत्ययो यद्वत् प्रमाणत्वेन कल्पितः ।

लौकिकं तद्वदेवेदं प्रमाणं तु आ आत्मनिश्चयात् ॥३॥

1. Thus the Vṛttikāra referred to in the Ānandamayādhikaraṇa is admittedly of this tradition. (Vide SB., 1-1-11 p. 39) ; so is the one referred to in SB., 3-2-21 who posits Brahman to be devoid of all differentiating features (Pratyastamitāsheshaprapancham प्रत्यस्तमिताशेषप्रपञ्चम् SB., 3-2-21 p. 360).

The *first of these Ślōkās* refers to the so-called degrees of reality since it states that when the figurative self such as one's own son, and the unreal self such as one's body are sublated, the Intuition of Brahman accrues. It says, moreover, that after Knowledge has dawned, there cannot linger any more a sense of some duty to be discharged. The *second verse* states that the distinctions of knower and known prevails only so long as the Intuition of the Ātman, sought after, has not arisen. But as soon as It is sought out, the knower himself becomes the Brahman 'free from the blemish of evil (i. e., good and bad actions) and the like'. This is as much as to say that the basic Super-imposition of regarding oneself as the knower is annulled by the Intuition of Brahman. The *third and the last verse* avers that the idea of Pramāṇās (means of proof) continues to be true so long as the real Self is not realized. In other words, Knowledge arising from understanding the meaning of the teaching of the Śruti is the final Pramāṇa that abolishes the reality of the distinctions of Pramāṇa and Prameya (means and object of knowledge). Now, this is almost all that Śaṅkara's system propounds, and in the light of these verses, it can never be regarded as an innovation from the traditional Vedānta.

SECTION SIX

ANCIENT SYSTEMS DIVERGING FROM THE TRADITION OF ŚAṆKARA

1. SYSTEMS ABOUT WHICH ONLY MEAGRE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE

Side by side with the system recognizing the Vedāntic method of Adhyārōpa-Apavāda, there were other systems interpreting the Upanishads in their own way. I have exhibited the most important of these in the fourth chapter of the present work so far as can be gathered from casual references in Śaṅkara's Bhāṣhyās and Sureśwara's Vārtikās.

These systems can be classified into two main groups. The *first group* comprises systems that dismiss all hopes of building any theory of Bondage and Freedom on the independent basis of the Upanishads. They firmly believe that the Karma-Kāṇḍa can show the way to the highest goal of human life, the Upanishads being subservient to the ritualistic portion in some way or other. There were two sub-schools among these devotees of the Karma-Kāṇḍa. The first school believed that the 'Svarga' offered as the fruit of Vedic rites performed is the only *summum bonum*, while the other maintained that even the Mōksha or Ātmanyeva Avasthānam आत्मन्येवावस्थानम् (resting in one's own true Self), as taught by the Vedāntins, can be secured through proper performance of the obligatory Karmās enjoined in the Vedās. (pp. 118-122)¹

The *second group* recognizes the usefulness of the Upanishads also, but is aligned to the Karma-Kāṇḍa insofar as it demands some form of Vedic injunction necessary to

1. The pages referred to throughout this and the next section are of the Sanskrit work (Vedānta Prakriyā Pratyabhijñā).

make any spiritual discipline efficient to bring about the desired end. The school demanding the conjunction of rituals and Upāsana (123-126) and the one insisting on the injunction of Upāsana as the main purport of the Śruti while admitting that Brahman is also indirectly revealed as an accessory to meditation (126-128), had a decided leaning towards Mīmāṃsa and they had therefore to be contented with an eschatological Mukti. The school, which declared that the exhaustion of all desires in the Prajāpati-Lōka, was the only way open to oneself for Mukti (138), evidently placed Vedāntic Knowledge beyond human reach. The Bhāgavata school teaches that the aspirant is absorbed in Brahman after death and becomes one with It as a result of continued devotion throughout life (144-147). Of the schools which acceded to the admission of Freedom in the present life, we meet with several varieties : one that maintained that Knowledge of Brahman is enjoined in the Śruti (129), another which asserted that the seeker is commanded by the Śruti to dissolve by meditation all the distinctions and differences in empirical life to enable him to reach non-duality (133-137) ; a third which contended that the seeker is bidden to suppress the inherent impression of the three Avasthās (waking, dream and deep-sleep), and a fourth which supposed that the suppression of mental modifications is enjoined in the Śrutis (143-144). There were two schools which thought that mere knowledge accruing from a study of the Śrutis is not competent to bring an immediate Release. One of them said that the continued remembrance of the knowledge was enjoined as the real means to Mukti (142-143). While the other, known as the Prasaṅkhyāna school, supposed that the knowledge arising from the study of the

scripture should be repeatedly practised, with the aid of reasoning, for getting at the actual Intuition (130-133). This last school had a strange apprehension that ignorance of Ātman even after once dispersed by Knowledge could revive and overpower even true Knowledge !

It will be noticed that all these systems are Advaitic in the sense that they hold the goal of life to be *union* with Brahman.

2. BHARṬṚ-PRAPAÑCHA

The last ancient school to be mentioned in this connection is that of Bharṭṛ-Prapañcha. It is a pity that a closer study of his system has not been made either by orthodox puṇḍits or modern scholars, for he is the earliest representative of the Dvaita-Advaita school that we are so far acquainted with. I have therefore devoted a separate chapter for the discussion of his teachings. He appears to be a contemporary of Śaṅkara, or at any rate, his system seems to have held the field in Vedānta at the time that Śaṅkara began to write his Bhāṣhya on the Bṛhadāraṇyaka, for it is his views, more than those of any other, that are criticized almost at every step both by Śaṅkara and Sureśwara. A more detailed study, perhaps, would be helpful to scholars in tracing the vicissitudes of that school down to our own times. The teaching of this Bhāṣhyakāra comes very near to that of Śaṅkara in so much that he considers the relation of the individual soul and Brahman to be closer than what any other similar school has allowed. I have set forth in some detail the most important of Bharṭṛ-Prapañcha's doctrines in order to assist the critical reader who would take up a comparative study. Brahman as the cause and the effect (149-152), the eight evolutionary stages of Brahman (152-153), the indi-

vidual soul as a modification of Brahman (154-156), the Self as the seer (156-160), qualification for Brahma-Vidyā (160-163), examination of the three states of Consciousness (163-172), Sākshātkāra (direct vision) of Brahman and the two varieties of Liberation (172-173), the intermediate stage called 'Apavarga' of the soul between Bondage and absolute Freedom (173-176), the conjunction of Jñāna and Karma as a means to Mōksha (181-182) - on all these points Bhartṛ-Prapañcha holds doctrines peculiar to his own system and conspicuous by their absence anywhere else.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF PRE-ŚĀṆKARA VEDĀNTA

A study of the account of the pre-Śāṅkara schools as detailed in the present work will, I hope, give a general picture of the pre-Śāṅkara Vedānta. The reader will have noticed that the following are the common features that characterize these schools.

(1) All the schools are Advaitic in the sense that they teach the ultimate identity of Jīva and Brahman.

(2) All the schools rely on the authority of the Vedās and disclose a bias towards some Vedic injunction.

(3) Rituals alone or combined with Upāsana, or knowledge direct or a distilled form of it, or else a transformation of it into direct vision of Brahman, is invariably supposed to be enjoined by the Śrutis as the means to Mōksha.

(4) Final Release is mostly eschatological. Even schools which allow that Ātman is self-effulgent have recourse to some injunction or other, demanding the practice of some Sādhana, to remove the obstacles to Jñāna.

(5) Mōksha being presumed to be a goal to be reached through sheer effort, Avidyā has little or no place in any of

these schools of thought. Even schools that recognize Avidyā have a very hazy notion of it.

It is clear that the schools did not take cognizance of the distinction between texts that aim at describing Brahman as It is and those that enjoin meditation of Brahman. They never suspected that the frequent negative description in which the Upanishads take delight, might possibly point to a *method* common to them all. Again, they did not attach sufficient importance to Śrutis which teach the *eternal identity* of Jīva and Brahman and promise immediate Release simultaneous with the Knowledge of Brahman. As a consequence of this neglect, they could not realize that Avidyā is the only hindrance to the attainment of the goal. They were not aware of the distinction between the *Pārmāthika* view and the *Vyāvahārika* view - *Śāstradṛṣṭi* and *Lōkadṛṣṭi* - a distinction which could reconcile the *transcendental unity* of Reality with the empirical reality which admits of plurality within its fold. And above all, they either did not suspect the existence of, or deliberately disregarded, the minority of thinkers who pointed out that the classical Upanishads uniformly employ a device called the Adhyārōpa-Apavāda Nyāya or the method of deliberate Super-imposition and Rescission, in order to bring the enquiring mind to the Intuition of Reality which is forever *ineffable* and *supra-rational*.

The credit of formulating the above clear-cut distinction between the highly philosophical system of the traditional Vedānta and the theological systems with a realistic tinge belongs to Gauḍapada, and the credit of having presented it in its perfect form in consonance with the Prasthānatraya belongs to Śaṅkara.

