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तेनास्य श्रवणात्थार्थमननाद्युच्यानाच्य संकीर्तनात्  
सर्वात्मत्वमहाविभूतिसहितं स्यादीश्वरत्वं स्वतः

Thus, through hearing of it, through reflecting on its meaning,  
through meditating on it and through reciting it, Lordship,  
together with the great splendour of the Universal Self, will  
naturally come about.

—from the *Dakṣināmūrti stotra*, ascribed to Śaṅkara

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MEDITATION IN ŠAṄKARA'S VEDĀNTA

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## Preface

This work is the result of a long standing interest in both meditation and Śaṅkara. Meditation is at last beginning to receive the considerable attention it deserves, although far more remains to be said on the subject. About Śaṅkara, a great deal has already been written. Unfortunately, much of it is unsatisfying, largely because of the lack of an analytical perspective. I have tried to review some of the best of the more recent work on Śaṅkara. The reader may be surprised to find that most of the authors discussed at length here are not from India. This is partly due to the fact that few in India have yet responded to the important studies carried out by foreign scholars over the past forty years. It is my hope that this work may at least serve to introduce some of the outstanding research done abroad to a wider audience in India.

I have also focussed on foreign scholars with a view to criticise some of the ways in which we approach the study of Śaṅkara. One of the major shortcomings I have found in the writings of many Western authors is a tendency to ignore the traditional context of Śaṅkara's work. This leaves the results of their findings in a vacuum which has little relevance to the spirit of Śaṅkara's thought. We must remember that Advaita Vedānta is a living tradition. It was my privilege to have met three of the reigning Śaṅkarācāryas, who trace their lineage back to Śaṅkara himself. These are people who *live* the teachings of Śaṅkara. They are not alone in this. Many others in India embrace, in their daily lives, the principles expounded by Śaṅkara. This study seeks to highlight the need to pay proper attention to the traditional context of Śaṅkara's work.

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In this light, I must acknowledge that one of the limitations of this study is its failure to survey some of the excellent work done by traditional Indian scholars. I regret that I have only recently become acquainted with the writings of such scholars as Vāsudevaśāstri Abhyankar (1863-1942) and Swāmī Saccidānandendra Sarasvatī (1880-1975). Given the milieu of the nationalist spirit in India, and the great respect which is customarily accorded to religious leaders, the truly critical contributions of these scholars stand out prominently. I should make special mention of Swāmī Saccidānandendra who has, in his numerous publications in Sanskrit and English, insistently argued for clearly distinguishing the thought of Śaṅkara from that of later Advaitins. His succinct *Misconceptions About Śaṅkara* (Holenarsipur: Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, 1973) is particularly noteworthy in this respect.

My decision to publish this work is due to the interest and encouragement of two people who follow the traditional way of life, as *samnyāsin*-s. The study was originally undertaken as an M.A. thesis (which was presented at the University of Melbourne in January, 1985). I have revised the work and updated the references. But I regret that I have not had the time to expand upon some of the numerous issues which call for further discussion. I am, however, addressing one of these matters—the traditional accounts of Śaṅkara's life—in a separate work which is now in progress. The present brief study is put forward as a preliminary examination of the nature of meditation and its role in Śaṅkara's Vedānta.

For a more detailed enquiry into some of the issues raised here—especially on Śaṅkara's view of scripture and on the *Yogasūtra* commentary which is attributed to him—I would commend to the reader Wilhelm Halbfass' *Studies in Kumārila*

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and Śaṅkara (Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik, monographie 9. Reinbek, 1983). This excellent work was not available to me at the time of writing.

There are a number of people who have helped me considerably in preparing this work. First of all, I am most grateful to Swāmī N., who has been a constant supporter and my most severe critic. In letters and long hours of discussion, he has assiduously scrutinised the work from the traditional point of view. I am grateful as well to Swāmī Satyānanda Sarasvatī for his comments and encouragement. It was through Swāmī Satyānanda that I had the good fortune to meet Śri Sitaram Goel and Mr. P. K. Goel at Biblia Impex/Aditya Prakashan, who have so graciously agreed to undertake the publication.

I would like to thank Professor Lambert Schmithausen for his remarks and suggestions. Given that the work is quite critical of both his teacher and a close colleague, it is a testimony to the true spirit of Professor Schmithausen's scholarship that he read the work with a completely open mind. I am indebted to Professor J. W. de Jong for his generosity in giving of his time. His close reading of the final draft uncovered a number of errors. I would also like to thank Mrs. de Jong for her proof reading of the manuscript. I was fortunate to be able to consult with Dr. Michael Comans, whose knowledge of Vedānta comes from long study under traditional teachers and eminent academics. This work has benefitted from his pertinent comments. I am grateful to Professor Eliot Deutsch and Professor Eric Sharpe for their incisive criticism in their examination of the original thesis. I would also like to thank John Dunham for his comments on the earlier draft.

I am indebted to James Crouch who has suggested numerous stylistic improvements. Ms. Betty Kat was most

## Introduction

Traditional accounts of Śaṅkara's life relate that he was charged by his guru to spread the teachings of Advaita Vedānta throughout India. Accompanied only by a small band of disciples, he journeyed to the four quarters of the subcontinent. The nature of his mission was twofold. First, there were the rounds of debates in which Śaṅkara is said to have defeated prominent exponents of other philosophical persuasions. In conjunction with these public demonstrations of the pre-eminence of Advaita, he undertook the composition of learned commentaries so as to re-establish the "correct understanding" of the Vedānta teachings. His second task involved the foundation of monastic centres where the teachings were to be studied and practised.

However one might choose to account for it there can be little doubt that Śaṅkara has had a profound impact upon Indian culture. Whether the works of earlier interpreters were actually superseded by him, or have simply disappeared, Śaṅkara's compositions alone have survived. His works comprise the oldest extant commentaries on the primary sources of the Vedānta tradition: the *Brahmasūtra*, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and ten of the principal Upaniṣads. The monastic centres he is said to have founded are still in operation and the spiritual authority of their pontiffs is highly regarded in India today. Most remarkable of all is Śaṅkara's achievement in establishing the orthodoxy of his radical interpretation of the Upaniṣads. He managed to argue convincingly against the belief, widely held in his day, that Brahman and *ātman*, though identical, were somehow distinct. Śaṅkara sought to throw out this notion of distinction. With his exegetical prowess he gathered together the strands of non-dualistic thought in the Upaniṣads and presented it as the underlying truth of Vedānta.

By the beginning of this century Śāṅkara's work had already begun to receive considerable attention in Europe, largely due to the enthusiastic efforts of F. Max Müller and Paul Deussen. The success of their endeavour is evident from the large body of scholarly literature which has since focussed on Śāṅkara. Indeed, his work has probably received a disproportionate amount of attention at the expense of other Vedāntins whose work still languishes in relative obscurity. But there must be something inherently appealing in the thought of this eighth century teacher and metaphysician. Perhaps it is the peculiar combination of rigorous philosophical argument and the inspired expression of mystical insight in his work which continues to excite interest both within and outside India.

In the early 1950s there were two major developments in the field which have given new impetus to the study of Śāṅkara. Firstly, the thoroughgoing investigations of Professors Hacker, Nakamura, and Ingalls gave definition to the historical context of Śāṅkara's work. For the first time Śāṅkara's thought was clearly distinguished from that of his predecessors and followers. Secondly, the discovery of a hitherto unknown text has pointed to an unrecognized facet of Śāṅkara's thought. This text, the *Yogaśūtra-bhāṣya-vivaraṇa*,<sup>1</sup> is an apparently authentic commentary of Śāṅkara's on Vyāsa's authoritative exposition of Patañjali's *Yogaśūtra*.

It is yet to be conclusively proved that this "new" text was indeed composed by Śāṅkara.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, its existence raises

<sup>1</sup> *Pātañjala-yogaśūtra-bhāṣya-vivaraṇam* of Śāṅkara-Bhagavatpāda, ed. Polakam Sri Rama Sastri and S. R. Krishnamurthi Sastri ("Madras Government Oriental Series" no. 94; Madras 1952).

<sup>2</sup> Hacker claims that the text is genuinely Śāṅkara's (Paul Hacker, "Śāṅkara der Yogi und Śāṅkara der Advaitin. Einige Beobachtungen", WZKSO, 12-13, 1968-69, p. 147). Vetter concurs with Hacker, but notes that aside from its theories on God, the work is not very original (Tilmann Vetter, *Studien*

several important issues. Amongst the most notable of these is the problem of determining the place of yoga in Śāṅkara's Vedānta. In addressing this question, this study will concern itself with one essential aspect of yoga practice, namely, meditation. Indeed it will be argued that meditation is a key to the understanding of Śāṅkara's teaching on liberation.

Surprisingly, there has been little scholarly attention devoted to Śāṅkara's interest in meditation. When the subject has been taken up, the connection between meditation and liberation is invariably treated rather superficially. In some ways this is to be expected. After all, Śāṅkara himself emphasizes that ritual action and knowledge are not to be combined. Most of his Upaniṣad commentaries are introduced by a discussion which seeks to discredit the efficacy of ritual action. Knowledge, he claims, is the only valid means to liberation. Since meditation is a form of ritual action, albeit a mental one, it too is necessarily excluded. Nevertheless, Śāṅkara does accord a place to meditation as a

*zur Lehre und Entwicklung Śāṅkaras*, Vienna, 1979, p. 21). Mayeda also agrees with Hacker, but holds slight reservations (*A Thousand Teachings: The Upadeśasāhasrī of Śāṅkara*, tr. Sengaku Mayeda, Tokyo, 1979, p. 6). Hajime Nakamura, who has written three articles in Japanese on this text, finds that there is "no bar to the authenticity of the text" (cited by Trevor Leggett, *Śāṅkara on the Yoga-sūtra-s* [Vol. I: *Samādhi*], London, 1981, p. xviii). Wezler does not believe that Śāṅkara's authorship of the text has been established by Hacker's argument. However, Wezler accepts Hacker's assertion that Śāṅkara was initially a follower of yoga (Albrecht Wezler, "Philological Observations on the so-called Pātañjala-yogaśūtra-bhāṣya-vivaraṇa", III, 25, 1983, pp. 35-36). Halbfass states that while the ascription of the text to Śāṅkara is certainly questionable, "there is nothing in the form or contents of the Vivaraṇa that would exclude the possibility that it is a work by the author of the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*" (Wilhelm Halbfass, *Studies in Kumārila and Śāṅkara*, Reinbek, 1983, p. 108). All these scholars have pointed to various elements in Śāṅkara's work which correspond to concepts found in the YV. Nevertheless no one has yet set out to specifically prove, or disprove, the authenticity of the text.

preliminary discipline. Though it plays only a supporting role, it is an extremely important one. For meditation represents the most direct means of encouraging the arising of knowledge.

It has all too often been overlooked that there is a substantial difference between Śāṅkara's aims as an exegete and those he pursues as a teacher. This becomes especially apparent in the case of meditation. In his exegetical discussions he seeks to diminish the importance of the position which meditation holds in the Upaniṣads. Because his compositions mostly take the form of commentaries, the evidence we have of Śāṅkara's teaching methods is less obvious than that of his exegetical efforts. Fortunately however, we can also refer one major independent treatise, the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, which is now known to be one of Śāṅkara's authentic works. The prose portion of this text is set out in the form of a guide book on the teaching of Advaita. The method Śāṅkara elaborates here is remarkably similar to the teaching of the legendary sage Yājñavalkya, described in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.5. This ancient teaching told of a threefold process, *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana*, leading to the highest knowledge. First, the aspirant was to hear the sacred verses from the teacher, then to reflect deeply upon them, and finally, to become absorbed in constant meditation on what had been learned. Śāṅkara took up this way of knowledge and expounded it in accordance with the principles of his Advaita Vedānta.

The influence of yoga upon Śāṅkara's work is clearly reflected in his understanding of meditation. But the implications of the relationship between yoga and Advaita extend well beyond the common ground of meditation. Śāṅkara seems to have been profoundly affected by many of the ideas Vyāsa expressed in his *Yogaśūtra-bhāṣya*. Some concepts which are characteristic of Śāṅkara's thought can be traced back to Vyāsa's

text. Paul Hacker was the first to make an extensive study of Śāṅkara's yoga connections. He argues, "Ist das *Yogabhāṣya-vivaraṇa* ein Werk desselben Śāṅkara, der das BSBh verfasst hat, so lassen sich unter der Annahme, dass dieser zuerst Yогin war und dann Advaitin geworden ist".<sup>3</sup> While many of Hacker's insights are of great value, some of his implicit assumptions seem rather doubtful. There is little evidence to support the notion that Advaita and yoga are opposing philosophical systems. On the contrary, the yoga element in Śāṅkara's work appears to be an integral part of his Advaita Vedānta.

Śāṅkara does not regard yoga as a system of thought based on Patañjali's *Yogaśūtra*. He refers to this text simply as a *yogaśāstra*, a treatise on yoga. He seems to have been familiar with a number of these *sāstra*-s but does not cite the particular authority of any one of them.<sup>4</sup> What is more, he does not believe that the exposition of yoga is limited to the *yogaśāstra*-s. Even the Upaniṣads describe yoga, although in a rather unsystematic manner. The testimony of the Upaniṣads is sufficient reason for Śāṅkara to accept the validity of yoga practice. In this study yoga will be taken largely in the sense in which Śāṅkara understood it. Whether yoga is presented in a comprehensive treatise or in a

<sup>3</sup> "That the *Yogabhāṣya-vivaraṇa* is a work of the same Śāṅkara who has composed the BSBh can be established on the assumption that he was first a Yогин and then became an Advaitin". Hacker, "Śāṅkara der Yогин", p.124.

<sup>4</sup> In *Taittirīyopaniṣad-bhāṣya* 1.6.2, he speaks of the *suṣumnā nāḍī* which he says is well known from the yoga texts (*yogaśāstreṣु prasiddhā*). Similarly, he refers to *yogaśāstra*-s in his introduction to the sixth chapter of GBh. In BSBh 1.3.33 and 2.4.12, he mentions the authority of the *yogaśāstra* and cites passages from the *Yogaśūtra*. On some occasions, however, when Śāṅkara quotes from the *yogaśāstra*, it is not possible to identify the sources from which the passages are taken. In BSBh 2.1.3, for example, he cites the phrase *atha tattva-darśanopā�āḥ yogaḥ*, whose source is unknown. T. Leggett has collected some of these references (*Śāṅkara on the Yoga-sūtra*-s, p.xxv ff.).

less systematic fashion, it is a method of transformation comprising a variety of psychical and physical disciplines. The objective of these activities is the mastery over mind and body which results in the acquisition of power. The power of yoga is the agent of transformation. It is the means by which the yogi accomplishes superhuman feats. This power can also be utilised to transcend the limitations of individuality which obstruct the quest for liberation.

There are two preliminary problems which are crucial to the development of this study. The first concerns methodology. Aside from a piece by Daniel H. H. Ingalls,<sup>5</sup> very few of the recent studies on Śāṅkara have considered the relative merits of their respective approaches to this complex figure. Śāṅkara is at once a teacher, a metaphysician, theologian, mystic, and, in India, the stuff of mythology. Yet Śāṅkara so often seems to be reduced to two-dimensionality. He is taken to be simply an author of texts, a philosopher whose work evolves in an orderly and predictable manner. While there are no easy solutions to establishing a suitable means of approach, a critical discussion of some of the recent scholarship may at least be a start. The second problem is one of definition. In spite of the considerable attention, both scholarly and popular, which meditation has enjoyed, the nature of meditation remains surprisingly indistinct. It will be essential to clarify the terms 'meditation', and 'contemplation', as well as their Sanskrit equivalents, before considering Śāṅkara's treatment of the subject.

This essay, then, is a re-examination of Śāṅkara's work in the light of his interest in yoga. The focal point of the study is Śāṅkara's teaching on liberation, particularly with regard to meditation.

<sup>5</sup> "The Study of Śāṅkarācārya", *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 33 (1952), pp. 1-14.

## I

### Approaches to the Study of Śāṅkara

In 1952 Professor Ingalls called attention to the need for new efforts in the application of historical methods to the study of Śāṅkara.<sup>1</sup> He suggested that the philosophical analysis of Śāṅkara's thought could not proceed much further without the assistance of historical study. At this very time two other scholars, Hacker and Nakamura, were engaged in research which was to give new direction to the study of Śāṅkara.

Prior to the publication of several important papers by the late Paul Hacker, there was much uncertainty as to which of the several hundred compositions traditionally ascribed to Śāṅkara could be regarded as genuine. The one notable exception is the *Brahmaśūtra* commentary which is, by definition, the work of Śāṅkara. This commentary (*bhāṣya*) represents his *magnum opus* and serves as the measure against which other works attributed to him may be placed. Ingalls, for instance, had accepted only three other works, based on the testimony of Śāṅkara's direct disciples. The existence of Sureśvara's expositions (*vārtika-s*) is certainly strong evidence that two of Śāṅkara's Upaniṣad commentaries, the *Taittiriya* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, are genuine. Likewise, in his *Naiśkarmyasiddhi*, Sureśvara's numerous citations of the *Upadeśasāhasrī* suggest the authenticity of this independent treatise of Śāṅkara's. But clearly, other criteria are needed here.

The first breakthrough in establishing further criteria came with Hacker's discovery of a significant pattern occurring in the

<sup>1</sup> "The Study of Śāṅkarācārya", p. 5.

colophons of Śāṅkara's compositions.<sup>2</sup> Those works likely to be genuine (by comparison with the *Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya*), he found, tended to be ascribed to Śāṅkara-Bhagavat. On the other hand, those whose authorship seemed doubtful were usually attributed to Śāṅkarācārya.<sup>3</sup> The very designation 'Śāṅkarācārya' can indeed be a source of some confusion. For this title may apply equally to any of the pontiffs of the five monastic centres traditionally regarded as having been established by Śāṅkara.

Hacker next devised a more substantial methodology based on a careful analysis of Śāṅkara's use of certain technical terms.<sup>4</sup> He discovered Śāṅkara's understanding of *avidyā*, *nāmarūpa*, *māyā*, and *īśvara* to be quite distinct from that of his followers. Accordingly, an examination of these terms becomes the focal point in a procedure which Hacker believes to work as "a sieve with a mesh wide enough to let pass spurious works and close enough to retain or admit even variations or development among authentic ones".<sup>5</sup> Hacker's conclusion is that only one independent treatise, the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, can properly be attributed to Śāṅkara. The rest of his genuine compositions consist wholly of commentaries. These include his *bhāṣya*-s on the *Brahmasūtra*, the *Bhagavadgītā*, and ten Upaniṣads: *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*,

<sup>2</sup> Paul Hacker, "Śāṅkarācārya and Śāṅkarabhagavatpāda. Preliminary Remarks Concerning the Authorship Problem", *New Indian Antiquary*, 9 (1947), 175-186. A corrected version of this article appears in *Paul Hacker: Kleine Schriften*, ed. Lambert Schmithausen, Wiesbaden, 1978, pp. 41-58.

<sup>3</sup> The honorific *ācārya*, generally denotes a teacher or spiritual preceptor. The title 'Bhagavat' has a connotation something like that of 'Most Reverend'. Śāṅkara is also referred to by his disciples as 'Bhagavatpāda' (lit. 'whose feet are holy') or 'Bhagavat-pūjya-pāda' ('whose feet are to be worshipped').

<sup>4</sup> Paul Hacker, "Eigentümlichkeiten der Lehre und Terminologie Śāṅkaras", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 100 (1950), pp. 246-286.

<sup>5</sup> Hacker, "Śāṅkara der Yogin", p. 147.

*Chāndogya*, *Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha*, *Taittirīya*, *Aitareya*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍūkya* (including the *Gauḍapādīya-kārikā*), and *Praśna*. Hacker also recognizes the commentaries on the *Yogaśūtra-bhāṣya* of Vyāsa and the *Adhyātmopāṭala* of the Āpastamba-*dharmaśūtra*. Sengaku Mayeda has demonstrated the validity of Hacker's methodology in the course of several precise studies.<sup>6</sup> Each of these offers a convincing proof of the authenticity of one particular *bhāṣya*. Another of Hacker's concerns was to chart the stages of development in Śāṅkara's thought. He identified Śāṅkara's earlier works as the YV, MKBh, TUBh, USP chapter 19, and USP chapter 17.<sup>7</sup> These findings represent the first stage in the establishment of a probable chronology. Further research in this area has been carried out by Tilman Vetter.<sup>8</sup>

Both Ingalls and Hajime Nakamura have utilised Bhāskara's commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* as the key to distinguishing Śāṅkara's thought from that of earlier Vedāntins. Bhāskara's commentary appears to have been written in the period immediately following Śāṅkara's death, circa A.D. 750.<sup>9</sup> What is remarkable about this work is its striking similarity to Śāṅkara's *bhāṣya*. This is despite substantial differences in the viewpoints of the two commentators. Indeed Bhāskara is sharply critical of

<sup>6</sup> In his articles which examine the authenticity of the GBh, KenaBh, MKBh, and US, Mayeda considers the existence of sub-commentaries as a further criterion. See bibliography for details.

<sup>7</sup> "Śāṅkara der Yogin", p.135. See table of abbreviations above.

<sup>8</sup> Tilman Vetter, *Studien zur Lehre und Entwicklung Śāṅkaras* (Publications of the De Nobili Research Library; Vienna, 1979).

<sup>9</sup> Until fairly recently it was generally accepted that Śāṅkara's dates were A.D. 788-820. Nakamura has argued that the dates should be pushed back to 700-750 (Hajime Nakamura, *An History of Early Vedānta Philosophy*, Pt. 1, Delhi, 1983, p. 87. The original Japanese publication was 1950-56).

Ingalls and Karl Potter have largely accepted Nakamura's dates; but there are other scholars who do not. Vetter, for example, maintains that we cannot at present ascribe more precise dates than 650-800 (*Studien*, p.11).

Śāṅkara. Ingalls cites an appropriate illustration in Bhāskara's remark on Śāṅkara's concept of liberation: "Some of us would rather be jackals in the forest than have your kind of release".<sup>10</sup> In view of such marked antipathy, it seems highly unlikely that Bhāskara would imitate Śāṅkara. Yet there are numerous occasions where nearly identical passages occur in both commentaries. This would suggest that both are relying on an earlier interpreter. Ingalls calls this as yet unidentified Vedāntin the "Proto-commentator".<sup>11</sup> It appears that Bhāskara's criticism is concentrated on those very points where Śāṅkara tends to differ from the Proto-commentator. From his reading of the *Brahmasūtra*-s and a close examination of the two commentaries, Nakamura concludes that where the two differ, Bhāskara's is probably closer to the original meaning of the *sūtra*-s.<sup>12</sup> Whether Bhāskara's comment actually tallies with the "original" meaning of the *Brahmasūtra*, or merely represents an earlier interpretation of the work,<sup>13</sup> it does provide a strong indication of the points at which Śāṅkara has developed his own line of thought.

Ingalls has enumerated three fundamental approaches to Śāṅkara's work: the traditional, the historical, and the philosophical.<sup>14</sup> Most of the available material on Śāṅkara is philosophically oriented. More often than not, the approach is that of comparative philosophy. Śāṅkara's work has been

<sup>10</sup> Ingalls, "The Study of Śāṅkarācārya", p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10. But Ingalls' conclusions have been questioned by Klaus Rüping, *Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Vedānta-Philosophie. Teil 1: Philologische Untersuchungen zu den Brahmasūtra-Kommentaren des Śāṅkara und des Bhāskara*, Wiesbaden, 1977, pp. 25; 65 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *A History of Early Vedānta*, p.459.

<sup>13</sup> An adherent of Advaita Vedānta would argue that Śāṅkara has rediscovered the "original" meaning of the *sūtra*-s. It might also be questioned that the Proto-commentator is necessarily representative of the earliest interpretation of the *sūtra*-s.

<sup>14</sup> "The Study of Śāṅkarācārya" p. 4.

compared with a wide range of philosophers—both ancient and modern—including Plato, Plotinus, St. Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, Kant, Fichte, and Bradley. Śāṅkara's thought has often served to initiate discussion on the part of contemporary philosophers who regard some of his concerns as vital philosophical issues. So many scholars have worked in this area that it is difficult to single out particular names for mention. A glance through Karl Potter's bibliography would suffice to provide some indication of the range of research involved.<sup>15</sup>

Some of the more recent work on Śāṅkara has followed an historical approach. Among the most notable scholars here are Hacker, Nakamura, Ingalls, and Vetter. In spite of the substantial contribution of these scholars, there remain some serious drawbacks in the application of historical methods to the study of Śāṅkara. The identification of his authentic works may tend to stifle interest in some important texts. The *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, for instance, can now be discounted as a genuine composition of Śāṅkara's. Yet within the Advaita school this text is highly respected and is accepted as an integral part of the tradition. For the scholar, this text presents a wealth of significant philosophical material. It contains what is perhaps the most extensive discussion to be found on the five *kośa*-s, a characteristic metaphysical doctrine of Vedānta.<sup>16</sup> While the historian and philosopher may be tempted to simply reject the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* as a "spurious" work, one studying the traditional approach has little choice but to examine it closely. This medieval text which is not only philosophically coherent, but profound in its interpretation of Vedānta, cannot be so lightly dismissed. The

<sup>15</sup> *Bibliography of Indian Philosophies (The Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, vol. I, Delhi, 1974), p. 111 ff.

