

## YOGA IN ŚAṆKARA'S ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

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I had on an earlier occasion written in one of my papers, examining Śaṅkara's commentaries on the Brahmasūtras (BS), that Śaṅkarācārya, while vehemently opposing the ontological stand of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, was not averse to speak approvingly of some of the yogic practices themselves. Thus he does oppose Yoga as a school of philosophy in his commentary on Brahmasūtra (BS) *etena yogaḥ pratyuktaḥ* II.1.3 for instance. He is also not opposed to meditation per se, called *upāsanā*. Right at the beginning of the introduction to BS. I. 1. 12 for instance, Śaṅkara, makes it clear "that in the state of ignorance Brahman can come within the range of empirical dealings, comprising the object of (worshipful or notional) meditation, the meditator, and so on. Of such meditations, some are conducive to the attainment of higher states and some to liberation by stages, and some to the greater efficacy of actions. These differ in accordance with the qualities or conditioning factors involved"<sup>1</sup>. Again talking about the different *vidyās* or *upāsanās* like Śaṇḍilya etc.,<sup>2</sup> he points out that they are all the same as their object of meditation is identical. But lest one gets the idea that an object such as Brahman is to be meditated on, we are told that Brahman as identified with the mind is to be meditated on, thus indicating its difference from the yogic meditation.

A considerable portion of the commentaries on *sūtras* in the third *pāda* of the third chapter (*adhyāya*) and the first *pāda* of the fourth chapter are devoted to discussions on both the practices and the results that accrue through meditation. Commentaries under BS. IV. I. 4, 5 make it clear that it is the idea of Brahman that is superimposed on sun etc., and meditated upon. The discussion on meditating in a sitting posture is also interesting.<sup>3</sup> Thus *dhyāna* or meditation is accepted and strongly advocated by Śaṅkara albeit different from Yoga *dhyāna*.

<sup>1</sup> Gambhīrānanda, *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya*, (BSBh) p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> BSBh III. 3.19

<sup>3</sup> Brahmasūtra (BS). IV. 1. 7. and Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* (SBh)

When we examine Śaṅkara's own statements in his acknowledged works, like his commentaries on the BS and those accepted as his Upaniṣad commentaries, as well as the *Upadeśasahasrī* (*Upadss*), we realize that his attitude towards Yoga is positive. As is well known he quotes and also refers to the Yogaśāstra in many places in the BS. Whether he is referring to the same *Yogasūtras* (YS) of Patañjali that we are familiar with or not, need not concern us here. But a number of references do appear as if he knew not only the YS of Patañjali, but also the *sūtras* along with the *bhāṣya* of Vyāsa. His enumeration of the five *vr̥ttis* under BS. II.4.12 and his reference to *padmāsana* under IV.1.10 as found in Patañjali's YS and in the Vyāsabhāṣya (VyBh) respectively, leads us to surmise that he perhaps was referring to Patañjali's YS along with the VyBh. He also speaks approvingly of practices like *yama*, *niyama*, *dhyāna*<sup>4</sup> etc. He has no problem to admitting the yogic *siddhis*<sup>5</sup> and the powers that come through meditation on Īśvara,<sup>6</sup> he believes in the *siddhi* of entering into another body by giving up one's own body in his reference to Sulabha<sup>7</sup>, he makes reference to the acquisition of many bodies, and powers like *aṇimā* etc, by anyone who practices yoga assiduously,<sup>8</sup> thus all these points indicate his familiarity, as well as his acceptance of Yoga and its principles.