SECTION SEVEN

POST-ŚAṆKARA SYSTEMS

1. SYSTEMS INDEPENDENT OF ŚAṆKARA

From chapter six onwards, the present work attempts to record the reaction of succeeding Vedāntins to Śaṅkara's formulation of Advaita. Only two of these have tried to systematize the Upanishadic teaching independently, while all the others have written as professed followers of Śaṅkara. It is interesting to note that while neither of the founders of the two independent systems has any avowed followers in our own times, they have both powerfully influenced all subsequent thinking, in so much that there has been almost no Vedāntin who has not found it necessary to mould his thoughts in their pattern, or has not modified, revised or re-affirmed the traditional doctrines of his school even while opposing them.

MAṆḌANA

Maṇḍana, the first of these two, was an Advaitin who was perhaps a contemporary of Śaṅkara. In his *magnum opus*, the *Brahma Siddhi* (Br. S., p. 34), he refers to Śaṅkara's doctrine almost in the latter's very words, that 'one who has realized his identity with Brahman as a result of Vedic teaching, can no more be subject to the ills of worldly life, and one who is subject to these has not evidently realized his identity with Brahman (SB., 1-1-4, p.23)'. He then proceeds to propound his own doctrine that owing to impressions of wrong knowledge, which stay in the mind even after conviction of the non-dual nature of the Self, the soul may continue to be swayed by the influence of false appearances of duality, to blot out which the repeated practice of right

knowledge is necessary. Simultaneous practice of sacrifice, gift and austerity as laid down in the Śrutis, precipitates the strengthening of his right impressions. Moreover, according to Maṇḍana, knowledge obtained through Śruti is only indirect and therefore cannot remove the actual experience of differences and therefore meditation (Nididhyāsana) or continued repetition of scriptural knowledge is needed to bring on the direct Realization of Ātman as He is. (Br. S., pp. 35 and 134).

The reader will see that Maṇḍana has ignored the fundamental nature of Upanishadic teaching. The texts, as we have learnt from Śaṅkara, do not teach us the nature of Ātman in the same way as a treatise on geography on studying which we necessarily have to travel and see for ourselves the nature of an island about which we seek information. They merely help us to shake off our misconceptions, or rather wrong ascriptions, by negating them and reminding us of a self-existing and self-effulgent Brahman which is eternally identical with our own Self. There can be therefore no question of denying or doubting, much less of any attempt at reaching or realizing, that Brahman after one has achieved the Intuition of his Brahmic nature. How are we to account for this persistence of Maṇḍana in holding to the pre-Śaṅkara view of the necessity of *Realization* even after scriptural knowledge has been attained ? Was he not aware of the traditional method ? Not quite that, for he once mentions it by name and dismisses it as though it belonged to some other school of Advaita. ('Tathā Aparaihi, Adhyarōpāpavādābhyām, Nishprapañcham Prapañchyate तथा अपरैः अध्यारोपापवादाभ्यां निष्प्रपञ्चं प्रपञ्क्यते') 'So say others'. Evidently, he could not appreciate the highly philosophic value of this method, for he never

alludes to it again in all his work. Indeed, some of the principal dogmas of his school may be even supposed to be in opposition to the spirit of this Nyāya. I shall try to illustrate this point by citing a few of them.

1. Maṇḍana is considerably exercised over the determination of the nature, status, locus and distinctions of Avidyā; that it is of two varieties, non-apprehension (Agrahaṇam) and mis-apprehension (Viparyaya-Grahaṇam); that it is located in the Jīvās and not in Brahman; that the very birth of Knowledge is its destruction and that, though beginningless and natural, it can be destroyed by Vidyā. These and other contentions, he takes immense pains to prove analogically and on the strength of the Śrutis (Br. S., pp. 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 20, 22, 32, 78, 121).

All this dialectic gymnastic could have been very well spared, had he only accepted Śaṅkara's indisputable definition of Avidyā as the mutual Super-imposition of the Self and the not-Self, for then he could have seen that Avidyā, being the fundamental fault and the very condition that induces one to look upon oneself as a thinker prompted to determine the nature of things, it must perforce be itself *outside the purview* of all *determinate views*. Indeed, one is already under the *clutches* of Avidyā even before he starts to determine its status. Most probably, Maṇḍana thought that he could steer clear of Śaṅkara's formulation of Avidyā as Adhyāsa by adopting the nomenclature accepted by Gauḍapāda, who divides it into *Kāraṇa-Avidyā* and *Kārya-Avidyā* (Br. S., p. 150); but he does not seem to have discerned that the latter Āchārya meant that both these varieties of Avidyā are the objects of the Witnessing Consciousness whose light falls

upon them quite unaffected by either. Maṇḍana's critical acumen seems to fail him when he argues that Avidyā and Jīva belong to a beginningless series like that of seeds and sprouts and that the Avidyā of each preceding Jīva is responsible for the succeeding false imagination which presents the next Jīva in a series. For, if Avidyā be a term of a beginningless series of Jīvas and Avidyās, it ceases to be Avidyā in the genuine sense of the word, since it cannot account for the appearance of time, its own substrate.

2. Neglect of the principle that the fundamental Superimposition or Avidyā is a pre-supposition in the field where Pramāṇas or logical canons obtain, compels Maṇḍana to take refuge in the Mīmāṃsā dictum that the Vedās are eternal and not the production of any person. When he argues that on this score they naturally carry a stronger validity than perception and other Pramāṇās which on the strength of the Śruti itself(!) may be inferred to be tainted with the impression of Avidyā, he has to suppose further that this inferred impression of Avidyā, being stable, does not affect the efficiency of perception and other canons as means of empirical knowledge. Recognition of the principle of Antya-Pramāṇam - the nature of Śruti being the ultimate Pramāṇa which sublates all distinctions of means and objects of knowledge, as explained on a previous occasion, might have stood Maṇḍana in good stead here, for it would have saved him the invoking of the un-philosophic postulate that Pramāṇās can be mutually opposed. The lengthy criticism of the concept of 'difference' undertaken in the second chapter could have been altogether dispensed with if only, in the empirical field, Pramāṇas were recognized as never in conflict with one another.

3. Maṇḍana's anxiety to establish the validity of the Śruti is responsible for his far-fetched justification of its efficiency to teach the nature of Brahman. In the face of an express statement by the Śruti itself, that neither words nor the mind can objectify Brahman, he argues that "a word in the Vedā, whose meaning we know through other sources, placed in collocation with other words denoting certain characteristics of Brahman, can and does denote Brahman and by that means a passage can and does convey a peculiar trait of Brahman not ascertainable through any other means of knowledge. Thus, for instance, the cause in general or being in general which we know through perception or other means, may become the object of the Śruti passage 'Yatō Vā यतो वा' (Tai., 3-1); or 'Asthūlam Anaṇu अस्थूलमननु' (Br.) in a special form by reason of its being related to or differentiated from things known through other words. Or else Brahman being really the object of every concept, for the reason that there is *nothing else* than Brahman *to be known*," says Maṇḍana, "the Śruti only negatives the manifold. Both the *manifold* and *negation* being knowables, their mutual connection in the Śruti can very well *convey the absence* of the world of differences (Br. S., p. 157)." It is obvious that the recognition of the principle that the concept of Pramāṇa itself lies within the sphere of Avidyā, and Brahman in Itself, though indeterminate, is *forever Intuited* by each one of us as ourself, could have saved him all this *needless exegetical feat*.

4. In discussing the immediate effect of Brahmajñāna, Maṇḍana remarks that the knower would attain Release immediately after he shuffles off his mortal coil. This

departure from the body would be, sooner or later, according to the rigour of one's Karma to be exhausted. According to this philosopher, there are two alternatives which we may predicate of a person who lives on for some time after he has acquired the Knowledge of Brahman. Either he is yet practising the meditation needful for the *complete Realization*, which becomes perfected at the time of death, or else, he is really a perfect soul whose dealings in life - even while they *appear* to be just like those of the ignorant - have this point of difference that the wise one is not *obsessed* with the idea of their reality (Br. S., 131-132).

This *pathetically realistic* description of one who has realized the truth betrays a woeful disregard of the two standpoints of view which a student of the Upanishads has constantly to bear in mind. For, from the transcendental point of view, there is no body, mind or senses limiting any one, since all distinctions are nought, the only Reality being Brahman, or Ātman. From the empirical view, the Jñāni is only one among other egos, while he is a miracle in the eyes of seekers of Knowledge. The experience of the Sthitaprajña described in the Gītā can never be exactly defined in empirical terms. From the transcendental point of view, there is no question of the Jñāni leaving behind him the body or an independent objective world, for it never existed for him. The idea that he deals with other egos and that the world goes on even after his departure is true enough empirically, but it can never affect Reality as It is.

The account given here of Maṇḍana's school will be enough to show the difference between the traditional method of Vedānta exhibited by Śaṅkara and the method or methods employed by the post-Śaṅkarās, for, Maṇḍana's method may

be taken to be typical of all. Profession of the authority of scriptures and quoting them with interpretations so as to suit one's own dogmatic views is the uniform line adopted throughout. For fear of prolixity, I refer the reader to the Sanskrit original for details.

BHĀSKARA

Bhāskarāchārya is the only other teacher who has struck out a new path of his own in interpreting Vedānta. Although his complete works are not available, his Sūtra-Bhāshya, which has been printed, is quite sufficient for the purpose of assessing his views and method.