<sup>16</sup> The *kośa*-s, described in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.1 ff., are sheaths which are said to encase the Self in layers of increasing degrees of subtlety.

question of authorship takes its place here as just one of several issues the text raises.<sup>17</sup> Another shortcoming found in some historical studies is the tendency to fragment an otherwise unified text. The *Yogasūtra* is one work that has suffered at the hands of several different assailants. Staal has shown how mutually contradictory the various attempts at the dissection of this text have been.<sup>18</sup> Śaṅkara's work may also meet a similar fate. In the course of his careful study, which attempts to chart the development of Śaṅkara's thought, Tilmann Vetter finds that the chronological order in which the prose chapters of the *Upadeśasāhasrī* were written differs from the sequence in which they appear in the various recensions of the text. He argues that

<sup>17</sup> In India, it is now common practice to refer to 'Ādi-Śaṅkarācārya', literally 'the original Śaṅkara', in order to distinguish him from the numerous later Śaṅkarācāryas. While Ādi-Śaṅkarācārya no doubt holds a very special place in the Indian tradition, the other Śaṅkarācāryas are held in no less esteem. In the eyes of the traditionalists, there may not be much difference between Śaṅkara's own works and those which he has inspired or prompted others to write. In the literature of India there are numerous instances where a work is "dictated" by a divine personage. We are inclined to regard with a fair degree of scepticism the belief that one and the same man could have written some three hundred works, many of which express widely diverging views. Yet this is not necessarily a problem in the eyes of the traditionally-minded. The fact that he was so prolific in his short lifetime and could give expression to so broad a spectrum of religious orientations, is taken as further proof of his divine power. Nowadays traditional scholars present two arguments justifying the ascription of such diverse works to Śaṅkara. The most common of these is that Śaṅkara, in his compassion for the ordinary man, wrote works suited to various levels of comprehension. T. M. P. Mahadevan proposes another explanation: he suggests that in order to spread the message of Advaita, Śaṅkara utilised the terminology of other schools in order to appeal to their adherents. This would account for the fact that the *Dakṣiṇāmūrti-stotra*, to cite one example, is written in the language of Kashmiri Śaivism (T. M. P. Mahadevan, *Sankaracharya*, New Delhi, 1968, p. 38).

<sup>18</sup> Frits Staal, *Exploring Mysticism* (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 90 ff.

the material in the first chapter represents a later trend of thought than that of the second chapter.<sup>19</sup> It is probably not Vetter's intention to fragment the USG. His findings, however, could be all too easily stretched towards the conclusion that this text is nothing more than a batch of unrelated short compositions.

Surely the project of tracing the development of Śaṅkara's thought does have its own valid sphere of application. But it is essential that we do not lose sight of the fact that such a methodology represents only one approach among many. Even if we do accept Vetter's conclusions, there is no reason why the USG cannot still be regarded as a coherent text. Indeed it is well recognised within the Advaita tradition that the work's three chapters have been intentionally arranged so as to correspond to the threefold process of *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana*. Whether Śaṅkara actually composed the three *prakarana-s* with this in mind, or whether the arrangement was the later work of his disciples, it is clear that the USG can stand as a unified work.

Just as an exclusively historical perspective has its limitations, so too does the purely philosophical approach. To begin with, there is not much justification for the assumption that Śaṅkara was first and foremost a philosopher. On the contrary,

He concentrates on what he considers the heart of the matter, the teaching that is necessary for *mokṣa*...His

<sup>19</sup> According to Vetter, USG II is quite close chronologically to MKBh, which was probably Śaṅkara's first Advaita composition, and must be placed before USG I (*Studien*, p. 75). In his critical edition of the US, Mayeda makes it clear that in the many editions of the text which he has consulted, the only variable is whether the prose part or the metrical part is placed first. Otherwise the arrangement of the *prakarana-s* is consistent in all the recensions. According to Mayeda, the eighteen *prakarana-s* of the metrical portion have merely been arranged in a "mechanical way", but the three chapters of the prose section are "very closely related to one another and constitute the whole which is complete in both content and form" (*Śaṅkara's Upadeśasāhasrī*, ed. Sengaku Mayeda, Tokyo, 1973, p. 65 ff.).

followers, while deeply attracted by this attitude, were forced to construct a metaphysical system that is in all respects logically coherent.<sup>20</sup>

This is not to say that metaphysics were unimportant for Śāṅkara. It is simply that he did not see the development of a metaphysical system as an end in itself. The point is that liberation (*mokṣa*) is at the very apex of Śāṅkara's metaphysical thought. He maintains that release from the rounds of transmigration is the direct result of the intuitive knowledge (*anubhava*) of Brahman. This ultimate reality is expressed in the *mahāvākyā* "Thou art that", indicating the essential unity of the Self with Brahman. Where Śāṅkara's emphasis on liberation is regarded primarily as a religious concern, it is not surprising to find that the subject is overlooked in favour of his discussion of more concrete philosophical issues. His role as an exegete is also glossed over by many of his philosophically oriented admirers. This is ostensibly to forestall the possibility that Śāṅkara's work be denigrated as mere scholasticism or theology, neither of which are very fashionable in the eyes of contemporary philosophers.

In order to properly investigate Śāṅkara's teachings on liberation it is necessary to take into account the traditional approach. Unfortunately this has often been the exclusive domain of apologists whose appearance on the academic stage serves neither to illuminate the profundity of Śāṅkara's thought, nor to reflect the Advaitin's way of life. Strictly speaking, this approach is for the practitioner, not the academic. Before embarking on the traditional path, the aspirant must have first demonstrated to the teacher that he has no taste for the pleasures of worldly life, his only desire being that of attaining liberation.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel H. H. Ingalls, "Śāṅkara on the Question: Whose is Avidyā?", *PEW*, 3 (1953), p. 72.

The practice consists in the threefold discipline alluded to above. In brief, this involves (1) hearing the traditional teachings as imparted by the guru, (2) reflecting deeply on the meaning of what has been heard until it is firmly grasped by the intellect, and (3) utilising the insights of the intellect in a special sort of meditation whose aim is to remove all trace of the ignorance which obscures the true nature of the Self. Clearly, this method is suitable only for the dedicated and true believer. Still, there is no good reason for ignoring this approach in the course of one's study. On the contrary, an examination of Śāṅkara's work which takes into account the perspective of the practitioner may well cast further light on the motives underlying the formulation of his Advaita doctrine.

Bearing in mind all these considerations, there seems good reason to follow the lead of Ingalls in acknowledging the value in all three approaches. In this study, however, particular emphasis will be placed on the traditional mode. It is hoped that a focus on the practical side of Śāṅkara's teachings will provide access to some areas of his thought which have thus far been explored by few outside the fold of his followers.

In addition to these broader questions of methodology, there remains the problem of determining how Śāṅkara himself is to be understood. In India he is defined largely in terms of the traditional accounts of his life. These sources portray him as a divine figure, an incarnation of Śiva who has descended to earth in order to restore the true teachings of Hinduism in the face of encroachments by Buddhism and other "heterodox" cults. He is aided in this task by his supernormal powers which enable him to fly through the air, assume other bodies, and predict the future. His life story is that of a prodigy who masters all branches of learning in his childhood and fulfills his entire mission in the brief span of thirty-two years. This mythical

perspective is in obvious contrast to the sort of perceptions arising from a critical approach, be it historical, psychological, or sociological. Yet as Eliade, Lévi-Strauss, and others have shown, there is no need to assume that mythical thought is any less rigorous than scientific thought. To dismiss these mythical accounts as a series of stories concocted to impress Śāṅkara's greatness upon credulous minds, is as simple-minded as the criticism this attitude intends. Neither is the notion that myth involves a valid mode of thought meant to suggest that it represents a crude or primitive forerunner to modern science. Rather, the point is, that in addressing itself to recognizable areas of concern—the social, religious, or philosophical—mythical thought functions on the basis of assumptions and perspectives which are simply different from those of critical scholarship.

The myth of Śāṅkara might be seen, in part, as a response to the problem of individuality. Louis Dumont has drawn attention to the fact that the individual represents something of an anomaly in Indian society. His contention is that the renouncer stands out as the only real individual in a society which defines the particular man solely on the basis of his relationship to the group by virtue of his family and caste affiliations.<sup>21</sup> The renouncer (*samnyāsin*) surrenders his caste identity, leaving the world behind in his quest for liberation. This marks him as an individual and sets him apart from society as a whole. Though he probably has a guru and may even take up residence in an *āśrama*, his spiritual practice remains his own responsibility. He is entirely on his own. His unique position in the society, or rather the fact that he is not bound to it, leaves him free to question all. As a result, he becomes, according to Dumont, the primary innovator in Indian thought and society.

<sup>21</sup> Louis Dumont, "World Renunciation in Indian Religions", in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, IV (1960), p. 42.

That the renouncer is uncomfortable with the fact of his own individuality is, in Dumont's estimation, shown by his efforts to eliminate or transcend it. But how, in turn, does the society overcome *its* anxiety about the *samnyāsin*? If he is truly outside the society is he not a threat to its stability? A scriptural justification of his position would be one obvious solution. The *samnyāsin*'s role and duties are indeed prescribed in a number of sources, such as Manu's authoritative *Dharmaśāstra*.<sup>22</sup> But perhaps this alone is not enough. At least on the more popular level, the realm of myth and the supernatural seems to provide an appropriate context into which the renouncer may be fitted. In his field-study of a multi-caste village, M. N. Srinivas provides a good indication of just how the man-in-the-world perceives the *samnyāsin*:

He was holy, and he could rise above the demands of the body... they could subsist on the leaves of some plants and fresh air, cure diseases normally incurable, convert base metals into gold and even make themselves invisible. The appearance of a sanyasi, his gestures, talk, food, etc. were reported in such a way as to suggest the existence of supernatural powers. I wondered how individuals who were as keenly intelligent and hard-headed as the villagers could suspend their disbelief so willingly...<sup>23</sup>

This would suggest that the householder *chooses* to identify the renouncer with the supernatural. It may be that the threat posed by the *samnyāsin* is not so much because he is outside the society, but rather that he is out of context. By slotting him back

<sup>22</sup> See 6.33 ff. Śāṅkara seems particularly partial to the authority of this *dharmaśāstra*.

<sup>23</sup> M. N. Srinivas, *The Remembered Village* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980), p. 162. This study was made in 1948, at a time when the village of Rampura had not yet been subjected to very extensive urban influence. There would most probably be more scepticism expressed there nowadays. Still, it is likely that the attitudes Srinivas describes remain fairly widespread, at least in the rural areas.

into place, a sense of order is restored. In this light, it is not surprising to find that Śāṅkara, one of the foremost among *samnyāsin-s*, has become the key figure in a mythical drama.

In India, the realm of myth exhibits some striking similarities to the social order. This is particularly apparent in the complex but highly organized hierarchy of the various divine and supernatural forces. This pattern is clearly manifest in the myth of Śāṅkara. Here the leading role is assigned to Śiva, Lord of ascetics, in whose honour Śāṅkara has been named. Brahmā incarnates as Śāṅkara's chief rival and eventual disciple, Maṇḍanamiśra. Sarasvatī, naturally enough, becomes Maṇḍana's wife, Ubhaya-Bhāratī. Three Vedic deities, Aruṇa, Vāyu, and Agni, take birth as the other leading disciples of Śāṅkara: Padmapāda, Hastāmalaka, and Toṭaka.<sup>24</sup> It is in terms of this familiar and orderly context that Śāṅkara's life is portrayed in the traditional biographies.

While these accounts strive to remove, or at least modify, Śāṅkara's individuality, most critical studies seem to take the very opposite approach. In its most extreme form, this attitude culminates in what Barbara Doherty has recognized as a European "myth" of Śāṅkara.<sup>25</sup> For the origins of this myth, one

<sup>24</sup> These details occur in the *Śāṅkara-dig-vijaya*, which is by far the most popular of the Śāṅkara hagiographies. The particulars of the Sanskrit text are: *Vidyāranya, Śrimacchāṅkara-digvijaya. Advaita-rājyalakṣmī-tīkāntargata-viśeṣa-vibhāga-tīppaṇibhis tathā Dhānpatisūri-kṛta-dīṇḍimākhyā-tīkayā ca sametah*, ed. Mahādeva Cimaṇājī Āpte [Poona:] Ānandāśrama Press, 1891. The publishers of the text incorrectly attribute the work to Vidyāranya and have altered the title. According to the colophons the author is simply Mādhava, and the work is entitled, *Saṅkṣepa-śāṅkara-jaya*. There is also an English translation: *The Traditional Life of Sri Śāṅkarācārya* by Mādhava-Vidyāranya, tr. Swami Tapasyananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1978). I am currently working on a study of the Śāṅkara hagiographies.

<sup>25</sup> Barbara Doherty, "The path to liberation: Śāṅkara, metaphysician, mystic and teacher", unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Fordham University, New York,

need look no further than the 19th century Indologists. In particular, it was Paul Deussen who most clearly proclaimed Śāṅkara as the Indian philosopher—a south Asian equivalent of Plato, Kant, or Schopenhauer. Yet even those scholars who are far less lavish in singing Śāṅkara's praises, tend to see him in terms of the individual, the philosopher. Accordingly, he is expected to be consistent, systematic, and original. Where these qualities are lacking, he is soundly criticized. When, for instance, he appears to blithely explain away a serious philosophical issue, one critic cannot resist castigating his "refuse disposal" of

1979. In looking at the myth of Śāṅkara, she raises an important issue which, so far, has not been given sufficient attention. The crux of Doherty's argument is that the myth of Śāṅkara was created largely by the lavish praise accorded him by F. Max Müller and Paul Deussen. These great Indologists were influenced on the one hand by the philosophical climate created by Kant and Schopenhauer, and on the other by Swāmī Vivekānanda. Both of these influences, she holds, "brought the philosophy of Identity into a spotlight. Śāṅkara who had recapitulated the thought of the Upaniṣads in this principle seemed the Indian exponent. He thus gained an aggrandizement not rightfully his" (p.24). Doherty does not seem to be aware that Śāṅkara's place as a pre-eminent exponent of Vedānta was already long since established in India. But she is fully justified in maintaining that Müller and Deussen did much to inflate Śāṅkara's reputation in the West. As she correctly points out, these nineteenth century scholars failed to acknowledge that Śāṅkara's was not necessarily the original, nor the only, perspective on Vedānta. While Doherty has examined the European contributions to the myth of Śāṅkara, she has neglected its Indian origins. This leads her to form a rather peculiar understanding of Śāṅkara: "Several centuries after his death, he rose to great popularity through a series of related historical circumstances of the 19th century" (p.251). Fortunately, the Indian myth-makers did not have to await a cue from Europe. They began their creative activities long before the advent of the German Indologists.

problems.<sup>26</sup> One manner of coping with the inconsistencies in Śāṅkara's work is to reorganize them into a pattern which will demonstrate the evolutionary development of his thought. The creation of such a chronological chart lends a sense of order and clarity to what otherwise might seem an unwieldy mass of material, full of contradiction. But is this too not a kind of myth making?

Looking at the nature of mythical discourse from the Structuralist point of view, this assumption does not appear quite so far-fetched. According to Lévi-Strauss, the purpose of myth is "to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction".<sup>27</sup> This is precisely the intention of those who would discover a chronological structure in Śāṅkara's work. However, as Lévi-Strauss points out, the quality of a real contradiction is such that it cannot be resolved. As a result, mythical discourse "grows spiral-wise until the intellectual impulse which has originated it is exhausted".<sup>28</sup> In other words, so long as the contradictions represent a significant problem, the myth will continue to be retold in a series of ever-changing versions. A similar situation presents itself in the striking variations one meets in the different accounts of Śāṅkara's evolution.

<sup>26</sup> This comment of Tilmann Vetter's is refuted at some length by Paul Hacker ("Notes on the Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad and Śāṅkara's Āgamaśāstravivarana", in *India Maior*, ed J. Ensink and P. Caeffke, Leiden, 1972, p. 116n.). Vetter's remark apparently stems from the fact that he takes Śāṅkara to be an individual philosopher. Hacker points out the problem this attitude entails: "The drastic imagery of Dr. Vetter's 'refuse disposal' would be quite to the point if Śāṅkara had been a solitary thinker of the kind that arose in the West about the time of Descartes. In India, however, what recommended a thinker's achievement was not novelty but conformity with tradition".

<sup>27</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth", in *Structural Anthropology*, translated by C. Jacobson and B. G. Schoepf (London, 1968), p. 229.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Madeleine Biardeau prefaces her observations on Śāṅkara's development with an appropriate note of caution:

Il y a peut-être un danger à vouloir trop systématiser la pensée d'un auteur et à percevoir des relations entre différents aspects de son oeuvre qui se présentent comme indépendants parce qu'ils répondent à des problèmes différents.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, she decides to press on with her analysis on the assumption that in a coherent philosophy the basic postulates are implicit throughout. The focal point of her study is the theory of definition. Biardeau contends that prior to establishing such a theory Śāṅkara is reluctant to apply any definition to Brahman, and only speaks of Brahman in such negative terms as 'not this, not this'.<sup>30</sup> She cites as examples GBh and BUBh, both of which are primarily apophatic in their description of Brahman. In BSBh and TUBh, on the other hand, Śāṅkara has not only formulated a theory of definition, but is willing to discuss the nature of Brahman in positive terms. This would suggest that GBh and BUBh comprise an earlier set of works, while BSBh and TUBh are later. Of the latter set, Biardeau is inclined to take TUBh as the later composition.

Hacker's chronology reverses the position of two of these works.<sup>31</sup> He places TUBh in an earlier group, and GBh in a later one. This is on the basis of his examination of the tensions he finds between the illusionistic and realistic tendencies that run through Śāṅkara's work. Vetter also utilises this distinction but

<sup>29</sup> "There is, perhaps, a danger in wishing to over-systematise the thought of an author and to perceive relationships between different aspects of his work which appear as being independent because they respond to different problems"; Madeleine Biardeau, "Quelques Réflexions sur l'Apophatism de Śāṅkara", *III*, 3 (1959), p. 87.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.100.

<sup>31</sup> "Śāṅkara der Yigin", p. 135.

links it to a movement away from the negative methodology of the earlier (illusionistic) works, such as MKBh, to a more positive (realistic) view which entails the recognition of the Self as pure consciousness.<sup>32</sup> This also seems to parallel Biardeau's assertions. Yet the two differ insofar as she suggests that BSBh 4.1.3-5 is a later development than BSBh 1.1.4, while Vetter does not separate the two. Although Ingalls has not proposed a chronology, he does remark that BUBh is a "far more original work" than the BSBh.<sup>33</sup> This stems from his observation that in the BSBh Śāṅkara is, for the most part, careful to follow tradition. In the BUBh, on the other hand, he deliberately challenges the positions of earlier Vedāntins on numerous occasions. If, as is usually assumed, the BSBh is the work which established Śāṅkara's reputation, then Ingalls' comments would imply that the BUBh is a later work. This is in contrast to Biardeau who takes the BUBh as being earlier.

An attempt to explain any author's work, especially that of a traditional metaphysician, in terms of an evolutionary development of his thought has its obvious shortcomings.<sup>34</sup> First of all, the differing perspectives from which each of these

<sup>32</sup> *Studien*, p. 42 ff; 95 ff.

<sup>33</sup> "Śāṅkara's Arguments against the Buddhists", PEW, 3 (1954), p.295.

<sup>34</sup> Wilhelm Halbfass comments that "It is important to keep in mind that [the] construction of Śāṅkara's development remains inevitably hypothetical. We have no factual biographical framework to which we could relate doctrinal variations; the framework itself has to be construed out of such variations. This is further complicated by the fact that Śāṅkara's writings do not simply present us with "doctrines", but also with complex and ambiguous patterns of relating one basic teaching or intent to a great variety of approaches and expressions...it requires extreme caution to identify "inconsistencies" and "contradictions" which would be illegitimate in Śāṅkara's own horizon and which would provide reliable, unambiguous clues for actual *changes* in his thought and for a development from earlier to later positions (*Studies in Kumārila and Śāṅkara*, Reinbek, 1983, p.39).

studies on Śāṅkara is undertaken seems to be a major factor in determining what conclusions are obtained. There is the additional problem that Śāṅkara, as Biardeau herself has noted, may well have written a particular work in direct response to certain specific issues. This would result in differences in his works which cannot be explained merely in terms of development. Nevertheless, each of these critical studies happens to represent an important piece of scholarship, offering valuable insights into Śāṅkara's thought. In pointing to the dynamic tensions, the logical contradictions, and the unresolved questions in his work, they raise issues which encourage further study of his thought. Some traditionalists, on the other hand, in seeking to minimize the contrasts in Śāṅkara's nature, portray him as a rather dull and pedantic character who would inspire very little in the way of vital discussion.

One might well argue that all the material about Śāṅkara could be taken as mythical discourse. Like the traditional accounts, the application of critical methods may be seen as efforts in creating a sense of order in the face of the contradictions inherent in Śāṅkara's life and work. Both perspectives, in turn, may perpetuate their own particular sets of contradictions. In the myths, for example, Śāṅkara appears as the model *samnyāsin* who renounces all earthly attachments. Yet he maintains a strong bond with his mother and breaks with tradition in performing her funeral rites. Although upholding the vow of celibacy from the time of his childhood, he revivifies the body of a dead king and proceeds to indulge himself in the pleasures of his wives and mistresses in order to master the amatory arts (*kāmaśāstra*). Both the traditional accounts and the critical studies involve a restructuring, a reconstruction of the pattern of Śāṅkara's life. Neither is in itself sufficient to provide a comprehensive understanding of his thought. Yet both may be

equally helpful, or distracting, in the search for an approach to the study of Śaṅkara.

In the context of this study, Śaṅkara is not seen as an original thinker, but rather one who sought to reinterpret the message of the Upaniṣads in terms of what is perhaps their boldest metaphysical doctrine. Yājñavalkya and other early Vedāntins had expressed the notion of a non-dualistic absolute reality, a quality-less Brahman. Śaṅkara's contribution lay in his determination to demonstrate that this was the underlying truth which unified the diverse teachings of the Upaniṣads. His *bhāṣya* on the *Brahmasūtra*-s established a precedent which no later commentator could afford to ignore, however much he might disagree with Śaṅkara's position. In addition to his role as an exegete, Śaṅkara was very much involved in the transmission of Vedānta teachings. This is demonstrated by the large number of practical treatises which are traditionally ascribed to him. Even if only one among these, the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, is authentic, there is still available to us sufficient evidence of his teaching methods.

Aside from the influence Śaṅkara's thought has had upon his direct disciples and the Advaita school as a whole, his teachings have gradually been infused into the mainstream of Indian culture. Even the unlettered man may have at least a rough idea of Śaṅkara's message. His place in society is therefore quite different than that of, say, Kant or Bradley. While we are not really accustomed to regarding profound metaphysical speculation as a cultural achievement, it is precisely on this basis that Śaṅkara's thought commends itself to us. It would, of course, be foolish to approach Śaṅkara in the hope that his work will reveal to us the nature of the Indian psyche. Rather, it is in Śaṅkara that we find expression of some of its most noble aspirations.

## II

### The Nature of Meditation

Lately meditation has attracted considerable interest in both popular and scholarly circles. Yet surprisingly little attention has been given to establishing a precise definition of meditation. While we cannot expect specialised definitions of complex terms in standard dictionaries, they do indicate the prevailing conventional understandings, and may, for that reason, also reflect some of the difficulties in the comprehension of those terms. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, defines the verb 'meditate' as, to "exercise the mind in (esp. religious) contemplation". This raises some immediate questions. To what extent are meditation and contemplation equivalent? Where 'meditation' has a religious connotation, does it vary substantially from one tradition to another?

These questions may serve as our starting point in establishing a working definition of 'meditation'. The approach here will be threefold: (1) an etymological analysis of 'meditation' and 'contemplation', (2) a selective survey of the application of these terms within the context of mystical theology, and (3) a look at Hindu meditation (a) as it is presented in the early Upaniṣads, and (b) as it is later synthesized in the *Yogasūtra*.

#### Meditation and Contemplation

The term 'meditation' can be traced back to the Indo-European root \*med, whose primary significance is that of 'measuring'.<sup>1</sup> In Sanskrit, for example, the cognate root *mā* means "measure,

<sup>1</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. C. T. Onions and G. W. S. Friedrichsen (Oxford, 1966), s.v.

mete out, mark off'.<sup>2</sup> The Greek term *meletao*, which derives from \**med*, connotes 'meting out'. More specifically, *meletao* signifies "attend to, study, practise, exercise".<sup>3</sup> Its Latin cognate, *meditor*, is virtually synonymous. Originally *meditor* meant 'exercise' in a rather general sense, but the term was later restricted to the designation of a mental or spiritual exercise.<sup>4</sup> It is from this Latin term that 'meditation' is derived.

'Contemplation', in turn, is from the Latin *templum*. The earliest use of *templum* was to designate the space marked out by the augur for the practice of divination: "espace carré délimité par l'augure dans le ciel, et sur la terre, à l'intérieur duquel il recueille, et interprète les présages".<sup>5</sup> By extension it came to denote a place consecrated to the gods, a temple. In this sense, *templum* is quite close to the Greek *temenos*, a sacred enclosure. The manner in which the enclosure was marked out is suggested by the Indo-European root \**tem*, 'to cut', from which both terms are derived. Insofar as the intersecting lines marked out by the augur appear to divide and define what is simply an open space, his activity involves a 'cutting'. This is not merely 'cutting off', but rather marking out a space within a greater space. The intention of the augur is to define the link between heaven and earth. The link appears in the form of celestial omens, and it is the reflection on the meaning of these that constitutes contemplation. Elémire Zolla vividly describes this ancient process:

A ritual should first of all separate a space, a moment from time. The holy spot should be cut off from the

<sup>2</sup> Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (repr. Delhi, 1974), s.v.

<sup>3</sup> A *Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott (revised ed.; Oxford, 1925-40), s.v.

<sup>4</sup> A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Latine, Histoire des Mots* (4th ed.; Paris, 1967), s.v.

<sup>5</sup> "A quadrilateral space drawn out by the augur in the sky and on the earth, within which he gathers and interprets omens", *ibid.*, p. 681.

everyday time of ordinary space: set apart...The ancient seer traced a circle on the spot that had 'all room within'. On the circle he marked four points: the cross of the four moments of time. The seer would draw other patterns on the ground until he stood over an emblem and map of the cosmos...He would then turn towards the star whose power had manifested itself. He might place a pebble, or a twig, or a flower on the point of the circle where the line from the star to himself had intersected it. In that direction he would steady his gaze. Whatever crossed that line was a word from the star to him. He would bet that it was omen. In awe and wonderment he had marked off that space and time. He was wrapt in contemplation, and contemplation had shown him the sign.<sup>6</sup>

This also reflects the development the term *contemplatio* has undergone: from 'cutting', and 'marking out', to 'gazing', and 'contemplation'.