His definition of *saṃradhanā*, translated as *saṃādhi*, resembles that of Vyāsa under YS III. 24, though he will give a different understanding of it, in keeping with his Advaita Vedānta (AdV) metaphysics. Thus, Śaṅkara believes, he needs to explain the distinction between the idea of *saṃradhanā/saṃādhi/dhyāna* in AdV as opposed to *saṃādhi* in Yoga in his commentaries on the set of *sūtras* BS III. 2. 24-30.<sup>9</sup> Sūtra commentaries on III. 25-30 address the question raised by the *pūrvapakṣin* that a relationship of meditator and meditated will lead to the separation of the Self and the self.<sup>10</sup> In these *sūtra*-commentaries he takes great pains to explain away the idea of duality that can arise due to such statements as "Moreover, Brahman is realized in *saṃādhi* [*saṃradhane*] as is known from direct revelation and inference" (trans. Swāmī Gambhīrānanda), by quoting from the various Upaniṣads for support like 'One

can see that indivisible Self through meditation'<sup>11</sup> or 'One reaches the self effulgent Puruṣa that is higher than the higher'<sup>12</sup> (trans. Swāmī Gambhīrānanda). However, what stands out clearly in these attempts is the fact that while *dhyāna* was a well accepted mode of spiritual discipline in Yoga, there was great difficulty of comprehending what *nididhyāsana* stood for, which is the AdV equivalent of *dhyāna* also understood as *saṃādhi*. One can thus find innumerable examples in the *bhāṣya* on the Brahmasūtras and Śaṅkara's Upaniṣad commentaries, wherein Śaṅkara adopts the practices as well as the vocabulary of the Yogaśāstra, whenever there is a need to explain himself in those categories. It, therefore, became mandatory for Śaṅkara to spend a lot of energy explaining how *nididhyāsana* or *dhyāna* has to be understood in the AdV context. One realizes that Śaṅkara is not dismissing the yogic *dhyāna* practice but is only pointing out the difference that exists between *nididhyāsana* and *dhyāna* even though both of them stand for meditation, albeit in different senses.

As I continue to read some of Śaṅkara's Upaniṣad commentaries and his *Upadeśasahasrī* (*Upadss*), the feeling grows, that there is no headlong confrontation by Śaṅkara to the practices that Yoga advocates. I shall look at some of the Upaniṣad commentaries of Śaṅkara and at the *Updss*, to gain some more insight into the attitude of Śaṅkara towards Yoga. However there will be no attempt to discuss the difference between the yogic *prasaṃkhyāna* and the use of *prasaṃkhyāna* by Śaṅkara's AdV as that will get us into another sphere altogether.<sup>13</sup>

References to Yoga in the early Upaniṣads that Śaṅkarācārya commented on are indeed scarce. Even so, we do have enough references to Yoga in its many dimensions, both in Śaṅkara's commentaries and the *Updss* itself, to enable us to understand his attitude towards Yoga, both as a spiritual practice and in its metaphysical principles. In this presentation I am only looking for references that in some way can be related to what can be called Patañjali's *aṣṭāṅgayoga* advocated in the YS.

While *nididhyāsana* is the ultimate means to Brahman-realization in AdV and is usually translated as meditation and resembles *saṃādhi* in Yoga,

4 BSBh. III.3.28, IV. I. 8, 11.

5 BSBh. III. 3.30.

6 BSBh on IV. 1.13.

7 BSBh. III. 3. 32. see also Mahābhārata Śāntiparvan

8 BSBh on I.3.27.

9 *api cainamātmānam nirastasamastaprapañcamavyaktam saṃradhanakāle paśyanti yoginaḥ. saṃradhanam ca bhaktidhyānapranidhānādyanuṣṭhānam.* SBh on BS. III 2. 24

10 *nanu saṃradhyasamradhakabhāvābhūyupagamatparāparātmanorānratnyam syādīti*

11 Mund. Up. III.1.8.

12 Muṇḍ Up. III. 1.8.

13 Those interested can refer to the illuminating article by Vidyasankar Sundaesan in The Adyar Library Bulletin, *Brahma Vidyā*, 1998.

it is more often used interchangeably with *dhyāna* in Adv. But there is a vast difference in the connotation of the words *nididhyāsana* and *dhyāna*, though both stand for meditation in Adv. It is this lack of distinction or the difficulty of distinguishing the difference between the two types of *dhyāna*, one used in the yogic sense and the other in the Advaita sense of *nididhyāsana*, that has led later writers like Sadānanda conflating the methodology of *nididhyāsana* into something like *samādhi* of the YS. I shall discuss this mixing up of categories towards the close of this presentation.

