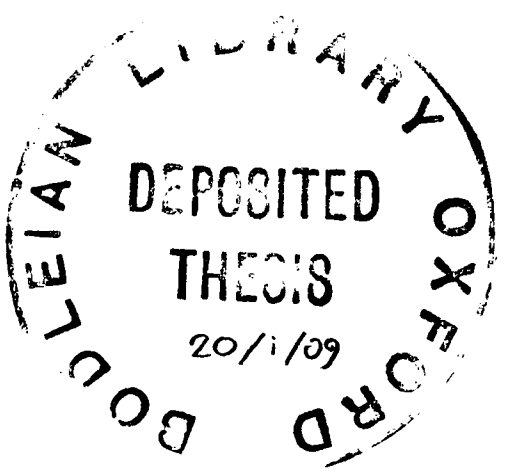
Śaṅkara's Soteriological Tradition

Aspects of the Divine from the Perspective of the Witnessing Self

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ABSTRACT

Śaṅkara's Soteriological Tradition
Aspects of the Divine from the Perspective of the Witnessing Self

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D.Phil., Hilary Term, 2008

This study attempts to show that an appeal to the 'perspective of the witness' is essential to better understand the way Śaṅkara makes sense of the richly diverse Vedānta material. It goes beyond the general understanding that Śaṅkara 'conveniently' arranges such material into the categories of the conventional and the absolute—placing texts speaking of the Absolute (*Brahman)* with properties in the conventional/relative category. It suggests that the fundamental properties associated with a theistic conceptualisation of the Absolute, which all authoritative texts attest to, need not be seen as dogmatic tenets that Śaṅkara has to contend with while expounding his non-dual system of thought. Instead, it argues that they should be regarded as meaningful devices that have for their sole purpose to lead the spiritual seeker to the realization of the absolute unity of being, a result that the Advaita tradition holds as the highest goal of life. Three key conceptions of *Brahman* are explored: *Brahman* as the cause of the world, as an entity who is gracious towards his devotees, and as an object of devotion. It is argued that all three can be better understood and appreciated when considered in their proper and larger pedagogical context, whose climax is 'the perspective of the witness.'

The first three chapters of this thesis are mainly concerned with epistemological and didactic means that are associated with demonstrating the 'perspective of the witness.' The fourth and fifth chapters evaluate how much help such a standpoint can provide us in our appraisal of these three aspects of the Absolute in the context of Śaṅkara's writings.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Śaṅkara's Soteriological Tradition
Aspects of the Divine from the Perspective of the Witnessing Self

Jean-Marie Schmitt, St Cross College, University of Oxford
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Śaṅkara's famous commentaries on the canonical Vedāntic texts named *Prasthānatraya,* which comprise the chief Upaniṣads, the *Brahmasūtras,* and the *Bhagavadgītā,* have proved a formidable riddle to both scholars and followers of the Advaita Vedānta tradition interested in understanding Śaṅkara's soteriological system. The Absolute (*Brahman)* as the cause of the world, as an entity who is benevolent towards his devotees, and as an object of devotion, are key theistic themes present in Śaṅkara's soteriology, and have been at the centre of the greatest controversies in academic and traditional Vedāntic circles.

It is well known to specialists of Advaita Vedānta that in order to give a cogent interpretation of the rich diversity of material encountered in the authoritative Vedānta literature—the collection of works mentioned above—Śaṅkara utilized the two-fold interpretive technique of the conventional standpoint and the absolute or knowledge standpoint. However, beyond the traditional understanding that Śaṅkara 'conveniently' arranges the heterogeneous Vedānta material into the categories of the conventional and the absolute—placing texts speaking of the Absolute with properties in the conventional/relative category—there is no clear understanding of the relevance of the concept of the witness with regard to Śaṅkara's interpretation and use of theistic themes present in the already mentioned canonical texts. This study aims to show that the 'perspective of the witness' is highly significant to fully grasp the way Śaṅkara makes sense of the traditional Vedānta material. It suggests that the fundamental properties associated with a theistic conceptualisation of the Absolute, need not be seen as dogmatic tenets that Śaṅkara has to contend with while expounding his non-dual system of thought. Instead, it argues that they should be regarded as meaningful devices that have for their sole purpose to lead the spiritual seeker to the realization of the absolute unity of being, a result that the Advaita tradition holds as the highest goal of life. This thesis contends that these three fundamental conceptions of *Brahman*—as the cause of the world, as an entity who is gracious towards his devotees, and as an object of devotion—can be better understood and appreciated when considered in their proper and larger pedagogical context, whose climax is 'the perspective of the witness.'

The first three chapters of this study are mainly concerned with epistemological and didactic means that are associated with demonstrating the 'perspective of the witnessing Self.' The fourth and fifth chapters evaluate how much help such a standpoint can provide us in our appraisal of these three aspects of the Absolute in the context of Śaṅkara's writings.

To show that the adoption of the witness-standpoint is instrumental to establish continuity between these three important aspects of the Absolute and Śaṅkara's non-dual exposition of Vedānta, it is necessary to reach back to other aspects of his teachings. It is essential, for instance, to understand Śaṅkara's classification of the Vedānta teachings into the two categories of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti.* This classification differentiates these teachings by their more or less direct approach to revealing the non-dual nature of reality. In Śaṅkara's soteriology, theistic views feature in these two categories, but it is in the latter that they become particularly relevant with regard to some of the most important and profound practices taught in the tradition of Śaṅkara. For it is through them that a qualified student is drawn to the direct apprehension of his fundamental nature of being as the Supreme Being, the always detached witnessing Self. I explain

this significant distinction in the first chapter of this dissertation and return to it throughout the entire work and particularly in the last two chapters, where I take up the task to re-evaluate these three specific aspects of the Divine—*Brahman* as the cause of the world, as an entity who is gracious towards his devotees, and as an object of devotion—while giving serious attention to the experiential component that such a task should, in my view, entail.

Also, it is critical to grasp Śaṅkara's positions on the nature of the Upaniṣadic teachings, and on the kind of relationship that holds between the Upaniṣads and the possibility of direct and immediate identification with the witness of all, the Supreme Being. In chapter two, the issues explored concern textual authority, experience, and their relationship. In chapter three, the issues examined relate to a unique method of teaching. The chapter focuses on what seems to be a particularly important method of inquiry into the nature of reality in Śaṅkara's soteriological system and, perhaps, in the early Advaita tradition as a whole. This method, albeit one among many traditional methods of instruction, is certainly unique in terms of its breadth and scope. It demands that the pupil thoroughly examines all of his experiences as they manifest to him in the forms of waking, dream, and deep sleep states. The sole intention of this process of instruction that needs to be imparted by an apt teacher, is to lead the Advaitin pupil to adopt the standpoint of the Supreme Being, by which he realizes that the self-effulgent witnessing consciousness that illumines everything (the states and their contents) is none other than himself.

The first aspect of the Divine with which this study is concerned (chapter four) is the *Brahman* that theistic narratives in the Upaniṣads describe as the principle responsible for the creation, the sustenance, and the cessation of the universe. I argue that such a conception of *Brahman* is part of a traditional teaching stratagem that aims at awakening seekers of liberation to the truth of non-duality, and is well integrated at all levels of the Advaita discipline that Śaṅkara presents. According to Śaṅkara, the tenability of such divine functions as that of creating the world can be examined and endorsed in the most direct manner by the competent student of Vedānta. For this student, the chief instrument is not speculative philosophy or imagination, but facts of experience of universal importance. Most pertinent to this issue is an appraisal of Śaṅkara's thesis that *Brahman* is not a second reality besides everyone's immediately revealed consciousness, and that an introspective pupil can apprehend this 'fact' by exploring in the appropriate way—as indicated by the Upaniṣads and the teacher—the various dimensions of human experience that the states of waking, dream, and deep sleep, encapsulate. It is through a critical investigation of these states that a student comes to identify himself with the sovereign *Brahman*, the witness of all, and the cause of everything.

Chapter five examines the second and third aspects of the Divine: *Brahman* as an entity who is benevolent towards his devotees, and *Brahman* as an object of devotion. I believe that we cannot rely on Śaṅkara's acquaintance with and borrowings from the Vaiṣṇava religion to secure a comprehensive understanding of his teachings on the latter matters. Although Śaṅkara's commentaries reveal his familiarity with and use of certain components of the Vaiṣṇava religion, his views on such topics as devotion and grace are indebted to the teaching method and the spiritual disciplines specific to his own school of Advaita, handed down to him from his predecessors. In this respect, I examine a significant aspect of B.J. Malkovsky's research on the role that grace and divine personalism play in Śaṅkara's soteriology. I express my disagreement with an important conclusion that emerges from his study, which is that Śaṅkara accepts some form of divine benevolence as the last or ultimate means for the attainment of liberation. Although I acknowledge that there is room for grace in Śaṅkara's soteriology, I try to show that it is only so at the *pravṛtti* level of the Advaita teaching scheme. Grace, for Śaṅkara, can only make sense at the level where the student is identified with his body and has yet to develop his discriminative faculties by way of purifying his mind. However, at the *nivṛtti* level where the student has acquired discernment, and is involved in such practices as the examination of the three states, the doctrine that liberation is ultimately dependent on a divine act of grace is not acceptable. This is because the Upaniṣadic teachings independently inform the pupil about his divine nature as the detached witness and Supreme Being.

Finally, with regard to devotion in Śaṅkara's soteriology, I also suggest that treating this topic requires distinguishing between devotion discussed within the *pravṛtti dharma* and the *nivṛtti dharma*, for Śaṅkara offers various arguments that support devotion at these two levels of the Advaita Vedānta discipline. In accordance with this broad categorization, devotion in the *pravṛtti dharma* is to the Supreme Being or any deity conceived as other than the devotee. It involves superimposing a concept, a symbol, an image, and so forth, on the Absolute, for the purpose of its worship. This form of devotion is a mediate means of self-knowledge as it prepares the student for the liberating knowledge by restraining his mind and senses, and by creating a desire for liberation. Devotion in the *nivṛtti dharma*, however, is characterized by discernment. It demands that the student discriminates between the Self and what is other than the Self. In this context, devotion is a *nivṛtti* practice, and Śaṅkara considers it a direct means of liberation. This devotion is understood as the practice of turning the mind away from all objects, within and without, and directing it towards the Self that is the pupil's intrinsic awareness, until it eventually becomes 'absorbed' in it, a result that is liberation. This type of devotion is unique in that it does not follow the injunctions of scriptures; instead, it is carried out on the basis of the pupil's own discriminative knowledge between the witness and all else, a knowledge that he derives from such traditional instructions as the above mentioned examination of the states.

ABBREVIATIONS

Bhā	Bhāmatī
BG.	Bhagavadgītā
BGBh	Bhagavadgītā Bhāṣya
Bṛ	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
BṛBh	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
BS	Brahmasūtra
BSBh	Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya
Ch	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
ChBh	Chāndogya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
GK	Gauḍapāda Kārikā
GKBh	Gauḍapāda Kārikā Bhāṣya
Īśādi	Īśādinavopaniṣadaḥ
Īśā	Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad
Ka	Kaṭha Upaniṣad
KaBh.	Kaṭha Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
Ke	Kena Upaniṣad
KeBh	Kena Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
Mā	Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad
MāBh	Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
MNP	Mīmāṁsā Nyaya Prakāśa
MS	Mīmāṁsā sūtra
MuBh	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
MV	Method of Vedānta
P.P	Pañcapādikā
Pr	Praśna Upaniṣad
PrBh	Praśna Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
Tai	Taittirīya Upaniṣad
TaiBh	Taittirīya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya
Śve	Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad
US	Upadeśasāhasrī

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Introduction

1 Considerations of method and material and their relevance in approaching theistic views in Śaṅkara Vedānta

1.1 The place of theistic elements in Śaṅkara's writings

A sweeping survey of Advaita Vedānta literature shows that the theistic elements in Śaṅkara's works have often been viewed as philosophically objectionable if not as outrightly threatening to his thought.[1] For essentially, Śaṅkara's teaching is that only non-dual consciousness (*Brahman)* exists. The perceived manifold is caused by one's ignorance; it is but a misconception that only the Upaniṣadic means of knowledge can remove. According to the majority of Advaita scholars, the presence of theistic concepts such as that of an all-powerful entity (*Īśvara)* who creates the universe and acts graciously towards certain of his devotees, and so forth, in Śaṅkara's commentaries, are of secondary importance. They are secondary in the sense that they are associated with the *Brahman* that the Upaniṣadic scriptures present as having qualities and functions, and which cannot constitute the liberating 'object' of knowledge on the basis of Śaṅkara's repeated assertion that it is the knowledge of the concept-free *Brahman* alone that is salutary. Such scholars tend to see Śaṅkara's work as being primarily philosophical as well as experiential, that is, they see Śaṅkara's writings as a system whereby non-duality is amenable to rational proof and personal realization.

Other scholars, however, though recognizing that Śaṅkara's work is not ungrounded in philosophy, stress its significant theistic aspects. Among them, we find, one the one hand, those who do not limit their exploration to the works whose authorship is no longer seriously disputed (the *Prasthānatraya-bhāṣyas* and the *Upadeśasāhasrī)*. These scholars accept works of dubious origin that often epitomize the forms of the divine, devotion, mystical insight, certain tantric practices, etc., such

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[1] Geoffrey Parrinder, for instance, thinks that the theistic doctrine of *avatar*, which appears in traditional Vedānta literature (i.e., the *Bhagavadgītā),* cannot be harmonized with Advaita Vedānta. He sees Vedāntic monism as incompatible with "mythology and crude theological symbol...There is no room for revelation, prayer, or anything that suggests a transcendent deity." G. Parrinder. *Avatar and Incarnation*: *The Wilde Lectures in Natural and Comparative Religion in the University of Oxford*, London, 1970, pp.48-9.

as *Saundaryalaharī, Ānandalaharī, Śataślokī, Dakṣinamūrtistotra, Prapañcasāra, Vivekachudāmani,* and others (Guénon, 2002; Misra, 1967; Mahadevan, 1985). On the other hand, we have scholars who have recently—seemingly inspired by the works of Paul Hacker and Swami Satchidānandendra—taken up the task to re-evaluate the importance of theism in Śaṅkara's writings (A. J. Alston, 1980; Malkovsky, 2001; J.S. Hirst, 2005), while limiting their research to the works whose authenticity is no longer polemical. They have, rightly in my view, discarded the dozens of commentaries, hymns, independent treatises, and so forth, whose immense popularity alone has constituted, for centuries, the main criterion to determine Śaṅkara's genuine works.

Despite the recent emphasis on studying Śaṅkara's teachings on the basis of the four original works mentioned above, a clear picture of how theistic views work in Śaṅkara's thought, is yet to emerge. The most recent writings on the topic (Malkovsky and Hirst) argue, at different degrees, that a strong Vaiṣṇava influence is perceivable in Śaṅkara's teachings—in opposition to Śaṅkara's traditionally recognized allegiance to Śiva and, in certain cases, to Śaṅkara being considered a manifestation of Śiva. Although Hirst rightly regards Śaṅkara's many references to Vaiṣṇava practices and symbols as concessions that are accepted at a pedagogical level, and which should not be read as representing Śaṅkara's own views, Malkovsky, working from a broadly realist perspective, suggests a more personalist view of the Absolute, and offers the view that Śaṅkara accepts *Īśvara*'s grace as the final means of liberation. This view of liberation, which is openly expressed in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, suggests a connection between the latter and Śaṅkara's teachings, which is, I believe, unwelcome. It is my position that the witnessing vision or insight that the Upaniṣadic teachings provides to the qualified student, is indispensable to understanding the role of the Supreme Being along with the related issues of creation, devotion, and grace, in the context of Śaṅkara's system. These matters are explored in chapters 4 and 5.

If scholars such as De Smet, Malkovsky, and Hirst have succeeded in showing that theistic elements in Śaṅkara's genuine writings are very much significant to comprehending his overall

kinds of miscellaneous and uncoordinated themes and ideas, as well as numerous theological and philosophical interpretations. Thus, not finding any ground, even a single continuous trend of philosophical thought, they cannot approach this literature as a system of thought per se. Such scholarship associates itself with various other areas of expertise on India (history, anthropology, archeology, and philology...) which are providing an ever-sharpening picture of the why, when, and how, of the Advaita Vedānta 'phenomenon,' a phenomenon which is presented as a historical construction. However much we may learn about a spiritual tradition like Advaita Vedānta through these modern means, we cannot reasonably turn a blind eye on centuries of 'traditional' Vedāntic interpretation, whose strength resides in the fact that scriptural propositions dealing with the knowledge of the highest entity—propositions that are always formulated in the present tense—rest on the directly and immediately revealed experience of the seeker of liberating knowledge.

Śaṅkara is neither a philosopher nor a theologian. To see him as either would constitute an insurmountable challenge to the present Western religio-philosophical consciousness. Unless he is understood as a spiritual pedagogue (as Hirst has recently stressed), and transmitter of an oral tradition, which was passed on to him with method and care, attempts to disclose whatever lies behind the Upaniṣadic texts may prove impossible. This is especially true, in my opinion, when one approaches these texts with little or no knowledge of traditional principles of interpretation and with no insight into their truths. Common sense calls for a reconciliation that would see these approaches seek mutual support, and this study is a step in that direction. Even though it is meaningful to read Advaita Vedānta from a historical perspective, I wish to bring to the attention of specialized scholars, the need to explore Śaṅkara's work at large beyond such a perspective, for the distinctiveness of this tradition lies precisely in its overall interpretive procedure as well as in its plainly experiential character.

1.3 The importance of Paul Hacker and Swami Satchidānandendra's works

It is true that Śaṅkara Vedānta is a living reality, a complexity in the making. Since Śaṅkara's death, the inner dynamism of the tradition has brought innumerable developments, which raise all kinds of problems for both scholars and adherents of his tradition. It is customary for its followers to rely on later works to study Śaṅkara's own teachings. Sub-commentaries as well as independent treatises (many of which, we have seen above, being dubiously attributed to Śaṅkara) are studied while mere lip service is paid to our commentator. Paul Hacker and especially Swami Satchidānandendra have opposed this well-established attitude.[2] The latter's masterwork '*The Method of Vedānta*,' contends that it is the long and voluminous post-Śaṅkara commentarial tradition that tends to obscure our author's writings. Consequently, he urges students and scholars alike to do what seems natural but is not customarily practiced, which is to study Śaṅkara's commentaries if the object is to understand his system. Because this is what this work aims at, we shall let ourselves be guided by the thought of Śaṅkara as found in his genuine works, and solely introduce specific concepts and doctrines that appear in post-Śaṅkara Advaita sources, when they seem to oppose his original scheme of liberation in important ways.

The contributions of Hacker and Satchidānandendra to the field of Advaita Vedānta are also extremely significant with regard to the method they have devised to ascertain the authenticity of Śaṅkara's works. Due to their pioneering works and, to a lesser extent, to that of Sengaku Mayeda (who has used Hacker's criteria to establish the authenticity of the *Upadeśasāhasrī*), it has become established that to judge whether or not a text can be attributed to Śaṅkara, it is necessary to study the style of the text, the themes and ideas discussed in it, its syntax, its use of technical terminology, and so on, in the light of Śaṅkara's foundational and undisputed work, the *Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya* (BSBh). This rigorous process of text authentication seems to leave the commentaries on the

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[2] Swami Satchidānandendra Saraswati (1880-1975) convincingly argues that the technique of *adhyāropa-apavāda* is a unique and most central feature of Śaṅkara's work that has been discarded or forgotten by the commentarial tradition (with the exception of his disciple Sureśvara) and overlooked by modern scholarship. In his introduction to the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad-bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara, the Indian scholar Kuppuswāmi Śāstrī also states the importance that this technique occupies in Śaṅkara's commentaries. The centrality of this feature is brought out in many places in this study, most notably in chapter 3 & 4 as well as in the appendix.

Brahmasūtras (BS), the principal *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā* (BG), and the independent treatise named *Upadeśasāhasrī* (US) as Śaṅkara's only genuine works.[3] It is interesting to note that it is an Indian scholar, Satchidānandendra, who has been the most drastic in the way he applied the already mentioned criteria of selection; for he only takes the *prasthānatraya-bhāṣya* and the US as Śaṅkara's authentic works. It is worth pointing out that until the recent publication of T.S. Rukmani's critical translation of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣyavivaraṇa* (2001), a consensus was emerging, despite Halbfass' reservation (1991, pp.218-19), that this *vivaraṇa* should be included as a genuine work of Śaṅkara. In his paper: *Śaṅkara the Yogin and Śaṅkara the Advaitin*, P.Hacker brings forth the view that this work may be ascribed to Śaṅkara, given the possibility of evolution in the thought of the latter. He suggests that Śaṅkara first adhered to the Yoga tradition of Patañjali before becoming an Advaitin.[4] However, T.S.Rukmani does not subscribe to this hypothesis. She states that unlike the author of the *vivaraṇa*, the Śaṅkara who is the author of the BSBh never subsumes the Yoga school under that of Sāṁkhya, and never accepts its ontology. Quite the contrary, he repudiates it completely. She presents additional concrete evidence supporting the view that Śaṅkara cannot be the commentator of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, and I believe that she successfully settles this authorship dispute, once and for all.[5]

Needless to say how significant this rigorous process of text authentication is for those who wish to see an accurate picture emerge from their studies of Śaṅkara's thought. The application of this critical method has been extremely fruitful. It has shown, for instance, that Śaṅkara's use of technical terms is quite flexible—more often than not, Śaṅkara uses the terms *Brahman* and *Īśvara* synonymously. Importantly, the use of this method has contributed to demystifying Śaṅkara, and it is now taken for granted that one cannot study Śaṅkara's works without giving due consideration to the particular religious, social, and political environment of his time.

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[3] In this study, I take these four works as representing the totality of Śaṅkara's writings.

[4] Paul Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*. Ed. Wilhelm Halbfass. Albany, Suny, 1995, pp101-128. Along with P. Hacker, T. Legett, H. Nakamura and S. Mayeda are also inclined to see this work as genuine, albeit not always for the same reasons. See Trevor Leggett, *Śaṅkara on the Yoga Sūtras*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1990, pp.17-18.

[5] T.S. Rukmani, *yogasūtrabhāṣyavivaraṇa of Śaṅkara*. Vol.1&2, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2001. See introduction to vol.1 and appendix 1&2 to vol.2.

In terms of understanding Śaṅkara's soteriology, I think that the work of Satchidānandendra is invaluable. His writings are particularly significant in two areas. First, as mentioned above, he claims and substantiates the view that the entire post-Śaṅkara commentarial tradition, with the exception of one of his direct disciples, Sureśvara, does not follow the views of Śaṅkara on many crucial aspects of the tradition. He thus passionately argues for a 'return' to Śaṅkara's commentaries. Second, he argues for the existence of a traditional method of teaching non-duality in the authoritative Vedānta texts as well as in Śaṅkara's commentarial work. He determines the method to be that of temporary superimposition followed by negation (*adhyāropa-apavāda*), and sees it as the modus operandi of the Upaniṣads as well as of the two other 'departing points' of the tradition, the *Brahmasūtras* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. In this study, I expose the relevance of this method with regard to determining the nature of the relation between the Upaniṣadic teachings and the possibility of directly apprehending or intuiting the Absolute as witness, in the context of Śaṅkara's writings. As a way to center the issue of the relationship between scriptures and the direct apprehension of the witness, the topic of the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep is examined (ch.3). This topic has been understudied[6] although it is, I think, one of the most important aspects of Śaṅkara's tradition. It provides insights into the heart of Śaṅkara's soteriology and appeals to our most intimate experiences of life, encompassing personal commitments and scholarship. It is on this experiential basis of Śaṅkara Vedānta that I wish to bring forth the view that Śaṅkara's arrangement of Vedāntic material is wholly pedagogical and not merely taxonomical in nature.

[6] Despite the works of A.Fort, B. Gupta and, more recently, A. Sharma with his monograph on the importance of sleep in the Advaita tradition, the sole detailed examination of the three states and their relevance as a teaching stratagem, in the context of the works of Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara, is found in Satchidānandendra's works.

1.4 The 'witness-standpoint,' a prerequisite to understanding theistic doctrines in Śaṅkara's soteriology

Among the specialists who have attempted to give an account of the significant theistic component in Śaṅkara's writings, even amid modern scholars who solely rely on the works mentioned above that can really bear the label 'Śaṅkarite,' none seem to have considered the experiential basis implicit in Śaṅkara's use of theistic views. It is a challenging conclusion that Hirst derives from a consideration of the method of superimposition and negation used by Śaṅkara and, perhaps, the Upaniṣads themselves, to lead the Advaitin student to liberation. Although she acknowledges the importance of the concept of a Supreme Being in Śaṅkara's soteriology, a concept that happens to be solely working at the level of superimposition, it remains a concept of theoretical significance, "a context of teaching." I shall attempt to go a step further, showing that the concept of a creating deity, along with other fundamental theistic principles, have important practical consequences for Advaitin pupils and scholars alike—given the latter's willingness to partake in the experiential nature of Śaṅkara's demonstrations. To this effect, I suggest that the notion of the witness can prove to be a powerful aid in understanding the role that theistic views play in Śaṅkara's teachings. Expressions used in scriptures like the supreme, all-knowing and all-powerful *Īśvara*, from whom the world originates, by whom it is sustained, and into whom it merges, and so on, are not simply evaluative concepts of the Highest Being. This terminology comes alive when considered in the light of the unique stance of the witness. For Śaṅkara, this perspective is afforded to the pupil through the Upaniṣadic teachings and a teacher, and means his identification with the single timeless and immortal entity, which the Upaniṣads name differently and present in different guises. It is under this aspect that a deep understanding of creation and devotion may be arrived at in the context of Śaṅkara's teachings. The experiential nature of theistic views in Śaṅkara Vedānta, that is to say, the elevation of scripture-based theology to the level of direct experience, and this, without privileging mystical experience over common experience, rests on this important concept of the witness. And it is because Śaṅkara believes that the witness indicates our immediate subjectivity, the

self-revealed consciousness to which all our cognitions can be reduced, that an experiential approach to theistic views in Advaita Vedānta may be considered and, at least to some extent, comprehended.

An aspect of Śaṅkara's soteriology, as in Judeo-Christian traditions, anchors itself in the authority of divine revelation, and from this standpoint, its credibility too stands on a dualistic understanding of the human person and the Supreme Being. According to the way Śaṅkara conceptualizes the Vedic revelation, this aspect falls into what may be referred to as the *pravṛtti dharma* category, the component of the Advaita teaching that is solely based on ignorance and activity. However, I suggest that if there are reasons for arguing that Śaṅkara's views on the varied aspects and functions of the Absolute are entirely consistent with and dependent on the authority of the Vedic scriptures, there are also reasons for asserting that these views are features of the Advaitin pupil's experience, as he treads the path leading to liberation. As such, they have positive values besides the fact of being consistent with scriptures, since they are at the core of an essential component of the Advaita spiritual discipline, that which is based on knowledge and renunciation. In this latter aspect of Advaita soteriology, the student who adopts the stance of the witness equips himself with the means by which one fills up the gap between what it is to be human and what it is to be the Supreme Being. We will see that this perspective may be afforded to the student through different means, albeit we shall mainly focus on techniques which can be subsumed under the broad method of teaching known as 'the discrimination of the three states.'

This study, in brief, aims at re-evaluating the place that theistic views occupy in Śaṅkara's soteriology. It suggests that it is through a key asset of his tradition, the witness-standpoint, that Śaṅkara coherently integrates the theistic components of the *Prasthānatraya* literature and makes them relevant at the most critical level of the Advaita spiritual discipline. I believe that this witness-standpoint is both an important interpretive device as well as a crucial component of the traditional Advaita discipline.[7] It is a tool that contributes to harmonizing the theism and the absolutism of the

[7] Bina Gupta 's detailed study on the concept of the witness stresses Śaṅkara's innovative use of this Upaniṣadic concept as a way to bring more coherence to his non-dualistic thesis. He does not pay much attention to this notion with respect of its soteriological function within what Śaṅkara calls the discipline of knowledge. See *The Disinterested Witness, A Fragment of Advaita Vedānta Phenomenology*. Northwestern University Press, Illinois, 1998.

authoritative Vedānta texts. Without understanding the extent to which Śaṅkara values the significant teaching about the self as witness, misunderstandings concerning the nature of Śaṅkara's work (as theological or philosophical) are likely to increase rather than decrease.

2 Thesis outline

Chapter 1: Interpreting the Vedic *dharma*

'Interpreting the Vedic *dharma*' describes the structure of the Vedic revelation as taught in the traditional schools of Mīmāṁsā and Śaṅkara Vedānta. It focuses on the distinction between the significant concepts of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* as operating in these respective schools. Although the issue concerning the relation between the two schools of Purva-Mīmāṁsā and Uttara-Mīmāṁsā has been explored quite extensively, my analysis suggests that Śaṅkara's conceptualization of *Dharma* is likely to have been influenced by the Mīmāṁsā tradition. Most scholars discuss the issue of *dharma* as being the exclusive domain of the Purva-Mīmāṁsā. It has become clear to me that specialists would gain to look at Śaṅkara's soteriological system in terms of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti dharma*, two Mīmāṁsā notions that served Śaṅkara well as organizing principles for the authoritative Vedānta materials. They are helpful categories that are pertinent to understanding the significance and the aim of diverse religious principles and postulates that are examined in chapters four and five. Thus, this chapter anticipates as well as complements the part of the thesis that largely deals with assessing the place and role of theistic concepts in Śaṅkara's non-dual system. Through this examination, I indicate how the interpretation of the Vedic literature, the worldview, the religious practices, and goals of these two orthodox traditions are related as well as opposed. This examination is important because while illustrating what is mainly a conflict of two opposing outlooks, it identifies Śaṅkara's soteriological framework. Against the background of this chapter where the key elements of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti dharma* are highlighted, I will present Śaṅkara's ideas about the role of Upaniṣadic revelation and experience (ch.2) and show how this forms an interactive process of teaching that

supports and strengthens the pertinence of theistic views in the Vedānta texts and in Śaṅkara's writings.

Chapter 2: Revelation and experience in Śaṅkara Vedānta

Chapter two is an appraisal of the peculiar sense in which the Upaniṣads may be called a revelation. It thus deals with the first significant theological concern of the work. In this chapter, I expose my understanding of the Upaniṣads in terms of their unique and distinctive function as the sole valid means of liberating knowledge, in the context of Śaṅkara's commentaries. The chapter also attempts to clarify the relationship between revelation and the central concept of non-mediate or intuitive experience of one's being as the Self, *Brahman*. We will see that Śaṅkara disagrees with the traditionally held view that scriptures communicate the mediate knowledge of the Self.

I believe that a clear understanding of Śaṅkara's views on the relationship between revelation and immediate experience of self as *Brahman* in the form of witness may help us unravel the mystery behind the theistic language used in the *Prasthānatraya* texts and Śaṅkara's commentaries on them. This is because for Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣadic revelation can bring the teaching about *Īśvara* as the witness and self of all, the source of the universe, the all-knowing one, and so forth, home to the experience of the competent student who has a teacher.

Chapter 3: Demonstrating the efficiency of the Upanisads vis-à-vis self-knowledge

As a way to focus on the issue raised in the previous chapter regarding Śaṅkara's belief in the capacity for the verbal content and arrangement of the Upaniṣadic revelation to bring about the re-cognition of the unity of Self and the Absolute, this chapter examines a selection of Upaniṣadic passages with Śaṅkara's commentaries, which are concerned with all or some of the states that all humans experience, i.e., waking, dream, and deep sleep. The passages are the section 4.3 of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (Bṛ), the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* (Ch) 6.8.1, 8.7.1-8.12.1, the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* (Ka) 2.1.3-7, 2.3.6, the *Praśna-Upaniṣad* (Pr) 4.6-7 and various excerpts from the *Māṇḍūkya-*

Upaniṣad (Mā) with *Gauḍapāda's Kārikā* (GK). This case study also serves to pull Advaita Vedānta out of the abstruse and mystical nest in which it finds itself today. It presents the Upaniṣadic teaching of an infinite, changeless, and ever-present principle of existence, based on a comprehensive and methodological investigation into consciousness, carried out by Śaṅkara, Gauḍapāda and, presumably, by the very individuals who are behind the Upaniṣadic teachings. The investigation into the domain of consciousness in the context of Śaṅkara's soteriology, which I propose to carry out in this chapter, does not proceed along the lines of psychology or neuro-psychology, and does not seek to establish the superiority of Śaṅkara's method of analysis over those of the latter scientific domains. It is solely committed to examining Śaṅkara's thesis that *Brahman* is not a second reality besides everyone's immediately revealed consciousness and that an introspective student can apprehend this fact by exploring, in the appropriate way (as suggested by the Upaniṣads and the Advaitin teacher), the various dimensions of human experiences that are enclosed in the states of waking, dream, and deep sleep. The research in this chapter is particularly significant for it stresses the importance that Śaṅkara attaches to experiences shared by everyone, in his exposition of the canonical Vedāntic literature. The contention made by Swami Satchidānandendra that the superimposition and negation method is the very backbone of Śaṅkara's soteriological system will be examined in relation to this chapter's enquiry.

Chapter 4: Views on creation in Śaṅkara's soteriology:

This chapter seeks to highlight the importance and the value of theistic narratives, which present *Brahman* as the principle responsible for the creation, the sustenance and the cessation of the universe, in Śaṅkara's soteriology. These narratives, I propose to show, are not cumbersome, opposed to, or irreconcilable with Śaṅkara's non-dualism. They are part of a traditional teaching stratagem that aims at awakening seekers of liberation to the truth of non-duality, and are well integrated at all levels of the Advaita discipline. I shall first explain how, through an exegetical stratagem called *upasaṁhāra*, Śaṅkara unites all the materials dealing with origination, with the aim

to draw the student's attention to the reality of the cause of the universe. This method is used to make the source of the universe the prime target of the aspirant's emotions, thoughts, and activities, something that Śaṅkara sees as indispensable to a fruitful inquiry into the undifferentiated and immortal *Brahman*. Then, I attempt to explain a truly unique aspect of Śaṅkara's system. I describe how these origination stories become part of the immediate means of liberation. At the highest level of the Advaita spiritual practice, when the competent pupil adopts the stance of the witness through the techniques referred to above, creation narratives become very much alive. In effect, identifying with the witness, the student disengages himself from the superimposed physical and psychological apparatus that constitute his person, and identifies with the creating principle that is but the consciousness that witnesses all. I believe that no Vedāntic pursuits, spiritual or purely academic, can be undertaken without giving these narratives proper consideration. And I consider that in order to examine them in all fairness in the context of Śaṅkara's commentaries, both scholars and adherents must be ready to turn their attention to this unique insight of the Advaitin, and which is, in my view, necessary to understanding the role that these narratives play in Śaṅkara's tradition.

Chapter 5: The significance of devotion and grace in Śaṅkara's soteriology

This chapter presents Śaṅkara's views on the other two theistic components of the Vedāntic literature with which this thesis is concerned, devotion and grace. I begin with the latter through engaging with Malkovsky's remarkable scholarly work on grace in Śaṅkara's soteriology. I express my disagreement with his idea that Śaṅkara accepts some form of divine benevolence as the ultimate means of liberation. Examining various commentarial passages, among which passages that he himself selects to support his contention, I present my arguments which show that such a notion cannot be assigned to Śaṅkara. I then turn to the continuously debated issue of the place which devotion occupies in Śaṅkara's system, some advocating that there is none, while others stress its centrality or even its independence as a direct means of liberation. Śaṅkara's soteriological scheme is filled with devotion, regarding which he makes almost systematic sense if we are careful enough to

distinguish between devotion discussed within the *pravṛtti dharma* and the *nivṛtti dharma*. Śaṅkara offers careful, persuasive, and varied arguments that support devotion at both levels of the Advaita discipline. Whenever possible, these issues are addressed in light of the conclusions reached from our examination of traditional Advaita teaching strategies used to lead an apt Advaitin student to adopt the standpoint of the Absolute as the all-witnessing consciousness.

Chapter I

Interpreting the Vedic *Dharma*

This first chapter is an examination of the two Vedic interpretive traditions of Pūrvamīmāṁsā and Uttaramīmāṁsā. It focuses on the way these two traditions articulate their understanding of the Vedic *dharma*. In the process, it shows where *dharma* may be seen as an element of continuity, tension, or outright divergence between them. This study of the Vedic *dharma* is crucial to understanding the most fundamental aspects of Śaṅkara's soteriology. It allows us to gain a better understanding of the function of the Vedic revelation, of spiritual disciplines (the main Advaita *pravṛtti* discipline follows, although outwardly, the daily and occasional obligatory rites, which the Mīmāṁsā tradition advocates), and the commitments that they entail. This, in turn, shall enable us to better appreciate how Śaṅkara was able to fully embrace various theistic views while seeing himself as a member of a strictly non-dual Vedic interpretive tradition.

In India, enormous importance is given to *dharma,* although it is difficult to think of a concept that has elicited more speculation throughout the centuries. Even a succinct survey across the rich religious and social landscape of the Indian subcontinent reveals that it is far from possessing a uniform meaning. In brāhmanic India, however, *dharma* is fundamentally Vedic, and as Charles Malamoud reminds us, *dharma* is about righteousness and is intrinsically related to performing sacrifices:

"That which is external to the sacrifice, that which cannot be linked, in the final analysis, to the sacrifice, is thus outside of *dharma*—itself understood in the sense of a mode of conduct proper to an upright life."[8]

Sacrifices are related to "the coherence and continuity of the world"[9] (*dharma)*, a conception that finds its closest parallel in the Vedic term *ṛta*, usually rendered as 'cosmic order.' This 'cosmic order' transcends the gods of the Vedic pantheon themselves, since judging from the hymns of the Ṛgveda,

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[8] *Cooking the World: Ritual and Thought in Ancient India,* by Charles Malamoud. Translated from the French by David White. Oxford India Paperbacks, 1998, p.78.
[9] Ibid., p.67.

one of the foremost functions of the gods is to protect it through the performance of sacrifices. Many stories of the *Brāhmaṇa* literature connect the divinity Prajāpati with *dharma* (cosmic order) and the sacrifice. Prajāpati, the source of the universe, is the sacrifice par excellence; and there can be no birth for creatures of the past, present or future, without the sacrifice.[10] The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* tells us that the gods needed to perform sacrifices in order to render their creator's body (Prajāpati) its original integrality since his creative effort was such that it resulted in its dismemberment. [11] For the cohesion of *dharma,* humans are also directly involved since the gods can only sacrifice—and thus keep Prajāpati whole (in order)— when humans sacrifice to them. In fact, it is through the sacrifices performed by humans that the gods exist.[12] Yet, in turn, the sacrifice cannot be brought to completion and thus no corresponding result, visible or invisible, can be secured, while leaving the gods out. Hence, sacrificial acts are the guarantee and the condition of *dharma.*

The brāhmaṇic conceptualization of *dharma* is also closely associated with the way Indian society is organized. *Dharma* constitutes the immutable model of society, its value and truth. How is the relationship between the sacrifice, *dharma,* and the society established? The response to this question takes many forms. For the 'orthodox' Hindus, it is primarily scriptural authority: the *Veda* or *śruti*— 'that which is heard,' is eternal and devoid of authorship (modern scholarship brackets the phases of the composition of this vast literature between 1200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E.)—and the *Mānava Dhārmaśāstra* (laws of Manu 200 B.C.E.-100 C.E.), that is part of the collection of texts focusing on issues of law, all of which being *smṛti* texts—the term *smṛti* usually signifies 'tradition' or 'what is remembered.' This term refers to texts with authorship and which fall outside the Vedic

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[10] See *Religion and Mythology of the Brāhmaṇas,* by Dr. G.V. Devasthali:. The Bhau Vishnu Ashtekar Vedic Research Series, vol.1; University of Poona, 1965, pp.12 & 20.

[11] Malamoud, pp.59-62.

[12] "That which the sacrificer pours into the fire, he pours it in the gods, and through this the gods subsist" (Śat.Br.2.3.1.19). J. Eggeling does not read "*tasmād devāḥ santi*" as an ontological statement. He suggests that the verb (*santi*) must be supplied with "allowed to share in the sacrifice." This is not very problematic as the Brāhmaṇas correlate the existence of everything in the universe with the sacrifice, whether as a direct result of its performance or as an element of it (see Śat.B.I.6.3.35-36). *The Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (Śat.B.), According to the Text of the Mādhyandina School.* Translation by Julius Eggeling. The Sacred Books of the East, Vol.12, Edited by F. Max Muller. Motilal Barnasidass, 1963.

revelation proper.[13] As already mentioned, the indispensable relation between *dharma* and the sacrifice is detailed in the *Brāhmaṇa* literature and is well illustrated in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* where Prajāpati is said to be held together by the sacrificial actions of gods and, indirectly, of humans. Regarding the society, both the *Veda* and the *Dhārmaśātra* lay out principles of social categories known as the caste system. The existence of an intrinsic connection between *dharma* and the arrangement of society is attested to in *Ṛgveda* 10.90 (*Puruṣasūkta*) where the social categories just referred to can be seen as the direct result of the primordial being—Puruṣa—sacrificing himself.[14] The *Bhagavadgītā*, perhaps the most influential text in all of the *smṛti* literature, brings out this connection in its formulation of the concept of *avatāra* (incarnation of a divinity). Concerning *dharma*, the role of the *avatāra*, like that of the Vedic gods, is protective. In a well-known verse of the *Bhagavadgītā* (4.7), the *avatāra* Kṛṣṇa describes his role as the protector of righteousness (*dharma*): "Whenever, scion of Bharatas! righteousness declines and unrighteousness prevails, I project myself."[15] The *avatāra*'s 'projection' or 'descent' (the latter being closer to the etymological meaning of *avatāra*) into the realm of humans occurs solely at times of extreme distress, such as when society as a whole is said to depart from its ideal. On a more permanent basis, however, this protective task is the responsibility of the *brāhmaṇas*, the priests who make up the exclusive and highest social caste in the land of India. The *brāhmaṇas* alone assume the charge of maintaining the *dharma*—which may be traced back to the notion of *ṛta*, or even to Prajāpati or the original Puruṣa—to the level of the Indian society through teaching the *dharma* to the members of the first three upper classes, the twice-born. This position, many scholars have alleged, was secured by the *brāhmaṇas* alone due to their close association with politics (chieftains and kings) and through making themselves indispensable as knowledgeable officiates in sacrificial procedures, which they have rendered increasingly complex. This, it goes without saying, should be differentiated from the ideal

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[13] For the schools which reject the authority of the Veda like the Buddhists, a collection of authoritative *sūtras* that contain fixed guidelines for worldly and moral conduct fulfil a similar role.

[14] In the introduction to his English translation of the Śathapata Brāhmaṇa, Julius Eggeling remarks that in the *Ṛgveda*, the *Puruṣasūkta* alone indicates the existence of a caste system. He thus holds that the caste system, as a solid institution, only manifested in post-Vedic times. Eggeling, pp.12-13.

[15] *The Bhagavad-Gīta-Bhāṣya of Śri Śaṅkarācārya*. Translation by, A.G. Krishna Warrier. Śri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1983.

nature and function of *brāhmaṇas*. Thus, the 'hierarchization' of the Indian society into the priestly, politico-military, economic, and labor categories, i.e., the caste system (*varṇā*), comes from 'high' (the transcendent or eternal) via the ruling priestly caste. Even though in principle the ordinary or temporal is subordinate to the eternal, it would be more correct to say that *dharma*, when understood as the caste system, is preserved by both the *brāhmaṇas* and the *kṣatriyas* (the two dominant castes), the latter having judicial authority.[16]

At the social level, *dharma* is also expressed in terms of the ideal stages of life (*āśramadharma*). According to this latter theory, a person's life should, ideally, be marked by four stages: student (*brahmacārin*), householder (*gṛhasthin*), forest dweller (*vānaprasthin*), and renunciant (*saṁnyāsin*). For one who accepts the authority of the *Veda*, his life is thus regulated in a complex way since a person's rights and obligations vary according to his caste and stage of life. It is the duty and 'privilege' of the householder alone, for instance, to perform the daily *agnihotra* sacrifice. The performance of this daily sacrifice is the means to secure a place in heaven. Following this formulation, *dharma* comes to express the actions that one ought to accomplish because they are desirable or salutary (as in the case of the *agnihotra*), as well as the actions that one must not perform in order to avoid getting the non-desirable or non-salutary outcome that such actions entails.

The above features of *dharma*, with the sacrifice being the most fundamental amongst them, fit the Mīmāṁsā's conceptualization of *dharma*, Mīmāṁsā being one of the two interconnected Vedic interpretive traditions with which we are concerned in this chapter, the other being the tradition of Advaita Vedānta as propounded by the 8th century thinker Śaṅkara. In the latter, understanding *dharma* is solely possible through a shift of context that takes us from one that is entirely based on rituals to one that is ultimately free from all activities. In such a context, *dharma* is seen as incorporating a spiritual discipline and a final goal that both transcend the agent, his actions, and their results.

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[16] For a detailed discussion on the brāhmaṇical and royal role, power and authority in Indian society, refer to Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus, the Caste System and Its Implications*, The University of Chicago Press, 1980 (notably chapter 8).

1 The Mīmāṁsā conceptualization of the Vedic *dharma*

In matters of *dharma*, both schools of Vedic interpretation agree that the Veda is the sole authority. The relationship between *dharma* and Mīmāṁsā is fundamental for it is what connects this school to the Veda. This is evidenced by the first of Jaimini *sūtras*, which introduces *dharma* as Mīmāṁsā's primary concern: "*athāto dharmajijñāsā*" (Thereafter, an investigation into *dharma*).[17] The term *dharma*, as already mentioned, has taken different meanings in the course of the development of Indian thought, and this is also true within the Mīmāṁsā system itself, which branched off into different schools. However, there is a general consensus among them that *dharma* means duty with regard to the performance of Vedic rituals, and that such *dharma* necessitates the Vedic revelation to make it possible for people to follow.[18] In Mīmāṁsā, *dharma* includes and integrates the components of word-action (*vidhi*) and purpose (*artha*)[19] of the Vedic word, the latter being relevant to the performer and/or the individual for whom a word prompted action is performed i.e., in the case of the sacrificial ritual.[20] The Vedic injunctions lead to either *pravṛtti* i.e., prompting someone to perform some action, or to *nivṛtti*, i.e., withdrawing from or blocking some specific activities (*niṣeda-karma*).[21] Mīmāṁsā argues that the Vedic language mainly communicates instructions and explains

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[17] *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* (MS), 1.1.1

[18] According to the *brāhmaṇic* ideology, it is the people belonging to the traditionally approved castes and orders of life (*varṇa* & *āśrama*) alone that are competent to execute the various rites and sacrifices, which following the *dharma* entails.

[19] In his assessment of Jaimini's understanding of *dharma*, F.X. Clooney stresses that this technical term is always connected to the rite and argues that the *sūtras* of Jaimini aim at explaining *dharma* in terms of a basic relationship between word-purpose-action (See MS 2.1.1-5; 4.3.11). The Vedic word-purpose-action indicates the intricate relationship between *vidhi* (the content of injunction), *codana* (the force or *śakti* that triggers or instigates the performance of action, denoted by the use of the optative tense), and the *artha* (the goal of the Vedic word). Refer to *Thinking Ritually* (Ch.4) for a detailed examination of *dharma* and the integration of the above three elements in the sacrifice. *Thinking Ritually, Rediscovering the Pūrvamīmāṁsā of Jaimini*, by Francis X. Clooney, S.J. Vienna, 1990.

[20] In the case of the sacrifice itself, numerous elements need to be brought together (and that is the case for each and every Vedic injunction to sacrifice). The elements include the sacrificer and the sacrificial fire with its accessories i.e., ghee, ladle, etc., the deities, and what serves as the link between the action of sacrificing and its corresponding result, namely, the *apūrva*. Unless these elements are properly harmonized through following the directives of the scriptures, no proper rite can take place, leaving the object of the Vedic injunction and thus *dharma*, unfulfilled. It is also important to stress that without the rite, these elements have either no existence or no value. The gods, for instance, have no existence separate from the rites, although they are integral to them. The gods do not seem to have any intrinsic value since they are not taught outside of the sacrifice.

[21] In the *sūtras* of Jaimini—which Clooney sees as communicative of a complete Mīmāṁsā system—we find that the term *pravṛtti*, although inevitably relating to the sacrificial rites and their subordinate elements, is set within the confines of the ritual act itself. There, *pravṛtti* as a time bound occurrence is emphasized. *Pravṛtti* is

passages that cannot be ascertained as injunctive in nature, to be nonetheless connected to injunctions. For the most part, this interpretive school emphasizes the performance of sacrifices, oblations, and the singing of hymns and prayers, following a fixed liturgy. It gives a prominent place to Vedic rituals i.e., the Vedic sacrifice (a vegetal or animal offering) that has the sacred fire as its basis. Mīmāṁsā distinguishes three main types of rites.[22] The *naimittika-karmas*, which are occasional ceremonies or rites taking place in such occasions as the birth of a child, a wedding, and such, and the *kāmya-karmas* or optional rites, performed to secure specific things that an individual desires, like the birth of a son, wealth, heaven, and so on. These *karmas* must be carried out through the intermediaries of the sacrificial fire, the officiating priests, and other elements involved in the rite. They can only be fruitful when performed through such means. Finally, the *nitya-karmas* or permanent rites also bear results, but they are not optional; they must be performed on a daily basis and throughout one's life, as stipulated by the Veda.[23] Such a conception of the Vedic religion may be called *pravṛtti dharma* (the path of religious works) since it urges one to perform actions.

The Mīmāṁsā conception of the Vedic religion may also be named *nivṛtti dharma* in so far as it requires abstention from specific actions which, if performed, would bring about a detrimental outcome.[24] Abstention from performing certain actions is due to *niṣedas* (prohibiting statements), which are similar to *vidhis* in their constructions. They too take an optative ending (indicative of an injunctive intent), although the latter is connected with a negative particle (*na*). In a *niṣeda* statement such as, "A *brāhmaṇa* shall not be killed," it is the combination of the optative ending with the negative particle that instigates a man not to carry out such act. The obvious outcome of a *niṣeda*

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only pertinent at the time when the ritual experience occurs; its values are not abstract, they rather coincide with those of time and space and are thus more ordinary than esoteric or transcendental. As to the related term *nivṛtti*, it denotes discontinuation: "*nivṛtti* means that something is 'left out,' discontinued and does not appear in the ectype along with the other details." For example: "A ladle is usually rubbed with ghee to prevent particles from sticking to it, but when gold pieces are being offered this rubbing is *nivṛtta*, since gold will not stick to a ladle anyway (MS 10.2.12)" Thinking Ritually, p.108-110.

[22] We can also take note of a fourth type of rite named *prāyaścitta*, which is a rite of expiation for errors committed during the sacrifices.

[23] *The Mīmāṁsā Nyaya Prakāśa of Apadevi* (MNP). Translated by franklin Edgerton, Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1986. Refer to section 207 along with footnote, p.134.

[24] The generic term used in Mīmāṁsā to denote withdrawal from certain activities is *niṣeda*. In his MNP, Apadevi examines *niṣeda* or prohibition in some detail. See sections 320 to 363.

sentence is the non-existence of the action that its verb(s) denotes. Because man does not know the detrimental effect of killing a *brāhmaṇa*, it is suggested by the scriptural use of the negative associated with the optative verb form.

Thus far, we have seen that, in the Mīmāṁsā conceptualization of *dharma* as *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, one is enjoined to perform certain actions and to hold back from performing others. The former is a means to secure worldly and/or religious advantages, whereas the latter is a way to deter one from incurring undesirable results. We have also to make note of another use of the terms *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, where these do not quite apply in the general sense of injunction-prompted activity and withdrawal from activity, but are set within the ritual act itself and at a critical moment of the rite.[25] Although Śaṅkara's interpretation of the Vedic *dharma* shares some similarities with that of the Mīmāṁsā, there certainly exist some important divergences, both of which deserve our attention.

2 Śaṅkara's conceptualization of the Vedic *dharma*

Śaṅkara argues against the Mīmāṁsā school, which tends to define the Vedic revelation in terms of the materials that are directly relevant to performing rites. His position is that although it is beyond questioning that the Vedic scriptures do resonate in terms of what is to be done and what should not be done—and this is particularly true when we consider the *Brāhmaṇas*—the aspects of the revelation that are not related to rituals play the most important part in this literature. In effect, Śaṅkara argues that it is only non-ritual matters that can be of ultimate importance since the ritual and its complex paraphernalia do not have the capacity to lead man to the highest goal of life, spiritual realization or *mokṣa*. He holds that the portions of the scriptures that deal with rituals are meaningful to those who are ignorant of the identity of their being with *Brahman*, and that includes

[25] Clooney remarks that for the pioneer of the Mīmāṁsā system, Jaimini (for it is not necessarily the case in later Mīmāṁsā literature), *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* are pertinent solely at the time when the ritual event occurs, thus associating the values of a specific time and space to these terms. For Jaimini, he says, *pravṛtti* is a particular state attained at some point in the unfolding rite: "That there are duties is not disputed, nor is the ordering of actions, their abstract value, etc. What is in question is the time at which they impinge upon the life of a certain individual, when the abstractions attain the further state of *pravṛtti*. Rituals experience *pravṛtti* at certain times only." The carrying out of enjoined actions may remain the general meaning of *pravṛtti* while we can appreciate the original sense of the term as presented in the *sūtras* of Jaimini, which narrows it down by the specification of a time-bound actualization.

those who do not seek liberation and those who seek it but whose attachment towards the things of this world or the next, prevent them from treading the path to liberation.

Śaṅkara's use of the term *dharma* extends beyond the context of Vedic rituals and the traditional social structure based on the system of caste and stages of life, as it is normally understood. The following textual extracts from the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavadgītā*,[26] and Śaṅkara's commentaries on them, aim to show that according to Śaṅkara, *dharma* is two-fold, namely, *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*. It is the perpetual expression of the Vedic revelation relating to both ritualistic activities and knowledge.

In the dialogue between the god of death Yama and the young son of a *brāhmaṇa* named Naciketā, occurring in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, Yama instructs Naciketā about the two-fold Vedic *dharma*. Yama speaks of the division between worldly prosperity and heavenly bliss on the one hand, and liberation on the other. He names them *preyas* (the more pleasurable or gratifying) and *śreyas* (the good or bliss of realization), respectively. Their difference is that between ignorance and knowledge:

"Both the good and the gratifying present themselves to a man; the wise assess them, note their difference; and choose the good over the gratifying. But the fool chooses the gratifying rather than what is beneficial"; "Far apart and widely different are these two: ignorance and what's known as knowledge" (Ka.2.2& 4).[27]

Yama praises Naciketā for showing the qualities necessary for pursuing *śreyas*, "I take Naciketas as one yearning for knowledge; the many desires do not confound you (Ka.2.4)." Death also mentions the path or discipline of *śreyas*, stressing the need to renounce all desirable things of this world or the next, to hear about the Self of the Upaniṣads and to separate or extricate it:

"You have looked at and rejected, Naciketas, things people desire, lovely and lovely to look at." "Satisfying desires is the foundation of the world; uninterrupted rites bring ultimate security; great

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[26] Henceforth BG.