The term *contemplatio* was understood by the scholastics to be synonymous with the Greek *theoria* and was employed to render that term into Latin. The primary meaning of *theoria* is 'viewing', 'beholding'.<sup>7</sup> The only difference between these terms is that whereas *contemplatio* bears a specifically religious connotation, *theoria* has a more general application.<sup>8</sup> Plato brings out the contemplative connotation of *theoria*:

But if it were given to man to gaze on beauty's very self—if it were given to man to see the heavenly beauty face to face, would you call his...an unenviable life whose eyes had been opened to the vision, and who had gazed upon it

<sup>6</sup> Elémire Zolla, "Traditional Methods of Contemplation and Action", in *Traditional Modes of Contemplation and Action*, ed. Yusuf Ibish and Peter Lamborn Wilson (Tehran, 1977), pp. 49-50.

<sup>7</sup> *Greek-English Lexicon* (cited above).

<sup>8</sup> A. J. Festugière, *Contemplation et Vie Contemplative Selon Platon*, (2nd ed.; Paris, 1950), p. 13n.

in true contemplation until it had become his own forever?<sup>9</sup>

From this it seems that *theoria* is a special kind of gazing, that culminates in an intuitive understanding. Plato in *Symposium* 210-211 explains a method of contemplation which begins with the observation of beauty in a single form or body. By a gradual process of abstraction the physical aspects of beauty are left aside so that the soul's supramundane beauty may be considered. Similarly, there is a progression from sensory perception to intellectual perception. Ultimately there is direct perception of the highest order which reveals the very Form of beauty itself.

Since the time of Aristotle, a distinction has been drawn between *bios theoretikos*, the contemplative life, the way of "seeing", and *bios praktikos*, the active life, the way of doing. Meditation and contemplation are, of course, components of the *bios theoretikos*. Nevertheless, 'meditation' implies activity. Although *meditari*, the Latin cognate of *melete*, denotes a specifically mental or spiritual form of exercise, its connotation is clearly one of activity. For this reason, meditation must be linked with *praxis*, while contemplation can only be associated with *theoria*.

The relationship between meditation and contemplation is perhaps better understood in the context of mystical theology. Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) devotes a great deal of attention to the subject. He distinguishes three modes of perception in the contemplative life: cogitation, meditation, and contemplation. The three are alike insofar as they represent the "sight of the soul",<sup>10</sup> but each has its own character. Cogitation denotes a rather

<sup>9</sup> *Symposium* 211 E, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Michael Cairns (Bollingen Series LXXI; New York, 1963), p. 563.

<sup>10</sup> Richard of St. Victor, *Selected Writings on Contemplation*, tr. Clare Kirchberger (London, 1957), p. 138.

aimless type of thought: the mind wanders about until it meets with something to which it is so powerfully attracted, that it is impelled to a deeper investigation. If this inquiry is pursued, cogitation develops into meditation:

an industrious attention of the mind concentrated diligently upon the investigation of some object...the careful look of the soul zealously occupied in search of truth.<sup>11</sup>

While meditation requires great exertion, contemplation is virtually effortless. In contemplation the mind simply receives the truth for which it had been seeking, and remains fixed in that truth in a state of exultation and wonder. Richard further elaborates upon these three methods of perception, with the help of some delightful imagery:

Cogitation, slow-footed, wanders hither and thither along bypaths, caring not where they will lead. Meditation, with great mental industry, plods along the steep and laborious road keeping the end in view. Contemplation, on a free wing, circles round with great nimbleness wherever the impulse takes it.<sup>12</sup>

Richard emphasises the sense of freedom in contemplation. However, he is careful to point out that contemplation does not imply abandon. Although it may dart to and fro, circle about, or hover as if motionless in one place, the contemplation remains firmly fixed upon a single point.

In the *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas Aquinas discusses the work of several earlier writers on the subject of the contemplative life.<sup>13</sup> He clarifies Richard's rather vague notion of cogitation, explaining it as a process of deductive reasoning. St.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.136.

<sup>13</sup> In 2.2.Q.180, he cites the work of St. Augustine, Dionysius, St. Gregory the Great, and St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

Thomas also takes meditation to be a kind of reasoning, and distinguishes it from contemplation:

'Meditation' would seem to be the process of reason from certain principles that lead to contemplation of some truth—but 'contemplation' regards the simple act of gazing on the truth.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, in the *Living Flame of Love*, St. John of the Cross describes meditation as a rational procedure. He holds that acts of the imagination, and the discursive exercises of meditation, are only appropriate to the "beginner". It is when meditation is put aside, or rather, when the stage is reached where it can no longer be practised, that one may "receive that which is communicated from God...the loftiest wisdom and language of God such as is contemplation".<sup>15</sup>

Although 'meditation' and 'contemplation' derive from roots which imply a sense of 'measurement', the two terms have certainly developed their own distinctive connotations. Meditation entails a deliberate practice. It is a rigorous mental exercise whose aim is a clear perception of truths of a religious or metaphysical nature. Contemplation, on the other hand, is *not* an activity. It is a receiving, a beholding, or an intuitive perception, of the truth which was sought in meditation. Nevertheless, the interrelationship of the two should not be overlooked. Contemplation is the corollary of meditation. They are inseparable links in the contemplative process. Hence, 'meditation' and 'contemplation' are best understood as complementary terms.

It has become established usage to apply 'meditation' rather than 'contemplation' in discussing Indian religions, although the

<sup>14</sup> *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, tr. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London, 1934), Vol. 14, p. 108.

<sup>15</sup> *The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross*, ed. and tr. E. Allison Peers (3 vols.; revised ed.; London, 1953), vol. III, p. 162.

reasons for this are not clear. The Sanskrit term *dhyāna*, for example, is usually translated by 'meditation'. One scholar who stands apart from this "convention" is Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. He consistently renders *dhyāna* by 'contemplation', on the understanding that the verbal root *dhyai*, from which *dhyāna* derives, is equivalent to *dhī*, 'to perceive' or 'to think'.<sup>16</sup> Mayrhofer agrees the two roots are cognate,<sup>17</sup> as does Gonda who demonstrates at great length that *dhī* signifies 'vision'.<sup>18</sup> Coomaraswamy logically extends the correspondence of these roots to the nominal forms *dhyāna* and *dhī*. In indicating the significance of these terms for the creative process, he maintains that traditionally the artist began with an "intellectual operation", a contemplation by which he "saw" the required form of the work to be done. He cites passages from the Vedas where a chariot or an altar is said to be "put together by means of a contemplation (*dhiyā*)".<sup>19</sup> Because they connote a supramundane perception, Coomaraswamy equates *dhī* and *dhyāna* with *theoria* and *contemplatio*. Although a good case could be made for taking up his rendering, in this study *dhyāna* will be translated by 'meditation'. Firstly, it is more convenient to follow what is by now an established usage. Secondly, 'meditation' seems preferable insofar as it is not suggestive of a particular religious tradition.

Even without undertaking a comparative examination of meditation in Christian and Hindu traditions, many points will be

<sup>16</sup> Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "The Symbolism of the Dome", in *Coomaraswamy I: Selected Papers, Traditional Art and Symbolism*, ed. Roger Lipsey (Princeton, 1977), p. 426. This was first published in 1938.

<sup>17</sup> Manfred Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen* (3 vols.; Heidelberg, 1956-66), vol. 1, s.v.

<sup>18</sup> J. Gonda has devoted an entire monograph to an examination of the term *dhī*: *The Vision of the Vedic Poets* (The Hague, 1963), especially p.289 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Coomaraswamy, *loc.cit.*

seen to agree. The intention here is not to notice the obvious parallels, nor the differences, but rather to provide a clearer picture of meditation than has been previously available. To summarise what has been covered so far, and as an introduction to the Sanskrit sources, it will be useful to offer at this point a provisional definition of meditation: *the concentration of the mind on a particular theme or object in preparation for the direct intuition of truth.*

### Upāsanā

In the early Upaniṣads, *upāsanā* is the term most frequently employed to designate the process of meditation. *Dhyāna* also occurs occasionally, but does not have the distinctive sense which it acquires in the later Upaniṣads, and, more especially in the *Yogaśūtra*. Derived from the verbal root āś, 'to sit', *upāsanā* is literally 'sitting near'. Its particular significance is that of "serving, honouring, worshipping",<sup>20</sup> and by extension, 'expressing this attitude through meditation'. Śāṅkara explains *upāsanā* on several occasions, but his most striking definition is found in BUBh 1.3.9:

*Upāsanā* means reaching by the mind the form of a deity or something else as delineated in scriptural passages relating to meditation, and concentrating the mind on it-uninterrupted by secular thoughts, until identity with that deity or other thing is imagined in the same degree in which identity is (now) imagined (by us) with our body.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v.

<sup>21</sup> Translated by M. Hiriyanna, "The Training of the Vedāntin", in *Popular Essays in Indian Philosophy* (Mysore, 1952), p. 7; *upāsanam nāma upāsyārtha-vāde yathā devatādi-svarūpam śrutyā jñāpyate tathā manasopagamyā āsanam cintanam laukika-pratyayā vyavadhānenā yāvat taddevatādi-svarūpātmābhimānābhivyaktir iti laukikātmābhimānavat.*

Śāṅkara's reference to the deity (*devatā*) as an object of meditation shows that *upāsanā* involves an element of worship. This is further emphasised in BSBh 4.1.1: "Thus we say in ordinary life that a person 'is devoted' [*upāste*] to a teacher or king if he follows him with a mind set steadily on him".<sup>22</sup> Despite this analogy to ordinary experience, meditation is clearly not a secular practice. As Śāṅkara indicates, the object of concentration is to be drawn exclusively from scripture.

The real aim of *upāsanā* is to effect a correspondence of subject (meditator) and object (of the meditation), "identity with that deity". The notion of attaining identity and so reuniting the sacred and the mundane can be traced back to Vedic ritual sacrifice. The *Puruṣasūkta*, for example, describes how creation results from the gods' sacrificial offering of the primordial man. This divine sacrifice becomes the model for human behaviour; man's creative undertakings are similarly to be initiated by means of sacrifice. In this way sacrifice is understood to be the very link between the gods and man. This correspondence between the divine and human realms is sought in order to satisfy man's material needs as well as his deeper spiritual aspirations, for sacrifice is believed to provide prosperity and fecundity.

The Vedic rituals were transformed in such a way that sacrifice became the *upāsanā* of the Upaniṣads. In BUBh 3.1.6, Śāṅkara refers to an *upāsanā* which substitutes meditation for ritual action. He explains that meditation is a more effective means of obtaining the desired results. To begin with, any defect in the performance of the ritual, however minor, could invalidate the whole procedure. He points to another problem in the substantial expenditure some of the sacrifices require. Few could afford the expense of the more elaborate rituals and are thus

<sup>22</sup> *The Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa with the commentary by Śaṅkara*, tr. George Thibaut (2 vols.; reprinted, New York, 1962), vol. II, p. 332.

deprived of the boons they confer. There are perhaps other factors which contributed to the transformation of ritual. J. F. Staal suggests that ritual practice may have degenerated so that it could no longer effect the sacred identity.<sup>23</sup> But meditation may have simply been an easier way.

The opening passages of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* link ritual with *upāsanā* in the setting of a grand cosmic drama. The secret of creation is symbolically revealed as a great horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*). Prajāpati, the creator, first appears on the scene as death, having devoured all that he had made manifest. Yet the creative urge arose in him anew. He made of himself the sacrificial offering. His body became gradually swollen (*aśvat*) until there emerged a horse (*aśva*). He then reflected upon the horse in the following manner:

The head of the sacrificial horse is the dawn, its eye the sun, its vital force the air....Its back is heaven, its belly the sky, its hoof the earth, its sides the four quarters.<sup>24</sup>

Though held in the mind, the horse was allowed to roam free for a year, as is the practice in the ritual; Prajāpati then sacrificed the horse to himself. In the *Puruṣasūkta* a similar creation myth suggested the efficacy of ritual action, based on the model of the sacrifice initiated by the gods. In the *Upaniṣad*, however, it is meditation alone which effects the sacred identity. Prajāpati discovers the identity of the creator and his creation and so shows the way to immortality through meditation: "He who

<sup>23</sup> He argues that in the earliest Vedic sacrifice there was no distinction between "inner" and "outer" experience. The ritual process reflected the essential unity of what was later to be distinguished as body and mind. It was the development of self-consciousness which destroyed this unity and led to a gradual decline in the efficacy of the sacrifice (*Advaita and Neo-Platonism*, Madras, 1961, p. 70 ff.).

<sup>24</sup> *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, tr. Swāmī Mādhavānanda (5th ed.; Mayavati, 1975), p. 6.

knows thus conquers further death. Death cannot overtake him, it becomes his self and he becomes one with these deities".<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the Indian tradition there is clear expression of the belief that the realms of thought and matter are interrelated. It is said that mental activity, especially meditation, has the power to effect change on the physical plane. Śaṅkara reinforces this notion with a maxim he cites on several occasions: "howsoever one meditates on him, that indeed he becomes".<sup>26</sup> The idea is that as one attains identity with a particular object, one inherits or assumes those properties which characterise the object. The same concept underlies the notion of the sacred word:

The spoken word had a mysterious, supernatural power; it contained within itself the essence of the thing denoted. To 'know the name' of anything was to control the thing. The word means wisdom, knowledge; and knowledge...was magic power.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed the sacred word is often the basis of *upāsanā* in the *Upaniṣads*. Numerous illustrations are found in the Chāndogya *Upaniṣad*—a veritable treasury of meditations—the second chapter of which is almost entirely devoted to a description of various *upāsanā*-s developed from the chants of the *Sāma Veda*. The *upāsanā*-s comprise layer upon layer of identifications. In 2.2.1 the five divisions of the *sāman* chant are identified with the five divisions of the world.<sup>28</sup> The correspondence is further defined

<sup>25</sup> BU 1.2.7, in Mādhavānanda, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>26</sup> *tam yathā yathopāsate tad eva bhavati*. Śaṅkara quotes the phrase in BSBh 1.1.11; 3.4.52; 4.3.15; ChUBh 1.1.7; and BUBh 1.3.16. He refers to it as *śruti* but its source is unidentified.

<sup>27</sup> Franklin Edgerton, *The Beginnings of Indian Philosophy* (London, 1965), pp. 23-24.

<sup>28</sup> The division (*bhakti*) of each of the verses (*sāman*) of the *Sāma Veda* indicates the way the particular *sāman* is to be chanted. Each element of the *sāman* is given a specific designation: *hṛṣikāra*, *prastāva*, *udgītha*, *pratihāra*, and *nidhana*. The roles of chanting the different parts of the *sāman* are

in terms of the first region, earth. Various natural elements are linked with the components of the *sāman*:

One should meditate on the fivefold *sāman* in the rain. The preceding wind as the syllable *him*; the formation of the cloud is the *prastāva*. What rains is the *udgītha*, the lightning and thunder as the *prathāra*...It rains for him and he causes it to rain, he, who knowing this thus, meditates on the fivefold *sāman* in the rain.<sup>29</sup>

Through this series of identifications, the meditator acquires the power inherent in the object of the meditation.

Śaṅkara acknowledges the acquisition of power as one of three traditionally designated goals of *upāsanā*.<sup>30</sup> A second goal is the averting of danger: "He does not die in water, he becomes rich in water, he, who knowing this thus, meditates on the five-fold *sāman* in all the waters".<sup>31</sup> The third, and highest, attainment is promised as the culmination of a meditation on the sun: "He obtains the victory of the sun, indeed a victory higher than the victory of the sun...which leads beyond death".<sup>32</sup>

In the Vedic tradition the correct manner of pronunciation (*śikṣā*) is in itself an important basis for the comprehension of the sacred word. In *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 1.3, two facets of pronunciation are discussed. The first involves simply a process of recitation, and only receives brief mention. The second is an extensive elaboration of an esoteric interpretation of

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specifically allocated among the Vedic priests (*The Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, tr. Swami Swahananda, Madras, 1975, p. xlvi). The five corresponding realms are earth (*prthivī*), fire (*agni*), atmosphere (*antarikṣa*), sun (*āditya*), and heaven (*dyaus*).

<sup>29</sup> *The Principal Upaniṣads*, ed. and tr. S. Radhakrishnan (4th ed.; London and New York, 1974), p. 361.

<sup>30</sup> *phalam apy eṣāṁ yathopadeśāṁ kvacid durita-kṣayāḥ kvacid aiśvaryaprāptih kvacit krama-muktir*, BSBh 3.2.21.

<sup>31</sup> ChU 2.4.2, tr. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

<sup>32</sup> ChU 2.10.6, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

pronunciation, developed through meditation on the conjunction of syllables. The proper relationship of the syllables is the subject of a variety of *upāsanā*-s, the first of which is a meditation on the world (*loka*). The earth is taken to represent the initial syllable while the second syllable corresponds to heaven. The space between is represented by ether (*ākāśa*), and the link that joins the syllables is air (*vāyu*). The student is guided to recognise the distinctive qualities of each syllable, and also the intervening space. Indeed, he himself participates in the process of conjunction. For it is the power of the air, or wind, generated by his own pronunciation of the syllables, that actually serves to link them.<sup>33</sup>

In this way the syllables are understood to be far more than mere building blocks for words. Their interrelationship becomes a microcosm which mirrors a cosmic pattern. This awareness leads the student to the comprehension of such esoteric utterances (*vyāhṛti*) as *bhūr bhuvaḥ suvah*, which he chants thrice daily at the commencement of his diurnal rites (*samdhya*): "*Bhūḥ* is this world, *bhuvaḥ* the atmosphere, *suvah* is the yonder world...he who knows this knows Brahman".<sup>34</sup>

Since Brahman is so closely associated with the power of the word, it is not surprising to find that the pre-eminent symbol used in meditation on Brahman is the sacred syllable *om*:

<sup>33</sup> Swāmī Gambhirānanda cites Śaṅkarānanda's explanation of this process: "In the text *iśe tva*, the *e* that follows the *ś* is the symbol of the earth; the *t* that follows is identical with heaven; the intermediate space between these two letters is *ākāśa* (the tryst); the other *t* that emerges by duplication in that space as a result of conjoining the two parts, the actual pronunciation being *iśet-tva*, is identified with *Vāyu* (the joining agent). This is how one should meditate." (*Eight Upaniṣads with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, tr. Swāmī Gambhirānanda [2 vols. Mayavati, 1977-78], vol. I, p. 236n.).

<sup>34</sup> TU 1.5.1 ff., tr. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, pp. 532-533.

The word which all the Vedas rehearse, and which all austerities proclaim....That syllable, truly, indeed, is Brahman, that syllable indeed is the supreme. Knowing that syllable, truly, indeed, whatever one desires is his. That is the best support. That is the supreme support.<sup>35</sup>

*Om* is the ultimate support of meditation;<sup>36</sup> it is the bow which directs the arrow of the Self to Brahman, the mark;<sup>37</sup> it is the fire stick which, when rubbed by the practice of meditation, reveals the hidden divinity.<sup>38</sup> But despite the prominence of the sacred syllable *om* in *upāsanā*, there is little procedural detail supplied in the accounts of these well known meditations.

Fortunately another important *upāsanā* is elaborated somewhat more fully. The meditation on Brahman as symbolized by the term *satya*, 'real' or 'true', involves the establishment of an identity by means of an esoteric understanding of the word. The *upāsanā* is introduced with the assertion that the Self is immortal (*amṛta*), that it is Brahman. The next identification is that of Brahman and *satyam*:

Verily, these are the three syllables: *sat-ti-yam*. The *sat*-that is the immortal. The *ti*-that is the mortal. Now the *yam*-with that one holds the two together. Because with it one holds the two together, therefore it is *yam*.<sup>39</sup>

The passage is chiefly concerned with the question of determining the relationship of the mortal, the individual, to the immortal

<sup>35</sup> KaU 2.15-17, in *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, tr. Robert Ernest Hume (2nd ed.; Oxford, 1977), p. 349. See also ChU 1.1, TU 1.8 and MāU 1. For a discussion of the meaning of the word *om*, see Asko Parpola, "On the primary meaning and etymology of the sacred syllable *om*", *Studia Orientalia*, 50 (1981), pp. 195-213.

<sup>36</sup> PU 5.2.

<sup>37</sup> MuU 2.2.4.

<sup>38</sup> Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 1.14.

<sup>39</sup> ChU 8.3.5, tr. Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 265. Another version of this meditation is described in BU 5.5.1.

Brahman. The answer lies in a meditation on the sacred word, a link between the mortal and the immortal.

The word reveals its secrets in an etymology (*nirukta*) which is not strictly philological, but rather a psychological one, rich in its suggestion of an entire range of interconnected meanings.<sup>40</sup> The first syllable, *sat*, literally 'being', is indicative of Brahman, that being which has neither beginning nor end. The *ti*, according to Śāṅkara, is a reflection of the syllable (*ty*) in the term *mṛtyu*, 'death', 'mortality'. The final syllable is understood in the sense of the verbal root *yam*, 'to hold'. It is left to the following verse to describe the way the mortal and the immortal are actually held together: "Now the self is the bridge, the boundary for keeping these worlds apart. Over that bridge day and night do not cross, nor old age nor death".<sup>41</sup> The key here is the term *setu* which denotes not only 'bridge', but 'dike', 'embankment'. Insofar as it refers both to 'holding', as well as to 'holding in', 'restraining', and 'controlling', the connotation of *setu* corresponds precisely to that of *yam*. The "controller" is the *ātman*. Now the term *ātman* can designate either the physical body or its immortal essence. In the former sense the *ātman* represents the mortal body which binds one to the "nearer shore". But knowledge of the higher Self, the identity of *ātman* and Brahman, is the bridge by which one crosses over to the "other shore".

The notion of control suggested by the syllable *yam* in the analysis of *satyam* is also significant in its implication of the

<sup>40</sup> Betty Heimann maintains that the etymologies we often encounter in the ancient texts are "philologically wrong but psychologically correct" (*Facets of Indian Thought*, London, 1964, p. 91). The type of precise philological analysis which we now expect may not have seemed especially relevant to the Upaniṣadic teachers. Some of their etymologies may have simply been teaching devices to awaken the pupil to the interrelationship of the word with man, the world, and the divine.

<sup>41</sup> ChU 8.4.1, tr. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 497.

self-control required in the practice of *upāsanā*. Śāṅkara stresses that *upāsanā* is characterised by a uniform flow of thoughts, *tulya-pratyaya-santatir*.<sup>42</sup> Clearly, a good deal of discipline is required if the current of thought is to be maintained. But the accounts of *upāsanā* in the ten Upaniṣads on which Śāṅkara has commented have little advice to offer the meditator on just how the practice is to proceed. They focus instead upon the object of the meditation, elaborating in great detail the ritual and symbolic themes representing "that deity" with whom identity is sought.

### *Dhyāna*

In the ten Upaniṣads singled out by Śāṅkara, the term *dhyāna* is virtually synonymous with *upāsanā*,<sup>43</sup> or simply denotes 'thinking'.<sup>44</sup> Śāṅkara does not seem concerned with distinguishing *dhyāna* from *upāsanā*. In BSBh 4.1.7 and 4.1.8, he repeats precisely the same explanation for each of the two terms: "maintaining a uniform train of thought". Yet despite their similarity there are obvious differences. Firstly, unlike *upāsanā*, *dhyāna* does not necessarily entail a devotional attitude. Secondly, as *dhyāna* comes to be associated with yoga practice, the term is specifically identified with techniques used in controlling the mind. *Upāsanā* does not connote a particular set of mental exercises. In *upāsanā*, the emphasis is on the object of the meditation, the deity with whom identity is sought, hence, the sense of 'worship'. As the early Upaniṣads suggest, *dhyāna* is indeed a kind of thinking. But it is a specialised mode of thought: a 'way of attaining identity', or a 'means of true knowledge'.

<sup>42</sup> TUBh 1.3.2.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, ChU 1.3.12; PU 5.1; MU 2.2.6.

<sup>44</sup> See BU 4.4.21; KaU 1.28; AiU 3.8.

It is only in the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* that *dhyāna* begins to develop its characteristic connotation. It is also recognised as an essential component of a yoga practice which will be more fully elaborated in the *Yogasūtra*. When commenting on yoga, Śāṅkara generally cites the authority of these three works, but relies especially on the *Yogasūtra*. This is what we would, of course, expect if the *vivarāṇa* on Vyāsa's *Yogasūtra-bhāṣya* was indeed composed by Śāṅkara. Many of his remarks on yoga and meditation reflect the influence of Vyāsa. When, for instance, Śāṅkara explains *dhyāna* in BSBh 4.1.8, *samāna-pratyaya-pravāha-karaṇam*, he echoes Vyāsa's definition of the term in YSBh 3.2: *pratyayasya ekatānatā sadṛśah pravāhah*.

Śāṅkara illustrates the specific usage of the term *dhyāna*, in a manner reminiscent of the *Yogasūtra*:

The word 'meditative' [refers to] those whose minds are concentrated upon a single object, whose gaze is fixed, and whose limbs scarcely move.<sup>45</sup>

The *Yogasūtra* describes the practice of meditation as beginning with a firm and steady posture (*āsana*). The steadiness is reinforced by control of the breath (*prāṇāyāma*). Each moment of the breath, comprising an inhalation, exhalation and cessation, is regulated and protracted. As the breath becomes ever more subtle, external movement is brought to a virtual halt. The fixity of his gaze suggests that the meditator has also put an end to the activity of the senses. This is accomplished by a withdrawal (*pratyāhāra*) of the sensory organs so that there is no longer any interaction with sensory stimuli. These three practices, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma* and *pratyāhāra*,<sup>46</sup> together with the prerequisite moral

<sup>45</sup> *dhyāyatiś ca praśīthilāṅga-ceṣṭeṣu pratiṣṭhita-drṣṭiṣv eka-viṣayāksiptacitteṣu...BSBh 4.1.8.*

<sup>46</sup> See YS 2.46 ff.

conduct,<sup>47</sup> constitute the foundation upon which meditation is based.

When the aspirant is thus prepared, he may then strive to achieve mastery of the mind. The mind is first fixed in concentration (*dhāraṇā*), focussed exclusively on a single object. It is only then that the "uniform train of thought", characteristic of *dhyāna*, can be developed. Śankara likens this current of unbroken thought to the way oil pours: a fine, continuous stream (*taila-dhārāvat-samtato 'vicchinna-pratyayo*).<sup>48</sup> *Dhyāna* culminates in *samādhi*, absorption. *Samādhi* occurs when all sense of separateness disappears. The one who meditates, the act of meditation and the object of meditation merge into one. This identity manifests itself by shining forth in the light of the object.