The meaning of *dhyāna* in Patañjali's YS is the continuous flow of the same stream of knowledge which has as its support the object used as support for meditation.<sup>14</sup> Thus clearly there is recognized an outer object which can aid in the attainment of *dhyāna* which can then lead to *samādhi* in Patañjali's YS. As Adv. does not allow any reality outside that of Brahman it cannot countenance an outside object as support that will lead to Brahman-realization. Its dictum '*sarvaṃ khalu idam brahma*' cannot posit a false object as an object or support of meditation. Therefore we find many ways of understanding the word *dhyāna* in Śaṅkara's commentaries and a serious attempt to distance Adv. *dhyāna* from yogic *dhyāna* is evidenced in Śaṅkara's works as we notice in his commentaries on BS III. 2. 24-30.

In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad (BrU), Yājñavalkya instructs Maitreyī and says '*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ-śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyo maitreyī*' i.e. the Self should be realized, should be heard of, reflected on and meditated upon. Śaṅkara's commentary on this hardly tells us anything, in this context, to distinguish between the two meanings of *nididhyāsana* and *dhyāna*. He just translates *nididhyāsana* as 'ascertained to be such and such and not otherwise' (trans. Mādhavānanda).<sup>15</sup> Śravaṇa is hearing from the teacher, *manana* is reflection on what one has heard from the teacher and *nididhyāsana* is just getting a confirmation of what one has already reflected on. Surely this is not enough for us to understand what this *nididhyāsana* is and how it is different from the familiar Yoga *dhyāna* as understood from the YS.

The same Up. in 1.4.7 has a lengthy explanation on the way one needs to understand meditation in the Adv. context. Śaṅkara uses all the examples like *tat tvamasi*, *aham brahmāsmi*, *ayamātmā brahma* etc., only to direct the

<sup>14</sup> *tasmin deṣe dhyeyāmbanasya pratyayasyaikatānatā sadṛśaḥ pravāhaḥ pratyāyantarēṇa aparāmṛṣṭo dhyānam*. Vyāsaśāstra (VyBh) on YS III. 2

<sup>15</sup> *niscayena dhyātavyaḥ*, BrU.IV.5.6

mind to the fact that there is nothing else which is real other than the Self (*ātman*). The opponent then raises a very interesting question asking whether the control of the mind as mentioned in Yoga (*cittavṛttinirodhaḥ*) can be enjoined in Advaita as a means to self-realization. If Śaṅkara wanted to dismiss Yoga totally, here was an opportunity to do so. But he glosses over this and just says that it is not a means to *mokṣa*/liberation<sup>16</sup>. He even turns it around and says that control of mental states themselves depend on knowledge of the self and continuous remembrance about it.<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to note that Śaṅkara at once mentions that he only admits this contingently<sup>18</sup> and asserts that there is no other means to Self realization except knowledge. But the difficulty of comprehending the concept of *nididhyāsana* also called *dhyāna* and *vijñāna* still remains and is amply testified to in the BSBh as well as the BrU commentary.