While his school belongs to the *Bheda-Abheda* school of Vedānta, it differs from that of Bhartṛ-Prapañcha in so many respects that one is tempted to surmise that he belongs to some other ancient branch of the school which has left no record behind as to its career. His system has been examined in the body of the present work (pp. 337-393) at some length. The chief value of his system lies in his pungent criticisms of the later interpretations of Śaṅkara's Advaita as represented by the author of the Pañchapādika and the legacy of doctrines that he has left to the succeeding opponents of Śaṅkara's Advaita. We shall have occasion to consider his system again while discussing the Vaishnava-Vedānta systems in the second volume.

2. ŚAṆKARA'S FOLLOWERS

(1) SUREŚWARA

Interpreters of Śaṅkara have to be divided into two main groups, the first of which has Sureśwara as its main representative. It is perhaps an irony of fate that the study of

Sureśwara's extant works, invaluable guides as they are for a clear grasp of the fundamentals of Vedānta, has become almost obsolete, except for the lip-homage evinced by modern Vedāntins in the shape of a sprinkling of a few well-known quotations from the Vārtikās, mostly in service of their respective views foisted on that great Āchārya. I have, therefore, devoted a considerable portion of the present work (pp. 210-276) to a discussion of his important views.

Sureśwara's Vārtika is aptly called by that name, for it answers to the lexicographical description of the title in all respects (Uktā-Anukta-Durukta-Chintā उक्तानुकदुरुक्ताचिन्ता), since the author especially in his Bṛhadāraṇyaka Vārtika not only clarifies and amplifies all that has been said in the Bhāṣhya but very frequently states his personal views regarding the subject-matter as well as the manner of interpretation. The critical student will therefore be greatly profited by a careful and diligent study of his thought-stimulating work.

The essential teachings of Sureśwara concerning Vedānta are identical with those of Śaṅkara. I shall therefore state very briefly what has been given at greater length in the body of the present work. Ātman is of the nature of Pure Intuition itself and therefore (Anubhavamātrātmakatvāt अनुभवमात्रात्मकत्वात्) needs no means of right knowledge to establish his nature. He is in fact the *prius* and the *source* from which the knower and the means of knowing as well as the objects of knowledge derive their breath (Nai. 1-89, Br. V., 1-4-874). Strictly speaking, Śruti is the one Pramāṇa and the Ātman the only Prameya. There is really one Avidyā or Ajñāna (ignorance) which *obscures* the true nature of Ātman, the only unknown. The knowledge ordinarily regarded as resulting from the application of Pratyaksha and other Pṛamāṇas, is itself the

object to be known according to Vedānta (SVa., 159).¹ The manifold world is *only an appearance*, as Gauḍapāda has rightly remarked, of the unknown Ātman in the same way as the snake, line of water etc., are all mere *illusory appearances* imagined in the rope (Br. V. 2-1-2). Hence the Veda is Pramāṇa, not because it is the Vedā but because of the absence of all factors which might be suspected to vitiate the validity of the knowledge arising from it (Br. V, 2-4-325).

In texts like 'That thou art', the collocation or opposition of the two words 'that' and 'thou', the mutual relation of the qualifier and the qualified between the entities denoted by these words and the consequent cancellation of the seemingly contradictory implications such as the individual self being miserable and Brahman being something to be known mediately - these are the successive stages of the psychological process *culminating* in the *revelation* of the *absolute identity* of the two entities indicated by the two words. The Intuition being transcendental, and Brahman being of the nature of Pure Consciousness which is our very Self, there is no need of any extraneous means of right Knowledge (para 116).

I have examined the several sub-varieties or modes of the Vedāntic method - as applied to causality, the five Kōśās, the knower and the known, the three states of Consciousness etc., - at great length (paras 118 to 122) to show how Sureśvara closely follows in the footsteps of Śaṅkara in almost all details in this respect. As regards one or two points in particular, Sureśvara appears at first sight to be quite independent. In the first place, his division of Avidyā into

1. The abbreviation SVa., stands for *Sambandha Vārtika* on the Bṛhadāraṇyaka.

absence of knowledge and wrong knowledge, is liable to be mistaken for a similar division adopted by Maṇḍana, while his emphasis on the former only as Avidyā proper, is likely to mislead one to think that he breaks off his fidelity to his master in this respect. But this divergence is more apparent than real, for Sureśwara, unlike Maṇḍana, takes care to lay special stress on the distinction between empirical ignorance and this *beginningless ignorance* of Brahman by insisting that it is 'Anubhavavedya' or Intuited, and 'Avichārasiddha' appearing only in the state of non-discrimination and that it never exists from the highest standpoint. He quotes the Gaudapāda's Kārikā 'Aniscitā Yathā Rajjuḥ अनिश्चिता यथा रज्जुः' (Just like a rope un-ascertained as such etc., G. K., 2-17)¹ again and again. This Kārikā, the reader will remember, avers that all empirical world is a Super-imposition on Ātman like the snake etc., which are super-imposed upon a rope not ascertained to be such. He never troubles himself like Maṇḍana with the unphilosophical question : 'To whom does Avidyā pertain ? Is it Brahman or Jīva that is ignorant ?' No doubt he once admits that ignorance can belong only to a conscious being (Nai. III) but that is only to repudiate the suggestion that even insentient things can be 'un-conscious' or 'un-known' as is vulgarly imagined. As for Maṇḍana's contention that ignorance cannot be possibly supposed to reside in Brahman who is all-Knowledge, Sureśwara rebuts it by remarking that this objection can be raised neither by one who is ignorant of the nature of Brahman since he does not *know* that he is ignorant, nor by the enlightened one, since from his view-point *ignorance never exists* (Nai. III-116).

1. Gaudapada's Kārikās on the Māṇḍūkya.

अतः प्रमाणतोऽशक्याऽविद्याऽस्येति वीक्षितुम् ।

कीदृशी वा कुतो वाऽसावनुभूत्येकरूपतः ॥

“In fact, one can never know ignorance as belonging to any one, neither determine its nature nor conceive how it can possibly be at all; for it is essentially of the nature of Pure Intuition itself” (*Sambandha Vārtika*, 184).

I have discussed this question more fully in the body of the work, and shown how the distinction of *Kāraṇāvidyā* and *Kāryāvidyā* itself presupposes the basic *Adhyāsa* and how *Sureśvara* also admits this (p. 223) indirectly. We have therefore to conclude that in setting his face against *Mithyājñāna* (wrong knowledge) as *Avidyā*, *Sureśvara* was only thinking of ‘mis-conception’ upheld by the *Mīmāṃsa* and other schools and not of the *Adhyāsa* advocated by *Śaṅkara*.

It is sometimes urged that *Sureśvara* actually argues against the two kinds of nescience recognized by *Maṇḍana*. While it is true, as I have already explained, that the *Vārtikakāra* lays emphasis on ignorance as non-apprehension as contrasted with mis-apprehension, I think that he is not particularly against giving false knowledge also its own place as *Avidyā*. He only means to say that, but for the ignorance of the negative type, there could be no false knowledge at all, since it is by reason of our not knowing a thing as it is, that we mistake it for something else.

अज्ञानं संशयज्ञानं मिथ्याज्ञानमिति त्रिकम् ।

अज्ञानं कारणं तत्र कार्यत्वं परिशिष्टयोः ॥ बृ. वा. १-४-१३६८

Here both doubt and false knowledge are declared to be the effect of ignorance properly so called.

It is, however, necessary to repeat that, speaking from

a higher point of view, Sureśwara holds that Ātman is the only unknown entity and it is therefore wrong to speak of the not-self as either known or unknown (para 114) since it is nothing but the display of Avidyā and therefore nothing but Avidyā (Tai. V., 2-178, 179). In this sense, therefore, there is only one Avidyā. It is from this standpoint too, that he vehemently argues (para 113) against the unwarranted distinction made by the Prasaṅkhyānavādins, between the adventitious ignorance of empirical objects which can be obliterated for ever by true Knowledge, and the *inherent ignorance* enveloping Ātman, which they feared to be likely to crop up again even after its destruction by Knowledge.

The other point of seeming difference between Śaṅkara and Sureśwara is with regard to *Nididhyāsana*. While Śaṅkara takes it as a means to be practised for the attainment of Realization, Sureśwara thinks that it is the resulting Intuition itself, since it is paraphrased in the Śruti by the word *Vijñāna*. Notwithstanding this conflict of opinions in exegesis, there is no divergence between the two teachers about the final teaching, since even Sureśwara admits that meditation is also a means of Realization. The reader is referred to the body of the work (para 125) for further details bearing on this reconciliation.

On the whole, Sureśwara remains a staunch advocate of Śaṅkara's tradition, supplementing his teachings with arguments based on the Śruti invariably appealing to universal Intuition and defending his position against all un-Vedāntic encroachments.

(2) PADMAPĀDA

An important innovation in Śaṅkara's system was introduced by the fragment of a commentary on his Śārīraka-

Bhāshya. This commentary called the 'Pañchapādikā', literally a treatise explaining the first five Pādās of the Sūtrās, actually ends with the gloss on the fourth Sūtra. Tradition uniformly ascribes the work to Padmapāda, the reputed immediate disciple of Śaṅkara, but neither the author nor his glossators afford any clue enabling us either to fix the identity of the writer or to explain the incomplete nature of the work.