In the *Yogasūtra*, meditation involves the whole of a process comprising *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*.<sup>49</sup> This can be expressed in terms of the traditional imagery cited by Śankara: first the lamp is firmly grasped, then filled with oil and lit, whereupon the light alone is seen to be shining forth.

<sup>47</sup> Śankara does not refer to moral conduct in BSBh 4.1.8. While he rarely enumerates moral principles, it seems that they were expected of his students. Śankara insists, for example, that the teacher should determine whether or not the student is possessed of the necessary qualities which are "well known from the traditional sources", *śāstra-prasiddha-śiṣya-guṇa-sampannāya* (USG 1.2). The YS provides details of the necessary moral principles, which comprise the first two steps of the eightfold yoga practice (*astāṅga-yoga*). The first step, *yama*, designates a series of 'restraints': not causing injury to living beings, non-covetousness, non-stealing, truthfulness and continence (YS 2.30). The second step, *niyama*, involves a series of 'observances': purity, contentment, austerity, study and devotion to the Lord (YS 2.32).

<sup>48</sup> GBh 13.24.

<sup>49</sup> See YS 3.1 ff. Coomaraswamy suggests that the process is parallel to the *consideratio*, *contemplatio* and *excessus* of Christian mystical theology ("Some Pāli Words", in Coomaraswamy 2: *Selected Papers. Metaphysics*, ed. Roger Lipsey, Princeton, 1977, p.284).

Collectively, these three aspects, known as *samyama*, are regarded as the direct means (*antarāṅga*) to the goal of yoga.<sup>50</sup> The five preceding steps are only indirect aids (*bahirāṅga*), which prepare the ground for *samyama*. Meditation, then, represents the very heart of the yoga practice.

The *Yogasūtra* distinguishes between two different types of meditation:<sup>51</sup> those based on object-centred consciousness (*samprajñāta*), and those which reject all contact with objects (*asamprajñāta*).<sup>52</sup> *Samyama* exemplifies object-based meditation, for it strives to establish an identity. *Prasamkhyāna* best represents the approach independent of object-orientation. This meditation is characterised solely by *viveka-khyāti*, "discriminative discernment".<sup>53</sup> The function of *prasamkhyāna* is to discriminate between the pristine nature of the Self (*puruṣa*), and that of *prakṛti*, the very source of all material objects. The aim of the meditation is to stop the fluctuations of the mind (*citta-vṛtti-nirodha*), and ultimately, to be free from the bonds of *prakṛti*. The YS clearly regards *asamprajñāta* as the superior of the two ways of meditation. In the final analysis,

<sup>50</sup> See YS 3.4 ff.

<sup>51</sup> Strictly speaking these are *samādhi*-s. But 'meditation' is used here in the broader sense of the term which comprises *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. The two are inseparably linked as components of *samyama*. The six types of *samādhi* mentioned in YS 1.17 and 1.42 may all be attained by means of *samyama*. For further discussion see Surendranth Dasgupta, *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion* (repr. Delhi, 1973), p. 124 ff. Śankara, for his part, does not seem particularly concerned to distinguish *samādhi* from other, more general, terms denoting meditation. In his comment on BS 2.3.29, *samādhy abhāvāc ca*, he cites as examples of *samādhi* passages which prescribe *dhyāna* and *nididhyāsana*.

<sup>52</sup> See YS 1.18.

<sup>53</sup> This is James Haughton Woods' translation (*The Yoga System of Patañjali*, repr. Delhi 1977, p.8). *Prasamkhyāna* is described in YS 4.29 and YSBh 1.2.

*samyama* is but an external aid to the practice of a meditation which does not rely on objects.<sup>54</sup>

Śaṅkara too favours meditation which goes beyond the limits of object identification:

Thus the sage identifies himself, by stages, with the vital force that comprises everything. Then, withdrawing this all-comprising vital force into the inner Self, he next attains the state of the witness, the transcendent Self that is described as 'not this, not this'.<sup>55</sup>

Śaṅkara accepts the striving to attain identity only as a preliminary stage of meditation. When this stage is abandoned, the meditator becomes a mere witness (*draṣṭṛ*) to all associations. He exercises discriminative insight by negating (*neti neti*) all which is other than the highest Self. Such meditation is a true reflection of the nature of the Self, which, in the absolute sense, can only be identified as 'not this, not this'. To assist his students in the path of Self-realisation, Śaṅkara developed a process he calls *parisaṃkhyāna*, a meditation closely resembling the *prasamkhyāna* of the *Yogaśūtra*.<sup>56</sup> Using this type of meditation as a model, Śaṅkara establishes a new interpretation of *upāsanā*. An analysis of the sacred utterance, *tat tvam asi*, becomes the basis of a meditative process which discriminates between Self and non-Self, while reaffirming the essential unity of *ātman* and Brahman.

<sup>54</sup> YS 3.8.

<sup>55</sup> BUBh 4.2.4, in Mādhavānanda, *op. cit.*, p. 414; *evam vidvān kramenā sarvātmakam prāṇam ātmavenupagata bhavati. tam sarvātmānam pratyag-ātmany upasamṛ̥tya draṣṭur hi draṣṭṛ-bhāvam neti nety ātmānam turiyam pratipadyate.*

<sup>56</sup> Both terms are formed from the root *khyā*, 'to be known'. Monier-Williams defines *prasamkhyāna* as "enumeration, reflection, meditation" and *parisaṃkhyāna* as "enumeration, exclusive specification". See Chapter IV for further discussion.

### III

## Śaṅkara's View of Meditation

Śaṅkara's understanding of meditation is determined largely by his basic metaphysical assumptions. Even though it involves traversing again the already familiar terrain of Śaṅkara's metaphysics, a look at some of the fundamental concepts of his thought should help to answer two important questions. Firstly, why does he seek to modify the obvious significance which the older Upaniṣads attach to meditation? Secondly, what exactly is the place of meditation in Śaṅkara's Vedānta? There remains the further question of Śaṅkara's practical instructions regarding meditation. Two recent studies have commented on his apparent failure to provide specific guidance in this area. Yet in at least one instance, GBh 5.12, he has provided a clear outline of the spiritual disciplines the aspirant is to follow. Utilising the scheme presented in this text, along with some material from his other works, it is possible to reconstruct a picture of Śaṅkara's practical teachings on meditation.

There have been two studies specifically devoted to Śaṅkara's view of meditation: Hajime Nakamura's article, "Meditation in Śaṅkara",<sup>1</sup> and Barbara Doherty's unpublished Ph.D. thesis, "The Path to Liberation: Śaṅkara, Metaphysician, Mystic, and Teacher".<sup>2</sup>

Nakamura's study is, for the most part, a descriptive summary of Śaṅkara's comments on meditation drawn wholly from the BSBh. While Nakamura presents a lucid exposition, he offers little analysis of Śaṅkara's position on meditation. Perhaps he did not intend that the study be comprehensive, but in

<sup>1</sup> *The Journal of Religious Studies* (Punjabi University), VII (1979), 1-18.

<sup>2</sup> Fordham University, New York, 1979.

restricting himself to a consideration of the BSBh, Nakamura has limited the scope of his findings. It is certainly understandable that any study of Śāṅkara might begin from the standpoint of the BSBh. Yet it seems unfortunate in this instance to exclude the *Upadeśasāhasrī*. Since this is an independent treatise, it allows Śāṅkara greater range in which to expound his own thought than do his commentaries. But above all the *Upadeśasāhasrī* is a manual of practical instruction. As such it provides an invaluable context in which to examine Śāṅkara's teachings on meditation. In the BSBh, on the other hand, his discussion of meditation is largely exegetical. Nevertheless even here Śāṅkara gives some suggestion of the role meditation plays in his Advaita Vedānta.

In view of the considerable attention which the *Brahmasūtra* accords to meditation, it may appear odd that Śāṅkara does not present a systematic elaboration of the subject in his BSBh. Nakamura notes that Śāṅkara's treatment of meditation is "rather fragmentary", and that "there is no deep discussion on the psychological stages of progress in meditation".<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Nakamura has in mind here certain Buddhist texts which are most explicit in their description of various stages of development in meditation.<sup>4</sup> But Śāṅkara's apparent failure to enlarge upon passages concerning meditation is probably quite intentional. This is very much in keeping with his basic metaphysical position. Since he regards meditation as an activity relevant only to the lower order of truth,<sup>5</sup> Śāṅkara endeavours to minimise its importance. When commenting on passages he does not believe to be pertinent to the highest truth, Śāṅkara confines himself to the briefest of explanations. When the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*

<sup>3</sup> *Op.cit.*, p. 9ff.

<sup>4</sup> One notable example is the *Visuddhimagga* of Buddhaghosa.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 54 ff. above.

itself goes to great lengths in presenting such topics, he treats the discussion merely as a "supplementary section" (*khila-kānda*). This, he maintains, is needed in order to bring to completion the full range of material which the Upaniṣad has encompassed. Alternatively, Śāṅkara suggests that such "supplements" are for the benefit of those aspirants who are incapable of grasping the highest truth. For those rather dim-witted souls (*mandabuddhīnām*), the ancient teachers found it necessary to provide meditations based on the lower, or conditioned, aspect of Brahman.

Nakamura does cite one passage in which he sees a suggestion of the "stages of progress" he had expected to find. But here he seems to miss Śāṅkara's intention. In BSBh 1.4.1 Śāṅkara describes what appear to be steps in a meditation leading to knowledge of the Self.<sup>6</sup> First, speech is withdrawn into mind. Then, the mind is absorbed into intellect, the intellect into the great Self, and finally, the great Self merges into the peaceful Self. Śāṅkara takes this passage to be an illustration of the method by which the illusions that obscure the true nature of the Self are removed. He explains a similar procedure, a progressive understanding (*kramavatī pratipattiḥ*), in BSBh 4.1.2. Here the meditation involves the cultivation of attentiveness (*avadhāna*). This becomes the means by which one is able to gradually discard (*apoh*) the false identification of the Self with the body, the senses, the mind, the intellect, and so on. Śāṅkara refers again to this practice in his discussion of meditation in GBh 13.24. Here too there is a progressive withdrawing

<sup>6</sup> The passage in question here is from KaU 3.13: *yacched vārimanasi prājñas tad yacchej jñāna ātmani / jñānam ātmani mahati niyacchet tad yacchech chānta ātmani*. Śāṅkara's explanation of this verse is more extensive in KaUBh than in BSBh 1.4.1. He glosses the prescriptive 'restraint' advocated in the text with *upasamphare* which can suggest both 'let him withdraw' and 'let him become absorbed'.

(*upasamṛ̥ti*) which leads to an absorption in the inner intelligence.<sup>7</sup> In all these instances the essential feature of the meditation is a process of discarding or removing. While the procedure may well involve a progression, it would be misleading to speak in terms of "stages of progress" in this context. There seems little point in looking for development in a process which consists solely in removing illusory identifications.

Although Doherty's thesis does draw on other sources, she relies almost exclusively on the BSBh for Śāṅkara's position on meditation. In particular, she examines Śāṅkara's treatment of the *vidyā*-s in BSBh 3.3. *Vidyā*, literally 'knowledge', in this context denotes 'meditation based on the knowledge of one or more of the various aspects of Brahman'. Virtually the whole of *Brahmasūtra* 3.3 and Śāṅkara's *bhāṣya* thereon are occupied with a lengthy discussion of these meditations. Doherty assumes that Śāṅkara's extensive comments on the subject are indicative of the significance which the *vidyā*-s hold for him. She takes his comments on the *vidyā*-s as a "prime example of his spiritual instruction".<sup>8</sup> Yet at the same time she observes that he is "primarily a teacher of identity and not an instructor in the skills of meditation". Her claim here is rather confusing. If he is not a teacher of meditation, then presumably he must be providing some alternative form of "spiritual instruction" in BSBh 3.3. But this is not the case.

The problem which BS 3.3 is concerned with is that of reconciling the varied *vidyā*-s which appear throughout the older Upaniṣads. More specifically, as Śāṅkara puts it, the question is whether the different Upaniṣads actually present divergent

<sup>7</sup> *dhyānam nāma śabdādibhyo viśayebhyaḥ śrotrādīni karaṇāni manasy upasamṛ̥tya manaś ca pratyak cetayitari ekāgratayā yac cintanām tād dhyānam.*

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

cognitions of Brahman (*kim prativedāntām vijñāna-bheda aho svin na*). One could scarcely deny that the Upaniṣads do depict various cognitions of Brahman and a corresponding assortment of *vidyā*-s. The task of the Vedāntin is to demonstrate that this multiplicity does not detract from the unity of Brahman. Śāṅkara's argument is that the passages on meditation do differ, but that they are all concerned with one and the same Brahman. He illustrates his point with an image of regal life:

The case is analogous to that of two wives ministering to one king, one with a fly-flap, the other with an umbrella; there also the object of the ministrations is one, but the acts of ministrations themselves are distinct and have each their own particular attributes.<sup>9</sup>

Doherty has somehow overlooked the obvious fact that Śāṅkara is concerned almost exclusively with exegetical matters in this section of the BSBh. In a few places he does develop some of his characteristic non-dualistic concepts. But there is little here which can be regarded as instruction on spiritual practice. Although an enquiry into the nature of the *vidyā*-s may serve to clarify the nature of meditation in the older Upaniṣads, it will not shed much light on Śāṅkara's teachings about liberation. Doherty has completely missed the focal point of his practical teachings. In BSBh 4.1 Śāṅkara comments directly on the techniques of meditation. Still more important here is his discussion of the sacred utterance (*mahāvākyā*), 'Thou art that' (*tat tvam asi*). This *mahāvākyā* is the basis upon which Śāṅkara constructs his method of liberation.

As a traditional interpreter of Vedānta, Śāṅkara must show that the seemingly diverse range of metaphysical viewpoints expressed in the Upaniṣads are actually a unified description of

<sup>9</sup> *The Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa with the Commentary by Śāṅkara*, tr. George Thibaut (2 vols.; reprinted: New York, 1962), vol. II, p. 203.

the nature of reality. More specifically, it is the differing perspectives on the relationship of Brahman and *ātman* which constitute the basic problem the Vedāntin seeks to resolve. Before Śaṅkara, the prevailing current of Vedānta thought seems to have been that of *bhedābheda*, identity-in-difference. In this interpretation, Brahman is at once identical and yet different from the individual being (*jīva*). Śaṅkara repeatedly refutes this position, particularly in his BUBh. In its place, he proposes that the fundamental message of the Upaniṣads is the complete identity of Brahman and *ātman*. He maintains that this non-dual reality is absolute and unqualified. Although this non-dualistic attitude is present in the Upaniṣads, they also speak of Brahman as having qualities (*saguṇa*). Not only do they posit a distinction between Brahman and the *jīva*, but suggest a third entity as well, the world (*jagat*). Śaṅkara attempts to tie together these apparently contradictory ideas:

In all the Upaniṣads, first identity is broached, then by means of illustrations and reasons the universe is shown to be a modification or part or the like of the Supreme Self; and the conclusion again brings out the identity.<sup>10</sup>

For Śaṅkara, any assignation of qualities to Brahman, or any discussion concerning the question of how creation is effected from the one reality, necessarily entails a limited or modified perspective of the absolute. The sole purpose in describing the "modifications" of Brahman is to provide a support or object of meditation. The aim of the meditation is, in turn, to indicate the non-dual reality.

<sup>10</sup> BUBh 2.1.20, in *The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, tr. Swāmī Mādhavānanda, p. 210; *sarvāsu hy upaniṣatsu pūrvam ekatvam pratijñāya, dṛṣṭāntair hetubhiś ca paramātmano vikārāṇśāditvam jagataḥ pratipādya, punar ekatvam upasamṛharati*.

In a sense, it is not really necessary for Śaṅkara to provide arguments which justify the concept of the non-dual Brahman. The *śruti* or revealed scripture,<sup>11</sup> which he holds to be the ultimate authority and source of knowledge, has already done so. His attitude to scripture is perhaps best demonstrated in the first prose chapter of the *Upadeśasāhasrī*. Here, the discussion of metaphysical principles is wholly reliant on the citation of scriptural passages. Yet Śaṅkara does offer some further explanation for the identity of Brahman and *ātman*. First of all, he suggests that the *ātman* is self-established (*svayam siddha*):

The being of Brahman is known on the ground of its being the Self of everyone. For everyone is conscious of the being of (his) Self, and never thinks; 'I am not'. If the being of the Self were not known, everyone would think 'I am not'. And this Self (of whose being all are conscious) is Brahman.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> It is difficult to provide a precise English equivalent for this term. While 'revealed scripture' is probably the best translation for *śruti* it is nevertheless somewhat misleading. The *śruti* is comprised of the corpus of the Vedas. The Vedas, along with other ancient compositions, were transmitted only in oral form for many centuries. They were not written down until well after the time of Christ. The terms 'text' and 'scripture' are utilised here, albeit reluctantly, for want of other appropriate terms to designate the "literature" of an oral tradition. It is believed that the *śruti* represents the teachings of the highest order, as directly "heard" by the ancient sages. While the *śruti* is, in a sense, a revelation, it is not revealed by a divine agency. The *śruti* is thought to have always been; it is eternal. At the dawn of creation the *śruti* simply reappears, in the same form in which it had appeared in previous cycles of creation. The *smṛti* is what is "remembered" from the primeval teachings. *Smṛti* compositions are believed to have a human (or semi-divine) author. For this reason they are dependent upon the ultimate authority of *śruti*.

<sup>12</sup> BSBh 1.1.1, in Thibaut, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 14 [I have replaced his rendering of *astitva* as 'existence' with 'being'].; *sarvasyātmavāc ca brahmāstivprasiddhīḥ / sarvo hy ātmāstitvam pratyeti, na nāham asmi* /

Not only is the *ātman* self-established, it is also self-luminous. Śaṅkara employs a simple analogy for this, linking knowledge with illumination (*prakāśa*). Just as the sun requires no other light for its illumination, so too, knowledge requires no other knowledge for its illumination.<sup>13</sup> Śaṅkara follows this line of thought to its logical conclusion: the identity of Brahman and *ātman* is not something to be attained. It is already present. For this identity constitutes our very nature. Besides, if identity were something that could be effected, then it would not be an eternal truth.

Now if the *ātman* is self-established and self-luminous, then the question Śaṅkara must deal with is, 'Why don't we know this?' He addresses this issue from the outset of his BSBh. This ignorance (*avidyā*), he claims, is due to superimposition (*adhyāsa*), "the apparent presentation to consciousness of something previously observed in some other thing in the form of remembrance",<sup>14</sup> *smṛti-rūpaḥ paratra pūrva-dṛṣṭāvabhāṣaḥ*. The result of *adhyāsa* is that the unreal, in the form of the temporal body, is superimposed upon the real Self. For this reason, we see the body as the Self and not the Self as it really is. Śaṅkara cites further illustrative examples from the realm of ordinary experience. The mother of pearl appears to be silver, and the rope is mistaken for a snake.

The basic problem, then, is one of ignorance, while the obvious solution is simply true knowledge (*samyag-darśana*). Yet the knowledge which removes this false appearance and therefore restores the original identity is not an activity. Śaṅkara utilises a surprisingly realistic argument to draw a sharp

*yadi hi nātmāstitva-prasiddhiḥ syāt sarvo loke nāham asmi ti pratīyāt / ātmā ca brahma.*

<sup>13</sup> This notion is elaborated in BUBh 4.3.7.

<sup>14</sup> In Thibaut, op. cit., vol. I, p. 4.

distinction between ritual action and knowledge. While ritual actions depend both on the injunctions of the Vedic texts (*codenā-tantra*), and on the mind of man (*puruṣa-tantra*), knowledge depends only on an existing thing (*vastu-tantra*) being an object of perception.<sup>15</sup> In the case of ritual action involving the sacred fire, for example, both the Vedic texts and the correct actions of the participant are essential. Where knowledge is concerned, the situation is entirely different. Even if the Vedas were to tell us that fire was cold, or if an individual were to claim that the fire was wet, still, the actual fire before us would remain unchanged.<sup>16</sup>

Since it is purely a mental process, meditation may not appear, at first glance, to be a ritual act. Nevertheless it does depend on the agent-meditator. Therefore, *dhyāna* is something that may or may not be performed, and which will necessarily remain subject to modification. Śaṅkara designates the functions of ritual action as production, attainment, modification, and purification.<sup>17</sup> All these terms might serve equally well to indicate the three goals of *upāsanā* which were mentioned earlier: averting calamity, achieving power, and gradual release. Needless to say, the characteristics of production, attainment, etc., cannot be ascribed to a Brahman which is absolute. Any of these actions would entail some sort of limiting adjunct (*upādhi*) or modification. For this reason, meditation cannot lead directly to identity with Brahman, to liberation.

For the most part, Śaṅkara tends not to reject outright those traditional Vedānta teachings which are incompatible with his Advaita. Instead, he subordinates them. This is basically what

<sup>15</sup> BSBh 1.1.1.

<sup>16</sup> BUBh 3.3.1.

<sup>17</sup> *utpatty-āpti-vikāra-saṃskārā hi karma-sāmarthyasya viṣayāḥ*, BUBh 3.3.1.

happens in the case of meditation. Śāṅkara is able to accord a place to meditation by associating it with a lower order of knowledge. In doing so he draws upon the distinction of the higher (*para*) and lower (*apara*) classes of knowledge which are set out in MuU 1.1.4-5. The two orders of knowledge also correspond, for Śāṅkara, to two perspectives of Brahman. From the *apara* standpoint, Brahman appears within the context of the manifest world, defined by numerous qualities. The *para* Brahman, on the other hand, is unconditioned and quality-less (*nirguna*).<sup>18</sup>

Śāṅkara finds it inadmissible to refer to 'going to' the highest Brahman. Neither can one properly speak of attaining identity with the absolute. J. F. Staal has commented on the important distinction between the notions of identity and identification.<sup>19</sup> 'Identification' implies 'the act of making identical', as in *upāsanā*. 'Identity' only refers to 'being identical', which is a matter to be understood solely by means of knowledge. Śāṅkara readily admits that by meditation one may attain the realm of the gods (*deva-loka*).<sup>20</sup> But he insists that where Brahman is concerned, only the *saguṇa* aspect may be considered attainable. Still, he does bow to the clear statement of the *śruti* texts declaring that liberation may be won by those who achieve identification with Brahman.<sup>21</sup> He concedes that one may

<sup>18</sup> T. M. P. Mahadevan argues that Śāṅkara is not suggesting the existence of two Brahmans, nor even that there are, strictly speaking, two aspects of Brahman. Śāṅkara's contention, he says, is that there are simply two perspectives from which Brahman may be seen. In referring to a 'lower' Brahman, the term 'lower' should be understood to denote a quality of perception ("Vedāntic Meditation", pp. 354-355).

<sup>19</sup> *Advaita and Neoplatonism: A Critical Study in Comparative Philosophy* (Madras, 1961), p. 109.

<sup>20</sup> BUBh 1.5.16.

<sup>21</sup> BSBh 4.3.10.

undergo a gradual process of liberation (*krama-mukti*) in the realm of the *apara* Brahman. This process involves the achievement of perfection during the countless years one remains in the world of Hiranyagarbha, Śāṅkara's preferred designation of *apara* Brahman. One will continue to dwell there until such time as this realm is reabsorbed into the absolute. When this occurs one will be liberated along with Hiranyagarbha himself.<sup>22</sup>

In conjunction with the notion of the two perspectives of Brahman, Śāṅkara adopts the doctrine of the two truths. Gauḍapāda, Śāṅkara's *paramaguru*, had taught that there was both a conventional (*vyāvahārika*, *laukika*) and a higher (*pāramārthika*) truth.<sup>23</sup> Śāṅkara utilised this concept to distinguish those scriptural passages which were directly relevant to his Advaita viewpoint from those which seemed contradictory to it. In this way, passages such as *neti neti* and *tat tvam asi*, which simply express the non-dual "character" of *para* Brahman, are understood to evoke *pāramārthika* knowledge. Verses such as "Brahman is Āditya", or "Brahman is mind", on the other hand, convey *vyāvahārika* knowledge. This allows Śāṅkara to maintain the validity of those *śruti* texts which are not concerned with the absolute Brahman by relegating them to the context of conventional truth. Yet even in the realm of the *vyāvahārika*, there remains a distinction between secular and religious activity. He holds that the purpose of scriptural injunction lies in

<sup>22</sup> BUBh 6.2.15.

<sup>23</sup> Śāṅkara has undoubtedly inherited this position from Gauḍapāda. See GK 4.57 and MKBh 4.60. In turn, Gauḍapāda is likely to have borrowed the idea from Nāgārjuna (see *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā*, 24.8). While there is a clear scriptural basis for the distinction of *para* and *apara* Brahman (MuU 1.1.4; PU 5.2), it could be argued that Śāṅkara was stretching the point in connecting this notion to the concept of the two truths. For a discussion of Gauḍapāda on the two truths see T. M. P. Mahadevan's *Gauḍapāda: A Study in Early Advaita* (Madras, 1975), pp. 195-196; 213-214.

diverting men from their preoccupation with the external objects of worldly desire and turning their attention inward, to the *ātman*,<sup>24</sup> so that they may achieve *mokṣa*, the highest aim of man. The *pāramārthika* knowledge, however, is beyond the sphere of any course of ritual action, even meditation. Still, meditation remains, in Śāṅkara's Vedānta, a pre-eminent spiritual discipline whose role is to prepare the ground for the arising of knowledge.

### Jñāna-yoga

The qualifications that Śāṅkara prescribes for the aspirant set a standard which appears to be so demanding as to exclude all but the most superior of seekers. One suspects that those who fulfil the requirements would already be on the verge of Self-realisation. Yet Śāṅkara is not unwilling to provide instruction for the pupil who is not so adequately prepared. He speaks of students who have not acted in accord with *dharma*, who are careless in everyday matters, who are lacking in firm preliminary knowledge, who pay attention to the concerns of worldly people and who take pride in such things as caste.<sup>25</sup> Śāṅkara suggests that such pupils might follow the restraints and observances (*yama-niyama*),<sup>26</sup> which, of course, constitute the first two stages of the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. In a similar vein, he utilises the distinction drawn in the YSBh between the indirect means (the first five *āṅga-s*) and the direct means (*samyama*) of yoga practice. In applying this notion to the Upaniṣads, he describes ritual action as constituting the remote (*bāhyatara*) means to

<sup>24</sup> *svābhāvika-pravṛtti-viṣaya-vimukhi-karaṇārthaṇi...pratyag-ātma-srotas tayā pravartayanti*, BSBh 1.1.4.