Let us see how Śaṅkara negotiates the few references to Yoga that we find in some of the other Upaniṣads he commented on. As long as the issue of the unity of Brahman is not threatened Śaṅkara has no problem of approving the yogic method. Verse II.2.3 of the Muṇḍakopaniṣad has many similes reminiscent of yoga. Thus it says: "Taking hold of the bow, the great weapon familiar in the Upaniṣads, one should fix on it an arrow sharpened with meditation. Drawing the string ... hit that target that is the imperishable, with the mind absorbed in its thought" (Trans. Swāmī Gambhīrānanda). Śaṅkara, in his commentary on the verse, approvingly uses these similes to elucidate his own method of meditation.<sup>19</sup> However, he has to make a few changes to suit his purpose. Thus he translates the word *upāsāniṣitam* (sharpened by meditation) first as *tanūkṛtam* which will not serve his purpose as *tanūkṛtam* has already got the standard meaning of the afflictions or *kleśas* being weakened in Yoga. Since Adv. does not subscribe to the theory of *kleśas* as such, he has to substitute the word *tanūkṛtam* with *samskṛtam* or purified. But apart from these minor changes he makes, he does not have any difficulty with adopting the Yoga methodology, without of course falling into the trap of admitting Brahman as an *ālambana* or support for meditation.

<sup>16</sup> *na mokṣasādhānatvena anavagamāt*.

<sup>17</sup> *na hyātmavijñānatatsmṛtisamtānavyatīrekeṇa cittavṛttinirodhasya sādhanamasti*. ibid

<sup>18</sup> *abhyupagamyedamuktam*.

<sup>19</sup> i. *tat veddhavyaṃ manasā tādayitavyaṃ, tasmin manasaḥ samādhānam kartavyam ... akṣare cetaḥ samādhatsva*; bhāṣya on 11.2.2.

ii. *upāsāniṣitam santātabhidhyānena tanūkṛtam, samskṛtam ityetaḥ; samadadhīta samdhānam kuryāt... āyama ākṣya sendriyamantaḥkaraṇaṃ svaviśayādvivartya lakṣyam evāvarjitam kṛtvetyarthaḥ*. ibid on 11. 2.3.

However, Om as the symbol which is Brahman, is admitted as an *ālambana* in many Upaniṣads, as is well known. We also know that meditation on the conditioned Brahman is also accepted by Śaṅkara albeit as inferior, fit only for the dull witted which is the view of both the Upaniṣads and Śaṅkara<sup>20</sup>. It is in the fourth verse of Muṇḍakopaniṣad II. 2 that the yogic simile is completely invoked. Thus it says: Om is the bow; the *self/ātman* is the arrow and Brahman is the target. Drawing the string one is exhorted to hit the target of Brahman with a mind that has become one with it. Śaṅkara in his commentary on this verse uses language that is reminiscent of Yoga practice. Annotating the word *apramattena* (unerring) Śaṅkara explains it as “one who is free from the error of desiring to enjoy external objects, who is detached from everything, who has control over his senses and has concentration of mind” (trans. Swāmī Gambhīrānanda). He advocates concentration of the mind in a one-pointed manner in order to penetrate the one principle of consciousness.<sup>21</sup> The methodology is highly reminiscent of the Yoga practice of *pratyāhāra* and his use of the word *ekāgracitta* in his commentary can only mean his endorsement of the Yoga practice of concentration.

Another Upaniṣad which has reference to Yoga is the Kathopaniṣad (Kath. Up) where verses II. 3. 10 & 11 have clearly yogic resonances. Thus: “When the five senses of knowledge come to rest together with the mind, and the intellect does not function, that state they call the highest”; “They consider keeping the senses steady as Yoga. One becomes vigilant at that time, for yoga is subject to growth and decay” (trans. Swāmī Gambhīrānanda). Śaṅkara’s commentaries on these verses tell us how he reconciles Yoga methodology to fit his Adv. Thus his commentary on Kath. Up II. 3. 10 clearly endorses Yoga and its method of withdrawing the mind and the intellect (*antaḥkaraṇa*) from all activity in order to realize Ātman which is here described as the ruler in the heart. However in his commentary on II. 3. 11 he clarifies what he understands by Yoga, and states that though Yoga means enjoining in general, it is, in reality, *viyoga* or disjoining,<sup>22</sup> as the mind is withdrawn from all contact with all things superimposed by ignorance on it.<sup>23</sup> Thus Śaṅkara distances himself from the definition of yoga as *samādhi* which we find in the

20 SBh. on BS. IV.1.2

21 ... *bāhyaviṣayopalaḍḍhiṣṇāpamāḍavarjitena sarvaṭo viraktena jīṭendriyeṇa ekāgracittena veddhavyaṃ brahma lakṣyam .... vedhanādūrdhvaṃ śaravaṭ tanmayah bhavet ...* ibid on II.2.4

22 ... *yogamiti mānyānte viyogameva santam.* Bhāṣya on Kath. U III. 3. 11.