[27] *Upaniṣads*. Translated from the Original Sanskrit by Patrick Olivelle. Oxford New York, 1996, p.235. All forthcoming translations of Upaniṣads are from P. Olivelle, unless stated otherwise.

and widespread praise is the foundation. These you have seen, wise Naciketas, and having seen, firmly rejected" (Ka.2.3&11).
"When a mortal has heard it, understood it; when he has drawn it out and grasped this subtle point of doctrine, he rejoices for he has found something in which he could rejoice. To him I consider my house to be open Naciketas" (Ka.2.3.13).[28]

In BG.2.11(0) and 3.3, we find a similar distinction of *dharma* expressed as the path to attain worldly or heavenly prosperity on the one hand, and liberation, on the other:

"O Arjuna, In ancient times, two paths [disciplines] were established by me (Kṛṣṇa) in this world; for the sāṁkhyas, the *yoga* of knowledge, for the yogis, that of *karma-yoga* (work)" (BG.3.3).[29]

Śaṅkara's gloss reads:

"O sinless one [Arjuna], I, the omniscient Lord[30] revealed the means to prosperity and liberation, which are the traditional goals of the Veda. What is the two-fold path? a) Concerning the *yoga* of knowledge, *yoga* is knowledge itself. This path is spoken of for the followers of sāṁkhya who discern between the Self and the not-Self, are celibate and wandering monks of the *paramahaṁsa* order, are well versed in the Upaniṣads, and are abiding in *Brahman*. b) With regard to the *yoga* of work, it is the path intended for the yogis, those established in works, which is spoken of."[31]

Similarly, in his introduction to the work of the BG itself, Śaṅkara alludes to *dharma* as two paths. But there again, a different set of technical terms which identify *dharma* with the paths of knowledge and work is used, namely, *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*:

"Having created the universe, and wishing to make it stable, the Lord first created the Prajāpatis (Lords of creatures) such as Marichi, and others, and made them grasp the *dharma* characterized as *pravṛtti dharma*, the way of action that is spoken in the Veda. He then created others such as Sanaka and Sanandana and caused them to grasp the *nivṛtti-dharma*, the *dharma* characterized by knowledge and renunciation. It is this *dharma*, spoken in the Veda as two paths, i.e., that of action/work and that of renunciation, which sustains the world. This *dharma*, which is the direct cause for the

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[28] Commenting on Ka.2.13, Śaṅkara writes: "I shall speak of that reality which is the Self. Having heard about that [Self] from a compassionate teacher, a mortal, subjected to the law of death—possessed of *dharma*—grasping it as the proper Self through lifting it up—separating it from the body, and the rest; attaining this subtle self, this mortal, [now] a knower, rejoices"*(etadātmatattvaṁ yadahaṁ vakṣyāmi tacchrutvācāryaprasādātsamyagātmabhāvena parigṛhyopādāya martyo maraṇadharmā dharmādanapetaṁ dharmyaṁ pravṛhyodyamya pṛthakkṛtya śarīrāderaṇuṁ sūkṣmametamātmānamāpya prāpya sa martyo vidvānmodate)* KaBh.2.13. *Īśādinavopaniṣadaḥ with Śaṅkarabhāsya.* Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, Delhi, 1991, p.50. Henceforth named 'Īśādi.' All translations of Śaṅkara's commentaries are my own, unless indicated otherwise). Given the context, "*pravṛhya*" refers to the extrication of the Self from the conglomeration of body, mind, and sense organs, which characterize the not-Self, by means of discrimination.
[29] My translation.
[30] Throughout the thesis, I use the Sanskrit word *Īśvara* and its English equivalents, 'Lord,' 'Highest Deity' and 'Supreme Deity', interchangeably.
[31] "*abhyudayaniḥśreyasaprāptisādhanaṁ vedārthasaṁpradāyam āviṣkurvatā proktā mayā sarvajñena īśvareṇa he anagha apāpa / tatra kā sā dvividhā niṣṭhā iti āha tatra jñānayogena jñānam eva yogaḥ tena sāṁkhyānām ātmānātmaviṣayavivekavijñānavatāṁ brahmacaryāsramāt eva kṛtasaṁnyāsānāṁ vedāntavijñānasuniścitārthānāṁ paramahaṁsaparivrājakānāṁ brahmaṇi eva avasthitānāṁ niṣṭhā proktā... karmayogena yoginām karminām niṣṭhā proktā ityarthaḥ*" BGBh.3.3, p.101.

liberation and the prosperity of individuals, is followed by those who seek after the good (*śreyas*), who are within the *vārṇāśrama* system, beginning with the *brāhmaṇas*."[32]

It is important to stress that as an eight century C.E. orthodox *brāhmaṇa*, Śaṅkara probably considered the eternal Veda to be just as natural, present and concrete a reality as matter is to ordinary people. Probably, it is such an outlook on revelation that made it possible for him to concede to various forms of worship and accept a great diversity of rules related to social life, i.e., the caste division. Although it is true to say that Śaṅkara holds the Upaniṣadic revelation in high esteem primarily because he believes in its capacity to impart the teaching of non-difference between the self and the Absolute,[33] his conceptualization of the Vedic *dharma* leaves ample room for considerations of a religious and social nature.[34] The above passages clearly show that Śaṅkara regarded the religion of activities (*pravṛtti dharma*) as the expression of the Veda, and as being essential to world order and the welfare of everyone.[35] In BSBh 2.1.14, Śaṅkara concedes that concerning the aspirant who does not have the capacity to follow the path of *nivṛtti dharma*, he can efficaciously pursue his activities, Vedic or other: "all activities, Vedic or worldly, are appropriate so long as the unity of Self is not apprehended."[36] Significantly, the above excerpts show that for Śaṅkara, the terms *śreyas*, *sāṁkhya*, and *nivṛtti dharma*, stand for the direct path or means to liberation or *mokṣa*, with its pronounced emphasis on hearing the Upaniṣads from the mouth of the qualified teacher,[37] on discrimination and renunciation. This *dharma*, Śaṅkara tells us, supplants the ritual-based *dharma*, which is rooted in

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[32] "*sa bhagavān sṛṣṭvedaṁ jagat tasya ca sthitiṁ cikīrṣuḥ marīcyādīn agre sṛṣṭvā prajāpatīn pravṛttilakṣaṇaṁ dharmaṁ grāhayāmāsa vedoktam / tataḥ anyān ca sanakasanandanādīn utpādya nivṛttilakṣaṇaṁ dharmaṁ jñānavairāgyalakṣaṇaṁ grāhayāmāsa / dvividho hi vedokto dharmaḥ—pravṛttilakṣaṇaḥ nivṛttilakṣaṇaśca jagataḥ sthitikāraṇam / prāṇināṁ sākṣāt abhyudayaniḥśreyasahetuḥ yaḥ sa dharmaḥ brāhmaṇādyaiḥ varṇibhiḥ āśramibhiḥ śreyorthibhiḥ anuṣṭhīyamānaḥ*" Śaṅkara's introduction to the BG.

[33] "All the Upaniṣads are commenced to teach the unity of Self so as to annihilate this source of all ills" (*asyānarthahetoḥ prahāṇāyātmaikatvavidyāpratipattaye sarve vedāntā ārabhyante) Adhyāsabhāṣya.*

[34] Until recently, such considerations in Śaṅkara's writings have been largely overlooked. This is in part due to an exaggerated emphasis on the doctrine that the universe with all its diversity is illusory.

[35] It seems to me that in regard to the *Kaṭha* passage cited above, the Upaniṣads themselves already express both these aspects of *dharma*. Perhaps, we could even suggest that the Uttaramīmāṁsā started right with the Upaniṣads themselves.

[36] "*tasmātprāgbrahmātmatāpratibodhādupapannaḥ sarvo laukiko vaidikaśca vyavahāraḥ*" BSBh. 2.1.14, p.198.

[37] "He is to be sought after, He is to be known through the instruction of the scriptures and the teacher...he attains all worlds and all desires who knows that Self; having inquired, step by step, into the teachings of the scriptures and the teacher" (*so'nveṣṭavyaḥ śāstrācāryopadeśairjñātavyaḥ...sa sarvāṁśca lokānāpnoti sarvāṁśca kāmān yastamātmānaṁ yathoktena prakāreṇa śāstrācāryopadeśenānviṣya vijānāti)* ChBh.8.7.1.

the false idea of multiplicity, a multiplicity that is imagined due to ignorance.[38] The conceptions of the ultimate goal of life and its direct path (*nivṛtti dharma*) meet us *everywhere* in these extracts, interwoven with each other. Similarly intertwined are the ideas of worldly, religious, and cosmological benefits, with the path of *pravṛtti dharma*. This division of the Vedic *dharma* with the characteristics mentioned above, is also repetitively alluded to by Śaṅkara in BSBh.3.4, notably in 3.4.20, where it is stated that the people who belong to the first three stages of life are qualified to tread the path of *preyas*, while those who belong to the fourth stage, those who have for their unique goal the realization of the Self (*saṁnyāsins*), are qualified to tread the path of *śreyas* that alone leads to liberation. This latter path consists of monasticism (which includes the giving up of all goal-oriented activities) and steadfastness or abiding in *Brahman*, which excludes concern for anything other than liberation:

"These three are fit for [or partake in] the world of virtue; [that] one ('*ekaḥ*' refers to the renunciate of the fourth *āśrama*) is fit for immortality...therefore, it is these three, i.e., the people who belong to the first three stages of life, who are fit for the world of virtue, and it is the remaining one, the wandering mendicant alone, who gets immortality." "The expression 'abiding in *Brahman*' is to be understood as the abiding in *Brahman* with no other engagement whatsoever; it is but one's firmness in or devotion to *Brahman*. This [condition] precludes people belonging to the other three stages of life, for they cannot give up the duties pertinent to their *āśrama* without incurring sin; the *saṁnyāsin* alone does not incur sin because he has renounced all actions." [39]

Before continuing our analysis of *dharma* according to Śaṅkara and Mīmāṁsā, I wish to stress that all throughout this chapter and the subsequent ones, I use the concepts of *pravṛtti/nivṛtti dharma* primarily to indicate Śaṅkara's interpretive framework, which, as the cited passages of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* suggest, was pre-existent in Upaniṣadic literature. I chose these terms because they seem most suggestive of Śaṅkara's broad conceptualization of the Vedic revelation along with its implications in terms of religio-spiritual undertakings. However, I could have substituted them with

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[38] "Name and form, conjectured by ignorance, cannot be described as real or other; they are the seed for the world of transmigration" (*avidyākalpite nāmarūpe tattvānyatvābhyām anirvacanīye saṁsāraprapañcabījabhūte)* BSBh.2.1.14, p.201.

[39] *"traya ete punyalokabhāja eko'mṛtatvabhāk iti...tasmātpūrve traya āśraminaḥ puṇyalokabhājaḥ pariśiṣyamāṇaḥ parivrāḍevāmṛtatvabhāk.""brahmasaṁstha iti hi brahmaṇi parisamāptirananyavyāpāratārūpaṁ tanniṣṭhatvamabhidhīyate / tacca trayāṇāmāśramāṇāṁ na saṁbhavati / svāśramavihitakarmānanuṣṭhāne pratyavāyaśravaṇāt / parivrājakasya tu sarvakarmasaṁnyāsātpratyavāyo na saṁbhavatyananuṣṭhānanimittaḥ"* BSBh.3.4.20, pp.441-442.

the other two technical pairs, namely, *preyas* versus *śreyas* or *karma* versus *jñāna*, insofar as Śaṅkara's interpretation is concerned. However, these terms are too foreign to Mīmāṁsā to be used here. In addition to serving as a support for a comparative study of Mīmāṁsā and Śaṅkara Vedānta, the words *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* are particularly well suited when dealing with Śaṅkara's soteriology, with the former denoting the religious acts that a pupil ought to be carrying out with a total disinterest for their results, whereas the latter describes the interruption of *pravṛtti*, and with both, in that order, leading to self-knowledge. We shall return to these two important ideas.

From the standpoint of religious works that are based on ignorance, Śaṅkara encourages all efforts that elevate man from the worldly to the divine, and thus does not condemn the multifarious ways of worshipping in accord with the Vedic revelation[40]—something that might be expected from a non-dualist thinker. *Nivṛtti dharma*, however, remains the sole spiritual path advocated in Śaṅkara's tradition, which purports to *directly* lead the spiritual seeker to realizing his own nature of being as the one reality without a second. Hence, *nivṛtti* also means the Upaniṣads, since it is upon hearing the Upaniṣadic teachings from the mouth of a qualified and compassionate teacher that the liberating awareness dawns. In chapter three, I offer a concrete example of a *nivṛtti* teaching process as Śaṅkara understands it, based on the Upaniṣadic teaching on the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep.

According to Śaṅkara, *Brahman* cannot be the effect of any action whatsoever. From this, his conception of *nivṛtti* becomes concomitant with the renunciation of all actions.[41] Following the *nivṛtti dharma* entails turning away from all that is characterized by name, form, and action. Śaṅkara

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[40] "I give unswerving faith to each devotee who seeks to worship with faith whatever divine form [of his choice]" BGBh.7.21. Tr. K.Warrier.

[41] *Nivṛtti dharma* deals with the direct knowledge of the Absolute, not intelligible in terms of what has to be done or accomplished. Because Śaṅkara treats *Brahman* as the self-established inmost self of the individual, there is no scope for any activity. *Brahman* cannot be the result of a bodily action such as the sacrifice, or of a mental action such as meditation, and this implies the renunciation of all actions: "[*Brahman*] is rejected as being a result of the activity of knowing, [for we have the texts] 'It is other than what is known and what is unknown' (ke.1.3) and 'Through what should one know that owing to which all this is known?' (Bṛ.2.4.14). Also, [*Brahman*] is rejected as a result of the activity of meditation, [for we have the texts] 'That which one cannot express by speech, by which speech itself is expressed'..." (*anyadeva tadviditādatho aviditādadhi' iti vidikriyākarmatvapratiṣedhāt yenedaṁ sarvaṁ vijānāti taṁ kena vijānīyat' iti ca / tathopāstikriyākarmatvapratiṣedho'pi bhavati 'yadvācānabhyuditaṁ yena vāgabhyudyate'...*) BSBh.1.1.4, p.16.

asserts that for the qualified student of Vedānta, Vedic rituals are of no use. It is the discipline of knowledge alone—which involves the study of the Upaniṣads under the guidance of a teacher, as well as renunciation, since they lead to the immediate apprehension of the Absolute as self[42]—that is of significance to such an aspirant. The nature of renunciation and its connection with knowledge and the study of the Upaniṣads is looked at by Śaṅkara in his commentary on Bṛ.4.4.22, where it is stated, "It is when they desire him [the Self] as their world that wandering ascetics undertake the ascetic life of wandering." Śaṅkara comments:

"When the expression '*vedānuvacana*' is taken as the daily study [of scriptures], it also includes the study of the Upaniṣads."[43] "As the Vedic instructions [to study the Veda], etc., which are enjoined as means to the knowledge of the Self, are to be taken at their face value but not as eulogies, similarly, adopting the life of a wandering ascetic, along with the study [of the Upaniṣads] as being the means to attaining the world of the Self, cannot stand as being eulogies."[44]

These extracts, however, only provide us with a partial understanding of renunciation, as other passages like Bṛ.3.5.1 draw a different picture of renunciation: "It is when they come to know this self that the *brāhmaṇas* give up the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, and the desire for worlds, and undertake the mendicant's life." We see that in these Upaniṣadic and commentarial passages, the subjects are not one and the same. In Bṛ.4.4.22, the subject is the person who, though seeking after liberation or wishing to know the Self, still sees diversity, retains his sense of agency, and acts in order to fulfil his aspirations. According to Śaṅkara's interpretation of this passage, it is for such an ignorant person alone that renunciation is enjoined. It is this type of *saṁnyāsin* that interests us here, for it is he who is enjoined to follow the *nivṛtti dharma* in order to remove his misconception about reality. The fundamental elements of this *dharma*, i.e., the study of the Upaniṣads (to be undertaken with the aid of a qualified teacher) preceded by the renunciation of all rites, are meaningful to the aspirant who pursues his spiritual quest while being afflicted by ignorance. This

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[42] On the topic of liberation, an appeal to scriptures parallels an appeal to immediate experience. See ch.2&3 where I examine the relationship between scriptural authority and experience.

[43] "*yadā vedānuvacana śabdena nityaḥ svādhyāyo vidhīyate tadopaniṣadapi gṛhītaiveti*" BṛBh.4.4.22, p.371. *The Bṛhadaranyakopaniṣad with the Bhāṣya of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya*, vol.3. Published by the Mahesh Research Institute, Varanasi.

[44] "*yathā'tmavedanasādhanatvena vihitānāṁ vedānuvacanādīnāṁ yathārthatvameva nārthavādatvaṁ tathā taireva saha paṭhitasya pārivrājyasyā'tmalokaprāpti sādhanatvenārthavādatvamayuktam*" BṛBh.4.4.22, pp.374-375.

nivṛtti discipline is a unique and essential feature of Śaṅkara Vedānta, and we will return to it throughout this study and specifically when we examine the place and role of theistic tenets in Śaṅkara's teachings (ch.4 & 5). However, the renunciate mentioned in the passage of Bṛ.3.5.1, as Śaṅkara tells us, is the person who is not under the sway of ignorance and thus *naturally* desists from action, being free from the desires for sons, wealth, and worlds, on the strength of his knowledge.[45] The knower of *Brahman* wears no distinctive signs (like the holy thread), performs no Vedic ritual, and adopts the lifestyle of a wandering ascetic.[46]

3 Knowledge and actions in the conceptualization of the Vedic *dharma*

For the followers of Mīmāṁsā, the Veda issues injunctions,[47] which find their significance if and only if there is some agent capable to translate such injunctions into action. From their standpoint, the agency of the self is taken as a definite fact and not as a case of superimposition as in Śaṅkara Vedānta.[48] Thus it would seem that the performance of duties enjoined in the scriptures becomes truly meaningful in the Mīmāṁsā tradition alone. But what are we to make of Śaṅkara's doctrine that in each individual there is an indestructible and eternal principle different from the body that

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[45] "It is when they come to know this Self that Brahmins give up the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, and the desire for worlds, and undertake the mandicant life" Bṛ.3.5.1. "On the strength of that [knowledge], there is opposition [renunciation of these three objects of desire], because there are specific statements as, "having known him, this very Self" (*tadbālena hi vyutthānam etam vai tamātmānaṁ viditvā iti viśeṣavacanāt)* BṛBh.3.5.1, p.253.

[46] "Therefore, the ancient *brāmaṇā*, knowers of *Brahman*, renouncing ritual acts and the means to their performance, i.e., the sacred thread, etc., adopt [the lifestyle] of a wandering renunciate" (*tasmātpūrvaṁ brāmaṇā brahmavido vyutthāya karmabhyaḥ karmasādhanebhyaśca yajñopavītādibhyaḥ paramahaṁsapārivrājyaṁ pratipadya)* Ibid., p.254.

[47] Of course, even Mīmāṁsā agrees that the Veda does not only issue direct injunctions since it also deals with non-commendatory statements such as *mantras*. Yet again, Mīmāṁsā defends their significance and fruitfulness on the basis that they indirectly relate to injunctions, tying in with the broader purpose of injunctive statements.

[48] "One cannot be a knower without identifying his self with the body, the sense organs, and the like. The means of knowledge cannot proceed because the senses of sight, and others, do not work without one [following] identifying with the senses. Empirical life is not possible without a basis for the senses [i.e., the body], no one conducts activities with his body not superimposed on his self; the unattached self cannot be a knower unless there are all these [superimpositions] on him. And without a knower the means of knowledge cannot function" (*dehendriyādiṣvahaṁ mamābhimānarahitasya pramātṛtvānupapattau pramāṇapravṛttyanupapatteḥ / nahīndrīyāṇyanupādāya pratyakṣādivyavahāraḥ saṁbhavati / nacādiṣṭānamantareṇendriyāṇāṁ vyavahāraḥ saṁbhavati / nacānadhyāstātmabhāvena dehena kaścitvyāpriyate / nacaitasminsarvasminnasati asaṅgasyātmanaḥ pramātṛtvamupapadyate / naca pramātṛtvamantareṇa pramāṇapravṛttirasti) Adhyāsabhāṣya*. Superimposition (*adhyāsa*) is central to Śaṅkara's soteriology and will receive considerable attention all throughout this work.

survives death to reap the fruits of its past actions? And how are we to understand Śaṅkara's reasoned statement that an individual does not obtain the competence for scriptural duties unless he is well aware of the relationship of his soul with the next world?[49] After all, this statement conforms to the Mīmāṁsā's own idea about the agency of the self, since it is only one who is aware of the relation of his soul with the next world who is competent to carry out the actions that will lead him to heaven. What is important to realize here, is that Śaṅkara's acknowledgment of the 'acting' nature of the self is *provisional* since he tells us that such relationship holds only so long as the erroneous identification with the body lasts. This suggests that for Śaṅkara, one's true being is never genuinely associated with Vedic works, albeit it appears to be so. This, he sees as transpiring from passages like Ka.1.3.1-2:

"Knowers of *Brahman*, men with five fires, and with the three fire-altars of Naciketas, they call these two 'shadow' and 'light,' the two who have entered—the one into the cave of the heart, the other into the highest region beyond, both drinking the truth in the world of rites rightly performed."

Śaṅkara understands this passage to mean that in the body (*loke*) two selves (drinkers [*pibantau*]) exist; one is the individual self who, impelled by desires, acts and enjoys the fruits of his actions—an enjoyment that necessitates his transmigration—while the other is the Self that is ever-free from actions and their consequences, like rebirth,[50] and thus exists completely independently from *dharma*. Evidently, there cannot really be two selves; the self that is concomitant with deeds and their results is only imagined on account of ignorance, and hence, is not ultimately real:

"If the Self is embodied, it can perform virtuous and non-virtuous deeds.
[Advaitin:] No, that the Self performs both meritorious and non-meritorious acts cannot be established because it cannot be proved that the Self has any relation with the body"; "Agency cannot be proved because of the absence of connection between the Self and effects"; "Mistaken self-identification is directly perceived as the cause for such connection. In this way, it is explained how the Self can be a sacrificer" (BSBh.1.1.4).[51]

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[49] "Although a person may be knowledgeable regarding empirical dealings, he has no competence concerning the scriptures if he is ignorant of the relation that exists between his self and the world beyond" (*śāstṛīye tu vyavahāre yadyapi buddhipūrvakārī nāviditvātmanaḥ paralokasaṁbandhamadhikriyate)* Ibid.

[50] "The knowers of *Brahman* speak of these two as being different like shade and light because one is in the cycle of rebirths, while the other is not" (*tau ca cchāyātapāviva vilakṣanau saṁsāritvāsaṁsāritvena brahmavido vadanti kathayanti)* KaBh.1.3. Īśādi, p.54.

[51] *"tatkṛtadharmādharmanimittaṁ saśarīratvamiti cenna, śarīrasaṁbandhasyāsiddhatvāddharma adharmayorātmakṛtatvāsiddheḥ"; "kriyāsamavāyābhāvāccātmanaḥ kartṛtvānupapatteḥ"; "mithyābhimānastu pratyakṣaḥ saṁbandhahetuḥ / etena yajamānatvamātmano vyākhyātam"* BSBh, p.22.

In these extracts, Śaṅkara openly identifies the notion of being a sacrificer as an error of judgment, a misconception. Scriptural duties apply to the self that is the *saṁsāri* or *jīva*, a superimposition on the Supreme Self. Therefore, Śaṅkara's provisional acceptance of Vedic statements enjoining rituals rests on the false yet temporarily posited view that the Self is the *saṁsāri* who alone acts and reaps the results of his/her actions.

In his *Adhyāsabhāṣya*, Śaṅkara questions the scope of the authority of Vedic injunctions, characteristic of the Mīmāṁsā view of *dharma*. He states that both empirical means of knowledge such as perception, inference, and so forth, as well as the whole of the Vedic revelation, are solely authoritative in relation to ignorance.[52] *Dharma*, as interpreted in Mīmāṁsā, is of little help to the knowledge of the undifferentiated *Brahman* which, for Śaṅkara, is the core of our being and does not involve the difference of agent, actions, and their consequences. To him, the ultimate objective of the Vedic *dharma* is the knowledge of *Brahman* that is unrelated to rituals, and whose realization is dependent on the removal of ignorance, a mistaken belief caused by the absence of discriminative knowledge.[53] According to Śaṅkara, *nivṛtti dharma* ends *pravṛtti dharma*, the Mīmāṁsā's sole conception of the Vedic *dharma*.[54] *Nivṛtti*, the discipline of knowledge, is the superior Vedic *dharma* since knowledge is said to annul actions and the desire to perform them.[55] Notwithstanding the fact that he characteristically accords no ultimate validity to ordinary means of knowledge, with regard to

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[52] "Taking the mutual superimposition of the Self with the not-Self called *avidyā*, all dealings involving means and objects of knowledge, whether mundane or Vedic, proceed. This includes all the scriptural texts about injunctions, prohibitions, and liberation" (*tametamavidyākhyamātmānātmanoritaretara adhyāsaṁ puraskṛtya sarve pramāṇaprameyavyavahārā laukikā vaidikāśca pravṛttāḥ sarvaṇi ca śāstrāṇi vidhipratiṣedhamokṣaparāṇi) Adhyāsabhāṣya.*

[53]"Nevertheless, because there is no discrimination between their respective natures as well as between their qualities—even though they are absolutely distinct—they are superimposed on each other. In this way, coupling the existent and the non-existent, people naturally use expressions such as, 'I am that' and 'That is mine.' The reason for this is false knowledge" (*tathāpyanyonyasminnanyonyātmakatām anyonyadharmāṁścādhyāsyetaretarāvivekenātyantaviviktayordharmadharmiṇormithyājñānanimittaḥ satyānṛte mithunīkrtya 'ahamidaṁ' 'mamedamiti' naisargiko'yaṁ lokavyavahāraḥ)* Ibid.

[54] Although Mīmāṁsā does, as already mentioned, recognize *nivṛtti*, it is bereft of all Vedāntic meanings.

[55] "As a kindled fire reduces all fuel to ashes, so, Arjuna, does the fire of knowledge reduce all works to ashes" BG.4.37. Tr.Warrier.

nivṛtti, Śaṅkara compares the process of knowing *Brahman* to that involved in revealing the nature of any ordinary object:

"[The Vedic] instructions about *Brahman* simply awaken a person. Because knowledge is born from these instructions, the individual is not compelled to get involved in that knowledge, just as one is not [compelled to engage] in the knowledge [born] from the contact of the eye with its corresponding object."[56]

Here, then, Śaṅkara denies that the true nature of any existent thing or entity can be revealed by any means other than the knowledge that conforms to such thing or entity as it is. Thus, Śaṅkara demonstrates, on the basis of ordinary epistemological principles, that whenever the topic concerns the realization of our being as the unconditioned Absolute the Vedic commanding actions are subordinate to the Upaniṣadic knowledge and its path.[57]

From what has been said, we may draw our first conclusion that fundamentally, *pravṛtti dharma* and *nivṛtti dharma* can genuinely function within their respective domains alone, for their scopes and objectives are fundamentally different. Nonetheless, Śaṅkara recognizes that religious works that are properly performed in accordance with the position that an individual occupies in society, can play a significant role in his liberation. He sees the correct performance of religious duties as a means to purify the mind, which he considers essential to the rise of discriminatory knowledge:

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[56] "*brahmacodanā tu purūṣamavabodhayatyeva kevalam avabodhasya codanā'janyatvānna purūṣo'vabodhe niyujyate / yathākṣārthasaṁnikarṣeṇārthāvabodhe tadvat*" BSBh, p.5.

[57] It is important to mention the four qualities/requisites which, the Advaita tradition insists, are indispensable to treading the path of knowledge. Briefly, they are 1) the capacity to discern between what is constant or eternal and what is ephemeral; 2) the absence of passion towards all that is temporary and particularly with regard to what results from one's own actions; 3) the ability to control the mind and the senses, to develop tranquility, patience and faith (in the teacher and the Upaniṣads), and endure the highs and lows of ordinary life; 4) the sincere desire to be released from *saṁsāra*, the perpetual cycle of births and deaths. "*nityānityavastuvivekaḥ ihāmutrārthabhogavirāgaḥ, śamadamādisādhanasaṁpat, mumukṣutvaṁ ca*" BSBh.1.1.1, p.5. The fourth requisite, the desire for liberation, is seen as the effect of the other three. For otherwise, K. Warrier tells us, "life in the world may be felt as all right" (p.101). For Śaṅkara, the performance of Vedic duties with detachment towards their results, along with the cultivation of the above-mentioned requisites, provide the aspirant with the competence (*adhikāratvam*) to tread the path of *nivṛtti dharma*. According to Śaṅkara's commentary on BSBh.1.1.1, this is exactly what Bādarāyaṇa reminds us in his first aphorism (*athāto brahmajijñāsā*). For him, the word '*atha*'—which is indicative of an immediate sequence or succession—points to this group of requisites.

"Actions like sacrifices, and the like, performed in this very life or anterior ones cause the destruction of 'sins' [already] incurred and serve to purify the mind; thus they are the gateway to the rise of knowledge and the reason for abiding in knowledge."[58]

Defending the authority of scriptures in both areas of rituals and knowledge, Śaṅkara brings the study of the Upaniṣads into the domain of rites. He asserts that the daily reading of scriptures is a rite and that to study the Upaniṣads with a competent teacher means to sacrifice to the Self:

"When the expression '*vedānuvacana*' is taken as the daily study [of scriptures], it also includes the study of the Upaniṣads. This way, no part of the meaning of the word is omitted; and since such a study goes along with sacrifices, and so on...by the word '*vedānuvacana*' we understand rites alone; the daily study of the Veda is verily a rite."[59] "Sacrifices, those physically performed and those consisting of knowledge [i.e., the study of the Upaniṣads], aim at purification; and for one who has been purified, whose mind has been cleansed, knowledge will arise without obstacles. Thus [it is said] 'they seek after knowledge through sacrifices'... Hence, all the obligatory daily rites—those prompted by desires being rejected—constitute a means to liberation, being the doorway to the rise of knowledge."[60]

This integration of rites (when performed without regard to their outcome) in Śaṅkara's soteriology, is corroborated by the *saṁnyāsin's* symbolic interiorization of the sacrificial fires, which occurs during the ceremony that marks one's entry into the stage of renunciation, the fourth and last *āśrama*. 'Sacrificing', is here rendered possible by the discerning knowledge that is secured through the teachings of the Upaniṣads; it is by 'sacrificing' to the Self that the aspirant rids himself of all misidentifications. For this sacrificer, the *pravṛtti* aspect of rites is eliminated and replaced by the negating function of the Upaniṣads, *nivṛtti*. We will examine what this entails in chapter three where we look at specific descriptive Upaniṣadic passages which, to Śaṅkara, aim at directing the aspirant's attention to *Brahman* as his immediately revealed and self-effulgent consciousness. Returning now to the possibility of relationship between these two areas (rituals and knowledge), we see further evidence for it on the basis of Śaṅkara's sensible argument that scriptures instruct by way of adapting

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[58] "*karmaṇāṁ kriyāṇāṁ yajñādīnām iha janmani janmāntare vā anuṣṭhitānām upāttaduritakṣayahetutvena sattvaśuddhikāraṇānāṁ tatkāraṇatvena ca jñānotpattidvāreṇa jñānaniṣṭhāhetūnām*" BGBh.3.4. See also BṛBh.4.4.22, p.351.

[59] "*yadā vedānuvacana śabdena nityaḥ svādhyāyo vidhīyate tadopaniṣadapi gṛhītaiveti vedānuvacanaśabdārthaikadeśo na parityakto bhavati / yajñādisahapāṭhācca...tasmātkarmaiva vedānuvacanaśabdenocyata iti gamyate / karma hi nityasvādhyāyaḥ*" BṛBh.4.4.22, p.371.

[60] "*yajñeneti dravyayajñā jñānayajñāśca saṁskārārthāḥ / saṁskṛtasya ca viśuddhasattvasya jñānotpattirapratibandhena bhaviṣyatyato yajñena vividiṣanti /...evaṁ kāmyavarjitaṁ nityaṁ karmajātaṁ sarvamātmajñānotpattidvāreṇa mokṣasādhanatvaṁ pratipadyate*" BṛBh.4.4.22, p.372.

to existing circumstances. This means that they direct their teachings to those who are in the grips of ignorance, wrongly thinking that duality is real:

"Therefore, accepting the experienced plurality that is effected by ignorance which is natural/inherent to everybody, [scriptures] first teach the performance of rituals to those endowed with such defects as attachment, aversion, and others, and are naturally ignorant, with a view to helping them secure their desired ends. Thereafter, when those people see the well-known defects inherent in actions, their means, as well as their results, and when they desire the result that is the attainment of their own indifferent state of being, which is opposed to those defects, [the scriptures] teach them the knowledge of *Brahman*, which consists in the vision of the oneness of Self, this being the means to that [result]" (BṛBh.5.1.1).[61]

We see here that in Śaṅkara's soteriology, the two Vedic *dharmas* are not harmonized on doctrinal grounds but on pedagogical ones. These two *dharmas* respond to the different spiritual capacities of the various aspirants. This being said, it is to be kept in mind that both are terminated with the realization of the Self.

We also learn in various places in Śaṅkara's commentaries, notably in his commentary on the famous chapter of the BG named *Karma Yoga,* that such harmony comes through only in so far as religious works are carried out with a spirit of complete non-attachment with regard to their fruits: "Perfection is characterized by the attainment of knowledge born in a pure mind that shuns results when actions are being performed."[62] This type of religious work is meant to elicit dispassion (*vairāgya*) towards worldly and otherworldly gains, since both hold the promise of rebirth. And to cultivate *vairāgya* is to purify one's mind. For Śaṅkara, a pure mind is a mind focused on the Supreme Being, a mind that is sincerely and deeply inquisitive about the nature of the Absolute. *Pravṛtti dharma* is thus to be seen as a means to check humans' natural penchant for sense gratification, which is the main force behind transmigration. The idea of renouncing the outcome of one's actions is not entirely foreign to Mīmāṁsā, which advocates the performance of obligatory daily rites, irrespective of results. Further (although the sole reference I came across is in the MNP), we find the view that when Vedic duties are performed as pure acts of devotion to a deity, they lead to

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[61] "*tasmādyathāprāptameva dvaitamavidyākṛtaṁ svābhāvikamupādāya svābhāvikyaivāvidyayā yuktāya rāgadveṣādidoṣavate yathābhimatapurūṣārthasādhanaṁ karmopadiśatyagre paścātprasiddhakriyākārakaphalasvarūpadoṣadarśanavate tadviparītaudāsīnyasvarūpāvasthānaphalārthine tadupāyabhūtāmātmaikatvadarśanātmikāṁ brahmavidyāmupadiśati*" BṛBh.5.1.1, p.393.

[62] "*phalatṛṣṇāśūnyena kriyamāṇe karmaṇi sattvaśuddhijā jñānaprāptilakṣaṇā siddhiḥ*" BGBh.2.48.

"supreme beatitude."[63] And it is on the authority of the *Bhagavadgītā* too that Mīmāṁsā supports such an idea. [64] Without trivializing the element of commonality between the two conceptions of *pravṛtti dharma*, i.e., offering the outcome of Vedic works as acts of devotion, it is essential to underscore that numerous BG passages affirm the necessity of detachment with regard to the results of both religious as well as worldly actions, and strongly emphasize that all actions and their results should be surrendered to *Parameśvara*, the Supreme Being, a deity which Mīmāṁsā does not accept. For Śaṅkara, a seeker of truth must direct all actions and their outcomes to *Īśvara*, *Parameśvara*, *Bhagavan*, *Vāsudeva*, or to any other endorsed epithet of the Absolute. The reason why Śaṅkara does not equally recommend surrendering the outcome of actions to other deities of the Vedic pantheon is, I suggest, because the Supreme Being (*Īśvara*, *Brahman*, *paramātman*, etc.) is the only deity described as everyone's self,[65] as being altogether different from nature (*prakṛti*), as the supervisor of works, all pervading, and the witness and inner controller of all beings.[66] The deities of the Vedic pantheon are within the play of *prakṛti* and thus, are not intrinsically free. It is because various *smṛti* and Upaniṣadic texts clearly identify the Supreme Being with the self of everyone that Śaṅkara mentions the former, the highest entity, as the sole recipient of the surrendering of actions and fruits,

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[63] MNP, p.16. 'Supreme beatitude' here, means heaven (*svarga*). However, characteristic of early Mīmāṁsā is its total lack of interest for esoteric matters; *svarga* does not correlate with other Indian conceptions of liberation; it is a state of joy (*pritti*), actually obtained by a given individual. Śabara, in his commentary on the *Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* (PMS.4.1.1), refers to heaven as a) whatever gives pleasure to a person, including food, perfumes, young women, etc., and b) as a specific place where all the ills of life are simply absent. Madeleine Biardeau tells us that in early Mīmāṁsā, the terms *niḥśreyasa* and *svarga* denoted a wholly material type of happiness: " Le terme *niḥśreyasa*, dans la *Mīmāṁsā*, signifiait le bonheur conçu de façon très terrestre, et nous avons vu que le *svarga* lui-même était réduit à un état de contentement situé dans le prolongement des satisfactions les plus 'mondaines' et obtenu grâce au *dharma*." *Théorie de la Connaissance et Philosophie de la Parole dans le Brahmanisme Classique*. Mouton & Co et École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, 1964, p.101.

[64] The *Bhagavadgītā* is quoted as an authority to support the Mīmāṁsā view that "supreme beatitude" can be attained by means of ritual works if carried out in a disinterested manner: "Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest as oblation or givest in gifts, whatever penance thou doest, son of Kunti, that do as an offering to me" MNP 394, p.189.

[65] "By this *yoga* of knowledge, characterized by correct perception, it is I, the Supreme Self, that they attained as their self. Who? those who worship me with their mind [fixed] on me" (*buddhiyogena samyagdarśanalakṣaṇena māṁ parameśvaram ātmabhūtam ātmatvena upayānti pratipadyante / ke te ye maccittatvādiprakāraiḥ māṁ bhajante)* BGBh.10.10.

[66] "The one God, hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the inner self of all beings, the supervisor of works, dwelling in all, witness, apprehender, alone and beyond constituents" Śve.U.6.11, quoted from BGBh.9.10. Tr. Warrier).

for that seems to be the most conducive way to liberation (within the *pravṛtti dharma*), which is the realization that "I am Brahman," stated in the Upaniṣads as "That thou art."[67]

This view of *pravṛtti dharma*, which turns man's activities towards the ultimate reality, the innermost and utmost entity, is what makes the teachings of Advaita Vedānta coherent with a purely dualistic kind of theism. At the same time, Śaṅkara renders the teachings of Vedānta suitable for a type of non-dualistic theism, by grounding the scriptural declarations about the existence of a Creator with multiple functions and attributes, in the life experience of the competent Advaitin student. We will explain this significant aspect of Śaṅkara's soteriology in chapter 4. In the Mīmāṁsā context, however, the notion of a Supreme Being is basically absent, and various Vedic deities only serve a function within the framework of rites. The Veda alone, viewed as eternally autonomous and absolute, holds the highest status. Let us recall that Mīmāṁsā considers its revelation to be self-validated since it requires neither a human nor a divine being or principle as its source.

Hence, we see that it is solely at the level where the qualities of mind needed to tread the path of knowledge ought to be secured by the student of Advaita Vedānta, that Śaṅkara supports the *pravṛtti dharma* 'lifestyle' endorsed by the Mīmāṁsā school, although, as already stressed, with a different mind-set. We shall also bear in mind that if *pravṛtti dharma* implies that the self has volition and agency, it is something that both Mīmāṁsā and Śaṅkara accept but that the latter alone ultimately denies.

It is possible to see Śaṅkara's conceptualization of the two-fold *dharma* (a division of *dharma* which seems to have been present in the scriptures themselves) as an attempt to answer the perennial problem of 'being.' In the Upaniṣads, this problem is posed in terms of the plurality revealed to us by our senses or by scriptures (the existence of deities, souls, heavens, and so forth), and its indivisible essence, the Self. An important and recurring message that transpires from reading the Upaniṣads is that from plurality, the 'given', one is to proceed backwards as it were, to its essence, the real.[68] This

[67] Ch.6.8.7-16 & Ch.7.25.

[68] The most striking example of the Upaniṣads inciting the aspirant to follow this procedure is found in the well-known instructions that Uddalāka Āruṇi gives to his son Śvetaketu, in chapter 6 of the *Chāndogya*

seems crucial to Śaṅkara, whose conceptualization of the Vedic *dharma* reflects this idea, i.e., beginning with the imperfection of action and culminating in the perfection of non-action. According to Śaṅkara's *Adhyāsabhāśya,* the most significant instance of the 'given' is the individual's natural conception of self ("I am this body") which, though erroneous, is the ground of all worldly, religious, and philosophical undertakings. Śaṅkara holds that each and every one of us is imbued with a false sense of self that is responsible for all sorrows. One who sees himself as a follower of the Upaniṣads, as someone who has embraced a monastic life, is no exception to that error. He too is mistaken about his true identity. Nonetheless, such an individual alone is said to have a 'correct desire' since he wishes for nothing but the world of the Self. Enlivened with this sole desire and equipped with a mind that has been purified through sacrifices, he is in the position to tread the difficult *nivṛtti* path that culminates in the apprehension of the real nature of his being as the one entity taught in the Upaniṣads (*aupaniṣadasya purūṣasya* BSBh.1.1.4). To Śaṅkara, all other aspirants can never answer the perennial problem of being, for they are concerned with actions and their consequences. The inability to tread the path of *nivṛtti* has a cost: the perpetual knowledge and the experience of the 'given' alone, whatever is within the confines of time and space, *saṁsāra.*[69] We understand that for Śaṅkara, the separation between a thing and its truth or essence is not possible without taking into account the existence of the thing. Inquiring into the truth of a thing presupposes the existence of the latter or at least the provisional acknowledgment of its existence

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Upaniṣad. One single passage should suffice to illustrate this point: "Now, take these rivers, son. The easterly ones flow towards the east, and the westerly ones flow towards the west. From the ocean, they merge into the very ocean; they become just the ocean. In that state they are not aware that: "I am that river," and "I am this river." In exactly the same way, son, when all these creatures reach the existent, they are not aware that: "we are reaching the existent". No matter what they are in this world, whether it is a tiger, a lion, a wolf, a boar, a worm, a moth, a gnat, or a mosquito, they all merge into that. 'The finest essence here— that constitute the self of this whole world; that is the truth; that is the self (Ātman). And that's how you are, Śvetaketu." Ch.6.10.

[69] M. Biardeau brings out the domain and function of *pravṛtti* and its direct link with *saṁsāra* as follows. Her description of *saṁsāra* follows that found in the *Nyāya Bhaṣya* (1.1.2) and corresponds to a wide range of negative experiences, from a specific physical or mental effort to the incessant flux of rebirths: "Par le terme *pravṛtti* on veut dire le *dharma* et *l'adharma* dont l'activité—*pravṛtti*—est l'instrument, tout comme on dit que la nourriture est les êtres vivants, qu'elle est le souffle des vitaux. C'est précisément l'activité ainsi entendue qui est la cause d'une naissance humble ou élevée. Quant à la naissance, c'est l'apparition (de l' Ātman) spécifiée par l'ensemble corps-sens-pensée. Quand elle se produit, il y a douleur, c'est à dire ce que l'on éprouve comme désagréable: obstacle, souffrance physique, effort pénible. Ces catégories de choses—*dharma*—qui vont de l'idée fausse à la douleur et dont l'activité est sans interruption aucune constituent le flux des renaissances, *saṁsāra.*" Théorie de la Connaissance, p.103.

(Śaṅkara opts for the second view). In Śaṅkara's context, plurality stands within the domain of desire and action. And it is by sublimating these two through what the BG names *karma-yoga* or the *yoga* of actions (not hankering after one's actions and their fruits) that the mind becomes pure and the question about the authentic sense of the 'given' is raised and is subsequently dealt with at the level of *nivṛtti* practices, where Vedic rituals are no longer relevant.

To sum up our examination of the Vedic *dharma*, we found that Śaṅkara holds both *pravṛtti dharma* and *nivṛtti dharma* to be valid within their respective domains, i.e., as related to action and knowledge, while Mīmāṁsā holds that both of them relate to Vedic injunctions only. We have noted that Śaṅkara's insistence on the supremacy of *nivṛtti dharma*, the discipline relating to renunciation and knowledge, over *pravṛtti dharma*, represents the most important departing point from and challenge to the Mīmāṁsā contention that the Vedic texts only serve directly or indirectly (as in the case of the Upaniṣads too) the purpose of ritual performance. We also noted that in contradistinction to Mīmāṁsā, Śaṅkara says that individual selves do not share the characteristics of name, form, or action, and cannot *really* perform any action, religious or otherwise. Importantly, we stressed that it is as a concession to the natural but ignorant view that individuals are other than pure being that Śaṅkara commits himself to nothing less than espousing the Mīmāṁsā notion of *pravṛtti dharma*, with the notable difference that the sacrificer who aspires to *mokṣa* ought to surrender all actions and their results to the Supreme Being as a means of purifying his mind.

In the context of *nivṛtti dharma*, Śaṅkara holds that Vedic actions are neither necessary nor desirable. The path of self-knowledge or *nivṛtti dharma* does not respond to some human need in the way the texts dealing with injunctions and prohibitions do in the Mīmāṁsā context. For Śaṅkara, *nivṛitti dharma* is the Upaniṣadic path to knowledge by which alone the qualified pupil can permanently remove all erroneous notions that exist within the scope of ignorance, i.e., being an agent, a knower, and an enjoyer, which the Mīmāṁsā system can never dispense with.

Chapter II

Revelation and Experience in Śaṅkara Vedānta

In our study of the Vedic *dharma*, we have stressed the importance that Śaṅkara attaches to the revealed scriptures of the Veda as the authority that teaches the two-fold path leading to the disparate goals of prosperity and spiritual liberation, thus responding to the needs of two types of individuals. Other religions too, amongst them the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have revealed scriptures, which offer postulates, doctrines, and perspectives on a wide array of topics such as the nature of the Supreme Being, that of the individual soul, the possibility of an after life, and so on. All three are based upon divine revelations granted to particular individuals for the sake of humankind. If Śaṅkara's system of thought rests on various texts that are within the Vedic corpus commonly referred to as a revelation, such a term may be somewhat misleading. The aim of this chapter is to examine the peculiar sense in which the Upaniṣads, within this revelation, constitute a valid means of liberating knowledge. As we proceed to ascertain Śaṅkara's position concerning the nature and the function of the Upaniṣads, we will attempt to determine the extent to which he values immediate experience in relation to the study of these texts. The examination of these aspects of Śaṅkara's system is necessary to our overall attempt to defend the thesis that Śaṅkara's soteriology integrates theistic views which, at a certain level of the Advaita spiritual practice, finds direct and immediate experience as its ground, precisely when adopting the perspective of the witness.

1 The Concept of the Upanisads as the last means of knowledge

Śaṅkara's understanding of the Upaniṣads as the last means of knowledge (*antya pramāṇa*)[70] is significant for it helps us understand the role that the Upaniṣadic instructions play in his soteriology. In Śaṅkara's tradition, the sacred texts of the Upaniṣads are unique in that they truly become the last means of knowledge when they provide the pupil with the direct apprehension of the unity of Self. And it is upon such a realization that the validity of these texts is lost. In the final analysis, the Upaniṣads are a self-destructive revelation. The notion that the Upaniṣads are the last means of knowledge underlies the fact that for Śaṅkara, the realization of the Absolute as the student's immediate awareness dawns by merely engaging with these texts under the guidance of a teacher. This is important because today, the dominant understanding of Śaṅkara Vedānta is based on post-Śaṅkara accounts, which devalue the significance of the Upaniṣadic discourses as the last and ultimate means of knowledge, in favor of mysticism.[71]

Why are the Upaniṣads extremely significant to Śaṅkara? They are significant because as he tells us in his commentary on *Brahmasūtra* (BS) 1.1.3 (*śāstrayonitvāt*), the Upaniṣads constitute the only means of knowing *Brahman*, the ultimate principle from which the universe originates.[72] There are many passages in his commentaries where Śaṅkara argues for the indispensability of the Upaniṣads on the basis that all other available means of knowledge do not have capacity to reveal the Absolute as self.

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[70] In his *Method of Vedanta* (MV), Satchidānandendra calls the Veda, "the final means of knowledge." Although he does not develop this notion in a systematic and detailed manner, he brings out two important points that set the stage for this present attempt to understand the value of the Upaniṣads for Śaṅkara: "The statement that the Upaniṣads are the means to its attainment [the Absolute] is also used merely to indicate that the self-luminous principle is not known by any of the other means of knowledge, such as perception and the rest. There is also a further point. Perception and the other means of knowledge, along with the Vedic texts conveying injunctions and prohibition—along with the Upaniṣadic texts themselves—are valid only as long as the Absolute has not been known in its true nature through the Veda, for then the wrong notion of 'knower through means of knowledge' is eliminated." MV, pp.60-61.

[71] Rambachan clearly demonstrates how, in post-Śaṅkara developments and particularly in contemporary presentations of Advaita Vedānta, mystical experience supplants the role of scriptures as the means to liberation. A. Rambachan. *Accomplishing the Accomplished: The Vedas as a Source of Valid Knowledge in Śaṅkara*. Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1991.

[72] *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya of Śaṅkarācārya* (BSBh). Translated by Swami Gambhirananda. Second edition, Calcutta, 1972, p.19.

"This exceedingly profound matter that is the true nature of being, the cause of liberation, cannot even be guessed at without the help of the [Advaita] teaching tradition" (BSBh.2.1.11)[73]
"The realization of *Brahman* is accomplished/finalized through assiduous examination of the meaning of texts; it is not accomplished due to any other means of knowledge such as inference, and the like" (BSBh 1.1.2).[74]
"Although its own nature is established as an entity, *Brahman* is not the content of direct perception, etc., because there can be no realization of *Brahman-Ātman* apart from the authoritative texts [with such statement as] 'you are That' " (BSBh.1.1.4).[75]
"When, awakened by the scriptures, having risen above the aggregate of body, senses, mind, intellect [through the teaching]: 'You are not the aggregate of body, senses, mind, and intellect; you are not a transmigratory being; what then? That which is truth, that *Ātman* whose nature is mere consciousness, you are that' Then, rising from the identification with his body, and so on, awakening to the Self whose nature is the unchanging and eternal witness, he becomes the Self whose nature is the unchanging and eternal witness." (BSBh.1.3.19).[76]

It is because our ordinary means of knowledge always proceed towards the physical phenomena of the universe and not towards our intrinsic awareness, the really real, that Śaṅkara sees the Upaniṣads as indispensable to self-knowledge. Granting the senses the capacity to take an inward turn, they still could not enable us to identify our being with *Brahman*, which Śaṅkara describes as being beyond acceptance and refusal.[77] The Upaniṣadic explanation for it is that awareness is self-established, self-luminous and, therefore, non-objectifiable as 'this' or 'that.' Empirical means of knowledge apply to things whose nature is definable in terms of species, qualities, and actions, but not to consciousness, our awareness that is inherently free from all characteristics.[78]

This categorical rejection of empirical means of knowledge seems paradoxical since the knowledge of the Self gathered from the Upaniṣads necessitates the use of empirical means, at least insofar as a textual investigation of the relevant literature (*śruti*)—aided by tradition (*smṛti* texts like

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[73] "*nahīdamatigambhīraṁ bhāvayāthātmyaṁ muktinibandhanamāgamamantareṇotpreksitumapi śakyam*" BSBh. p.193.
[74] "*vākyārthavicāraṇādhyavasānanirvṛttā hi brahmāvagatirnānumānādipramāṇāntaranirvṛttā*" BSBh, p.7.
[75] "*naca parinisṭhatavastusvarūpatve'pi pratyakṣādiviṣayatvaṁ brahmaṇaḥ tatvamasi iti brahmātmabhāvasya śāstramantareṇānavagamyamānatvāt*" BSBh, p.11. See also the Upaniṣadic passage: "I ask you about him, the Upaniṣadic puruṣa" (*taṁ tvaupaniṣadaṁ puruṣaṁ pṛcchāmi)* Bṛ.3.9.26, and Śaṅkara's annotation to this passage in his BSBh.1.1.4: "This *puruṣa* who is *Brahman*, not a transmigratory entity, is known in the Upaniṣads alone" (*yo'sau upaniṣatsvevādhigataḥ puruṣo'saṁsārī, brahma*) BSBh, p.19.
[76] "*yadā tu dehendriyamanobuddhisaṁghātādvyutthāpya śrutyā pratibodhyate nāsti tvaṁ dehendriyamanobuddhisaṁghātaḥ nāsti saṁsārī kiṁ tarhi tadyatsatyaṁ sa ātmā caitanyamātrasvarūpastattvamasīti tadā kūṭasthanityadṛksvarūpamātmānaṁ pratibudhyāsmāccharīrādyabhimānātsamuttiṣṭhansa eva kūṭasthanityadṛksvarūpa ātmā bhavati*" BSBh, p.112.
[77] BSBh.1.1.4. Tr. Gambhirananda, pp.22 &35.
[78] KeBh. 1.3. *Eight Upaniṣads with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*. Translated by Swami Gambhirananda, vol 1, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1998, p.49.

the *Bhagavadgītā*)—requires them! Śaṅkara would, of course, admit that the student ought to be able to hear the Vedānta teachings from the mouth of the teacher in the first place. All that he would deny is the inherent ability for ordinary means of knowledge to reveal one's own natural state of immortality that is *mokṣa*.

Śaṅkara seems to have anticipated the reasonable doubt that the notion of a permanently self-established and self-revealed principle as our subject of being may very well be an arbitrary assumption or a conviction formed through the study of the Upaniṣads, a dogma. In BSBh 1.1.4, he says that the Self cannot be denied insofar as it is the true being of one who denies it.[79] We have here the affirmation that the Self is a universal premise that can dispense from proof. And in BSBh.2.3.7, after reaffirming that the Self requires no proof for its existence, Śaṅkara adds that all our available faculties of knowing and acting solely operate and acquire validity on the basis of our inmost subject of being, while remaining inaccessible to them:

"Because it is self-established, the Self is not an adventitious thing. Someone's self is not proved in relation to a means of knowledge. It is not established through any other means of knowledge such as perception, etc., since they are used with the intention to prove the existence of objects yet to be ascertained...but the Self being the basis of all empirical dealings, it is verily established prior to such dealings as the use of means of knowledge, and so forth. And it is not possible to deny the existence of such a Self. It is only a contingent thing that can be denied but not one's own [true] nature. The very one who rejects [the Self], that alone is his own [true] nature. The heat of fire cannot be denied by the fire itself," [80]

Such commentarial passages make it plain that for Śaṅkara, the Self is the ground or basis of our most rudimentary means of knowledge.[81] In view of Śaṅkara's assertions that the Absolute is an intrinsically existent entity that consists of consciousness and is the inmost self of us all, humans cannot find in themselves what it takes to satisfy their desire to know the Self. It goes without saying

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[79] "*ya eva hi nirākartā tadeva tasya svarupam*" BSBh.1.1.4.

[80] "*nahyātmāgantukaḥ kasyacit svayaṁsiddhatvāt / nahyātmātmanaḥ pramāṇamapekṣya sidhyati / tasya hi pratyakṣādīni pramāṇānyaprasiddhaprameyasiddhaya upādīyante /... ātmā tu pramāṇādivyavahārāśrayatvātprāgeva pramāṇādivyavahārātsidhyati / nacedṛśasya nirākaraṇaṁ saṁbhavati / āgantukaṁ hi vastu nirākriyate na svarūpam / ya eva hi nirākartā tadeva tasya svarūpam/ nahyagnerauṣṇyamagninā nirākriyate*" BSBh, p.268.

[81] This idea is already present in the Upaniṣads. Ke.1.4-8, for instance, presents the innermost principle *Brahman*, as the inscrutable basis which provides various functions of the human organism with their respective powers: "[That] which one cannot express by speech, by which speech itself is expressed; Which one cannot grasp with one's mind, by which, they say, the mind itself is grasped; Which one cannot see with one's sight, by which one sees the sight itself; Which one cannot hear with one's hearing, by which hearing itself is heard; Which one cannot breathe through breathing, by which breathing itself is drawn forth."

that Śaṅkara could not consider possible that scientific exploration and philosophical inquiries may directly contribute to the realization of the Absolute since all investigations naturally take for granted the basis (the subject) on which knowing, its arising, rejection, or acceptance, are established. Of course, it does seem like a cruel paradox that men are the Self and yet do not possess the means to recognize this fact concerning their being. The possibility to realize this fact is conferred, Śaṅkara tells us, by the Upaniṣadic teachings alone.