<sup>25</sup> USG 1.4; *adharma laukika-pramāda...asamjñata-dṛḍha-pūrvva-śrutatva-loka-cintāvekṣaṇajātyādyabhimānādi*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

knowledge in contrast to those direct (*pratyāsanna*) means such as attaining calmness of mind (*sānta*, *dānta*, etc.).<sup>27</sup>

One of the themes which runs throughout the whole of Śāṅkara's work is his insistence that ritual action (*karman*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) are not to be combined (*samuuccaya*) as a means to liberation.<sup>28</sup> Since ritual actions are held to be dependent upon an agent, they are not regarded as the means to the knowledge of Brahman, which is self-established. Even in the context of the *Bhagavadgītā*, where *karma-yoga*, the way of disciplined activity, is held in such high esteem, Śāṅkara still maintains his position that the two are not to be combined. In order to diminish the prominent place given in the *Gītā* to *karma-yoga*, Śāṅkara emphasises a way of knowledge, *jñāna-yoga*, as the means to liberation. But he concedes that *karma-yoga* can be a means to *jñāna-yoga*. A series of preliminary disciplines may serve to prepare the aspirant for *jñāna-yoga*.

In GBh 5.12 and 5.24 Śāṅkara goes so far as to sketch out the stages of spiritual discipline in which this progression would occur. However, he does not fully elaborate upon the way in which such a plan may be carried out. Indeed, he may well have suggested it simply as a device to demonstrate the essential harmony between the techniques advocated in the *Gītā* and those of his Advaita Vedānta. Yet judging from the nature of his practical instructions in the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, there is good reason to believe that the method outlined in the GBh may have been followed by his students. In any case, Śāṅkara's scheme serves as a useful point of reference for an analysis of the Advaita method of spiritual discipline. Śāṅkara enumerates the following stages: (a) purification of the mind (*sattva-śuddhi*), (b) the

<sup>27</sup> BSBh 3.4.27; 4.1.18.

<sup>28</sup> Śāṅkara's frequent discussion of the subject suggests that many Vedāntins of his day accepted the validity of combining ritual action and knowledge.

advent of knowledge (*jñāna-prāpti*), (c) renunciation of all ritual actions (*sarva-karma-samnyāsa*), and (d) steadiness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*).

Of the four functions of ritual action which Śāṅkara describes as production (*utpāda*), attainment (*āpti*), modification (*vikāra*) and purification (*samskāra*),<sup>29</sup> only purification has a particular place in *jñāna-yoga*. Certainly it is not Brahman, the eternally pure (*nitya-śuddha*) that stands in need of purification. With regard to the aspirant, however, there is something to be purified, so long as there are obstacles which prevent him from engaging in the path of knowledge. It is in order to remove such barriers as an accumulation of demerit that the seeker practises purification of the mind. To this end he might involve himself in sacrifice, the giving of gifts, study of the Veda, austerity, and fasting.<sup>30</sup> Yet it is not for the sake of knowledge that these ritual actions are performed, but merely to purify the mind so as to facilitate the arising of knowledge.

This 'arising' serves to indicate the second stage of the path. Since the first step was basically a preliminary, it is (b), *jñāna-prāpti*, which more properly signifies the commencement upon the path of knowledge. Now Śāṅkara stresses throughout his works that the aspirant must (c), renounce all ritual actions. What exactly is it, then, that the student is expected to do? Śāṅkara's position on the renunciation of ritual action certainly appears problematical. Several scholars are inclined to argue that his views on the subject are wholly contradictory.<sup>31</sup> How indeed can

the aspirant embark upon the way of knowledge if he must also renounce all ritual actions?

Śāṅkara's understanding of the nature of the aspirant may well shed some light on this problem. He sets out four preconditions for the aspirant: (1) an ability to distinguish between the temporal and the eternal (*nityānitya-vastu-viveka*); (2) dispassion for the enjoyment of the fruits of one's actions both here and hereafter (*ihāmutrārtha-phala-bhoga-virāga*); (3) attainment of the means of tranquillity, self restraint and the like (*śama-damādi-sādhana-sampat*); (4) the desire for liberation (*mumukṣutva*).<sup>32</sup>

At first glance all but the fourth of these qualifications might easily be mistaken for indications of Self-realization.<sup>33</sup> The process of (1), discrimination, involves the ability to distinguish the Self from the non-Self, the rope from the snake. If the aspirant were already able to effect this discrimination, he would immediately understand the meaning of *tat tvam asi*. There would be nothing further for him to do. The qualities designated in (3) raise a similar question. Śāṅkara is undoubtedly referring here to BU 4.4.23. Yet this passage contains the description of a sage who is *already* a knower of Brahman. There is only one logical explanation for the stipulation of these prerequisites. Although the aspirant is expected to demonstrate such qualities, he would not as yet have fully established them as the sole characteristics of his personality. It is for this reason that Śāṅkara advises the teacher to repeatedly relate the teachings to

<sup>29</sup> USP 17.49.

<sup>30</sup> BSBh 4.1.16.

<sup>31</sup> S. Mayeda, for instance, asserts that Śāṅkara contradicts himself in accepting actions such as purification while demanding the renunciation of actions. Nevertheless Mayeda attempts to defend Śāṅkara from the likes of Rudolph Otto and Paul Deussen who have severely attacked his apparent disregard of ethical matters. Mayeda suggests that Śāṅkara intentionally

takes a self-contradictory position on the question of renunciation (Sengaku Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings: The Upadeśasāhasrī of Śāṅkara*, Tokyo, 1979, p. 88 ff.).

<sup>32</sup> BSBh 1.1.1. He discusses the qualifications of the student more fully in USG 1.2-4. See also USP 16.72; 17.85.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Deussen notes this peculiarity but does not elaborate (*The System of the Vedānta*, tr. C. Johnston, Chicago, 1912, p. 81).

the student until they are firmly grasped: *brūyāt punah punar yāvad grahanām dṛḍhi-bhavati*.<sup>34</sup>

It would seem that (4), *mumukṣutva*, is contingent upon (2), renunciation, inasmuch as the harbouring of worldly or even otherworldly desires is incompatible with the desire for liberation.<sup>35</sup> But what is more significant here is that Śaṅkara has not required in (2) that one must renounce all ritual actions as he did in stage (c) of the discipline set out in GBh. Rather, he asks only that one have dispassion (*virāga*) for the results one obtains from his actions. This notion is very close to the idea presented in *Gītā* 4.20: "having abandoned attachment to the fruits of action...though engaged in karma he does not do anything".<sup>36</sup> But Śaṅkara differs markedly from the *Gītā* in his assertion that one should renounce all ritual actions. The *Gītā*, on the other hand, insists that one must engage in activity.

If Śaṅkara's statements on renunciation are taken strictly on face value, he would be enmeshed in self-contradiction. For surely the student must engage in ritual activity in approaching the teacher, or even in hearing the sacred word, both of which are essential to the practice of Advaita. It seems unlikely that Śaṅkara could have totally ignored the common-sense argument presented in *Gītā* 3.8. The gist of the argument is that without action one could not even maintain the life processes of the body. But Śaṅkara obviously did not want to support this position. He purposely obscures the meaning of the text by suggesting a very different interpretation in his commentary. If it

<sup>34</sup> USG 1.2.

<sup>35</sup> Śaṅkara enumerates three types of desires which are to be abandoned: those relating to this world which can be obtained through sons; those of the realm of the ancestors which are sought through rites; and the world of the gods which can be reached through meditation (BUBh 3.5.1).

<sup>36</sup> *tyaktvā karma-phalāsaṅgam...karmany abhipravṛtto 'pi naiva kiñcit karoti sah.*

were possible to directly confront Śaṅkara here concerning his stand on renunciation, his response might be that one need not cease the act of respiration but should simply renounce the idea that 'I am breathing'. This is the position he takes in BUBh 1.4.7. He argues that there is no need for injunctions to meditation. For these can only suggest that there is a meditator who is separate from the object of his meditation. Yet he does not dispute the need for meditation. Śaṅkara's stance becomes still clearer in USP 13.17: "how can concentration, or non-concentration, or anything else which is to be done belong to me?"<sup>37</sup> It is only on the basis of this awareness that he proceeds to uphold the value of meditation: "with concentrated mind one should always know everything as ātman".<sup>38</sup>

It may be well to summarize here the implications of Śaṅkara's position on renunciation. (1) Engaging in ritual action cannot be conjoined with knowledge as a means of liberation. Since all actions are dependent upon the notion of agency, they are ultimately the effect of ignorance (*avidyā-kāryatva*). As true knowledge and ignorance are wholly incompatible, it becomes an impossibility for the aspirant to continue to perform ritual actions. (2) Yet ritual action is not wholly rejected, but rather relegated to the role of an indirect means or preliminary to *jñāna-yoga*. (3) Ritual action is not to be literally abandoned, but all attachment to action based on the notion 'I am the agent' is to be rejected outright.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> In Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, p. 133; *samādhir vāsamādhir vā kāryāṇ vānyat kuto bhavet.*

<sup>38</sup> USP 13.25, in Mayeda, *op. cit.*, p. 134; *sarvadātmānam vidyāt sarvam samāhitāḥ.*

<sup>39</sup> Śaṅkara certainly engaged in a great deal of activity in the course of his short lifetime. His prolific writings and extensive travels point to the fact that he did engage in activity in the spirit of *Gītā* 4.20.

Still, the question remains as to why Śāṅkara urges the aspirant to renounce all ritual action, instead of providing him with more precise and literal instructions. Mayeda's observation that Śāṅkara wished to shock the students into a new awareness may well be on the right track.<sup>40</sup> But would not Śāṅkara have also utilised this method as the means to eliminate what he regarded as an all-too-likely possibility? The student would be prone to fall back into the trap of attachments to his own ritual actions, even where the actions sought no result. Accordingly, he is advised to remove a more fundamental misconception, the notion of agency which the student unwittingly accepts: 'I am not the highest ātman, my nature is characterized by agency'.<sup>41</sup>

Having renounced all ritual actions, the aspirant, desirous of release, enters upon the final stage in the path of knowledge, *jñāna-niṣṭhā*. Śāṅkara has adopted this expression from the text of *Gītā* 18.50 (*niṣṭhā jñānasya*) and uses it throughout the GBh to denote the yoga of knowledge.<sup>42</sup> For Śāṅkara, *jñāna-niṣṭhā* refers to the process by which steadfastness in knowledge is achieved, and designates the culmination of *jñāna-yoga*. He explains *jñāna-niṣṭhā* as 'the determined effort of establishing a current of thought concerning the inner Self'.<sup>43</sup> Śāṅkara's

<sup>40</sup> *Op.cit.*, p.91.

<sup>41</sup> *yady apy aham vidyamānas tathāpi na paramātmā / kartṛtvā-bhoktṛtvā-lakṣaṇāt saṃsāro mama svabhāvah* (USG 2.51).

<sup>42</sup> Śāṅkara defines *niṣṭhā* as 'completion' (*paryavāsanna; parisamāpti*), in order to suggest that *jñāna-yoga* is the culmination of the other types of yoga described in the *Gītā*. *Niṣṭhā* also signifies 'devotion'. In GBh 18.55 Śāṅkara cites *jñāna-yoga* as the equivalent to *ananya-bhakti*, single-minded devotion, which the *Gītā* takes as the highest form of *bhakti*. In MuUBh 1.2.12, Śāṅkara states that the expression *brahma-niṣṭha* signifies one who, having abandoned all ritual action, is absorbed only in the non-dual Brahman; *hitvā sarva-karmāṇi kevale'dvaye brahmani niṣṭhā yasya so'yam brahma-niṣtho*.

<sup>43</sup> *pratyag-ātma-visaya-pratyaya-saṃtāna-karaṇābhiniveśa*, GBh 18.55.

reference to a 'current of thought' is certainly suggestive of meditation.<sup>44</sup> But he is careful to point out that the process of *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is not needed to establish true knowledge. Effort is not required for the sake of knowledge. The current of thought is only maintained with regard to stopping the conception of the Self in terms of what is not-Self.<sup>45</sup>

At this point the somewhat hypothetical scheme of *jñāna-yoga* must be left aside. The very idea that there can be a progression in a path of knowledge is "merely an antecedent of the true knowledge of the Self in which there can be no successive stages".<sup>46</sup> Ultimately Śāṅkara's teaching on liberation relies upon the concept of two truths. Meditation can only be assigned a place in the lower order of reality. For the practice of meditation entails the notion of multiplicity. There must be a meditator (*sādhaka*), an object upon which the meditation is based (*sādhya*), and an act of meditation (*sādhanā*). With his insistence on non-duality Śāṅkara is, in a way, challenging the validity of the scriptures and the teacher. If there is to be no distinction between the guru and his disciple, then what is the point of the teachings? Śāṅkara contends that until such time as true knowledge presents itself, the conventional notion of reality remains valid and there is indeed an aspirant who follows the teachings.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the aim of the scriptures in prescribing meditation is not to invoke immediate knowledge, but merely to

<sup>44</sup> Śāṅkara explains meditation in terms of a current, *saṃtāna* in PUBh 5.1, and similarly as *saṃtata* in GBh 13.24. Both terms are synonymous with *pravāha* which he utilizes to describe meditation in BSBh 4.1.8 and GBh 12.3.

<sup>45</sup> *tasmāj jñāne yatno na kartavyaḥ, kim tv anātmāni ātma-buddhi-nivṛttau eva*, GBh 18.50.

<sup>46</sup> BSBh 4.1.3, tr. Thibaut, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 336.

<sup>47</sup> BSBh 2.1.14.

direct the aspirant's attention to it. Meditation, then, will not lead to the highest truth.

If Śaṅkara is to develop a method of liberation which is in conformity with the principles of his Advaita Vedānta, it must function from the standpoint of the highest truth. Insofar as his notion of *jñāna-niṣṭhā* involves a discriminative awareness of the difference between Self and not-Self, it provides a glimpse of teachings which Śaṅkara presents to the true seekers of liberation. For them there is nothing to be attained. But they must find a way to remove the misconceptions which cause the Self to appear as not-Self. To this end, Śaṅkara has proposed a process whereby the aspirant cultivates the faculty of discriminative insight, based solely on the assertion of a non-dual reality.

## IV

### The Transformation of Meditation

Śaṅkara rejected ritual and meditation as valid means to liberation, and so had to develop a method which did not rely upon these activities. In his exegesis of scripture he shows that knowledge alone is the means to liberation. Yet as a teacher his duty lay with describing the way by which *mokṣa* could be "attained", or rather, realised. Śaṅkara indeed provided his students with a specific method of Self-realisation. Although there are certain innovations in his approach, his teachings are based upon the *śruti* and *smṛti* traditions of Vedānta.<sup>1</sup> Śaṅkara's path to liberation rests upon the formula first set out in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: *śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyo*.

Śaṅkara retains this ancient process of meditation and explains it in terms which are in accordance with the principles of his Advaita Vedānta. In his commentary on BU 2.4.5, he states that one should first hear about the Self from the teacher and from scripture. Then one should reflect on it by means of reasoning. After that one should resolutely meditate on it.<sup>2</sup> Yet the exhortation to follow this path is not to be understood as an injunction for ritual action. Indeed the aim of the process of *śravana-manana-nididhyāsana* is, according to Śaṅkara, the

<sup>1</sup> See Ch. III, note 11.

<sup>2</sup> *śrotavyaḥ pūrvam ācāryata āgamataś ca / paścān mantavyas tarkataḥ / tato nididhyāsitavyo niścayena dhyātavyaḥ*. Here Śaṅkara explains the sense of the desiderative form, *nididhyāsana* (*ni* + *dhyai*), with the term *niścayena*, 'resolutely', or 'with certainty'.

destruction of those false conceptions which are the motives for ritual action.<sup>3</sup>

The focal point of the discipline leading to true knowledge is the *mahāvākyā*, a sacred utterance expressing only the highest truth. A number of *mahāvākyā*-s occur throughout the older Upaniṣads, but Śaṅkara singles out *tat tvam asi* for special attention: "the fact of everything having its Self in Brahman cannot be grasped without the scriptural passage 'Thou art that' ".<sup>4</sup> On the basis of this assertion, it might appear that Śaṅkara takes scripture as the sole means of knowledge. Yet he often declares that both the testimony of *śruti* passages (*śabda*), and logical reasoning (*yuktī*), are valid means of knowledge. On several occasions, especially in the MKBh, he seems to suggest that *yuktī* and *śabda* are of equal authority.<sup>5</sup>

Śaṅkara's most extensive discussion of rational thought, *vis-à-vis* scripture, occurs in BSBh 2.1.6 and 2.1.11. These comments represent his definitive statement on the nature of *yuktī* and *śabda*.<sup>6</sup> Śaṅkara maintains that the process of reflection (*manana*) is not one of bare ratiocination (*śuṣka-tarka*). Reason must function as a subordinate of intuitive knowledge (*anubhavāṅga*). *Anubhava*, in turn, is directly interrelated with scripture. For the time being it will be better to leave aside consideration of this relationship in order to concentrate on Śaṅkara's argument for the supremacy of *śabda* over *yuktī*.

<sup>3</sup> *yadbrahma-kṣatrādi karma-nimittam varṇāśramādi-lakṣaṇam ātmāny avidyādhyaśropita-pratyaya-viṣayam...avidyā-pratyaya-viṣayam rajvām iva sarpa-pratyayah, tadupamardanārtha āha.* BUBh 2.4.5.

<sup>4</sup> BSBh 1.1.4 in Thibaut, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 23, *tat tvam asi iti brahmātma-bhāvasya śāstram antareñānavagamyamānatvāt*.

<sup>5</sup> See MKBh 3.13; GBh 18.17: USP 15.54; 18.4: USG 1.43-44.

<sup>6</sup> For a comprehensive and most stimulating discussion on the subject see Wilhelm Halbfass, *Studies in Kumārila and Śaṅkara* (Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik, monographie 9), Reinbek, 1983, chapter two, pp. 27-84. Unfortunately this work was not available to me at the time of writing.

Perfect knowledge, he insists, is uniform and not subject to dispute. The scriptural statement is analogous to propositions such as 'fire is hot'. There can be no question of its validity, no conflict of opinion. On the other hand, Śaṅkara continues, even amongst the most eminent of men (Kapila and Kanāda are singled out for mention), disagreement is rife. The *śāstra*-s based on logical argument invariably contradict one another. In contrast to the diverse opinions of logicians, past and present, the Veda is the eternal, consistent source of truth.

Śaṅkara draws a further distinction between the two means of knowledge. The true nature of reality is so profound (*atigambhīra*) that one cannot comprehend it without the help of scripture. Since Brahman does not possess such qualities as form, colour, and the like, it cannot be perceived by means of reason. Yet Śaṅkara does, in some sense, understand the *śruti* to facilitate perception. In comparing *śruti* and *smṛti*, he likens the former to perception and the latter to inference.<sup>7</sup> This could not, of course, constitute a conventional type of perception because scripture is intended as "an authority in regard to that which is beyond the reach of perception and not for things perceived by the senses".<sup>8</sup> Instead, the *śruti* serves as the basis for *anubhava*, a term Śaṅkara utilises to imply 'direct perception', and, more specifically, 'intuitive knowledge'. In seeking to avoid a dogmatic approach, he suggests that one must not rely solely on *śruti* but also upon a direct experience of the truth: "scriptural texts on the one hand and intuition on the other are to be had recourse to

<sup>7</sup> *pratyakṣam śrutih, prāmāṇyaṁ praty anapekṣatvāt / anumānam smṛtiḥ, prāmāṇyaṁ prati sāpekṣatvāt*, BSBh 1.3.28. Nakamura discusses this notion in "Conflict between Traditionalism and Rationalism: A Problem with Śaṅkara", PEW, 12 (1962), p. 159.

<sup>8</sup> *prāmāṇyaṁ, na pratyakṣādi-viṣaye, adṛṣṭa-darśanārtha-viṣayatvāt prāmāṇyasya*, GBh 18.66.

according to the situation".<sup>9</sup> What generally happens in Śāṅkara's case, is that *śruti* serves as the source of knowledge, while *anubhava* is the final result (*avasāna*) of the pursuit of knowledge. In the light of this we can see why Śāṅkara holds that independent reasoning is to be subordinated to intuition. For it is *anubhava* which represents the true knowledge, derived initially from the sacred texts, that the aspirant has made his own through direct experience.

Śāṅkara does not specifically explain *how* the Vedic statement can evoke true knowledge. Instead, he seems more concerned with demonstrating that scripture *is* the source of knowledge.<sup>10</sup> Needless to say, it would be difficult for him to provide a logical account of a process of knowledge which he himself has placed outside the realm of reason. Śāṅkara has already acknowledged that the exhortation to hear, reflect, and meditate, can indicate or direct one's attention toward knowledge. But somehow, *tat tvam asi* is believed to have the potential to fully awaken the aspirant to the highest truth. This can only occur through the power inherent in the sacred word. In spite of the revisions and innovations which Śāṅkara has introduced in Vedānta, he still maintains this essential aspect of the Vedic tradition. He may, then, wholeheartedly allow the notion that the world has arisen from the sacred word,<sup>11</sup> even though his preoccupation is not with passages related to creation but with those which evoke knowledge.

<sup>9</sup> BSBh 1.1.2, in Thibaut, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 18; *kim tu śruty-ādayo nubhavādayaś ca yathā-saṁbhavam*.

<sup>10</sup> Śāṅkara tends to disregard epistemological questions. Nakamura has criticised his theory of knowledge as being unclear ("Conflict", p. 161).

<sup>11</sup> *ata eva hi vaidikācchabdād devādikam jagat prabhavati*; BSB 1.3.28. But Śāṅkara rejects the *sphoṭa* theory here. He refuses to accept the notion that a supersensuous entity is vested in the word, as this would imply a power other than Brahman.

Once this traditional and orthodox context has been established, Śāṅkara does accord *yukti* an equal partnership with *śabda*. Scripture is the foundation of true knowledge, the "hearing" of the highest truth, and *yukti* is the reflection upon the teachings. But there is yet another role for *yukti*. It is the means to remove that which has been falsely superimposed on the Self. This all-important process of elimination is known as *apavāda*, de-superimposition: "when an idea previously attached to some object is recognized as false and driven out by the true idea springing up after the false one".<sup>12</sup>

Śāṅkara has suggested several methods whereby *yukti* serves to facilitate the removal of superimposition. The most notable of these is *anvaya-vyatireka*, 'agreement and difference'. This method was commonly used by grammarians in order to establish the relationship between a word and its meaning.<sup>13</sup> But Śāṅkara uses it for a rather different purpose: to effect a non-dualistic analysis of the sentence. Although the function of this method seems quite significant, he only elaborates upon it in Chapter 18 of the USP.<sup>14</sup> Moreover he chooses to limit its application exclusively to determining the meaning of 'thou' in the declaration 'Thou art that'. Śāṅkara may well have been wary

<sup>12</sup> BSBh 3.3.9, in Thibaut, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 197, *apavādo nāma yatra kasminīś cid vastuni pūrvā-nivisṭāyāṁ mithyā-buddhau niścitāyāṁ paścād upajāyamānā yathārthā buddhiḥ pūrvā-nivisṭāyā mithyā-buddher nivartakā bhavati*. Swami Nikhilananda uses the term 'de-superimposition' for *apavāda* in his translation of *Vedāntasāra of Sadānanda* (Mayavati, 1974), p.81.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed discussion see George Cardona, "Anvaya and Vyatireka in Indian Grammar", ALB, 31-32 (1967-68), pp. 313-352.

<sup>14</sup> See USP 18.90 ff. However, he does refer elsewhere to *anvaya-vyatireka*. In BSBh 2.1.5, although it is not elaborated upon, the expression seems to have the same sense as in USP 18. In BSBh 2.1.14, it is used as the logicians understood it. Most significant of all is BSBh 4.1.2, where an identical but abbreviated process of 'agreement and difference' is presented. But in this instance, Śāṅkara does not call it *anvaya-vyatireka*.

of exaggerating the value of such a logical/grammatical approach. Nevertheless, *anvaya-vyatireka* was adopted by Sureśvara and subsequently became an integral part of the Advaita tradition.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the considerable attention Śāṅkara devotes to the discussion of 'agreement and difference', he does not spell out its procedure. Yet it is possible to get an idea of how he intends it to function. According to Śāṅkara, one may comprehend the words 'thou' and 'that' and still fail to understand the meaning of the sentence 'Thou art that'.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, comprehension of the sentence is dependent upon one's remembering the correct meanings of the individual words.<sup>17</sup> To begin with, 'Thou art that' is a statement of identity, and may be likened to such statements as 'The horse is black'.<sup>18</sup> The term 'art' is the referent which indicates that both 'thou' and 'that' constitute one and the same thing. The meaning of 'that' is already well known from scripture as a designation of Brahman. Hence, it is the term 'thou' that must be analysed.

If the meaning of 'thou' is taken to refer to anything other than 'that', the meaning of the sentence cannot be understood. It is for this reason that the method of *anvaya-vyatireka* is adopted. In utilising this process, one first determines which meanings of

<sup>15</sup> See for example Sureśvara, *Naiśkarmyasiddhi*, 3.1-4 and 3.73-80; Vidyāraṇya, *Pañcadaśī*, 7.69 ff.; Sadānanda, *Vedāntasāra*, 148 ff. However, W. Halbfass, citing G. Cardona, calls into question the notion that *anvaya-vyatireka* has a special meaning in the Advaita tradition (Wilhelm Halbfass, *Studies in Kumārila and Śāṅkara*, pp. 55-56).

<sup>16</sup> USP 18.193.

<sup>17</sup> USP 18.176.

<sup>18</sup> As Mayeda notes, this analogy is not strictly precise because the subject and predicate are not necessarily interrelated. For this reason, later Advaitins utilised the expression *so' yam devadattah*, 'this is that Devadatta' to illustrate the point. In this example both terms are based in one and the same thing (*A Thousand Teachings*, pp. 55-56).