23 *etasyām hyavasthāyām avidyādhyāropanavṛjitasvārūpapratīṣṭha ātmā ...* ibid.

VyBh under YS I.<sup>24</sup> Yoga, understood as withdrawing the mind from all that is other than Brahman, is what Śaṅkara wants to emphasize as Yoga in Adv. Given that caveat Śaṅkara has no problem admitting Yoga as a methodology to be practiced in Adv. This is made clear in his commentary on Kath. Up. II. 3. 18 when he says that Naciketas acquired both the knowledge and the process of Yoga from Mṛtyu<sup>25</sup>. One gets the same method of approach in other Upaniṣadbhāṣyas as well.

There is no difference to this understanding and instruction that one gets from the Upadss. as well. This is made clear in the Upadss. by the introduction of the method of *parisaṃkhyāna* that is to be followed in the practice of meditation. Sundaresan has made clear how the method of *parisaṃkhyāna* meditation on the Self in the Upadss. presumes an exclusion of the non-Self which paves the way “for the non-dual Self-knowledge from the Upaniṣads.”<sup>26</sup> The Upadss describes *parisaṃkhyāna* in the following manner:<sup>27</sup>

I who am of the nature of consciousness not attached to anything, changeless, immovable ... extremely subtle and not an object, cannot ... be made an object and touched by sound ... or by its special forms such as the notes of... praise etc., which are pleasant and desirable .... So there is no loss or gain due to sound. Pleasant or unpleasant sound regarded as belonging to the self glorifies or injures an ignorant man on account of indiscrimination. But it cannot do the slightest good or evil to me who am a man of knowledge (trans. Swāmī Jagadānanda)

Thus when we look at Śaṅkara’s references to Yoga in all the commentaries accepted by scholars as his genuine works as well as the Upadss. we have to admit that Śaṅkara accepts and respects Yoga practices and in particular *dhyāna* for spiritual progress, while at the same he vehemently opposes its ontological dualistic stand. It is interesting to note that Śaṅkara, while opposing the dualistic stand of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, uses the argument of yogic meditation to dismiss the notion of *pradhāna* when he says that it is *māyā* that is denoted by the word *ajā* in the Upaniṣads and adds that it is “through the Yoga of meditation that the seers entered Brahman and saw the

24 *yogaḥ samādhiḥ sa ca sārvaḥaumaḥ cittasya dharmah.* YSBh on YS I. 1.

25 *mṛtyuproktām etām yathoktām brahmavidyām yogavidhiṃ ca kṛtsnam samastam sopakaraṇam saphalamityetat.* Bhāṣya under Kath. Up. II. 3. 18.

26 Adyar Library Bulletin, *Brahma Vidyā*, 1998, p.81.

27 T.S.Rukmani, “Śaṅkara’s Views on Yoga ...” in *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 21, 1993.



hidden power which is Māyā".<sup>28</sup> This certainly reveals the tremendous respect for the methodology of Yoga for spiritual progress that Śaṅkara had.