Since the Self has no distinctive features of its own, it can neither be grasped as an object of knowledge nor be imagined by the mind. [82] If no positive terms can be used to reveal the Absolute and if our intelligence is unfit to comprehend it, how could the Upaniṣads be considered a means of knowledge, let alone the last means to *Brahman*-realization (*antya pramāṇa*)? Śaṅkara does not say that scriptural 'authority or 'validity' expresses the idea that it is its non-empirical nature and content that make *Brahman* known. He does not assert the absolute nature of the Upaniṣadic words. The 'word' of the Upaniṣads is not paralleled with the 'word-authority' characteristic of the Judeo-Christian religions or the 'word-efficiency' of the Mīmāṁsā, with their insistence on the infallible nature of the revelation and the reality of the individual selves as singular agents and enjoyers—the individual selves being actually affected by their wholesome and unwholesome deeds. Śaṅkara states that the true essence of the individual self is bodiless at all times, that it is all-pervading consciousness unaffected by deeds and their outcome.[83] Thus it follows that the *Upaniṣads* can be described as 'efficient' only indirectly, that is insofar as they effect the negation of all the factors involved in the process of ordinary knowledge:

"Scriptures aim at removing the duality that is conjured up by ignorance. They do not seek to instruct *Brahman* as an object referable as 'this.' How then? They remove such duality as known,

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[82] "Before they reach it, words turn back, together with the mind." Tai. 2.4.

[83] In his BSBh.1.1.4, Śaṅkara expressly denies that the Self is in any way related to or affected by deeds and their effects. He cites the following scriptural passage in support of his position: "Tell me what you see as different from the right doctrine and from the wrong; different from what is done here and what is left undone; different from what has been and what is yet to be" (*anyatra dharmād anyatrādharmādanyatrāsmātkṛtākṛtāt anyatra bhūtācca bhavyācca yattatpaśyasi tadvada)* Ka.1.2.14. Śaṅkara's rendering of *kṛtam* and *akṛtam* as *karyam* (effect) and *karaṇam* (cause), respectively, coincides rather well with his conception of the self as ever pure, conscious and free, which is beyond the tripartite of time, space, and causality, a formula that eliminates the possibility of attributing any distinction to it.

knower, knowledge, and the rest, conjectured by ignorance, by teaching [*Brahman*] not as an object but as the immediate self"(BSBh.1.1.4).[84]

We observe that for Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣadic revelation fulfils its function as a *pramāṇa* without postulating any *actual* characteristic to *Brahman*, everyone's true self. The main function of this revelation as a *pramāṇa* is to negate all features that they themselves associate with or superimpose upon the Absolute for the purpose of instruction. Indeed, as already mentioned (ft.61), Śaṅkara tells us that the Upaniṣads proceed to teach by adopting man's natural standpoint of ignorance.[85] The simple process of negating temporary attributions is used throughout the Upaniṣadic literature. The number of passages confirming this deliberate teaching process is very important and the following extracts are by no means an exhaustive list:

"Here, then, is the rule of substitution: 'not—, not—,' for there is nothing beyond this 'not' "(Bṛ.2.3.6).
"It is neither coarse nor fine; it is neither short nor long; it has neither blood nor fat; it is without shadow or darkness; it is without air or space; it is without contact; it has no taste or smell; it is without speech or mind; it is without energy, breath, or mouth; it is beyond measure; it has nothing within it or outside of it; it does not eat anything; and no one eats it" (Bṛ.3.8.8).
"About this self (Ātman), one can only say 'not—, not—,'" (Bṛ.3.9.26).
"They consider the fourth quarter as perceiving neither what is inside nor what is outside, nor even both together; not as a mass of perception, neither as perceiving nor as not perceiving; as unseen; as beyond the reach of ordinary transaction; as ungraspable; as without distinguishing marks; as unthinkable; as indescribable; as one whose essence is the perception of itself alone; as the cessation of the visible world; as tranquil; as auspicious; as without a second. That is the self (Ātman), and it is that which should be perceived" (Mā.7).[86]

Let us now turn to Śaṅkara's occasional use of the expression *antya pramāṇa* to qualify the Upaniṣads, since it allows for a better understanding of the place and the role that the Upaniṣadic teachings occupy in his soteriology. I am aware of three passages where this expression appears, but there may be many more. What is interesting with the passages which include that expression, is that

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[84] "*avidyākalpitabhedanivṛttiparatvācchāstrasya / nahi śāstramidaṁtayā viṣayabhūtaṁ brahma pratipipādayiṣati / kiṁ tarhi pratyagātmatvenāviṣayatayā pratipādayadavidyākalpitaṁ vedyaveditṛvedanādibhedamapanayati*" BSBh, p.16.
[85] "Since it leads one to the knowledge of its reality, even the false form caused by adjuncts is granted as though it were an attribute of the knowable, as expressed in [the text] "on all sides it has hands and feet," and so forth. Thus say the true knowers of the tradition: "That which is devoid of the manifold is explained through the process of superimposition and cancellation" (*upādhikṛtaṁ mithyārūpam api astitvādhigamāya jñeyadharmavat parikalpya ucyate 'sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṁ' ityādi / tathā hi saṁpradāyavidāṁ vacanam—'adhyāropāpavādābhyāṁ niṣprapañcaṁ prapañcyate*) BGBh.13.13. Refer to p.126-8 below for additional citations.
[86] See also: Bṛ.3.9.26; Bṛ.4.2.4; Bṛ.4.4.22; Bṛ.2.3.6; Ke.1.4; Tai.2.9.

they emphasize the connection between the Upaniṣads and a) the non-contradictory nature of the knowledge that they provide; b) the immediate reality of the Self, an already attained entity; and c) the non-reality of the superimposed elements that are responsible for action, knowledge, and enjoyment, and make transmigration possible. I selected the following passages because in them, Śaṅkara clearly emphasizes the connections referred to above. His use of *antya pramāṇa* as an epithet of Upaniṣad(s) leaves little doubt about what he considers their nature and function to be. It is important to bear in mind, however, that similar characterizations of the Upaniṣads undoubtedly occur in passages of Śaṅkara's commentaries that do not mention this particular expression.[87]

"Moreover, [The Upaniṣads] are the last means of knowledge through revealing that the Self alone exists, after which nothing at all is required...it is not possible to say that this apprehension is inauspicious or erroneous. For it is seen to cause the eradication of ignorance and since it cannot be falsified/destroyed by any subsequent knowledge" (BSBh.2.1.14).[88]
"The Upaniṣads are the last means of knowledge. Their validity is established on the basis that they teach the Self through eliminating the characteristics that are superimposed on it, and not because they reveal something that was [previously] unknown." And so, we have the Upaniṣadic text: '*Brahman* that is immediate and direct, the Self within all' " (BGBh.2.18. para. 2).[89]
"Once the nature of the Self is apprehended, the ordinary distinction of means of knowledge and their objects no longer occurs. The last means of knowledge (Upaniṣads) negates the very knowership of the self, and ceases to be a valid means of knowledge, like the means of knowledge in a dream upon waking" (BGBh.2.69)[90]

This last passage is particularly revealing since it clearly connects Śaṅkara's use of the expression '*antya pramāṇa*' with the place and function of the Upaniṣads, and with the direct apprehension of reality. It announces that the Upaniṣads are the sole liberating means in the sense that they remove the false idea of oneself as a knower.

It is significant to stress that in these extracts, Śaṅkara does not emphasize the necessity to understand the Upaniṣads as a fixed collection of words and sentences. The attributive and,

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[87] For a list of such passages, refer to the MV, pp.61-63.
[88] "*apicāntyamidaṁ pramāṇātmaikatvasya pratipādakaṁ nātaḥ paraṁ kiṁcidākāṅkṣayamasti ... naceyamavagatiranarthikā bhrāntirveti śakyaṁ vaktum / avidyānivṛttiphaladarśanāt bādhakajñānāntarābhāvānca*" BSBh, p.199.
[89] "*śāstraṁ tu antyaṁ pramāṇam ataddharmādhyāropaṇamātranivartakatvena prāmāṇyaṁ ātmanaḥ pratipadyate, na tu ajñātārthajñāpakatvena / tathā ca śrutiḥ—'yat sākṣādaparokṣād brahma ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ'" (Bṛ.3.4.1) iti*" BGBh.2.18.
[90] "*na hi ātmasvarūpādhigame sati punaḥ pramāṇaprameyavyavahāra saṁbhavati / pramātṛtvaṁ hi ātmanaḥ nivartayati antyaṁ pramāṇam / nivartayat eva ca apramāṇibhavati svapnakālapramāṇam iva prabodhe*" BGBh.2.69.

ultimately, the negating statements of the Upaniṣads are important insofar as they lead to the Absolute that is beyond words. Their uniqueness and efficacy seem to be found in their way of teaching and not in the fixity of particular texts written in a particular language. The exclusive way of teaching resorted by the Upaniṣads is that which permits individual selves to directly recognize their own being as the Self.

Śaṅkara believes that the Upaniṣads reveal the true identity of individual selves as the one self without a second, as expressed in such texts as, "this one that sees, touches, hears, smells, tastes, thinks, knows, and acts, is the self whose nature is consciousness."[91] Hence, he quite appropriately states that the exclusivity of the Upaniṣads as the means of liberating knowledge lies in that they permit the Self to directly realize itself through itself:

> "As already stated, the individual endowed with the knowledge of the three letters of *aum* is verily the Self with the three quarters; he who knows in this way enters into his own absolute Self through himself alone" (Mā.12).[92]
> "It is only itself that is aware of the seeing, for its nature is awareness. The awareness of this [inner Ātman] is described as the intellect's coming into being as a possessor of its reflection" (US.18.202).[93]
> "Because this glory of the knower of *Brahman*, characterized as 'not this, not this,' and other such statements, is not connected with action; hence, he who knows it in this way sees the Self, the inner/immediate light in his own self, the collection of causes and effects [his body]. Does he see the Self as limited to this only? No, he sees the Self as the totality of the universe. He sees that nothing differs from the Self, even by a hair's breadth" (BṛBh.4.3.23).[94]

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[91] "*eṣa hi dṛṣṭā spṛṣṭā śrotā ghrātā rasayitā manta boddhā kartā vijñānātmā puruṣaḥ*" Pra.4.9.

[92] "*yathoktavijñānavatā prayukta oṁkārastrimātrastripādaḥ ātmaiva saṁviśatyātmanā svenaiva svaṁ pāramārthikamātmānaṁ ya evaṁ veda*" Mā.12. Īśādi, p.439. This first extract is related to an Upaniṣadic instruction that utilizes the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep to awaken the competent Advaitin student to the nature of his being as *turīya*, the witness that is eternally free from the states. The passage extols such a realization.

[93] *A Thousand Teachings. The Upadeśasāhasrī of Śaṅkara* (US). Translated and Edited by Sengaku Mayeda. State University of New York Press, 1992.

[94] "*yasmādevamakarmasaṁbandhyeṣa brāhmaṇasya mahimā neti netyādilakṣaṇastasmādevamvit...ātmanyeva sve kāryakaraṇasaṁghāta ātmānaṁ pratyakṣetayitāraṁ paśyati / tatra kiṁ tāvanmātraṁ paricchinaṁ netyucyate sarvaṁ samastamātmānameva paśyati nānyadātmavyatiriktaṁ vālāgramātramapyastītyevaṁ paśyati*" BṛBh, p.377. This passage also extols the result of the Upaniṣadic instructions that culminate in the identification with the Self. Like in the above passage, the result of the teaching is expressed as the knower giving up the three states and identifying with *turīya*, his true nature of being. We shall review this Upaniṣadic instruction in some detail in ch.3.

The same point is brought out clearly in Śaṅkara's annotation to Bṛ.1.4.9.[95] There, Śaṅkara refutes the view (probably that of the commentator Bhartṛprapañca) that the word "*brahman*" refers to a man who aspires to be *Brahman*, and that the Upaniṣadic instruction is helpful in the context of a meditation called *sampad*, in which the transmigratory self is only imagined as *Brahman*. Śaṅkara says that to hold such a view would lead to accepting *Brahman* as an impermanent entity. He argues that resorting to the idea that *Brahman* indicates a man who aspires to becoming *Brahman* is unwelcome, considering that, "even before knowing *Brahman*, everybody, being *Brahman*, is really always identical with all, but ignorance superimposes on him the idea that he is not *Brahman* and not all."[96] Not to accept that one is always *Brahman* and identical with all, he says, is to oppose thousands of scriptural passages where the words "*Brahman*" and "self" are used synonymously.[97]

For Śaṅkara, the idea that this scriptural passage refers to a man who will become *Brahman* through *sampad* cannot be correct since it would entail that knowledge is creative and not merely informative about facts.[98] The knower who becomes all can only be *Brahman*, for this alone is established as a fact by the Upaniṣads. Śaṅkara corroborates this view quoting Bṛ.2.5.18: "That Supreme Being first entered the bodies..." And he explains that the individuals—ordinary men and sages—as well as the gods who secured liberation, were in fact *Brahman* since it is really *Brahman* that was in them before their securing liberation. This is the reason why, Śaṅkara tells us, anyone who abandons the false notion about his essential nature of being through the instructions of the Upaniṣads, comes to know his own self as "I am Brahman."[99]

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[95] "This self was Brahman alone in the beginning, and it knew only itself as "I am Brahman." Consequently, it became this all...this is so even now, he who knows this in this way: 'I am Brahman,' he becomes this all." Unlike Olivelle's translation of '*idam*' as this world (in "*brahma vā idamagra assīt*"), I take '*idam*' to mean this self. This harmonizes better with the later statement "*tadidamapyetarhi ya evaṁ vedāhaṁ brahmāsmīti sa idaṁ sarvaṁ bhavati,*" since it is when gods, men, and others, know their self (and not the world) as "I am Brahman" that they become the world.

[96] BṛBh.1.4.10. (Tr. Mādhavānanda, p.102).

[97] "This self is Brahman" (Bṛ.2.5.19); "The Brahman that is immediate and direct" (Bṛ.3.4.1-2 & 3.5.1); "This is truth, this is the Self" (Ch.6.8.7); "The knower of Brahman attains the highest" (Tai.2.1.1); "All this is the Self" (Bṛ.2.4.6)." Ibid., p.105. In BSBh.1.1.4 too, Śaṅkara refutes the view that the unitary knowledge presented by the Upaniṣads is a kind of *sampad*.

[98] Ibid., p.106. See also BṛBh.2.1.20, Madhavananda's tr. p.209, and TaiBh.1.11.2-4

[99] Ibid., pp.110-11.

Let us return to the passage in BGBh.2.69 (p.44), which brings into focus another significant aspect of the nature and function of the Upaniṣads in Śaṅkara's system. This passage is significant in that it indicates the limits of the revelation, limits that in fact correspond to self-knowledge. The passage also tells us that it is the very function of the Upaniṣads that finally annuls their standing as a means of knowledge, thus revealing their indispensable yet purely propedeutic nature. A citation from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* is also interesting concerning the notion that the status of the Upaniṣads as a means of self-knowledge is itself liable to cessation: "Here a father is not a father, a mother is not a mother, worlds are not worlds, gods are not gods, and Vedas are not Vedas."[100] The word "here" in the context of the above citation, refers to the experience of profound sleep wherein individual selves are no longer associated with their waking body, mind, and senses, for these do not appear to their consciousness.[101] In that state, though consciousness continues throughout, it does not present itself as differentiated in the forms of mother, father, Veda, and so on. Śaṅkara asserts that during deep sleep, the individual self is embraced by the Supreme Self; it really is itself. This is because in that state, both dream and waking are absent. From the viewpoint of immediate experience, deep sleep knows no desire and no action and thus, no *saṁsāra*. The scriptural statement "The Vedas are not Vedas" means that as texts or rather as a 'wisdom-teaching tradition,' the Upaniṣads 'lose' their revelatory function, for when there is no association or identification with the aggregate of body, mind, and senses, surely, there can be no individual knower, no means of knowledge, Vedic or empiric, and nothing known. Let us note what Śaṅkara says while commenting on Bṛ.4.5.15, which assert the total absence of duality in the state of enlightenment:[102]

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[100] Bṛ.4.3.22.

[101] According to Śaṅkara, deep sleep experience is essentially the same as *mokṣa*. The sole 'difference' between them lies in that *mokṣa* is everyone's ever-attained nature of being whereas deep sleep, as a time-bound experience of non-duality, is a product of ignorance. It is ignorance which 'frames' non-duality in a time-space-subject relation and thus renders it limited. Yet from the sole standpoint of experience, Śaṅkara observes, liberation as well as deep sleep are but unimpeded consciousness, free from a second object separate from it as it were, and which could then be perceived. Śaṅkara reckons that what constitutes the source of particular perceptions (those which we have in the waking and the dream states), i.e., the internal organ, the eyes, and the forms, are all presented by ignorance as something other than the Self (see BṛBh.4.3.23). I discuss this issue at some length in chapter three.

[102] "For when there is a duality of some kind, then the one can see another, the one can smell the other, the one can taste the other, the one can greet the other, the one can hear the other, the one can think of the other, the one can touch the other, and the one can perceive the other. When, however, the whole has become one's very self (*Ātman*), then who is there for one to see and by what means? Who is there for one to smell and by what

"[Opponent:] In the absence of perception, and the like, there will be the absence of scriptures. [Advaitin:] We approve of this position that the Veda itself is absent when one is awakened as expressed in the text beginning with "Here a father is not a father," [and ending with] "the Vedas are not Vedas" (Bṛ.4.3.22).[103]

According to Śaṅkara, realization and deep sleep[104] indicate that there can be no absolute dimension to the Upaniṣads as texts or tradition. For in theses states, there is no duality whatsoever. The authority of scriptures remains only so long as duality is perceived, i.e., so long as ignorance prevails. This is what Śaṅkara says quite straightforwardly in his *Adhyāsabhāṣya* when he asserts that scriptures too function merely on the basis of ignorance:

"All worldly and Vedic actions, [involving] means of knowledge and objects of knowledge, as well as all scriptures—whether concerned with injunctions, prohibitions, or liberation—proceed by following this mutual superimposition of the Self and not-Self, called ignorance."[105]

Upaniṣadic knowledge, like ordinary knowledge, is based on ignorance.[106] Both worldly knowledge and behavior require the belief that the body-mind complex be agent and knower. In the context of Vedic knowledge and behavior, what is required is the belief that one's self is different from the aggregate of body, mind, and senses. Nonetheless, both beliefs are ultimately erroneous, being a direct outcome of ignorance. Though the Upaniṣadic instructions presuppose and function solely in the realm of ignorance (as they teach the spiritual seeker who is unaware of his/her true nature of being), they alone can disclose the self within. For the position that the Upaniṣadic discourses occupy in the domain of human interactions is a unique and privileged one (*śāstra-vyavahāra*). Indeed, as already noted, they remove the pupil's erroneous identifications with agency and knowership. To do so, they employ many stratagems. One of them, as already noted, is to

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means? ...Who is there for one to perceive and by what means? Bṛ.4.5.15.

[103] "*pratyakṣādyabhāve śruterapyabhāvaprasaṅga iti cet... 'atra pitā'pitā bhavati' (Bṛ.4.3.22) ityupakramya 'vedā avedāḥ'* (Bṛ.4.3.22) *iti vacanādiṣyata evāsmābhiḥ śruterapyabhāvaḥ prabodhe*" BSBh, p.465.

[104] Here, we see that Śaṅkara implicitly equates the state of deep sleep where, "a father is not a father...", with awakening (*prabodhe*).

[105] "*tametamavidyākhyamātmānātmanoritaretarādhyāsaṁ puraskṛtya sarve pramāṇaprameya vyavahārā laukikā vaidikāśca pravṛttāḥ sarvāṇi ca śāstrāṇi vidhipratiśedhamokṣaparāṇi" Adhyāsabhāṣya.*

[106] In his *Adhyāsabhāṣyā,* Śaṅkara mentions three views about ignorance that are known to him and concludes: "from every point of view, however, there is no difference as regards the appearance of one thing as something else. And in accord with this, we find in common experience that the nacre appears as silver, and a single moon appears as two" Tr. Gambhirananda, p.3.

gradually direct the student's attention (via the analysis of the states of waking and dream) to his experience of deep sleep. This, for Śaṅkara, is a fruitful means for disclosing *Brahman* as unchanging consciousness, given that in that state, the distinctions between knower, knowledge, and known, are absent. We will give a detailed account of this teaching method in the next chapter.

We can already draw some conclusions about Śaṅkara's conceptualization of the Upaniṣads as the last means of knowledge. This conception, as encapsulated in the expression *antya pramāṇa,* draws out the connections between some of the most fundamental components of Śaṅkara's soteriological tradition, i.e., scriptures, ignorance, and the direct apprehension of *Brahman* as self (*anubhava*). Most importantly, its value lies in that it clearly specifies the limits of the revelation, limits that in fact correspond to self-knowledge. Although Śaṅkara never undermines the superiority of the Upaniṣads over and above all other means of knowledge, as the last means of knowledge, they achieve their highest form of pre-eminence at the time when they trigger knowledge, which marks the loss of their authority. Finally, Śaṅkara's uncompromising stance about the indispensability of the *Upaniṣads* seems to concern their overall process of instruction, which alone remove the sense of knowership, etc., rather than the particular teachings themselves. Ultimately, the Upaniṣads, as literary or non-literary discourses, draw their authority from the immediate experience of *Brahman* by *Brahman*, which alone is absolute.

Before pursuing with the topic of experience, which is both a unique and axiomatic feature of Śaṅkara's interpretation of the Vedānta texts, it is appropriate to give an overview of the main valid means of knowledge in this tradition. Besides his belief in the Vedic revelation as a *pramāṇa* and his conception of the Upaniṣads as the *antya pramāṇa* for the Self, which validation rests in the student's immediate apprehension of the non-dual truth, Śaṅkara is mainly interested in two other means of knowledge, i.e., perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*).[107] The latter two having validity

[107] Śaṅkara makes rare references to the other three means of knowledge namely, analogy (*upamāna*), reasoning by presumption (*arthāpatti*) and non-apprehension (*anupalabdhi*) as mentioned in other Advaita Vedānta texts and accepted by the followers of Mīmāṁsā.

within the confines of ordinary experience. We may thus classify *pramāṇas* into the following three categories:

-*Pratyaksa and anumāna*: Sense perception and inference are valid means to secure knowledge of empirical phenomena. Although *pratyakṣa* literally means 'immediately close or present to the eye,' it signifies the five senses. *Anumāna* or inferential knowledge widens prior knowledge gained through sense perception by applying deductive reasoning to the former, i.e., seeing smoke and inferring fire.

-*Śruti pramāna*: Revelation provides us with a valid knowledge of what is not accessible to our empirical means of knowledge, in this world and beyond. Most importantly, it indicates the very process by which we can come to know the supreme reality as our very self: "this Ātman is not this, not this."

-*Antya pramāna*: The Upaniṣads can be called a means of knowledge only upon making the object that it is supposed to be revealing—in the Advaita tradition it is the *Brahman-Ātman*—known. The Upaniṣads become the last means of knowledge (*antya-pramāṇa*) when *Brahman* becomes directly manifest to the pupil and expressed through such statements as "I am Brahman" (*aham brahmāsmi* Br.1.4.10). In Śaṅkara's tradition, 'the enquiry into the nature of *Brahman*' that the first aphorism of the *Brahmasūtra* announces, finds its completion in the liberating knowledge of *Brahman* as self. This is also what Śaṅkara thinks Bādarayaṇa indicates (twice) in his last aphorism: "There is no return on the authority of the Upaniṣads" (*anāvṛttiḥ śabdādanavṛttiḥ śabdāt*).[108]

2 The place of experience in Śaṅkara's conceptualization of the *nivrtti dharma*

In the previous section, we have examined Śaṅkara's arguments for the indispensability of the Upaniṣadic revelation with regard to self-knowledge. We have seen that Śaṅkara's understanding of this revelation as the last means of knowledge involves two correlatives: the notions of limits to the absolute nature of the revelation (it ceases after its function), and direct experience. We shall now

[108] Two and three need not be separated into two categories. However, I did organize them in the above fashion to stress the limitation of the revelation when it does not lead to the knowledge of oneself as the Absolute that is liberation.

attempt to further elucidate the relation between the Upaniṣads and self-knowledge and demonstrate that for Śaṅkara, the scriptures lack no direct efficiency with regard to the immediate apprehension of the Absolute, although the phenomenological perspective on hearing and reflecting on the Upaniṣads is explored in some detail in the next chapter. To understand the nature of this apprehension and the way it is arrived at is important because these are stepping stones leading to a better understanding of theistic views from the perspective of the witnessing consciousness. This will become clear in due time.

If Śaṅkara does not question the legitimacy of certain Vedic doctrines such as the doctrine of transmigration—which does not require proving and is interpreted as being inseparable from the Veda's overall soteriological enterprise—he urges his reader (the Advaitin student) to investigate Vedic propositions which relate to the matter of self-knowledge.[109] The pupil is asked to authenticate these propositions on the basis of his immediate experience, technically called *anubhava* or *avagati*.[110] According to Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣads constitute an accredited *pramāṇa* because, like all other valid means of knowledge, they prompt such an experience. Etymologically, these terms denote perception, experience, or again, understanding. In Śaṅkara's commentaries, they often have a deep spiritual meaning. These pregnant terms indicate the apprehension of the essential nature of reality, an apprehension that is of the nature of one's own immediate awareness. And it is in this sense that Śaṅkara understands the Upaniṣadic expressions "*vijñāna-ghanaḥ*" and "*prajñāna-ghanaḥ*" (a mass or lump of consciousness) as applying to the individual.[111] This direct apprehension, as already

[109] What is the reason for the need to verify Vedic claims about self-knowledge while claims concerning the doctrine of transmigration need no verification? The main reason is, perhaps, that for Śaṅkara, the former bears consequential results while the latter does not. By "consequential results", I mean those results that are relevant in one's lifetime. Transmigration is, of course, 'consequential' but is limited to the domain of activities and thus fits primarily the activity-based worldview (*pravṛtti dharma*). In his work, however, Śaṅkara does not address the ritualist but the *mumūkṣu*, the individual who follows the *nivṛtti dharma*, who seeks after knowledge through the study of the Upaniṣads with the hope of securing *mokṣa* in his lifetime (*jīvan-mukta*).

[110] There are of course other terms that signify the apprehension of the Self such as *samyagjñāna and vidyā*. However, Śaṅkara is relatively consistent with using these two terms in the context of self-knowledge. The widely used term *vidyā* (knowledge), for instance, indicate different things in different contexts. In one context it might refer to the knowledge of *Brahman*, in another, to meditative practices, and in yet another, to the result of a meditative practice.

[111] Respectively Bṛ.2.4.12 and Mā.5. Although *prajñā* also carries the sense of 'understanding,' in the context of the Mā.5, it is employed in the same sense as *vijñāna*, as found in Bṛ.2.4.12, that is to say, as consciousness or

indicated, is also referred to as the viewpoint of the highest reality. Conversely, the absence of such apprehension—characterized by the erroneous identification with the not-Self, i.e., the individual entity—and the acceptance of the fatalities of one's birth and death, represent the non-ultimate viewpoint of reality, the viewpoint of error.[112] According to Śaṅkara, *anubhava* is free from errors; it is reality, characterized as that which can never be falsified. "The real/true," Śaṅkara asserts, "is that which does not alter the nature which has been determined as its own, and the unreal/false is that which does change the nature that has been determined as its own."[113] In the context of self-knowledge, *anubhava* is not the product of an act; neither does it involve memory. The latter is excluded because immediate experience necessitates the presence of the object of knowledge. The former is excluded on the basis that the nature of the Self is self-illumined and self-established. In BSBh 2.1.11, Śaṅkara remarks that uniformity and constancy are the features of the Self for anyone who apprehends it. He asserts that it is such features that place the advaitic 'object' of knowledge beyond logical disputes and controversies:

"Correct knowledge is unvarying because it depends on its object. That object alone, which is established as unvarying, is ultimately real. And in the world, knowledge of such an object is called valid knowledge, as in 'fire is hot.' This being so, with regard to correct knowledge, divergence of views amongst people is not possible. But it is known that knowledges based on reasoning are mutually opposed."[114]

How is the truth-value of this apprehension ascertained? Its truth-value is commensurate with the experience itself. M. Comans rightly says that for Śaṅkara, *anubhava* is, "the experience of oneself as awareness."[115] The passage he uses to make his observations on this topic is derived from US.18.104 and particularly BSBh.4.1.2. In the latter, while referring to the passages "Brahman is

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awareness (See also ft. 116 below).

[112] The distinction that Advaita makes at the level of reality (*vyavahāra/paramārtha*) does not imply that there needs be two sides to it; the distinction does not involve ontological categories of reality. The reason is that the non-ultimate is contradicted or falsified whereas the ultimate, that which exists, isn't.

[113] "*satyamiti yadrūpeṇa yanniścitaṁ tadrūpaṁ na vyabhicarati satsatyaṁ yadrūpeṇa yanniścitaṁ tadrūpaṁ vyabhicaradanṛtamityucyate*" Tai.Bh.2.1.

[114] "*samyagjñānamekarūpaṁ vastutantratvāt / ekarūpeṇa hyavasthito yo'rthaḥ sa paramārthaḥ / loke tadviṣayaṁ jñānaṁ samyagjñānamityucyate yathāgniruṣṇa iti / tatraivaṁ sati samyagjñāne purūṣāṇāṁ vipratipattiranupapannā / tarkajñānānāṁ tvanyonyavirodhātprasiddhā vipratipattiḥ*" BSBh, pp.193-4.

[115] M.Comans. *The Method of Early Advaita Vedānta. A Study of Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara, Sureśvara and Padmapadā*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000, pp.306 & 310.

Reality, Consciousness, Infinite" (*satyaṁ jñānamanantaṁ brahma* Tai.2.1.1), and "Brahman is Consciousness, Bliss" (*vijñānamānandaṁ brahma* Bṛ.3.9.28), Śaṅkara states:

"With the words '*vijñāna*' and so forth, what is expressed is [*Brahman*] being of the nature of consciousness and light. It is established amongst those who are well-versed in the *Vedānta*, that the meaning of 'That' [in the formula 'you are That'], is to be understood as *Brahman*, whose nature is immediate experience that has none of the characteristics of *saṁsāra*."[116]

In this last passage, Śaṅkara assigns a precise referent to *Brahman*. The referent is one's immediate awareness that is *anubhava*. *Brahman* can be disclosed immediately because of the perfect correspondence between the experience and the object of experience, thus making further assessments about the truth or falsity of the experience unnecessary. Śaṅkara illustrates this point in the often-cited example of the perception of a man-like stump. He tells us that when one has the experience, "this is a man," where the object out there is really a stump, the experience will fail to have authority because 'manness' is not the characteristic that qualifies the stump out there. Inversely, because 'stumpness' is the exact feature that qualifies the stump out there, the experience of the form, "this is a stump," will have validity. Obviously, it is important not to take this illustration too far since *Brahman* is not a particular object qualified by qualities and attributes. Concerning the Self, experience must conform to the '*vastu*,' the object sought—here taken in a technical sense or rather in its broadest sense—which is being experienced as devoid of the apparatus of knowledge as we know it in our ordinary life:

"Upon the immediate experience of the non-dual Self that is beyond acceptance and rejection, the [use of] means of knowledge cannot continue without objects and subjects [of knowledge]. Moreover, they say (?): 'On account of the negation of son, body, etc., their being unreal [and called] selves in a secondary and false sense, 'I' is [realized as] the real *Brahman-Ātman*. Once negated, how can there be any work [performed]?' The self has agency prior to the knowledge of the Self that is to be inquired into. Once sought out, this very knower is freed from such defects as unwholesome actions and the rest."[117]

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[116] " *vijñānādiśabdaiścacaitanyaprakāśātmakatvamuktam / eṣa vyāvṛttasarvasaṁsāradharmako'nubhavātmako brahmasaṁjñakastatpadārtho vedāntābhiyuktānāṁ prasiddhaḥ*" BSBh.2.1.4, p.462.

[117] "*nahyaheyānupādeyādvaitātmāvagatau nirviṣayāṇyapramātṛkāṇi ca pramāṇi bhavitumarhantīti / apicāhuḥ—gauṇamithyātmano'satve putradehādibādhanāt / sadbrahmātmāhamityevaṁ bodhe kāryaṁ kathaṁ bhavet / anveṣṭavyātmavijñānātprākpramātṛtvamātmanaḥ / anviṣṭaḥ syātpramātaiva pāpmadoṣādivarjitaḥ*" BSBh.1.4, pp.23-4.

In Śaṅkara's commentarial work, words like *anubhava* and *avagati* are not mystical terms as it is the case in later Advaita developments where they are integrated into the discipline of *Yoga* as propounded by Patañjali. Seeking to root itself in the Advaita tradition of Śaṅkara while apparently unaware of the fundamental differences that exist between the school of Śaṅkara and that of Patañjali, Swami Vivekananda and other representatives of the neo-Vedānta movement assert that mystical experience supplants the *pramāṇatva* of the Upaniṣads for self-knowledge.[118] This is erroneous since in Śaṅkara's non-dual tradition, the *pramāṇatva* of the Upaniṣads, characterized by its singular mechanism of eliminating all that is not-Self, can never be dispensed with. As the above passage shows, the experience of the one self without a second that is obtained from the Upaniṣads simply means the absence of identification with the factors of knowledge. For the issue is the removal of the false belief that one is a knower, something against which the non-dual experience derived from trance (liberation being obtained in the trance state of *samādhi* in neo-Vedānta) is totally ineffective. If direct experience or *anubhava* is fundamentally important in Śaṅkara's system, it is not in the sense that it is a more appropriate means of knowledge than the Upaniṣadic teachings, as understood in neo-Vedānta. It is rather because it results from understanding the sentences of the Upaniṣads when taught by the qualified teacher to the qualified aspirant.

2.1 Ways of knowing in the discipline of *nivrtti dharma*

"Scriptures, etc., are not the sole means of knowledge with regard to the inquiry into *Brahman* as they are concerning the inquiry into *dharma*. What then? scriptures, etc., as well as experience (*anubhava*), and so forth, are the valid means of knowledge here, because the knowledge of *Brahman* culminates in experience and because it has an entity as its object" (BSBh.1.1.2).[119]

Śaṅkara follows the Mīmāṁsā system in the way it conducts its textual inquiries regarding *dharma* (as in rites to be performed). Śaṅkara accepts the six criteria used in Mīmāṁsā,[120] and so it goes

[118] *The Limits of Scripture, Vivekananda's Reinterpretation of the Vedas.* Anantanand Rambachan. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1994, pp.118-119.

[119] "*na dharmajijñāsāyāmiva śrutyādaya eva pramāṇaṁ brahmajiñāsāyām / kiṁtu śrutyādayo'nubhavādayaśca yathāsaṁbhavamiha pramāṇam anubhavāvasānatvādbhūtavastu viṣayatvācca brahmajñānasya*" BSBh, p.8.

[120] The series of hermeneutical principles (*ṣaḍliṅgas*) used to determine the significance of the *śruti* texts comprises: consistency between the beginning and concluding sections of a given topic (*upakrama-upasaṁhāra*); repetition (*abhyāsa*); novelty in content (*apūrvatā*); fruitfulness (*phala/prayojana*) corroborative

without saying that he regards a certain mastery of skills in textual analysis as important in ascertaining the meaning of the Upaniṣadic sentences. We may add that mastering such skills may have been intended to minimize speculation and discord within its own school. Although Śaṅkara largely embraces Mīmāṁsā exegesis, he affirms that the culmination of Vedāntic study lies in the immediate apprehension of the Self. Looking at the above quote, it would have been helpful if Śaṅkara had mentioned the complete list of valid means of knowledge relevant to the inquiry into the nature of reality. Rambachan thinks that "etc" indicates *anubhava* as one among many other factors leading the student to liberation and may stand as, "any experience that can be analyzed to support and reinforce the revelations of *śruti*."[121] Hirst rightly points out that Rambachan's view is incorrect, for it omits the significant point which Śaṅkara makes later in the same section, that the knowledge of *Brahman* has an already existent entity as its object, and that it culminates in *anubhava*.[122] Śaṅkara's emphasis that the knowledge of *Brahman* culminates in *anubhava* cannot be a reference to any ordinary experience. In the light of passages in the US (18.200-3) and BSBh (1.1.2), Hirst suggests that *anubhava* concerns the witness. And on the basis of numerous passages, among which she mentions US.1.216 &18, she makes clear that for Śaṅkara, it is uniquely the scriptures that yield *anubhava*. She thus joins Comans on this point.

Although I broadly share this view, I do not think that the direct apprehension of *Brahman* as witness is the context-free state of consciousness that liberation is. Following Ram-Prasad's explanation of liberation, this apprehension certainly comes to mean "de-individuation" (2001, p.189), albeit "de-individuation" here signifies identification with the ground or substratum of the universe, something that still entails duality, and cannot constitute liberation proper. We shall return to this significant point in the next section where we examine the role that the great Upaniṣadic sentences or *mahāvākyas* play within the *nivṛtti* component of Śaṅkara's soteriology. For now, let us pursue with the meaning of "etc" in *"śrutyādaya"* mentioned in the above citation. From

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statements (*arthavāda*); and overall consistency of the text (*upapatti*).

[121] Rambachan, 1991, p.114. Quoted from J.G. Suthren Hirst. *Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, A Way of Teaching*. Routledge Curzon Hindu Studies Series, London, 2005. p.66.

[122] Ibid.

passages like BSBh.2.1.6, we can surmise that "etc" refers to reasoning that is in accord with the revelation. If the revelation has the power to generate the knowledge of the self as it really is, it does not exclude the use of reasoning, which is seen to remove the doubts that may creep up upon hearing the Upaniṣadic instructions. In BSBh.2.1.6, where Śaṅkara refers to Bṛ.2.4.5: "You see Maitreyī, it is one's self which one should see and hear, and on which one should reflect and concentrate," reasoning and reflection (*manana*), besides attentive listening to the scriptures (*śravaṇa*), are enjoined. And we read, "Not by the use of 'dry' reasoning can the Self be apprehended here. It is only the reasoning that conforms to the Upaniṣads that is accepted, for it is an ancillary means to experience."[123] This being said, we shall note that Śaṅkara also sees as an imperative that scriptural assertions do not contradict what everyone accepts to be true in ordinary experience. For example, he states that if scriptures were to assert that fire is cold, they should be rejected.[124]

Therefore, the *pramāṇatva* of the Upaniṣads rests, ultimately, on the experience that consists in directly apprehending *Brahman* as one's immediate and self-revealed awareness. Exegetical and logical factors are not excluded, though they occupy a subordinate position.

2.2 The significance of the *mahāvākyas* in the discipline of *nivrtti dharma*

Let us now look at what is generally understood as the immediate conditions that generate the apprehension of the Absolute as self. It seems that there are two stages or movements to the Upaniṣadic instruction, although at times, this seems to constitute a point of contention between Śaṅkara and his followers, notably his disciple Sureśvara. The first movement is negative in nature in the sense that it seeks the elimination of the false content of awareness, its extrinsic properties. Śaṅkara seems to consider this stage sufficient to ascertain the reality of *Brahman* as self, on the

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[123] "*nānena miṣeṇa śuṣkatarkasyātrātmalābhaḥ saṁbhavati / śrutyanugṛhīta eva hyatra tarko'nubhavāṅgatvenāśrīyate* " BSBh, pp.188-9. See also Śaṅkara's *Upadeśasāhasrī* 18.184.

[124] BSBh.1.3.28 and BṛBh.2.1.20. Vācaspati also echoes this view while commenting on Śāṅkara's *Adhyāsabhāṣya*: 'I' common to all men cannot be negatived even by a thousand Upaniṣads, that being opposed to experience. A thousand scriptures, verily, cannot convert a pot into a cloth. Therefore, because of opposition to experience, we see fit to hold that the Upaniṣads have but a figurative sense." *The Bhāmatī of Vācaspati on Śaṅkara's Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* with an English translation by S.S Suryanarayana Sastri. Theosophical Publishing House, Madras, India, 1933, p.5.

grounds that it guarantees the absence of plurality in one's intrinsic awareness, which itself cannot be falsified and is revealed as the sole reality. Here, the impossibility to falsify one's own immediate awareness is taken as the criterion of its ultimate reality.[125] Sureśvara, however, is not merely satisfied with the reality that obtains as a consequence of the impossibility to falsify one's immediate awareness. He presses for a second movement that is 'positive' in nature in the sole sense that it points to the non-difference between pure awareness or consciousness—left manifest subsequent to the first movement—and one's essential nature of being. This second aspect of the teaching process is characterized by the great or principal statements of the *Upaniṣads* such as "*tat tvam asi*" (You are That) as stated by a teacher to his student.[126] Such a *mahāvākya* does not share the usual function of a sentence that offers a linguistic description of a given object. The referent "That," the *Brahman* devoid of all *saṁsāric* characteristics, is used in the *mahāvākya* to cause the realization of the non-difference between *Brahman* and self. It seems that for Sureśvara, these two phases of the Upaniṣadic process of teaching are inseparable, the negative phase being the necessary basis to the realization triggered by the *mahāvākya*. In fact, there might very well be little room for disagreement between Śaṅkara and Sureśvara's views, since the second phase predominantly advocated by the latter may be seen as a 'healthy' supplementary tool to dispose of any doubt that could survive the general Upaniṣadic *via negativa* process of teaching. Perhaps, as Hirst suggests, statements like "*tat tvam asi*" helped refuting the Buddhist charge of vacuity, a dangerous charge if all the Upaniṣadic teachings were to terminate with the negative assertion "not this, not this." To overcome this philosophical

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[125] "[The statement] "not this, not this" eliminates what is imagined. But here [with regard to the Self] It remains established" (*na ceti netīti yathā vikalpitaṁ niṣidhyate'trāpyavaśeṣasiddhaye*) *A Thousand Teachings of Sri Śaṅkarācārya* (*Upadeśasāhasrī*. US). Original Sanskrit and translation into English by Swāmi Jjagadānanda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, India, 1941, ch.19.18, p.294.

[126] "The meaning of the sentence "I am *Brahman*" is understood from that sentence [*tat tvam asi*] alone" (*yo'yamahaṁ brahmeti vākyārtha tatpratipattirvākyādeveti*). *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi of Sureśvara*. Original Sanskrit and English translation by R. Balasubramanian. University of Madras, 1988, p.110. In some places Śaṅkara, like Sureśvara, supports the view that the immediate apprehension of *Brahman* is the result of properly understanding the sense of the words used in such a *māhāvakya*. In US.18.172, he writes: " The sentence [*tat tvam asi*] [reveals] the immediate/innermost self like the statement 'You are the tenth man' " (*daśamastvamasītyevaṁ vākyaṁ syātpratyagātmani*). See also US.18. 173-178. But in US.18.19, he seems to assert that the formula "*netinetyātma*" is *final*: "...No, [repetition of knowledge is not necessary] the secret teachings end with 'not this, not this' " (*naitadevaṁ rahasyānāṁ netinetyavasānataḥ*). This seeming contradiction is also apparent in BSBh.4.1.2.

pitfall, among others, Hirst suggests that this *mahāvākya* is to be seen in continuity with other key Upaniṣadic passages such as the other three traditional *mahāvākyas* and the important declaration of Tai.2.1, "Brahman is Reality, Consciousness, Infinite." She suggests that these statements support and correct one another.[127] That there is continuity and similarity of intent is clear from the statement that Śaṅkara makes in US.18.198, where he judges that realizing *Brahman* as self may come either way: "The conjoined words ["*tat*" and "*tvam*"] convey the same meaning as [the statement] "*neti neti*."[128] We should thus understand that, at least for Śaṅkara, both types of scriptural declarations stand as a valid means of knowledge since they fulfil the criteria required of a *pramāṇa*—the proposition must reveal a previously unknown/unattained object, and it must be non-falsifiable. In both cases, it is the sentences of the Upaniṣads, the sole recognized *pramāṇa* for the Self, which allow the student's experience to correspond with the entity to be known, when the qualifying features of his innermost self coalesce perfectly with those of the object sought, *Brahman*.

Another problem arises with regard to whether the meaning of "*tat tvam asi*" is grasped through a single instruction or by way of repeating it. The problem may be stated as follows: If "*tat tvam asi*" points to the coalescence between one's immediate awareness and *Brahman*, expressed as the constant knower, witness of the intellect and all its modifications,[129] or as the principle that creates and permates all,[130] and so forth, does it correspond to the kind of context-free realization that the Upaniṣads speak of? Can we say that experiencing oneself as the cause for the birth, order, and dissolution of the world, is a context-free realization? I would suggest that it is not, for Śaṅkara tells us that with respect to the students who are still afflicted with ignorance, doubts, or confusion, the *mahāvākya* can provide 'partial insights' as it were, gradually leading to the full realization of *Brahman* free from all definitions and functions. In BSBh 4.1.2, responding to the view that the repetition of the instruction "*tat tvam asi*" cannot be fruitful if the realization of its meaning does not occur at the first hearing, Śaṅkara explains that,

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[127] Hirst, pp.139 & 177.
[128] "*evaṁ ca netinetyarthaṁ gamayetāṁ parasparam.*"
[129] US.18.152-53, 73-74, 176...
[130] US.1.23, 18.1, BSBh4.1.2, ChBh.6.8-16, TaiBh.2.1 & 7...

"It is established that the meaning of a sentence, which is not fully grasped when a sentence is heard only once, becomes correctly ascertained through eliminating the false notions obstructing its meaning. Moreover, this sentence 'you are That' identifies [looks at] the meaning of the word 'you' with that of the word 'That.' The word 'That' signifies *Brahman* that is existence, the seer and the cause for the origin of the world, etc."[131]
"Although the Self that is to be known is indivisible, nevertheless, numerous aspects are being superimposed on it, such as body, sense organs, mind, intellect, knowing objects, and so on. By applying oneself to removing an inferior [less valid] part with another, it is proper, in this context, [to speak] of gradual knowledge."[132]

Although apprehending the witnessing consciousness as self means apprehending the sole entity that is to be known, *Brahman* (thus legitimizing its appellation *anubhava*), it is not a 'context free' state of consciousness since it involves experiencing oneself as *Brahman* with respect to something other, i.e., objects of consciousness. The context in which the scriptures allow for the student experiencing/appreciating himself as witness is, necessarily, a context of superimposition where such functions as 'witnessing' are figuratively attributed to *Brahman* to do away with other misconceptions that the student entertains.[133] The statements identifying the self (you) with the Absolute (That) defined as the always cognizant principle from which the world originates, and so forth, are not definitive. All the functions attributed to the Absolute, i.e., witnessing, creating, controlling, and so forth, are superimposed and need to be eliminated to give way to the realization of the one reality without a second. Before their elimination, these characterizations of the Absolute are helpful to the students who do not have the sharpest mind[134] (those who are still afflicted by doubts, fear, and other such defects). These temporary attributions, which remain meaningful so long as the student perceive duality, have the capacity to bring the enquiry into the Absolute to fruition by allowing for a gradual realization of the changeless. In the next chapter, where we examine the traditional Advaita

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[131] "*dṛśyante hi sakṛcchṛutādvākyānmandapratītaṁ vākyārthamāvartayantastattadābhāsavyudāsena samyakpratipadyamānāḥ / apica tattvamasītyetadvākyaṁ tvaṁpadārthasya tatpadārthabhāvamācaṣṭe / tatpadena ca prakṛtaṁ sadbrahmekṣitṛ jagato janmādikāraṇamabhidhīyate*" BSBh, p. 462.
[132] "*yadyapi ca pratipattavya ātmā niraṁśastathāpyadhyāropitaṁ tasminbahvaṁśatvaṁ dehendriyamanobuddhiviṣayavedanādilakṣaṇaṁ tatraikenāvadhānenaikamaṁśamapohatyāpareṇāparamiti yujyate tatra kramavatī pratipatiḥ*" Ibid.
[133] "Opponent- There is this defect that the knower cognizes a defective field.
Advaitin- No, because of the figurative use of being a cognizing entity for the immutable entity whose nature is but cognition. It is like the figurative heating activity of the fire that is [in fact] nothing but heat" (*nanu ayameva doṣaḥ yat doṣavatkṣetravijñātṛvam iti cet na vijñānasvarūpasya eva avikriyasya eva vijñātṛtvopacārāt yathā uṣṇatāmātreṇa agneḥ taptikriyopacāraḥ tadvat*) BGBh. 13.2(17).
[134] Ibid., p.463.

teaching process based on the analysis of the three states, we will see how this peculiar type of instruction that leads to full realization through stages, unfolds.

It is important to stress, yet again, that when the sentence "*tat tvam asi*" indicates the non-difference between the student's self and the witnessing consciousness from which the universe springs forth, it does reveal *Brahman* alone, albeit with respect to the realm of names and forms where plurality is manifested and objectified. Although in this instance, the *mahāvākya* reveals the Self 'in context,' it still fulfils the criteria required of a *pramāṇa* since the proposition reveals a previously unknown object that is non-falsifiable, and because it culminates in *anubhava.*

This highlights the idea that Śaṅkara accepts the criterion of *anubhava* (identifying with the witnessing awareness) to validate various scriptural views that we may broadly designate as theistic, such as the view that *Brahman* is the cause of the world, its ordainer, and so forth. This is extremely relevant insofar as it helps generate a better understanding of the general intent of religious language in Śaṅkara's soteriology. Indeed, it carries profound implications concerning the 'correct' way to understand Śaṅkara's interpretation of religious views present in scriptures. It is also extremely significant in determining the student's degree of participation, as he follows the Advaita spiritual discipline, which takes place within the orbit of a Supreme Being and the various other dimensions that the existence of such an entity entails (i.e., creation, transcendence, rule, benevolence, object of devotion and meditation, and so on and so forth). This idea will progressively unfold in the chapters to come.

Coming back to the role of the *mahāvākya* proper in the *nivṛtti* discipline, sentences like "*tat tvam asi*" do not turn *Brahman* into an object of knowledge because *Brahman*, Śaṅkara asserts, cannot be the object of any proposition.[135] Grammatical torturing or mere repetition of specific statements like "*neti neti*" or "*tat tvam asi,*" have no place in the scheme of Śaṅkara's soteriology. What matters is the elimination of the student's misconception that he is not the Absolute, and that happens through the Upaniṣadic instructions that draw the pupil to the direct apprehension of the Self. And it is seems

[135] See Śaṅkara's gloss on Ke.2.5-6.

that the *mahāvākya* which identifies the Self as the self-reflexive witnessing consciousness that is one's immediate subject of being, fulfils this task. It allows the student to abandon his former mis-identifications with the aggregate of body, mind, and senses, and thus, to identify with the witnessing awareness, his true self. Although this interpretation of the *mahāvakya*—"you" meaning the witness, source of the world, etc—works in the backdrop of the witnessed, i.e., the objects of consciousness that are judiciously positioned by the scriptures and the teacher in the general teaching framework of superimposition and negation, it is effective because it reveals the Absolute that is consciousness in an immediate and direct way. Because it works in association with reason,[136] through which the student can ascertain the objects of consciousness as having no existence of their own, the dualistic conclusion of the Sāṁkhya school is avoided. Most importantly, as we have already noted, understanding the meaning of the *mahāvākya* in this way is, for Śaṅkara, entirely valid, because it culminates in the student's direct experience, expressed in the declaration: "I am Brahman."

We shall now make some remarks on the value of discrimination since for Śaṅkara, accessing the meaning of a *mahāvākya* and, consequently, identifying with the Self, demand discriminating the Self from the not-Self.

2.3 The role of discrimination in the discipline of *nivrtti dharma*

According to Śaṅkara, although the Self is a non-spatial and non-temporal reality, it is indicated through every experience, through every one of our cognitions,[137] and is thus ever immediate. It is because this non-phenomenal Self, substratum of all manifestations,[138] is the one self-evident and all-pervading light of consciousness that is indiscriminately present in all beings as the witness of their

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[136] "The characteristic of the not-Self is removed from the self which is already known as 'I', by teachings such as 'You are [that]' coupled with reason, like the idea of a snake from a rope" (US.18.4) Hirst's translation, p.152.

[137] "*pratibodhaviditaṁ*" Ke.2.4. "How is this *Brahman* known correctly? It is known with every cognition. The word *'bodha'* indicates the cognitions pertaining to the intellect...as the witness of all cognitions and a mere power of consciousness, [this Self] is indicated through the cognitions themselves, indistinct in the midst of cognitions. There is no other way to the knowledge of the Self" (*kathaṁ tu tat brahma samyagviditaṁ bhavatītyevamarthamāha—pratibodhaviditaṁ bodhaṁ bodhaṁ pratividitam / bodhaśabdena bauddhāḥ pratyayā ucyante / ...sarvapratyayadarśī cit śaktisvarūpamātraḥ pratyayaireva pratyayeśvaviśiṣṭatayā lakṣyate nānyaddvāramātmano vijñānāya*) KeBh.2.4. Īśādi, p.88.

[138] "All this shines through his self-effulgence" Ka.2.2.15.

own minds[139] that Śaṅkara insists, it is not to be produced anew and is not dependent on the attainment of a particular state at some point in the future.[140] For Śaṅkara, *saṁsāric* life proceeds from the fundamental and natural, albeit erroneous association of unbounded consciousness with the limiting adjuncts of body, mind, and sense organs.[141] This false association does not, in the least, alter the fact that humans are intrinsically free.[142] Since the crux of our feeling of finitude is nothing more and nothing less than a misconception caused by wrongly identifying with the not-Self, Śaṅkara affirms that discrimination must be at the heart of the Advaita Vedānta discipline. Indeed, it is by discriminating between his innermost subject or awareness and the superimposed limiting adjuncts like the body and so on, that the Advaitin pupil is able to determine these adjuncts to be mere linguistic juggling.[143] When the student acquires discrimination, there is no obstruction to his apprehending the meaning of such Upaniṣadic statements as "you are That" or "I am Brahman." Thus, an important element of the discipline of *nivṛtti* is the discrimination between the self-established and self-lit witness in all beings, and all that it witnesses, the phenomena in constant transformation, beginning from the gross body and ending with the 'I' notion. This, according to Śaṅkara, is what knowledge is.[144] The Upaniṣads and *smṛti* texts such as the *Bhagavadgītā* provide the basis for this discriminative procedure that is so crucial to secure the liberating knowledge of the Self.

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[139] "I see the modification of the mind in all beings without exception. [But] how can I, who am changeless, have differentiation in any respect?" US.2.3 (metrical part). Mayeda's translation, p.126.

[140] "Since liberation is not a result, it is not sound to hold that it requires work as its means. An eternal entity isn't effected/manifested through work or knowledge" (*akāryatvācca niḥśreyasasya karmasādhanatvānupapatiḥ na hi nityaṁ vastu karmaṇā jñānena vā kriyate)* BGBh.18.66 (3); "liberation is eternal [always attained]"(*nityatvāt mokṣasya)* BGBh.18.66 (5).

[141] "And so proceeds this natural superimposition [between Self and not-Self] which exists as a misconception and has no beginning and no end. It manifests in a form that is familiar to us all, the form of being an agent and enjoyer [the receptacle of the results of our actions and cognitions]"(*evamayamanādiananto naisargiko'dhyāso mithyāpratyayarūpaḥ kartṛtvabhoktṛtvapravartakaḥ sarvalokapratyakṣaḥ) Adhyāsabhāṣya*, p.4. In BSBh.1.2.12, Śaṅkara speaks of the properties of *saṁsāra* in terms of the individual's sense of agency and enjoyment, etc., which result from the identification with the body, etc. (*na hyatra śārīraḥ kṣetrajñaḥ kartṛtvabhoktṛtvādinā saṁsāradharmeṇopeto vivakṣyate*).

[142]"Where there is superimposition, its basis is not affected in the least by the defects or the qualities pertaining to the thing superimposed" (*yatra yadadhyāsastatkṛtena doṣeṇa guṇena vā'ṇumātreṇāpi sa na saṁbadhyate) Adhyāsabhāṣya*, p.2.

[143] "It [the world] is a verbal handle, its basis is in speech. What is that? It is transformation, a mere name" (*vāgāraṁbhaṇaṁ vāgālaṁbanamityetat ko'sau vikāro nāmadheyaṁ nāmaiva)* ChBh.6.1.4, p.245.

[144] " Men of discrimination call ignorance this superimposition that is characterized as such [superimposition of the not-Self on the immediate self]. And they name knowledge, the determination of the real nature of the entity [Self] through discriminating/separating it [from the superimposed] (*tametamevaṁ lakṣaṇamadhyāsaṁ paṇḍitā avidyeti manyante tadvivekena ca vastusvarūpāvadhāraṇaṁ vidyāmāhuḥ) Adhyāsabhāṣya*, p.2.