'thou' agree with 'that', and which are different. When the various definitions of *ātman* are considered, one discovers that it is the *pratyagātman*, the 'inner Self', and not the self as agent and sufferer (*kartā duḥkhī ca mā bhūvam*), which corresponds to 'that'. One must exclude (*apohya*) this latter designation and retain only the former. In this way, the two words retain their own meanings, and moreover "convey a special meaning which results in the realization of the inner *ātman*".<sup>19</sup>

Śāṅkara cites the traditional story of The Tenth Man as an analogue of how the sentence can awaken knowledge. A party of ten men undertake the arduous crossing of a river in spate. For a time they are all separated by the furious waters, but eventually they regroup on the other shore. One of them, anxious to ascertain whether all have arrived safely, proceeds to count those present. He is dismayed to find that there are only nine, until it is pointed out to him that he has neglected to count himself: 'You are the tenth!'<sup>20</sup>

On the surface, the method of *anvaya-vyatireka* appears to be a strictly analytical affair. Yet underlying this logical process is the same sort of belief in the mysterious power of the word upon which the meditations of the Upaniṣads were based. Śāṅkara holds that true knowledge arises following the comprehension of the term 'thou' immediately one hears the sentence.<sup>21</sup> The enigma of the *mahāvākyā* is further described by Sureśvara: "The very moment he understands that the entity denoted by the words 'that' and 'thou' is one and the same, he comprehends that which

<sup>19</sup> USP 18.171, in Mayeda, *ibid.*, p. 190, *svārthasya hy aprahāṇena viśiṣṭātha-samarpakau / pratyag-ātmāvagat�yantau nānyo 'rtho' rthād virodhy atah.*

<sup>20</sup> USP 18.172.

<sup>21</sup> *tatkālā jayate pramā*, 18.103.

is not the meaning of any sentence".<sup>22</sup> With this realisation all duality disappears. There is no longer any scope for the operation of perception, even such perception as is generated by the scriptural statement. Śāṅkara is able to reinforce this point with an appropriate citation from the śruti itself: "Then the Vedas are not the Vedas".<sup>23</sup>

While Śāṅkara is quite willing to suggest a scheme which parallels the processes of śravaṇa and manana, he is somewhat more hesitant to suggest an equivalent for nididhyāsana. He does, however, admit that there are certain practices designed to follow upon hearing and reflection. He refers to one of these as a 'train of remembrance' (*smṛti-saṃtati*), while another is simply 'repetition' (*āvṛtti*), of the hearing and reflection.

Śāṅkara concedes that a single hearing of the sentence may not always suffice to awaken intuitive knowledge. In such instances, repetition of śravaṇa and manana is allowed, provided that it is not enjoined as a duty. Injunctions inevitably result in the misconceptions, 'this knowledge is mine', 'this is done by me', which cause one to lose sight of the true sense of the teachings.<sup>24</sup> Having stated these precautions, Śāṅkara proposes a logical method which is perhaps a precursor or alternative to *anvaya-vyatireka*.<sup>25</sup> The first step in this technique involves recalling the numerous scriptural statements which establish the absolute Brahman. Śāṅkara seems to expect that for students of Vedānta, this will suffice to adequately convey the meaning of 'that'. So they may properly comprehend 'thou', the pupils are

<sup>22</sup> NS 3.1, in *The Realization of the Absolute*, tr. A. J. Alston (London, 1971), p. 143, *yadaiva tad-arthaṁ tvam arthe'vaiti tad-aivāvākyārthatāṁ pratipadyate...*

<sup>23</sup> *atrā...vedā vededāḥ*, BU 4.3.22 cited in BSBh 4.1.3.

<sup>24</sup> *niyuktasya cāsmīn adhikṛto 'ham kartā mayedam kartavyam ity avaśyam brahma-pratyayād viparīta-pratyaya utpadyate*, BSBh 4.1.2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

asked to remember the way the Self was apprehended in TU 3. Initially, the Self was found to constitute the essence of the physical body (*anna*). The Self was progressively understood to be the life-force (*prāṇa*), the mind (*manas*), the intellect (*vijñāna*) and finally, bliss (*ānanda*). At this point it was realised that the Self was none other than Brahman. Using this scheme as a model, Śāṅkara suggests that the student should focus his attention on gradually removing (*apoha*), one by one, the various elements falsely associated with the Self. Again the purpose of this method is simply to facilitate the comprehension of the true sense of the word 'thou'.

Perhaps the closest Śāṅkara comes to designating an alternative to *nididhyāsana* is in his discussion of the "constant train of remembrance of the Self",<sup>26</sup> *ātma-jñāna-smṛti-saṃtati*. In the course of a rather lengthy argument, he strives to demonstrate that this remembrance automatically arises upon hearing the scriptural statement. As the remembrance is already present, it is not something that need be enjoined. Yet Śāṅkara admits that the train of remembrance is necessary to maintain the knowledge of the Self in the face of the effects of *prārabdha-karma*, those past actions which are now bearing fruit:

Since the resultant of past actions that led to the formation of the present body must produce definite results, speech, mind, and the present body, are bound to work even after the highest realization, for actions that have begun to bear fruit are stronger than knowledge; as for instance an arrow that has been let fly continues its course for some time.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> BUBh 1.4.7, in *The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Śāṅkarācārya*, tr. Swāmi Mādhavānanda (5th ed. Mayavati, 1975), p. 90 ff.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93, *yady apy evaṁ śārirārambhakasya karmaṇo niyataphalatvāt samyag-jñāna-prāptāv apy avaśyam-bhāvinī pravṛttir vāñ-manaḥ-kāyānām / labdha-vṛteḥ karmaṇo baliyastvāt / muktesvādi-pravṛttivat*.

Śaṅkara's assertion that action may be "stronger than knowledge" is somewhat startling. The fact that he accords so much importance to the workings of karma is a significant factor, not only in terms of his attitude to meditation, but also inasmuch as it points to the motivation behind his firm position on renunciation.<sup>28</sup> In renouncing all ritual actions, one at least ensures that "no further arrows will be set in flight".

Because the aspirant must suffer the disturbing influences generated by previous karma, Śaṅkara suggests that he should regulate (*niyatavya*) the train of remembrance by such means as renunciation (*tyāga*) and dispassion (*vairāgya*). It is in this process of regulation that meditation finds its proper place. Meditation is not needed to establish a current of thought, for this arises spontaneously as a result of knowledge. Rather its purpose is to remove the interruptions to the flow caused by one's karma. Śaṅkara devotes the whole of the third chapter of the USG to the elaboration of *parisaṃkhyāna* meditation, "for seekers after final release who are devoting themselves to

<sup>28</sup> Eliot Deutsch has rightly called attention to the role of karma as a "convenient fiction" for Śaṅkara ("Karma as a Convenient Fiction in the Advaita Vedānta", PEW, 15 [1964], pp. 3-12). But the place of karma in Śaṅkara's thought seems more than that of a useful device with which to explain away certain difficult problems. The fact that the development of true knowledge can be undermined by the workings of *prārabdha-karma*, demonstrates that Śaṅkara takes karma as a force to be reckoned with. Wilhelm Halbfass points to the way in which Śaṅkara "universalizes" karma by equating it with *avidyā*, while at the same time "radically devaluing" it by relegating it to the realm of *vyāvahārika* truth ("Karma, *Apūrva* and Natural Causes: Observations on the Growth and Limits of the Theory of *Saṃsāra*", in *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, ed. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980, p. 302). Yet by taking karma as a lower order of truth, Śaṅkara is not necessarily diminishing its power. He maintains that the effects of karma continue even after liberation until the *prārabdha-karma* has fully played itself out. This is an issue deserving further consideration.

destroying their acquired merit and demerit and do not wish to accumulate any more".<sup>29</sup>

Now Śaṅkara conveys quite clearly and in specific terms the nature and operation of *parisaṃkhyāna*. What is rather puzzling, however, is the nature of the distinction between *parisaṃkhyāna* and *prasamkhyāna*, which he seems to have thoroughly rejected in USP 18.<sup>30</sup> Śaṅkara presents here the argument of an opponent who propounds the necessity of *prasamkhyāna*.<sup>31</sup> The opponent maintains that one cannot obtain final release solely by hearing the *mahāvākyā*, one must also practice reasoning (*yukti*), and *prasamkhyāna*. He stresses the latter: "meditation should accordingly be performed until the ātman is grasped".<sup>32</sup> The basis for the antagonist's position is that the statement 'Thou art that' does not explain the means for realisation. Therefore, an injunction is required. In a similar vein, Sureśvara puts forth the views of an opponent who defines this meditation as "the repeated application of the mind to the ideas evolved by reasoning".<sup>33</sup> Some Vedāntins must have understood *prasamkhyāna* as an equivalent of *nididhyāsana*. In addition, they would have held that the practice was to be enjoined. *Prasamkhyāna* was probably also used to designate 'meditation' in the broader sense of the term. Kālidāsa, for example, uses it when speaking of absorption in meditation.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> USG 3.112, in Mayeda, op. cit., p. 251.

<sup>30</sup> Mayeda raises the question but does not suggest what the relationship between the two terms might be (op. cit., p. 254n.).

<sup>31</sup> USP 18.9 ff.

<sup>32</sup> Mayeda, op. cit., p.173; *prasamkhyānam atah kāryam yāvad ātmānubhūyate*, USP 18.12.

<sup>33</sup> NS 3.89, in Alston, op. cit., p. 211, *nanu prasamkhyānam nāma...yuktivisaya-buddhy-āmredanam abhidipyate*.

<sup>34</sup> In *Kumārasaṃbhava* 3.40, Kālidāsa describes Śiva in meditation: *kṣane 'smīn harah prasamkhyāna-paro babhūva*. Mallinātha glosses *prasamkhyāna* here as *ātmānusamdhāna*.

A more precise definition of *prasamkhyāna* is given in the *Yogaśūtra*, where it is further elaborated by Vyāsa, who explains the term as follows: "grounded in itself and being nothing but the discernment of the difference between *sattva* and the Self...the highest elevation",<sup>35</sup> *svarūpa-pratiṣṭham sattva-puruṣānyatā-khyāti-mātram...tat param prasamkhyānam*. The purpose of this meditation is to remove the afflictions or hindrances (*kleśa*-s) to liberation. The *kleśa*-s comprise ignorance (*avidyā*), egotism (*asmitā*), passion (*rāga*), aversion (*dveṣa*), and the clinging on to life (*abhiniveṣa*).<sup>36</sup> The chief of these afflictions is ignorance, which causes one to regard the temporal and not-Self as the eternal, and the Self. Ignorance serves as the breeding ground (*prasava-bhūmi*) for the other hindrances. The *kleśa*-s are the foundation upon which deposits of karma accrue. The effects of these accumulated karmas will be experienced both in present and future lifetimes. The afflictions can be reduced by the yoga of action (*kriyā-yoga*), but their subtle form will remain nevertheless.<sup>37</sup>

The effect of *prasamkhyāna* is to burn away the very seeds of the afflictions so that it is impossible for deposits of karma to form. *Prasamkhyāna* marks a watershed, after which one's attention no longer flows towards objects, but simply discriminates between that which is only an activity or quality of the mind, *sattva*, and that which is the Self. Although the attainment of this highest elevation is indeed an exalted state, the aspirant must remain dispassionate (*virakta*) and detached from the *prasamkhyāna*. This will ensure the constancy of

<sup>35</sup> YSBh 1.2, in *The Yoga-System of Patañjali*, tr. James Haughton Woods (reprinted Delhi, 1977), p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> See YS 2.3 ff.

<sup>37</sup> *Kriyā-yoga* consists in austerity, study and devotion to the Lord (*tapas-svādhyāyeśvara-prapidhānāni*), YS 2.1.

discriminative knowledge which, in turn, results in the cessation of all karma and absolute freedom (*kaivalya*).<sup>38</sup>

Śāṅkara rejects the opponent's argument for *prasamkhyāna* largely on the grounds that no injunction to activity is required for the development of knowledge. Injunctions can only be relevant to the preliminary practices in the path of knowledge. For the highest teachings such as *neti neti* negate all notion of agency.<sup>39</sup> It seems likely that Śāṅkara sought to refute *prasamkhyāna* primarily because it might entail injunctions or imply a sense of agency. Sureśvara adds a further objection: the knowledge of reality does not arise through *prasamkhyāna*.<sup>40</sup> Since some of the adherents of this meditation, who were contemporaries of Śāṅkara, upheld the view that ritual action was necessary,<sup>41</sup> he probably decided to reject the term *prasamkhyāna* altogether. Instead, Śāṅkara proposes an almost synonymous term, *parisamkhyāna*, and his explanation of this

<sup>38</sup> See YS 4.29 ff.

<sup>39</sup> See USP 18.25.

<sup>40</sup> NS 3.123 ff. See also Michael Coman's discussion of Śāṅkara's view of meditative practices in his translation of *Advaitāmoda* by Vāsudevaśāstri Abhyankar. Delhi, 1988, pp. 77-83.

<sup>41</sup> Maṇḍanamiśra is one of the most notable proponents of the view that meditation is necessary for the attainment of liberation. He argues for the need to repeatedly perform meditation along with other ritual actions: *tasmāj jāte 'pi pramaṇāt tattva-darśane anādi-mithyādarśanābhyaśa-parinispannasya draḍhiyasaḥ saṃskārasyābhībhavāyocchedāya vā tatva-darśanābhyaśaṁ manyate / tathā ca "mantavyo nidiḍhyāsītavyaḥ" ity ucyate; śama-dama-brahmacarya-yajñādi-sādhana-vidhānam ca; anyathā kas tad upadeśārthah?* (*Brahmasiddhi* by Acharya Maṇḍanamiśra with commentary by Saṅkhapāni, ed. S. Kuppuswami Sastri [1937], reprinted Delhi, 1984, p. 35). While Śāṅkara probably did not know of Maṇḍanamiśra himself, the viewpoint he refutes is very similar to that of Maṇḍana's. Sureśvara does directly attack Maṇḍana. See Allen Wright Thrasher, "The Dates of Maṇḍana Miśra and Śāṅkara", WZKS, 23 (1979), pp. 117-139.

bears a striking similarity to the concept of *prasamkhyāna* as it is delineated in the *Yogaśūtra* and Vyāsa's YSBh.

According to Śāṅkara, the purpose of *parisamkhyāna* is to free one from the effects of karma. Śāṅkara traces the roots of karma back to ignorance as does the YS. Like the YS, which cites *avidyā* as the cause of the five afflictions, Śāṅkara mentions it as the cause of faults (*doṣa-s*), though he names only two of the five listed in the YS, passion and aversion.<sup>42</sup> From these faults arise the activities of the body, mind and speech. These activities, in turn, generate an accumulation of karma, the results of which must be borne by the individual in the form of pleasure and pain, and the like.

Despite Śāṅkara's implicit approval of *prasamkhyāna*, as set out in the YSBh, there is good reason for him to have avoided the use of the term. First of all, he could not have accepted a meditation whose practice was enjoined by Vedāntins who upheld the efficacy of combining ritual action and knowledge. Secondly he would have to be cautious in taking up a process not associated with the Upaniṣads, but with the *Yogaśūtra*. Yet Śāṅkara is able to utilise the technique of *prasamkhyāna* by casting it in a slightly different mould.

In the designation *parisamkhyāna*, Śāṅkara selects a term ordinarily employed in the context of Vedic exegesis. The Mīmāṃsākas speak of a *parisamkhyā* injunction (*vidhi*). The purpose of the *parisamkhyā-vidhi* is to limit or exclude one of several alternative forms of action.<sup>43</sup> Although it is, to be sure,

<sup>42</sup> In USG 3.112 Śāṅkara does not specify what the *doṣa-s* are, but he refers to them as *raga-dvesa* in USP 1.7. He discusses the concept of the *doṣa-s* more fully in *Adhyātmapaṭala-vivaraṇa* 11.

<sup>43</sup> *Mīmāṃsāśūtra* 1.2.42 says simply, *parisamkhyā*. The commentators explain the *sūtra* with the phrase, *pañca-pañca-nakhā bhakṣyāḥ*, 'Only five animals with five nails may be eaten'. The implication here is one of exclusion. The *vidhi* emphasises what should *not* be done.

an injunction, the *parisamkhyā-vidhi* is more concerned with excluding activity than with initiating it. This is very much in keeping with the spirit of Śāṅkara's *parisamkhyāna*. Insofar as it requires single-pointed concentration, a withdrawal from sensory objects, and a steady remembrance of the Self, *parisamkhyāna* is certainly a kind of meditation. But unlike object-centred meditations, the emphasis here is on destroying false identifications rather than establishing an identity. It is a process of knowledge, not (ritual) action.

There is an unmistakable resemblance between *parisamkhyāna* and *anvaya-vyatireka*.<sup>44</sup> Just as in the method of 'agreement and difference', *parisamkhyāna* involves the rejection of anything which does not agree with the ever-present, essential unity of Brahman and ātman. In this instance, the basic process consists in removing the idea that one can be affected by the activities of the senses. In other words, the aim is to eliminate the false associations of the physical body with the Self. *Parisamkhyāna* proceeds along the lines of the distinction Śāṅkara makes between the perceived and the perceiver. That which is perceived can have no knowledge of itself. It is merely an evolved thing, like clay. But the knowing perceiver must be other than this evolved thing. The practice of *parisamkhyāna* begins with an awareness of oneself as the perceiver in an absolute sense: "My very nature is that of seeing; I am unattached, changeless, motionless, endless".<sup>45</sup> From this perspective, one discriminates between the Self which is witness to all things, though unaffected by them, and the objects of sensory perception: "Therefore, what can words of praise or

<sup>44</sup> Mayeda, *op. cit.*, pp. 52; 55, notes the similarity. However, G. Cardona, takes issue with this claim in arguing that *anvaya-vyatireka* is not a kind of meditation (Cardona cited in W. Halbfass, *Studies in Kumārila and Śāṅkara*, pp. 55-56).

<sup>45</sup> *dṛk-svabhāvam asamsarṇīnam avikriyam acalam anidhanam*. USG 3. 115.

blame, which have the characteristics of being pleasant and unpleasant, do to me?"<sup>46</sup> *Parisamkhyāna*, then, is the way in which the aspirant maintains Self-consciousness.

Śāṅkara's method of Self-realisation is based on an effective combination of scripture and reasoning. The teacher awakens the aspirant by a transmission of power through the medium of the word. The student, in turn, prepares himself for the true "hearing" of the sacred word. To this end, he is guided in a process of repeated hearing and reflection on the *mahāvākyā*, *tat tvam asi*. The reflection, at first analytical, gradually develops into a meditation consisting solely in a discriminative insight. In Śāṅkara's Vedānta, meditation is thus transformed from a way of action to a way of knowledge.

<sup>46</sup> *ato mām kim kariṣyati stuti-nindādi-priyāpriyatvādi-lakṣaṇaḥ śabdaḥ*, *ibid.*

## V

### SĀNKARA AND YOGA

Although a few scholars have commented on the parallels between yoga and Advaita,<sup>1</sup> it is generally held that Śāṅkara's Vedānta is diametrically opposed to yoga.<sup>2</sup> This assumption stems from Śāṅkara's apparent refutation of yoga in BSBh 2.1.3. But a careful reading of Śāṅkara's interpretation of this *sūtra* reveals that his objections do not preclude a qualified approval of yoga. Śāṅkara himself admits to using certain yoga concepts. In BSBh 2.4.12, he establishes a principle which permits the selective adoption of doctrines espoused by one's opponents, provided they are not contradictory to one's own thought (*paramatma apratiṣiddham anumatam bhavati*). He proceeds to cite with approval the *Yogasūtra*'s notion of the five mental states.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For example, M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* (London, 1968), p. 341 ff.; T. M. P. Mahadevan, *The Philosophy of Advaita* (4th ed.; New Delhi, 1976), p. 262 ff.

<sup>2</sup> There are two camps here. Some scholars take Patañjala-yoga to be a philosophical system which is necessarily antagonistic to Advaita. Hacker is perhaps the most significant representative of this line of thought. In his "Śāṅkara der Yогин und Śāṅkara der Advaitin" he repeatedly refers to a "Yoga system". He argues that Śāṅkara was first a "Yогин" (i.e. follower of the "Yoga system") and later an Advaitin. Other scholars do not understand yoga, even as it is defined by Patañjali, to represent a system of thought. In his *History of Indian Philosophy* (tr. V. M. Bedekar 2 vols. Delhi, 1973, I. p. 321 ff.), Erich Frauwallner makes a good case in favour of this position. Eliade is very much in accord with Frauwallner on this point. But he too regards Śāṅkara as an opponent of yoga (Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, tr. Willard R. Trask, 2nd ed.; Princeton, 1973, p. 144).

<sup>3</sup> See YS 1.6.

There is a remarkable resemblance between the practice Śāṅkara calls *parisaṃkhyāna* and the meditation designated by the *Yogaśūtra* as *prasaṃkhyāna*. This is yet another example of the degree to which Śāṅkara's understanding of meditation is reliant on the *YS*. Many of his remarks on the subject echo those of Vyāsa, the earliest commentator on the *YS*.<sup>4</sup> In BSBh 4.1.7, for instance, Śāṅkara defines meditation as *samāna-pratyaya-pravāha-karaṇam*. This is a virtual restatement of Vyāsa's comment in YSBh 3.2. In ChUBh 7.6.1, Śāṅkara explains *dhyāna* as 'the continuous flow of a conception which is not interrupted by different types [of conceptions]' (*bhinnajātiyair anantaritah pratyaya-santānah*). This description is almost identical to that found in the *Vivarāṇa* on Vyāsa's YSBh 3.2. The *Vivarāṇa*, which is attributed to Śāṅkara, states that meditation is, 'a continuous flow of a single conception, unsullied by other conceptions of a different type' (*bhinnajātiya-pratyayāntarāparāmṛṣṭaika-pratyaya-pravāha*). It is not yet established whether or not this *Vivarāṇa* is in fact by Śāṅkara.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that Vyāsa's YSBh has made a substantial impression on Śāṅkara.

Because meditation forms an integral part of Śāṅkara's teachings on liberation, the influence of yoga on his work is all the more significant. But what exactly is the nature of the relationship between yoga and Śāṅkara's Vedānta?

<sup>4</sup> For a challenging discussion on the authorship of the *YS* and YSBh see Johannes Bronkhorst, "Patañjali and the Yoga sūtras", in *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik*, 10 (1985), pp. 191-212.

<sup>5</sup> Two excellent studies have dealt at some length with the still unresolved question of the *Vivarāṇa*'s authenticity: Wilhelm Halbfass, *Studies in Kumārila and Śāṅkara*, Reinbek, 1983, pp. 106-131; and Albrecht Wezler, "Philological Observations on the so-called Patañjalayogaśūtrabhāṣya-vivarāṇa", *IJ* (25), 1983, pp. 17-40. For the views of other scholars, see note 2 in the Introduction.

Paul Hacker was the first to address himself to this question; he initially called attention to the appearance of yoga concepts in Śāṅkara's work in 1950.<sup>6</sup> This connection was further emphasised by the publication in 1952 of the *Yogaśūtra-bhāṣyavivaraṇa*, attributed to Śāṅkara Bhagavat. Hacker's important study, "Śāṅkara der Yoggin und Śāṅkara der Advaitin. Einige Beobachtungen",<sup>7</sup> is based on this text. His seminal observations on how Śāṅkara's thought corresponds to that of Patañjala-yoga, have prompted a re-evaluation of Śāṅkara's work in the light of this yoga influence.

Hacker accepts the *YV* as Śāṅkara's. He presents evidence of stylistic and conceptual parallels between the *YV* and Śāṅkara's apparently later Advaita works to justify this assumption. Hacker does not, however, set out to systematically prove the authenticity of the *YV*. Instead, he concentrates his efforts on an attempt to demonstrate the validity of his hypothesis that Śāṅkara was initially a follower of yoga doctrines who later became an Advaitin. Thus his emphasis is upon a pattern of development he perceives in Śāṅkara's work.

It will be helpful here to summarise the main points of Hacker's argument. The fundamental problem, and in Hacker's view, a most perplexing feature of Śāṅkara's thought is his failure to mount a rational justification for the central concept of his system: "Warum ist der Monismus, zu dem sich Ś doch emphatisch bekennt, bei ihm argumentativ so schwach entwickelt?"<sup>8</sup> In the second prose chapter of the *US*, Śāṅkara

<sup>6</sup> Paul Hacker, "Eigentümlichkeiten der Lehre und Terminologie Śāṅkaras: Avidyā, Nāmarūpa, Māyā, Iśvara", *ZDMG*, 100 (1950), p. 248 ff.

<sup>7</sup> In *Beiträge zur Geistesgeschichte Indiens, Festschrift für Erich Frauwallner*, Wien, 1968 (=WZKSO 12-13, 1968-69), pp. 119-148.

<sup>8</sup> "Why is it that monism, which after all Ś professes so emphatically, is developed by such weak argumentation?"; *ibid.*, p. 121. Hacker's

provides an extensive elaboration on the nature of the Self. The discussion is conducted solely on the basis of rational arguments. What is more, Śāṅkara describes the Self in terms commonly employed in the discourse of logicians. Yet he presents little evidence for his belief that there is only one Self, and that the Self alone is real. In other places, Śāṅkara similarly fails to develop substantial arguments on behalf of monism or its necessary complement, illusionism. This is particularly surprising seeing as other Advaitins, including Śāṅkara's predecessor Gauḍapāda, argue very well in favour of monism. Nevertheless, Śāṅkara does develop a distinctive conception of the Self: "man aus seinen Werken eine beachtliche Lehre vom Selbst entnehmen kann, ohne dass der Monismus erwähnt zu werden brauchte".<sup>9</sup>

In order to explain this puzzling situation, Hacker offers his hypothesis of Śāṅkara's transition from yoga to Advaita.<sup>10</sup> Śāṅkara, although an adherent of yoga, is attracted to Advaita because of his strong theistic tendencies and his belief in the importance of the sacred syllable, *om*. In particular, he is drawn to a relatively new work, the *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* of Gauḍapāda.<sup>11</sup> This text presents a new kind of yoga (*asparśa-yoga*) which is based on an extensive interpretation of the meaning of *om*. Śāṅkara is instructed in Gauḍapāda's teachings by an Advaita master who eventually entrusts him with the task of writing a commentary on the text. The MKBh is Śāṅkara's first Advaita work. It contains various remnants of yoga thought

terminology is deliberately reproduced in this summary in order to highlight his perception of Śāṅkara.