The author, whoever he was, boldly sets forward with the doctrine of those whom Maṇḍana calls 'Avidyōpādānabhedavādinaha' (Br. S., p. 10) or the ancient school of Vedāntins who taught that all empirical phenomena are the effect of Avidyā, the primordial material cause. He believes that Śaṅkara belongs to that school and accordingly in his interpretations of the Bhāshya, gives an altogether new turn to the arguments put forth by Śaṅkara. The most famous of such forced interpretations is his explanation of the very first sentence of the Bhāshya, wherein we find the following clause.

मिथ्याज्ञाननिमित्तः सत्यानृते मिथुनीकृत्य अहमिदं ममेदमिति नैसर्गिकोऽयं लोकव्यवहारः ॥

“It is a natural procedure on the part of men due to wrong knowledge to mix up the real and the unreal and to think ‘I am this’, ‘This is mine’. This commentator, however, stretches the meaning of the word *Mithyājñāna* to mean something which squares with the creed peculiar to his own school :-

मिथ्याज्ञाननिमित्तः इति । मिथ्या च तदज्ञानं च मिथ्याज्ञानम् ‘मिथ्या’ इति अनिर्वचनीयता उच्यते । अज्ञानमिति च जडात्मिका अविद्याशक्तिः, ज्ञानपर्युदासेनोच्यते । तन्निमित्तः तदुपादान इत्यर्थः ॥

“The compound word ‘Mithyājñāna’ is made up of the

words 'Mithyā' and 'Ajñāna'. Mithyā means Anirvacanīya and 'Ajñāna' means the insentient potentiality of Avidyā, as opposed to Jñāna or sentiency. Adhyāsa has this Avidyāśakti for its 'Nimitta' i.e., Upādāna or material cause. This is the meaning."

(PP., p. 4).

Comment is needless.

Further on, the author enumerates a number of terms as synonymous ; Nāma-Rūpa (name and form), Avyākṛtam (undifferentiated state), Avidyā (nescience), Māyā (false appearance), Prakṛtihi (original cause), Agrahaṇam (non-apprehension), Avyaktam (unmanifested), Tamaha (darkness), Kāraṇam (cause), Layaha (dissolution), Śaktihi (potency), Mahāsuptihi (the long sleep or dream), Nidra (sleep), Aksharam (imperishable), Ākāśam (ether). It is clear that the word Avidyā which, derived as it is from the root *Vid* - to know, can primarily express only something epistemic, is here requisitioned to denote a causative something. Most of its synonyms here shown, indeed, are uniformly used by Vedāntins for the subtle state of the manifested world. And Śāṅkara not only never mixes up this Avyākṛta or Māyā with Avidyā, as is here done, but expressly says that it is really a figment of Avidyā.

Witness the following passage :-

सर्वज्ञस्येश्वरस्य आत्मभूते इवाविद्याकल्पिते नामरूपे तत्त्वान्यत्वाभ्यामनिर्वचनीये संसारप्रपञ्चबीजभूते सर्वज्ञस्येश्वरस्य माया, शक्तिः, प्रकृतिः - इति च श्रुतिस्मृत्योरभिलष्येते॥

"Name and form imagined by Avidyā as though they were identical with the omniscient Īśvara, but difficult to define either as identical with or different from Him, are the seed of the manifold world of mundane existence. They are called in the Śruti and the Smṛti the 'Māyā', 'power' of the omniscient Īśvara and 'Prakṛti'." (SB., 2-1-14, p. 201).

It is evident that the author is bent upon interpreting Śaṅkara's system which aims at showing that in Vyavahāra all views of Reality as conceived by the human mind are due to Avidyā, in the light of his own pet doctrine that all Adhyāsa is an evolution of the causative seed called by him 'Avidyā'. Accordingly he writes :

चैतन्यस्य स्वत एवावस्थितब्रह्मस्वरूपावभासं प्रतिबध्य जीवत्वापादिका
विद्याकर्मपूर्वप्रज्ञासंस्कारचित्रभित्तिः सुषुप्ते प्रकाशाच्छादनविक्षेपसंस्कारमात्ररूपस्थितिः
अनाद्यविद्या ॥

“This beginningless Avidyā obstructs the shining forth of the inherent nature of Consciousness as being one with Brahman and brings on to It the state of Jīva. It is the canvas on which is painted the impression of knowledge, action and past experience,¹ and abides in deep sleep in the only form of *Ācchādana* envelopement covering the light of consciousness and the subtle form of *Vikshepa* or projection of false appearances.” (PP., p. 20).

And what is the warrant for the assumption of this Avidyā? The Pañcapādika replies : “This Avidyāśakti should necessarily be assumed to reside in external and internal things (the individual selves and the external objects), as being attached to their very essential being, for otherwise no false thing could appear. And it does not obstruct the nature of inert things from appearing forth, for their being not apprehended can be the result of the absence of a means of their knowledge and also because the nature of a thing like

1. The original as found in the printed books has the variant reading 'Avidyā-Karma-Pūrṇaprajñā' and this is endorsed by the sub-commentary the *Vivaraṇa*. Actually, however, this phrase is a reference to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (4-4-2) where we read 'Vidyā-Karmaṇi Samanvārabhete Pūrvaprajñā Cha'.

the shell can be known both before and after the sublation of the appearance of false silver, notwithstanding the existence of Avidyā throughout. Hence Avidyā is only responsible for the appearance of an objective thing in another form. But in the case of the inner Self, which is of the nature of Consciousness and hence self-luminous Its being not known to be Brahman cannot be accounted for in any other way and hence Its not being known as such is due solely to the natural Avidyā which inheres in It. Hence it obstructs the shining forth of the Brahmic nature in the internal Conscious Self and becomes the occasion of Its false appearance as the ego etc., and in deep sleep and other similar states it stays in the shape of merely the subtle form of the ego etc., and resumes its shape again.” (PP., pp. 4, 5).

The above long passage is enough to convince the reader that the author of the Pañchapādika is eager to show that according to Śāṅkara, Avidyā is an ontological, rather than an epistemic, principle, accounting for the false appearance of the empirical world. Accordingly, he twists even the definition of adhyāsa or Super-imposition and interprets it as though it described something super-imposed, rather than the mental process of super-imposing. He is aware, however, that Śāṅkara later on explains himself in unmistakable terms ‘Adhyāsō Nāma Atasmin Tadbuddhihi Iti Avōchāma अध्यासो नाम अतस्मिन् तद्बुद्धिरित्यवोचाम’. We have already said that ‘Adhyāsa, Super-imposition, means mistaking something to be what it is not.’ He therefore, hastens to add ‘Arthāt Tadvishayasyāpi Avabhāśasya Idameva Lakṣaṇam Uktam अर्थात् तद्विषयस्याप्यवभासस्य इदमेव लक्षणम् उक्तम्’ (Perforce, this may also be taken as the definition of the knowledge of such an object). That is to say, according to this explanation, Śāṅkara is not primarily

thinking of an inherent error that assails the human mind, but only of something objective falsely appearing in place of another !

It is needless to multiply instances of *text-torturing* to force one's own meaning into Śaṅkara's words so as to fit in with this theory of Avidyā, not a trace of which is to be found in all that teacher's classical works. Needless to say that it is a travesty of Maṇḍana's terminology to describe this hypothetical Avidyā as Anirvachanīya, and no more than a make-believe of a commentary on Śaṅkara to say that this is what that great Vedāntin meant to place before us in his famous introduction to the Sūtras, as the source of all ills to be destroyed by the Knowledge of the one Ātman.

The Pañchapādika is glaringly divergent from Śaṅkara's system in its description of Avidyā on at least three fundamental points :

1. Śaṅkara appeals to reason based upon universal Intuition when he says that neither thinking nor action is possible without the basic Super-imposition of Adhyāsa or Avidyā and thence deduces the corollary that all Pramāṇas pre-suppose this Avidyā before they function. The Pañchapādikā, on the other hand, appeals to a *logical necessity* which is supposed to compel us to believe that a certain force, or principle called 'Avidyā-Śakti' is inherent in all things internal or external - that is to say in thinking subjects and the objects of thought - and tries to prove this by means of Pramāṇas (PP., pp. 4, 5, 14).

2. Śaṅkara wants to show how all the ills of Saṃsāra are due to the fundamental Super-imposition otherwise called Avidyā and hence that right Knowledge alone of the one Ātman who is the sole Reality, can effectively remove

Avidyā. The commentary, on the other hand, holds that causal Avidyā is to be postulated to rest in Jīva (Arthāt Jīve Brahma Svarūpaprakāśacchādikā Avidyā Kalpyate) covering its Brahmic nature. And later on, inconsistently enough, identifies Avidyā with Adhyāsa (PP., p. 30) most probably because Knowledge cannot be rightly held to remove anything objective directly.