In chapter 13 of the BG, for instance, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna to know him as the field-knower (knower of the world of plurality, including men and divinities) existing in all fields, and adds that knowledge is the knowledge of the field and the field-knower. For Śaṅkara, to have any doubt as to the probability of existence of any thing or to define any phenomenon as false, one must already possess—be—that which is true or changeless. To know anything as false necessitates something which does not share the status of being false or relative, and that, according to him, is the Absolute that is immediately available to everyone as their own awareness expressed through the concept of 'I', and which, therefore, does not necessitate an intermediary to make itself known. It is through discrimination that the student becomes aware of the existence of a constant principle that effortlessly illumines and pervades all external and internal changes relating to the particular entity with whom he was identified. The effect of the Upaniṣadic formula "*neti neti*" is the elimination of all that is not-Self, i.e., all objective and subjective limiting adjuncts[145] that ordinarily sketch our conception of self. Liberation ensues from that. In the case of the *mahāvākya* "you are That," Śaṅkara tells us in his US, the identity of referents of the two words is made possible through discrimination. In US.18.181, the process of discriminating the meaning of "you" (the meaning of the word "That" not being an object of contention) is called *anvaya-vyatireka* (agreement-difference).[146] It is through this discriminative process that all objects of consciousness (pertaining or not to the psychophysical organism) are recognized as not-Self, and are excluded as possible meanings of the sentence. In both cases, the scriptures play a strictly negative role. They simply remove superimpositions. It is in this way that the teaching culminating in the statements "*neti neti*" or "*tat tvam asi*" are able to express what

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[145] The first four groups of adjuncts enumerated hereafter represent the *jīva*'s subtle body (*sūkṣmaśarīra*) —the mental equipment (*antaḥkaraṇa*, i.e., intellect, mind, and 'I' notion), the senses (*jñānendriyāṇi*), the vital breaths (*prāṇāḥ*), the organs of action (*karmendriyāṇi*), the gross elements (*pañcabhūtas*) and the subtle elements (*tanmātras*). See *The Vedānta-Sāra of Sadananda*. Translation by M. Hiriyanna. Poona Oriental Book Agency, 1929. p.49. The limiting adjuncts spoken of in Advaita Vedānta closely follow the Sāṁkhya classification of the 'realities' (*tattvā*) or products of the eternally existent 'nature' (*pradhāna* or *prakṛti*). For a somewhat detailed comparative study of metaphysics in Advaita and Sāṁkhya see ch.3 of *Saṁkhya and Advaita Vedanta: A comparative study*. Anima Sen Gupta. Published by Monoranjan Sen 'Gour Ashram', Lucknow, India, 1973.

[146] For a detailed exposition of this technique, see *Sureśvara's Naiṣkarmyasiddhi* (chapter 2). See also chapter three of the present study where I examine this process of *anvaya-vyatireka* in the context of the analysis of the three states.

Sureśvara calls *avākyārtha* or the non-object of the sentence.[147] There is no indication, in Śaṅkara's commentaries, that the true sense of these statements comes through applying such technique as '*jahadajahallakṣaṇā*' that involves retaining and rejecting a part of the primary sense of the words "That" and "you," as Comans suggests.[148] It is a fact that in later Advaita literature, it is generally understood that "*tat*" designates *Brahman* that is omnipresent, omniscient, without limits or parts, and so on, while "*tvam*" designates the individual self with his limited faculties of knowledge, action, etc. The verb "*asti*" expresses a relation, that of sharing a common substrate. According to this popular view, non-difference between *Brahman* and the self obtains with the retention, in each, of what they have in common, and with the rejection of what differentiates them. However, Śaṅkara sees the function of these words as merely allowing the student to apprehend their only meaning and referent *Brahman* which, in his view (Up.18.4), is already established as 'I'. As mentioned previously, these words act in negating the transmigratory adjuncts of body, mind, and sense organs (the attribute 'you') from the Self ('I'):

"From this [self-] established [*ātman* that is indicated by the word] 'I' the attribute 'you' is excluded —just as the notion of a serpent [is excluded] in application to a rope—by means of reasoning and such teachings as 'Thou art that' (i.e., Ch.6.13.3) and so forth."[149]

The quasi conventional view, among Advaitins, that the "*tat tvam asi*" sentence yields its result when part of the meaning of those terms is rejected, is really not obvious when considering Śaṅkara's above statement. Consciousness is established as the 'I', and is thus immediately available to everyone. Were part of the meaning of both these words to be given up, the significance of Śaṅkara's above assertion among others where he clearly asserts that a) there is no actual distinction between the individual self and the Absolute, and b) the Absolute is to be cognized as one's immediate self, would be greatly diminished.

By revealing *Brahman* as the immediate self of the pupil, such a scriptural statement demands discrimination but not the application of the technique named *jahadajahallakṣaṇā*. In fact, Śaṅkara

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[147] *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*, 3.28-29.
[148] Comans, pp.297-8.
[149] US.18.4. Mayeda, p.172.

thinks that scriptures simply enable the pupil to recognize the fact that he never was anything other than *Brahman*:

"Opposed to the previous understanding, i.e., being an agent and one who experiences/enjoys [the results of actions], is the realization of one who knows *Brahman*: 'I am *Brahman* whose nature is free from the sense of agency and enjoyment in the three times [past, present, and future]. Even before, I was neither an agent nor an experiencer. And not even now or in the future, shall I become so'."[150]

A key idea from this citation is that the correct apprehension of scriptural declarations like "I am Brahman," entails the complete dissociation from the not-Self, all factors involved in action, knowledge and experience. It is worth noting that discrimination is operative at all levels of the Advaita *nivṛtti* discipline, that is throughout *śravaṇa* (attentive listening to scriptures), *manana* (reasoning) and *nididhyāsana* (concentration), the latter two being spiritual disciplines for the aspirants in whom realization does not occur at the first hearing of the Upaniṣadic instructions. We shall now give a brief exposition of these disciplines.

2.4 Traditional *nivrtti* practices: *śravana, manana,* and *nididhyāsana*

When the first instruction has not generated the knowledge of the Self, complementary disciplines that are not related to the performance of any action per se, are recommended to remove the doubts with which the student is still beset. In Śaṅkara's system, the significant disciplines of *manana* and *nididhyāsana* are to be seen as facilitating the rise of knowledge and are placed—along with *śravaṇa* —within the *nivṛtti dharma* or the discipline of knowledge. They cannot be undertaken prior to or in replacement of the instructions imparted by a teacher, for these disciplines are *vastu-tantra*, which means that they depend on the uniform and immutable 'object' that the Upaniṣadic texts present. We will return to this important distinction.

The practice of *manana* involves reflecting on the texts heard. It is a 'turning back' on what has been heard, an inspection of the steps involved in ascertaining the meaning of the texts. It requires

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[150] "*pūrvasiddhakartṛtvabhoktṛtvaviparīta hi triśvapi kāleṣu akartṛtvābhoktṛtvasvarūpaṁ brahmāhamasmi netaḥ pūrvamapi kartā bhoktā vā ahamāsaṁ nedānīṁ bhaviṣyatkāla iti brahmavidavagacchati*" BSBh.4.1.13. See also BSBh.1.3.19, p.112.

the use of reasoning when it accords with scriptures and common experience. Exercising reason minimizes the risks of errors in understanding, and allows for a thorough grasping of the meaning of texts. It is a process by which perspectives arrived at, and which militate against the revelation or against plain experience, are discarded. Manana also includes *vicāra* (lit. examination or inquiry), the inquiry into the Self through such means as the analysis of the states.[151]

In BSBh.4.1.1, where a discussion on the necessity to repeat the *nivṛtti* practices unfolds, Śaṅkara describes the practice of *nididhyāsana* as a mental act, involving unwavering concentration and devotion to the Self. Śaṅkara brings out the level of concentration/absorption that this practice entails by comparing it to the state of mind of a woman who awaits the return of her husband from a journey, thinking of him continuously, anxious, and devoted.[152] It is a continuous concentration on the self-evident consciousness, the principle that remains uncontradicted by the *negativa* method of the Upaniṣads, and which is, ultimately, the characterization of the Existent. Because it involves concentration on the Upaniṣadic *vastu*, it necessitates *anubhava* or the direct apprehension of the Self. Identifying with the self-reflexive awarenenss is thus the prerequisite to *nididhyāsana*. This will become particularly significant when we examine the issue of devotion in Śaṅkara's soteriology, in chapter 5.[153]

There is no doubt that Śaṅkara sees the practices of reflecting on the meaning of the Upaniṣadic instructions, and unwavering concentration/meditation on the Self, as direct means of liberation. However, in light of his repeated assertions that *śravaṇa* alone can lead to self-knowledge, we may

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[151] *Asparśa Yoga, A Study of Gauḍapāda's Māṇḍūkya-Kārikā*, by C.A. Cole. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1982. pp.92-3. This particular type of *vicāra* is described in chapter three.

[152] BSBh.4.1.1, p.460.

[153] This point is has not been emphasized by scholars in their explanation of *nididhyāsana,* in the context of Śaṅkara's understanding of the traditional spiritual discipline/means of knowledge mentioned in Bṛ.2.4.5: "You see, Maitreyī, it is one's self which one should see and hear, and on which one should reflect and concentrate." To the best of my knowledge, *anubhava,* with regard to the above Advaita method, is either understood as the final means of knowledge, which takes precedence over scriptures, or it is understood in terms of any ordinary experience (Rambachan 1991). Hirst has rightly rejected both views and has brought forth the ideas that regarding the process of knowledge, *anubhava* refers to, "*dṛśi*, the context-free state of consciousness," and "the final arbiter"(Hirst, 2005, pp66-67, Ram-Prasad 2001, p.171). As already suggested, *anubhava,* taken as the apprehension of *Brahman* in its form of witness, cannot be context-free. However, it may certainly be seen as a cooperating factor in this process of realizing *Brahman*. This will be further argued later.

assume that he viewed *manana* and *nididhyāsana* as auxiliary practices.[154] Although acknowledging that *śravaṇa* alone can engender knowledge, Śaṅkara says that a repetition of these disciplines is adequate to discern the meaning of the liberating words of the Upaniṣads:

"Even when the teaching [occurs] once, repetition [of the instruction] is proper. Repetition is suitable, naturally, when the teaching occurs more than once."[155] "For one who is able to directly experience the condition of *Brahman-Ātman* at the first utterance of the statement, 'You are That,' repetition is unwanted. But for the individual who is not able [to directly apprehend the Self at the first hearing], repetition is in order. Thus in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, exhorting (Uddālāka) over and over again: 'O revered one, instruct me once again', having destroyed the causes of his doubts, he (Uddālaka) teaches him, 'You are That' repeatedly. And this [instruction] is indicated in the text: 'It is to be heard, reflected on, and meditated upon' "(BṛBh.4.5.6).[156]

It is the view of Śaṅkara that for those who cannot ascertain the meaning of "That" and/or "you" due to absence of knowledge, doubt, or misconception, repeated recourse to the practices of hearing and reasoning, in accord with the scriptures, is a necessity. Such practices end in the apprehension of the meaning of these two words.[157]

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[154] William Cenkner, following Mādhusūdhana's line of thought on this topic, suggests, instead, that *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* are a "three-fold operation" by which he means that these three are the necessary stages to achieve liberation. *A Tradition of Teachers: Śaṅkara and the Jagadgurus Today*. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1983 (pp.21-24; 65).

[155] *"sakṛdupadeśvapyāvṛttisiddhiḥ / asakṛdupadeśastvāvṛtteḥ sūcakaḥ"* BSBh.4.1.1. p, 460.

[156] *"bhavedāvṛttyānarthakyataṁ prati yastattvamasīti sakṛduktameva brahmātmatvamanubhavituṁ śakhyāt / yastu na śaknoti taṁ pratyupayujyata evāvṛttiḥ / tathāhi chandogye 'tatvamasi śvetaketo'* (Ch.6.8.7) *ityupadiśya 'bhūya eva mā bhagavānvijñāpayatu' (ibid) iti punaḥ punaḥ paricodyamānastattadāśaṅkākāraṇaṁ nirākṛtya tatvamasītyevāsakṛdupadiśati / tathāca śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ ityadi darśitam"* (BṛBh.4.5.6).

[157] *"yeṣāmetaupadārthāvajñānasaṁśayaviparyayapratibaddhau teṣāṁ tattvamasītyetadvākyaṁ svārthe pramāṁ notpādayituṁ śaknoti...padārthavivekaprayojanaḥ śāstrayuktyabhyāsaḥ"* BSBh.4.1.2. p, 462. It is interesting to note that no mention is made of *nididhyāsana*.

2.4.1 Later Advaitins' understanding of *śravana, manana,* and *nididhyāsana*

Due to the presence of passages like Bṛ.2.4.5.and 4.5.6 (immediately above), and "One who wants to become *Brahman* shall meditate on *Brahman*" (Mu 3.2.9), and since such passages lend support to the view that knowledge is dependent upon meditation, Vācaspati and his followers[158] have presented the view that knowledge is, to a great extent, dependent on action. However, these contentions are not representative of the *nivṛtti* discipline as presented by Śaṅkara himself, and lie at the heart of today's greatest misconceptions about Śaṅkara's system. Below are two passages from the *Bhāmatī* on the issue of the three means of self-knowledge:

"Concrete knowledge (*vijñāna*) or immediate intuition (*sākṣātkāra*) arises through the maturation of repeated practice of reverent and continuous and prolonged meditation on the content of previous hearing and pondering"(Bhā.1.3.14).[159]
"By the word "concentration," the author refers to the yogic practice called *saṁyama* (see *Yogasūtra* 3.1.4). This word covers fixing the mind on an object (*dhāraṇā*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and concentration carried to the point of trance (*samādhi*). As the *Yoga Sūtra* says, "The three collectively are called "*saṁyama.*" In this connection, "The Self should be heard about, pondered over..." (Bṛ. 2.4.5) teaches 'fixing the mind' (*dhāraṇā*). The text, " It should be subjected to sustained meditation" (ibid.) teaches meditation (*dhyāna*). "It should be seen" (ibid.) teaches concentration carried to the point of trance (*samādhi*). For '*samādhi*' is defined in the *Yoga Sūtras* in the words, " '*samādhi*' is that same meditation when it illumines the object alone, and the mind is virtually eliminated in the object" (Bhā.2.3.39).[160]

In the first passage, we see that Vācaspati advocates a lengthy and sustained meditation as the last means of knowledge, something which contradicts Śaṅkara's express statement that knowledge can simply manifest through hearing and deliberating on the Upaniṣadic teachings. In the second passage, Vācaspati equates the traditional Advaita practices of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*

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[158] Vācaspati is the founder of the *Bhāmatī* school of Advaita Vedānta, traditionally identified as one of the two interpretive lines of Śaṅkara's teachings.
[159] "*tatpūrvakeṇa cādaranairantaryadīrdhakālāsevitena dhyānābhyāsaparipākena sākṣātkāro vijñānam.*" *The Method of the Vedānta (MV). A Critical account of the Advaita Tradition by Sri Swami Satchidānandendra Sarasvati, translated from the Sanskrit by Alston, A.J. Kegan Paul International, 1989, p.629.* Satchidānandendra regards the doctrine of repeated meditation on the content of the knowledge derived from *śravaṇa* and *manana*, as a direct borrowing from Maṇḍanamiśra's writings. The latter argued that after the knowledge was secured through *śravaṇa* and *manana*, powerful 'residues' of ignorance remained and had to be eliminated by the practice of repeated meditation of the truth obtained via the instructions of the Upaniṣads. In this regard, refer to the MV, pp.277-78; 282-286; 291.
[160] "*samādhiriti saṁyamamupalakṣayati / dhāraṇādhyānasamādhayo hi saṁyamapadavedanīyāḥ / yathāhuḥ trayamekatra saṁyamaḥ iti / atra śrotavyo mantavya iti dhāraṇopadeśaḥ nididhyāsitavya iti dhyānopadeśaḥ dṛṣṭavya iti samādherupadeśaḥ / yathāhuḥ tadeva dhyānamarthamātranirbhāsaṁ svarūpaśūnyamiva samādhiḥ iti*" Alston's translation, MV, p.631.

with the three disciplines of *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*, as found in Patañjali's teachings. Since in BG.6 and BSBh.2.3.39, Śaṅkara speaks about *samādhi* as a means taught in the Upaniṣads for self-realization, we may wrongly surmise that like Vācaspati, he takes *samādhi* and *nididhyāsana* as interchangeable terms. But as Satchidānandendra remarks,[161] this does not mean that the *samādhi* used in the passage refers to the *samādhi* obtained in the Yoga system taught by Patañjali. And in this regard, he writes:

"All that the *sūtra* (BS.2.3.39) intended to teach was that an injunction amounting to "the highest self should be seen through sustained meditation" cannot be carried out by the soul unless it has the feeling that it is an individual able to perform actions. One has the right to ask why the whole *Yoga Śāstra* discipline for obtaining *samādhi* through *saṁyama* should be dragged in here, where it has no place at all. The teaching, "It should be seen," cannot possibly amount to instruction to perform *samādhi*. For one must conclude that the reference of the Brahma-sūtra was to the immediate experience of the Self denoted by the word 'vision,' the result (not of the practices of the Yoga school but) of hearing the supreme Upaniṣadic texts, pondering over them and subjecting them to sustained meditation."[162]

We have already stressed that for Śaṅkara, the immediate apprehension of the Self is the antithesis of actions for the simple reason that this apprehension means the absence of the erroneous belief that one is an agent who knows, acts, and experiences. The *Bhāmatī* doctrine that knowledge arises through repetitive and prolonged meditations on the knowledge obtained from the practices of *śravaṇa* and *manana*, does not follow Śaṅkara's conception of the discipline of knowledge. For Śaṅkara, the genesis of knowledge accrues simultaneously with the elimination of false attributions. He justifies this position using the analogy of the rope-snake where, with the help of scriptures and a knowledgeable person, the true nature of the rope-snake is revealed simultaneously with the falsification of its 'snake' form. Such knowledge is 'direct' and need not be 'actualized' by any subsequent practices such as *nididhyāsana* as Vācaspati understands it. In addition, noting the context in which BSBh.2.3.39 is placed (the aim of the section being to demonstrate that the individual soul is an agent), it follows, as Satchidānandendra points out, that the word *samādhi* is used to show that it is only in the case where agency is taken as a quality of the self that meditation

[161] Although the identification of Advaita Vedānta practices (*śravaṇa...*) with those of the school of Patañjali poses obvious problems, it has not attracted the attention of many scholars. The notable exceptions are Satchidānandendra (1957), and more recently, Rukmani (2001) and Hirst (2005).
[162] MV, p.636

may be undertaken. And we get no indication from BSBh.2.3.39 that either Bādarāyaṇa or Śaṅkara refer to the *yogic* trance-like state of *samādhi*. As we will show, it would be incongruous to interpret it in such a way since both teachers explicitly reject the dualism involved in the schools of Yoga and Sāṁkhya (BSBh.2.1.9).

3 Securing self-knowledge: the curious shift

When speaking of the role of experience in Advaita Vedānta, Arvind Sharma suggests that in the course of the development of the Advaita school, an important shift occurred, where the emphasis on liberation supplanted that of knowledge:

"The emphasis shifted, perhaps within the Hindu tradition in general but certainly within the tradition of Advaita Vedānta in particular, to liberation (*mokṣa*): *mumukṣā* (the desire for liberation) replaced *jijñāsā* or the desire to know Brahman was deemed to be saving knowledge but somehow being saved became a stronger concern than knowing Brahman."

Sharma supports this contention by quoting a passage from the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*[163] which, as he acknowledges in a footnote, has not been definitely established as one of Śaṅkara's works. If Śaṅkara had been its author—there is a growing consensus that it is not the case—and granting that the treatise clearly establishes this 'shift' in preoccupation, i.e., from knowledge to liberation, it would certainly stand alone since it is not encountered anywhere in Śaṅkara's commentarial work or in his US. Also, Sharma does not tell us of the historical period during which such shift supposedly took place. As it will become clear, he is probably alluding to what are, in my opinion, complex historical misfortunes that have led to the assimilation of Advaita Vedānta with the Sāṁkhya and Yoga schools.

According to Christian Bouy, Advaitins had not manifested much interest for the Yoga school until the 17th century, which saw the first works of Advaitins on the *Yogasūtras* of Patañjali. To this

[163] "How to cross this ocean of phenomenal existence, what is to be my fate, and which of the means should I adopt, as to these I know nothing. Condescend to save me, O Lord, and describe at length how to put an end to the misery of this relative existence...As he speaks thus, tormented by the afflictions of the world—which is like a forest on fire—seeking his protection, the saint eyes him with a glanced softened with pity and spontaneously bids him give up all fear." *The Vivekacudāmaṇi of Śaṅkara*, quoted from *The Philosophy of Religion and Advaita Vedānta*, Arvind Sharma, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995. I fail to see how Sharma's above quote illustrates his so-called shift in emphasis from 'the desire to know' to 'the desire for liberation' unless, perhaps, he wishes to stress the importance of the grace of the Supreme Being and the guru in the process of liberation, which he may see as a 'later' development in the Advaita tradition.

effect, the author mentions Rāmānanda Sarasvati's *Yoga-maṇiprabhā* and Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha's *vṛttis* on the *Yogasūtras*: the *Sūtrārthabodhinī* and the *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā*.[164] This assertion is probably true if we are looking for actual Advaita treatises and commentaries on the *Yogasūtras*. However, this assimilation of schools, if Satchidānandendra is correct, may be traced back to the writings of Maṇḍanamiśra and Vācaspati. In any case, in its final form, the amalgamation of schools may be described as follows: Sāṁkhya represents the intellectual side of Advaita Vedānta since it is said to effect a conceptual and thus necessarily indirect knowledge of *Brahman*—by means of sustained discrimination between self and nature (*prakṛti*). The practices inherent in the Yoga tradition, culminating in the transcendental state of conception-free *samādhi*, represent the liberating aspect of Vedānta, that is the materialization of the knowledge of *Brahman*. It is certain that throughout a period of over 1000 years of exegetical work, numerous schools have supported the view that besides the knowledge of *Brahman*, an extraordinary state of mind had to be achieved or further efforts had to be made to deliver the goods, to actually transform knowledge into liberation. The doctrine of *prasaṁkhyāṇa* (repetition of knowledge), which is found in many forms but essentially involves turning the knowledge of *Brahman* into a constant reality—by eliminating the impressions of ignorance that persist after gaining knowledge of truth—is present in the writings of Maṇḍanamiśra and Bhartṛprapañca (both contemporaries of Śaṅkara). This doctrine is also found, albeit with certain variations, in the works of all modern Advaita teachers, such as Swami Chinmayananda and Swami Dayananda.

Surely, it is essential to stress that such a doctrine as the materialization of *ātmajñāna* does not find much support in Śaṅkara's commentaries on the authoritative Vedānta texts. In this literature, the correct knowledge of *Brahman* is always equated with emancipation or *mokṣa*. The recurrent attempts to connect the teachings of Śaṅkara with such doctrines as *prasaṁkhyāṇa* or *yogic samādhi* have been correctly rejected by Satchidānandendra.[165] More relevant to the role of experience in

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[164] Christian Bouy. *Les Nātha-Yogin et les Upaniṣads, Étude d'histoire de la litterature hindoue*. Collège de France, publication de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, Paris 1994. pp.67-8.

[165] "Repeated affirmation of what had been heard and reflected over once could not give rise to any new concrete metaphysical intuition that had not arisen in the first place. The theory results in the further difficulty

Śaṅkara Vedānta is Sharma's reference to the experience of the "living realization of Brahman," based on Śaṅkara's declaration, "When someone is convinced, in his heart, that he has realized *Brahman* while holding the body, how can someone else refute it?" BSBh. 4.1.15.[166] Unfortunately, he provides no clear explanation for the subtle but important correlation between revelation and experience from which such conviction as expressed in BSBh.4.1.15 arises. To me, this passage reinforces one of Śaṅkara's most radical tenets, which is that the direct experience of the Self does not involve an alteration of the psychophysical make up of the knower. In fact, Śaṅkara does not push for an actual event such as 'the dawn of knowledge,' an occurrence that would otherwise create a *real* division between pre and post-liberation. In this regard, Śaṅkara never tires of reminding his reader that liberation is eternal and hence, could not have a beginning. For him, the apprehension of the Self is the end-result of the action of the Upaniṣadic teachings, which simply eradicate the misconception consisting of thinking about oneself as a transmigratory individual:

"Even the mere statement about an entity like 'this is a rope, this is not a snake' is attested to be fruitful since it annihilates the fear born from delusion. Here also, by stating [pointing to] the entity that is the non-transmigratory self, [the Upaniṣads] are fruitful through eliminating the delusion of being a transmigratory entity."[167]

Śaṅkara says that the Self, our true nature, is ever free from the three constituents of *prakṛti* and is thus inherently devoid of body, sense-organs, breath, and so forth, the instruments through which individuals perform the good and bad deeds that keep them in the perpetual cycle of births and

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that, if it were followed, the meaning of the Vedic texts in view would in fact never be ascertained; for a series of deliberately repeated affirmations would be limitless. The opponent's notion that even after metaphysical ignorance had been destroyed by metaphysical knowledge it could return again later is unfounded. Equally unfounded is the expectation that, if it was capable of returning, it would be finally eradicated by repeated affirmation... Finally, repeated affirmation of wrong knowledge would not produce right knowledge, but would confirm and strengthen the wrong knowledge" MV, p. 188.

[166] "*katham hyekasya svahṛdapratyayaṁ brahmavedanaṁ dehadhāraṇaṁ cāpareṇa pratikṣeptuṁ śakyeta*" p.475.

[167] "*vastumātrakathane'pi rajjariyaṁ nāyaṁ sarpa ityādau bhrantijanitabhītinivartanenārthavattvaṁ dṛṣṭaṁ tathehāpyasaṁsāryātmavastukathanena saṁsāritvabhrantinivartanenārthavattvaṁ syāt*" BSBh.1.1.4, p.13.

deaths.[168] To the extent that the characteristic of *anubhava* is unbounded consciousness, it can be equated to the Absolute, *mokṣa*:

"Right knowledge is uniform because it is dependent on its object/content [pure consciousness]."[169]
"With the words '*vijñāna*,' etc., what is expressed is [*Brahman*] being of the nature of consciousness and light. It is established by those who are well versed in the Vedānta, that the meaning of 'That' [in the formula 'you are That'], is *Brahman*, whose nature is immediate experience that has none of the characteristics of *saṁsāra*." (BSBh.4.1.2).[170]

As the absence of identification with the body, mind, and sense organs, *anubhava* implies *aśarīratva* or the *constant* condition of being without a body. Although the competent Advaitin pupil comes to apprehend the true condition of his being at some point in time, this apprehension does not involve some real change taking place in time and space. What is called *anubhava* is nothing else than the Self; it has no commencement and no end. Since *anubhava* may be placed on the same plane as *mokṣa*, there is no question raised about its being the outcome of some activity. *Anubhava* reveals itself of its own accord not through any particular mental or physical activity but through the elimination of the false idea that one is in bondage.[171] If the difference between *anubhava* and its absence amounts to a misconception, the commentarial passage in 4.1.15 is not at all incongruous. Both the error and its subsequent removal pertain to the ignorant's mind. And if one has ceased

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[168] "Even among permanent [things] some undergo changes [as expressed] in the thought, 'That, indeed, is this,' and do not get destroyed even though they do undergo changes. It is like the earth, and so on, for those who uphold the eternality of the world, and like the constituting qualities [of *prakṛti*], for the followers of the Sāṁkhya school. But, from the absolute standpoint, this one [*puruṣa*] never moves, is all-pervasive like space, free from all alterations, always desireless, partless, and naturally self-effulgent" (*tatra kiṁcitpariṇāmi nityaṁ yasminvikriyamāṇe'pi tadevedamiti buddhirna vihanyate / yathā pṛthivyādijagannityatvavādinām / yathā ca sāṁkhyānāṁ guṇāḥ / idaṁ tu pāramārthikaṁ kūṭasthanityaṁ vyomavatsarvavyāpi sarvavikriyārahitaṁ nityatṛptaṁ niravayavaṁ svayaṁjyotiḥsvabhāvam)* BSBh.1.1.4, p.14.

"Where both *dharma* and *adharma* along with their effects do not apply in the three times; that bodiless self is called liberation" (*yatra dharmādharmau saha kāryeṇa kālatrayaṁ ca nopāvartete / tadetadaśarīratvaṁ mokṣākhyam)* BSBh.1.1.4, p.14.

"When he perceives this immense, all-pervading self, as bodiless within bodies, as stable within unstable beings—a wise man ceases to grieve" (Ka.12.22); "That Person [*puruṣa*], indeed, is divine, he has no visible form. He is both within and without, unborn, without breath or mind" (Mu.2.1.2.); "That Person is unattached" Bṛ.4.3.15. On the basis of these citations, Śaṅkara concludes, "It is established that being without a body, which is called *mokṣa,* is eternal and different from the results of the [Vedic] actions that are to be performed" (*ataivānuṣṭeyakarmaphalavilakṣaṇaṁ mokṣākhyamaśarīratvaṁ nityamiti siddham)* BSBh.1.14.

[169] "*samyagjñānamekarūpaṁ vastutantratvāt*" BSBh.2.1.11, p.193.

[170] See ft. 116.

[171] "By removing [the idea of] being a transmigrating soul, which is conjectured by ignorance, by way of revealing the eternally liberated nature of the Self, the defect relating to the impermanence of *mokṣa* is absent" (*atho'vidyākalpitasaṁsāritvanivartanena nityamuktātmasvarūpasamarpaṇānna mokṣasyānityatvadoṣaḥ)* BSBh, p.16.

identifying with the aggregates of body, mind, sense organs, who can object to it? It is here necessary to open a parenthesis to explain where the difference between *anubhava* and *mokṣa* lies. We must stress that if *anubhava* and *mokṣa* are synonymous in so far as they mean being *Brahman*, the latter means being permanently established in/as *Brahman* while the former may not culminate in such permanent realization. If *anubhava*, the non-identification with the mind-body complex that makes up our individuality, does not suffice to bring about permanent liberation, it means that a preliminary condition has not been fulfilled. Since the *pramāṇa* of the Upaniṣads cannot be at fault, it is towards the aspirant that Śaṅkara turns his gaze. Never does he say that the *pramāṇatva* of the Upaniṣads only leads to mediated knowledge. He points to such defects in the aspirant as weakness of concentration and a strong attraction for sensual objects, and so on, to explain the failure of the overall process of self-knowledge. Glossing Ka.1.2.24,[172] he enumerates some of the qualifications that must be present in the seeker of knowledge if the *pramāṇa* of the Upaniṣads is to fulfil its function:

"The person who has quit his evil ways and is not lured by his senses, whose mind is focused, and no longer thirsts for the results [of actions and practices] that person who has a teacher, as it is said [in scriptures], attains the Self by means of knowledge."[173]

And in the *Bhagavadgītā* too, Śaṅkara states that "the mind is the cause for the vision of the Self, when it is perfected by restraining it, the senses, and so forth, and by the instruction of the scriptures and the teacher."[174]

From what has already been said concerning experience in Śaṅkara Vedānta—whether *anubhava* or *mokṣa* is meant—we can easily deduce that it is to others alone that the knower of *Brahman* may be said to hold the body. For the knower himself, however, there is absolute freedom from the body

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[172] "Not a man who has not quit his evil ways; nor a man who is not calm or composed; nor even a man who is without a tranquil mind; could ever secure it [Brahman] by means of knowledge." Patrick Olivelle renders the last quarter of the *śloka, "prajñānenainamāpnuyāt"* as "could ever secure it by his mere wit." However, I do not think that the context can warrant this translation. In view of the context, the meaning of *prajñānena* cannot be other than 'by the knowledge,' that is by the wisdom that derives from the instructions of the Upaniṣads. The use of the possessive is also unwanted.

[173] "*yastu duścaritādvirata indriyalaulyācca samāhitacittaḥ samādhānaphalādapyupaśāntamānasaścāryavān prajñānena yathoktamātmānaṁ prāpnotītyarthaḥ*" Īśādi, p.53.

[174] "*śāstrācāryopadeśaśamadamādisaṁskṛtaṁ mana ātmadarśane karaṇam*"BGBh.2.21.

and other limiting adjuncts. Another passage in BSBh.1.1.4 sheds some light on this matter. The following extract is part of a discussion on the place and function of statements that refer to an existent thing as such, i.e., the Self. There, the Advaitin argues against the Mīmāṁsā position that statements about the Self must relate to action, at one level or another:

> [Opponent]- "It was said that since it is seen that even a transmigratory entity who has heard the instructions concerning *Brahman* remains [living] as before, [such instructions] are unlike the fruitful statement made about the nature of the rope."
> [Advaitin]- "The answer here is that for one who has realized [the unity of] *Brahman-Ātman*, it cannot be shown that his transmigratory life continues as before, since this opposes [the unity of] *Brahman-Ātman* born [realized] from the valid means of knowledge that is the Veda." [175]

Here, Śaṅkara argues that when the Upaniṣads remove the mere misconception about reality that both seekers and non-seekers alike cultivate quite naturally, this does not give way to a physical or psychological modification. For instance, the apprehension of the bodiless self does not involve the dropping off of the body since it is the realization that one never had a body in the first place.

Today, the amalgam of the traditions of Yoga and Sāṁkhya with Śaṅkara Vedānta is rarely questioned. However, in his two remarkable works, *The Limits of Scriptures* and *Accomplishing the Accomplished*, Anantanand Rambachan is able to correct many long lasting misunderstandings concerning the teachings of Śaṅkara. In the former, he corrects the view that Vivekananda's interpretation of Vedānta is faithful to Śaṅkara's. Rambachan concentrates on the most prominent departure of Vivekananda's interpretation of the Advaita tradition from that of Śaṅkara's. His survey of Vivekananda's teachings reveals that the latter's understanding of the means of liberation opposes Śaṅkara's classical view that the Upaniṣads alone constitute the sole source of liberating knowledge. Rambachan hammers the point that for Vivekananda, the sole means of gaining self-knowledge is not the inquiry into the meaning of the Upaniṣadic sentences under the instructions of a teacher, but the non-dual experience obtained in the special state of *nirvikalpasamādhi*. That revelation is of secondary importance in Vivekananda's scheme of liberation is attested by his choice of analogies. For instance, Vivekananda compares the revelation to a road map, which can "solely arouse our

[175] "*nanu śrutabrahmaṇo'pi yathāpūrvaṁ saṁsāritvadarśanānna rajjusvarūpakathanavadarthavattvamityuktam / atrocyate—nāvagatabrahmātmabhāvasya yathāpūrvaṁ samsāritvaṁ śakyaṁ darśayituṁ vedapramāṇajanitabrahmātmabhāvavirodhāt*" BSBh.1.1.4, p.21.

curiosity and stimulate us to make the discoveries for ourselves."[176] Vivekananda seems to follow the steps of Śaṅkara when he emphasizes that the proof of textual truths is the direct experience of the inquirer.[177] However, unlike Śaṅkara, he suggests that such a direct experience is self-sufficient, that the intuitive knowledge of the Vedāntic truths is not a direct consequence of the scriptures, and that consequently, direct experience alone but not the Upaniṣads remains the *pramāṇa* for the Self.[178]

Rambachan's work is important because it shows how strongly Vivekananda departs from Śaṅkara's teaching, with the insistence of the former on direct experience as the sole means of self-knowledge along with the devaluation of Vedic scriptures (a mere road-map). However, Rambachan does not demonstrate how the direct apprehension of the Self is a byproduct of the Upaniṣadic teachings. He cannot, in fact, endeavor to do so, for as we have already noted, he understands *anubhava* to be any experience that could contribute to liberation; he misses Śaṅkara's understanding of *anubhava* as the culmination of all factors of knowledge.[179] Our study has already been fruitful in that we have underlined the high correlation that exists between the Upaniṣads and *anubhava,* whether the latter refers to the apprehension of *Brahman* in context, i.e., as witness, or as context-free, whereby revelation finally loses its function and authority. In the next chapter, we shall examine a traditional Advaita teaching process that clearly shows that these two understandings of experience are not contradictory, since they are two phases of realization. For Sankara, the experience of *Brahman* as witness leads, in the end, to the cessation of all duality (the context-free experience).

Rambachan's findings concerning the important difference between the respective views of Śaṅkara and Vivekananda on the status and function of the Upaniṣads seem to corroborate the idea of a 'shift,' which Sharma understands as a change in preoccupation in the school of Advaita, i.e., a shift from knowledge to liberation. As I have suggested, the 'shift' may reflect a historical change, but not

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[176] *The Limits of Scriptures*, p.44.
[177] Ibid., p.44-5.
[178] "Talking, arguing, reading books, the highest flights of the intellect, the Vedas themselves, all those cannot give knowledge of the Self." *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (CW, 7:70). 8 vols. Advaita Ashrama, 1964-1971. Quoted from *The Limits of Scriptures*, p.46.
[179] On this point, see Hirst, p.66, and Rambachan's *Accomplishing the Accomplished: The Vedas as a Source of Valid Knowledge in Śaṅkara*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991.

one that began with Śaṅkara. The teachings offered by Vivekananda and those who adhere to his views, represent a marked departure in interpretation, for like all post-Śaṅkara Advaitins beginning with Vācaspati, they essentially embrace the philosophy and practices of the combined systems of the Sāṁkhya of Kapilā and the Yoga of Patañjali.[180] The 'shift' is expressed in the division between the Upaniṣads, thought to bring a conceptual knowledge of *Brahman*, and the particular trance state of *nirvikalpasamādhi*, conceived as the sole and final means needed to transform the conceptual knowledge drawn from the Upaniṣads into the direct realization of *Brahman*.

It appears that many Advaitins and scholars proceed to integrate the practices pertaining to the Sāṁkhya and Yoga schools with Śaṅkara Vedānta on the basis of linguistic affiliation. '*Yoga*,' a recurrent term in the commentarial literature, is commonly interpreted to mean the doctrine of *cittavṛttinirodha* of the Yoga school, through which the consummate experience of non-duality is said to occur. Similarly, the term '*sāṁkhya*' as found in the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavadgīta*, and Śaṅkara's commentaries, is said to refer to the Sāṁkhya school, which emphasizes the discrimination between the two sole existents of *prakṛti* and *puruṣas*, as the means to liberation. It is but natural to believe that these terms may stand for or refer to the systems of thought similarly named. However, beyond the linguistic similarities lie profound and irreconcilable differences, which Śaṅkara himself points to in his BSBh.2.1.3. With regard to interpreting the Upaniṣadic passage, "Having known that cause, the deity, through *sāṁkhyayoga*, he is freed from all fetters,"[181] Śaṅkara urges us not to confuse these two terms *sāṁkhya* and *yoga*, which are traditional Vedic means to the knowledge of the one self without a second, with the two dualistic philosophical systems of Sāṁkhya and Yoga.[182] The need to go beyond linguistic similarities also becomes obvious when considering that in chapter 2 of the

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[180] For a survey of the different views and doctrines held by the most prominent Advaitin thinkers and teachers following Śaṅkara, refer to a) *Advaita Vedanta. History of science, philosophy, and culture in Indian civilization*. Ed. R, Balasubramanian. Vol. 2, life, thought, and culture in India. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi, 2000; b) Dr. Sulochana A. Nachane's thesis: *A Survey of Post-Śaṅkara Advaita Vedanta*, edited by Dr. R.K. Panda. Eastern Book Linkers, Delhi, 2000.

[181] "*tatkarāṇaṁ sāṁkhyayogābhipannaṁ jñātvā devaṁ mucyate sarvapāśaiḥ* (Śve.6.13)" BSBh, p.183.

[182] "The Absolute is not realized through the knowledge of Sāṁkhya or through the path of Yoga that are independent from the Veda" (*na sāṁkhyajñānena vedanirapekṣeṇa yogamārgeṇa vā niḥśreyasamadhigamyata iti*) Ibid.

Bhagavadgītā, which is named '*Sāṁkhyayoga*', Śaṅkara uses the technical word *sāṁkhya* to mean 'knowledge' and to refer to the content of the entire chapter which, to him, is concerned with teaching Arjuna the non-difference between the Absolute and his immediate self. Further, he names the '*sāṁkhyas*,' those for whom the discipline of knowledge (*nivṛtti dharma*) is taught, and which leads to the realization of the Absolute that is free from the six-fold transformation.[183]

It remains a puzzling fact that Śaṅkara's calls to distance his school of Vedānta from the philosophical systems of Sāṁkhya and Yoga, particularly on the issue of liberation, were ignored by his successors, starting with Vācaspati. We have already mentioned the latter regarding his identification of *nididhyāsana* with the *samādhi* of the Yoga tradition. We shall now quote Vidyāraṇya, the very influential 14th century author of the *Pañcadaśī* and the *Jīvan-Mukti-Viveka*, whose writings had, as their effect, to seal the marriage between the two distinct traditions of Advaita and Yoga. The following passage should suffice to illustrate this point:

"From the constant practice of the conscious variety of Trance (*savikalpa-samādhi*), which leads to the discrimination of the *Puruṣa* from the *Pradhāna* made up of the three *guṇas* in a state of equilibrium, the being, to wit, the realization of the *Puruṣa* is attained. That complete absence of thirst for all objects whatsoever, which are but effects of the three *guṇas*, after the realization of the *Puruṣa*, is the highest detachment. Patañjali refers to the varying degrees in the rapidity with which Ecstatic Trance is attained, which are based on the varying degrees in the several stages of detachment, thus: "The attainment of *samādhi* is nearest to those whose detachment is the most ardent." (1.21) Yogins are of three classes, according to the degree of the ardor of detachment, to wit, those whose ardor is light, moderate, and excessive. "Nearest" means "attained in the shortest time possible." Again, with reference to the third class of Yogins alone, i.e., those whose ardor is excessive, it has been said: "A further distinction arises on account of the light, moderate and excessive (nature of the means employed), such as lightly excessive, moderately excessive, and extremely excessive." (1.22) These degrees of ardor lead sooner to the successful accomplishment (of Trance) in the order they are here mentioned. The best among the best yogins, such as Janaka and Prahlāda, belong to the class of practitioners with extremely excessive ardor, for, at a moment's thought, they can work themselves up into the condition of confirmed Ecstatic Trance. Uddālaka and others, of the lowest among the low sort, belong to the class of midly ardent practioners, for they can find the condition of Trance, only after considerable effort put forth in that direction. In the same manner, other practitioners as well, may be classified according to the degree of ardor reached by them. When, in this manner, the "firm ground" is obtained in the Unconscious variety of Trance, by the yogins of the class of the extremely excessive ardor, there being no scope for its coming out of it, their mind is entirely dissolved. Obliteration of *vāsanā* (mental impressions) being thus spared, *jīvan-mukti* is fully and firmly established, from the dissolution of the mind."[184]

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[183] Refer to ft. 29 & 31.

[184] *The Jīvan-Mukti-Viveka of Vidyāranya*. Edited with English translation by Pandit S.Subrahmaṇya Śāstri and T.R. Śrīnivāsa Ayaṅgār. The Theosophical Publishing House, Madras, 1935, pp.162-3. See also pp.125, 130,

Any reader who is solely acquainted with Śaṅkara's works would be surprised to find the philosophical views stated above, in a text that is generally celebrated as an Advaita Vedānta manual which is fully consistent with Śaṅkara's teachings. The reason is, as already remarked, that the latter advocates the Upaniṣadic teachings as the exclusive means to liberation, whereas Vidyāraṇya—as well as the majority of Advaita thinkers and teachers from him onwards—subscribe to some of the most important philosophical propositions of the systems of Sāṁkhya and Yoga, which Śaṅkara opposes. In fact, the Sāṁkhya doctrine about the two distinct realities of *pradhāna* and *puruṣas*, as well as the Yoga doctrine concerning the necessity to reach the trance state of *nirvikalpa/asaṁprajñata-samādhi* do not find their parallels in Śaṅkara's works. In addition to holding the necessity for practising the dissolution of the mind along with knowledge, Vidyāraṇya also argues for the necessity to combine the above practices with the elimination of certain latent impressions of the mind. I find that such a conception of the Advaita discipline is simply 'non-Śaṅkarien'. When commenting on the different *yogas* taught in the *Bhagavadgītā*, i.e., *karma-yoga*, *dhyāna-yoga*, and *bhakti-yoga*, Śāṅkara does not mention the dissolution of the mind as a component of the discipline of 'Vedāntic *yoga*.' The means to the liberating knowledge that Śaṅkara advocates share nothing with practices that lead to the "cessation of the mind" and the "elimination of latent impressions," either independently or together. These types of *yoga* are important in that they directly or indirectly lead the student to the final realization of his eternal freedom from *saṁsāra*. In both his commentarial work and his independent treatise (US), there is a particular emphasis on *yoga* acting as a means to purify oneself, i.e., the internal organ.[185] Although it would be necessary to carry out a detailed examination of the views of Vidyāraṇya and Śaṅkara on Advaita Vedānta disciplines to determine the extent to which they are compatible, still, with the evidence gathered so far, it is safe to say that unlike Vidyāraṇya, Śaṅkara does not have any appreciation for the aim of the Yoga school to reach the trance of *nirvikalpasamādhi* and, it goes without saying, for resorting to

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134, 146 and 151.

[185] *"antaḥkaraṇasya viśuddhyartham"* BGBh.6.12. See also BGBh.6.10-36 and 4.26-29, BSBh.3.4.27, and the US.2.17.22: "Knowledge manifests in the mind that has been purified, as in the case of a mirror" (*cite hyādarśavad yasmācśuddhe vidyā prakāśate*).

practices that lead to it, such as the dissolving of the mind.

As we proceed in our investigation of the nature of experience in Śaṅkara Vedānta, I shall continue to argue that for Śaṅkara, the direct cognition of the Self is only possible through the Upaniṣadic instructions and that unless one reverts to systematically torturing Śaṅkara's commentaries, the latter cannot be used to support the widely accepted Advaita view that the knowledge of the Self is dependent on practising the repetition of knowledge and/or attaining the special state of *nirvikalpasamādhi*.

4 The distinction between practices based on the practitioner and those based on the object

In the school of Yoga taught by Patañjali, as well as in the Advaita tradition (starting with Vācaspati), deliberate activities of the practitioner (*upāsanas*)—culminating in a heightened state of mental activity or in the complete cessation of all mental constructs[186]—are said to be necessary to achieving *mokṣa*. In the writings of Śaṅkara, however, the issue of the cognitive nature of the Absolute is treated differently. Liberation is ever attained and involves nothing other than the correction of erroneous knowledge. This correction entails ceasing the identification with the not-Self through the expedients of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*. When wrong identification comes to an end, consciousness, unimpeded by the superimposed limiting adjuncts of mind, etc., shines forth as it were. This consciousness is, for Śaṅkara, the already existent 'object' of the Upaniṣadic realization, and he never gets weary of repeating that the Absolute is self-lit and self-established, to ward off the idea that realization actually brings something new to the aspirant.[187] Śaṅkara presents *anubhava* as *vastutantra*, which means as being dependent upon the object, whereas the special trance

[186] Rambachan notes that Vivekananda's writings do not provide a consistent picture of the experience of *samādhi*, which he deems the sole source of self-knowledge. Rambachan indicates that if some of Vivekananda's descriptions of the experience of *samādhi* indicate the latter as the "superconscious state", which taps into the highest function of the mind, which remains 'active,' others characterize *samādhi* as the total cessation of the activities of the mind. If, as Vivekananda insists, *anubhava* is the sole means of liberating knowledge because of the absence of duality, we are left without an explanation as to the possibility of non-dual experience in a mystical state in which the mind is still active though free from intellectual grasp. See *The Limits of Scriptures*, pp.99-105.

[187] "Since it is self-established, it is not the case that the Self is the result of anything. For someone's self is not established with respect to a means of knowledge" *(nahyātmāgantukaḥ kasyacit svayaṁsiddhatvāt / nahyātmātmanaḥ pramāṇamapekṣya sidhyati)* BSBh, p.268.

or deep meditative state that the yogi attains is dependent upon the will and activity of the practitioner, the latter being technically named *kartṛtantra*. This distinction that Śaṅkara makes in his BSBh.1.1.4 between knowledge that is *kartṛtantra* and *vastutantra* is truly important and corresponds well to the *pravṛtti/nivṛtti* distinction made in the previous chapter; for all that falls within the range of activities (*pravṛtti*) depends upon the agent, while what corresponds to knowledge (*nivṛtti*) is dependent on the object of knowledge. Śaṅkara justifies this epistemological conception of *vastutantra,* on the basis of the universally accepted experience of empirical perception, which one deems 'correct', when it corresponds to an already existent object (refer to pp.52-53 above). Since *Brahman*, the object sought, is everyone's already established and evident self that is free from agency, will, attainments, and failures, its apprehension cannot depend on the activities, aspirations or convictions of any individual. In addition, since awareness is not in time, so too is realization, which is exactly what most Advaitins and scholars implicitly contradict when upholding that the complete realization of the one self without a second materializes with the time-bound concept-free trance state of *nirvikalpasamādhi*. The main rational behind the proposition that such a trance state cannot be the means to liberation is that it is a temporary state. Beyond the vista of non-duality that this temporary experience—as that of deep sleep—offers, the practitioner is destined to resume experiencing plurality as soon as the trance comes to an end. Śaṅkara criticizes the Yoga tradition because he sees *samādhi* as ineffective against ignorance. *Samādhi* cannot replace the Upaniṣads in their role of canceling the seeker's false sense of doership, knowership, and enjoyership, short of which, he cannot break free from the quagmire of endless births and deaths.

5 Knowing the Self, problems of epistemology
5.1 The Self expressed through the 'I' notion

We have stated that according to Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣads alone are the *pramāṇa* for the liberating knowledge of the Self. The problem that such a position involves is as follows: some Upaniṣads clearly state that *Brahman* is beyond the reach of words and mind as its true nature is free from attributes. Experience tells us that knowledge is simply not possible without the participation of an individual agent, some means of knowing and, last but not least, something to be known. Because of these interactive factors necessary for the experience of knowing, we may ask ourselves if the knowledge of *Brahman* is not simply symbolic, for any knowledge that involves a knower and means of knowing cannot dispense with an objective referent.

Although Śaṅkara concedes that *Brahman* is not a referent existing within the empirical world, and thus cannot conform to perceptual experience, nonetheless, he asserts that it is not altogether unknown to us all since it is intuitively—as opposed to perceptually—and effortlessly known to and accepted by everyone as their self. *Brahman* is reality and is expressed as everyone's intrinsic awareness:

"Uṣasta, the son of Cakra, asks Yājñavalkya about the *Brahman* that is immediate and not hidden in the least from the seer, which is direct and [understood] in a primary sense...It is nothing like the *Brahman*, etc., that is heard of. What is it? That which is the self. By the word 'self' the self that is inward/direct is indicated. It is the self that is within all. On the basis of these words, it is established that the self is *Brahman*" (BṛBh.3.4.1).[188]
"The Self is not absolutely beyond apprehension because it is the object/content of the concept 'I', and because it is direct, it is well known as the inner self" (*Adhyāsabhāṣya*).[189]

The concept 'I' is indeed well known for it is how everyone refers to himself or herself as a complex uniting physicality and awareness. Śaṅkara argues that the psychological side of this

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[188] "*yājñavalkyamuṣasto nāmataścakrasyāpatyaṁ cākrāyaṇaḥ papraccha / yadbrahma sākṣādavyavahitaṁ kenaciddṛṣṭuraparokṣādagauṇaṁ... na śrotrabrahmādivat / kiṁ tat / ya ātmā / ātmaśabdena pratyagātmocyate / sarvasyābhyantaraḥ sarvantaraḥ / yadyaḥ śabdābhyāṁ prasiddha ātmā brahmeti*" See also BṛBh.3.4.2 & 3.5.1.
[189] "*na tāvadayamekāntenāviṣayaḥ asmatpratyayaviśayatvāt aparokṣatvācca pratyagātmaprasiddheḥ.*" A similar reference appears in Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad:* "It is proper that it should be known as 'it exists' because it is the cause of space, and so on, is present in its effect, is placed in the great space within the recess of the heart, and since it is grasped through its distinct conceptual manifestations ['I am so and so,' etc.]" (*tasmāttadevedamākāśādikāraṇaṁ kāryasthaṁ parame vyomanhṛdayaguhāyāṁ nihitaṁ tatpratyayāvabhāsaviśeṣeṇopalabhyamānam astītyevaṁ vijānīyādityuktaṁ bhavati*) TaiBh.2.6. Īśādi, p.374.

universal concept, the *antaḥkaraṇa* (the inner instrument), that is the mental structure of the individual comprising the mind, the intellect and the sense of individuality or ego, shares the same material reality as external objects. However, it is because this psychical structure is very subtle and sufficiently 'close' to the Self that it can be easily associated with it, though erroneously, and give way to various expressions like "I do," "I am happy," and so forth.[190] True, the 'I' notion is a product of superimposition; yet because Śaṅkara holds that the Self constitutes one of the two entities whose nature and properties are superimposed on the other, he can reasonably assert that the Self is apprehended as the object/content of the concept 'I'.

5.2 The Self is ever free from the *antahkarana*

In many places throughout his commentaries, Śaṅkara states that our nature of being as consciousness shares nothing with the mental elements just referred to, for the latter are always objects of consciousness.[191] While all things and phenomena are effects, the Self is not. It finds no cause and is not a separate entity because it does not side with anything else, like space, for instance, sides with or is separate from the earth. Any object of cognition, which is characterized by transience or transformation, is not-Self.[192] Our true self is awareness that is our inmost and permanent subject of being. It constitutes the a-priori source of knowledge, by and through which any cognition can take place (during its seeming association with the *antaḥkaraṇa*)[193] but which cannot itself become an

[190] "Just as *Rāhu* [is known] due to its association with particulars like the moon and the sun, so the association of the hidden self with the inner instrument causes *Brahman* to be grasped. For this inner instrument is luminous and proximate. Just as a pot, etc., are apprehended when particularized by light, so the Self is apprehended when particularized by the light of mental concepts" (*yathā rāhoścaṅdrārka viśeṣasaṁbandhaḥ / evamantaḥkaraṇaguhātmasaṁbandho brahmaṇa upalabdhihetuḥ / saṁvikarṣādavabhāsātmakatvāccāntaḥkaraṇasya / yathā cālokaviśiṣṭhā ghaṭhādyupalabdhirevaṁ buddhipratyayālokaviśiṣṭhā ātmopalabdhiḥ syāt)* TaiBh.2.6, p.373.

[191] "The object and the subject, which are the respective contents of the concepts 'you' and 'we,' are of opposite natures like light and darkness, for it is established that their being is not shared, and so are their qualities" (*yuṣmadasmatpratyayagocarayorviṣayaviṣayiṇostamaḥ prakāśavadviruddhasvabhāvayoritaretarabhāvānupapattau siddhāyāṁ taddharmāṇāmapi" Adhyāsabhāṣya.*

[192] "It is not seen anywhere that something unchanging is a separate thing. Space is known to be separate from earth, etc. Thus, it too can be said to be an effect. In this way, directions, time, mind, atoms, and so on, are explained as being effects" (*natvavikṛtaṁ kiṁcitkutaścidvibhaktamupalabhyate /vibhāgaścākāśasya pṛthivyādibhyo'vagamyate / tasmātso'pi vikāro bhavitumarhati / etena dikkālamanaḥ paramāṇvādīnāṁ kāryatvaṁ vyākhyātam)* BSBh.2.3.7, p.268.

[193] "For one's self is not established on the basis of means of knowledge such as his perception, and the like, which are resorted to in order to ascertain [the existence] of non-established objects. [These] are his...It is not so that things like space, etc., are self-established, independent from [the use of] means of knowledge by which

object of cognition. It is because Śaṅkara sees the reality of the Self as self-established and contrary to the ontological status of all phenomena (determined because of their being relative to each-other) that in BSBh.1.1.4, he rejects the opponent's argument that the Self is not simply known from the Upaniṣads since we know it through this very notion of 'I'. There, Śaṅkara is quick to eliminate the false assessment of the Self as the association between unbounded consciousness and the mental organ:

"It is not the case [that there is such a relation], for it was said that it [the Self] is the witness [of that notion 'I']. [It is known] by discriminating the agent, object of the 'I' notion, from the witness of that [notion], the self that is one, unchanging, eternal, and established in all creatures; [this Self] is not known as the self of all to anyone [who looks] in the portion of the Veda dealing with injunctions, or in the precepts of the logicians" (BSBh.1.1.4).[194]

It is important to stress that Śaṅkara's above statement does not contradict that of his *Adhyāsabhāṣya* where he affirms that the Self is universally apprehended as the content of this 'I' notion. BSBh.1.1.4 presents a different analysis of the subject than that presented in the *Adhyāsabhāṣya*. There, Śaṅkara takes the standpoint of discrimination or knowledge, i.e., the right knowledge of the entities superimposed. He draws the reader's attention to the sole constant—and thus true—feature of the 'I' element, which is the witness and not the *antaḥkaraṇa*; the former being the immutable principle that witnesses the changing notions of 'I,' such as "I think," "I do," "I am happy," and the like.