However, the difficulty of fully understanding Śaṅkara's approach to *dhyāna/nididhyāsana*, has led to writers like Sadānanda confusing the issue. Sadānanda the author of the *Vedāntasāra*, who is assigned to the middle of the fifteenth century of the Common Era by Swāmī Nikhilānanda, and to the mid-sixteenth century by Hiriyanna<sup>29</sup> uses besides *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*, *samādhi* as well, in the path to Self realization. Śaṅkara admits only the first three as means to *mokṣa* and *samādhi* is not explicitly mentioned as another means or as the fourth. It is puzzling to see that Hiriyanna in his annotated translation of the *Vedāntasāra* does not comment on the enumeration of *Samādhi* as a means to Self-realization.<sup>30</sup>

The explanation of *śravaṇa* and *manana* by Sadānanda, follows the usual explanations as understood from the BSBh and the different Upaniṣads. But when he starts explaining *nididhyāsana* he slips into Yoga terminology in order to explain how the state of *mokṣa* is attained. The apparent ease with which Yoga lays down the path to *mokṣa/kaivalya* seems a practical goal and thus has attracted other schools as well to adopt its vocabulary. One is reminded of the *Sāṅkhyakārikās* failing to explicate its concept of *mokṣa* and then the *Sāṅkhyasūtras*, assigned again to the 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> centuries of the common era, following Misra, adopting a similar Yoga language to get at its *jīvanmukti* concept and failing in the process to do so. So much so it almost threatens the very existence of *jīvanmukti* in Śaṅkhya as first propounded by Īśvarakṛṣṇa.<sup>31</sup>

Sadānanda's efforts to equate *nididhyāsana* to a two fold *savikalpaka-samādhi* and *nirvikalpaka-samādhi* does not do any justice to Śaṅkara's AdV. This is perhaps the reason why Vijñānabhikṣu in his *Yogavārttika* ridicules the so-called Vedāntins trying to compare their *nirvikalpa-samādhi* to the Yoga one which is very different.<sup>32</sup> In fact it is not possible to imagine a two stage

28 Swāmī Nikhilānanda (Trans) *Vedāntasāra*, Introduction; M.Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 341.

29 Hiriyanna just glosses *savikalpaka-samādhi* as "the three (jñātr, jñāna and jñeya) together ... known as the tripuṭī". He uses the Pūrvamīmāṃsā technical word to describe this state and strangely enough does not seem to be bothered about the nature of the Ātman described in Pūrvamīmāṃsā, which is so different from Advaita Vedānta.

30 T.S.Rukmani "Revisiting the jīvanmukti question in Sāṅkhya" in Knut Jacobsen (Ed.) *Theory and Practice of Yoga*, 2005.

31 T.S.Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu*, Vol. I. p.15 and notes 6 and 7 on p. 15.

32 Vidyasankar Sundaresan op.cit. p.60.

*samādhi* in AdV for meditation to be enjoined on. Śaṅkara as already pointed out has defined Yoga as disjoining i.e. disjoining the mind from everything other than Brahman which means the meditation is of a different kind from that of Yoga here. The difficulty of explaining *nididhyāsana* has been acknowledged in the AdV tradition and has led to many ways of explaining it. The usual one is to translate it as 'meditation on the Self' when of course we get into the question of whether the object has to be real which then leads to the statement that "Meditation does not require its object to be real, and one may meditate on a completely imaginary thing ....".<sup>33</sup> Of course since this is not satisfactory Sureśvara steps in with his *parisaṅkhyā-vidhi* which is understood as the rejection of meditation on the non-Self.<sup>34</sup> One could conclude from the above examples that Śaṅkarācārya is not against meditation as such but like all other concepts meditation/*dhyāna* has to be understood in terms of his AdV.