3. Śaṅkara refers to various theories of Adhyāsa just to show how all are ultimately agreed that something is mistaken for something else and cites two common examples of illusion which illustrate what he means. The Pañchapādikā, however, enters upon a tediously long discussion to refute all views other than the theory of Anirvachanīya-Khyāti which is elaborated at great length, never invoking the support of the Bhāṣhya for any of the opinions advanced in that connection (PP., pp. 7-9). This wild-goose chase was necessitated perhaps by the predilection of the commentator for the objective view of Adhyāsa (Arthādhyāsa) already referred to. He insists that 'Ahaṅkāradhyāsa' is the effect of the postulated material cause Avidyāśakti, in defiance of Śaṅkara's express statement, at the very commencement of the Introduction, that the notions of 'me' and 'mine', are the result of the basic Super-imposition 'Adhyasya Itaretara-vivekena Mithyājñānananimittaha..... Aham Idam Mama Idam - Iti Naisargikōyam Lōka-Vyavahāraha अध्यस्य इतरेतराविवेकेन मिथ्याज्ञाननिमित्तः 'अहमिदं ममेदम्' इति नैसर्गिकोऽयं लोकव्यवहारः ' (para 137).

The above tenet not only militated against the express statement of Śaṅkara that 'the natural Adhyāsa, the nature of a false notion, has no assignable limit prior or posterior (Ayam Anādiranantō Naisargikōdhyāsō Mithyā-Pratyarūpaha

अयमनादिरनन्तो नैसर्गिकोऽध्यासो मिथ्याप्रत्ययरूपः) but also added another weak link to the chain of dogmatics required to support it, for the fact that a Knower of Brahman continues to exhibit the knot of egoity (Ahaṅkāra-Granthi) had to be justified by the assumption that this Avidyā, even after its destruction by Vidyā, continues owing to Saṃskāra, to produce the knot in question very much like fear which continues to produce trembling etc., even after one's error of mistaking a rope for a snake is over (PP., p. 40). This unhappy alliance with Maṇḍana brought on more un-philosophic positions in its train (para 15).

Max-Muller's observations regarding Avidyā deserve to be reproduced here in this connection.

“No wonder that with all these ambiguities about the phenomenally real and the really real, different schools even in India should have differed in their views about Avidyā, and that European scholars also should have failed to form a clear idea of that *creative nescience* of which we can neither say that it is or that it is not. Avidyā, like all other words, has had a history. In the Upanishads it is often used in the simple sense of ignorance, and opposed to Vidyā. Both are in that sense simply subjective. In some of the later Upanishads this nescience or Ignorance assumes a more independent character and even a new name viz. *Māyā*. It is thus no longer the nescience of the individual, but the result of that universal Nescience, which is the cause of what we should call the phenomenal world. Thus we read in the Svet. Up., (IV, 10), ‘Know Prakṛti (nature) as Māyā (magic), and the great Lord as Māyin (magician)’. Though, this is not pure Vedānta, it shows us, at all events, the way by which ignorance of the individual became the cause of what we call objective reality,

and led, at the same time, to the admission of an active and creative Lord, the personal Brahma or Īśvara, how Avidyā in fact became a Śakti or *potentia*, somehow or other related to Brahman Itself.” (SS., pp. 211-213).

These observations require modification at least in one respect. No Upanishad quoted by Śaṅkara has treated Avidyā and Māyā as identical and no Vedāntin is seen interchanging the two terms till we come down to the time of Maṇḍana who says (Br. S., p. 9) that Avidyā is also called ‘Māyā’ and ‘Mithyāabhāsa’ (false appearance or knowledge). It was the author of the Pañchapādikā, however, who called the Prakṛti or the seed form of names and forms which make up the world by the names ‘Avidyā’ and ‘Ajñāna’ and proclaimed it to be the material cause of Adhyāsa, for the first time, so far as we know. There is reason to believe that this cult of objective Avidyā was older than Maṇḍana, who quotes (Br. S., p. 10), a statement not to be found in the Pañchapādikā. In any case, the Pañchapādikā is the first work in which a sustained effort is made to argue that this school has the hearty support of Śaṅkara.

3. VĀCHASPATI MIŚRA

Bhāskarācārya’s attack on Śaṅkara’s system as modified by the Pañchapādikā, naturally evoked a strong reaction from the exponents of the Avidyā-Māyā doctrine. The first of such defenders of Śaṅkara, was Vāchaspati, whose sub-commentary the *Bhāmati* inaugurates a version of Śaṅkara’s system widely different from the one presented by the Pañchapādikā; for instead of staking his all on the objective Avidyā, he tries to graft Maṇḍana’s views on Śaṅkara’s system insofar as that is feasible, but indirectly accedes to the opinion of the objective-avidyā school while keeping his

fidelity to Śaṅkara's Adhyāsa doctrine also. In fact, this Miśra's Advaita is an amalgam of the thoughts of all the three systems.

Thus he walks close on the heels of Maṇḍana insofar as the latter's system postulates two Avidyās - cause and effect - both declared to be Anirvachanīya (para 182). In almost all instances of his defence of Śaṅkara against the attacks of Bhāskarāchārya, we find that the Anirvachanīyavāda is the one handy weapon un-sheathed to repulse the opponent. The question of the locus of Avidyā also is solved after the manner of Maṇḍana (para 186).

He incorporates Maṇḍana's modified Prasaṅkhyāna theory too, but he rejects (VB., 1-1-1) the latter's Samucchaya-vāda or doctrine of conjoined practice of both Knowledge and works as too palpably against Śaṅkara's un-compromising position.

On the other hand, he leans towards the objective-avidyā theory when he declares (VB., 1-3-30, p. 333) that at the time of absolute dissolution ('Mahāpralaya-Samaye') the mind and other phenomena are dissolved in their cause the *Anirvāchyāvidyā* (Svakāraṇe Anirvāchya-Avidyāyām Līnāha svakāraṇe anirvāchyāvidyāyāṁ līnāḥ) and abide there in a subtle potential form along with the impressions of Avidyā which are the tendencies to the projection of actions (Sūkshmeṇa Śaktirūpeṇa Karmavikshepakāvidyāvāsanābhihi Saha Avatishthanta Eva sūkshmeṇa śaktirūpeṇa karmavikshepakāvidyāvāsanābhiḥ: sah avatiṣṭhanti eva) and even elaborates that theory by an additional doctrine of his own that there are as many Avidyās as there are individual selves¹ (para 187), whence according to him it follows that only that

1. Prof. Dasgupta refers to Guṇaratna's Tarka-Rahasya Dīpikā, where that author mentions two schools of Sāṅkhya, the Maulikya (original)

person's Avidyā is destroyed who has realized his true nature, and not of others, since there is no opposition between the Vidyā that has dawned to one and the Avidyās which belong to other souls. That Vāchaspati Miśra wholly aligns with the objective-avidyā-Vādins in this respect, is placed beyond all doubt by this statement : 'The singular number is only used by courtesy for Avyakta or Avyākṛta, simply because all Avidyā-Śaktis are one as Avidyā'. ('Avidyātvamātreṇa Cha Eka-Tvōpachārah Avya-ktam Iti Cha Avyākṛtam Iti Cha अविद्यात्वमात्रेण च एकत्वोपचारः 'अव्यक्तम्' इति च 'अव्याकृतम्' इति च ॥) VB., p. 378.

At the same time he manages to find an egress out of the maze of the doctrine of objective-avidyā, since he agrees with Śāṅkara that Adhyāsa is the only Avidyā (Pratyagātmani Anātmādhyaśa Eva Anarthahetuhu, Na Punā Rajatādivibhramā Iti Sa Eva Avidyā प्रत्यगात्मन्यनात्माध्यास एव अनर्थहेतुः, न पुना रजतादिविभ्रमा इति स एव अविद्या VB. 1-1-1, p. 40) and can write without any qualm of conscience in Śāṅkara's very words that the differentiated (Vyākṛta) and the undifferentiated (Avyākṛta) names and forms constituting the world are both figments of Avidyā.

अविद्याकल्पितेन तु नामरूपलक्षणेन रूपभेदेन व्याकृताव्याकृतात्मना तत्त्वान्यत्वाभ्यामनिर्वचनीयेन परिणामादिसर्वव्यवहारास्पदत्वं ब्रह्म प्रतिपद्यते । न च कल्पितं रूपं वस्तु स्पृशति ॥ (वा. भा. २-१-२५, पा. ४७५).

and the Uttara (later). "Of these the doctrine of Maulikya Sāṅkhyas is said to be that which believed that there was a separate Pradhāna for each Ātman (Maulikya Sāṅkhyā hi Ātmānam Ātmanām Prati Prithak Pradhānam Vadanti)" (HIP. Vol I, 217). Vāchaspati Miśra does not seem to have been aware of this fact, for he claims that 'unlike the Sāṅkhyās' Vedāntins maintain Avidyā to be a different one for each Jīva (VB., p. 377).

It is interesting to note that even while taking Adhyāsa as the only Avidyā this thinker fails to appreciate the beginningless nature of Avidyā, which Śaṅkara enunciates at the end of his introduction to the Sūtra Bhāṣya, and has to harp on Maṇḍana's device of the seed and sprout series whenever the beginninglessness of Avidyā is spoken of. Thus he explains in Śaṅkara's phrase 'Anādihi' by remarking

(१) जीवात्मा इतरेतराध्यासोपादानः, तदुपादानश्च अध्यासः - इत्यादिदत्त्वात् बीजाङ्कुरवत् नेतरेतराश्रयत्वम् इत्युक्तं भवति ॥

And in defending his theory of different Avidyās for different Jīvās, he writes :

(२) न च अविद्योपाधिभेदाधीनो जीवभेदो जीवभेदाधीनश्च अविद्योपाधिभेद इति परस्परश्रयात् उभयासिद्धिरिति सांप्रतम् । अनादित्वात् बीजाङ्कुरवत्, उभयसिद्धेः (VB., p. 378).