In his *Adhyāsabhāṣya*, however, where he states that the Self is known through the 'I' concept, Śaṅkara speaks from the standpoint of non-discrimination or ignorance. Although a human error, the mixing up of Self and not-Self reveals the former implicitly with every concept derivable from the 'I' notion like "I think," and so on. It is on the basis of discriminative knowledge that Śaṅkara describes the Self as the witness of all. The perspective of the witness is called upon by Śaṅkara

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they are known. But the Self is established prior to the use of means of knowledge, etc., for it is their substratum" (*nahyātmātmanaḥ pramāṇamapekṣya sidhyati / tasya hi pratyakṣādīni pramāṇānyaprasiddhaprameyasiddhaya upādīyante / nahyākāśādayaḥ padārthāḥ pramāṇanirapekṣāḥ svayaṁsiddhāḥ kenacidabhyupagamyante / ātmā tu pramāṇādivyavahārāśrayatvātprāgeva pramāṇādivyavahārātsiddhyati)* ibid.

[194] "*na / tatsākṣitvena pratyuktatvāt / nahyahaṁpratyayaviṣayakartṛvyatirekeṇa tatsākṣī sarvabhūtasthaḥ sama ekaḥ kūṭasthanityaḥ puruṣo vidhikāṇḍe tarkasamaye vā kenacidadhigataḥ sarvasyātmā*" BSBh, p.20.

whenever he wishes the student to apprehend the reality of his subject as self-effulgent consciousness, the sole principle which does not take part in the given or the manifested, but from which the manifested as well as the means of knowing the manifested arise.

Hence, Śaṅkara's approach towards consciousness is two-fold. First, from the standpoint of non-discrimination, where pure awareness is implicitly present in all aspects of the 'I' notions through being wrongly associated with the mental apparatus, the sense organs, and the body (self-effulgent consciousness is not affected in the least even while such a limiting adjunct as the mind is superimposed on it). Second, from the standpoint of discriminative knowledge, entailing the identification with the Absolute as witness, which is ever disassociated from all psychical and physical adjuncts. The following section of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.3.1-7), along with Śaṅkara's commentary thereon, seems to corroborate this singular approach. There, the following two ideas are presented: a) the Self is entirely different from the complex of body, mind, and senses, from the fact of its being their constant witness, and b) the Self, while dwelling in the midst of the mental apparatus and sense organs, is manifest throughout and allows for their activities.

In Bṛ.4.3.1-6, the Emperor Janaka questions the sage Yājñavalkya about what serves man as his light in carrying out his daily activities. Yājñavalkya's first answer is that it is the external light of the sun. When asked what serves man as his light once the sun has set, he answers that it is the light of the moon, and in the absence of these two, the light of the fire. In the absence of these three, Yājñavalkya suggests, speech or sound serves man as his light. Finally, when neither outside light nor sound is present, Yājñavalkya says that it is the Self alone, different from man's constituents, which serves as his light.[195]

We see an obvious pattern in the answers provided by Yājñavalkya. He first concedes to the emperor's natural outlook by indicating external sources of light—the sun, the moon, and the fire. All three correspond to man's sense of sight, the chief organ to know extraneous things. The light next posited is that of sound by which alone man can still adjust to his environment. Sound,

[195] "But when both the sun and the moon have set, the fire has died out, and the voice is stilled, Yājñavalkya, what then is the source of light for a person here? The Self is then his source of light" Bṛ.4.3.6.

evidently, corresponds to the sense of hearing; it is, again, useful to knowing extraneous phenomena. Finally, in the absence of all outer support for our senses to properly function, the Self is said to be the light even though it is not associated with any sense organ.[196] What this implies is that the light that is the individual's very awareness is unrelated to or independent from both the physical and mental apparatus. What serves one as his light is the Self, the self-effulgent and self-established witness that is within the space of the heart, within the organs.[197] Thus we see that the first five verses of this Upaniṣadic teaching posit a series of extraneous sources of light to show, in turn, their limitations in a way that is helpful to the student to acquire a certain level of introspection, necessary to apprehend his/her own being as the unattached witness, the sole light that ever-remains constant. Bṛ.4.3.7 sheds light on both the ideas that the Self is the detached and constant witness of the body-mind complex, while dwelling in its midst and animating it:

"What is this Self? This *Puruṣa* consisting of knowledge (*vijñānamayaḥ*)[198] who is in the vital functions, the light within the heart (to be understood as the intellect). Being the same in both, he goes across both worlds, thinking and trembling, as it were. When he is asleep, he goes beyond this world, these forms of death" (Bṛ.4.3.7).[199]

Śaṅkara explains the idea that the Self travels across the two worlds (waking and dream), by proposing that it assumes the characteristics of the intellect. This happens, as mentioned before, due to the latter's luminous nature and proximity to the intellect. It is thus possible to speak of the immanence of the Self in the individual self and, concomitantly, in the two worlds. However, Śaṅkara interprets the expressions "thinking as it were" and "trembling as it were" to mean that the Self does not, in reality, perform any of these activities. It only seems to do so due to its false

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[196] To reinforce his overall interpretation of Bṛ.4.3.2-6, which is that it is the Self, the single witness, that is the light that makes it possible for everyone to function in the world, Śaṅkara presents the argument that the Self alone can account for the seeing function of an individual. He argues that if the individual's organs were themselves the 'seer,' then, even a corpse would see and perform other functions. Refer to BṛBh.4.3.6.

[197] Bṛ.4.3.7, Bṛ.4.4.5 7 & 4.4.22, Ka.2.3.16...

[198] Although the members of the compound "*vijñānamaya*" could meaningfully retain their primary meanings to give 'made of knowledge,' in conformity with the grammatical and other uses of the suffix "*maya*" (as in Ch.4.1.4-6), in his gloss, Śaṅkara takes the compound to signify 'identified with the intellect.' His choice seems motivated by the verse's dualistic references to both the light's location: "the light within the heart" and to its association with the intellect: "thinking as it were," etc.

[199] "*katama ātmeti yo'yaṁ vijñānamayaḥ prāṇeṣu hṛdayantarjyotiḥ puruṣaḥ sa samānaḥ sannubhau lokāvanusaṁcarati, dhyāyatīva lelāyatīva; sa hi svapno bhūtvemaṁ lokaṁ atikrāmati mṛtyo'rūpāṇi*" My translation.

association with the intellect. It is the intellect alone, illumined by the effulgence of the Self, which can get involved in such activities, but the Self never trembles nor thinks. Hence, Śaṅkara understands the Self (witness), as the principle that illumines, i.e., animates the entire physical and mental apparatus of the individual self, in a secondary sense.

Our author brings out the importance of subtlety and transparency, the two predominant characteristics of the intellect, to confirm the immediacy of the witness and the possibility of error in our apprehension of reality as it is. Because of the proximity of the intellect to the Self (being most subtle and luminous), it is the former that is first exposed to and takes on the nature and the characteristics of the Self. The notion of 'I' reveals the immediacy of the Self because it is fully pervaded by the latter. It is worth reiterating that this above description is only tenable on the basis of ignorance, the delusion about reality that all individual selves harbor, and which is rooted in a basic entanglement between the Self and the not-Self. In his introduction to his BSBh, Śaṅkara names this fundamental entanglement *adhyāsa*. In the above passage, we read that it is subsequent to the *adhyāsa* between the Self and the intellect that all psychical and physical aspects of the individual self are brought to life, making worldly life possible. However, in the same gloss on BṛBh.4.3.7, Śaṅkara finds the relation between the Self that illumines and that in which it is placed, the illumined, to be non-ultimate, along with one's "trembling" and "thinking." The illumined, the body, organs, mind, intellect, and the 'I' notion, are products of the five elements which are merely imagined in unbounded consciousness.[200]

From this, the descriptions concerning the location of the Self and its relation with the intellect and the other components of the individual cannot be taken as established doctrines. Rather, they are to be seen as scriptural propositions that parallel the aspirant's viewpoint of ignorance for the sole purpose of bringing about self-realization. In this regard, we have already referred to different passages from Śaṅkara's commentaries where he considers that the Upaniṣads proceed to teach by adopting man's natural standpoint of ignorance (p.44. See also pp. 126-28 below). The content of

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[200] Ibid.

these descriptions hold true from the viewpoint of ignorance, wherein the erroneous identification with the insentient intellect, and other adjuncts, occurs to everyone's misfortune.[201] In reality, however, such a connection or relation is not binding, and that, for Śaṅkara, is made apparent in the use of the expression "as it were" (*iva*) found in various passages like Bṛ.4.3.7. Therefore, it is without any difficulty that we can look at Śaṅkara's description of the Self as "dwelling in the space of the heart" (i.e., associated with the intellect) as a means to draw the aspirant's attention to the innate misconception that he cultivates about himself. And this, in turn, can be seen as the indispensable preliminary step to adopting the viewpoint of the witness through which the wrong association between the Self and the mental and physical organs ceases, and the identification with *Īśvara* begins. Śaṅkara understands this natural but erroneous association as the cause of all ills, and it is on the basis of such understanding that in his *Adhyāsabhāṣya*, he argues for the indispensability of the Upaniṣadic instructions with regard to liberation.[202]

6 Concluding remarks

On the basis of the Upaniṣads and Śaṅkara's writings, we have noted that wrongly associating or amalgamating the self-effulgent light of consciousness with the body-mind complex is the only cause for taking our being to be changing, divisible, and, consequently, to be mortal. It is also the basis on which Śaṅkara tells us that the Self is immediately available when expressed through the 'I' notion. For on account of ignorance, the Self seems to be linked to the various mental components, and can thus be said to be revealed with every thought and every perception. Śaṅkara's acknowledgment that the Self is manifested through the 'I' notion is based on the ordinary viewpoint of ignorance. When, however, Śaṅkara wishes to present the only truth about the Self, which alone is conducive to liberation, he indicates that it is solely the witness of the 'I' notion, and that its nature is but

[201] It is interesting to note that the 'close' relation that the Self is described to have with the intellect is not always presented in a negative way since the Absolute, being placed in the space of the heart (intellect), can be apprehended through the medium of the latter when it is made pure (through following the *pravṛtti dharma* as we saw in the last chapter). See TaiBh.2.1. Īśādi, pp.359-60.

[202] "In order to eliminate this cause of ills (this innate *adhyāsa*) all Upaniṣads endeavor to teach the knowledge of the unity of Self" (*asyānarthahetoḥ prahāṇāya ātmaikatvavidyāpratipattaye sarve vedāntā ārabhyante*) *Adhyāsabhāṣya*, p.4.

unimpeded consciousness. And it is the teachings of the Upaniṣads that enable the Advaitin student —through *śravaṇa* alone or, if needed, with the aid of the auxiliary *nivṛtti* practices of *manana* and *nididhyāsana*—to apprehend this witnessing awareness as his true condition of being, an apprehension which, like the intuition resulting in liberation, is termed *anubhava*. We have also established that the neo-Vedānta doctrine that the competent student cannot identify with the Self without resorting to the *yogic* experience of *nirvikalpasamādhi* simply invalidates Śaṅkara's overall soteriological scheme, which does not include such *yogic* practice that is dependent on and reinforces the pupil's sense of agency. In addition, because Śaṅkara determines *anubhava* to be everyone's already established condition of being as eternal, pure, conscious, and free, the need to resort to mystical trance at any point in the Advaita soteriological process, as advanced by all post-Śaṅkara Advaitins including Vivekananda, cannot be credited to Śaṅkara, and is clearly unhelpful when seen from Śaṅkara's position concerning the nature of liberation and the means to it. The writings of Śaṅkara do not show a leaning towards any individual mystical experience, whether as a gradual process of gaining liberating knowledge, or as a direct means to liberation. While it is not possible to validate the modern Advaita teaching that the Upaniṣads alone, when propounded by a qualified teacher to a qualified student, cannot lead to the direct apprehension of the Self, it is possible to validate the view that such an apprehension is integral to the Upaniṣadic revelation as its outcome as well as its corner stone, for in its absence, the Upaniṣads cannot be the last *pramāṇa* for the liberating knowledge. The next chapter will attempt to validate such a view.

In the next chapter, I shall pursue the argument that Śaṅkara saw no alternative to the teachings of the Upaniṣads when it comes to directly experiencing one's being as the Lord (*Īśvara*) and witness of all. We will see that Śaṅkara defends the view that the Absolute is the source of creation not simply to refute the Sāṁkhya theory that traces the origin of the universe to an insentient source or matter named *prakṛti*. His intention goes far beyond this. By affirming, on the basis of the Upaniṣads, that the Absolute is the all-witnessing and creating principle, Śaṅkara provides a basis for

the spiritual instruction on the three states which, as it unfolds, draws the pupil to identify with the Absolute as witness and creator. Of course, Śaṅkara's final objective is not to establish the witnessing principle, the Lord, as the Absolute, since this still involves duality. Nevertheless, this identification with the witness and Lord is an essential soteriological step that serves to eliminate some subtle forms of adjuncts that appear to limit the Absolute. This unique spiritual instruction of the Upaniṣads, as Śaṅkara saw it, seeks to teach the Absolute through the critical examination of the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. Although I will consider the overall sequential teaching method based on the states, I will focus on two different ways through which, Śaṅkara believed, the qualified Advaitin pupil comes to identify with the witnessing consciousness, the Lord who is associated with such functions as originating the universe and so forth. First, through the critical examination of the states of waking and dream, and, second, through the experience of deep sleep itself. This undertaking is fundamental to the main argument of this thesis, which is that securing the witness-standpoint is indispensible to fully work out the functions of theistic views in Śaṅkara's soteriology.

Chapter III

The Efficiency of the Upanisadic Teachings Regarding Self-Knowledge

In the last chapter we have explained Śaṅkara's conception of the Upaniṣads as the *antya pramāṇa*, a highly significant notion that he uses to connect the Upaniṣadic teachings with the immediate apprehension of the Self. We have also argued that Śaṅkara's presentation of the *pramāṇatva* of the Upaniṣads excludes mystical experience that most Advaitins have embraced throughout centuries. According to Śaṅkara, there are many teachings in the Upaniṣads that can afford a qualified student with the immediate knowledge of the Self.[203] For reasons that will become apparent, not least because it is not possible to detail all teachings here, I propose to focus on spiritual instructions that are based on the examination of the states of waking, dream, and deep sleep, the three universally shared states of experience that R. Balasubramanian calls our "triple stream of experience."[204]

I have chosen this particular teaching because of its obvious appeal to a non-specialized audience. All the Upaniṣadic and commentarial passages that I have selected and examined in the following pages are important because they treat reality as it manifests itself to the whole of mankind in its waking, dream, and deep sleep forms, and may be seen, as Satchidānandendra has argued, to constitute an independent, complete, and efficacious teaching procedure couched in universal experience.[205] I believe that the examination of the three states can best exemplify Śaṅkara's conviction that the standpoint of the witness may be adopted by merely 'hearing' the Upaniṣadic teachings.

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[203] Balasuramanian refers to three teachings that are direct applications of the overall *adhyāropa-apavāda* teaching strategy of the Upaniṣads, namely the cause-effect inquiry (*kārya-kāraṇa-vicāra*), the inquiry into the five sheaths (*pañca-koṣa*), and the inquiry into the three states (*avasthātraya-viveka*). R.Balasubramanian. *Advaita: An Overview. The Tradition of Advaita.* Edited by Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1994, pp19-21. In a review of the traditional Upaniṣadic teaching techniques, Satchidānandendra describes no less than 10 different ones. See Satchidānandendra's *Śuddha-Śaṅkara-Prakriyā-Bhāskara (Light on the Vedantic method according to Śaṅkara)*. Adhyātma Prakāsha Kāryālaya, Holenarsipur, 2001 (pp.67-91).

[204] Ibid, p.15.

[205] MV, p.95.

I see the present examination as particularly valuable if one is to fully appreciate Śaṅkara's perspective on the function of the *Upaniṣads* with respect to liberation. Of the few scholars who have taken a serious interest in the Upaniṣadic passages that refer to the above-mentioned states of consciousness and Śaṅkara's commentaries on them, most have not recognized that a particular teaching process is present throughout them. In this chapter, I try to bring out the relevance of a teaching method that consists of first superimposing and then negating the above-mentioned states on the Absolute.[206] This teaching process, albeit marginalized for centuries as the traditional Vedāntic means leading to liberation, seems to have been used as such by early Advaitins like Śaṅkara,[207] and possesses an inestimable soteriological value that is still largely overlooked. In her work *Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta: A way of teaching*, J.G. Suthren Hirst documents well the *adhyāropa-apavāda* pedagogical tool used throughout Śaṅkara's commentaries, but pays almost no attention to the application of this pedagogical strategy in this specific teaching. However, it is undeniable that Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara take a particular interest in it. This may be due to the fact that they engage the student in an examination of his or her common experiences. The sages of the Upaniṣads too shared their interest since direct Upaniṣadic references to some or all of the states are numerous. It is obvious to all scholars that a reading of the Upaniṣads free from commentaries does not permit us to state that during the 800-900 years that separate the earliest *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* from the late *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, the examination of the three states were used to present a complete, coherent, and rational means of imparting liberating knowledge. Having said that, the fact that the states are frequently mentioned or alluded to in order to sharpen the student's discriminative insight, support an argument, or make a useful comparison, reveals a high degree of familiarity with the topic of the three states. The fact that many Upaniṣads exhibit at least some features of the detailed examination of the states which we find in the GKBh, points to the pre-existence and importance of a literary and/or oral tradition that made good use of the theme of the states' analysis. It also, in my view,

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[206] Satchidānandendra sees, in this teaching, a single instance of a broader teaching procedure that is used throughout the Vedāntic literature. See MV, p.107 and notably p.111, where he generalizes the method of superimposition followed by cancellation, to all Upaniṣadic teachings.
[207] Refer to the appendix.

typifies the universal nature of Śaṅkara's teachings because of its appeal to common experience. This appeal is of paramount importance as it is what allows for a more meaningful understanding of the theistic language used throughout the *prasthānatraya* and Śaṅkara's commentaries. For the Advaitin student's direct identification with the Absolute as witness of the states gives unprecedented clarity to what would otherwise remain a purely scripture-based theistic imagery. Indeed, the adoption of the witness-stance is responsible for the pupil's identification with *Brahman* in its *Īśvara* form; it actualizes, to some extent, the divinity of the Absolute in the most direct and immediate way, although it stops short of liberation proper, as we shall see.

Our study of the analysis of the three states in Śaṅkara's tradition is primarily based on the following textual passages: *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (Bṛ.4.3); *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* (Ch.6.8.1, 8.7.1-12.1); *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* (Ka.2.1.3-7, 2.3.6, 4.4 & 6.6); various excerpts from the *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad* (Mā) with Gauḍapāda's kārikā (GK),[208] and Śaṅkara's gloss on all the above.

Attempting to grasp and explain the pedagogical and experiential dimensions of the Advaita teaching relating to the states requires that we pay particular attention to the *Gauḍapāda-kārikā*.[209] This text is a commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* written by Gauḍapāda (500-600 C.E.). In it, we find what is perhaps the first comprehensive analysis of the three states. In addition, this analysis is conducted with the clear intent to enlighten a pupil. This independent treatise was so significant to Śaṅkara that he wrote a commentary on it. Together with Śaṅkara's commentaries, the GK carries

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[208] The *Śaṅkara Digvijaya* of Vidyāraṇya (~1350 C.E) that presents the 'traditional' biography of Śaṅkara, refers to Gauḍapāda as Śaṅkara's great teacher (*paramaguru*). Recent scholarship, however, has attempted to discredit the *Śaṅkara Digvijaya* as an unreliable historical source and argues against the contention that the *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* has a single author, namely Gauḍapāda. The issue of authorship mainly concerns the fourth section of the work. It seems that Śaṅkara considered the four chapters that make up the GK to form a coherent whole. In his commentary on BS.1.4.14, Śaṅkara cites GK.3.15, and in BS. 2.1.9, he quotes GK.1.16, attributing them to a "teacher who knows the tradition" (*saṁpradāyavid ācārya*). This shows that he questioned neither the origin nor the integrity of the work. For a detailed examination of the *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* and their authorship, refer to the following works: *The Māṇḍūkyopanisad and the Āgama-śāstra*, by Thomas E. Wood; *Early Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism, The Mahayana Context of the Gaudapada Karika*, by Richard King; and *Māṇḍūkya Rahasya Vivṛti*, by Satchidānandendra Saraswati.

[209] The *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* is also referred to as the *Āgamaśāstra*. This title suggests that it was considered to be an authoritative text (*śāstra*) based on tradition (*āgama*). According to T. Wood, Gauḍapāda cannot be the author of the fourth *prakaraṇa* of the *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*. He sees him as the compiler of four different works. *The Māṇḍūkyopanisad and the Āgama-śāstra*, Thomas Wood, University of Hawaii Press, 1990, p.137.

out the most thorough investigation on the topic, and this is why these texts receive more attention than any others, and are somewhat used as reference texts throughout the chapter.

I am hopeful that the following will provide us with a clear understanding of a neglected but crucially important Advaita way of teaching that brings out the full meaning of the *pramāṇatva* of the Upaniṣads by allowing the pupil to directly adopt the perspective of the witness, and, therefore, to embrace the notions of the Supreme Being as the source of creatures, things, and phenomena, the seer of everything that exists, the provider of the results of actions, and so on and so forth. Once again, I wish to stress that this undertaking is essential to our thesis because without the experiential component of the Absolute as witnessing consciousness, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to understand how Śaṅkara's interpretation of the authoritative Vedāntic literature harmoniously integrates the theistic elements contained therein.

The present chapter is divided into two parts. The first part details the analysis of the states of waking, dream, and deep sleep, while the second discusses *turīya,* the non-dual awareness that is metaphorically called 'the fourth.' My examination of each state involves a review of the most relevant Upaniṣadic passages with the corresponding commentarial materials. Because I favor a thematic study of the states in Śaṅkara Vedānta, and since I wish to expose the existence of a pedagogical technique across the material mentioned above, the sections do not follow a particular structure that is other than thematic. More than once, I consider the views of scholars to bring out the meaning of difficult passages, or to deal with controversial points such as the superiority of waking over dream (section 1.2), the existence of ignorance in deep sleep (section 1.5), and the equation of *turīya* with the mystical state of *nirvikalpa-samādhi* (section 2.1).

1 The examination of the three states

1.1 The waking state

In chapter 2, we have presented the view found in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 4.3.1-6, that our immediate consciousness is a self-sufficient light which, while being completely distinct from one's body-mind complex, essentially allows for humans' bodily and mental functions.[210] According to Śaṅkara, the objective of such texts[211] is not limited to showing the peculiar connection that exists between the individuals and unimpeded awareness that is their true self, expressed as "the light through which one sits, goes out, works, and returns." To him, these passages also point to the fact that the entire waking state in which man finds himself while awake—inclusive of the waking space, time, and causal laws—is also dependent, for its existence, on limitless consciousness that is *Brahman*. He never tires of repeating that neither individuals nor the waking state as a whole, could be what they are and proceed to do what they do without consciousness. In fact, the Upaniṣads themselves claim that the absence of consciousness would deprive them of their very existence.[212] The substratum of the waking universe is consciousness alone, which may be called light since its nature is pure cognisance and pervades as well as sustains everything. It is on the ground of such passages that Śaṅkara argues for the underlying unity of Self throughout the experience of waking (the all-pervading light in/through which the entire state of waking has its being). This point is important and soteriologically relevant at the level where the aspirant is to make use of his discriminative faculty and take interest not in the world but in its cause. The other main concerns that transpire from Śaṅkara's analysis of the waking state is showing the utter independence of the Self from the state of waking, while demonstrating the complete dependence of the latter upon the former. This is evidenced in Śaṅkara's commentary on such Upaniṣadic passages as Bṛ.4.3.15-17. In

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[210] "It is by the light of the Self that a person sits down, goes about, does his work, and returns" Bṛ.4.3.6.

[211] See also Bṛ.4.3.15-17 (below), Bṛ.3.4.2, Ch.8.12.4, and Ke.1.5.

[212] "Since its absence in the body results in non-perception, and since its presence results in perception, it is thus understood that the agent behind such activities as seeing, and so on, is not the body" (*tasmādyadapāye dehe darśanaṁ na bhavati yadbhāve ca bhavati taddarśanādikriyākartṛ na deha ityavagamyate*) BṛBh.4.3.6, p.304. "There the sun does not shine, nor the moon and stars; there lightening does not shine, of this common fire need we speak! Him alone, as he shines, do all things reflect; this whole world radiates with his light" Ka.2.2.15.

this section of the Upaniṣad, Śaṅkara tells us, the aim of the teacher Yājñavalkya is to show that death is not part of our nature. The rationale used is that if death is inherent to the self, then one can never be liberated, as it is not possible to depart from one's true being. The passage in question reads:

"Well, after this person has enjoyed himself and traveled around in that serene realm and seen for himself [merely seeing][213] the good and the bad, he rushes along the same path and through the same opening back again into the realm of dream. Whatever he may have seen in that serene realm does not follow him, because nothing sticks to this person." "Well, after this person has enjoyed himself and traveled around in that realm of dream and seen for himself the good and the bad, he rushes along the same path and through the same opening back again to the realm where one is awake. Whatever he may have seen in that realm of dream does not follow him, because nothing sticks to this person." "Well, after this person has enjoyed himself and traveled around in this realm where one is awake and seen for himself the good and the bad, he rushes along the same path and through the same opening back again into the realm of dream"

Commenting on Bṛ.4.3.17, Śaṅkara says that passages like "the light through which man sits, goes out, works, and returns," do not establish a tie between the Self and acts of a meritorious or non-meritorious nature or results pertaining to the waking: "Agency is figuratively attributed to the Self, which, naturally, has none. Thus it has been said: 'It thinks and trembles as it were' " (BṛBh.4.3.7). For Śaṅkara, such texts vouch for the absence of agency in the Self during all states, the state of waking being no exception, although to make this point, Śaṅkara has to supply "Whatever he may have seen in that realm of waking does not follow him, because nothing sticks to this person" at the end of Bṛ.4.3.17, thus echoing the two preceding verses.[214]

Śaṅkara understands "merely seeing," reiterated in verses 4.3.15-17, to mean that the Self is a mere witness of the three states, ever detached from them, and yet supporting them. Arguing for the non-involvement of the Self in the waking state (as well as in all states), he offers the reasoning that if the Self was verily an agent and enjoyer in that state, then both merit or demerit accumulated in the waking would get carried over in the dream experience, but experience disproves that.[215] As we will

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[213] I think that it is preferable to follow Madhavananda's translation of *dṛṣṭvaiva* as 'merely seeing', given that the aim of the passage is to emphasize the absence of connection between the Self and the content of the waking state and, in turn, of the dream state.

[214] It also concurs with Bṛ.3.9.26; 4.2.4; 4.4.22; 4.5.15 (See Patrick Olivelle's notes on Bṛ.3.15. *The Early Upanisads*, Annotated Text and Translation, Oxford University Press, 1998, p.517).

[215] "Just as in the dream, being detached, he is not affected by the defects born through attachments in the waking state, in this way, in the waking, he is also not affected by the defects born through attachments in the dream" (*yathā'sau svapne'saṅgatvātsvapnasaṅgajairdoṣairjāgarite pratyāgato na lipyata evaṁ jāgaritasaṅgajairapi doṣairnalipyata eva buddhāntena*) BṛBh.3.4.16 .

see, Śaṅkara presents the same line of reasoning to assert the absence of connection between the states themselves.

Śaṅkara also argues for the all-pervasive and sustaining nature of the Self while rejecting its actual participation in or connection to the waking world, while commenting on the *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad*. The *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad* calls the Self *vaiśvānara* or *viśva*, when it enjoys all physical and psychological manifestations present in the universe as experienced in our waking, the inside and the outside of everything, from the most secretive insight of an individual—for it is his very subject of being—to the grossest manifestation of *prakṛti*.[216] *Vaiśvānara* is related to the important deity *agni* (who has light as its preeminent quality, like consciousness) that is at the heart of Vedic sacrifices. Commenting on Mā.3, Śaṅkara quotes Ch.5.18.2 that clearly draws parallels between the Self as *vaiśvānara* and aspects of the *agnihotra* sacrifice. There, heaven, sun, air, space, water, and earth, are identified with *vaiśvānara's* head, eyes, breaths, torso, bladder, and feet, while the element of fire is identified with his mouth, stressing the idea that the oblations that are poured into the *āhavanīya* fire (his mouth) are the 'food' of the universe, the cosmic Self or *Puruṣa*, and that sacrifices are what sustains everything. In this way, sacrifices become offerings to the Self and not only to the Vedic deity *agni*. The esoteric significance that the Vedic sacrifice takes in the Upaniṣadic literature—the powerful symbolization of the sacrificial fire as the universal Self[217]—is echoed in the authoritative Śaiva literature. Indeed, Lilian Silburn indicates a similar phenomenon taking place in the Śaivāgama: "With the Śaivāgama, the great sacrifice is the offering of the self, an oblation poured into the fire of the supreme conscious subject, which consumes all limitations."[218] Because it establishes a clear correspondence between the various components of the universe and *vaiśvānara*'s body parts, Ch.5.18.2 adds two important elements to the nature of the Self, already defined as the indispensable

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[216] "The first quarter is *vaiśvānara*—the Universal One—situated in the waking state, perceiving what is outside, possessing seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and enjoying gross things" Mā.3.

[217] "Jātavedas is hidden within the two fire-drills, fostered, as a fetus by women with child; with offering should men as they awake, worship the fire each and every day. So indeed is that!" Ka.2.1.8. Considering the context of this verse and Śaṅkara's gloss, "that" stands for the Self.

[218] Silburn, Lilian. *Kundalinī: The Energy of the Depths*. Trans. by Jacques Gontier, Albany, NY Sunny Press 1988, p.11

substratum for the world. It indicates the all-pervading essence of the Self and suggests that an invariable concomitance exists between the latter and the world, the waking world—when it appears.

Mā.3 presents *vaiśvānara* as endowed with nineteen 'mouths,' and suggests that it alone, because it pervades man's entire being, allows for all human experiences to take place. For Śaṅkara, the nineteen mouths stand for man's five senses of perception, the five organs of action, the five breaths or vital functions, the mind, the intellect, the ego, and the faculty of reasoning/discriminating. They are conceived as 'mouths' insofar as they constitute our common ways of knowing and experiencing.[219] Waking consciousness is always animated by the desire to experience. It is involved in securing worldly and non-worldly gains like heaven. 'Activated' by personal desires or Vedic injunctions, waking consciousness appears as if inextricably connected to actions. These mouths, Śaṅkara considers, are but instruments of the Self. He stresses that consciousness, though omnipresent in the waking state, does not act in any way. It appears to act on account of ignorance.[220]

From the examination of the above material, we can make the following points. First, according to our commentator, the Self pervades the waking in its entirety, including all sense organs and mental processes of the waking individuals. Second, the individuals' sense organs and so forth only operate on account of the Self, which enlivens them by its self-effulgent consciousness. Third, the Self is never associated with anything pertaining to the waking world, although in that state, consciousness is said to be directed towards things other than itself.

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[219] MāBh.3. This point is also brought out in GK.1.2, which locates *viśva* in the right eye, perception being the primary means to experience the empirical world. We should note that assigning particular localities in the body are meant to ease the meditations on the Self. As mentioned above, the Self as *viśva* is placed in the right eye, while *taijasa* is placed in the mind—which is indicative of subtleness and complete subjectivity of dreams, and *prājña* is located in the heart, the innermost dimension of humans. See Cole, p.99.

[220] In ChBh.8.12.5 and Bṛ.4.4.1 too, Śaṅkara makes it clear that it is only the instruments of perception (qualified as "mouths" in Mā.3) that are in relation with the outer objects of the waking, and not the Self who merely illumines their respective activities.

Śaṅkara explains the seeming activity of consciousness, which texts like Mā.3 and Ch.8.12.4-5 suggest,[221] with the help of the following analogy. Consciousness is like the sun, the sun does not engage in the act of illuminating anything. Illumination being its very nature, the sun illumines on account of its mere existence. Similarly, the Self whose nature is consciousness does not actually see, smell, speaks, and so on. The Self is said to engage in these activities figuratively, because of its mere existence.[222]

1.2 The dream state

"This is how he dreams. He takes materials from the entire world and, taking them apart on his own and then on his own putting them back together, he dreams with his own radiance, with his own light. In that place, this person becomes his own light" (Bṛ4.3.9).

This verse encapsulates the process involved in our experiencing dream. Śaṅkara explains that "dreaming with one's own radiance, one's own light" refers to the modifications of the mind into the phenomena experienced in the dream. He clarifies his understanding by stating that dream objects are the projections of the accumulated impressions left on one's mind while experiencing the waking world. What distinguishes dream from waking, he says, is that in the former, the Self is entirely distinct from the dream state and its contents, macrocosmic as well as microcosmic—since they are perceived as objects alone—like stellar bodies, individual bodies, minds and intellects, and so forth. In the waking state, however, the Self seems to intermingle with particular physical and mental components.[223]

Śaṅkara gives a similar explanation in his commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad,* using terms that are solely pertinent to this Upaniṣad and the *Kārikā.* While the Self is apparently mixed up with the body-mind complex when appearing as and enjoying the waking world in its *viśva* aspect, the Self

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[221] "Now, when this sight here gazes into space, that is the seeing person, the faculty of sight enables one to see. The one who is aware: "Let me smell this"—that is the Self; the faculty of smell enables him to smell...The one who is aware: "Let me think about this"—that is the Self; the mind is his divine faculty of sight..." Ch.8.12.4,5.

[222] ChBh.8.12.5

[223] As already explained in the previous section, to show its seeming contact with the physical elements of the waking, the Self is said to be located in the right eye, one of the doorways to experience waking. Refers to Śaṅkara's commentaries on Mā.3; Ch.8.12.4-5; GK.1.2 and Br.4.2.2 & 4.4.1.

that enjoys the dream in its *taijasa* aspect remains in the domain of the subtle, that is to say, in the mind alone. In addition to naming consciousness *taijasa*, which communicates its luminous nature, the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* also calls the Self '*antaḥprajñaḥ*' from the viewpoint of the dream,[224] for one is then only aware of impressions that are in the mind.[225]

Returning to the opening verse of this section that is concerned with the analysis of dream, Śaṅkara explains that the statement: "He takes materials from the entire world and, taking them apart on his own and then on his own putting them back together" (Bṛ.4.3.9), marks the juncture where the Self no longer appears as though intermingling with the external functions to remain in the mind, where, through its own effulgence, the impressions of waking experiences engineer and orchestrate the dream reality.

Commenting on Bṛ.4.3.9: "He takes materials from the entire world (waking)" and 4.3.10: "In that place (dream) there are no carriages, and so forth," Śaṅkara indicates the subordination of the dream to the waking insofar as the dream is made up of impressions of the mind gathered from experiences in the waking world.[226] However, above and beyond that, he wishes to underline the Self's immanence and detachment from the state of dream, two features which we have already referred to in the above section relating to the waking state. The former is indicative of the underpinning unity of Self throughout the experience of dream (as the all-pervading consciousness in which the dream state and its contents manifest); the latter signifies the full independence of the Self from the dream state and its content. To clarify the latter point, which may seem contradictory to the first, a similar explanation to that given in ChBh.8.12.5 with respect to the issue of agency of the Self in the waking, is resorted to. Śaṅkara's gloss on Bṛ.4.3.10, which describes the Self as an agent, a creator ("he creates for himself carriages...for he is a creator"), makes it unambiguous that in the dream, just as in

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[224] "The second quarter is *taijasa*—the Brilliant One—situated in the state of dream, perceiving what is inside, possessing seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and enjoying refined things" Mā.4.

[225] "With respect to the sense organs, the mind is located inside; and one whose knowledge in the dream state is in the form of impressions in that [mind], he is the knower of the inside" (*indriyāpekṣayā'ntasthatvānmanasaḥ tadvāsanārūpā ca svapne prājña yasya ityantaḥprajñaḥ*) MāBh.4. Īśādi, p.427.

[226] Refer to BSBh.3.2.7 & 3.2.3, where Śaṅkara attempts to show the subordination of dream to waking on the basis that proper space, time, and causal laws, necessary for the existence of a real object, are never gathered in the case of the dream. Also, refer to Andrew. O. Fort. *The Self and Its States: A States of Consciousness Doctrine in Advaita Vedānta.* Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1990, pp.52-54.

the waking, the Self is not a direct agent. In the waking, the Self may be thought of as an agent to the extent that it is the light in which the waking individual desires, works, and experiences, leading to the production of impressions that are manifested or projected during the state of dream. And in the dream too, the Self is figuratively spoken of as an agent since it is its natural effulgence that lights up the dream state with all its contents. Bṛ.4.3.16 stands out as one of the most obvious scriptural support for Śaṅkara's view that the Self is not a genuine agent or enjoyer in the dream:

"Well, after this person has enjoyed himself and traveled around in that realm of dream and seen for himself the good and the bad, he rushes along the same path and through the same opening back again to the realm where one is awake. Whatever he may have seen in that realm of dream does not follow him, because nothing sticks to this person."

Explaining this verse, Śaṅkara argues that the Self is completely independent from the dream reality. If the Self were not free from the dream reality, contact with the dream merit and demerit would affect the waking state, that is to say, continue in it. As we have already seen (p.96), Śaṅkara presents the same argument with regard to the absence of connection from the waking to the dream. In BṛBh.4.3.18 Śaṅkara goes a step further, asserting the freedom of the Self from both states of waking and dream, based on the analogy of the large fish that moves between two banks of a river.[227]

The use of this analogy announces one important logical conclusion that Śaṅkara and his predecessor Gauḍapāda draw from their understanding of the Upaniṣadic use of the states in general, and which may be summarized as follows. The states cannot really be related to each other; for any true relation between them would require that they themselves, or their elements, be in contact. And this would necessitate a relation of cause and effect. A true and definitive relation between the states would need to take place in a single time/space continuum, something that cannot be established without contradicting experience. The following declarations of Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara preclude the above possibilities:

"Wandering in the waking state, the perceiver of that state sees the beings that are born from eggs or from moisture, who are always present in the ten directions. They are being perceived by his waking consciousness and are not found separated from it. Similarly, this waking consciousness is only

[227] "It is like this. As a large fish moves between both banks, the nearer and the farther, so this person moves between both realms, the realm of dream and the realm where one is awake" (Bṛ.4.3.18).

regarded as that which is perceived [an object of perception]" (GK.4.65-66). "Because their condition is that of being perceived by consciousness, entities being perceived by a waking individual are non-different from his consciousness. It is like the entities being perceived by the consciousness of the seer of the dream [they too are non-different from his consciousness]" (GKBh.4.65-66).[228]

Here, Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara point to an invariable concomitance that would exist between the consciousness of the waking person and the waking objects as well as between the consciousness of the dreamer and the dream objects. Śaṅkara rests on idealist grounds—let us recall Berkley's maxim: "to be is to be perceived"—to argue for the non-difference between the objects perceived in the waking and waking consciousness. He reinforces and enlarges his argument by drawing the student's attention to the experience of dream where the non-difference between the objects of that state and the dreamer's consciousness is easily recognized. Therefore, a connection between these two states is deemed impossible on the basis that the domain of the waking consciousness is only the waking state while the domain of dream consciousness is only the dream state.

In his survey of the analysis of the states, Eliot Deutsch offers a different view on the matter. He sees evidence for the existence of a tie between the two states:

"Because one is involved in one's dream as well as being a witness to it, one is committing a fundamental misidentification of oneself with the contents of one quasi-liberated consciousness. These contents are called subtle elements (*taṇmātras*): not only are they less gross than the objects of waking consciousness, but they also subtly influence the whole fabric of waking consciousness, constituting as they do the material out of which so much of "personality" is formed. And it is precisely this subtle influence that makes it difficult for the *jīva* to know itself, to become fully aware of the forces that mold its attitudes and values. The contents of the dream state are largely involuntary: They present themselves without conscious control or selectivity. Further, so far as the waking state is intimately bound up in the dream state, it too is largely involuntary."[229]

I wish to stress that a reading of the analysis of the states given to us by the two traditional Advaita commentators Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara cannot point to the two above ideas arrived at by Deutsch, i.e., that the contents of the dream world exert an influence on the "whole fabric of waking

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[228] *"carañjāgarite jāgraddikṣu vai daśasu sthitān / aṇḍajānsvedajānvāpi jīvānpaśyati yānsadā // jāgraccittekṣaṇīyāste na vidyante tataḥ pṛthak / tathā taddṛśyamevedaṁ jāgrataścittamiṣyate"* GK.4.65 & 66. *"jāgrato dṛśyā jīvāstaccittāvyatiriktāḥ cittekṣaṇīyatvāt / svapnadṛkcittekṣaṇīyajīvavat"* GKBh.4.65-66. Īśādi, p.487.

[229] *Advaita Vedānta, A Philosophical Reconstruction.* Eliot Deutsch, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1973, p.58.

consciousness," and that the contents of the waking experience are involuntary, due to the fact of the waking state being "intimately bound up in the dream state." Regarding the "involuntary nature of the content of the waking experience," Śaṅkara explains, in BSBh.3.2.9, that although merging completely with the Highest Self in deep sleep, the law of *karma* and ignorance—the two factors that make for individual distinctions—cause one to take up the same body upon waking up. The same argument can be here presented to explain the involuntary nature of the content of the waking experience without adhering to Deutsch's view about the influence of dream on waking. Besides, in order for any relationship to take place between the states of consciousness, a single time and space continuum is needed, which is something that neither scriptures, nor our commentators validate. The dream time is not analogous to the waking time. It is with the help of a wrong inference alone that one may argue for the existence of a single time/space continuum; the latter cannot, in fact, be experienced. As just indicated, Śaṅkara thinks that waking time and space are bound to their waking state. Similarly, dream time and dream space are bound to their dream state. If there is no possibility for the categories of space and time, which are only pertinent to each state, to mingle, it naturally follows that these states' respective contents—the sentient and non-sentient entities of waking and dream—cannot transgress their necessary domain, delineated by the time and space of their particular state. In addition, no 'real' mixing between these two is possible for both are dream-like, false. Śaṅkara's view on the dream-like nature of both waking and dream finds precedence in Gauḍapāda's *kārikā* (particularly in ch.2). There, the assertion that both states are but one conjecture or construction is made: "The wise ones declare that both the states of waking and dream are one (dream)."[230] In GkBh.2.7, Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara have to answer the objection that the two

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[230] "*svapnajāgaritasthāne hyekamāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ*" GK.2.5. GK.2.9 & 10 give equal status to both the waking and the dream states by pointing out that the distinctions between true and false, which can be made within each of the two states, are evidence for the unreality of both states. As both erroneous and correct knowledge taking place in the dream can be falsified, so are erroneous and correct knowledge taking place in the waking. The real and unreal contents of both states are equally false: "Even while the dream takes place, what is imagined by the inner consciousness is not real; what is grasped by the outer consciousness is real; both are seen to be unreal" (*svapnavṛttāpi tu antaścetasā kalpitaṁ tvasat / bahiścetogṛhītaṁ saddṛṣṭaṁ vaitathyametayoḥ*) GK.2.9. "Even during the occurrence of the waking, what is imagined by the inner consciousness is not real. What is grasped by the outer consciousness is real. It is appropriate that both be unreal" (*jāgradvṛttāvapi tu aṁtaścetasā kalpitaṁ tvasat / bahiścetogṛhītaṁ sadyuktaṁ vaitathyametayoḥ*) GK.2.10. See also GK.2.15.

states cannot be unreal due to the absence of causal efficacy in dream and not in waking—food, drink, and so on being useless in the dream: "Their usefulness," says Gauḍapāda, "is contradicted in the dream state; thus, due to their having a beginning and an end, they are held to be false alone."[231] Śaṅkara's comments, below, remind us that it is through a process of reflection on common experience that one is to eliminate doubts concerning the teachings of scriptures.

"The efficacy of food, drink, etc., that is observed [in the waking], is contradicted in the dream state. Having satiated one's hunger and quenched one's thirst through eating and drinking in the waking state, he considers himself [feels], when sleeping, as if hungry, thirsty, etc., as if he had been fasting for a whole night. Similarly, having eaten and drunk in the dream, his condition is not complete [he is not free from hunger and thirst upon waking up]. Hence, the things that are being perceived in the waking state are seen to be contradicted in dream. Thus we think that their unreality, like that of dream objects, is beyond doubt. Hence, because of their shared condition of having a beginning and an end, they are viewed as false indeed."[232]

In GKBh.4.37 too, they face the objection that both states cannot be equally unreal. The objection is that both states cannot be unreal since it is commonly observed that the waking objects are the cause of the dream. The objector confirms his position on the basis that the dream is extremely unstable, while the waking is not. Śaṅkara's answer comes in his explanation of the verse that follows.[233] There, he states that such a view is only tenable for the people who lack discrimination, because for those who have discrimination, it is established that nothing whatsoever has origination.[234] Thus, in the final analysis, Śaṅkara thinks that this issue can be resolved through discrimination alone. And discrimination seems to be just what both Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara attempt to elicit in the student through demonstrating the unreality of both states. The

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[231] *"saprayojanatā teṣāṁ svapne vipratipadyate / tasmādādyaṁtavatvena mithyaiva khalu te smṛtāḥ."* This declaration is based on the preceding verse that gives the following axiom: "[something] which is not found at the beginning [before its appearance] and at the end [when it disappears] cannot also be found to exist at present" *(ādāvante ca yannāsti vartamāne api tattathā)* GK.2.6, Īśādi, p.443.

[232] *"saprayojanatā dṛṣṭā yā annapānādīnāṁ sā svapne vipratipadyate / jāgarite hi bhuktvā pītvā ca tṛpto vinivartitatṛṭ suptamātra eva kṣutpipāsādyārtamahorātropoṣitamabhuktavantamātmānaṁ manyate / yathā svapne bhuktvā pītvā cātṛptotthitastathā / tasmājjāgraddṛśyānāṁ svapne vipratipatipattirdṛṣṭā / ato manyāmahe teṣāmapyasattvaṁ svapnadṛśyavadanāśaṁkanīyamiti / tasmādādyantavattvamubhayatra samānāmiti mithyaiva khalu te smṛtāḥ"* GKBh.2.7, Ibid.

[233] "Your opinion that the unreal dream is born from the real waking is false. In this world, a false entity cannot really originate from a real entity. An unreal entity like the horn of a hare, and the like, is not seen to originate in any way whatsoever (GK.4.38).

[234] "[Objection:] The dream is extremely unstable while the characteristic of the waking is to endure. [Answer:] This is certainly true for those who lack discrimination. For those who have discrimination, however, it is established that no object whatsoever originates" *(atyantacalo hi svapno jāgaritaṁ tu sthiraṁ lakṣyate / satyamevamavivekināṁ syāt / vivekināṁ tu na kasyacidvastunaḥ utpādaḥ prasiddhaḥ)* GKBh.4.38, Īśādi, p.481.

demonstration consists in a) pointing out the similarities that exist in both states, and b) showing the absence of connection between the two states. Reading GK.4.38 along with Śaṅkara's annotations, we understand that our two commentators wish to establish the non-origination of duality, wherever it is experienced, i.e., in the waking or in the dream.

I now wish to 'sketch' *vaiṣvānara* and *taijasa,* following the description of the Self given in MāBh.3&4. This will help us confirm that Śaṅkara could not advocate the views a) that the waking is "intimately bound up in the dream state," and b) that the contents of the dream influences the waking.

For Śaṅkara, Mā.3&4[235] refer to the seven limbs and the nineteen mouths of the Self. In both states of dream and waking, the Self is presented with exactly the same qualities, i.e., with seven limbs and nineteen mouths. *Vaiśvānara's* limbs and mouths correspond to the objective universe and the individual who apprehends it within the domain of the waking state. *Taijasa's* limbs and mouths, on the other hand, stand for the objective universe and the person who apprehends it within the realm of the dream. The limbs and mouths of *vaiśvānara* and *taijasa* are their limiting adjuncts. *Vaiśvānara* and *taijasa* are the Absolute, the one and only reality with two different sets of *upādhis* or limiting adjuncts.

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[235] "The first quarter is *vaiśvānara*—the Universal One—situated in the waking state, perceiving what is outside, possessing seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and enjoying gross things. The second quarter is *taijasa*—the Brilliant One—situated in the state of dream, perceiving what is inside, possessing seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and enjoying refined things" Mā.3 & 4.

a) Vaisvānara: the Self with the adjuncts of the waking state and the waking individual (Mā.3)

Ahaṁkāra ('I' notion or ego)
Buddhi (intellect)
Citta (memory)
Manas (thinking repository)

} antaḥkāraṇa[236] (inner instrument)

Jñanendriyas (organs of sense)
Pañcaprānas (the five breaths)
Karmendriyas (organs of action)

} ekonaviṁśatimukhaḥ (nineteen mouths)

↙ ↘

Apprehension of the waking universe
jāgrat-prapañca (heaven, sun, air, space, water, earth, fire)

b) Taijasa: The Self with the adjuncts of the dream state and the dream individual (Mā.4)

Ahaṁkāra ('I' notion or ego)
Buddhi (intellect)
Citta (memory)
Manas (thinking repository)

} antaḥkāraṇa (inner instrument)

Jñanendriyas (organs of sense)
Pañcaprānas (the five breaths)
Karmendriyas (organs of action)

} ekonaviṁśatimukhaḥ (nineteen mouths)

↙ ↘

Apprehension of the dream universe
svapna-prapañca (heaven, sun, air, space, water, earth, fire)

[236] A verse quoted in the *Vedāntaparibhāṣā* mentions doubt, certitude, pride, and recollection as corresponding to *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahaṁkāra*, and *citta*, the four aspects or functions of the internal organ.

Śaṅkara tells us that it is the vibration of consciousness that is responsible for the experiences of both waking and dream, characterized by the appearance of objects and a subject of experience. This vibration of consciousness signifies the association of consciousness with the limiting adjuncts, which are the modifications of the mind in the waking, and the impressions left by these modifications in the dream.[237] As we have seen, Śaṅkara views the phenomenon of dream as the result of consciousness shining its light on the impressions left by waking experiences.[238] And this is the only way in which an 'association' between consciousness and the limiting adjuncts, and thus between the two states, can be conceived. In light of this, Deutsch's view would seem to conform to Śaṅkara's. However, whenever Śaṅkara refers to such a connection, implicitly or explicitly, it holds true from the viewpoint of the waking where the individual, lacking discrimination, imagines that anything can be born.[239] Andrew. O. Fort seems to allude to the same point when he states that "judgments about the inferiority of dreaming arise in waking, our present state. Dream, we now say, is 'mind-only' with no 'reality-test', assuming that only waking objects are real and that self-consciousness is desirable."[240] It seems, thus, that the connection between the two states is but a concession to the standpoint adopted by the ignorant pupil in the waking.

On the basis of passages like GK.2.6-10 and their commentaries (p.103-4 above), which speak of the nature of the states of waking and dream from the viewpoint of the experience of the states themselves, neither of the two states may be directly apprehended as superior or subordinate to the

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[237] "Waking consciousness is merely a vibration of the mind, it has many means [?] and appears as outer objects. So it leaves impressions on the inner organ" (*jāgratprajñā anekasādhanā bahirviṣayevāvabhāsamānā manaḥspandanamātrā satī tathābhūtaṁ saṁskāraṁ manasyādhatte*) MāBh.4. "The individual awakes, grasping the objects of the senses, due to associating with particular adjuncts that are the modifications of the mind. Qualified by their impressions, seeing dreams, he is conveyed through the word 'mind' " (*manaḥpracāropādhiviśeṣasambandhādindriyārthān gṛhnanstadviśeṣāpanno jīvo jāgarti / tadvāsanāviśiṣṭaḥ svapnānpaśyanmanaḥśabdavācyo bhavati*) BSBh.1.1.9, p.32.

[238] See BṛBh.4.3.9 & GKBh.4.37 (above) and "He creates the pools, etc., solely in the form of impressions. Because of this, he is an agent. We have said that he is the cause of the activity that brings about the modifications of the inner organ that are the basis of [dream] impressions" (*veśāntādīnsṛjate vāsanāmātrarupāt / yasmātsa hi kartā / tadvāsanāśrayacittavṛttyudbhavanimittakarmahetutvenetyavocāma*) BṛBh.4.3.10. p.320.

[239] Ultimately, it is impossible to establish any sort of connection between these states, since nothing, states included, can originate. Śaṅkara explains that it is logically untenable that anything be born, whether from the real or the unreal (GKBh.4.34-41).

[240] Fort, p.54.

other; neither can be seen as prior or posterior to the other. Further, the states do not transform into one another as Fort suggests while explaining that both states are transient and relative.[241] From their own standpoint, both are 'real'—taken as the waking alone—since each state manifests with a self-contained objective world of duality and a subject who experiences it. As Ram-Prasad says (2002, p.81), "the fact that experiences in a dream are mere misperceptions is not grasped by one while dreaming." However, in the final analysis, they are both seen as false since they cancel or contradict each other (GKBh.2.6-7). In view of all this, Deutsch's points seem hardly convincing. For Śaṅkara, the actual influence of the dream on the waking is just as unlikely on the basis of the analogies used in the scripture, as in Bṛ.4.3.18, where the states of waking and dream are equated to opposite banks, one located in the East, the other in the West. It is only the detached and witnessing consciousness, and nothing pertaining to the dream or waking states, like time, space, individuals, minds, and so forth, that navigates between the two.

Let us now turn to our first attempt to expose how Śaṅkara accounts for the rise of the knowledge of *Brahman* as witness, in the context of the examination of the states of waking and dream, an examination that entails taking on the qualities of the Highest Being as conceived in Śaṅkara's tradition. It should be stressed that the standpoint of the witness arrived at through this analysis, is as much a metaphysical point of view as a religious one. And in this respect, it will not do, for Śaṅkara, to appeal to the authority of scriptures alone. This is to be dealt with by recourse to experience and reasoning that accord with revelation. However, we should not be led to believe that we are here discussing the culmination of the Advaita teaching, since, as it will be made clear, the lordship and witnessing function of the Absolute are subtle limiting adjuncts that need, in turn, to be eliminated by the Upaniṣadic teaching.

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[241] Fort, p.52.