<sup>9</sup> "One can infer a remarkable doctrine of the Self from his works, without needing to refer to monism"; *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-127.

<sup>11</sup> Gauḍapāda is traditionally regarded as Śāṅkara's *paramaguru*, the teacher of Śāṅkara's teacher.

which he was later to discard after thinking out the Advaita position more fully. Two other works, USP chapter 19 and TUBh, resemble the MKBh both stylistically and in their proximity to yoga. Another notable feature of the early works are the verses of homage (*marigalācarāṇa-s*) to the guru which introduce and conclude the text. This suggests that while Śāṅkara was still with his teacher he added these *marigalācarāṇa-s* to his commentaries, but later abandoned the practice. The three works mentioned above all contain *marigalācarāṇa-s*, as does USP chapter 17 which probably also belongs to this early period.

Hacker's thesis has been called into question on only one point.<sup>12</sup> Nakamura gathered together some very convincing evidence to show that the author of the YV frequently put forward interpretations of Vyāsa's YBh which have a distinctly

<sup>12</sup> By Hajime Nakamura in his article "Śāṅkara's Vivaraṇa on the *Yoga-sūtrabhāṣya*", *ALB*, 44-45 (1980-81), pp. 70-77. Mayeda follows Nakamura and remarks that Hacker's study is "not fully acceptable" (Sengaku Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings: The Upadeśasāhasrī of Śāṅkara*, Tokyo, 1979, p. 4). Vetter takes up Hacker's outline of the development of Śāṅkara's thought, and elaborates extensively upon it (Tilmann Vetter, *Studien zur Lehre und Entwicklung Śāṅkaras*, Vienna, 1979). Taber offers some criticism of Hacker's attempt to explain the apparent inconsistencies in Śāṅkara's work by recourse to a theory of the development of his thought. Nevertheless, Taber himself uses a similar framework in arguing that there is a movement in Śāṅkara's work away from an emphasis on reasoning, and a gradual turning to a scriptural justification of his position. In this view, Taber seems to be largely following in the footsteps of Vetter (John Taber, "Reason, Revelation, and Idealism in Śāṅkara's Vedānta", *JIP*, 9, 1981, pp. 283-307). Wezler accepts the main thrust of Hacker's argument but is not inclined to admit Śāṅkara's authorship of the YV ("Philological Observations" pp. 17-40). Halbfass questions Hacker's thesis and refers to his "inconclusive observations concerning Śāṅkara's familiarity with Yoga teachings", but does not mount a specific attack on Hacker's notion that Śāṅkara was first a Yogi (Studies in Kumārila and Śāṅkara , 106-131, esp. p. 119).

Advaita orientation.<sup>13</sup> Hacker himself detects a tendency towards Advaita in Śāṅkara's predilection, when he was a "Yogin", for theism, especially in association with the sacred syllable *om*.<sup>14</sup> But Hacker sees this tendency as the factor that motivates Śāṅkara to turn to Advaita. Although it is not his intention to do so, Hacker discloses further evidence of Śāṅkara's affinity for Advaita in the YV:

Ś hat schon als Yogin diesen Illusionismus gegenüber Vyāsa verstkt...und er hat den Sinn des Wortes 'Geniesser' auf den Akt des reinen Wahrnehmens reduziert. Nach dieser Reduktion konnten dann aber die Termini 'Geniesser' und 'Geniessen' berhaupt fallen, und der Vedntastandpunkt war schon erreicht. Als Advaitin hat Ś eine heftige Kontroverse gegen das Snkhya gefrt wegen dessen Lehre, das Selbst sei *bhokt*.<sup>15</sup>

Among the linguistic features characteristic of Śāṅkara's apparently early works, Hacker cites the frequent occurrence of the term *vikalpa*.<sup>16</sup> He points out that Śāṅkara rarely uses the

<sup>13</sup> Nakamura does not take a stand on Śāṅkara's authorship of the YV. His evidence, however, weighs heavily in favour of an author with a strong inclination for Advaita. While Nakamura does cite a few instances where the author of the YV expresses views which do not tally with Advaita, he does not rule out the possibility that Śāṅkara could have written the YV.

<sup>14</sup> In YV 1.27 the Vivarna author says, *prapauti stautiśvaram iti praṇava omkaraḥ / praṇidhiyate cānena bhagavān praṇidhātṛbhīr...tasya coṇkārasya vācyah iśvaraḥ*. Hacker also points out that the longest *utsūtra* portion of the YV (1.25) represents Śāṅkara's attempt to demonstrate the reality of God (*iśvara*).

<sup>15</sup> "Ś, as a Yogin, had already amplified this illusionism in comparison to Vyāsa...and he has diminished the sense of the word 'enjoyer' to the act of pure perception. From this diminution, then, the terms 'enjoyment' and 'enjoyer' could generally be dropped, and the Vednta standpoint had already been achieved. As an Advaitin Ś has raised a vehement argument against the Snkhyas because of their doctrine that the Self is the *bhokt*"; *op.cit.*, p.138. This presumes, of course, that Śāṅkara is the author of the YV.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.127.

term in connection with illusionism in his later works, where he mainly restricts himself to *avidyā*. What Hacker does not mention, however, is that when the author of the Vivarna explains *vikalpa* in YV 1.42, he uses the terms *adhyāropa* and *adhyāsa* which are the hallmarks of Śāṅkara's "later" Advaita thought.<sup>17</sup> Given the many instances in which the YV introduces Advaita concepts into what is a manual of yoga thought, the significance Hacker attaches to Śāṅkara's transition to Advaita seems excessive.

Similarly, there is good reason to question the extent to which Śāṅkara really turned away from yoga in his later works. Hacker asserts that the early works "noch Überbleibsel des Yoga enthlt, die beim weiteren Durchdenken der Advaitaposition verworfen werden mussten".<sup>18</sup> The example he cites is from MKBh 3.31, where Śāṅkara discusses how the perception of duality comes to an end in conjunction with the cessation of mental activity. Śāṅkara's suggestion of the means for mental control recalls YS 1.12, where practice and dispassion (*abhyāsa-vairāgya*) are prescribed. Moreover, the Vivarna reiterates Vyāsa's comment in qualifying *abhyāsa* as *viveka-darśana*, discriminative insight. It is precisely this proximity to yoga, Hacker maintains, which is rejected in Śāṅkara's later works. However, in the "later" GBh, Śāṅkara again refers to the YS in a discussion of a similar nature. *Gītā* 6.35 describes the mind as restless and difficult to restrain, and to control it recommends practice and dispassion.<sup>19</sup> In his GBh, Śāṅkara says that *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* are needed in order to control *vikṣepa-s*,

<sup>17</sup> *vikalpo hi viśeṣādhyāropaḥ tenādhyāsenā*.

<sup>18</sup> "Still contain remnants of Yoga which during the further thinking out of the Advaita position had to be discarded". *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>19</sup> ...mano dur-nigrahaḥ / calam abhyāsenā tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca grhyate.

the distractions of the mind. Since the *Gitā* has made no mention of *vikṣepa* in this verse, it seems clear that Śaṅkara has introduced the notion in his commentary. In doing so, he echoes Vyāsa's statement that "vikṣepa-s are obstacles to *samādhi* which should be controlled by two things: practice and dispassion".<sup>20</sup> Vyāsa specifies that 'practice' means "resting the mind on a single object".<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Śaṅkara explains *abhyāsa* in the GBh as the "repetition of the same idea regarding a particular object of thought" (*citta-bhūmau kasyām cit samāna-pratyayāvṛtti*). Certainly in this passage Śaṅkara provides little indication that he has moved away from yoga.

Hacker admits that Śaṅkara is cautious in rejecting outright the practice of constant meditation. Nevertheless, Hacker finds in BUBh 1.4.7 what he believes to be a clear illustration of Śaṅkara's repudiation of meditation and yoga.<sup>22</sup> Here Śaṅkara argues against the injunction of a specialised meditation practice, a "train of remembrance of the knowledge of the Self" (*ātma-jñāna-smṛti-saṃtati*).<sup>23</sup> What is more, he denies that the yoga practice of restraining the mental fluctuations, *citta-vṛtti-nirodha*, is a means of liberation (*mokṣa-sādhana*). These comments need careful scrutiny, for Śaṅkara's extensive discussion is crucial to an understanding of his position on meditation and yoga.

The particular passage in BU 1.4.7 on which Śaṅkara focuses his attention, declares that "the Self is to be meditated on" (*ātmety evopāśīta*). He first cites the viewpoints of various opponents (*pratipakṣin-s*) who believe the text to constitute an "original injunction" (*apūrva-vidhi*). Śaṅkara's arguments on this

<sup>20</sup> *vikṣepāḥ samādhi-pratipakṣāḥ tābhyaṁ evābhyaśa-vairāgyābhyaṁ nirodhavyāḥ*. YSBh 1.32

<sup>21</sup> *artham eka-tattvālambanah cittam abhyāset*.

<sup>22</sup> *Op.cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>23</sup> For a description of this type of meditation, see Chapter IV.

point involve a rather complex exegesis on the nature of injunctions.<sup>24</sup> The upshot of his discussion is that the text is not an *apūrva-vidhi* but rather a *niyama-vidhi*. He explains this latter injunction as *pakṣa-prāpti*, a possible alternative. Having attempted to diminish the force of the injunction, Śaṅkara now seeks to eliminate altogether the requirement of even this *vidhi*. He turns to his familiar arguments concerning the incompatibility of knowledge and ritual action.<sup>25</sup> In the case of Self-knowledge, ritual actions, whether mental or physical are of no avail. There is nothing to be done, except for the "hearing" of the *śruti* verses which are indicative of the true nature of the Self.

At this point, another *pratipakṣin* intervenes and brings the conversation back to the passage on meditation. He contends that knowledge of the Self is one thing, but meditation is another. He refers to meditation here as a train of remembrance of the knowledge of the Self. It is this *smṛti-saṃtati*, he adds, which should be enjoined. Śaṅkara's response is that the remembrance of the Self is already attained, automatically, as soon as the knowledge of the Self arises. When one knows the Self, the

<sup>24</sup> In the *Mimāṃsā-paribhāṣā* the three types of injunctions are described in some detail. An *apūrva-vidhi* involves something which was formerly unknown; it is intended to prescribe ritual activity which cannot be known from other sources. In the absence of an *apūrva-vidhi*, the desired ritual action could not be carried out. A *niyama-vidhi* is a restrictive injunction, employed when there are various possible means of carrying out a ritual action. The traditional illustration of this *vidhi* concerns the threshing of rice. Since there are different ways in which the rice may be threshed, the *niyama-vidhi* is required to specify the particular means to be adopted. A *parisamkhyā-vidhi* is an exclusive injunction. The example traditionally associated with this injunction is: "Only five animals with five claws are to be eaten". The implication is that all other animals are unsuitable. Hence the *parisamkhyā-vidhi* is intended to exclude a whole range of possible activities (*Mimāṃsā-paribhāṣā* of Kṛṣṇa Yajvan, tr. Swāmī Mādhavānanda [Calcutta, 1948], p. 19).

<sup>25</sup> See Chapter III.

memories about the not-Self are abandoned. In their place, the train of remembrance about the Self emerges. Hence, *smṛti-saṃtati* need not be prescribed.

The *pratipakṣin* now changes his tack. He argues that the control of the mind must surely be different from Self-knowledge. The *yogaśāstra* enjoins the restraint of the mental fluctuations. Should not the same apply in the present case? Śaṅkara's reply is direct. He rejects the suggestion entirely, on the grounds that the authoritative Vedānta texts do not speak of *citta-vṛtti-nirodha* as a means of liberation. But Śaṅkara now makes a rather curious statement:

Besides there is no other means for the control of mental states except the knowledge of the Self and the train of remembrance about it. But this is a tentative admission; really, there is no other means of liberation except the knowledge of Brahman.<sup>26</sup>

Śaṅkara is obviously rather ambivalent about the status of the train of remembrance. It cannot be wholly accepted as a means to liberation. For once true knowledge arises, there is nothing to be done. Yet insofar as it is complementary to Self-knowledge, *smṛti-saṃtati* has an important role to play. Śaṅkara is clearly aware of the difficulty here. He allows a *pratipakṣin* to articulate the nature of the problem: if meditation on the Self is already known as a *niyama-vidhi*, how can it also be an inherent part of the train of remembrance?<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, tr. Swāmī Mādhavānanda (5th ed.; Calcutta, 1975), p. 91; *ananya-sādhanatvā ca nirodhasya / na hy ātma-vijñāna-tat-smṛti-saṃtāna-vyatirekeṇa, citta-vṛtti-nirodhasya sādhanam asti / abhyupagamyedam uktam, na tu brahma-vijñāna-vyatirekeṇa anyan mokṣa-sādhanam avagamyate.*

<sup>27</sup> *kathām punar upāsanasya pakṣa-prāptir yāvatā pāriśeṣyād ātma-vijñāna-smṛti-santatiḥ nityaivety abhīhitam.*

In responding to this criticism, Śaṅkara defends his use of meditation. Even after the awakening of true knowledge, the results of past actions are still effective, just as the arrow once released must continue in its course. Moreover, the operation of knowledge is weaker than the effects of karma.<sup>28</sup> For this reason, subsequent to the arising of knowledge, either the results of past actions or the flow of remembrance of Self-knowledge may occur. Therefore *smṛti-saṃtati* is only a possible alternative. Having managed to provide some justification for his understanding of the text "meditate on the Self" as a *niyama-vidhi*, Śaṅkara finally takes a firm stand on the place of meditation:

Therefore there is need to regulate the train of remembrance of the knowledge of the Self by having recourse to means such as renunciation and dispassion; but it is not something to be originally enjoined.<sup>29</sup>

Śaṅkara's position on meditation and yoga, as set out in BUBh 1.4.7, may be summarised as follows: (1) The need for meditation is not denied, but the necessity of injunctions for meditation on the Self is rejected; (2) yoga is not a means to liberation; but (3) it is necessary to maintain the practice of regulating the flow of ideas about the Self in the face of the disturbance generated by the results of past actions. This seems yet another instance of Śaṅkara's acceptance of what he has described in GBh 6.35 as, "the repetition of the same idea regarding a particular thought". In this light, it is difficult to see how Hacker can claim that Śaṅkara has rejected the practice of constant meditation. Neither does it appear that Śaṅkara has "discarded remnants of yoga". It

<sup>28</sup> See Chapter IV, pp. 73-74.

<sup>29</sup> Mādhavānanda, *op. cit.*, p. 93; *tasmāt tyāga-vairāgyādi-sādhana-balāvalambena ātma-vijñāna-smṛti-santatir niyantavyā bhavati, na tv āpūrvā kartavyā.*

is still very much in evidence in such an important "later" work as the BUBh.

There is, however, quite a distinction between appropriating elements of yoga practice and accepting yoga as a means of liberation. Even in the MKBh, which Hacker holds to be the closest to yoga thought, Śaṅkara does not regard yoga as a means to liberation. In this work, Śaṅkara is obliged to elaborate at some length on yoga practice. For Gauḍapāda has devoted the latter half of the third chapter to the subject of controlling the mind. Gauḍapāda may indeed have established a precedent for Śaṅkara here, in combining some of the practical techniques of yoga with a thoroughly non-dualistic conceptual framework.

Gauḍapāda calls this association of yoga and Advaita *asparśa-yoga*.<sup>30</sup> *Asparśa*, literally 'without touch', connotes intangibility and the absence of relationship. His use of this term is intended to suggest the non-dual Brahman, which he describes as free from the senses and above the mind.<sup>31</sup> Gauḍapāda explains the function of *asparśa-yoga* as follows. The mind is the perceiver of duality. When the mind is held still, duality is no longer apprehended. But this cessation is not like that of deep sleep, in which the mind is simply dispersed. The mind must be awakened. It should be restrained from its tendency to become distracted by the objects of desire. This is to be effected by the constant recollection (*anusmṛtyā*) of the non-dual Brahman in conjunction with the recollection of the suffering inherent in the world of duality.

In MK 3.39 Gauḍapāda points to the fact that his *asparśa-yoga* is quite different to the yoga which is commonly

<sup>30</sup> MK 3.39; 4.2.

<sup>31</sup> MK 3.37. This is following Śaṅkara's interpretation of the *kārikā*. He takes Gauḍapāda's *sarvābhilāpa-vigata* to mean *sarva-bāhya-karaṇa-varjita*.

practised.<sup>32</sup> He warns that yogis will find his *asparśa-yoga* difficult to grasp, for they are perceivers of duality who fear the highest truth. However, Gauḍapāda does not make it clear whether *asparśa-yoga* is fully compatible with the highest truth, as he understands it: "nothing whatsoever is born".<sup>33</sup>

Śaṅkara certainly leaves no doubt as to his understanding of *asparśa-yoga*. It is not the highest truth. He refers to MK 3.15-16, where Gauḍapāda sets out the limitations of *upāsanā*. Meditation on the conditioned aspect of Brahman is said to be suitable only for inferior and mediocre aspirants. Similarly, Śaṅkara asserts, *asparśa-yoga* is for those yogis whose perception is inferior or middling: those who see the mind as something separate from the Self.<sup>34</sup> Śaṅkara stresses the point again in 3.48. Here he links control of the mind together with *upāsanā* and discussions on the creation of the world. All these, he holds, are only spoken of as means to the apprehension of the nature of the highest truth. They do not constitute the highest truth itself.<sup>35</sup>

In the MKBh Śaṅkara asserts that true knowledge consists in the cognition of the non-dual Self. This knowledge is ascertained by the sacred texts and by reasoning.<sup>36</sup> Śaṅkara reiterates this notion again and again.<sup>37</sup> What is unusual about

<sup>32</sup> There is no clear indication in the MK that Gauḍapāda has utilised the YS. He may have drawn from Buddhist sources on yoga similar to those which influenced the YS itself.

<sup>33</sup> MK 3.48, *etat tad uttamam satyam yatra kim cin na jāyate*.

<sup>34</sup> *ye tv ato anye yogino...hīna-madhyama-dṛṣṭayo mano 'nyad ātmavyatirkitam...paśyanti*, MKBh 3.40.

<sup>35</sup> *sarvo 'py ayam mano-nigrāhādīḥ...sr̥ṣṭir-upāsanā coktā parāmartha-svarūpa-pratipatti-upāyatvena na paramārtha-satyeti*.

<sup>36</sup> MKBh 3.17, *śāstropapattibhyām avadhāritatvāt advayātma-darśanam samyag-darśanam*.

<sup>37</sup> See for example, YV 1.48; MKBh 2.30, 3.17; TUBh 3.10.4; USP 15.54, 18.4, 19.17; GBh 18.17; ChUBh 6.12.2; BUBh 2.5.15; USG 1.43.

the MKBh, however, is its emphasis on rational argument. In other works, Śāṅkara tends to give more weight to the evidence of śāstra.<sup>38</sup> As Hacker has noted,<sup>39</sup> this suggests that the influence of Gauḍapāda was particularly pronounced during the time in which Śāṅkara was composing the MKBh. Śāṅkara's commentary clearly reflects Gauḍapāda's preoccupation with establishing a rational foundation for non-dualism. Yet Śāṅkara tends not to repeat these arguments in his other works,<sup>40</sup> neither does he develop an alternative set of logical propositions.

For Hacker, Śāṅkara's failure to argue rationally on behalf of monism is especially conspicuous, all the more so considering that Gauḍapāda and other Advaitins are not wanting in this respect. The problem is compounded by the fact that Śāṅkara does not normally shy away from argumentation. Hacker claims to have found an explanation for this puzzling situation: "Ś, wenn er argumentativ dachte, sich weitgehend auf den ihm vertrauten Bahnen des Yogasystems bewegte, das nicht monistisch war".<sup>41</sup> Although it certainly is true that Śāṅkara is familiar with yoga and that elements of yoga thought occur throughout his works, Hacker's thesis is nevertheless untenable.

To begin with, the assumption that Śāṅkara was first a "Yogin" is called into question by the fact that the author of the

<sup>38</sup> The notable exception here is the second prose chapter of the USG. But in this chapter śruti citations are intentionally omitted because Śāṅkara wishes to illustrate the process of reflection based on reasoning. The first chapter of the USG comprises numerous scriptural references in order to demonstrate hearing (śravaṇa). Śāṅkara's most extensive discussion of the respective roles of śruti and yukti is found in BSBh 2.1.6 and 2.1.11. Here he subordinates yukti to śruti. See Chapter IV.

<sup>39</sup> *Op.cit.*, p.135.

<sup>40</sup> USP chapter 19 is the only notable instance where Śāṅkara employs these arguments.

<sup>41</sup> "Ś, when he thought argumentatively, largely goes along the lines, well known to him, of the Yoga system which is not monistic", *op.cit.*, p.135.

YV has a distinctly Advaita orientation. Secondly, the evidence for Śāṅkara's eventual turning away from yoga is insubstantial. Even in his later works Śāṅkara continues to utilise yoga concepts. A still more obvious question arises here. Why should Śāṅkara's argumentation continue along the lines of the "Yoga system"? Can it really be simply because it is "well known to him"? Śāṅkara is also familiar with Gauḍapāda's mode of argument, but he does not continue along the lines of the rational approach established by his paramaguru. There is a fundamental self-contradiction in Hacker's thesis. If Śāṅkara rejects yoga in his later works, why does he retain yoga concepts in his argumentation?

The reason Śāṅkara does not argue for monism is that he is not, strictly speaking, a monist. It would certainly be misleading to equate Śāṅkara's thought with that of the European monists. Similarly, Hacker's reference to Śāṅkara as an "illusionist" (presumably, he intends māyā-vādin here) or "partial illusionist", seems unjustified because his Advaita does not assume the reality of māyā. Indeed Hacker himself has argued that Śāṅkara does not emphasise the importance of māyā in his work as do later Advaitins. It seems better, then, to designate Śāṅkara's thought simply with a literal rendering of advaita, hence, 'Non-dualism'.

Śāṅkara does, of course, hold that there is only one Self and that the Self (=Brahman) is the sole reality. Yet he speaks far more frequently of non-duality (*advaita, advaya*) than of oneness (*ekātma, ekatva*). Where Śāṅkara does use the term 'oneness', he usually speaks of nonduality as well. In such passages, the emphasis is on the removal of duality:

If the knowledge of oneness has arisen, there is no longer anything to be sought or avoided, and the recognition of the distinction between actions, agents, and the like is

destroyed. The recognition of duality is uprooted by the knowledge of oneness.<sup>42</sup>

Hacker has also overlooked the significance of Śāṅkara's reliance on *śabda-pramāṇa*, evidence on the basis of scripture. Hacker sees this as merely an "academic justification" for his failure to substantiate the oneness of the Self.<sup>43</sup> But far from being an escape from rational argument, it is a vital element of Śāṅkara's thought. In BSBh 2.1.11 Śāṅkara explains why *śabda-pramāṇa* is the only appropriate means of knowledge about the Self. Brahman, he argues, cannot be an object of perception for it lacks the characteristic signs upon which inferential reasoning (*anumāṇa*) is based. But above all, knowledge derived by rational means is at the mercy of conflicting opinions. True knowledge, on the other hand, must have as its source evidence which is firmly established and eternally valid. For this reason, only the testimony of the Vedas, which cannot be denied by logical argument, is to be accepted where knowledge of the Self is concerned. While reasoning does have its place, Śāṅkara continues, it must be subordinated to scripture. However much one might object to Śāṅkara's arguments on this point, it would be difficult to discount the pre-eminence of *śabda-pramāṇa* in Śāṅkara's Vedānta.

In spite of his reluctance to justify his concept of the Self with argumentation, Śāṅkara is certainly not hesitant to elaborate on the nature of the Self. He explains the Self in terms of illumination: the Self is the inner light. By means of this light, or rather its reflection, the mind is able to carry out the functions of perception. Because the very nature of the Self is light, it is self-

<sup>42</sup> BSBh 1.1.4, in *The Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa with the commentary by Śāṅkara*, tr. George Thibaut (2 vols.; reprinted, New York, 1962); *ekatve heyopadeya-śūnyatayā kriyā-kārakādi-dvaita-vijñānopamardopapateḥ / ...ekatva-vijñānenonmathitasya dvaita-vijñānasya...*

<sup>43</sup> "wissenschaftlich rechtfertigen", op. cit., p 123.

evident and does not become an object of perception. Here we are indebted to Hacker for pointing out that this notion is fundamental to Śāṅkara's thought. Hacker traces the concept of light back to its sources in the Upaniṣads, in yoga, and, to a lesser extent, in Mīmāṃsā. In this instance, Hacker is willing to acknowledge Śāṅkara's synthesis of Advaita and yoga. But otherwise, he insists on placing Śāṅkara firmly in either one camp or the other.

Few Sanskritists outside of India have made as thorough a study of Śāṅkara as has Professor Hacker. But unfortunately his careful reading of Śāṅkara's work is marred by the inherent flaws in his mode of approach. His analysis is founded on the dubious assumption that an author's work develops in an orderly manner, and in one direction. He reduces Śāṅkara's synthesis of yoga and Advaita to a linear, evolutionary progression whose starting point is yoga and whose terminus is Advaita. Perhaps a more serious problem in this line of approach, is the application of a modern European model to a traditional Indian context. But yoga and Advaita are not simply mutually exclusive schools of thought. They cannot be juxtaposed as if they were categories like classical/romantic or radical/conservative.

The yoga element in Śāṅkara's work must be accepted as an integral component of his thought. The significance of yoga is recognized in the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Brahmasūtra*, and even in the older Upaniṣads. If these authoritative texts accord a place to yoga, then it is little wonder that Śāṅkara follows suit. In his BSBh, Śāṅkara clearly outlines the extent and limitations of the role yoga plays in his Advaita-Vedānta.