In both of the above instances Vāchaspati Miśra maintains like Maṇḍana that Avidyā and the nature of Jīva each belong to a beginningless series whose previous Avidyā of Jīva accounts for the succeeding one.

Vāchaspati Miśra is a learned scholar and a versatile author conversant with all the Darśanās, and in his erudite commentary we find many thoughts of Darśanās other than Vedānta coalesce into a whole which claims to represent Śaṅkara's system. The reader is referred to the body of the present work for some thought-arresting instances.

4. VIMUKTĀTMAN

Vāchaspati's liberality in incorporating Maṇḍana's views with Śaṅkara's views was naturally resented by the followers of the strictly objective-avidyā school who claimed to be the sole representatives of Śaṅkara's Advaita and noticeable

reaction was soon to follow. Vimuktātman was the first champion of the latter school to make out a strong case in their favour. He produced an independent polemical work called the *Ishṭa Siddhi* which attempted to base the doctrine of causal Avidyā or Māyā on surer foundations by taking its stand on Anubhūti or pure Intuitive Consciousness on which the entire phenomenal universe of Māyā is painted (IS., p. 35).

This Māyā or Avidyā is, as we have already learnt from the *Pañchapādikā*, undefinable either as being or non-being, and resting as it does according to Vimuktātman on Pure Consciousness, is as insecure as darkness resting in the thousand-rayed sun or coldness resting in fire (IS., p. 35), for it is neither identical with nor different from Brahman (IS., p. 36).

Unlike the author of the *Pañchapādikā*, Vimuktātman refuses to go in search of a Pramāṇa for Māyā for he declares straight away that the world is a product of Māyā or Avidyā like the illusory or 'Anirvāchya' silver seen in the mother of pearl (IS., p. 39). At the same time he has to maintain this *Anirvachanīya-Khyāti* theory as against the *Ātmakhyāti* (of the Vijñāna-Vādins), the *Akhyāti* (of the Mimāṃsakās), the *Anyathākhyāti* (of the Naiyāyikās) and the *Asatkhyāti* (of the Mādhyamikās) and a considerable portion of the work (pp. 39-323) is devoted to the refutation of these opponents by means of logical arguments leading to the conclusion that the illusory silver being Anirvachanīya demands a material cause of the same nature. This cause is to be admitted to be no other than the beginningless Avidyā (IS., p. 48).

It is interesting to note that in the course of this discussion the author dismisses the notion entertained in the

Pañchapādika that Avidyā may have external objects like the pearl-oyster also for its *locus* since the appearance of false silver etc., must be *traced to a cause*. He argues that the same Ajñāna which rests in Ātman may very well serve as the *cause* of these *false appearances* (IS., pp. 56-57).

Ignorance, according to the *Ishṭa Siddhi*, is never completely removed so long as there remains some inert thing (IS., p. 71).

Notwithstanding that Vidyā is itself the product of ignorance, Vimuktātman contends that it is not inconsistent that Avidyā can be destroyed by Knowledge in the same way as bamboos are sometimes burnt up by fire produced by their own friction (IS., p. 69). Gradual removal of portions of this Avidyā, as it were, by different grades of knowledge is, according to the *Ishṭa Siddhi*, quite conceivable since the Śruti has recommended various means of their removal (IS., pp. 73-74). Even after Avidyā has been completely destroyed, it is to be presumed that some vestige of it is left over as long as the wise man bears the body, since Śrutis and Smṛtis teach two kinds of Mukti, *Jīvanmukti* (freedom in this very life) and *Videhamukti*, release after death (IS., p. 77).

The absolute disappearance of Avidyā is neither being nor non-being ; it cannot be both, since that is a self-contradictory notion ; nor is it Anirvachanīya, for the removal of anything Anirvachanīya cannot itself be of the same status. Hence the total disappearance of Avidyā is of the fifth variety (IS., pp. 85-86). It would be more exact to say, however, that the destruction of ignorance is destruction and nothing else (IS., p. 369), and therefore there need be no discussion as to its status. This destruction is really Ātman himself known as such (IS., pp. 369, 372).

Vimuktātman is a staunch opponent of Maṇḍana's and Vāchaspati's theory that the *locus* of Avidyā is Jīva and not Brahman. He resolutely maintains that Brahman is both the locus and the object of the *Anirvachanīyāvidyā*. The whole of the sixth chapter is a sustained attack of the opponent's position in all its bearings as well as a staunch defence of his own doctrine.

The verses (VIII, 25 to 28) at the close of the work summing up its chief teachings leave us in no doubt of the object of this work which has been aptly entitled 'Iṣṭa Siddhi'.

“There is Mukti and that is to be attained by Knowledge, which alone is capable of destroying ignorance. Ignorance resides in Ātman and to him alone accrues the fruit of destruction, leaving Ātman alone in the end. Ātman is one, free from action, infinite, secondless, of the nature of Intuitive Consciousness, untainted by ignorance or its effects, resting in Himself, the light of lights, self-effulgent. The highest bliss desired by all can be known only through the Ātman taught in Vedānta. And this, as known to the knowers of the Vedās, is particularly what I have aimed at. *Now, this doctrine can be established if Avidyā is Anirvachanīya. It is therefore that I have enquired into the nature of that Avidyā, in order to achieve the desired end (IS., p. 378).*”

The Vedāntic system of the objective-avidyā school as formulated in the *Pañchapādikā* may be considered to have been reformed, fortified by logical arguments and placed on a surer footing by the Iṣṭa-Siddhi than ever before. Vedānta became more and more *dialectic* hence-forward, as may be seen from a study of its later developments.

5. PRAKĀŚĀTMAN

Prakāśātman, the disciple of Ananyānubhava, is the most celebrated of the successors of Padmapāda, the reputed author of the *Pañchapādikā*. In his production, the famous *Pañchapādikā-Vivaraṇa* he consolidated almost all that had been said before him on behalf of the objective-avidyā and made contributions of his own in such an authoritative manner that this line of thought is now known mostly as belonging to the '*Vivaraṇa School*', thus almost supplanting the *Pañchapādikā* and the *Ishṭa Siddhi*.

In endeavouring to perfect the teachings of the *Anirvachanīyāvidyā* school, Prakāśātman introduced many remarkable changes into the system. The chief innovations and improvements for which he is responsible may be summed up as follows :

(1) In disregard of the *Pañchapādikā* and the *Bhāmati*, which taught that texts dealing with Śravaṇa, Manana and Nididhyāsanā, were only *Ārīhavāda*, eulogies, in the guise of injunctions and in defiance of Śaṅkara's express statement that Brahman is not taught as subservient to any injunction, (SB. 1-1-4, p. 23), Prakāśātman avers that Śravaṇa or study of the scriptures is enjoined as a means to be practised for the *Realization* of Brahman, and that the very first Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa is meant to discuss the nature and implications of this injunction (V., p. 3).

(2) While agreeing with the *Pañchapādikā* in holding that the Anirvachanīya-Avidyā is the *material cause* of false appearances, the Vivaraṇa makes it explicit that both the false appearance and its knowledge are due to that Avidyā, and supports its views very much on the lines of the *Ishṭa Siddhi* (V., p. 14).

(3) Two more Pramāṇas are adduced to prove the necessity of the postulated *radical-Avidyā* (V., p. 13). The argument is on the whole a clearer statement and amplification of what the *Pañchapādikā* and the *Ishta Siddhi* have said. Inference of Avidyā in sleep from the waking memory, Avidyā as distinct from non-apprehension, mis-apprehension and its impressions (V., p. 16), the different ways of explaining the origin (V., p. 21), and sublation of Prātibhāsika (apparent) objects (V., p. 14), as well as the discussion of the ingredient factors which give rise to such objects (V., p. 29), the likening of the *contact* of ignorance and Ātman to the black colour super-imposed on the sky (V., p. 17), the enunciation of the *three grades* of Being (V., p. 31), emphasis on considerations which compel one to identify Avidyā and Māyā (V., pp. 31, 32), and the justification of adducing Pramāṇas for Avidyā directly Intuited by the Witnessing Ātman (V., p. 43) - these are some of the features which have tended to make the *Mūlāvidyā Theory* more rigorous than before. Prakāśātman's treatment of deep sleep, his postulate of three different *limiting conditions* of Jīva in the three different states of Consciousness, the theory of *three different Chidābhāsās* in the ignorance obtaining in the three different states which accounts for the *memory of sleep* experience (V., pp. 44, 56, 57, 58, 66) are distinct contributions which strengthened the position of this school.