1.3 The possibility of apprehending the Absolute as witness from the examination of the two states of waking and dream

From our above examination of various passages in BṛBh.4.3 and GKBh.2, we have already put forth two important contentions of Śaṅkara relating to the examination of the waking and dream states: a) the states of waking and dream are not real since they exclude each other. Nevertheless, the unity of Self is safeguarded throughout the states' appearance and disappearance; b) although from the waking standpoint it may be said that waking impressions influence the dream manifestations, from the viewpoint of the direct experience obtained in the states themselves, they are fully autonomous and consistent realities. This is a view that opposes Deutsch's interpretation. The absence of continuity between the two states is the reason given for their non-coexistence—time, space, and causation being confined to a given state. The *verifiable* fact that the presence of one of the two states excludes that of the other, serves Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara in their common assertion that both states are dreams. At this point, one may object that waking and dreams do not cover the entire range of human experiences since, besides these two states, hallucinations, mystical trances, loss of consciousness, and so on, although not universally experienced, are nevertheless observed to occur, and ought to be accounted for. For Śaṅkara, all such experiences may be incorporated into the state of waking, given that they are all manifestations of waking consciousness. A hallucination, for instance, is a 'sub-state,' an occurrence that pertains to one's waking state, and has no meaning beyond its boundaries.[242]

For Śaṅkara, the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 4.4 and 6.6 support the idea that both waking and dream are unreal. Yet these texts also speak of adopting the unique perspective of the unattached witness that brings all sorrows to an end. And from them, Śaṅkara seems to think, it can most certainly be understood that through the critical examination of the states of dream and waking, under the

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[242] See Arvind Sharma's *Sleep as a State of Consciousness in Advaita Vedanta*. State University of New York Press, Albany, 2004, p.5.

guidance of a teacher well versed in the ancestral Advaita teaching tradition, the existence of the Absolute as witness may be apprehended directly. For the principle through which one perceives or objectifies both states of waking and dream and their contents—and we can include all individuals with their associated fainting, hallucinatory experiences, and the like—is identified as the Self: "That by which one perceives both the states of sleep and of being awake; knowing that it's the immense, all pervading self, a wise person does not grieve" (Ka.4.4). For Śaṅkara, this statement voices the possibility to discover one's divine essence through critical analysis of one's experiences under the guidance of the Upaniṣadic instructions. His annotation to Ka.4.4 reads:

"Dream is to be known, the state of dream, the dream condition. And [similarily] waking is to be known, the state of waking, the waking condition. The Self by which he perceives both states of waking and dream—everything is [to be understood] as before [i.e., as in the verse]. Experiencing this immense and all-pervading Self directly as being oneself [in the form]: 'I am the Supreme Self,' the wise one does not grieve." [243]

In the above gloss, Śaṅkara says that both the states are to be known as objects of cognition ("he perceives both states") through the witness, the Highest Entity with which the pupil identifies. With this identification, the student acquires all the attributes and functions of *Īśvara*; significantly, he becomes the source, the sustenance, and the final destination of the states and their contents. Śaṅkara is not just appealing to scriptures to support his contention that the Self is completely free from the physical being that "works, sits, and moves" within the particular state (waking or dreaming) in which one finds himself. He seems to be calling upon the pupil to verify this contention, which he sees as deriving from facts of common experience. This is reminiscent of the argument he makes concerning the issue of superimposition in his *Adhyāsabhāṣya*, as we shall see later on. In KaBh.4.3 too, it is this same witnessing principle that is identified as the means through which a wise person is able to extricate himself from the aggregate of body, mind, and the like:

"If the aggregate of body, and so on, whose essence is forms, should cause the knowledge of real forms, etc., then, external forms too [other than body...], should come to know their own as well as each other's forms. But it is not so. Therefore, people know forms with characteristics such as the

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[243] *"svapnāntaṁ svapnamadhyaṁ svapnavijñeyamityetat / tathā jāgaritāntaṁ jāgaritamadhyaṁ jāgaritavijjñeyaṁ ca / ubhau svapnajāgaritāntau yenātmananupaśyati loka iti sarvaṁ pūrvavat / taṁ mahāntaṁ vibhūmātmānaṁ matvāvagamyātmabhāvena sākṣādahamasmi paramātmeti dhīro na śocati"* KaBh.4.4. Īśādi, p.62.

body, etc., by means of the Self whose essence is awareness and is different from the body, and so forth" (KaBh.4.3).[244]

In these passages, Śaṅkara tells us that the wise individual who ceases to grieve is one who directly 'beholds' the Self, the immediately available awareness through which he sees the aggregate of body, mind, and senses, and so forth, i.e., the states of waking and dream. Similarly, in GKBh.4.67, GK.4.68-69 (which Śaṅkara leaves free from annotations), and KaBh.6.6, it is said that it is the discriminating person who ceases to grieve, 'beholding' the Self as the principle through which there is perception of the emergence and the disappearance of agents of knowledge, sense organs, knowledge, and objects known, all of which obtain in the phase of waking as well as that of dream:

"Does [the consciousness/knowledge of the waking individual] exist? The discriminating person answers that in the dream, neither the elephant nor the knowledge/consciousness [with the elephant as its object] exists. Therefore, here too [in the waking state] the discriminating one intends the same [i.e., knowledge and the objects of perception do not exist in the waking]. Why? Because both lack [actual] features" (GKBh.4.67).[245]
"As an individual conjured up in a dream is born and dies, similarly, all these individuals [in the waking] come about and cease to be" (GK.4.68).
"As an individual conjured up by magic is born and dies, similarly, all these individuals come about and cease to be" (GK.4.69).[246]
"The senses have a distinct nature and are produced and destroyed. Knowing that they are being produced separately, the wise person does not grieve" (Ka.6.6).[247]

Śaṅkara understands this last verse as excluding—and this is reminiscent of the BG statement that the *guṇas* function in the midst of the *guṇas*[248]—any sort of real association between the origination and destruction of the senses and the Self. The origination and the destruction of the senses are linked back to their respective elements only. For instance, the sense of hearing arises from space and disappears into space, while the Self is not at all affected by these changes. He also explains that the rising and ceasing of the senses pertain to the particular states of waking and dream to which

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[244] *"yadi hi dehādisaṁghāto rūpādhyātmakaḥ sanrūpādīnvijānīyāt tarhi bāhyā api rūpādayo'nyonyaṁ svaṁ svaṁ rūpaṁ ca vijānīyuḥ / na caitadasti / tasmāddehādilakṣaṇāṁśca rūpādīnetenaiva dehādivyatiriktenaiva vijñānasvabhāvenātmanā vijānāti lokaḥ"* KaBh.4.3. Īśādi, p.61.
[245] *"kiṁ tadastīti vivekinocyate / nahi svapne hastī hasticittaṁ vā vidyate, tathehāpi vivekināmityabhiprāyaḥ / kathaṁ lakṣaṇāśūnyam"* Īśādi, p.488.
[246] *"yathā svapnamayo jīvo jāyate mriyate'pi ca / tathā jīvā amī sarve bhavanti na bhavanti ca." "yathā māyāmayo jīvo jāyate mriyate'pi ca / tathā jīvā amī sarve bhavanti na bhavanti ca"* Īśādi, p.488.
[247] *"indriyāṇāmpṛthagbhāvamudayāstamayau ca yat pṛthagutpadyamānānāṁ matvā dhīro na śocati."*
[248] "Having known that the constituents [of nature or *prakṛti*] function among themselves, he becomes detached" (*guṇā guṇeṣu vartante iti matvā na sajjate*) BG.3.28.

they belong; this, again, shows the independence of the Self from them. Śaṅkara says that it is upon such consideration/understanding or examination of the senses and their domains (states) that the wise person stops grieving—through gaining the immediate knowledge of his being as the detached witnessing consciousness or Self.[249] Were one to object that the states and their contents (i.e., individuals and their senses, minds, and so on) could be quite different from the Self, albeit in some way related, the already examined scriptural passages as interpreted by Śaṅkara—Bṛ.4.3.16-17 which describes the Self as being completely detached from both the states because of "merely seeing" the meritorious and non-meritorious results present in both; Bṛ.4.3.18, which compares the Self that moves freely between the states to a large fish swimming between two banks; and Ka.4.4, which states that one's sorrows cease by objectifying both the states of sleep and waking, through the light of the witness, the all-pervading Self—invalidate such an objection.

Although Śaṅkara sees the examination of the three states as a sequential and complete teaching procedure leading to self-knowledge (GKBh.4.89, ChBh.8.12.1, and appendix) the above Upaniṣadic and commentarial material (BṛBh.4.3.16-18 and KaBh.4.4) seem to vouch for the possibility of recognizing that one is the constant witness, "the immense, all-pervading self," by merely examining the states of waking and dream. Surprisingly, despite the clarity of the passages examined above, this extremely interesting view finds the support of a single scholar, Swami Satchidānandendra, who has this to say on the matter while glossing Ka.4.4:

"The perceived waking state, along with the phenomena [its content] is contradicted in dream, and so is the limiting adjunct that is the appearance of the phenomena perceived in dream. Hence, knowing the witness of both [states and contents], the highest self that is non-different from himself [in the form] 'I am that' [the scriptures say] 'he grieves no more.' It is said that for one who seeks knowledge, the examination of these two states alone culminates in the realization of the Highest Self.[250]

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[249] "The wise person, one who has discernment, does not grieve, knowing that the senses like hearing, and so forth, are separately produced from their own causes like space, and such, with the purpose to apprehend their corresponding objects, and knowing that the origination and dissolution of the senses associated with the states of waking and dream have nothing to do with the Self, their inherent nature being different from the true nature of the self, being one and just consciousness" (*indriyāṇāṁ śrotrādīnāṁ svasvacviṣayagrhaṇaprayojanena svakāraṇebhya ākāśādibhyaḥ pṛthagutpadyamānānāmatyantaviśuddhāt kevalāccinmātrātmasvarūpātpṛthagbhāvaṁ svabhāvavilakṣaṇātmakatāṁ tathā teṣāmevendriyāṇām udayāstamayau cotpattipralayau jāgratsvapnāvasthāpekṣayā nātmanastau iti matvā jñātvā vivekato dhīro dhīmānna śocati*) KaBh.6.6. Īśādi, p.72.

[250] "*jāgaritadṛṣṭaṁ saprapañcatvaṁ svapne vyabhicarati, jāgarite ca svapnadṛṣṭaṁ prapañcābhāsopādhikatvam-ityataḥ, tadubhayasākṣiṇamahameva sa iti paramātmānanyatvenātmānaṁ matvā na śocati*

If the mere examination of these two states is sufficient for self-knowledge as Śaṅkara and Satchidānandendra, 1200 years later, seem to indicate, then we may ask in what way the Upaniṣads are needed? For in view of the material considered, it is clear that the knowledge of the Absolute obtains through discrimination alone. Although this matter is bound to become an important source of contention among scholars of Advaita Vedānta, as some recent postings on an internet email group already suggest,[251] my present understanding is that the knowledge secured through discrimination in no way trivializes the explicit need to resort to the Upaniṣads in order to secure liberation. The reason for this is that for Śaṅkara, it is the scriptures that draw the pupil's attention to the permanent principle, the Self that witnesses the manifestation and the cessation of the two states. Furthermore, it is also the scriptures which ultimately reveal the one reality without a second through such formulations as "you are That," and "not this, not this." This is what the teachings of Ch.8.7.1-8.12.1, which rest primarily on an analysis of the three states, seek to do, through Prajāpati's 'enlightening formula': "This is immortal, this is fearless, this is Brahman." This formula, which is reiterated at every stage of this teaching whose underpinning is the examination of the Self in the three states, draws the able student (Indra) to the realization of the Absolute. A significant stage in this teaching consists in leading the student to the crucial insight that both states of waking and dream are false on the basis of universally acceptable facts. The facts seem to be that the states are mutually exclusive. Just as in the dream one completely transgresses the duality (all limiting

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ityavasthādvayaparīkṣaṇenaiva paramātmavijñāne parisamāptirjijñāsāyā uktā." The *Viśuddhavedāntasāraḥ*, Satchidānandendra Sarasvatī. Adhyātma-prakāśa-kāryālaya, Holenarasīpuram, 1968, pp.34-35. I would like to thank Ira Schepetin and Prof. G. Mishra, for reading this Sanskrit work with me and clarifying the meaning of a great many passages. In her thesis, M.J. Doherty argues against Satchidānandendra's view that the states of waking and dream are causally unrelated. She states that such a view contradicts both Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara's direct statements on the subject (GK.4.37 and BSBh.3.2.3-4). She thinks that Satchidānandendra, unlike Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara "denies a cause-effect relationship for waking and dream from any standpoint [relative and absolute]." However, her claim seems unwarranted as Satchidānandendra (in MV, pp.531-32), in unison with Śaṅkara, only speaks of the absence of cause-effect relationship between the states from the standpoint of discrimination. See *A Contemporary Debate in Advaita Vedānta: Avidyā and the Views of Swami Satchidānandendra Saraswati* by Martha, J. Doherty. A thesis presented to The Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies. Harvard University Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1999.

[251] One member of the group, a student of Satchidanandendra, says that if we were to accept the view that the examination of one's experience of the three states provides one with the direct knowledge of the Self, then the Vedic scriptures would lose their authority. For discrimination, which is not dependent on any particular body of scriptures, would then be the authoritative means of knowledge, but not the Upaniṣadic sentences. The postings on satchidanandendra@yahoogroups.com that are particularly relevant to this issue are 464-509.

adjuncts) perceived in the waking, so also in the waking, one totally transgresses the duality (all limiting adjuncts) perceived in the dream. The mutual elimination of the states is attested by a constant principle that is entirely different from the impermanent states and their contents, and which our commentator identifies as the witnessing awareness, our true self.

1.4 The deep sleep state

According to Śaṅkara, an introspective and critical deliberation on the experience of deep sleep in the context of the examination of the states plays an important part in the process of yielding the knowledge of *Brahman*. In the preceding exposition, we saw that Śaṅkara argues rather strongly for the possibility of identifying with the witness that is the Highest Being, based on the structure of our ordinary experience of waking and dream. With regard to the use of the experience of deep sleep that the scriptures and traditional teachers like Śaṅkara make to enlighten pupils, I must stress, at the outset, that the effect of reflecting on the experience of deep sleep cannot refer to the spiritual apogee of the Advaita tradition as taught by Śaṅkara. For the latter's final view is that there is just *Brahman*, which precludes the existence of states where duality is perceived (dream and waking), as well as states where it is not (deep sleep or *samādhi*). We have already emphasized that to adopt the viewpoint of the witness through an analysis of waking and dream—although revealing the pupil's divine nature—is still symptomatic of an ignorant person experiencing duality, and that consequently, it must be considered a superimposition to be eliminated by the scriptures.

Let us now look in some detail at Śaṅkara's understanding of deep sleep, which he sees as part of a teaching method provided by the scriptures for the sole purpose to teach the Absolute, so as to discern what the pupil gains through reflecting on his experience of deep sleep.

Śaṅkara presents the idea that it is in the state of deep sleep that the nature of the Self is best revealed, for otherwise, the Self seems inevitably associated with the body, mind, and senses, in the waking, or with the subtle impressions manifested as the dream. With respect to the three states, it is

in deep sleep alone, Śaṅkara asserts, that the Self is truly itself. This is because in that state, both dream and waking are absent. In that state, there is no desire, no action and, therefore, no *saṁsāra.*[252] To show that this is the intent conveyed by scriptures, he frequently quotes such passages as Bṛ.4.3.19: "As a hawk or an eagle, after flying around in the sky and getting tired, folds its wings and swoops down into its nest, so this person rushes into that realm where as he sleeps he has no desires and sees no dreams."[253] According to him, the description, "he has no desires and sees no dream," discloses the fact that everyone, on a day-to-day basis, enters this state effortlessly, and does not experience the states of waking and dream and their contents—the experiencer/ego, other sentient and insentient entities, and so forth. Even when these states appear along with their contents, they do not possess an ontological reality separate from the Self that is nothing but consciousness. As already mentioned, Śaṅkara's belief that the states are devoid of any ontological status is grounded in the fact that they do not endure, the states always annulling each other. At the same time, he affirms that these states are, in essence, non-different from the witness or knower.[254] That in deep sleep one does not experience any kind of plurality is again disclosed in the clause, "he sees no dream." Although this passage (Bṛ.4.3.19) refers to desire and dream as the states of waking and dream, respectively, we shall recall that following Gauḍāpada, Śaṅkara takes the word 'dream' to signify both states of waking and dream, which are imagined (pp.103-4 above).

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[252] For Śaṅkara, the sole cause of *saṁsāra* is the erroneous association of the Self, mere awareness, with the not-Self. In the present context, this translates itself into the mistaken belief that I am awake, dream, and sleep. See Śaṅkara's commentary on Mā.7.

[253] See also Bṛ.4.3.21 that describes the experience of deep sleep as follows:
"Now, this is the aspect of his that is beyond what appears to be good, free from what is bad, and without fear. It is like this. As a man embraced by a woman he loves is oblivious to everything within and without, so this person embraced by the self consisting of knowledge is oblivious to everything within or without. Clearly, this is the aspect of his where all desires are fulfilled, where the self is the only desire, and which is free from desires and far from sorrows."

Also, in Ch.6.8.1 Uddālaka Āruni explains the nature of sleep to his son Śvetaketu by telling him that when someone sleeps, he enters his own being, the existent:

"Son, learn from me the nature of sleep. When one says here: "the man is sleeping," son, then he is united with the existent; into himself he has entered. Therefore people say with reference to him: "He is sleeping," for then he has entered into himself."

[254] "Like the duality of a snake, a streak of water, and the like, imagined on the real rope, and so on, the three states] annul each other even though their essence is the knower that is real because it is unchanging everywhere [throughout the states]" (*jñasvarūpāviśeṣe'pi itaretaravyabhicārādasatyatvaṁ rajjvādāviva sarpadhārādivikalpitabhedavat sarvatrāvyabhicārājjñasvarūpasya satyatvam)* MāBh.7, p.434.

The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* identifies the third state as "undifferentiated awareness [literally, a lump of awareness]" (*prajñānaghanaḥ)*, "made up of bliss" (*ānandamayaḥ*), and as "the enjoyer of bliss" *(ānandabhuk)*. Closely following the definition given in Bṛ.4.3.19, Mā.5[255] states that "deep sleep is when a sleeping man entertains no desires and sees no dreams," suggesting, as already noted, the absence of waking and dream along with their contents. Śaṅkara explains that it is the mind that brings about suffering when vibrating, creating both objects of knowledge and agent of knowledge.[256] And in deep sleep, where there is no duality, he says that there is no mind, duality being always concomitant with the mind.[257] When the mind does not vibrate, it is but undifferentiated awareness and pure bliss. This is corroborated in ch.19 of his US (*A Conversation Between the Self and the Mind*), where the Self, speaking to the mind, says: "Everything, the agent who sees, the seen, as also the action of seeing, is a delusion imagined by yourself."[258] Thus, for Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣadic reference to the essential condition or form of deep sleep as undifferentiated awareness, pure bliss, and the enjoyer of bliss, is congruent with the experience of deep sleep; for the landmark of the latter is the absence of mind and, consequently, of subject/object duality.[259]

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[255] The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* was composed in the 1st century C.E whereas the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* was composed about 1000-800 B.C.E. See Nakamura, p.104.

[256] "Because of the absence of sorrows brought about by the mind vibrating in the form of subject and objects of experience, he [is said to] consist of bliss. Because he himself enjoys this state that is completely free from effort, he is [called] the enjoyer of bliss" *(manasoviṣayaviṣayyākāraspaṇdanāyāsaduḥkhābhāvāt ānandamaya... atyantānāyāsarūpā hīyaṁ sthitiranenātmanānubhūyata ityānandabhuk)* MāBh.5, Īśādi, p.428.

[257] The concomitance of the mind with duality, that is to say with the states of waking and dream, is expressed by Śaṅkara in his annotation to GK.3.31 and Ch.7.3.2. In the former, he states: "All this duality that is perceived by the mind is seen to be but the mind. [Duality] is present when [the mind] is present, while [duality] is absent when [the mind] is absent" (*manodṛśyamidaṁ dvaitaṁ sarvaṁ mana iti pratijñā / tadbhāve bhāvāttadabhāve cābhāvat*) Īśādi, p.465. In the latter, the same idea is stated, albeit in a context dealing with spiritual practices. There, the mind is superimposed on *Brahman* for the purpose of meditation: "The mind is the Self. The Self is said to have agency and enjoyership when the mind is present and not otherwise. The mind is said to be the Self. The mind, indeed, is the world. It is certainly true that when there is the mind, there is the world along with the engagement of the means to know it" (*mano hyātmā ātmanaḥ kartṛtvaṁ bhoktṛtvaṁ ca sati manasi nānyatheti mano hyātmetyucyate / mano hi lokaḥ, satyeva hi manasi loko bhavati tatprāptyupāyānuṣṭānaṁ ceti)* Iśādi, p.281.

[258] "*dṛṣṭā ca dṛśyaṁ ca tathā ca darśanaṁ bhramastu sarvastava kalpito hi"* US, p.291.

[259] MāBh.6. Since Śaṅkara, in unison with the scriptures, hold the view that sleeping means being undifferentiated consciousness, we should be very cautious with Shantha Kumari's sweeping statement that for Advaitins, deep sleep provides "a mere foretaste of the bliss which is to be experienced permanently in liberation." See Shantha Kumari, B.R. *Transformative Metaphysics: Advaita as a Model. The Tradition of Advaita (10). Essays in Honour of Bhasyabhavajna V.R Kalyanasundara Sastri*. Edited by R. Balasubramanian. New Delhi, 1994, p.190.

With respect to the analysis of deep sleep, we must address the issue of value regarding the experience of deep sleep. In BṛBh.4.3.21, the scriptural statement: "Just as a man embraced by his dear wife knows nothing within or without, so this person embraced by the knowing self knows nothing within or without" seems to negate the possibility of knowledge in deep sleep ("he knows nothing within or without"). An opponent objects that if it is so, then it amounts to the cessation of consciousness in that state. Importantly, this would contradict other scriptural statements which describe the Self as knowledge in its broadest sense, i.e., as self-effulgent consciousness. In addition, in the absence of consciousness in deep sleep, this latter state would become irrelevant insofar as the inquiry into the Absolute is concerned. For Śaṅkara, this seemingly contentious scriptural statement does not entail that knowledge or consciousness ceases in deep sleep. The scriptures' reference to the absence of knowledge in deep sleep merely indicates the absence of a second thing to be known, meaning that no particular knowledge(s) is possible—and this is exactly what is extremely valuable when one examines this state. For our commentator, this view is clearly established by the scripture (Bṛ.4.3.23).[260] Specific knowledge, including that which is based on memory, as we have already explained, can solely relate to the limitations of the waking and the dream. Unbounded knowledge is the feature of deep sleep.

We encounter the same objection in Ch.8.11.1 where Indra, having been taught that one who sleeps is the Absolute or *Brahman*, expresses his objection in the following manner: "But this Self as just explained, you see, does not perceive itself fully as 'I am this'; it does not even know any of these beings here. It has become completely annihilated. I see nothing worthwhile in this." In this extract, Indra sees no worth in the teaching based on the experience of deep sleep because he sees this state as incompatible with knowledge. Śaṅkara explains the nature of this statement in his annotation to Ch.8.12.1. There, he asserts that Indra's above statement is "correct" in view of the fact that in waking and dream, in contradistinction to the experience of deep sleep, the seer perceives all beings

[260] "Now, he does not see anything here (in deep sleep); but although he does not see, he is quite capable of seeing, for it is indestructible. But there is not a second reality here that he could see as something distinct and separate from himself" Bṛ.4.3.23.

and itself in the form: "These are the creatures; this is myself."[261] From these waking and dream standpoints, Indra's understanding of the self in deep sleep is certainly sound since in that state, the experience of a seer perceiving other creatures and itself as a particular subject, a specific knower, is absent; one becomes "annihilated" as it were. Nonetheless, in view of Śaṅkara's following comment about "the continuation of the pleasant and the unpleasant for the conscious one (Self) as long as it remains embodied on account of ignorance,"[262] we are left with no choice but to see Indra's statement concerning the absence of knowledge in deep sleep as ultimately faulty, for it is a statement that finds its roots in the false notion of being embodied. In effect, Prajāpati has to continue correcting Indra's misguided views in his long endeavor to impart the liberating knowledge of the Self to him.

We thus understand that for Śaṅkara, deep sleep cannot be relegated to a state where awareness is not present. Rather, in the teaching process based on the examination of the three states, deep sleep serves the purpose to show the nature of the Self as it is, that is to say, as non-adventitious consciousness that is free from the subject-object duality that is characteristic of waking and dream.

To sum up our examination of the states so far, the texts dealing with the waking present the Self with gross limiting adjuncts. Those dealing with the dream describe the Self with subtle or mental adjuncts. Finally, the texts that deal with deep sleep reveal this same Self in its true nature, that is to say as undifferentiated awareness. The examination of the first two, it was shown, can lead to the realization of the Self as the witness, the seer without a real second,[263] distinct from and not connected to these states, which are but dreams. For Śaṅkara, however, the examination of deep sleep has a special value. Following the scriptures, he claims that in that state where no particular cognitive experience is possible, everyone enters his or her own essence of being, that is to say, is the

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[261] "He (the seer) apprehends the creatures and himself in both waking and dream (being aware that): 'These are the creatures; this is me. From their standpoint, the negation in the declaration: 'this one indeed, etc' (does not know himself in deep sleep) is correct" (*jāgratsvapnayorbhūtāni cātmānaṁ ca jānāti imāni bhūtanyayamahamasmīti / prāptau satyāṁ pratiṣedho yuktaḥ syānnāha khalvayamityādi)* Īśādi, p.327.

[262] "*tathā cetanasyaivāvidyānimittayoḥ saśrīratve sati priyāpriyayorapahatirnāsti...*" Īśādi, p.327.

[263] "He becomes the one ocean, he becomes the sole seer without a second. This, your majesty is the world of Brahman. So did Yājñavalkya instruct him" Bṛ.4.3.32.

Absolute. The experience of deep sleep shows that *Brahman* exists by itself, free from anything other, such as a state.

From the investigation of these three states, which clearly sets consciousness with the waking or dream as its contents apart from consciousness free from all contents, one may conclude that consciousness is thus not unified. However, Śaṅkara leaves no room for such a doubt, since he clearly argues in favor of the unity of consciousness across all states and all experiences. In his annotation to GK.1.3-5, for instance, he unifies the enjoyers in the three states—under which are subsumed all possible enjoyments, all experiences:

> "In the three states of waking, and so on, a single object of enjoyment manifests into three forms called material, subtle, and blissful. And that which is called *viśva taijasa*, and *prājña*, is but a single enjoyer. This is affirmed on the basis of the single conception 'I am that,' and because there is no distinction in being a seer." [264]

Thus, while there is no unity among the three states with respect to time, space, and causality, the unity of Self is still preserved throughout. For it is the same Self, the witnessing awareness alone, which is said to manifest as waking and dream, due to ignorance. And it is this very awareness, devoid of manifestations, which is met with when one enters his essence in deep sleep. Satchidānandendra thoughtfully observes that calling the Self by three different names according to his witnessing the waking, the dream, or the absence of all distinctions in deep sleep, is appropriate to the extent that it is correct to say that the existence of reflection is dependent on another 'real' object. This remark, I think, means that it is appropriate to designate the Self as *vaiśvānara*, etc., so long as the three states are seen to exist, that is to say, so long as one is in ignorance.[265] The Self is called *ekībhūtaḥ* (He who has become one [in sleep]) only so long as two other states are erroneously thought to exist beside it.[266] This view finds support in the declarations made by both Gauḍapāda and

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[264] "*triṣu dhāmasu jāgradādiṣu sthūlapraviviktānandākhyaṁ bhojyamekaṁ tridhābhūtaṁ yaśca viśvataijasaprājñākhyo bhokteikaḥ so'hamityekatvena pratisaṁdhānāt dṛṣṭṛtvāviśeṣācca prakīrtitaḥ*" GKBh.1.5. Īśādi, p.430.

[265] MV, p.102.

[266] "Because of their cessation [waking and dream] in deep sleep, this individual self is said to have become one, resolved into himself, as it were. Just as an appearance is said to be dependent on another form, as it were, so it is faultless to designate the witness of waking as *vaiśvānara,* the witness of dream as *taijasa*, and the witness of sleep as *prājña*" *(tasyāpyupaśamāt suṣuptau svātmani pralīna iva bhavatītyataḥ 'ekībhūtaḥ' ityucyate'yamātmā / yathoktapararūpatvābhāsamapekṣyaiva tu jāgratsākṣiṇo vaiśvānarasaṁjñatvaṁ svapnasākṣiṇastaijasasaṁjñatvaṁ*

Śaṅkara concerning the Self as being ultimately free from all states. Further, on the basis of Śaṅkara's multiple statements that the Self is everyone's immediate awareness, indivisible, changeless, and already attained, modifications like "dissolving into oneself," commonly called deep sleep, waking up, or dreaming, can only be explained on the basis of an error. To appeal to something else than an error, like the existence of a positive ignorance in sleep, as a way to account for our experiencing an ongoing series of states, as it is commonly done in post-Śaṅkara Advaita, cannot be credited to Śaṅkara himself, and actually works against the coherence of his soteriological system, as we shall now see.[267]

1.5 The problem of *avidyā* in deep sleep

According to Śaṅkara, ignorance or *avidyā* is fully responsible for our ordinary perception of duality. Most scholars, East and West, present *avidyā* as a positive principle (usually called *māyā*) with two powers, which knows no commencement. The first power, *āvaraṇa-śakti*, is said to cover *Brahman*'s self-effulgence, while the second, *vikṣepa-śakti*, projects the manifold universe. *Avidyā* as a 'positive principle' means that it is indefinable as either existent (as an object like a pot may be said to have existence) or non-existent. Instead, it is named 'indeterminable' (*anirvacanīya*), a category altogether different from those of existence and non-existence.[268] *Avidyā* is perhaps the most controversial topic in Advaita Vedānta. It is so controversial and important, that every teacher belonging to either of the two main schools of Advaita Vedānta, namely, the Bhāmatī and the Vivaraṇa, has had to endeavor in the troubling task to give the 'correct' and 'final' view on ignorance. One of the main sources of disagreement concerns the location of ignorance. The Bhāmatī school

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ca suśuptasākṣiṇaśca prājñatvavyapadeśa ityanavadyam) Viśuddhavedāntasāraḥ, p.39.

[267] Of course, as we shall see, Śaṅkara also appeals to the Lord, *Īśvara*, to explain the appearance of duality (the states of waking and dream). This appeal is also to be understood as a stratagem that works within the overall Advaita process of teaching defined as superimposition followed by negation.

[268] The widely accepted Advaita doctrine that *māyā/avidyā* is an indeterminable positive entity, a metaphysical principle with a two-fold power that conceals *Brahman* and projects the world, may be traced to the writings of Maṅḍana Misra (a contemporary of Śaṅkara) and was developed by post-Śaṅkara commentators. See A. W. Thrasher's *The Advaita Vedānta of Brahma-siddhi*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1993, pp.70&73. See also Vācaspati Miśra's *Bhāmatī*, 2.2.2: "Name and form are set up by ignorance. Causal ignorance is of the nature of dissolution (*laya*), associated with the impression of projection derived from world projection in previous world periods." Quoted from the MV, p.550.

contends that the *jīva* is the seat of *avidyā* whereas the Vivaraṇa school argues that it is pure consciousness, *Brahman*. I do not wish, at present, to directly enter this debate. Rather, I propose to examine a single aspect of the debate, precisely, the reliability of the widely accepted belief that *avidyā* exists in deep sleep because in this state, it is directly perceived. It is pertinent to take up this examination at present since in the forthcoming chapter, I shall present Śaṅkara's view that the student who is engaged in the *nivṛtti* discipline can attest to his essence as the witness, the Supreme Being who is devoid of any sort of causal ignorance, on the basis of his own experience of deep sleep.

Some 'heavyweights' of the Advaita Vedānta tradition such as Vidyāraṇya, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, and modern swamis like Chinmayananda and Dayananda, as well as foremost academics such as Karl H. Potter, T.M.P. Mahadevan, Eliot Deutsch, and Martha Doherty, accept and sometimes argue that in deep sleep, the witness knows the existence of ignorance. After a brief overview of this argument, I shall consider the views of Śaṅkara as well as some significant remarks made by Satchidānandendra on the topic, which I find to oppose the generally accepted view.[269] Before proceeding, it is appropriate to give a brief summary of Śaṅkara's own understanding of ignorance. To this effect, there is perhaps no better place to look than in his preface to the *Brahmasūtras*, the *Adhyāsabhāṣya*. The interesting feature of this short preface, which is particularly relevant to the present investigation, is that contrary to the rest of his commentarial work, it is not corroborated by Upaniṣ*adic* quotes. In fact, the views expressed therein derive, not from scriptures, but from common experience. In this introduction, though it is also prevalent in many places throughout his writings, Śaṅkara addresses the problem of ignorance as an experiential problem rather than a metaphysical one. It should be noted that most modern scholars of Advaita Vedānta speak of ignorance as a metaphysical principle. The view of Satchidānandendra stands as an exception. In her thesis,[270] Doherty examines the latter's controversial ideas on the nature of ignorance and related matters, and finds many of his views untenable. One of the views she contests is that the

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[269] For a summary of the traditional Advaita view on the topic, see *Vedāntavidvadgoṣṭhī*, edited by Sṛī Satchidānandendra Sarasvatī. The Adhyātma-Prakāśa-Kāryālaya, Holenarasīpuram, Mysore, 1962.

[270] See also Martha Doherty's paper *A Contemporary Debate among Advaita Vedantins on the Nature of Avidyā*. Journal of Indian Philosophy, vol 33, No.2 April 2005, pp.209-239.

metaphysical character of ignorance was a concept developed and strengthened by Śaṅkara's successors. I take side with Satchidānandendra's opinion that in his commentarial work, there is no solid evidence to suggest that Śaṅkara viewed *avidyā* as a metaphysical conundrum. In the following passage of his *Adhyāsabhāṣya*, for instance, Śaṅkara clearly emphasizes the experiential character of ignorance:

"Like the nature of darkness which opposes that of light, the object and the subject,[271] whose domain is the notion 'you' and the notion 'I', respectively, cannot be established as identical. It is also the case with regard to their attributes. Consequently, it is not appropriate to superimpose upon the subject—because its nature is consciousness, and because its domain is the 'I' notion—the object whose domain is the notion 'you,' along with its qualities. Inversely, it is inappropriate to superimpose the subject and its qualities on the object. Nevertheless, because there is no discrimination between their respective natures as well as between their attributes—even though they are absolutely distinct—they are superimposed on each other. Thus, coupling the existent and the non-existent,[272] people naturally use expressions such as 'I am this' and 'this is mine.' The reason for this is wrong knowledge." [273]

Deutsch holds that consciousness in deep sleep functions as the causal body of the Self. On this basis, he asserts that deep sleep is not the consciousness wherein non-duality is obtained, and that distinctions are not eliminated but exist in a potential form. It is for this reason, he claims, that the individual "is said here (in deep sleep) to perceive pure *avidyā*, the cause or source of all distinctions."[274] Deutsch's above view agrees with the traditional post-Śaṅkara interpretation of the topic. Doherty reminds us of the traditional Advaitin pandits' rationale for establishing the presence of positive ignorance—and not the mere absence of knowledge—in sleep: "It would be impossible to awake from sleep into *saṁsāra* if there is no ignorance in sleep and only oneness with *Brahman*."[275] Before mentioning Mahadevan's view on the subject, let us note a more detailed argument favoring

[271] The subject, as we have already pointed out, is the witnessing consciousness. All else is within the domain of the known, the not-Self.

[272] The subject is the only existent; the objects of perception have no independent reality from it. In and of itself, an object of perception is unreal. The rationale behind this view is that the essence of objects of cognition can never be ascertained since they are always changing. It is axiomatic in this tradition to consider whatever never changes its nature as reality.

[273] *"yuṣmadasmatpratyayagocarayorviṣayaviṣayiṇostamaḥprakāśavadviruddhasvabhāvayoritaretarabhāvānupapattau siddhāyāṁ taddharmāṇāmapi sutarāmitaretarabhāvānupapattirityato'smatpratyayagocare viṣayiṇi cidātmake yuṣmatpratyayagocarasya viṣayasya taddharmāṇāṁ cādhyāsaḥ tadviparyayeṇa viṣayiṇastaddharmāṇāṁ ca viṣaye'dhyāso mithyeti bhavituṁ yuktam / tathāpyanyonyasminnanyonyātmakatām anyonyadharmāṁścādhyāsyetaretarāvivekena, atyantaviviktayordharmadharmiṇormithyājñānanimittaḥ satyānṛte mithunīkṛtya, ahamidaṁ mamedamiti naisargiko'yaṁ lokavyavahāraḥ." Adhyāsabhāṣya.*

[274] Deutsch, p.61.

[275] Doherty, p.169.

the presence of ignorance in deep sleep, given by a traditional proponent of Śaṅkara Vedānta. In his *Advaita-Siddhi*, Madhusūdana holds the view—generally accepted by all later Advaitins—that the existence of *avidyā* is revealed by pure consciousness,[276] which is not itself within its grip. He also argues that the ignorance present in deep sleep is solely one of ignorance's many modes, which ceases upon waking. This particular mode leaves an impression that is the basis for its being remembered upon waking. According to this traditional interpretation, ordinary and common experiences of the type: "I am ignorant of such a thing," "I do not know this person," and so on, bear testimony that one's ignorance can be perceived. In the context of the deep sleep experience, our memory of it reveals that one does not know anything in that state. This, he argues, is evidence to the existence of *avidyā* in deep sleep, for it is being perceived there. [277]

In *Superimposition in Advaita Vedānta*, Mahadevan also examines the question about the possible presence of ignorance in deep sleep. He first points out that Śaṅkara is quite ambiguous on the matter. He then says that Śaṅkara argues positively for the existence of *avidyā* in deep sleep, and to corroborate this view, he cites ChBh.7.3.2, as well as BSBh.2.3.30-31 and 3.2.9, [278] the BSBh passages being cited by traditional pandits desirous to support the position that there is ignorance in deep sleep.[279] His citation of ChBh.7.3.2, however, does not seem appropriate. This verse appears in a context of meditation and Śaṅkara's annotation says nothing about ignorance or the state itself. It describes the mind as the Self, the principle which pervades speech and name, and which is taken as an object of meditation. It is but one object of meditation among 14 others presented in a series from 7.1 through 7.16. Regarding Mahadevan's reference to the BSBh citations that are quoted among

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[276] Bina Gupta, p53.

[277] See the *Advaita-Siddhi* of Madhusūdana Sarasvati, pp.550 & 558. Madhusūdana derives many of his views from Sarvajñātma's *Saṁkṣepa-Śārīraka*, notably the traditional Vivāraṇa claims that the Absolute is both the locus as well as the object of ignorance and that ignorance is directly experienced in the state of deep-sleep. This view is also expressed in the *Pañcadaśī*, Vidyāraṇya's most popular work: "For a person awaken from deep sleep, the ignorance of deep sleep is known in the form of memory. This memory is that of the object (ignorance) experienced during deep sleep. Therefore, the consciousness alone illumined the ignorance in deep sleep" *Discourses on Pañcadaśī* by Br. Sudhanshu Chaitanya, Vol.1. Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Bombay, 1994, (*Tattva Viveka*, 5, p.6).

[278] Mahadevan also cites BṛBh.5.2.21. The verse is probably misquoted. T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Superimposition in Advaita Vedānta*. Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1985. pp.49-50.

[279] Doherty, p.170.

similar ones below, they simply assert that deep sleep is the source for the states of waking and dream as long as the knowledge of the Self is absent. It is difficult and I think undesirable to hold the view that Śaṅkara expounded the presence and the direct perception of ignorance in that state simply because he acknowledges the latter to be the source of waking and dream:

"Consciousness is [named] *cetomukhaḥ*, being the entryway to the knowledge/consciousness of the dream, etc., [waking]" (MāBh.5).[280]
"Dream is apprehending something as another like a rope as a snake. That one, whose distinguishing feature is the absence of knowledge of reality is called sleep. *Viśva* and *taijasa* correspond to these two [dream and absence of knowledge]. Hence, they are spoken of as being connected with cause and effect. Yet, *prājña* is devoid of the dream and is joined with sleep alone. It is spoken of as associated with [being a] cause" (GKBh.1.14).[281]
"As long as this individual self remains a transmigratory entity, [as long as] the condition of being a transmigratory entity is not eliminated by correct perception [of the Self], so long will there be his association with the intellect" (BSBh.2.3.30).[282]
"In deep sleep and dissolution, contact with the intellect exists in the sole form of a potency and comes forth again upon waking and creation" (BSBh.2.3.31).[283]
"It has been explained repeatedly that existence alone is imagined to be the individual self, due to contact with limiting adjuncts. That being the case, as long as it conforms to this nexus pertaining to that single adjunct, so long is there the activity of that individual self. But when [existence] conforms to a nexus pertaining to some other limiting adjunct, there is another individual self's activity. That alone, this adjunct, [exists] in sleep and waking, in accord with the maxim of the seed and sprout. Thus, it is correct to say that [the adjunct] alone awakens as the individual" (BSBh.3.2.9).[284]
"In deep sleep, when that ignorance which presents objects different from the Self, has subsided, there being no object differentiated from the Self by ignorance, what should one see, smell or know, and through what means? ...It is ignorance that creates duality, but here [in deep sleep], it has been pacified. Therefore, it is the one seer [witness], for the inherent nature of the seer, the light of the Self, cannot be lost. [The Self] is non-dual because of the absence of a second entity to be seen" (BṛBh.4.3.32).[285]

The above extracts, most of which are quoted by Mahadevan and Doherty (in defense of 'traditional' Advaita), speak of the causal function of deep sleep but do not lend support to the view

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[280] "*svapnādipratibodhaṁ cetaḥ prati dvārībhūtatvāccetomukhaḥ*" Īśādi, p.428.
[281] "*svapno'nyathāgrahaṇaṁ sarpa iva rajjvām / nidroktā tattvāpratibodhalakṣaṇaṁ tam iti / tābhyāṁ svapnanidrābhyāṁ yuktau viśvataijasau / atastau kāryakāraṇabaddhau ityuktau / prājñastu svapnavarjitayā kevalayaiva nidrayā yuta iti kāraṇabaddha ityuktam*" Īśādi, p.436.
[282] "*yāvādayamātmā saṁsārī bhavati yāvadasya samyagdarśanena saṁsāritvaṁ na nivartate tāvadasya buddhyā saṁyogo na śāmyati*" BSBh, p.287.
[283] "*buddhisaṁbandhaḥ śaktyātmanā vidyamāna eva suṣuptapralayayoḥ punaḥ prabodhaprasavayorāvirbhavati*" BSBh, p.289.
[284] "*sadeva tūpādhisaṁparkājjīva ityupacaryata ityasakṛtprapañcitam / evaṁ sati yāvadekopādhigatā bandhānuvṛttistāvadekajīvavyavahāraḥ / upādhyantaragatāyāṁ tu bandhānuvṛttau jīvāntaravyavahāraḥ / sa evāyamupādhiḥ svāpnaprabodhayorbījāṅkuranyāyenetyataḥ sa eva jīvaḥ pratibudhyata iti yuktam*" BSBh, p.353.
[285] "*yatra punaḥ sā'vidyā suṣupte vastvantarapratyupasthāpikā śāntā tenānyatvenāvidyāpravibhaktasya vastuno'bhāvātkena kam paśyejjighredvijānīyādvā /...avidyayā hi dvitīyaḥ pravibhajyate / sā ca śāntā'trāta eko dṛṣṭā dṛṣṭeraviparilluptatvādātmajyotiḥsvabhāvāyā advaite dṛṣṭavyasya dvitīyasyābhāvāt*" BṛBh, p.340.

that *avidyā* or a mode of *avidyā* is perceivable in deep sleep or, for that matter, that one experiences it there. In fact, BṛBh.4.3.32 with its insistence that there is nothing other than the Self affirms the contrary. However, glossing Mā.5 and BS.2.3.30-31, Śaṅkara recognizes that there is a connection between ignorance and deep sleep in so far as the absence of knowledge of the real is common to the three states.[286] The absence of knowledge is the reason for the individual's wrong belief that he/she experiences the three states in succession (BSBh.2.1.9), the belief that one is a transmigratory entity. Here, we see an extension of Fort's remark concerning the judgment about the inferiority of dream, which solely arises in waking (p.107 above). Significantly, the judgment that one goes through the three states in succession also arises solely in the waking. Śaṅkara's acknowledgment that the connection with the adjunct of intellect is present, albeit in a latent form, in sleep (BSBh.2.3.30-31), is a necessary inference made in the waking; it is a concession to the viewpoint of ignorance, which entails the dominance of the erroneous belief of going through the states of sleep, waking, dream. This is a subtle yet crucial point that Doherty's research did not bring out, and which left her with no other alternative than to concede to the traditional doctrine of the presence of *avidyā* in deep sleep, to explain why duality continues appearing if ignorance is not present in deep sleep. Potter, too, does not seem to be aware of this distinction between the direct or intuitive experience of deep sleep and the inferential knowledge derived from it in the waking state. For in some places (Potter, p.90), he holds that Śaṅkara equates deep sleep with ignorance, while in others, he cites passages that contradict such an assertion (i.e., TaiBh.2.8.5 and US.1.2.86-93). In such passages, Śaṅkara differentiates deep sleep from waking and dream on the basis that duality, in the latter two states, is a product of ignorance, whereas in deep sleep, the non-perception of duality is natural (not an outcome of ignorance), since its nature is unbounded consciousness.[287]

Moreover, when in MāBh.5 Śaṅkara calls *prājña* (the Self with the adjunct of deep sleep) "the doorway to the experience of both the states of waking and dream,"[288] he explains that it functions as

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[286] "*triṣvapi sthāneṣu tattvāpratibodhalakṣaṇaḥ*" MāBh.5. Īśādi, p.428.

[287] Karl H. Potter (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, Advaita Vedānta up to Śaṅkara and His Pupils*. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1981, pp, 216; 225-6.

[288] "*svapnādipratibodhaṁ cetaḥ prati dvārībhūtatvāccetomukhaḥ*" Īśādi, p.428.

a causal state. Yet this state, the seed for the manifestation of both dream and waking, is entirely dependent on the erroneous viewpoint that waking and dream actually exist. And the generally accepted viewpoint that positive ignorance is present in deep sleep on the ground of the recollection: "in sleep, I knew nothing," is not acceptable to both Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara for whom the state of waking and its contents, inclusive of body, mind, and thus memory, can have no association with the dream state and its own contents, since they are mutually exclusive.[289] However, when deep sleep is examined for what it is, and that, it seems, can only be done through considering deep sleep as it presents itself to us directly, it is found to lie beyond cause and effect.

For Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣadic descriptions of deep sleep as the source for the manifestation of the states of waking and dream, are a means of instruction that necessitate the temporary adoption of the pupil's natural but erroneous view of reality. There is ample evidence to suggest that Śaṅkara held the view that scriptures adopt the viewpoint of ignorance in all their teaching procedures at various occasions and in different contexts, yet always with the aim to convey that which the mind cannot conceive and which words cannot express. In BṛBh.5.1.1, he argues against the view held by Bhartṛprapañca, that scriptures teach *Brahman* as both unity and plurality. One of the objections leveled against Śaṅkara is that since he defends the actual absence of duality, the portion of the revelation concerned with rituals cannot be valid. Śaṅkara replies that scriptures can only proceed to teach aspirants based on existing circumstances, which he defines as the common but erroneous thinking that duality is real. He then explains the general way scriptures teach the Absolute, and in the process, he shows how the texts that are concerned with ritual prescriptions and prohibitions serve the ultimate purpose to make *Brahman* known:

"Therefore, taking duality as experienced, which is created by ignorance and is natural to everyone, [scriptures] first instruct the performance of rites considered to be the means to secure the desired ends of those who have defects such as attachment and aversion, having ignorance, innately. Thereafter, upon perceiving the defects inherent to the well-known actions, their means, and their consequences, and desiring for result their natural state of indifference that stands in opposition to those [actions, and so on], [scriptures] teach them, as a means to that [result], the knowledge of

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[289] See section 2.2 above.

Brahman, whose nature is the vision/realization of the unity of Self. When they have secured that result, their natural state of being that is indifference, their interest in the validity of scriptures ceases. And in the absence of that, the scriptural status [authority] of the scriptures too, ceases."[290]

In BGBh.13.13,[291] we also have a frank endorsement of this teaching procedure. There, Śaṅkara explains that the enumeration of the well-known human sense organs as adjuncts of the witness or field-knower, aims to eliminate doubts about the possibility to apprehend it. This, he believes, is entirely congruent with the traditional Vedāntic teaching method that leads to liberation, i.e., superimposing and eliminating false adjuncts to the Self:

"Since it leads one to the knowledge of its reality, even the false form caused by adjuncts is granted as though it were an attribute of the knowable, as expressed in "on all sides it has hands and feet," and so forth. Thus say the true knowers of the tradition: "That which is devoid of the manifold is explained through the process of superimposition and cancellation"[292]

Throughout the *prasthānatraya-bhāṣya*, there are passages where Śaṅkara implies, alludes, or straightforwardly declares that the scriptures resort to our natural viewpoint of ignorance in their teaching procedures. I have footnoted a few additional passages in order to remove any doubt about Śaṅkara's conviction regarding this significant point. [293]

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[290] *"tasmādyathhāprāptameva dvaitamavidyākṛtaṁ svābhāvikamupādāya svābhāvikyaivāvidyayā yuktāya rāgadveṣādidoṣavate yathābhimatapuruṣārthasādhanaṁ karmopadiśatyagre paścātprasiddhakṛiyā kārakaphala svarūpadoṣadarśanavate tadviparītaudāsīnyasvarūpāvasthānapha lārthine tadupāya bhūtāmātmaikatvadarśanātmikāṁ brahmavidyāmupadiśati / athaivam sati tadaudāsīnyasvarūpāvasthāne phale prāpte śāstrasya prāmāṇyaṁ pratyarthitvaṁ nivartate / tadabhāvācchāstrasyāpi śāstratvaṁ taṁ prati nivartata eva"* BṛBh.5.1.1, p.393.

[291] "On all sides It has hands and feet; on all sides, eyes, heads, and mouths. It has ears on all sides here in this world; It stands encompassing all things."

[292] See ft. 85.

[293] "The Upaniṣad 'thinks' that the Self taught through the negation of all features in the text, "now, therefore, the teaching: 'not this, not this' (Bṛ.2.3.6), is very difficult to understand; thus, whatever was explained again and again, through various means, for the sake of establishing that very [Self], it negates all that" (*sarvaviśeṣapratiṣedhena 'athāta ādeśo neti neti' iti pratipāditasya ātmano durbodhatvaṁ manyamānā śrutiḥ punaḥ punaḥ upāyāntaratvena tasyaiva pratipipādayiṣayā yadyadvyākhyātaṁ tatsarvaṁ nihnute"* GKBh.3.26. Īśādi, p.463. "Having realized such a state free from plurality, we revere it to the best of our ability, making it enter the range of ordinary dealings, though it is beyond it" (*īdṛkpadamanānātvaṁ nānātvavarjitaṁ buddhvā avagamya tadbhūtāḥ santo namaskurmastasmai padāya / avyavahāryamapi vyavahāragocaramāpādya yathābalaṁ yathāśaktītyarthaḥ)* GKBh.4.100. "The existent is accepted, fabricated by you; since it is the occasion for the inquiry, were [the existent] not to exist, then due to the loss of the inquiry, so too [the existent?] would be merely fabricated. If that [eventuality] is not desired, the existent is always assumed" US.19.15. Clooney's translation. "All worldly and Vedic actions, [involving] means of knowledge and objects of knowledge, as well as all scriptures—whether concerned with injunctions, prohibitions, or liberation—proceed by following this mutual superimposition of the Self and not-Self called ignorance" *Adhyāsabhāṣya* (see ft.105). "No such plurality of knowers (lit. field-knowers) is sought to be taught; it is rather their condition relative to bondage and liberation that is sought to be conveyed. This is conveyed by following the established difference in condition, relative to bondage and liberation. However, this difference, caused by limiting adjuncts, is conjectured through erroneous knowledge; it is not absolute" (*nahīyaṁ kṣetrajñabhedapratipipādayiṣā kiṁtu bandhamokṣavyavasthāpratipipādayiṣātveṣā / prasiddhaṁ tu bhedamanūdya bandhamokṣavyavasthā pratipādyate / bhedastūpādhinimitto mithyājñānakalpito na pāramārthikaḥ*) BSBh.1.4.10. Īśādi, p.157. Also, while criticizing Śaṅkara's interpretation of BS.3.22-30, Rāmānuja shows that Śaṅkara was indeed committed to such a teaching strategy. He states that it would be ridiculous to hold the view that *Brahman* possesses attributes in order to conform to popular beliefs, and to then negate these very attributes. For a) it would be futile, and b) such a

From passages like these, we can see clearly that for Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣads 'deliberately' adopt the standpoint of ignorance, and proceed to attribute certain qualities and functions to the Absolute, such as its being luminous or knowable, the creator of all forms, etc., as necessary means of instruction.

Regarding the scriptural statements that present deep sleep as the source for the manifestation of the states of waking and dream, they necessarily 'assume' that one really dreams, sleeps, and wakes up, something which awareness does not really do since it is free from transformations. From the viewpoint of direct experience, which is what Śaṅkara's commentary on scriptural passages like Mā.5 appeals to, deep sleep is the Self, free from all distinctions such as states, knowledge and ignorance. We will remember that Śaṅkara calls upon direct experience to verify whether the states coexist or overlap and thus influence each other—common experience reveals that whenever any one state is found, the others are not. Essentially, the cornerstone of the examination of the three states in Śaṅkara's system is based on common experience, and from that standpoint, deep sleep is just awareness. In deep sleep, the conditions for particular cognitive experiences that would enable the perception of ignorance are absent; for there is no knowing agent, means of knowing, and objects of knowledge. Ignorance, which is repeatedly described as the mixing up of the nature and qualities of Self and not-Self, takes a different although complementary dimension in the context of the examination of the three states. In such a context, ignorance is the mistaken notion that one is awake, dreams and then sleeps, until becoming wakeful again, and so on and so forth. It is a mistaken association of the Self with the waking body, mind, and senses, which is responsible for the wrong belief that one continuously goes through the three states. When, in *Adhyāsabhāṣya* and BSBh.1.3.2, Śaṅkara states that mistaking the Self for the not-Self is the cause for the numerous ways through which we approach life, i.e., worldly, religious or otherwise, we must necessarily include the universal notion that we are creatures of the 'real' waking time and space within which we reach the

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process could only be justified if such attributes could be known in worldly life, whereas in fact, they can only be known by means of the scriptures. *The Vedanta Sutras with the Commentary by Ramanuja*, by George Thibaut. Kessinger Publishing Co, 2004, pp.291-92.

states of dream and deep sleep. If sleeping is itself a mistaken notion, so is the view that there is a visible or knowable ignorance in sleep!

From the natural but erroneous understanding that we are creatures of the waking state, we can easily see the difficulties inherent in trying to determine whether or not *avidyā* exists in deep sleep. It is highly implausible that the existence or non-existence of *avidyā* in deep sleep may be arrived at through reasoned arguments. For reason can only rest on facts, while facts themselves cannot be established on reason. The state of deep sleep, like the knowable ignorance in it, should be determined on the basis of facts and not on the mere strength of reason.

In addition, we have seen that the 'key' commentarial passages that allegedly lend credibility to the view that Śaṅkara himself considers ignorance as something observable in deep sleep show no clear evidence of that. Regarding this matter, Satchidānandendra's remarks are worth noting. He says that if ignorance—particularly the 'positive ignorance' spoken of above—did exist in deep sleep, it would simply contradict scriptures. Importantly, it would also show that the connection between the Self and ignorance is real since the Self endures throughout all states.[294] Ultimately, Satchidānandendra suggests that it should be left to the inquirer to verify, in his own experience, if what we call deep sleep is consciousness alone or consciousness associated with some positive ignorance:

"This is said in another Upaniṣad: 'So this person embraced by the self consisting of consciousness, he knows nothing inside or outside' (Bṛ.4.3.21). But the witness that is consciousness permeates deep sleep through its own experience/being because it is consciousness alone; yet no ignorance of his is perceived there."[295]

It seems clear, then, that the authority of the Upaniṣads and/or Śaṅkara cannot stand alone in judging what happens to everyone of us who pass in deep sleep every single day. Is there ignorance in deep sleep? Satchidānandendra reminds Advaitins and scholars alike, that the existence or non-existence of ignorance, or, for that matter, of anything else in deep sleep, is to be carefully examined

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[294] Doherty, p.117.

[295] *"taduktaṁ śrutyantare: 'prājñenātmanā saṁpariṣvakto na bāhyaṁ kiñcana veda nāntaram'* (Bṛ.4.3.21) *iti / sākṣī tu prājñaḥ prājñatvādeva suṣuptiṁ svānubhavena vyāpnotyeveti naiva tatrāpi tasyājñatvaṁ vidyate" Viśuddhavedāntasāraḥ,* p.39.

in light of one's experience of deep sleep. The post-Śaṅkara Advaita view that people express their experience of ignorance in deep sleep when stating, "I knew nothing in deep sleep," "I slept peacefully," and so on, does not hold, for these statements only reveal that in deep sleep, the criteria for perception are not met. The fact of the matter is that in deep sleep, all referents—both gross and subtle like the mind—are absent. Therefore, no perception can occur, including that of *avidyā*.