Sadānanda does not adopt any of the limiting devices and after describing *manana* as a continuous reflection on Brahman, goes on to describe *nididhyāsana* as a stream of ideas of the same kind as that of Brahman.<sup>35</sup> When he says "*vastusajātīyapratyaya*" the words *vastu* and *sajātīya* assume that there is something to meditate on which lends itself to a continuous stream of the same thing. One is tempted to go back to Sureśvara's *parisaṅkhyā-vidhi* in order to avoid precisely this difficulty i.e. recalling to mind a *vastu*. This assumption of a *vastu*, without the restrictive *parisaṅkhyā-vidhi*, leads him (Sadānanda) to posit the fourth means as *Samādhi* and further divide it into *savikalpaka* and *nirvikalpaka-samādhi*. He describes *savikalpaka-samādhi* as having self-consciousness i.e. where "the mental state, taking the form of Brahman, ... rests on It, but without the merging of the distinction of knower, knowledge and the object of knowledge"<sup>36</sup> (Trans. Nikhilānanda). One is tempted to raise the question as to who the knower and the known object are in this context. As earlier pointed out, Śaṅkara explains the nature of meditation.

33 ibid. p.61.

34 *vijātīyadehādipratyayarahita-advitīyavastu-sajātīyapratyayapravāho nididhyāsanam. Vedāntasāra*, op. cit. p.108.

35 *tatra savikalpako nāma jñātrjñānādivikalpalayānapekṣayā-advitīyavastuni tadākārā-kāritāyāścittavṛttera-vasthānam*. ibid. p. 109.

36 *na pratīke nahi sah. BS. IV. 1. 4; na pratīkeṣvātmamatiṁ badhñīyāt. na hi ṣa upāsakaḥ pratīkāni vyastānyātmavēnākalayet yatpunarbrahmapratīkātmān. brahmatvaṁ tataścātmāvatamiti, tadasat. pratīkābhāvaprasaṅgāt. Vikārasvarūpopamardena hi nāmadijātasyā brahmatvamevāśritam bhavati .. SBh. on BS. IV. 1. 4.*

under BS. IV. 1. 1-12. One understands that one meditates on the sun, for instance, as Brahman and not vice-versa. Thus as BS IV. 1. 4 explains, the idea of Brahman is itself superimposed on the sun etc.<sup>37</sup> There is thus, a basic difference in the meditation technique of AdV and the Yoga school. As Yoga has no problem with the reality of the outside objects it allows for meditation on any outside object which can eventually lead to *kaivalya* through *samprajñāta* and *asamprajñāta-samādhi*.<sup>38</sup>

AdV based on the Upaniṣads and as developed by Śaṅkara's commentaries on the BS. and the Upaniṣads has been at pains to point out repeatedly that there cannot be knowledge of Brahman as an object in the way we understand in the ordinary world. But in Sadānanda there is a blurring of these boundaries. His example which explains this state as the consciousness of Brahman being present like when a clay elephant is known there is the presence of the clay as well, does not help matters much.<sup>39</sup> The clay and the elephant being present goes against both the *niyama-vidhi* of Śaṅkara and the *parisaṅkhyāna-vidhi* of Sureśvara. The *mṛṇmaya* example used by Uddālaka Āruṇi in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad is to illustrate the immanence of Brahman which is correct for the understanding of the *vastutattva*. But when Sadānanda further goes on to explain *nirvikalpaka-samādhi* he slips into Yoga language and explains it as a total mergence in Brahman where the distinctions between knower, object known and knowledge is obliterated.<sup>40</sup> One witnesses this blurring of boundaries when even such a one as Swāmi Nikhilānanda adds a note to both *savikalpaka-samādhi* and *nirvikalpaka-samādhi* calling them *samprajñāta* and *asamprajñāta Samādhi* respectively.<sup>41</sup> I cannot go into the inroads that Yoga vocabulary has made into the Advaita territory here. But the point I would like to stress is that *nididhyāsana* being a difficult idea to grasp, the help of a *samānatantra* Yoga, has been resorted to by Sadānanda as a solution. But of course *nididhyāsana* itself has been distorted in the process. But the reason that Sadānanda does so, can give us a clue to Śaṅkara's attitude to Yoga. It is because AdV of Śaṅkara does not demonize Yoga, as he does

37 yathābhimatadhyānād vā. YS. 1. 39.