The most appropriate starting point in looking at Śāṅkara's understanding of yoga is BSBh 2.1.3. Here Śāṅkara elaborates on the *Brahmasūtra*'s terse refutation of yoga, *etena yogah pratyuktah*. He takes the *sūtra* to be the continuation of a series

of arguments advanced against the Sāṅkhyā viewpoint. The fundamental Sāṅkhyā principle of *pradhāna* or *prakṛti*, the primal substance from which the world evolves, is dismissed on scriptural as well as logical grounds. Since the concept of *pradhāna* is also central to the metaphysics of yoga, the same refutation, he observes, also applies in this case. Śaṅkara continues to link Sāṅkhyā and yoga throughout his discussion of the *sūtra*.<sup>44</sup> It is apparent that he regards yoga thought as a kind of Sāṅkhyā. Yet he also believes yoga to constitute a course of disciplined activity which is more or less independent of Sāṅkhyā principles.

Śaṅkara's interpretation of the *sūtra* revolves primarily around his analysis of the relationship between *smṛti* and *śruti*.<sup>45</sup> To begin with, he refers to the text(s) upon which yoga is based as *yogasmṛti*.<sup>46</sup> This designation emphasises his contention that yoga rests solely upon *smṛti* sources, in contrast to Vedānta which is founded on *śruti*. His underlying assumption here is that the authority of *smṛti* is secondary to that of *śruti*. Śaṅkara again employs the argument that the Vedas are not dependent upon reasoning. *Smṛti*, however, reflects a variety of differing opinions and is consequently less reliable. To further justify his position, he cites *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.3, which maintains that when there is conflict between *smṛti* and *śruti*, the former is to be disregarded. Nevertheless, Śaṅkara recognises that the *yogasmṛti* does have its place, along with the *sāṅkhyasmṛti*, so long as it is not at variance with the Vedas. In his estimation, a portion of the

<sup>44</sup> Bronkhurst argues that the BS uses the term 'yoga' to designate the viewpoints of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, and not that of Pātañjalayoga. 'Yoga', he claims, "came to be applied to one form of Sāṅkhyā philosophy because of Śaṅkara's incorrect understanding of some of the *Brahmasūtra*". (Johannes Bronkhurst, "Yoga and Seśvara Sāṅkhyā", *JIP*, 9 [1981], p. 316).

<sup>45</sup> See Chapter III, note 11, for a discussion of these terms.

<sup>46</sup> By *yogasmṛti*, Śaṅkara means *yogaśāstra*. See the Introduction, p. 5.

*yogasmṛti* is certainly in agreement with *śruti*; other portions, like those setting out the notion of *pradhāna*, are incompatible.<sup>47</sup>

While Śaṅkara singles out the Sāṅkhyā component of the *yogasmṛti* for criticism in his discussion of *Brahmasūtra* 2.1.3, he takes the instructions regarding the disciplined activities of yoga practice to comprise the 'portion' which is in accord with *śruti*. Śaṅkara readily admits that the Upaniṣads themselves speak of yoga practice. He cites passages referring to yoga postures, control of the senses, and meditation. His illustration here of the injunction for meditation is most significant: *śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyah* (BU 2.4.5). These instructions are certainly not characteristic of yoga texts. The discipline of hearing, reflecting, and constantly meditating upon the teachings concerning the Self is, of course, the method which is set out for students of Vedānta. That the phrase was probably singled out for special mention well before Śaṅkara's time, is evident from the frequency with which it is cited by Śaṅkara's opponents in the BUBh. Śaṅkara himself attached great importance to the passage. Though in adapting it to the Advaita viewpoint he restructured the practice. Later Vedāntins continued to assign a prominent place to the process of *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana*. Śaṅkara's acknowledgement that this *śruti* passage prescribes yoga shows that its practice is indeed an integral part of his AdvaitaVedānta.

While the importance of yoga practice is not called into question, Śaṅkara does seek to limit its application. He stipulates that yoga must not be regarded as a means of liberation. This position, he admits, is contrary to the commonly held view that man's highest aim can be achieved through yoga.<sup>48</sup> There is even

<sup>47</sup> arthaikadeśa-saṃpratipattāv apy arthaikadeśa-vipratipatteḥ...yena tv amśena na virudhyete tenेषां eva sāṅkhyā-yogasmṛtyoḥ sāvakāśatvam.

<sup>48</sup> sāṅkhyā-yogau hi parama-puruṣārtha-sādhanatvena loke prakhyātau.

scriptural evidence which appears to support this view: "It is attained by Sāṅkhyā and yoga...one is freed from all bondage".<sup>49</sup> Śāṅkara contends that this passage cannot be understood to refer to the particular viewpoints of Sāṅkhyā and yoga. The term *sāṅkhyā*, in this context, signifies Vedic knowledge, while 'yoga' simply connotes meditation. There are probably a number of ways in which Śāṅkara could have justified this interpretation, but he does not bother to elaborate.<sup>50</sup>

Instead, he argues that since the path of yoga and the knowledge of Sāṅkhyā are not dependent upon the Vedas, they do not lead to the highest state.<sup>51</sup> In the light of his paradigm of *śruti* and *smṛti*, he is obliged to discard the knowledge of Sāṅkhyā, which is seen to be in conflict with the Vedas. The case of yoga is somewhat different. The path of yoga is not one of knowledge, but rather a series of disciplined activities, and in particular, meditation. For this reason, Śāṅkara is able to safely subordinate yoga to Vedānta. Yoga practice can be retained provided his students recognise that the knowledge of reality arises only from the statements of the Upaniṣads.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *sāṅkhyā-yogābhīpannaṇ...mucyate sarva-pāśaiḥ*, Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.13. Śāṅkara recognizes this Upaniṣad as *śruti*.

<sup>50</sup> He only goes so far as to suggest that by 'sāṅkhyā' and 'yoga', 'knowledge (of the Vedas)' and 'meditation' are to be understood, "because of the proximity of the terms"; *vaidikam eva tatra jñānam dhyānam ca sāṅkhyā-yoga-śabdā�्याम abhilapyate pratyāsatter ity avagantavyam*. This follows Śāṅkara's line of thought in GBh 2.39 and 5.5. He claims that when the *Gītā* refers to *sāṅkhyā* and 'yoga' it is suggesting knowledge and practice, respectively, and not the Sāṅkhyā and yoga viewpoints. Edgerton observes that in early texts such as the *Gītā*, *sāṅkhyā* denotes 'the way of knowledge' and 'yoga' connotes 'disciplined activity'. (Franklin Edgerton, "The Meaning of Sāṅkhyā and Yoga", *American Journal of Philosophy*, XLV, 1924, p. 6)

<sup>51</sup> *nirākaraṇam tu na sāṅkhyā-jñānenā veda-nirapekṣeṇa yoga-mārgena vā niḥśreyasam adhigamyata iti.*

<sup>52</sup> *tattva-jñānam tu vedānta-vākyebhya eva bhavati*, BSBh 2.1.3.

Insofar as Śāṅkara is determined to achieve a consistent interpretation of scripture upon which an Advaita viewpoint may be established, yoga is obviously of little value to him. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that Śāṅkara is not simply a metaphysician and exegete. He is also a teacher who has dedicated himself to lighting the way to liberation. In this capacity, one of his overriding concerns is to effect a profound psychical transformation in his students. It is in this respect that yoga plays an important part in his work.

Śāṅkara accepts the validity of yoga practice as a means to both physical and psychical transformation. Although he rarely discusses disciplines relating to the physical body, he makes a point of acknowledging some of the remarkable achievements yogis have made in this regard. He maintains that yogis can acquire extraordinary powers such as the ability to become as small as an atom.<sup>53</sup> Accomplished yogis may occupy several bodies at the same time.<sup>54</sup> They may even have direct perception of the past and future.<sup>55</sup> Śāṅkara describes these powers as if they were an obvious fact of life. Yet rather than appealing to empirical evidence to support these claims, he is content to rely on the testimony of scripture. One cannot, he argues, simply deny the power of yoga, because it is supported by authoritative *smṛti* and *śruti* texts.<sup>56</sup>

There are no fixed boundaries to speak of between the physical and the psychical in Śāṅkara's discussion. He does tend, however, to associate the power of yoga more closely with control of the mental faculties. In GBh 8.10, he defines this

<sup>53</sup> *yogo'py animādy-aiśvarya-prāpti-phalaḥ*, BSBh 1.3.33; cf. MKBh 4.9.

<sup>54</sup> ...*yoginām api yugapad aneka-śarīra-yogām darśayati*, BSBh 1.3.27.

<sup>55</sup> *yoginām apy atūtānāgata-visayaṁ pratyakṣam jñānam icchanti yogaśāstra-vidāḥ*, BSBh 1.1.5.

<sup>56</sup> ...*smaryamāno na śakyate sāhasa-mātreṇa pratyākhyātum / śrutiś ca yoga-māhātmyām prakhyāpayati*, BSBh 1.3.33.

power, and describes the manner in which it is developed: "the power of yoga is characterised by firmness of mind which is generated from the accumulation of mental impressions which have arisen from *samādhi*".<sup>57</sup> The practice of *samādhi*, complete absorption in meditation, is the catalyst which initiates this process of transformation. *Samādhi* brings about the formation of a series of "subliminal impressions".<sup>58</sup> A sufficient accumulation of these *samskāra*-s results in a mental state of absolute steadiness. Śāṅkara's brief sketch of the evolution of yoga power presupposes a familiarity with sources such as the *Yogasūtra* where the subject is more fully elaborated. According to the YS, all actions leave a residue or deposit (*āśaya*) which is characterised either by merit or demerit.<sup>59</sup> In the presence of afflictions (*kleśa*-s) such as ignorance, the latent deposits of karma grow, like seeds, to fruition. The manifestation of their fruition is three-fold. It determines the nature of one's birth, the type of experiences one will encounter, and the span of life.<sup>60</sup> There are two other 'seed' factors which are also mentioned. These are *samskāra* and *vāsanā*, two closely related terms denoting the mental impressions formed as a consequence of every thought and action.<sup>61</sup> The *samskāra*-s which accrue from the concentration of *samādhi* prevent the accumulation of residues from the *samskāra*-s which have already arisen,<sup>62</sup> due to the activities of the uncontrolled mind. In this way, the dispersion of the mental

<sup>57</sup> *yogabalaṁ samādhija-samskāra-pracaya-janita-citta-sthairya-lakṣaṇam.*

<sup>58</sup> This is Woods' translation of *samskāra* (*The Yoga System of Patañjali*, tr. James Haughton Woods [reprinted Delhi, 1977], p. 41, et passim).

<sup>59</sup> YS 2.14.

<sup>60</sup> YS 2.13.

<sup>61</sup> See YSBh 4.9. G. Koelman suggests that *samskāra* denotes "physical vestiges of action", while *vāsanā* refers to "psychical subliminal impressions" (Gaspar Koelman, *Patañjala-Yoga*, Poona, 1970, p. 50n.).

<sup>62</sup> *samādhi...samskāro vyutthāna-samskārāśayam bādhate*, YSBh 1.50.

faculties is gradually brought to an end. The mind becomes steady like a calmly flowing river.<sup>63</sup>

When it is held in the state of *samādhi*, the mind develops one-pointedness, *ekāgratā*.<sup>64</sup> This one-pointed concentration has the potential to effect the remarkable physical and psychical changes to which Śāṅkara has alluded. The exact process by which these superhuman feats are accomplished is not, of course, revealed. But the underlying assumptions are quite clear. It is believed that the meditator takes on the very nature of the object upon which he focuses his attention. Vyāsa expresses this as follows: "In the case of meditation on the power of an elephant, he attains the power of an elephant...by meditation on the wind, he attains the power of the wind".<sup>65</sup> Śāṅkara wholly endorses his view. He is fond of citing a verse to this effect: 'howsoever one meditates upon him, that indeed he becomes', *tam yathā yathopāsate tad eva bhavati*.<sup>66</sup>

In YSBh 1.41, Vyāsa explains the mind's propensity for transmutation by the analogy of the power of a crystal. As different objects are placed in proximity to the crystal, it becomes tinged by the respective forms and colours of each item. So too is the mind coloured by the object of its meditation. In the state of *samādhi*, the mind takes on a form identical to that of its object.<sup>67</sup> It should be noted here that the author of the YV utilises the same line of thought in explaining the operation of

<sup>63</sup> YS 3.10.

<sup>64</sup> YS 3.11.

<sup>65</sup> YSBh 3.24. The term designating meditation here is *samyama*, which denotes a process of meditation comprising concentration (*dhāraṇā*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and absorption (*samādhi*). See YS 3.4.

<sup>66</sup> BSBh 1.1.11; 3.4.52; 4.3.15; ChUBh 1.1.7; BUBh 1.3.16.

<sup>67</sup> *yathā sphatika upāśraya-bhedāt tattadrūpoparaka upāśraya-rūpākareṇa nirbhāsate, tathā grāhya-ālambanoparaktam cittam grāhya-samāpannam grāhya-svarūpākareṇa nirbhāsate*. YSBh 1.41.

perception. In YV 1.7 he describes how the mind is coloured by external objects. This occurs when the mind contacts an object via the channel of the senses. The mind then assumes the form of the object. As a consequence of this interaction, the mind receives an impression, as if it had been stamped.<sup>68</sup> The process of "colouration" represents the very antithesis of the one-pointedness of *samādhi*. In this meditative state, the mind no longer flows out in every conceivable direction, as it did when impelled by sensory stimuli. All the energy which was formerly consumed by outward activity is instead conserved and retained. It is when the energy is focussed on a single point, in the intense concentration of *samādhi*, that the extraordinary powers can presumably be attained.

For Śaṅkara, these powers do not represent something to be desired. But they are nevertheless of value in demonstrating the truth of what has been learned from the teacher and scriptures. Vyāsa provides the basis for this idea in YSBh 1.35. He observes that by concentrating on the tip of the nose, one may obtain the sensation of divine fragrances. These sorts of experiences, he remarks, furnish the student with first-hand knowledge which confirms the validity of the teachings. The point is, he continues,

When some one thing out of what has been taught has been directly perceived, everything else is firmly believed including such subtle matters as release, and this is why the yogin is directed to train the mind in this way.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup> *indriyam eva pranādikā dvāram śabdādy-ākāra-vṛtti-rūpeṇa pariṇama-mānasya cittasya...bāhya-vastv-ākāratayā pariṇama-mānam uparajyate / tasya tad uparāgāddhetoh cittasya yā mudrā-pratimudrāvat.*

<sup>69</sup> *Śaṅkara on the Yoga-sūtra-s* (Vol. I *Samādhi*), tr. Trevor Leggett, (London, 1981), p. 145; *tatra tad-upadiṣṭārthaika-deśa-pratyakṣatve sati sarvam sūkṣma-viṣayam api ā apavargāt śraddhiyate / etad artham evedam citta-parikarma nirdisyate*, YSBh 1.35.

Śaṅkara may well have had Vyāsa's comments in mind when he formulated his definition of yoga in GBh 16.1: "making intelligible to oneself things which have been learned by one-pointedness through suppression of the senses and the like".<sup>70</sup> The *Yogaśūtra*, in spite of its extensive enumeration of yoga powers, warns that they may well become obstacles to one's path and must ultimately be given up.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, the text insists that the highest *samādhi* can only be achieved when there is no longer any attachment to *samādhi*.<sup>72</sup> The attainment of this highest meditative state results in the destruction of the deposits of karma, along with the afflictions which engender them.<sup>73</sup> When this occurs, absolute freedom (*kaivalya*), the goal of yoga practice, is attained.

Śaṅkara is certainly not prepared to admit that yoga is the means to final release. He does, however, recognise the effectiveness of yoga in the subsidiary role of destroying the accumulation of karma. The *parisaṃkhyāna* meditation he sets out for his students is designed precisely for this purpose. Śaṅkara claims it will eliminate the stock of merit and demerit which has already accrued, and ensure that new deposits of karma are averted.<sup>74</sup> But Śaṅkara sees another use for this specialised meditation practice. It has a definite therapeutic value. He prescribes it for those who, though learned, are nevertheless tormented by the perception of sensory objects.<sup>75</sup> Śaṅkara is fully aware that yoga practice has the potential to effect psychical

<sup>70</sup> *avagatānām indriyādy-upasāṃkhāreṇaikāgratayā svātma-saṃvedyātāpādanam* *yogaḥ*.

<sup>71</sup> YS 3.37; 3.51.

<sup>72</sup> YS 4.29.

<sup>73</sup> YSBh 4.30.

<sup>74</sup> *upāttā-puṇyāpuṇya-kṣapaṇa-parāṇām apūrvānupacayārthīnām parisam-* *khyānam idam ucyate*, USG 3.112.

<sup>75</sup> *śabḍādibhir upalabhyamānaiḥ pīḍyamāno vidvān*, USG 3.114.

transformation. He makes full use of this potential by incorporating yoga techniques into his teachings on liberation.

The author of the YV, who may well be Śaṅkara, emphasises the therapeutic aspects of yoga in his introduction to the text. He observes that in medical texts, the subject matter is arranged in four categories: illness, the cause of illness, the state of health, and the remedy. The *Yogasūtra*, he remarks, comprises four parallel topics. The first describes the illness that is to be removed, namely, the incessant rounds of rebirth which are filled with suffering (*duḥkha-pracurah samsāro heyah*). The second topic cites the cause, the association of the perceiver and the perceived due to ignorance (*tasyāvidyā-nimitto draṣṭr-dṛśya-samyoγo hetuh*). The healthy condition, or desired result of the therapy, is absolute freedom (*ārogya-sthāniya-kaivalya*). The remedy and means of release is an unwavering discriminative discernment (*viveka-khyātir-aviplavā-hānopāyah*). This discriminative knowledge puts a complete end to the association of the perceiver and the perceived which is caused by ignorance.<sup>76</sup>

The same remedy is set out for the "sufferer" in the third prose chapter of the *Upadeśasāhasrī*.<sup>77</sup> Here Śaṅkara identifies the suffering as a reaction to the stimuli of sensory objects: one is tormented because one is hot or cold, praised or blamed. The real problem, once again, is the false assumption that the

<sup>76</sup> The *Vivarāṇa-kāra*'s discussion here is drawn largely from Vyāsa's comment on YS 2.15. He does make one notable change, however. While Vyāsa expresses the cause as *pradhāna-puruṣayoh samyoγa*, Śaṅkara calls it *draṣṭr-dṛśya-samyoγa*. This serves to modify the Sāṅkhya component of the YS.

<sup>77</sup> Hacker has noted this similarity, "Śaṅkara der Yogi", p. 139. But in his detailed and penetrating study of the YV, Wezler holds that the correspondence between the YV and USG is purely coincidental ("On the Quadrupal Division of the *Yogaśāstra*, the Caturvīhātva of the *Cikitsāśāstra* and the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha", *Indologica Taurinensia*, 12 [1984], 289–337, esp. p. 299).

perceiver and the perceived are connected. After all, Śaṅkara argues, the objects of perception cannot have knowledge of themselves. That by which the objects are known must be different in nature because it is a knower.<sup>78</sup> The sensory objects are associated not with the perceiver, but with the faculties of perception. External objects are transformed into the form of the body, the senses that perceive them, and the mind.<sup>79</sup> The perceiver is the Self, whose very nature is that of seeing, unconnected, and changeless (*dr̥k-svabhāvam asamsariṇam avikriyam*). The unchanging Self represents the state of health, one's own true nature. The remedy consists in *parisaṃkhyāna*. The practice of this meditation involves a continual process of discrimination which distinguishes the perceiver from that which is perceived. The meditator becomes a witness to the interaction of external objects and the sensory faculties. Remembering that he is the Self, he must remain unconcerned and unconnected with whatever sensory stimuli may present themselves.

Śaṅkara introduces both the MKBh and USP chapter 19 with a discussion of therapeutics. In USP 19.1, he suggests the medicines of knowledge and dispassion as treatment for the illness caused by the fever of desire.<sup>80</sup> In the MKBh, the illness is identified with the perception of duality. In this instance, the remedy is simply knowledge (*vidyā*). Here Śaṅkara stresses the correlation between healthiness and being in one's natural condition, both of which are designated by the term *svasthata*. Similarly, in USG 1.47, a student asks his teacher to explain the cause of his suffering so that he may regain his true nature, as one who is ill is restored to health. The teacher replies that the cause is ignorance (*avidyā*).

<sup>78</sup> *yena ca jñāyante sa jñātṛtvād ataj-jātiyāḥ*, USG 3.113.

<sup>79</sup> USG 116.

<sup>80</sup> *cikitsitam jñāna-virāga-bheṣajam / na yāti kāma-jvara-sannipāta-jām...*

Śaṅkara's "system of therapy" is ultimately concerned with the removal of ignorance by means of true knowledge. The role of yoga must remain subsidiary here to that of knowledge. Nevertheless, the impact of yoga thought on Śaṅkara's therapeutics is considerable. It is not so much the *Yogasūtra* itself, but rather Vyāsa's commentary, the YSBh, which has so strongly influenced Śaṅkara. It was Vyāsa who described the means of release as true knowledge, *samyagdarśana*. This term figures prominently throughout Śaṅkara's work. Vyāsa also emphasised that the highest yoga is attained by perfecting one's knowledge. He mentions three ways in which this is accomplished: by scriptural authority, by inferential reasoning, and by fondness for the constant practice of meditation.<sup>81</sup> Vācaspatimiśra, in his commentary *Tattvavaiśaradī*, takes Vyāsa's remarks to suggest *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana*. The author of the YV does not overtly refer to this threefold Vedānta discipline in his explanation of Vyāsa's statement. But his comments on the three ways of establishing knowledge leave little doubt of his understanding:

The first is, to follow the instructions of the scriptures and the teachers; the second is mainly concerned with removing, by reasoning and inference, objections to the authoritative teaching which is being studied, and so rightly establishing it; and the third is eagerness for constant practice of meditation on what has thus been established by the scriptures and by inferences from them.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Vyāsa quotes this as a verse: *āgamenānumānena dhyānābhyaḥyāsa-rasena ca/ tridhā prakalpayan prajñāṇaṁ labhate yogam uttamam* // YSBh 1.48.

<sup>82</sup> YV 1.48, in Leggett, *op. cit.*, p.173; *tatraiko bhāgaḥ sāstrācāryopadiṣṭārthaḥnusārī / dvitīyas tasyaiva yuktyānumānena vicāryāgamārtha-virodhi-nirākarana-pūrvakam tat samyag-upapādāna-parah/ tritīyas tu sad-āgamānumāna-samyag-upapannārthaṁ lāmbanasya pratyayasyānuśilanam rasopayogi.*

The *Vivarana* author's elaboration of this point is remarkably similar to Śaṅkara's gloss on *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana* in BUBh 2.4.5.<sup>83</sup>

The most extensive exposition of Śaṅkara's therapeutic method, or rather, the path to liberation, is found in the prose portion of the *Upadeśasāhasrī*. He briefly outlines the whole of his methodology in the first chapter. To begin with, the student should be taught *śruti* passages describing the unity of Brahman and *ātman*. These texts should be supplemented with verses indicative of the supreme Brahman. *Smṛti* sources which are in conformity with *śruti* may also be utilised. Once the pupil has grasped the teachings of scripture, he is to be asked, 'Who are you?' If the student identifies himself as anything other than the Self, the teacher should say to him, "You must remember, my dear, that you have been taught about the highest Self".<sup>84</sup> The process Śaṅkara has sketched out here is, of course, modelled upon the threefold discipline of *śravaṇa-manana-nidihiyāsana*. Each of the three chapters of the USG is devoted to an elaboration of one component in this process. The greater part of the first chapter is taken up by citations from scripture. Śaṅkara explains here the manner in which the sacred texts are to be presented, or rather, "heard". There are no references to scripture in the second chapter. Instead, an apparently advanced student engages in rational argument with a teacher who leads him on to an understanding of the Self. The final chapter is dedicated solely to an exposition of *parisamkhyāna* meditation. The student is shown how to maintain a constant remembrance of the Self.

<sup>83</sup> *śrotavyaḥ pūrvam ācāryata āgamataś ca / paścān mantavyas tarkataḥ / tato nidhidhyāsitavyo niścayena dhyātavyaḥ...yad aikatvam etāny upagatānī tadā samyag-darśanam brahmaikatva-viṣayaṇ prasīdati.*

<sup>84</sup> *smartum arhasi somya, paramātmānam...śrāvito'si*, USG 1.17.

This examination of Śāṅkara's teachings on liberation has shown that Advaita is not antagonistic to yoga, as has often been assumed. On the contrary, yoga can be seen to play an important role in Śāṅkara's Vedānta. While Śāṅkara does seem to recognise Pātañjala-yoga as a distinct *darśana*,<sup>85</sup> he does not regard yoga practice as the exclusive domain of the *Yogasūtra*. Śāṅkara only refutes Pātañjala-yoga on two counts. Firstly, he rejects that portion of the *YS* which echoes the dualistic metaphysics of Sāṅkhya. Secondly, he will not accept the claim that yoga is a means of liberation. This latter objection is really contingent on the former. The dualism expressed in the *YS* is in direct opposition to the teachings of *śruti*, as Śāṅkara interprets it. It is not possible for a method founded on dualistic assumptions to lead to the highest truth, which, by Śāṅkara's definition, is non-dual. Nonetheless, yoga is retained, but made subordinate to the way of knowledge.

Śāṅkara makes much use of yoga psychology in formulating his teachings on liberation. Yoga thought, particularly as interpreted by Vyāsa, has had a profound effect on many aspects of Śāṅkara's work. Among the most notable examples are: his understanding of perception, his identification of ignorance as the fundamental obstacle to be overcome, and his concept of the Self as light. The conspicuous appearance of yoga in later, more syncretic Advaita texts, such as Sadānanda's *Vedāntasāra*, is not a new development. Śāṅkara and Gauḍapāda had long since laid the foundations for a synthesis of yoga and Advaita.

<sup>85</sup> A *darśana* is, literally, a 'viewpoint'. It does not denote a philosophical system, but rather, it is a particular point of view, a more or less unified body of thought which is usually associated with a specific authoritative treatise.

This brief study of Śāṅkara has tried to remove some of the misconceptions which have thus far obscured the nature of his work. It has been shown that the range of his thought cannot be encompassed by categorial philosophical definitions. Neither can he be seen simply as a philosopher, or founder of a metaphysical system. While much emphasis here has been placed on Śāṅkara's role as teacher, this too is but one facet of his work. There is much scope for further study of Śāṅkara, as metaphysician, teacher, exegete, mythical hero, and especially, as yogi. It is hoped that this examination has suggested the kind of study which remains to be done.

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