(4) The function of *Tarka* or reasoning has been elaborated and some original doctrines added on to those found in the *Pañchapādikā*. Prakāśātman evidently struggles very hard to maintain his position that the Śruti alone can produce *direct cognition* of Brahman and in doing so he stretches the meaning of the word 'Tarka' ; for, according to

him, it means in the first place (1) reasoning which succeeds in removing the suspected improbability or falsity of what is taught by the Śruti and in the second place it means (2) purification of the mind with the aid of Manana (reason) and Nididhyāsana (concentration). He offers two alternative theories of the function of the Śruti in consonance with the *Pañchapādikā*. The first theory is to assume that Śruti immediately gives direct Knowledge, and Tarka only explodes the wrong conception that it is indirect. The second is to suppose that the Śruti first produces indirect knowledge only, and then with the help of 'Tarka' (in its second meaning) it produces *direct knowledge*. Prakāśātman thinks that there is nothing incongruous in the second alternative that there can be an *indirect cognition* of Brahman which is self-luminous since we have all to infer the self-luminous Consciousness of other persons (V., pp. 103-104). It is easy to see how dangerously near Maṇḍana and Vācaspati this latter theory is, for Vācaspati says "when we reason and then meditate, what we had reasoned about becomes the object of meditation and then Intuited. In this sense, reason is *subsidiary* to Intuition" (VB., p. 445).

(5) Two curious ways of accounting for the continuance of the appearance of the world even after the destruction of Avidyā are to be found in the *Vivaraṇa*. The first way is to assume that the super-imposition of the mind on the Ātman has been removed and hence the Pramāṭṛtva, the nature of being a perceiver, is obliterated. Mere Consciousness of the Self, being unrelated to the objective world, perception of duality becomes out of question, just as there is no question of a blind man perceiving colour (V., p. 203). The other view is that the liberated person realizes Advaita in the state of

Asamprajñāta Samādhi or trance, while he continues to experience duality owing to the defect arising out of the fructifying Karma (V., p. 284). The continuance of the impression of Avidyā (Avidyā Saṃskāra) or Avidyā-Leśa (remnant of Avidyā) is of course taken for granted in deference to the opinion of Maṇḍana or Vimuktātman (V., pp. 105-106). The reader will see that it is the disappearance or non-perception, and *not the realization* of the unreality, of the phenomenal world that is contemplated here.

(6) The 'cause' of the world can be conceived in three alternative ways, according to Prakāśātman : (1) Brahman conjoined with Māyā very much like a rope made up of two twisted strands is the cause ; or (2) Brahman associated with the power of Māyā is the cause ; or else (3) Brahman as the locus of Māyā, the material cause, is the cause (V., p. 212). Elsewhere, (V., p. 232) Prakāśātman cites four alternative views on this matter : (1) Brahman invested with the power of Māyā is the cause ; only the Jīvās, Its reflections, are enveloped in Avidyā ; (2) Brahman as reflected in Māyā, that is Avidyā, is the cause of the world, while the pure Brahman Itself is ever unsullied, the Jīvās being bound by ignorance ; (3) Each of the Jīvās themselves displays Brahman in the form of the world through this ignorance ; owing to similarity, the several worlds are imagined to be one and the same, in the same way as the second moons fancied by different persons suffering from cataract. Brahman in Itself is the cause of the world. (4) Brahman, though one, transforms Itself into the world owing to Its own Avidyā, as a person does in states like a dream. It is clear that by the time of Prakāśātman, Śaṅkara's Advaita had been completely submerged in an ocean of *chaotic speculations* about

cosmogony which had reared their heads under the auspices of the theory of objective-avidyā, while the genuine method of Vedānta, the Adhyārōpāpavāda, had been *clean forgotten* or *thrown into the limbo*.

6. SUCCESSORS OF PRAKĀŚĀTMAN

Vedānta after Prakāśātman mostly bears his stamp on most of its details. The *Vivaraṇa* assimilated the teachings of Maṇḍana and Vimuktātman and refuted Bhāskara's doctrines in more unmistakable terms than the *Ishṭa Siddhi* or the *Bhāmati*. It laid greater emphasis on the Anirvachanīya-Avidyā doctrine than either the *Pañchapādikā* or the *Ishṭa Siddhi*, and its doctrines appealed to the succeeding Vedāntins so much that today Śaṅkara's Vedānta is mostly equated with the doctrines of the *Vivaraṇa*, rather than with the *Bhāmati*-school. The *Pratibimbavāda*, the conception of Jīva as a reflection of Brahman in Avidyā rather than as limited by Antahkaraṇa (mind), the doctrine of Brahman and not the Jīva being the *locus* of Avidyā, and the doctrine of a single Avidyā in preference to that of innumerable Avidyās, generally find favour with the present-day Vedāntins, though the study of the *Bhāmati* as well as lip-service to Vāchaspati's views, continues to some extent.

(1) ĀNANDA-BŌDHA

This state of affairs has been brought about chiefly by the synthetical teachings of writers like Ānanda-Bōdha and Chitsukhāchārya who drew their inspiration from all the Advaitic works of importance.

The *Nyāya-Makaraṇḍa* of Ānanda-Bōdha consists of thirteen sections treating of the different topics of interest such as refutation of the difference of selves and of the

knowable objects, the theory of illusion, the unreality of the world, the self-luminosity of Ātman etc. The discussion of each subject is conducted very much after the manner of the *Brahma-Siddhi*, except for the fact that each conclusion here is couched in a formal syllogism. From Ānanda-Bōdha onwards, the use of the Mīmāṃsaka-Nyāyās for the interpretation of texts and the employment of the dialectic forms of the logicians in disputation came more and more to the forefront in Vedāntic works. For details, the present Sanskrit work may be consulted with profit.

(2) SRI HARSHA

This writer's *Khaṇḍana-Khaṇḍakhādyā* ushered in a new phase of Vedāntic discussion. Sri Harsha believes that all duality is Anirvachanīya, that is to say, indefinable. He is not content like his predecessors with the assertion that the world is Anirvachanīya because it is the product of Avidyā of that nature. He challenges the dualists - especially the logicians - to produce an invulnerable definition of any logical category and claims to be able to refute it *in toto*. He has devised a scheme of dialectic for refuting all the categories of any dualistic system. The following verse embodies the steps of procedure to be adopted in criticizing any particular position :

तत्तुल्योहस्तदीयं च योजनं विषयान्तरे ।

शुद्धखला तस्य शेषे च त्रिधा भ्रमति मज्जिया ॥

“My dialectic moves in three directions :

1. Hit upon some argument similar to those already advanced to criticize any new definition brought forward by the other party ;
2. Or, apply one of the criticisms already set forth in this

work to other cases where new modes of defence are brought forward by the disputant ;

3. Or else, take up any one of the many terms which make up a proposition enounced by the opposite side and begin another criticism of what it denotes on the lines already indicated, and when the opponent has exhausted his resources of an argument on that point, take to the examination of another concept in the same manner (SKh., p. 419). It goes without saying that this species of *dialectics* leads the disputants nowhere and that is just what hyper-criticism aims at.

Sri Harsha's contention is that Advaita need not be proved inasmuch as it is self-established. Since all items of dualistic systems stand self-condemned, it necessarily follows that Reality is Advaita unaffected by the Anirvachanīya phenomena.

(3) CHITSUKHĀCHĀRYA

Chitsukha follows Sri Harsha's foot-steps in criticizing the categories of both the Naiyāyikās and the Vaiśeshikās. The lure of logical treatment of topics, however, tempted him so much that he attempted fresh definitions and proceeded to offer logical proofs - sometimes even adopting *Mahāvīdyāś'* or round-about syllogisms in favour of the Anirvacanīyāvidyā and other doctrines of the neo-Śāṅkarites. He thus overshoots his mark forgetting his model Sri Harsha's warning that his dialectic is interested only in demolishing the definitions of the dualists and not in defining or proving anything, since the dialectic never presumes the reality or unreality of any

1. This species of sophistic syllogisms said to have been started by Kularka Pundita were first refuted by Vadindra in his *Mahāvīdyā-Viḍāmbana*.

definition or proof. Sri Harsha's strict position is that *no proof* can be demanded for defending *Advaita*, since proof may be right or wrong even when what is sought to be proved is real. It is enough for him that *Advaita* is *revealed* by the Upanishads.

(4) SARVAJÑĀTMAN

The hypothesis that Sarvajñātman was the disciple of Sureśwarāchārya is now generally discredited. That this supposition - merely based on the flimsy evidence of the word 'Deveśvara', the name of the author's Guru occurring at the beginning and the end of the *Śaṅkshhepa-Śārīraka* - lacks historical support, has been now proved upto the hilt. But even in the absence of such a proof, a cursory glance at the contents of the work would be enough to show that Sarvajñātman has no connection whatever with Sureśwara, for the *Śaṅkshhepa-Śārīraka* from his pen is no more than an exposition of the objective Anirvacanīyāvidyā doctrine unknown to Sureśwara.

The procedure adopted here is mainly on the lines of the *Vivaraṇa*. Besides conducting a detailed examination of the relation between Adhyāsa and Avidyā, Sarvajñātman made certain contributions of out-standing importance to this school. The following deserve special mention :

1. He maintains that positive statements like '*Tat Tvam Asi*' (That Thou Art) are better suited to describe the nature of Ātman than negative texts like '*Neti Neti*' (SS. 1-250 to 262).