Finally, concerning the causal function of deep sleep, as Śaṅkara implicitly indicates in the above-mentioned extracts starting with BṛBh.5.1.1, it is a necessary assumption resorted to by the scriptures and the teachers out of necessity for those who seek after liberation (pp.126-8). We will return to the causal aspect of deep sleep in the next chapter, where the notion of creatorship of *Brahman* and its relevance for the student in the *nivṛtti dharma* is examined.

1.6 Sequential approach to the analysis of the three states in *Brhadāranyaka Upanisad*.4.3

We can now outline the basic sequence of cognitions involved in the examination of the three states. The following table describes the order in which the three states are examined throughout the section 4.3 of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, which is the most detailed Upanisadic study of the three states. Each passage or group of passages that I present offers a more or less autonomous examination of a state or states. In every case, the numbers 1, 2 and 3 are used to indicate the order in which the states are analyzed.

Passages of The Upaniṣad	State of wakefulness (*jāgrat*)	State of dream (*svapna*)	State of deep sleep (*suṣupti*)
Bṛ.4.3.9	1	2	
Bṛ.4.3.10	1		
Bṛ.4.3.11	1, 3	2	
Bṛ.4.3.12	1	2	
Bṛ.4.3.13&14		1	
Bṛ.4.3.15		1, 3	2
Bṛ.4.3.16	2	1	
Bṛ.4.3.17	1	2	
Bṛ.4.3.18	1/2	2/1	
Bṛ.4.3.19	1/2	1/2	3
Bṛ.4.3.21-32			1
Bṛ.4.3.34	2	1	

We see that Bṛ.4.3, which gives a detailed analysis of the three states, is not consistent with the order in which it presents the states. This being said, we see that quite often, it begins its examination with the waking state. This is due to the fact, as already emphasized, that all human endeavors, which include scientific, religious, and philosophical enquiries, naturally begin from the waking standpoint. However, we see that in some sections, a single or a couple of states may be examined in isolation from the other(s). To me, this fact is not immaterial. It reinforces the idea mentined above that the states of consciousness do not follow a definite chronology, common experience supplying evidence that the states do not share a common time, space, or law of causality.

Before moving on to the next section, which examines the concept of *turīya*, introduced in the *Māṇḍūkya* as the fourth (state), let us summarize the main features of the states already examined:

1) The waking state (*jāgrat*):

a) Manifestation of the waking as an object of the Self or witnessing consciousness.
b) Sustenance, i.e., permeation of the waking by the Self.
c) Dissolution of the waking back into the Self.

2) The dream state (*svapna*):

a) Manifestation of the dream as an object of the Self.
b) Sustenance, i.e., permeation of the dream by the Self.
c) Dissolution of the dream back into the Self.

3) The deep sleep state (*susupti*):

a) Absence of the manifestation of both dream and waking and absence of a knowing subject along with all empirical means of knowledge, nullifying all epistemological processes.
b) Deep sleep is the source for the manifestation of both the waking and the dream along with the tripartite epistemic elements of knower, means of knowledge, and known.
c) Deep sleep is the Self.

2 Turīya

In *Chandogya Upaniṣad* 8.7-8, Indra, the highest god of the Vedic pantheon, expresses the desire to know the highest entity, *Brahman*. It is the creator god Prajāpati who instructs him. Having approached Prajāpati in the customary manner—with sacrificial wood in hands—Indra is told that to arrive at his end, he has to examine and contemplate his own self. Prajāpati first instructs that the fearless and immortal Self is Indra's physical self, adorned with attractive clothing, etc., the self that is perceivable in the water of a jar or in a mirror.[296] Understanding the inadequacy of such an instruction, since it attributes the defects and the destruction of the body to the Self, Indra returns to Prajāpati for further teachings. Indra tells him that the being who goes here and there in the dream, is the fearless *Brahman*, the immortal reality.[297] Once again, Indra requests further instructions, realizing that what happens to the dream individual does not affect him in the least, and is thus of little value."[298] Prajāpati consents to bestow Indra with further teachings: "When one is fast asleep, totally collected and serene, and sees no dreams—that is the Self; that is the immortal; that is the one free from fear; that is Brahman."[299] Yet again, Indra sees no benefit to such a knowledge: "Sir, this self

[296] Ch.8.8.3.
[297] Ch.8.10.1.
[298] Ch.8.10.2.
[299] Ch.8.11.

as just explained, you see, does not perceive itself fully as 'I am this', nor even does it know any of these beings here. It has become completely annihilated. I see nothing worthwhile in this."[300] Prajāpati acknowledges the limitations intrinsic to this state, and stresses the need to overcome the limits of the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep. For Śaṅkara, these three representations of reality share a common substratum, the witnessing consciousness, which is the sole reality to be arrived at by the Advaitin pupil. It is to afford Indra (here in the role of the committed aspirant who spends 101 years in the house of his teacher Prajāpati) with the understanding, or rather the realization of his disembodied nature as the one witnessing awareness, that the method consisting in examining consciousness as it unvaryingly manifests in three states to ignorant people, is resorted to. However, why is it of little comfort to Indra to learn that he naturally attains *Brahman* in deep sleep, night after night? Further, if Indra becomes *Brahman* in deep sleep, why does he need to receive further teaching?

In Ch.8.11.1, Indra himself offers a compelling answer to the above queries. There, he states that even in deep sleep, no one knows himself as: "I am this [reality]." Although deep sleep is *Brahman* alone, the former is not a liberating force because it is not a means of knowledge, the reason being, as already noted, that this state is free from knower, means of knowledge, and known. And even if there were something like an objective ignorance in deep sleep, it could not be eliminated since the above-mentioned tripartite distinction is absent. In Ch.8.11.3, Prajāpati confirms that in that state, one is not aware of himself as *Brahman*, one becomes as if non-existent. He tells Indra to remain with him for further instructions, while announcing that he shall not explain anything other than what he already has.

For Śaṅkara, the teachings that Indra receives during the last five years of his stay aim at eliminating the defect that remains following Prajāpati's three-fold teaching. This defect, Śaṅkara explains, is ignorance of the Self that has no connection with the three states and their defects:

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[300] Ibid.

"He told Indra—who had such defects as attachment, etc., removed—about the nature of the Self that has no connection with the defects relating to the three states and whose characteristic is to be devoid of demerit, and the like." [301]

The remaining defect, hinted at in Ch.8.11.2, is diagnosed as 'embodiement' when Prajāpati resumes his instruction in Ch.8.12, an instruction that begins with the statement that there is no immortality for anything that is truly embodied. Śaṅkara begins his annotation to Ch.8.12 by stressing the need to discriminate between the incorporeal Self and the psychophysical self. There, discrimination alone is championed since it is by first erroneously assuming that the Self is embodied[302] that one can relate to external things along with what originates from them. Thus, once again, it is an imperfect judgment that is mentioned as the source of all ills. In the present context, wrongly imagining to be embodied is the reason for associating with the states and their contents. Hence, the person who imagines himself to be embodied thinks that he is undergoing wakefulness, dream, and sleep. This is a feature that only Satchidānandendra brings out in a clear manner in his *Viśuddhavedāntasāraḥ*. We have already cited Satchidānandendra on various occasions in our effort to clarify Śaṅkara's understanding of the traditional teaching process based on the three states analysis. Concerning the present aspect of the analysis, we can easily concede, with him, that for Śaṅkara, the inevitability of experiencing the three states and their respective defects continuously is due to the false idea of being embodied, which has its basis in non-discrimination:

"An ignorant person, due to a lack of discrimination concerning his own nature, conjectures the limiting adjuncts characterized as body, senses, etc., to pertain to his being and seems to perpetually experience the three states named waking, dream, and deep sleep, which he superimposes. And imagining that waking and dream exist as cause and effect, he imagines the false forms of the waking phenomena as well as the dream phenomena—consisting of the impressions of the former—to be real."[303]

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[301] "*tasmai mṛditakaṣāyādidoṣāya sthānatrayadoṣasaṁbaṅdharahitamātmānaḥ svarūpam apahatapāpmatvādilakṣaṇaṁ maghavate tasmai hovāca*" ChBh.8.11.2. Īśādi, p.324.

[302] "The condition of having a body—[expressed in] 'I am that body alone,' and 'the body is verily me'—which is not that of the self whose nature is bodiless, is caused by not discerning properly the real nature of the Self" (*aśarīrasvabhāvasyātmanaḥ tadevāhaṁ śarīraṁ śarīrameva cāhamityavivekātmabhāvaḥ saśarīratvam*) ChBh.8.12.1. Īśādi, p.325.

[303] "*ajño janaḥ svarūpavivekābhāvādevātmani śarīrendriyādilakṣaṇopādhitantratāṁ kalpayitvā jāgratsvapnasuṣuptākhyamavasthātrayānubhavaṁ santatamivādhyāropayati / tathā jāgratsvapnayoḥ kāryakāraṇabhāvaṁ prakalpya jāgratprapañcasya satyatāṁ svapnaprapañcasya ca tadvāsanāmayatvānmithyārūpatāṁ ca kalpayati*" *Viśuddhavedāntasāraḥ*, p.41.

Because the erroneous belief that one perpetually experiences the three states (which becomes one possible way to define *saṁsāra*) is caused by mixing up the incorporeal Self and the imagined limiting adjuncts that are the body, mind, etc., there is a need to resort to discrimination to eradicate this false belief and realize the incorporeal nature of the real nature of self. This, for Śaṅkara, seems to be the main message of Ch.8.12.1-3. The superimposition of the states is but an extension of the tradition's central epistemological problem that Śaṅkara tirelessly identifies and attempts to resolve. The problem is always that of self-reference. In addition to embodiment and the three states, a third superimposition, the transmigration of the individual self, appears in the same commentary. And like the other two, it is negated. Indeed, Śaṅkara rejects the transmigratory nature of the *jīva* on the basis that transmigration too, is superimposed on the Self through ignorance. Ignorance, he reiterates again, is the false appropriation of the nature and the qualities of things that are other than the Self, such as the psychological and physiological aggregate. From this, we can better understand the motive behind Śaṅkara's preface to the *Brahmasūtras*, which addresses the nature and breadth of the problem of ignorance and the way to resolve it:

"All worldly and Vedic actions, [involving] means of knowledge and objects of knowledge, as well as all scriptures—whether concerned with injunctions, prohibitions, or liberation—proceed by following this mutual superimposition of the Self and not-self called ignorance"(ft.105). "Thus this beginningless and endless ignorance that is natural [to all], [existing] in the form of a misconception, and which prompts agency and enjoyership, is evident to all. It is with the intention to eliminate this source of ills through imparting the knowledge of the unity of Self, that all the Upaniṣads are commenced...it is said that knowledge consists in determining the true nature of the entity by means of discriminating it [from the superimpositions]." [304]

Here again, Śaṅkara hammers the point that ignorance is of the form of a misconception. It is everyone's "source of ills" because it is responsible for an individual's beliefs that he is the body, mind, and sense organs, that his real existence is in the waking state, that he experiences the three states as a continuous series from the moment of his birth to that of his death, and that he reaps the fruits of his deeds in this life and thereafter.

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[304] "*evamayamanādirananto naisargiko'dhyāso mithyāpratyayarūpaḥ kartṛtvabhoktṛtvapravartakaḥ sarvalokapratyakṣaḥ / asyānarthahetoḥ prahāṇāya ātmaikatvavidyāpratipattaye sarve vedāntā ārabhyante... tadvivekena ca vastusvarūpāvadhāraṇaṁ vidyāmāhuḥ" Adhyāsabhāṣya.*

As we have seen, Śaṅkara thinks that to teach the Absolute, the Upaniṣadic texts adopt the position of our natural ignorance, characterized by the belief that each individual goes through the three states. In this way, they expound the Self with the accoutrements or appearances of waking and dream, and free from all accoutrements, as its real essence, in deep sleep. As the Upaniṣadic texts and our commentators examine the states, it becomes evident that no particular effort is put towards connecting them with each other, or subsuming them to the experiences of the waking individual (which would otherwise lead to solipsism). On the contrary, their examination may be seen as an attempt to root out the natural but erroneous conviction that it is the single human person of the waking, the *jīva*, that is the basis of the other two states of dream and deep sleep. Rooting out the pupil's entrenched idea that he is an individual knowing agent and enjoyer in the 'real' world of wakefulness, is concomitant with eliminating the imagination that he actually experiences the non-enduring states of waking, dream, and deep sleep. This, according to Śaṅkara, is ultimately achieved through the Upaniṣadic means of knowledge, which negates the reality of these three states:

"They consider the fourth quarter as perceiving neither what is inside nor what is outside, nor even both together; not as a mass of perception, neither as perceiving nor as not perceiving; as unseen; as beyond the reach of ordinary transactions; as ungraspable; as without distinguishable marks; as unthinkable; as indescribable; as one whose essence is the perception of itself alone; as the cessation of the visible world; as tranquil; as auspicious; as without a second. That is the Self, and it is that which should be perceived" (Mā.7).

Śaṅkara's gloss on Mā.7 explains how this 'rooting out' process takes place. There, he makes numerous references to the methodology of negation regarding the three states:

"The fourth quarter, which is obtained gradually, is to be spoken of. It is said not to be conscious of the inside, etc. Because it is devoid of the cause that renders the use of all words possible, it cannot be designated through words. It [scriptures] wishes to indicate *turīya* only by negating distinctions."[305] "This Self, the highest reality, is referred to as having four quarters, its non-absolute nature. Its non-absolute nature, which is conjured up by ignorance, is characterized by the three quarters. They [the Self and the states] are compared to the rope-snake, and stand in a relation [similar to that of] a seed and its shoot. Now, the highest reality, spoken of as the rope, whose nature is seedless [causeless], is described as 'not conscious of the inside,' through eliminating the three states, spoken of as a snake." "As a rope which is being imagined variously as a snake, and so forth, so too is the Self, [characterized as] 'being conscious of the inside,' albeit one alone, is conjectured as the three states. The result characterized by the complete removal of the

[305] "*caturthaḥ pādaḥ kramaprāpto vaktavya ityāha—nāntaḥprajñamityādinā / sarvaśabdapravṛttinimittaśūnyatvāttasya śabdānabhidheyatvamiti viśeṣapratiṣedhenaiva turīyaṁ nirdidikṣati*" MāBh.7. Īśādi, p.432.

unwholesome plurality in the Self occurs in conjunction with the valid means of knowledge that negates such characteristics as 'being conscious of the inside, etc.' When *turīya* is apprehended, no other means of knowledge or disciplines can be sought after...thus, simultaneously with the elimination of [characteristics like] 'being conscious of the inside,' and the like, occurs the cessation of duality such as agency, etc...Therefore, it is established that the elimination of such ills as 'being conscious of the inside,' and the rest, superimposed in/on the Self, coincides certainly with the application of the valid means of knowledge that is negation."[306]

From the above, it becomes clear that for Śaṅkara—and GK.3.26 indicates that it is also the case for Gauḍapāda—the Upaniṣads do not wish to affirm the existence of the waking, dream, and deep sleep, as well as the existence of a transcendental state, the fourth or *turīya*. To him, the examination of the states aims to indicate the ever-established non-duality of the Self. In the appendix, I explain how it is the *adhyāropāpavāda* teaching stratagem, which Śaṅkara refers to in his commentaries—notably in GKBh.3.26 and BGBh.13.13—that shapes the entire teaching process based on the examination of the three states.

2.1 *Turīya* and the *samādhi* experience

It is a matter of fact that all Advaitins recognize the importance of the examination of the states as one of the ways to bring the inquiry into the nature of *Brahman* to a successful end. Still, they regard the instruction regarding the three states—and the same goes for the Upaniṣads in general—unfit to afford the aspirant with the immediate and direct apprehension of his/her own self as *Brahman*. They consider that attaining the state of *samādhi* is the culminating phase of the analysis of the three states. Frequently, they introduce the technical terms of *savikalpa-samādhi* and *nirvikalpa-samādhi* in their explanation of the Advaita analysis of the states. Although they often draw on Śaṅkara's writings,

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[306] *"so'yamātmā paramārthāparamārtharūpaścatuṣpādityuktaḥ / tasyāparamārtharūpamavidyākṛtaṁ rajjusarpādisamamuktaṁ pādatrayalakṣaṇaṁ bījāṅkurasthānīyam / athedānīmabījātmakaṁ paramārthasvarūpaṁ rajjusthānīyaṁ sarpādisthānīyoktasthānatrayanirākaraṇenāḥ—nāntaḥprajñamityādi." "rajjuriva sarpādibhirvikalpyamānā sthānatraye'pyātmaika evāntaḥprajñāditvena vikalpyate yadā, tadā antaḥprajñāditvapratiṣedhavijñānapramāṇasamakālameva ātmanyanarthaprapañcanivṛttilakṣaṇaphalaṁ parisamāptamiti turīyādhigame pramāṇāntaraṁ sādhanāntaraṁ vā na mṛgyam... antaḥprajñatvādinivṛttisamakālameva pramātṛtvādibhedanivṛtteḥ... tasmātpratiṣedhavijñāna-pramāṇavyāpārasamakālaiva ātmanyadhyāropitāntaḥprajñatvādyanarthanivṛttiriti siddham"* Ibid, p.433. Also, let us recall the passage: "The Upaniṣad thinks that the Self, presented through a negation of all attributes in the text, 'now, therefore, the description of *Brahman*: "Not this, not this" is very difficult to understand; so, whatever was explained through various ways for the sake of establishing that very Self again and again; it negates all that" (GK.3.26), See ft.293.

they do not seem anxious to represent the views of Śaṅkara. The excerpt below, taken from Deutsch's work *Advaita Vedānta, A Philosophical Reconstruction*, captures the prevalent idea that the determination of the nature of the Self through the analysis of the three states finds completion in *turīya*, which is explicitly equated with the *yogic* experience of *nirvikalpa-samādhi*:[307]

"In later Advaita, as we have noted earlier, a distinction is made between two types or kinds of spiritual experience related to transcendental consciousness: that of *savikalpa-samādhi*, the border line experience, as it were, between the *jīvātman* and the *paramātman*; and that of *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, the pure experience of reality. The distinction between the two is subtle but important because it brings out so clearly the uncompromising non-duality of Advaita Vedānta and because it makes clear, in terms of the distinction between *savikalpa-samādhi* and *suṣupti*, the deep sleep state, the fundamental difference between Ātman and the *jīva*—from the standpoint of the *jīva*. *Savikalpa-samādhi* means "determinate" spiritual experience. In it an awareness of duality is absent, but unlike in *suṣupti*, the deep sleep state, the emphasis here is not so much on the absence of duality as it is on the presence of non-duality. Whereas in *suṣupti* the self is still a knowing subject, although there is nothing there as such to be known, in *savikalpa-samādhi* the self is aware only of the presence of Reality. In *suṣupti*, all the phenomenal activities of the self are suspended in a kind of serene blank in *savikalpa-samādhi* they are concentrated on the Real. In *suṣupti* the self is still very much the *jīva*, in *savikalpa-samādhi* the self is passing into Ātman. *Nirvikalpa-samādhi* is the consummation of the process. It is the pure "indeterminate" intuition of non-duality. In *savikalpa-samādhi* the self is aware of Reality; in *nirvikalpa-samādhi* it is Reality." [308]

This description of the process of apprehending or intuiting non-duality contradicts the opinion of Śaṅkara. As we have noted earlier, the latter considers that subject-object duality is absent in deep sleep as well as in the mystical *nirvikalpa-samādhi* state, the latter being the apogee of the discipline taught in the school of Patañjali. For Śaṅkara, *nirvikalpa-samādhi* cannot be accepted as leading to liberation since, like deep sleep, it too is not a means of knowledge (see pp.132-3 above). And in BSBh.2.1.3, Bādarāyaṇa and Śaṅkara straightforwardly refute the tradition of Patañjali Yoga on the basis that it teaches duality. Had Śaṅkara considered *nirvikalpa-samādhi* a means of liberation, he would not have defined Patañjali's school as dualist. In addition, Śaṅkara's commentary on Mā.7 unequivocally affirms that *turīya* can only be indicated through the negation of the three states; and those three states are but the Self, the *turīya* that is wrongly thought of in three ways. All the states are mere limiting adjuncts of the Self, conjectured by ignorance. For Śaṅkara, *turīya* cannot be realized in a transcendental state because it is the reality of waking, dream, and deep sleep. The way

[307] See also Fort's discussion on Vidyāraṇya's explicit borrowings from the school of Patañjali, to expound the Advaita teaching based on the four quarters, notably the equation of *turīya* and *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, pp.81-83.
[308] Deutsch, pp.62-3.

to realize the reality of these three states is not to attain a state that is akin to deep sleep, but simply to remove the misconception that *turīya* is awake, dreams, and sleeps.

3 Concluding remarks

It is quite clear that for Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣadic teaching process that is based on the examination of the three states of experience constitutes a direct means of self-knowledge and thus has meaning within the *nivṛtti* dharma alone. It seeks to lead a competent student to the realization that his true nature of being is the one non-dual reality. To this effect, it provides guidance for identifying with the Absolute as the Supreme Being or witness, something that stops short of liberation because it retains the misconstructions that are the three states, and which are to be eliminated in the last stage of the teaching process. Śaṅkara shows no interest in mystical or trance-induced experience, for such an experience cannot terminate duality, because waking up, working, sleeping, meditating, and attaining *samādhi*, are all equally dependent on the epistemic blunder that we all make, and which drives all our activities. However, as we have seen, Śaṅkara thinks that the Upaniṣadic teachings can shake up the very framework in which humans, in their immense majority, establish their identity and evaluate all their experiences. We showed that for Śaṅkara, there is no absolute time and space continuum marking the limits of a true objective world in which all human experiences are written. For him, the teachings based on the three states reveal that time and space are real only in so far as they are found within a particular state with which they are inexorably joined. To our waking experiences correspond the waking time and space. To our dream experiences correspond the dream time and space. Concerning our deep sleep experience, being void of subjective and objective phenomena, the question of time and space does not arise.

According to Śaṅkara, the examination of the three states yields what may be called, *faute de mieux*, an epistemological shift, a shift from the waking individual knower to the witnessing consciousness that effortlessly objectifies and, in the process, extricates itself from states of

experience along with their time, space, laws of causation, and all considerations that are pertinent solely within their domain, such as sorrows, happiness, liberation, and so forth.

Consistency in theories relating to time, space, and causality, are most significant to, if not the ultimate concern of individuals whose existence is imagined to be shaped by the waking standpoint alone. However, the all-witnessing perspective that Śaṅkara thinks the Upaniṣads provide to a competent student, is timeless and causeless. Although it assumes the existence of the three states, and thus retains an aspect of duality, this teaching is viewed as capable to disclose the Absolute as witness, and is considered invaluable because it elevates man to the status of the Supreme Being, coming ever so close to the one non-dual reality to be realized.

In the forthcoming chapters, we will continue to explore the appropriateness of this process of teaching and its outcome, as we attempt to understand how Śaṅkara legitimizes the theistic elements found in the authoritative Vedāntic literature.

Chapter IV

Views on Creation in Śaṅkara's Soteriology

1 Introductory remarks

In the last chapter, we have noted that for Śaṅkara, the liberating nature of the Upaniṣadic means of knowledge rests on the systematic process of superimposing characteristics on *Brahman* and negating them. When considering the examination of three states, we have observed that Śaṅkara sees the states as mere attributions made onto the Absolute. Superimpositions are resorted to for the removal of the seeker's erroneous understanding of reality. They constitute the necessary corollary to one's original ignorance that is responsible for bringing the Absolute to the level of particulars. In our examination of the process of superimposition and negation in the context of the study of the three states (see also the appendix), we found that for Śaṅkara, the familiar yet wrong perspective to be corrected by the Upaniṣads is the belief that one is a creature of the waking state who keeps experiencing the subordinate states of dream and deep sleep until death extracts him from the regulatory laws of his worldly experiences, the waking time, space, and causality. A key corrective technique employed in the system of Śaṅkara involves the examination of the states, individually and comparatively. This examination calls the student's attention to the witness that constitutes the necessary basis for the appearance and disappearance of states and their contents (in the case of waking and dream). This witnessing consciousness alone—because unchanging—is said to be real. This strategy, although fully grounded in the Upaniṣadic texts, is experiential from top to bottom. Śaṅkara suggests that with sufficient detachment from the waking state, the aspirant can adopt the standpoint of the witness and immediately apprehends his nature of being as beyond the waking body, sense organs, and psychological faculties, which are confined to the waking state alone.

The problem that I wish to address at present is the 'hard problem' of Śaṅkara's system: the need to understand the mechanism by which he reconciles the absolutism and the theism of the

Upaniṣads. According to Śaṅkara, the nature of reality is eternal, pure, conscious, and free,[309] and devoid of all phenomena.[310] To him, this truth is best described in such texts as:

"When the whole has become one's very self (*ātman*), then who is there for one to smell and by what means? Who is there for one to see and by what means? Who is there for one to hear and by what means? Who is there for one to greet and by what means? Who is there for one to think of and by what means? Who is there for one to perceive and by what means?" (Bṛ.2.4.12).
"I shall speak of that which is to be known, knowing which, one obtains immortality. The supreme *Brahman* is beginningless and cannot be spoken of as either existent or non-existent" (BG.13.12).[311]

However, this Absolute is also conceivable in relation to the universe at large since throughout the *Prasthānatraya* literature, we find descriptions of *Brahman*—also referred to as *Ātman, Īśvara, Narāyaṇa,* or *Vāsudeva,* to cite only the most used epithets of the Absolute in this material—as the source of the universe, the principle that sustains it while it lasts, and absorbs it when it ends, as the ultimate object of worship, and the only 'thing' really worth knowing:

"From this very self (*ātman*) did space come into being; from space, air; from air, fire; from fire, the waters; from the waters, the earth; from the earth, plants; from plants, food; and from food, man..." (Tai.2.1).
"That from which these beings are born; on which, once born, they live; and into which they pass upon death—seek to perceive that! That is Brahman!" (Tai.3.1).
"[That] from which birth, etc., [proceeds] (*janmādyasya yataḥ*)" (BS.1.1.2).
"I am the source of this whole world and the being into which it dissolves" (BG7.6).[312]

In other passages of this literary corpus, a full array of functions is attributed to the Highest Being:

"Who alone presides over womb after womb; in whom this whole world comes together and dissolves—when someone recognizes that Lord who fulfils wishes as the God who is to be adored, he attains this unending peace" (Śv.4.11).
"He is the doer of all acts, possessed of all desires, all smells, and all tastes" (Ch.3.14.2).

Hence, the main difficulties in interpreting this rather large and diverse body of literature lie in making sense of what appear to be mutually contradictory passages bearing on the nature of the

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[309] "*nityaśuddhabuddhamuktasvabhāva*" BSBh.1.1.1 & 2.3.29.
[310] "*prapañcopaśama.*" Although a literal rendering of '*prapañcopaśama*' would give 'quieting/quelling the phenomena', I prefer to translate it as 'devoid of phenomena' because in MāBh.7, while speaking about *turīya,* Śaṅkara says: "the absence of the attributes/qualities pertaining to the states of waking, and so on [dream, and deep sleep], is said to be '*prapañcopaśama*'...therefore, it is tranquil and auspicious; and because it is non-dual, [the fourth one, *turīya*] is devoid of imagined plurality" (*prapañcopaśamamiti jāgradādisthānadharmābhāva ucyate... ata eva śāntaṁ śivaṁ yato'dvaitaṁ bhedavikalparāhitam)* Īśādi, p.434.
[311] "*jñeyaṁ yattatpravakṣyāmi yajjñātvā'mṛtamaśnute / anādimatparaṁ brahma na sattannāsaducyate.*"
[312] Warrier's translation.

Absolute. Is Śaṅkara able to reconcile the two scriptural presentations of the Absolute, one transcending all functions and attributes, the other being the cause and regulating principle of he universe? Can our deliberation on the witness be relevant to an appraisal of the conception of *Brahman* as a presiding deity full of extraordinary qualities, in Śaṅkara's context? Is it helpful or perhaps even necessary for both scholars and followers of Śaṅkara Vedānta to adopt the stance of the witness if they wish to determine how Śaṅkara treats the collection of theistic postulates in his work, particularly the concept of a sovereign *Brahman* often named *Īśvara?* I believe that the adoption of the witness-stance is instrumental to deepening our understanding and appreciation of the theistic ideas present in Śaṅkara's writings. I suggest that unless this witness-standpoint is borne in mind while studying his commentarial work, it is not possible to see the latter as presenting a consistent and coherent soteriology. In addition, I also believe that devoid of this vantage point, one cannot fully appreciate the singular type of Advaita spiritual discipline that is based on knowledge and renunciation, and which we have been referring to as *nivṛtti dharma,* an expression that evokes these two important features of Śaṅkara's conception of traditional Advaita Vedānta discipline.

Of course, scholars have recognized certain interpretive principles that Śaṅkara makes use of to present the Vedānta material in a somewhat organized fashion. It is generally admitted, for instance, that Śaṅkara speaks about the Absolute from different angles by swerving back and forth between two viewpoints, i.e., the relative (*vyavahāra-dṛṣṭi*), and the absolute (*paramārtha-dṛṣṭi*). This is indeed viewed as indispensable to understanding Advaita Vedānta, and this distinction in standpoints is deemed to be "one of the remarkable insights of the Advaitins."[313] However, the way Advaitins secure this insight is never actually explained. These two standpoints are usually discussed in the context of exegetical investigation, and in this respect, they are often regarded as having been devised by Śaṅkara himself as a mechanism to do away with irreconcilable contradictions that the authoritative Vedānta texts themselves present, i.e., the Absolute with and without attributes. While Parrinder asserts, rather boldly, that the theistic ideas and concepts that Śaṅkara seems to support in

[313] *The Builders of Indian Philosophy Series. T.M.P. Mahadevan.* R. Balasubramanian. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Delhi, 1998, p.38. See also pp.26 and 37.

his writings are but concessions to popular religion, and are surpassed by the way of knowedge (as opposed to the way of Bhakti),[314] K.S. Murty finds that it is incoherent for Śaṅkara to accept such theistic theories as that of divine incarnation.[315] Radhakrishnan argues that the categorization of Upaniṣadic passages into the two-fold dimension of reality, i.e., conventional and absolute, represents a new interpretive framework elaborated by Śaṅkara himself to answer this problem, and most important of all, to make the *prasthānatraya* texts fit his own system. Scholars like P. Deussen, H. Nakamura, and P.M. Modi, think that Śaṅkara does not deal with such textual inconsistencies as noted above, in a successful manner. Deussen says that Śaṅkara draws no sharp distinction between the two aspects of *Brahman*, and that at times, his work reveals that he never became clearly conscious of the difference between them. He adds that because Śaṅkara confuses them, a clear insight into all details is not possible.[316] Modi and Nakamura come to draw similar conclusions, and for them, Śaṅkara radically departs from Bādarāyaṇa's tradition.[317] For A. G. Krishna Warrier, the Upaniṣadic passages that deal with the origin of the universe (and dealt with at some length in Śaṅkara's commentary on BS.1.1.2, "That from which the world originates, etc.") bring *Brahman* and the world in an apparent relation, and "embody, not the essence of the Absolute, but only an accidental definition thereof."[318] Although Warrier asserts that the Tai.3.1 passage, "That from which these beings take birth," and other similar statements cannot prove the reality of the cause (*Brahman*), he nevertheless says that they "deserve credence and may be trusted to yield knowledge" on the basis that they are the record of the spiritual experiences of the seers of the Upaniṣads.[319]

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[314] Parrinder, pp.52-3.
[315] Refer to A.G. Krishna Warrier, *God in Advaita*. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1977, pp.155-6.
[316] *The System of the Vedanta* by P.Deussen. Translation by Charles Johnston, The Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago, 1912, p. 206.
[317] Nakamura thinks that Śaṅkara departs from Bādarāyaṇa in that the latter alone a) recognizes certain pre-eminent qualities to *Brahman* (*sat, cit, ānanda, satyam, jñānam, anantam, jyotiḥ*...), b) does not differentiate between two types of Brahman, and c) considers the phenomenal world to be reality. Nakamura, pp.484-90. See also P.M. Modi who makes similar observations in *A Critique of the Brahmasūtra*. Part I & II. Printed by Gulabchand Lallubhai Shah, at the Mahodaya P.Press, Bhavnagar, and Published by Dr. P.M. Modi, Bhavnagar (Part I Intro, pp.15-16 and Part II p.6 with ft.17).
[318] Warrier 1977, pp.40-51.
[319] Ibid., p.52

The objective of this chapter is to show that the presence, in the *prasthānatraya* texts, of the recurring theory which puts *Brahman* as the principle that creates, sustains, and dissolves the world, need not be seen as evidence for a strong theistic force that Śaṅkara had to contend with as a non-dualist interpreter, and learn to live with as a non-dualist thinker. This study anticipates similar discussions in the next chapter, bearing on the Supreme Being as an object of exclusive devotion/contemplation and as the final cause for liberation. For Śaṅkara, the theistic representations of the Absolute, which are evidently present in the scriptures, are far from being cumbersome, and are not an "accidental definition thereof." Also, they are not to be trusted to yield knowledge because they are the recorded experiences of mystics. Rather, I suggest that they are fully integrated at all levels of the traditional Vedānta enterprise as Śaṅkara sees it. Śaṅkara understands the theistic portrayals of the Absolute as strategic and temporary superimpositions that are to be negated in due time if the liberating self-knowledge is to arise. However, they receive strong support from him at both levels of the Advaita Vedānta discipline—*pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*. At the *nivṛtti* level, they ought, for the aspirant, to become facts of awareness. Generally speaking, the view that the Absolute is a creative entity, a mighty being that brings forth, oversees, terminates his creation, and so forth, is the necessary outcome of one's perception of duality; yet is is resorted to for the removal of the pupil's erroneous understanding of reality. In the context of *pravṛtti dharma*, such theistic notions are used to correct the tendency of the mind to hanker after the objects of experience and to lead to self-knowledge by creating dispassion for the things of this world and the world thereafter, and developing exclusive devotion for such an entity. In the context of the path of knowledge also, albeit its landmarks are self-knowledge and renunciation, the notion of a Supreme Being who creates, rules, and so on, is significant although no longer dogmatic, that is to say, dependent on the authority of scriptures alone. In that context, by adopting the standpoint of the witness, the student takes on the qualities and the functions of that Highest Being. This stance, unique to Śaṅkara's tradition, has an obvious soteriological value, but also bears on the way he proceeds to harmonize different or sometimes mutually contradictory scriptural assertions.

Chapter arrangement:

The topic of creation that is explored in this chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I attempt to explain what Śaṅkara takes to be the true intention lying behind origination stories. To this effect, I first propose to give a brief review of the opinion of contemporary scholars who correctly argue that Śaṅkara refers to various conceptualizations of the Absolute as the source of creation, without this presenting a difficulty with regard to his overall non-dual system. Thereafter, taking side with them, I argue further that in Śaṅkara's system, the fundamental identity of the terms that denote the cause of the universe in the various models of creation given throughout the scriptures co-operates with a hermeneutical technique called *upasaṁhara,* to establish the sole reality of the Self. Then, I attempt to show that for Śaṅkara, descriptions about world creation do not establish a real or even an illusory creation. In the process, I also provide textual evidence, which demonstrates that Śaṅkara traces the causality of the world to the Absolute as 'magician' (*māyāvin*) without ever associating the latter with the *avidyā-māyā* principle, as is characteristic of a great many post-Śaṅkara interpreters. In this regard, I provide a brief review of the various conceptions of world origination used by Śaṅkara to lead the student to intuit the Supreme Being, the self-reflexive witnessing awareness that is untainted by all worldly phenomena.

In the second part, I examine the scriptures' postulates about the Absolute as the material and efficient cause of the universe, within the context of the spiritual discipline of knowledge (*nivṛtti dharma).* In this context, I refer back to the notion of *antya pramāṇa* discussed in chapter two, as well as to our study, in chapter three, of some teaching strategies based on the examination of the states, which Śaṅkara promotes as direct means to intuiting the Absolute as witness. The first one involves critical examination and reflection on the experience of deep sleep, while the second demands serious analysis and reflection on the experience of the three states, with a special emphasis on the two states of waking and dream. This, I contend, will help us sharpen our comprehension of the nature and place of theistic elements in Śaṅkara's soteriology.

2 The Absolute and the creation of the universe

A long held fallacy among scholars and followers of the Advaita Vedānta tradition has been the notion that Śaṅkara, unlike the author of the BS, always distinguishes between *Brahman* in itself and *Brahman* as the material and operative cause of the universe. H. Nakamura, for instance, writes that

"Brahman was in the Brahma-sūtras regarded as the agent or subject of action with positive volition, and not a static, calm, inactive being. Śaṅkara regarded Brahman with such active character as the Lord (*īśvara*), and distinguished it from Brahman in itself, but the Brahma-sūtras itself did not distinguish between the two."[320]

However, scholars like A. J. Alston and Hirst, mainly under the lead of P. Hacker's findings concerning the identity of *Īśvara* and *Brahman* in Śaṅkara's writings,[321] have arrived at the view that it is possible, in the context of Śaṅkara's commentaries, to replace the term *Īśvara* by *Brahman* or *Paramātman,* virtually everywhere:

"In Śaṅkara, the terms 'Īśvara' (the Lord) and Parameśvara (the supreme or highest Lord) are virtually interchangeable terms. The notion of 'the Lord' or 'the highest Lord' is also usually identical with that of the Absolute (ātman, brahman), though in certain contexts it may be distinguishable."[322]
"It is quite clear that Śaṅkara's preferred term for God ('Īśvara,' 'Lord') is applied as much to the highest brahman as to God in relation to the empirical world and selves."[323]

Although both authors rightly state that all qualities attributed to *Īśvara* are eventually to be removed in order to correctly apprehend the Absolute, Hirst makes a further significant point. She argues that it is through an understanding of the Supreme Being, by correctly interpreting scriptures, that aspirants are liberated. In this regard, she speaks of the various aspects of the Lord as "context for the teaching." Examining the question of the two *Brahmans* (lower and higher), Hirst remarks that the issue is not whether or not there are two of them. The point is rather to distinguish between the qualities that are meant for meditation, and those that are meant for knowledge, though both

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[320] Nakamura, p.488. Śaṅkara had no difficulty referring to either *Brahman* or *Īśvara* to indicate the ultimate principle that supports, pervades, and dissolves the entire universe. With the use of '*paraḥ*' qualifying *Ātman, Brahman*, or again *Īśvara,* Śaṅkara seems to follow the author of the BS and his intent to unify and synthesize all Upaniṣadic teachings.
[321] Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, pp.86-9. See also Mayeda, p.19.
[322] A. J. Alston. *Śaṅkara on the Creation A Śaṅkara source-book*, vol.2. Shanti Sadan, London, 1980.
[323] Hirst, pp.19-20.

kinds of qualities speak from within the conventional world.[324] This is a very pertinent point although when the texts predicate 'witnessing' to the Absolute or the Highest Being *Īśvara*, it is not clear to me that they speak from within the conventional world. We will return to this point later. Concerning the issue of causality, I agree with Hirst, on the basis of her analysis of BSBh.2.1.14, that to only equate *Īśvara* with the lower *Brahman* is to oversimplify Śaṅkara's position. For 2.1.14 shows that *Īśvara* as the cause of the universe is the Absolute alone, *Brahman* without qualities, and that the qualities predicated to it (omniscience and omnipotence) are "a better way of helping us to come to the understanding of the non-dual subject, self, than the Sāṁkhyan alternative,"[325] which postulates the non-conscious *pradhāna* as the cause of the universe. As she suggests, the quasi-free exchange of terms that occurs in contexts dealing with causality is helpful to refuting some inferior theories like the Sāṁkhya theory of *pradhāna*. But it is also important to stress that this interchangeability of terms is possible because they share one and the same referent. The significant point to note is that when terms like *Īśvara, Brahman, Paramātman,* and others, occur in contexts dealing with causality, they all refer to the self without a second. This point is crucial for understanding how creation narratives—in which we find various terms denoting the world-cause—are used to establish the cause alone as real. Let us now turn to this latter point.

2.1 *Upasaṁhāra:* harmonizing creation narratives with the sole aim of the Advaita tradition

"From this very self (*ātman*) did space come into being; from space, air; from air, fire; from fire, the waters; from the waters, the earth; from the earth, plants; from plants, food; and from food, man" (Tai.2.1).
"That from which these beings are born; on which, once born, they live; and into which they pass upon death—seek to perceive that! That is Brahman!" (Tai.2.7).
"In the beginning this world was simply what is existent—one only without a second. And it thought to itself: "Let me become many. Let me propagate myself." It emitted heat. The heat thought to itself: "Let me become many. Let me propagate myself." It emitted water. Whenever it is hot, therefore, a man surely perspires; and thus it is from heat that water is produced. The water thought to itself: "Let me become many. Let me propagate myself." It emitted food. Whenever it rains, therefore, food becomes abundant; and thus it is from water that foodstuffs are produced" (Ch.6.2.2-4).[326]

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[324] Hirst, pp.118-119. Hirst also points out that the qualities meant for meditation are sometimes found in context dealing with knowledge and vice versa. For instance, she cites BSBh.1.3.13 where Śaṅkara clearly describes the Absolute as the subject of meditation on the syllable *om*. Interestingly, this meditation leads to liberation by stages (p.119).
[325] Ibid., p.122.

"That Person, indeed, is divine, he has no visible form; He is both within and without, unborn, without breath or mind; He is radiant, and farthest than the farthest imperishable. From him issues breath and mind, and all the organs, wind, fire, water and space, and the earth that bears everything" (Mu.2.1.2-3).

It is essential for Śaṅkara, as an interpreter who claims to follow the tradition of Bādarāyaṇa, to harmonize the numerous scriptural accounts of creation with what he takes the ultimate goal of these texts to be: the realization of the one reality without a second. To this effect, he utilizes the exegetical means known as *upasaṁhāra*, also known to Bādarāyaṇa. The latter used this technique in the sole context of meditations, though Śaṅkara also applies it to creation narratives, as we will soon see. First, however, we shall briefly trace the lineage of this interpretive technique named *upasaṁhāra*.

In BS.3.3.5, Bādarāyaṇa explicitly refers to *upasaṁhāra* which, he says, consists in associating different features relating to similar meditations throughout the Upaniṣads: "There should be a combination [of appropriate qualifications from various texts], regarding what is their common [object/referent] since the object/referent is not different [from text to text]; just as is the case with the auxiliary part of injunctions" *(upasaṁhāro'rtha-abhedādvidhiśeṣavat samāne ca)*."[327]

For Śaṅkara, this aphorism summarizes the discussion of BS.3.3.1-4. It presents the conditions by which a meditation mentioned in any given Upaniṣad can be identified with similar meditations everywhere else in the entire Upaniṣadic corpus.[328] Śaṅkara defines the process of *upasaṁhāra* as follows: The meditations that appear in different Upaniṣads can be said to be the same if they present a large enough number of similar features. This basic principle is articulated in such texts as BSBh.3.3.2 & 5. For our present purpose, it will suffice to cite a passage from BSBh.3.3.2:

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[326] Ch.6.2 to 6.4 describes the production of the basic elements, deities of fire, water, and earth, as well as the production of the entire phenomenal universe, from the Self alone, said to enter into these three deities to manifest 'names and forms.'

[327] Clooney's translation quoted from his essay: *The Principle of Upasaṁhāra and the Development of Vedānta as an Uttara Mīmāṁsā*. Studies in Mīmāṁsā (18. ft.14). Edited by R.C. Dwivedi. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1994.

[328] See Clooney's essay in *Studies in Mīmāṁsā* (p.285), for the ritual analogy given by Śaṅkara to legitimate the Vedāntic use of *upasaṁhāra* in the context of meditation.

"It is certain that there are no differences among the objects of meditation and the meditations on account of difference in [traits] added or taken away. Although some small traits can be removed from or added to the object of meditation, [it is not so that there are different meditations] because of the apprehension of an unvarying collection of traits relating to the object of meditation. Hence, there is only a single meditation [in different Upaniṣads]." [329]

An application of this process in the context of meditations is evident in BSBh.3.3.6. There, an opponent argues for the difference in meditations on *Udgītha* in the *Chāndogya* and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads* because of certain discrepancies in the way the two accounts begin. While the Vājasneyins speak of *prāṇa* as the agent, the one who chants the *Udgītha*, the Sāmavedins speak of *prāṇa* as the *Udgītha* itself, the object of meditation. Śaṅkara remarks that "this is not a defect since by such difference, the identity of the meditations is not discarded. For there is the presence of many more similar traits."[330]

Looking at the whole of BS.3.3, we see that *upasaṁhāra* is not an interpretive tool that solely serves the followers of the Uttaramīmāṁsā school. Clooney shows that BS.3.3.1-4 draws from the *Pūrva Mīmāṁsā Sūtras* 2.4.8-33, a long *adhikaraṇa* "in which the continuity of ritual description across *śākhā* boundaries is defended."[331] Crucial to this *adhikaraṇa*, which Bādarāyaṇa seems to recall in BS.3.3.1—A conception/idea [for meditation] is to be had from all the Upaniṣads because it is not distinguished [like in the case of] injunction, etc.—is the *Mīmāṁsā Sūtra*: "[A rite referred to in more than one *śākhā*] is one, for it is not distinguished [from *śākhā* to *śākhā*] by connection, form, injunction or name."[332]

Śaṅkara himself says that the way of ascertaining the identity of meditations as mentioned in *sūtra* 3.3.1: "A conception/idea [for meditation] is to be had from all the Upaniṣads because it is not distinguished [like in the case of] injunction, etc. ("etc" standing for connection, form, and name), follows that used by the Mīmāṁsakas who are engaged in showing that variations concerning aspects of the rites, i.e., injunction, connection, name, and form, do not make the rites different. To show

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[329] *"nacāvāpodvāpabhedādvedyabhedo vidyābhedaścāśaṅkyaḥ / kasyacidvedyāṁśasyāvāpodvāpayorapi bhūyaso vedyarāśerabhedāvagamāt / tasmādaikavidyameva"* BSBh, p.377.

[330] *"naiṣa doṣaḥ / nahyetāvatā viśeṣeṇa vidyaikatvamapagacchati / aviśeṣasya bahutarasya pratīyamānatvāt"* Ibid., p.380.

[331] *Studies in Mīmāṁsā*, p.281

[332] Clooney's translation, ibid.

the unity of meditations scattered throughout the Upaniṣads, despite obvious existing variations, Śaṅkara resorts to this Mīmāṁsā exegetical principle and, in the process, confirms its efficacy in the way it harmonizes passages dealing with rites found in different branches of the Veda:

"But those for whom [different] names, forms, and so forth, appear as the cause for difference [in meditations], that is refuted in the first portion [*Mīmāṁsā Sūtra* 11.4.10) starting with: 'Because they do not designate names that enjoin ritual actions' " (BSBh.3.3.1).[333]

Let us now turn to the context of creation and examine the way in which Śaṅkara uses the *upasāṁhāra* stratagem in that context. In BSBh.1.4.14, Śaṅkara tells us how *upasaṁhāra* works in the context of creation stories and informs us about the purpose served by exercising this exegetical principle in such a context. To him, origination stories do not aim at providing us with a true and definite explanation of creation. If such were their aim, he says, constancy and uniformity would have been their chief feature. Instead, the objective of each teaching about creation is to indicate the non-dual *Brahman*, which is both the material and efficient cause of the universe that is then to be identified with the pupil's own self:[334]

"Although each Upaniṣad varies with regard to the way it presents the order of creation, i.e., space, and so on, there is no variation with respect to the Creator. How so? Because of unity in the signified that is spoken of. As the omniscient and omnipotent being, the one self of all, without a second, is expounded in one Upaniṣad as being the cause [of the universe], so that very being is declared in the other Upaniṣads too."[335]

Although in this extract Śaṅkara does not use the word *upasaṁhāra*, the presence of this exegetical principle is very much perceptible. It is also very much perceptible in the four different passages which we have cited at the beginning of this section, where all the descriptions of the Creator surely concur: "This Brahman is existence, knowledge and infinity, from this Self..."; "In the

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[333] "*ye tu nāmarūpādayo bhedahetvābhāsāste prathama eva kāṇḍe 'na nāmnā syādacodanābhidhānatvāt' ityārabhya parihṛtāḥ*" BSBh, p.376.

[334] "With the word Self designating him [*Īśvara* referred to as a cause] afterwards, and entering inside the sheaths of the body, etc., in succession, he is determined as the immediate, inner self of all" ([*īśvaraṁ kāraṇamabravīt] tadviṣayeṇaiva pareṇātmaśabdena śarīrādikośaparaṁparayā cāntaranupraveśanena sarveṣāmantaḥ pratyagātmānaṁ niradhārayat*) BSBh. 1.4.14, p.162.

[335] "*prativedāntaṁ sṛjyamāneṣvākāśādiṣu kramādidvārake vigāne na sṛṣṭari kiṁcidvigānamasti / kutaḥ / yathāvyapadiṣṭokteḥ / yathābhūto hyekasminvedānte sarvajñaḥ sarveṣvaraḥ sarvātmaiko'dvitīyaḥ kāraṇatvena vyapadiṣṭastathābhūta eva vedāntāntareṣvapi vyapadiśyate*" BSBh.1.4.14, p.162.

beginning this was Being alone, one without a second"; "He is without and within, unborn, without breath and without mind, pure and higher than the highest immutable."

Since it seems to be the case that wherever they occur, origination statements are negated at a later stage, Śaṅkara's view about the ulterior motive of creation accounts seems vindicated. To the passages selected above and following the same order, we find:

"For when a man finds within that incorporeal, indistinct, and supportless essence, the fearless state on which to rest, then he becomes free from fear" (Tai.2.8.1); "The transformation is a verbal handle, a name" (Ch 6.4.1); "By perceiving him the wise sees what is visible as the immortal in the form of bliss. When one sees him—both the high and the low; the knot of one's heart is cut, all doubts are dispelled; and his works come to an end" (Mu.2.1.8-9).

Śaṅkara believes that by such texts, which either reaffirm the changeless nature of the Self or straightforwardly declare that transformations are but linguistic conveniences, the pupil's natural belief in the reality of creation is greatly weakened and his focus can thus be re-directed towards the source of the creation that is to be apprehended as the sole reality. Furthermore, the source of creation is recognized as identical in all cases, since it is always presented as a featureless principle. What other purpose than to indirectly point to *Brahman* could these origination stories serve? Śaṅkara thinks that they can serve no other purpose. In BSBh.1.1.4, he writes that there is no benefit perceived by humans or stated in the Upaniṣads in relation to the teaching of a real creation. He also states that in the Upaniṣads, origination stories can be understood everywhere to teach the same thing, the reality of the cause, on the basis of both the initial and the concluding statements:

"The manifold world that is this creation, and the like, is not the object of exposition.[336] No human aim whatsoever is seen or heard of as being connected with it. Nor can this be conjectured as such on account of the initial statement and the conclusion of scriptural passages dealing with *Brahman* in various places, in order to present a unity of purpose." (BSBh.1.4.14).[337]

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[336] In GK.3.15, Gauḍapāda makes a similar statement: "Creation, which is presented differently through the means (analogies) of clay, gold, sparks, etc., is meant to bring about [the knowledge of] the Self; there is no plurality at all" (*mṛllohavisphuliṅgādyaiḥ sṛṣṭiryā coditānyathā / upāyaḥ so'vatārāya nāsti bhedaḥ kathaṁcana*) Īśādi, p.459.

[337] "*nahyayaṁ sṛṣṭyādiprapañcaḥ pratipipādayiṣitaḥ / nahi tatpratibaddhaḥ kaścitpuruṣārtho dṛśyate śrūyate vā / naca kalpayituṁ śakyate upakramopasaṁhārābhyāṁ tatra tatra brahmaviṣayairvākyaiḥ sākamekavākyatāyā gamyamānatvāt*" BSBh.1.4.14, p.163. See also Śaṅkara's gloss on GK.3.15 & 22 and GK.4.42. These commentarial passages suggest that Śaṅkara's employment of *upasaṁhāra* to make sense of creation stories throughout the Upaniṣads serves a much larger aim that is entirely soteriological. It accomplishes this by

In this passage, the term *upasaṁhāra* stands for the concluding statement of an instruction and is used along with *upakrama*, which stands for an initial statement or the declaration of the topic to be dealt with in a text or teaching. These were also introduced by the *mīmāṁsakas* to interpret various texts coherently. Śaṅkara applies them for the same purpose. With regard to the process of creation, it is used to show that differences in the 'details' of various accounts of creation do not change the unity of intent of these narratives; for there is unity of purpose with regard to *upakrama* and *upasaṁhāra* in all teachings about origination. This is evident in the creation narratives selected above, and it is particularly clear in the lengthy creation narrative beginning in Ch.6.2.1 with, "In the beginning, son, this world was simply what is existent—one only without a second," and concluding with the statement of Ch.6.8.7 that identifies the source of creation (existence) with the self of Śvetaketu: "The finest essence here—that constitutes the self of this whole world; that is the truth; that is the self (*ātman*). And that is how you are, Śvetaketu."

Besides turning the attention of the pupil to the cause of the creation rather than creation itself, and reaffirming the unity of purpose of all the Upaniṣads,[338] Śaṅkara's use of *upasaṁhāra* (*upasaṁhāra* understood on its own or in association with *upakrama* as ways to eliminate variations concerning creation stories throughout the texts) seems to draw out the magical or illusory nature of creation, for creation is simply an accessory of teaching.[339] The illusory nature of creation is an essential feature of Śaṅkara's teaching tradition that is often encapsulated in the distinct word *māyā*. It is important to pursue this matter and understand Śaṅkara's usage of this term as it reveals precisely the sense in which Śaṅkara understands *Brahman* to be the cause of the universe.

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directing the student's attention to the single source of creation, whose knowledge alone can benefit him.

[338] In the light of this examination of *upasaṁhāra* as an exegetical and pedagogical technique with which Śaṅkara was well acquainted, I find it difficult to validate the remarks made by S. Chatterjee and D.Datta that Śaṅkara finds creation narratives very much at odd with passages that clearly establish non-duality." Refer to *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, by Satischandra Chatterjee and Dhirendramshan Datta, University of Calcutta, 1950, p. 375.

[339] In this regard, we have already mentioned the Tai, Ch, and Mu texts, which negate the reality of creation after teaching it. Also, refer to pp.126-8 where I cite a series of passages crediting the view that in Śaṅkara's tradition, the Upaniṣads and the teacher accept the student's erroneous view of reality (plurality is real) as an indispensable means of instruction.

2.2 Creation, *māyā*, and the *māyavin*

As already mentioned, *Brahman*'s creative role can be endorsed if a world and living entities inhabiting it are perceived. But what is the nature of the perceived universe, *Brahman*'s effect, and what type of relationship holds between the cause and the effect? Before tackling these questions, a digression is in order to note how the concept of *māyā* came to be interpreted by most post-Śaṅkara Advaitins. The Vedānta schools of Rāmānuja (11th century) and Madhvācarya (13th century) see the Advaita Vedānta interpretation of *māyā* as the greatest fallacy of the Advaita school, and thus, it has sustained the brunt of their criticisms. Their critiques, it is important to note, are very much a reaction to doctrines found in post-Śaṅkara Advaita literature. For instance, Madhva's treatise named *The Refutation of the Proponents of the Māyā Theory* (*māyāvādakhaṇḍana)*, concerns a later interpretation of Śaṅkara's soteriological system, and focuses on the work of the 12th century Advaita scholar Śrīharṣa: *Khaṇḍana-khaṇḍa-khādya.* We have already mentioned that in most post-Śaṅkara works, we find the unambiguous claim that the two words *avidyā* and *māyā* mean the same thing.[340] The widely accepted Advaita doctrine that *māyā/avidyā* is an indeterminable positive entity, a metaphysical principle with a two-fold power as cause and effect, the former concealing *Brahman*, the latter projecting the world, is a doctrine that is traceable to the writings of Maṇḍana Miśra,[341] and was developed by post-Śaṅkara commentators, commencing with some of Śaṅkara's immediate disciples. Although Vācaspati speaks of two kinds of ignorance as cause (dissolution) and effect (projection),[342] following the doctrine of the *Brahma-Siddhi* and not Śaṅkara's commentaries, he does not consistently equate this conception of ignorance with *māyā*, as his successors do.[343] A more

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[340] Chapter 3, sec. 2.5.