38 tadā mṛṇmayagajādibhāne-api mṛdbhānavad-dvaitabhāne-apyadvaitam vastu bhāsate. *Vedāntasāra* op.cit. p.195.

39 *nirvikal pakastu jñātrjñānādi-vikalpalayaapekṣayā-ad viṣṭyavastuni tadākārākāritāścitta-vṛtteḥ-atītarām-ekībhāvena-avasthānam* ibid. p. 197. -

40 *Vedāntasāra* op. cit. p. 109 note under 194 and p. 110 note under 117.

41 Swāmi Nikhilānanda and Hiriyanṇa place him between the mid-15<sup>th</sup> and mid-16<sup>th</sup> centuries of the Common Era. Dharmarāja is assigned to the 17<sup>th</sup> century CE by Swāmi Mādhavānanda.

Śaṅkya for instance, that perhaps made bold a person like Sadānanda, a devout Advaitin, to borrow this kind of metaphor from Yoga to describe the state of *mokṣa* in Advaita.

It remains to be said that Sadānanda's incorporation of *samādhi* as the fourth means to Brahman realization is not duplicated in other well known writings on AdV, to the best of my knowledge. For instance Vidyāranya's *Jīvanmuktiviveka*, (ca 14<sup>th</sup> century CE) while using Yoga methodology extensively to instruct how one can get rid of the *vāsanās* of the mind and also empty the mind itself, does not slip into equating *samādhi* with *nididhyāsana/dhyāna*. Dharmarāja's *Vedānta Paribhāṣā* which could be a later work (ca 18<sup>th</sup> CE), and so could have known of Vidyāranya's works as well as the *Vedāntasāra*, has no reference to *samādhi* as an additional means to Brahman realization. Translating *nididhyāsana*, Dharmaraja explains it as "a mental operation helping to fix the mind on the Self by withdrawing it from objects, when it is drawn towards them by latent impressions that have no beginning".<sup>42</sup>

One can conclude by saying that Śaṅkarācārya was very much a *yogin* at heart, incorporating wherever possible the vocabulary of Yoga in his AdV, and speaking approvingly of even the *siddhis* or supernormal powers that are described in the Yoga tradition. His conviction of the reality of Brahman to the exclusion of everything else forces him to interpret *nididhyāsana/dhyāna* in a manner commensurate with his metaphysics and epistemology. He, in no way, admits the dual principles of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* as the ultimate realities and remains a staunch opposer of the dualistic metaphysical stand of both Śaṅkhya and Yoga.

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42 *nididhyāsanaṁ nāma anādidurvāsanayā viṣayeṣvākṛṣyamāṇasya cittasya viṣayebhyo' pakṛṣyātmaviṣayakasthairyānukūlo mānaso vyāpārah*, *Vedānta-Paribhāṣā*, p. 213.

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## DATING OF ROHIṆĪ-ŚAKAṬA-BHEDA\*

By

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### Abstract

Rohiṇī-Śakaṭa-Bheda (RSB) is referred in Indian literature as an event of great significance. RSB is said to occur when either Saturn or Mars pass through the triangle formed by α, ε and γ stars of the Taurus Constellation (or the Vṛṣabha). We have searched the literature and found descriptions of RSB recorded by several authors. We have compiled the various references to this event and show that the event has been given considerable importance in the literature, with only minor changes in the description over the millenniums. Based on this, we have derived a common minimal interpretation of the same. In some literature, this event is correlated with a huge disaster.

We have searched the astronomical database using the latest ephemeris for RSB. We found a series of RSB events with Mars. The latest event occurred in 5284 BC but before that, it occurred several times during the 10<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. However, since 5284 BC, the event has not occurred and is not expected to occur till 10,000 AD.

During 10,000 to 9,000 BC, the end of the last ice age indicates that there was a sudden rise in the sea level by 60 meters over a few hundred years indicating a yearly rise of 22 mm per year. This rise reached a plateau around 9,000 BC when the rate of increase came down to about 2 mm per year until about 5,500

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