2. That Brahman through the medium of Avidyā and not Brahman qualified by or reflected in Avidyā - is the cause of the world (1-320 to 333).

3. That perception is a Pramāṇa for *Sanmātra* or Pure

Being (1-45, 55) and Bādarāyaṇa rejects the *Ārambhavāda* (of the Vaiśeṣikās), the *Sanghātavāda* (of the Buddhās), and the *Pariṇāmavāda* (of the Sāṅkhyās), and prefers the *Vivartavāda* alone. It is admitted, however, that from the Ārōpa stand-point, the Sūtrakāra teaches the *Pariṇāmavāda* for the use of the lowest grade of enquirers and *Vivarta* for the mediocre minds, while he reserves the *Advaita-Dṛṣhti* for the highest minds. Sarvajñātman is an *Ekajīva-Vādin*, that is to say, he holds that Brahman alone has become the Jīva and sees the world in the form of Ākāśa etc. The preceptor, the Vedā and reason - all figments of Avidyā - are the means of getting rid of this Jīva-nature (2-162, 163). He therefore, rejects Maṇḍana's and Vāchaspati Mīśra's doctrine that the locus of Avidyā is Jīva (2-174). Pure Consciousness that knows no distinctions is alone the locus and object (Āśrayatva-Vishayatva-Bhāginī Nirvibhāga-Chitireva Kevalā आश्रयत्वविषयत्वभागिनी निर्विभागचित्तिरेव केवला). The knowledge of the true meaning of the Mahāvākyās like 'That Thou Art', says Sarvajñātman, results from dispassion, the discrimination of the meaning of the words 'That' and 'Thou' in the text, the determination of the true import of the text and practice of Sādhana or discipline, both external and internal.

In the course of the discussion of the meaning of the word 'Thou' (in the Vedāntic text) Sarvajñātman argues that agency and enjoyment of the fruits of action do not really pertain to the nature of the Self, since they are both objectified by the Consciousness of the Self, while in sleep all is merged in Avidyā as may be verified by waking-memory. Śaṅkara's *denial* of Avidyā in sleep should be interpreted only to mean that we do not conceive it clearly as distinct from us. Ignorance is of course *unreal*, since it is

known through Intuition (3-113 to 131, 139). Sarvajñātman sets great store by the import of the *Mahāvākyās* or texts that teach the identity of the individual and the Supreme-Self. The Upādhis, the semblance of *Chit* (Consciousness), the reflection of Chit and also the original Chit itself are all the component factors that make up the object denoted by the words 'That' and 'Thou'. The author explains at length how the Śruti aims at teaching the Absolute or secondless Chit as the 'Akhandārtha' as it is technically called. The original should be *carefully* studied before one is able to appreciate this *complicated teaching* (3-306 to 318).

The distinction of Sadyōmukti and Jīvanmukti is another special feature of Sarvajñātman's teaching. Ignorance is utterly burnt up by Knowledge and so the knowing one is immediately *released*. Jīvanmukti taught by the scripture is not to be taken *seriously* (4-38, 39). An alternative opinion is also allowed that the apparent continuance (*Bādhitānuvṛtti*) of Avidyā even after it is blotted out is possible till the fructifying Karma is exhausted (4-10 to 46). Sarvajñātman perfected the doctrines of Anirvachanīya-Bhāvāvidyā in many respects. He was mostly in favour of the Vivaraṇa school and therefore ruthlessly opposed many of the Maṇḍana and Vāchaspati doctrines by adopting a dialectic of his own. As many as seven different theories about the *locus* of Avidyā have been enumerated and confuted by this writer, thus showing that the Monism of Avidyā-speculators had been split up into several different sub-schools by that time.

CONCLUSION

This short sketch of the history of Vedāntic thought from the remotest times up to the time of Sarvajñātman, is expected to give the reader an idea of the various *attempts and failures*

of several Vedāntins at *systematizing* the Upanishadic doctrines. This epoch is marked by three principle turning points :

1. The ancient period presenting a phase comprising many divergent schools of Monism along with the traditional school, the precursor of Gauḍapāda's, which was perhaps not very dominant then.

2. The middle period presenting the phase of *Vivid Consciousness* of the un-adulterated traditional method represented by Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara and Sureśwara.

3. The third period presenting the phase of the objective-avidyā doctrine of many shades, professing to follow and defend Śaṅkara's views against a solitary dissidence - that of Bhāskara - but casting the *traditional method* into the shade. This period is also marked by a tendency to *speculate and ratiocinate*, as well as a fondness for interpreting Vedāntic texts in *alternative* ways in *disregard of experience*, quietly ignoring the principle that Truth and Reality are *unalterably uniform* in their nature.

The human mind has been, from time immemorial, in quest of universal and absolutely certain Knowledge of Truth and Reality, and the result has been the emergence of so many systems of philosophy in conflict with one another. Nevertheless, the intensity of the search is not abated a whit, and philosophers are sure and certain of getting at the Truth some day. Neither empirical science which relies on the data supplied by the senses, nor speculation which hopes to build up a *consistent system* with the help of reason applied to *partial experience* can satisfy this hunger for Truth or fulfil the hope, for the simple reason that both are limited to *partial views* of Reality. Moreover, the procedure of both science

and speculation is *circumscribed* by time and space, two factors that *cast a doubt* on the *finality* of the conclusion of either. Critical reason no doubt can espouse the claim of individual speculative systems or even show the hollowness of the pretensions of all reasoning as such, but can never land us in Truth or Reality, for it is primarily a *faculty of examining* but not of *creating or revealing* views and facts. A critical philosopher can hastily conclude that the human mind is unable to *know the real in itself*, or can at best suspend his judgment. The mystic can indeed pride himself on the *direct vision* of Reality in a *special trance* not vouchsafed to ordinary mortals. But others may question the genuineness of that *vision* for the very reason that it is limited to a *particular state* of particular individuals and *not universal* as Reality ought to be.

The Upanishads, however, have found a way out of this *labyrinth*. They declare with one voice that Truth and Reality *combined* in one, can be Intuited in one's own Self when one *transcends* both the senses and the mind. This Intuition of the Self is *universal*, for, as Śaṅkara says, everyone is Conscious of one's own Existence and can never conceive the opposite. And this Self is the Reality (SB. p. 6).-Again this Intuition is limited neither by time nor by space, for both of these belong to the region of the not-self and are conceivable only by the empirical 'me' which again pre-supposes the true Self. The latter can be neither affirmed nor doubted, neither proved nor disproved to exist, neither accepted nor rejected, neither *experienced as an object* nor thought away, for It is the *prius* which supplies the *very ground* of these thought-processes. Only variant views of It are possible for speculators, whence it follows that the assistance of reason may be usefully sought

for removing all constructs of imagination upon It by a direct appeal to this *universal Intuition* Itself. It is interesting to observe how, taking advantage of the universal and absolutely certain nature of this Intuition, which is really the Self of all sentient beings, every Upanishad, proposing to teach Brahman or Ātman, starts with presuming some thought-construct or other as applicable to the Self, and then proceeds gradually to show how that attribute is really foreign to Its nature. In fact, the Upanishads have the sole aim of hammering a single idea into the inquirer's head, to wit, any and every notion, positive or negative, entertained with regard to this Brahman would be a false ascription, screening Its true nature, and therefore the only way of correctly *knowing* It, is to disregard every such ascription and Intuit It just as It is, our own self-established Self free from all imaginable constructs of Avidyā, aye, from Avidyā itself for that matter. This *truth* is forcefully brought out in the following excerpt from Śaṅkara's Aitareya Bhāshya :

“It is, is not ; one, many ; with attributes, without attributes ; knows, knows not ; is active, passive ; experiences the fruit of action, does not experience the fruit ; has a cause, has no cause ; is happiness, misery ; within, without ; void, not void ; another, myself, or some one else - whosoever tries to ascribe such constructs of imagination to this Absolute beyond speech and concepts would as well try to roll up the sky like a piece of leather or to climb it up with his steps as though it were a flight of stairs, or to get on the trail of birds in the sky or of fish in water.” (Ait. Bh. concluding observations on the first chapter).

Many an attempt at interpretation of the Upanishads has become a failure, just because the various *systematizers* were

not aware of this *unique method* of procedure adopted in the Śrutis. While most of the systems, detailed in the present work, were aware of the Monistic tendency of the Upanishads, they uncritically presumed that the present state of the Jīva is a fall from the ideal Brahmic nature, and so some effort is necessary to re-transform it into its pristine glory. They never suspected for a moment that the *essential nature* of each one of us as well as of the whole world of duality is really Brahman or the Absolute, eternally unsullied by a second, except for the Super-impositions of Avidyā.

The credit of having drawn the attention of Vedāntins to the *only traditional method* of interpreting the Upanishads, which *successfully reconciles* all the *apparently conflicting texts* and *points to a system* in those sacred writings, belongs, as shown in the pages of this book, to Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara and Sureśwara - the three *resplendent stars* that sparkle unbedimmed in the Vedāntic heavens. Guided by them, we can all listen to the *heart-stirring teachings* of the Upanishads which sing the glory of Brahman and exhort us to give up our *mental aberrations* due to Avidyā, and return to our Brāhmic nature which is really ours *now and for ever*.

OM TAT SAT

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