[341] *Brahma-Siddhi*. 22.16-17, 149.19. Refer to ft.268.

[342] "We pay reverence to that Absolute which is the source, when accompanied by the two-fold indeterminable ignorance, of these illusory manifestations, ether, wind, fire, water and earth..." (Bhā. opening verse). "The inmost self, the support of the two-fold ignorance as effect and cause, the substratum of the ego-sense, the one subjected to transmigration..." (Bhā.1.1.1, p.45). "Name and form are set up by ignorance. Causal ignorance is of the nature of dissolution, associated with the impressions of projection derived from world-projection in previous world-periods. Name and form so conceived constitute "*māyā*" (Bhā.2.2.2.) Passages cited from MV, pp.549-50.

[343] It is worth mentioning, in passing, that one of the most influential Advaita thinkers, Madhusūdana, equates *avidyā* and *māyā* and expounds that it is a two-fold power that covers *Brahman* and creates illusion. See *Madhusūdana Sarasvati on the Bhagavad Gita*. Sisir Kumar Gupta. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1977, pp. 27, 36, 37, 128, 130, 135...

straightforward example of how some of the first post-Śaṅkara Advaitins came to use the term *māyā* can be found in the famous work named *Pañcapādika* (P.P.), dubiously authored by Padmapāda, one of Śaṅkara's direct disciples:

"This beginningless ignorance is referred to in *śruti*, *smṛti*, Epics and Purāṇas as name and form, the undeveloped, ignorance, *māyā*... In different places it is spoken of in different ways. It is spoken of as preventing the manifestation of Consciousness in its true form as the Absolute and then producing the appearance of the individual soul. It is spoken of as the wall on which are painted the pictures of the impressions resulting from our meditations, rituals and acquired skills in previous lives. It is spoken of as that which remains in dreamless sleep as the mere latent impression of its power of projection, concealing the light of consciousness."[344]

The indeterminable positive entity that is *māyā* forms a category of its own, altogether different from the real or the unreal. This is advanced as the reason why *māyā*, a synonym of *avidyā*, is able to stand as a material cause. Such is the view of Advaitins who hold that plurality is brought about by positive indeterminable ignorance. Unfortunately, this view is, more often than not, attributed to Śaṅkara himself. In his *Critique of Madhva Refutation of Vedānta*, for instance, K.Narain draws the following conclusion:

"From this description of Śaṅkara's exposition of *māyā*, two important conclusions may be drawn; firstly, the presence of the two capacities of creation and concealment in the Primal Nescience and, secondly, the usage of '*māyā*' and '*avidyā*' for the powers of creation and concealment, respectively. The usage of '*māyāmayī*' and '*mahāsuptiḥ*' in Śaṅkara's commentary may justify the contention that in Vedānta *māyā* denotes only the creative aspect of the *anirvacanīya* principle of cosmic superimposition. But this should not lead us to the confusion that *māyā* and *avidyā* are different principles; both *māyā* and *avidyā* are two aspects of the one inexplicable principle, the material cause of the cosmic *adhyāsa*, like the powers of understanding and argumentation in one man."[345]

If it is true that most post-Śaṅkara interpreters take the standard illustrations of the rope-snake and shell-silver as modifications undergone by their material cause, namely, *avidyā-māyā*, it is not a view that can be attributed to Śaṅkara himself. The latter simply posits that the rope-snake and the shell-silver are falsely ascribed to the rope and the shell, respectively. And unlike the followers of the Vivaraṇa tradition, Śaṅkara does *not* argue that:

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[344] P.P, p.98. Cited from MV, p.388. Concerning the authorship of the *Pañcapādika*, see MV, p.385.
[345] K. Narain. *A Critique of Mādhva Refutation of the Śaṁkara School of Vedānta*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Delhi, 1986, p.219.

1) *Māyā* and *Brahman* are together the joint cause of the world like the twisted threads of a rope.
2) *Māyā* is the power of *Brahman* and is directly the material cause of the world. As the power always depends on the powerful, *māyā* is also dependent on *Brahman* and, hence, the description of *Brahman* in the Upaniṣads and the *Brahmasūtras* is only figurative.
3) *Māyā* is directly the material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa)* of the world. Yet because the existence of *māyā* without *Brahman*, the substratum, is impossible, *Brahman* is eulogized as the *upādāna-kāraṇa* of the world.[346]

Because most post-Śaṅkara commentarial works do not follow Śaṅkara's ideas on the topic of *māyā*, as scholars are becoming increasingly aware of,[347] it may be necessary for the present day followers of all Vedānta schools, to consider what Śaṅkara himself says about *māyā,* and, perhaps, to re-evaluate how they ought to position themselves vis-à-vis the function and value of this concept when interpreted by Śaṅkara himself.

This post-Śaṅkara doctrine concerning *māyā/avidyā* as the indeterminable material cause for the world, stands far from Śaṅkara's understanding and use of these terms. In chapter three, we have already mentioned some of the implications that this doctrine has in coming to grasp with such teachings as the examination of the three states, notably, as Satchidānandendra suggests, because it ignores the methodology of temporary superimposition followed by negation (MV, p.392). But this doctrine also carries negative implications for the way Śaṅkara's soteriology works at the level of the *nivṛtti* practices. Whereas in the most influential Advaita works, it is *māyā* that is the material cause of the world, for Śaṅkara, it is nothing other than the Absolute itself. We have already cited many examples that substantiate this fact. Whether or not it is with the purpose to turn Śaṅkara's commentaries into a more robust system, that later Advaitins engaged in systematizing Śaṅkara's use of terms like *māyā* and *avidyā*, the fact remains that they are responsible for the introduction of many doctrines that oppose the teachings of Śaṅkara in fundamental ways. Since this has been shown beyond doubts in the MV, I shall not document this further. However, it will soon become evident

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[346] K. Narain, p.221.
[347] Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, pp, 64-65; Satchidānandendra, *The Method of Vedānta*. For a clear summary of Sachidānandendra's thought on the subject, see A. J. Alston's paper, *Śaṅkara in East and West Today. New perspectives on Advaita Vedanta: Essays in commemoration of Prof. Richard De Smet S.J.* Edited by Bradley J. Malkovsky, Leiden: Brill 2000, pp.91-99.

that this doctrine of *māyā* also clouds an important aspect of the *nivṛtti* dimension of Advaita soteriology as conceived by Śaṅkara. In effect, we shall see that this doctrine goes against the spiritual practice through which the pupil can observe, on the basis of his immediate experience, that his self-reflexive awareness alone is the material and the efficient cause of the universe.

For now, let us try to gain an understanding of *māyā* as pertinent to the subject of creation, and this, within the sole context of Śaṅkara's commentarial work.

2.2.1 *Māyā* in Śaṅkara's writings

In Śaṅkara's writings, *māyā* can stand for the world, understood as a magic display, or for the potential or force of manifestation of the universe also called *prakṛti, śakti, avyakta, nāmarūpe,* or *ākāśa.* Whether it refers to the phenomena or their potency, *māyā* is always described as caused by ignorance (*avidyā*), the latter term standing for a) absence of knowledge, b) doubt, or c) misconception, the latter being by far the most frequent meaning given to *avidyā*:[348]

"This duality that is mere magic, is called the phenomenal world..." (GKBh.1.17).[349]
"This, as spoken before, is my *māyā.* It is made up of qualities/constituents and is overcome with difficulty" (BGBh.7.14).[350]
"Nature, my *māyā*, whose form is the three qualities/constituents characterized as ignorance, causes the world, along with all sentient and non-sentient entities, to arise" (BGBh.9.10).[351]
"Name and form, conjectured by ignorance, as if they were the self of the omniscient Lord, cannot be defined as that [the actual thing itself] or as [anything] other; they are the seeds of the manifold world, and are discussed in both the Vedic and *smṛti* texts as the primordial matter and as the Lord's power of *māyā*" (BSBh.2.1.14).[352]
"This seed-power [of *Īśvara*] designated by the term 'non-manifest' is really of the nature of ignorance. It is indicated as a magic display that is dependent on the supreme *Īśvara* and as a great sleep in which transmigratory beings are immersed, unaware of their real nature... This non-manifest is sometimes named the imperishable: "higher than the higher imperishable" (Mu.2.1.2), sometimes, it goes by the name of *māyā*: "One should recognize the illusory power as primal matter, and the illusionist, as the Great Lord" (Śv.4.10). This *māyā* is indeed non-manifest since it cannot be determined as the real (*tattva*) or as [anything] different" (BSBh.1.4.3).[353]

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[348] See *Adhyāsabhāśya;* BSBh.1.3.2.
[349] "*tathedaṁ prapañcākhyaṁ māyāmātraṁ dvaitam*" Īśādi, p.437.
[350] "*eṣā yathoktā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā duḥkena atyayaḥ atikramaṇam*" BGBh, p.261.
[351] " *mama māyā triguṇātmikā avidyālakṣaṇā prakṛtiḥ sūyate utpādayati sacarācaraṁ jagat*" BGBh, p.303.
[352] "*sarvasyeśvarasyātmabhūta ivāvidyākalpite nāmarūpe tattvānyatvābhyāmanirvacanīye saṁsāraprapañcabījabhūte sarvajñasyeśvarasya māyāśāktiḥ prakṛtiriti ca śrutismṛtyorabhilapyate*" BSBh, p.201.
[353] "*avidyātmikā hi bījaśaktiravyaktaśabdanirdeśyā parameśvarāśrayā māyāmayī mahāsuptiḥ yasyāṁ svarūpapratibodharahitāḥ śerate saṁsāriṇo jīvāḥ /... kvacidakṣaraśabdoditam 'akṣarātparataḥ paraḥ' iti śruteḥ / kvacinmāyeti sūcitam 'māyāṁ tu prakṛtiṁ vidyānmāyinaṁ tu maheśvaram' iti mantravarṇāt / avyaktā hi sā māyā tattvānyatvanirūpaṇasyāśakyatvāt*" BSBh, p.149. See also BSBh.1.2.22.

In Śaṅkara's commentaries, there are many more relevant passages where the term *māyā* is used in similar ways as above. And we could certainly compile a long list, were we to include the original passages where *nāmarūpa*, *prakṛti*, and the like, are used as synonymous expressions of *māyā*.[354] The above instances, however, should suffice to make our point, which is that according to Śaṅkara, whether *māyā* describes creation, i.e., a magic display, or its potential force, it is always mentioned as being superimposed or imagined through ignorance.[355] Although we may say that *māyā* is within the purview of ignorance—as a magic display may be said to be of the nature of ignorance insofar as someone ignorantly takes a magical appearance to be real—the two terms *māyā* and *avidyā* are not synonymous; *māyā* is the outcome of ignorance. This is a significant point because if we take *avidyā/māyā* as a single indeterminable power that is neither real nor unreal, and which is the material cause of the world, then we have to ignore Śaṅkara's express statements that the phenomenal world and its latent state are imagined on account of ignorance, statements which assure us that for Śaṅkara, creation accounts are *not* ontological statements. More importantly, Satchidānandendra has noted that the *avidyā/māyā* of later Advaitins renders the means of liberation advocated by Śaṅkara (knowledge) powerless, for knowledge is only efficacious against absence of knowledge, misconception, or doubt. Knowledge cannot have any efficacy with regard to a mysterious power that covers the self-effulgent consciousness and projects duality. We shall see in a moment that it is this later conception of *māyā* that renders the theistic dimension of Śaṅkara Vedānta purely dogmatic.

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[354] For more on Śaṅkara's use of *māyā* and its synonyms and their usage in post-Śaṅkara's works, refer to *Philology and Confrontation* pp. 78-81.

[355] Ibid., p.74. See also BSBh.2.1.14 where Śaṅkara compiles a list of expressions indicating that *nāmarūpa*, also called *māyā* and *prakṛti*, is brought about by ignorance. Other expressions used are *avidyākalpita* (imagined/constructed by ignorance), *avidyāpratyupasthāpita* (projected by ignorance), *avidyākṛta* (made by ignorance), and *avidyātmaka* (whose essence is ignorance).

2.2.2 Śaṅkara's interpretation of cause and effect analogies implies that *māyā* is the illusory effect of the Absolute

According to Śaṅkara, creation is taught by way of various examples, which indicate that the knowledge of all things made of a particular substance is possible by the knowledge of that particular substance alone. In this regard, the most often cited example is the passage of Ch.6.1.4-6.[356] The maxim used throughout these analogies is that the effect is non-different from its material cause.[357] Following the analogies, *māyā*, meaning creation as well as its latent form, is the effect, while *Brahman*, its substratum, is the material cause. It is by interpreting these analogies in the light of this maxim that the Upaniṣadic assertion that through the knowledge of the Self everything can be known,[358] is justified. For Śaṅkara, the examples of clay, gold, etc., intend to show that the only truth to this entire creation is its cause, the Supreme Being. Nevertheless, we have to keep in mind that Śaṅkara does not teach a real transformation of the cause into the effect, which the analogies of the clay and the objects made of clay, or the milk turning into curd, and the like, first suggest. When instructed with the aid of such analogies, Śaṅkara tells us, creation "is but a means for engendering in us the idea of oneness of the individual and the Highest Self."[359] The particulars (the effect) are not taught as realities since they are relegated to the realm of speech: "Transformation is a verbal handle, a name (Ch.6.1.4-6)." In BSBh.3.2.4, having refuted the position that the reality of dream is identical with that of waking, Śaṅkara remarks that the creation of [waking] space is also far from being real, for in BS.2.1.14: "Their non-difference [cause and effect] is due to words such as 'beginning,' etc., it

[356] "By means of just one lump of clay one would perceive everything made of clay—the transformation is a verbal handle, a name"; "By means of just one copper trinket one would perceive everything made of copper—the transformation is a verbal handle, a name"; "By means of just one nail-cutter one would perceive everything made of iron—the transformation is a verbal handle, a name." See also the examples of the spider and its thread (Mu.1.1.7), and the fire and the sparks (Mu.2.1.1).

[357] Śaṅkara mentions this maxim when arguing against the Sāṁkhya position that the insentient *pradhāṇa* is the cause of the universe: "Because the manifold world originates from *Brahman*, and with the rule about the non-difference between the effect and the cause, in this way, the world is non-different from *Brahman*" (*prapañcasya brahmaprabhavatvātkāryakāraṇānanyatvanyāyena brahmāvyatireka ityevamjātīyakaḥ*) BSBh.2.1.6, p.188.

[358] In his logical demonstrations that *Brahman* must be the material cause of the universe in addition to being its efficient cause, Śaṅkara states, on the basis of Ch.6.1.3 that "through the knowledge of one [thing], it is seen that even all other unknown [things] become known. And with the knowledge of their material cause, the knowledge of them all is possible, for the effect is non-different from its material cause" (*tatra caikena vijñātena sarvamanyadavijñātamapi vijñātaṁ bhavatīti pratīyate / taccopādānakāraṇavijñāne sarvavijñānaṁ saṁbhavatyupādānakāraṇāvyatirekātkāryasya*) BSBh. 1.4.23, p.175.

[359] GKBh.3.15. Tr. Gambhīrānanda, p.284.

is explained that the entire manifold world is only *māyā.*"[360] Unsurprisingly, the first text that Śaṅkara quotes while commenting on this aphorism is Ch.6.1.1.1, where it is openly declared that transformation is a verbal handle, a name.[361] Because in this *sūtra*, Bādarāyaṇa was probably referring to this specific *Chāndogya* passage, it would be appropriate to interpret it to mean: "The effect is non-different from the cause on account of the texts declaring that it (the effect) is a verbal handle (or play)." In any case, it is clear that for Śaṅkara, this *sūtra* refutes the independent reality of the effect, which means that the effect is not anything existing in its own right; it is not a reality other than its cause, *Brahman*, which is infinite consciousness. This agrees with the results of our study on the states. For we saw that for Śaṅkara, dream or waking phenomena appear in and solely exist because of being fully pervaded by *Brahman* that is self-effulgent consciousness. The so-called phenomena comprised in the states, as well as the states themselves, are but the non-dual Absolute. Further, the reality of the all-pervading cause alone is asserted by putting forth the view that the nature of the effect, *māyā*, cannot be explained. The impossibility to divulge its nature, both Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara tell us, is due to the fact that it does not really exist.[362] The same idea may be drawn from examining Śaṅkara's use of the magic and the magician analogy, by which the *māyāvin* or the Self as magician is described as being both the material and efficient cause of the universe while *māyā*, the magic display is relegated to the domain of appearances and, ultimately, to unreality:

"As the effect, i.e., the origination through magic is but the existing magician, similarly, the perceivable effect, i.e., the origination of the world, leads to the Self [alone] as ultimately existing. For like the magician, it alone is the basis of *māyā* that is the origination of the world" (GKBh.3.26).[363]

"When entities such as individuals and others are imagined to be born, they are thus (*iti*); '*iti*' indicates the relative, as already mentioned [in 4.57]; it solely [indicates] the non-absolute birth of entities. [Entities] are not really born. Again, since the creation of these entities is relative, when birth occurs through *māyā*, then it is magic-like. [Opponent:] Then there is a thing called *māyā*. It is

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[360] "*naca viyadādisargasyāpyātyantikaṁ satyatvamasti / pratipāditaṁ hi 'tadananyatvamārambhaṇaśabdādibhyaḥ' ityatra samastasya prapañcasya māyāmātratvam*" BSBh, p.347.

[361] "*vācārambhaṇaṁ nāmadheyam*"

[362] "It is not so that the magic (*māyā*) associated with the magician really occurs and is eliminated upon the removal of the impediment in the seer's eyes...therefore, the intention conveyed is that there is no world at all that proceeds or ceases" (*naiva māyā māyāvinā prayuktā taddarśināṁ cakṣurbandāpagame vidyamānā satī nivṛttā...tasmānna kaścitprapañcaḥ pravṛtto nivṛtto vāstītyabhiprāyaḥ*) GKBh.1.17. Īśādi, p.437.

[363] "*yathā sato māyāvino māyayā janma kāryam / evaṁ jagato janma kāryaṁ gṛhyamāṇaṁ māyāvinam iva paramārthasantamātmānaṁ jagajjanma māyāspadameva gamayati*" Īśādi, p.464.

not so. That *māyā* is not found; the idea being conveyed is that what is called *māyā* is something non-existent" (GKBh.4.58).[364]
"Hence, transformation is false, a verbal handle, a name; only the Self is real. So, this entire universe is but the Self. What is termed the universe is not anything other than the Self...with the realization of this Self, the cause of everything, the Self alone is this universe, nothing different is known" (MuBh.2.1.10).[365]

In these above passages Śaṅkara is clear that there is no actual relationship between creation, manifest or latent, and the Self, since the former is found to be independently non-existent. And the student can establish this by adopting the perspective of the witness whereby creation, which is entirely concomitant with the waking state, is recognized as impermanent, cancelled by the states of dream and deep sleep. On the other hand, this vantage point also affords him with the understanding that even while the immutable self appears as the waking or as the dream, there is never anything other than it. Just as the conception of *Brahman* existing as the states is not ultimate because there really are no states besides *Brahman*, in the present context too, *Brahman* is said to be the material and efficient cause of the universe, albeit it is ultimately devoid of all such functions. Like the existence of the three states, the functions of creating, and so on, attributed to *Brahman*, are devices resorted to for the sake of the aspirant who stands only in the conventional realm where the manifold world is naturally and erroneously accepted as real. Therefore, we can once again hammer the point home that Śaṅkara's presentation of the Absolute with or without forms, desires, and activities (like being the creator of the world), need not be seen as indicating his failure to interpret the canonical texts cohesively. These two aspects of the Absolute are not two ontological categories that Śaṅkara tends to mix up. They can and are used interchangeably in the context of creation, for the purpose of falsifying the independent reality of the world, and establishing the sole reality of the cause. With the understanding that creation and its seed are illusory, it is the one reality without a 'real' second that is indicated in all places where *Brahman*, *Īśvara*, *Ātman*, *ksetrajña* or any other

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[364] *"ye'pyātmāno'nye ca dharmā jāyanta iti kalpyante te ityevamprakārā yathoktā saṁvṛtirnirdiśyata iti saṁvṛtyaiva dharmā jāyante / na te tattvataḥ paramārthato jāyante / yatpunastatsaṁvṛtyā janma teṣāṁ dharmāṇāṁ yathoktānāṁ yathā māyayā janma tathā tanmāyopamaṁ pratyetavyam / māyā nāma vastu tarhi / naivam / sā ca māyā na vidyate / māyetyavidyamānasyākhyā ityabhiprāyaḥ"* Īśādi, p.486.
[365] *"atho vācārambhaṇaṁ vikāro nāmadheyaṁ anṛtaṁ puruṣa ityeva satyam / ataḥ puruṣa evedaṁ viśvaṁ sarvam / na viśvaṁ nāma puruṣādanyatkiṁcidasti...etasminiha parasminnātmani sarvakāraṇe puruṣe vijñāte puruṣa evedaṁ viśvaṁ nānyadastīti vijñātaṁ bhavatīti"* Īśādi, p.515.

epithets of the Absolute are mentioned as the material and efficient cause of creation. With *Brahman* being described as the cause of an apparently real world in all origination stories that the Upaniṣads relate, it is, in all instances, its sole reality that is ascertained. With regard to these narratives, it is only Śaṅkara's view on *māyā*, and not that developed by later Advaitins, which is consistent with his use of *upasaṁhāra*. If *māyā* is understood as a thing of an indeterminable grade of reality, which hides the self-effulgence of the Absolute and projects the manifold world (thus also assuming the role of creator), exercising the technique of *upasaṁhāra* becomes irrelevant. For it no longer serves the purpose to indicate *Brahman* as the sole reality of the past, present, and future, in all the origination stories throughout the Upaniṣads. What will be indicated is the *māyā-avidyā śakti* without which, the later Advaita thinkers believe, the appearance of phenomena cannot be explained. It becomes clear that this later interpretation of *māyā* has the disadvantage to turn theistic teaching principles into dogmatic tenets, which evidently prevent the pupil from carrying out the kind of spiritual inquiry that would allow him to contemplate, in himself, the principle from which this world is born, by which it is sustained, and into which it is dissolved.

2.3 Principles of world causality: from *satkāryavāda* to *ajātivāda*

In Mīmāṁsā, elements relating to a sacrifice such as action and material are generally not a source of ambiguity for those involved in its performance. This is so because of the sacrificer's knowledge of the place these elements occupy in the sacrifice, and the recognition of their nature as primary (being a direct cause) or subsidiary (being an indirect cause but sharing in the overall purpose of producing the sacrifice's main result). Similarly, the variety of Upaniṣadic statements regarding creation does not need to puzzle us in so far as the latter take part in the single and ultimate purpose of teaching *Brahman*. However diverse the Upaniṣadic teachings appear to be—the formidable assortment of meditations and their fruits, the mixture of religious, philosophical, and metaphysical affirmations—differences, for Śaṅkara, do not simply amount to asserting that the *Upaniṣads* do not share a single aim. Continuity is not to be found in the Upaniṣadic armoury of

pedagogical means and philosophical doctrines. Rather, it is to be found in the overall process in which they are meaningfully inserted. Let us see how this applies regarding the topic of causality.

For the purpose of leading the student to the realization of his being as the unborn self, Śaṅkara introduces various philosophical positions on causality, each one being taken up to reject an 'inferior' one. All these positions, as we shall see on the basis of BSBh.2.1.14, are concessions made for the purpose of teaching. From the ignorant standpoint that plurality exists, it matters to Śaṅkara to account for the phenomenal reality in the manner that is most helpful to secure liberation. One of the theories on causality that Śaṅkara temporarily supports is known as *satkāryavāda*. This theory of causality, traditionally held by the followers of the Sāṁkhya system, states that the effect (the universe) already exists in its source prior to its manifestation. Śaṅkara temporarily endorses this view with the particular aim to refute the *asatkāryavāda* theory held by the Vaiśeṣika school and defended by the Buddhists. *Asatkāryavāda* signifies that the effect does not exist in its cause prior to its manifestation. In other words, it means that the world, which proceeds from *Brahman*, is a new effect having no prior existence. For Śaṅkara, this view is hollow, opposes reason, and requires rebuffing. The theory of *satkāryavāda* is posited to accomplish just that. For Śaṅkara, the correct reasoning is as follows: the effect is latent in its cause because something can never come out of nothing.[366] If the universe is to be accounted for, it is existence, *Brahman*, which calls it forth. In BSBh.2.1.14&15, Śaṅkara makes implicit references to the causal theories of *satkāryavāda*, *pariṇāmavāda*, and *mithyā-pariṇāmavāda* (*vivartavāda* as called in later Advaita]. Bādarāyaṇa presents *satkāryavāda* in BS.2.1.15: "And when [the cause] is present, [the effect] is apprehended" (*bhāve ca upalabdhe*). Śaṅkara's commentary on the aphorism seems to first defend the *satkāryavāda* theory on the basis of ordinary perception, for he states that it is only when a cause exists that an effect is seen to exist. He clarifies this view with the aid of the cloth and threads example, stressing that one does not perceive the cloth independently from the threads. However, as he explores this theory further, he comes to argue for a theory of transformation of the cause into the effect. Noting that the

[366] Recall BG.2.16: "No 'being' comes from the unreal and no 'non-being' comes from the real" (*nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ*)."

constituents of the threads are perceived to be the fibres, he explains that similarly, the three colors (corresponding to the elements of fire, water, and earth) are known. He goes on stating that from the knowledge of these three, air and space can be inferred; and in turn, through them, the *Brahman* in which all means of knowledge culminate can be known (inferred). Here, visibly, Śaṅkara advocates the *pariṇāmavāda* theory of causality, signifying *Brahman*'s transformation into the world. This theory, unlike that of *satkāryavāda*, has the obvious merit to show that the entire universe has no existence separate from *Brahman*, a position that is more sympathetic towards non-duality. However, this theory is found unsatisfactory since *Brahman*'s intrinsic nature is immutable, devoid of attributes, and cannot, ultimately, be the cause of the manifold world. Nor can it be the world itself. *Pariṇāmavāda*—as the opponent's interpretation (in 2.1.14) of the famous analogies of the single tree with its manifold branches and leaves, and of the clay with its modifications, shows[367]—cannot lead to the 'radical' type of non-dualism that the Advaitin propounds, and must be rejected. Accordingly, *Brahman* is said to 'illusorily' appear as the world, and to be in no way affected by the latter. "The world," as Ram-Prasad puts it, "is a virtual effect of Brahman" (2002, p.9). This theory, which Śaṅkara promotes, is best illustrated in Ch.6, particularly in 6.4.1-4, where the nature of the three basic elements that constitute the effect or creation is explained. In 6.4.1, the colors red, white, and black are said to characterize the fire, water, and food elements, respectively. It is then stated that the essence of fire, an effect, is only its colors, they alone are existent because as a transformation, it is but "a verbal handle, a name."[368] The passages that follow (6.4.2-4), wherein the element fire is substituted with the sun and, in turn, with the moon and lightening, are identical and to be understood in a similar way.

Further, in his annotation to BS.2.1.14: "Their non-difference [cause and effect] is due to words such as "beginning," etc. ["etc" indicating 'and for other reasons'] " (*tadananyatvamārambhaṇa śabdādibhyaḥ*), Śaṅkara says that scriptural passages describing the transformation of *Brahman* into

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[367] The opponent interprets these analogies in a way that asserts the reality of the world of phenomena while maintaining the unity of *Brahman*.
[368] See ft.365.

the world are pedagogical means to teach *Brahman* as it truly is, without change.[369] He supports this claim by citing the Mīmāṁsā maxim, "Any act enjoined without mentioning a result, closely on the heels of some other act having a result, has to be accepted as forming a part of the latter."[370] The maxim surely supports his contention that in texts instructing *Brahman* without modifications as self (as in Ch.6), any other view of *Brahman* must necessarily be subsidiary, and thus interpreted as leading to the realization of the birthless or changeless *Brahman*. This is how all the above theories of causality—including that of virtual creation—are to be understood. They are ancillary means, temporary superimpositions, which are conducive to liberation. And when, in the course of Śaṅkara's lenghty commentary on BS.2.1.14, the opponent points out that on account of his view that *Brahman* is changeless, the Advaitin cannot believe in such distinctions as the ruler and the ruled and, consequently, in the existence of an omniscient and omnipotent creator, Śaṅkara explains that,

> "Name and form, conjectured by ignorance, as if they were the self of the omniscient Lord, cannot be defined as the real [the actual thing itself] or as [anything] other; they are the seeds of the manifold world, and are discussed in both the Vedic and *smṛti* texts as the primordial matter and as the Lord's power of *māyā* [Tr. ft.352]. Other than them is the omniscient *Īśvara*, for we have the Upaniṣadic text, 'What is called 'space' is certainly what brings about name and form; that in which they [are], that is *Brahman*.' "[371]

Here, Śaṅkara clarifies the theory of magical or virtual creation, stating that name and form do not have a nature of their own, just like a mirage that cannot be defined as an existing thing or anything other. Nevertheless, because it is helpful to realizing the Self, Śaṅkara teaches that name and form and its products are not just hallucinations, they originate from the Highest who is always different

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[369] "In the section dealing with *Brahman*, it is established that there is a result [i.e., liberation] based on the realization of *Brahman* without any distinctive feature at all. When [in such a section], we hear of [positions] which have no result/benefit, such as *Brahman* being transformed into the world, and the like, that is solely to be considered a helpful means to the realization of *Brahman*" (*brahmaprakaraṇe sarvadharmaviśeṣarahitabrahmadarśanādeva phalasiddhau satyāṁ yattatrāphalaṁ śrūyate brahmaṇo jagadākārapariṇāmitvādi tadbrahmadarśanopāyatvenaiva viniyujyate*) BSBh, p.200.

[370] "Gambhirananda, p.333.

[371] "*tābhyāmanyaḥ sarvajña īśvaraḥ ākāśo vai nāma nāmarūpayornirvahitā te yadantarā tadbrahma (Ch.8.14.1) iti śruteḥ*" BSBh, p.201. Also, glossing BG.13.16, a verse that describes what is to be known (*jñeyam*) as the principle that originates, sustains, and consumes all beings, Śaṅkara rejects the doctrine of a real transformation of *Brahman* into the phenomena and advocates that of a magic-like transformation of *Brahman* into the phenomena. He remarks that at the time of creation, that principle gives birth to all beings in the same way as a rope gives birth to a snake, the latter being merely conjectured. Similar arguments are found in GKBh. 1.17, 3.10, 13, 19, 24, 27, 30-31...

from them. Certainly, the texts examined above indicate that in Śaṅkara's opinion, neither the Upaniṣadic seers, nor Bādarāyaṇa taught the real transformation of *Brahman* into the phenomenal world.

In GKBh, it is made abundantly clear that the final position on the issue of causality is *ajātivāda*, which means that nothing is born.[372] This position leaves no room for any sort of causal theory. The theories that *Brahman* has the world, the individual selves, etc., as its attributes, or that these constitute its natural and spontaneous emanation, do not hold. This is because *ajātivāda* flatly denies any sort of causality. *Brahman* always remains in its own nature. It is without distinctions and undergoes no birth of any kind. The commentarial passages putting forth the theories of *satkāryavāda*, *pariṇāmavāda* or *mithyā-pariṇāmavāda*, do not actually propose to explain the creation as a fact. This, as already noted, would render the scriptures fruitless, since phenomena obstinately present themselves to us all who can attest to them through ordinary means of knowledge. As we have just stressed, Śaṅkara suggests that they can only be interpreted as teaching means leading to the realization of the changeless *Brahman*. For these positions are provisionally established on account of ignorance, when reality is mistaken for what it is not. And from that standpoint alone, they may be seen as primary and subsidiary with regard to each other. Every posited view on causality may be said to be primary with regard to an inferior one, which it negates, while being itself subservient to a higher position that comes to supplant it, in a dialectical process operating to lead the student to the realization that nothing is ever born.

Let us now commence the second part of this chapter, which is concerned with the teachings on creation in the context of the *nivṛtti* disciplines. To begin, we shall first restate that for Śaṅkara, the essential features of *nivṛtti dharma* are knowledge and renunciation. For him, the corresponding spiritual disciplines of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*, aim at divesting the student of his constructed individuality, personality, and their extensions (this being the highest meaning of

[372] Refer to GKBh.3.23-28 and 33, which attempt to refute the reality of creation on different accounts.

renunciation). These *nivṛtti* disciplines, when relating to the examination of the states, offer us a great insight into this matter. As we have seen in chapter three, one of the consequences of the guided analysis of the states is its natural and necessary corollary: the adoption of the witness-standpoint. It is on its strength that Śaṅkara is able to place theistic postulates in the 'hands' of the student himself. As far as the origin of the world is concerned, Śaṅkara brings the Upaniṣadic declarations about the Absolute's power to create to the level of the pupil's immediate awareness.

3 The Supreme Being in the *nivrtti dharma*

3.1 Identifying with the Creator in deep sleep

Śaṅkara maintains that the instructions offered to Śvetaketu in Ch.6.8 aim at revealing the non-difference between the principle from which the world originates, by which it endures, and into which it dissolves, and the pupil's true nature of being, his immediate awareness.[373] The first instruction in a series of nine (6.8.1-7) vouches for the possibility to directly identify with *Brahman* as the support or ground of all things, through the proper comprehension of the meaning of scriptures. The instruction begins with Śvetaketu being instructed about the nature of deep sleep (6.8.1-2). Sleeping, 6.8.1 says, means to unite with the existent. Through the analogy of the bird tied to a pole, 6.8.2 introduces the idea that the condition of sleep, defined as the existent, is Śvetaketu's only resting place or support. In Ch.6.8.4, Uddālaka tells his son Śvetaketu that the existent "is the root of all these creatures—the existent is their resting place, the existent is their foundation." In Ch.6.8.6, the same teaching is reiterated and a variant is offered; Uddālaka briefly explains the process of death whereby each adjunct is said to merge into a subtler one, until everything has finally merged back into the primary essence or repository principle of all, which is named the Highest Deity. And in the following verse (6.8.7), this existent, the essence and the root of all entities, is identified with the self of Śvetaketu via the teaching: "The finest essence here—that

[373] See Śaṅkara's introduction to that chapter.

constitutes the self of this whole world; that is the truth; that is the Self. And that is how you are, Śvetaketu."

We shall now turn to the part of this instruction (6.8.1-2) that describes deep sleep as the Existent, and which is then (in 6.8.7) identified with Śvetaketu's self. For Śaṅkara, the scriptures' appeal to the experience of deep sleep is a helpful means to realizing the very divinity which is the cause, support, and place of dissolution of the world and, in fact, of the waking and dream states, as one's true self.

In the previous chapter, we have introduced the position of Śaṅkara on the nature and the causal function of deep sleep. His position is that its nature is nothing but pure awareness, *Brahman* itself. Nonetheless, he also acknowledges that deep sleep is a causal state for the world of multiplicity (as long as the latter is perceived), that is to say, with reference to the waking or dream experiences only. This is a subtle but key point to bear in mind to examine Śaṅkara's views on causality. According to him, both *Īśvara* and deep sleep can be viewed as the cause of the universe. In the case of scriptural passages on the origination of the world, Śaṅkara accepts both the Supreme Being and deep sleep as alternatives to explain the rise and the dissolution of the world.

Although in the final analysis, as we have seen, Śaṅkara thinks that nothing at all takes birth, thus making all views on causality null, the equation of *Īśvara* with the condition of deep sleep remains extremely significant because it places the various functions of the Highest Deity, such as that of creation and dissolution, within the parameters of the student's own experience. This is the issue we will now turn our gaze to after citing some passages that clearly indicate that Śaṅkara freely refers to either *Īśvara* or deep sleep when exploring the three states and the relation of the Self with them. We shall begin with Śaṅkara's gloss on Ch.6.8.1-2. This teaching is extremely significant since it culminates in the sentence, "You are That," which causes the recognition of the pupil's identity with the Supreme Being, the essence of all entities. Glossing 6.8.1, Śaṅkara reiterates the identity of deep sleep (in its characterization as pure consciousness) and *Īśvara*, three times:

"Identified with and established in the mind, the *jīva* performs the empirical tasks of thinking, seeing, hearing, etc. And when this ceases [in deep sleep], the *jīva* attains his own form alone, that of the [highest] deity."
"Aruṇi speaks to his son Śvetaketu about one who gets the name 'mind' when established in the mind, turns away from the objects of the senses by way of quieting the mind [and reaches] a state in which the Highest Deity has become his own self."
"I will show one's own nature as the deity, liberated from individuality, precisely in deep sleep."[374]

Also, in his commentary on verses 5 and 6 of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*,[375] Śaṅkara follows the steps of Gauḍapāda, speaking of the causal state of deep sleep in terms that describe *Īśvara*'s lordship, notably through the use of agentive nouns like '*jñātṛ*.' Commenting on the 5th verse, he says that "this one alone (*prājña)* is the knower of all things, the knower of the past and the future."[376] And glossing the following verse, he unequivocally equates the two: "For this one (*prājña*), in its own proper form, the Lord of all, is the Lord of all that is born as duality, along with that pertaining to the divine realm."[377] Having thus equated deep sleep and the Highest Deity *Īśvara*, Śaṅkara then refers to *Īśvara* as the place of origin and dissolution of all beings: "So, because he is said to have created the world along with its duality, this one is the source of everything. On account of that, this one is verily the origin as well as the end [culmination] of all creatures."[378]

A close look at Śaṅkara's wording in this text and in ChBh.6.8.1 reveals that where the Self is taught with the aid of the common experience of deep sleep, the terms *prājña* (although to be found solely in the *Māṇḍūkya), devatā, and sat,* are used interchangeably as they refer to the divinity *Īśvara,* described as the matrix or womb, the culmination, and the controller of all. It seems obvious that while the teacher guides the student through these texts, the latter is compelled to reflect on his

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[374] "*yanmayo yatsthaśca jīvo mananadarśanaśravaṇādivyavahārāya kalpate taduparame ca svaṁ devatārūpameva pratipadyate.*" "*tasyāsya manaḥsthasya manākhyāṁ gatasya mana upaśamadvāreṇindriyaviṣayebhyo nivṛttasya yasyāṁ parasyāṁ devatāyāṁ svātmabhūtāyāṁ yadavasthānaṁ...aruṇiḥ śvetaketuṁ putramuvācoktavān.*" "*suṣupta eva svaṁ devatārūpaṁ jīvatvavinirmuktaṁ darśayiṣyāmi ityāh*" Īśādi, pp.260-61.
[375] "The third quarter is *prājña*—the Intelligent One—situated in the state of deep sleep—deep sleep is when a sleeping man entertains no desires or sees no dreams—; become one, and thus being a single mass of perception; consisting of bliss, and thus enjoying bliss; and having thought as his mouth. He is the Lord of all; he is the knower of all; he is the inner controller; he is the womb of all—for he is the origin and the dissolution of beings."
[376] "*bhūtabhaviṣyajjñātṛtvaṁ sarvaviṣayajñātṛtvamasyaiveti prājñaḥ*" MāBh.5, Īṣādi. p.428.
[377] "*eṣa hi svarūpāvasthaḥ sarvaiśvaraḥ sādhidaivikasya bhedajātasya sarvasyeśvara*" Ibid.
[378] "*ata eva yathoktaṁ sabhedaṁ jagatprasūyata ityeṣa yoniḥ sarvasya / yata evaṁ prabhavaścāpyayaśca prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānāmeṣa eva*" Ibid.

experience of sleep and, from this, to 'see' the confirmation that he is endowed with all such divine characteristics as mentioned in Mā.6 or Ch.6.8.7.

Śaṅkara's annotation to *Praśna Upaniṣad* 4.6-7 also supports the idea that he understands the essential form of deep sleep and *Īśvara* to be non-different with regard to both their nature and function. In PrBh.4.6, Śaṅkara mentions the characteristics of deep sleep, which also apply to the Self that is unbounded consciousness, without a second, and tranquil. And in 4.7, while the identity of deep sleep and the Self is reaffirmed, the causal role of deep sleep is introduced through an illustration:

> "Then [in deep sleep], there is this happiness/bliss in the body, which is unbounded consciousness, wholly pervading the body, and tranquil. At that time, causes and effects that are connected to desire and action that pertain to ignorance, become pacified. The nature of the Self, manifesting differently because of limiting adjuncts, is one, without a second, auspicious, and tranquil, when they [causes and effects] have become pacified. In order to indicate that very state...there is the following illustration" (PrBh.4.6).
> "This is the illustration my dear boy: 'just like birds fly towards a tree for the sake of inhabiting it/getting rest; like that, as in the illustration, it is declared that everything [causes and effects] goes towards the Supreme Self, the imperishable'" (PrBh.4.7).[379]

In these passages too, and despite the obvious variation of vocabulary—the additional terms that Śaṅkara equates with the condition of deep sleep are the Supreme Self (*Paramātman)* and the imperishable *(akṣara)*—we see that deep sleep is here directly identified with the principle which is the repository of all. In accord with the birds-tree analogy, we are justified in suggesting that Śaṅkara considers deep sleep, like *Īśvara*, to be the source and the finality of all.

The same conclusion transpires from an examination of BSBh.3.2.7-8. In 3.2.7, Śaṅkara states that in deep sleep, one is said to attain one's self (*Brahman)* because all the limiting adjuncts with which one associates in the states of waking and dream have been pacified.[380] Commenting on 3.2.8, Śaṅkara says that from the standpoint of deep sleep, waking—and we shall keep in mind that the

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[379] *"tadaitasminśarīra etatsukhaṁ bhavati yadvijñānaṁ nirābādhamaviśeṣeṇa śarīravyāpakaṁ prasannaṁ bhavatītyarthaḥ // etasminkāle'vidyākāmakarmanibandhanāni kāryakaraṇāni śāntāni bhavanti / teṣu śānteṣvātmasvarūpamupāddhibhiranyathā vibhāvyamānamadvayamekaṁ śivaṁ śāntaṁ bhavatītyetāmevāvasthāṁ...darśayituṁ dṛṣṭāntamāha / sa dṛṣṭānto yathā yena prakāreṇa somya priyadarśana vayāṁsi pakṣiṇo vāsārthaṁ vṛkṣaṁ vāsovṛkṣaṁ prati saṁpratiṣṭhante gacchanti / evaṁ yathā dṛṣṭānto ha vai tadvakṣyamāṇaṁ sarvaṁ para ātmanyakṣare saṁpratiṣṭhate"* Īśādi, p.410.
[380] "It is reasonable that merged in existence alone, one knows nothing on account of the adjuncts being pacified" (*upādherupaśāntatvātsatyeva saṁpanno na vijānātīti yuktam*) BSBh, p.351.

world we ordinarily take to be real is, for Śaṅkara, dependent on the waking state—necessarily arises from the Self and thus from deep sleep, as the latter is identified with Existence.[381] To support his interpretation, Śaṅkara quotes Bṛ.2.1.20, a text that answers the question, "From where did he return?" posed in Bṛ.2.1.15 by Ajātaśatru to Gārgya, after having woken up a man from his sleep: "As a spider sends forth its thread, and as tiny sparks spring forth from a fire, so indeed do all the vital functions, all the worlds, all the gods, and all beings spring from this Self" (Bṛ.2.1.20).

To correctly understand the above commentarial passages where the condition of deep sleep is explicitly identified with *Īśvara* (as no distinction seems to be drawn between them), it is helpful to return to the distinction made in chapter three between deep sleep when directly experienced, and deep sleep when examined as a singular state among others. In common with the general understanding of sleep that is rooted in the waking standpoint where differences between the states are established, Śaṅkara concedes that the deep sleep state shares the status of falsity characteristic of the waking and the dream, essentially because of its impermanence. Nevertheless, this erroneous approach is utilized as a vehicle for this unique Advaita teaching about the Self, and joins the general Advaita Vedānta discourse that is couched in plurality. In effect, in GKBh.1.14 & 15, Śaṅkara holds that although the deep sleep state, like the other two, is a limiting adjunct of the Self, a product of ignorance, in comparison to the states of dream and waking, it is possible to affirm that one obtains unity with *Brahman* in deep sleep.

In chapter three, we also noted that it is only when deep sleep is considered from the viewpoint of its experience itself that it perfectly coalesces with *turīya* or unbounded consciousness. While examining the equation between *Īśvara* and deep sleep, it is also the content of the experience of deep sleep that is to be considered by the pupil, not the state. For the pupil to approach the activity of creation—not just that of the waking world but that of the dream too, with their respective physical laws, etc,— he is to realize that his true nature in deep sleep is pure cognition free from both

[381] "Since the condition of sleep is the Self alone, it is taught—in sections dealing with sleep—that waking up always proceeds from the Self" (*yasmāccātmaiva suptisthānamata eva ca kāraṇānnityavadevāsmādātmanaḥ prabodhaḥ svāpādhikāre śiṣyate*) Ibid.

subject and objects, and from which alone, waking up proceeds. It is from that ineffable consciousness, which the pupil obtains effortlessly in deep sleep, that the states of dream and waking must be admitted to emerge. Similarly, it is into that very consciousness that they must be admitted to merge back. In view of Śaṅkara's commentaries on texts like Ch.6.8.1-7, Mā.5&6, and Pr.4.6-7, gaining insight into the divine activities of creation, and so on, entails little more than the scriptures drawing the attention of the student's inquisitive mind to his own experience of deep sleep. Reflection and reasoning on the scriptural passages dealing with the states, but also, and largely, on the experience of the states, reveal that in deep sleep, no particular cognitive experience can occur since the mind that is responsible for bringing about suffering and happiness by its vibration—creating both objects of knowledge and agent of knowledge—is absent.[382] If Śaṅkara calls upon the student's direct experience to verify that deep sleep is nothing else than unbounded consciousness, the Absolute, it is through inference that the student is able to derive the knowledge that his condition in deep sleep is the cause for the creation of the world, in accord with the scripture.

Finally, the view that a qualified pupil can understand, through proper consideration, that his essential nature of being is *Īśvara*, the ultimate source of the universe, may be derived from an argument that Śaṅkara makes in a long section of BSBh.1.3 where he seeks to demonstrate that the only possible basis of creation is the Highest Self, *Brahman*, and not the insentient primordial matter that the Saṁkhya school advocates. He presents his argument with the aid of the analogy of the space within and without pots:

"What is opposed here is that living creatures are the substratum of the sky/heaven, and the like, for [the Self] is being grasped differently in everybody when identified with the adjuncts of the intellect, etc., just like in the case of the space within pots and the like. However, the one who is seen in all the bodies as devoid of all limiting adjuncts, that one is the Supreme Self alone. Just like the spaces within pots, and such, are the great [all-pervading] space alone when seen to be without the adjuncts of the pots, and so on, like that, living creatures [when seen without limiting adjuncts] cannot be

[382] "It is said to be a mass/lump of consciousness alone since its form is non-discrimination [between two things]" (*...avasthā'vivekarūpatvātprajñānaghana ucyate*). "Because of the absence of sorrows brought about by the effort of the mind vibrating in the form of subject and objects of experience, he is said to consist of bliss (*ānandamaya*)... [He is called] the enjoyer of bliss (*ānandabhuk*) because he himself enjoys this state whose form is completely free from effort" (*manaso viṣayaviṣayyākāraspandanāyāsaduḥkhābhāvāt ānandamaya... atyantānāyāsarūpā hīyaṁ sthitiranenātmanānubhūyata ityānandabhuk*) MāBh.5, Īśādi, p.428.

held to be other than the Supreme Self. Their rejection [as the substratum of the sky/heaven, and the like] is not proper. Therefore, the opposition to [entities] being the substratum of the sky/heaven, etc., is only because of their association with the adjuncts of the intellect, and so on." (BSBh.1.3.7).[383]

Here, Śaṅkara clearly indicates that it is the identification with various limiting adjuncts which bar an individual from recognizing that his true nature is the Supreme Being, the basis of all things. When he points out that in the state of deep sleep one is free from the limiting adjuncts of the states of waking and dream as well as their respective contents (the intellect, the ego, etc., of the subject identified with, and the objects apprehended by that subject in each state), it entails that there is no possibility to identify with any limiting adjunct whatsoever. Evidently, this tallies well with the idea that in sleep, everyone takes hold of his essence as the Self, and becomes the basis or support of the states of dream and waking (and, by implication, of the world), at least insofar as these are conceived to be actual manifestations. The above analogy of the spaces within the pots and the cosmic space serves Śaṅkara well, whether he speaks of creation, sustenance, or dissolution in the divine realm or in that of humans. This is understandable especially since the Upaniṣads often equate space with the all-pervasive self or consciousness that completely pervades the so-called states of waking and dream, and which is, in fact, their very fabric. It is that very consciousness that receives the names of *vaiśvāṇara* and *taijasa* in relation to those two states, and which constitutes the real nature of the seeker of liberation who simply entertains such wrong notions as being embodied, undergoing transmigration, and the like.[384] Just as the spaces within the pots may be said to merge into the cosmic space upon the destruction of the pots, similarly, the individual selves within the states may be said to merge into the unconditioned self upon the disappearance of waking and dream. Again, the Advaitin pupil can reach this conclusion through reflecting on his own experience of deep sleep

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[383] "*prāṇabhṛddhīha ghaṭādicchidravatsattvādyupādhyabhimānitvena pratiśarīraṁ gṛhyamāṇo dyubhvādyāyatanaṁ na bhavatīti niṣidhyate / yastu sarvaśarīreṣūpādhibhirvinopalakṣyate paramātmaiva sa bhavati / yathā ghaṭādicchidrāṇi ghaṭādibhirupādhibhirvinopalakṣyamāṇāni mahākāśa eva bhavanti tadvatprāṇabhṛtaḥ parasmādanyatvānupapatteḥ pratiṣedho nopapadyate / tasmātsattvādyupādyabhimānina eva dyubhvādyāyatanatvapratiṣedhaḥ*" BSBh. pp, 97-8.

[384] "Ignorant individuals speak of the Highest Self as the body, when it is being separated by the limiting adjuncts of body, senses, mind, and intellect. It is like when boundless space appears as though limited under the influence limiting adjuncts such as pots, jars, and the like" (*para evātmā dehendriyamanobuddhyupādhibhiḥ paricchidyamāno bālaiḥ śārīra ityupacaryate / yathā ghaṭakarakādyupādhivaśādaparicchinnamapi nabhaḥ paricchinnavadavabhāsate tadvat)* BSBh.1.2.6, p.67.

in relation to the perception of the other two states, and with the aid of sound reasoning. We cannot emphasize enough that in cooperation with the scriptures, Śaṅkara sees experience as fundamental to arriving at the knowledge that deep sleep does not admit such distinctions as agent of knowledge and objects known, which the process of knowledge (in whatever state) demands, and that by implication, deep sleep can be viewed as the sole locus of the states of waking and dream, endorsing the role of the divine principle from which they arise, by which they are sustained, and into which they go back. However, it seems to me that this view cannot be secured if we follow the post-Śaṅkara doctrine of the two-fold power of ignorance, i.e., dissolution (in sleep) and projection (in waking and dream). Indeed, the identification of deep sleep with the Supreme Being, becomes 'problematical,' as Sharma underlines, from the fact that obscuration (the covering power associated with *māyā*) is the basic feature of deep sleep, whereas the Supreme Being is free from this defect.[385]

It remains that if we stick to Śaṅkara's commentaries, the identification of deep sleep and the Supreme Being is unproblematic. For the student who qualifies for the knowledge of the Self, and engages introspectively with the teachings that bear on the nature of the states, under the guidance of the teacher, such a pupil can secure the knowledge that while he is in deep sleep, he is none other than *Īśvara*. Moreover, this position does not compromise non-duality, since Śaṅkara is careful to stress that one is always united with the Absolute, regardless of the appearance of the states. It is the same non-dual reality alone that exists, even when one is seemingly associated with the limiting adjuncts pertaining to the waking or the dream state. This implies that in both dream and waking, one's nature is the same as in deep sleep, ever devoid of duality.

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[385] See Arvind Sharma, *Sleep as a State of Consciousness in Advaita Vedanta*. State University of New York Press, Albany, 2004, p.31

3.2 Identifying with the Creator through the examination of the states

In the previous section, we saw that for Śaṅkara, an introspective student may gain the knowledge that in deep sleep he becomes the Supreme Being responsible for the rise of the other two states. This knowledge is to be secured on the basis of experience (the student experiences deep sleep in such a manner as mentioned in Ch.6.8.1, that is to say, as united with the existent), supported by reasoning that is unopposed to experience and the scriptures.

We shall now turn to the view that by adopting the standpoint of the witness in relation to the appearance and disappearance of states, the student may also secure the knowledge that his own consciousness is itself the divine ground from which the states (and indeed the waking world) issue forth, exist for some time, and cease, in a sequence that cannot see an end except through self-knowledge.

Śaṅkara accepts the witness and *Īśvara*—as they both denote the Absolute—as alternatives for establishing the origination and existence of the world. Scriptures establish that *Īśvara*, through his power of *māyā*, is the cause of the origination, maintenance, and dissolution of the world. The witness too may be said to fulfil the same functions,[386] and this can also be ascertained through scriptural texts aided by experience and reflection. According to Śaṅkara, as we have already explained, the world in all its diversity, which is inseparable from the waking state in which it is always found, is but an appearance that shares the status of the dream. Nevertheless, as an appearance, it necessarily appears to some principle different from it. This principle is the changeless consciousness often referred to as witness. The world, the states, defined as appearances, are dependent on that of which they are appearances, as they never become available without it. To the extent that the states are perceived by those still in the grip of ignorance, Śaṅkara holds that the witness functions as their "illuminator," meaning that consciousness pervades them through and

[386] In chapter three, we have emphasized that for Śaṅkara, adopting the viewpoint of the witness through the analysis of the three states—and, possibly, by merely examining the two states of waking and dream—means intuiting the Supreme Being as self. See Śaṅkara's annotations to Ka.4.3, 4.4&6.6; GK.4.67-69; Bṛ.4.3.16-18 examined in that chapter.

through.[387] It is indeed for the sake of those who are under the sway of ignorance that Śaṅkara teaches that the Absolute, as witness, stands in a causal relationship with the states that owe their existence to the light of consciousness that permeates all things effortlessly on account of its self-effulgent nature. It is in this context that Śaṅkara justifies the possibility of identifying with the Absolute as witness, in which and through which the endless series of waking and dream states with their internal subject/object division rise, endure for some time, and cease. It is thus the dependence of both the waking and the dream on the self-effulgent consciousness that characterizes the witness as their source, means of sustenance, and end. And this dependence is visible to one who carries out the *nivṛtti* discipline that consists in discrimination. It involves scrutinizing the states of waking and dream and then identifying with the principle that witnesses their appearance and cessation. During the practice, the student observes that all the distinctions that characterize the waking and dream states do not exist as such before they rise and after they cease. They are born from and solely exist in the light of the witnessing consciousness that is the student's true nature of being. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the individual selves of the waking and dream worlds cannot transgress the boundaries of the single state in which they appear.

With the discriminative method that the student employs, deep sleep too cannot elude him. Indeed, his knowledge that deep sleep is void of subject-object duality can be secured by identifying with the witness, his very awareness whose light encompasses the phenomenal states of the waking and the dream as well as the non-phenomenal state of deep sleep. The dream and the waking states with their respective contents rise from and rest on a common ground that is this witness and which, for reasons already mentioned, cannot be any particular individual self of either state.

It is indeed puzzling that the witness may be recognized as always remaining unchanged while being responsible for the appearances of the waking, the dream, and their contents. For anything experienced in these states, whether physical or mental, depends on the witness for its existence. To know the witness as both the material and efficient cause of the waking and dream states, their

[387] We have shown that for Śaṅkara, the world is completely pervaded by consciousness that allows for its existence while being entirely different from it, on account of being a mere witness. See pp.86-90 & 96-101 above.

underlying reality, and as the unchanging consciousness that is beyond all conceptualizations, is a conclusion revealed to the student through the careful examination of his experiences as encountered in the three states.

Reaching this conclusion, however, is afforded to the student who perceives duality. We should not forget that for Śaṅkara, the revelation and the 'true knowers of the tradition' resort to our natural viewpoint of ignorance to impart the liberating teaching of the Self without a second. Let us recall one of the already cited key passages where Śaṅkara clearly endorses this view:

> "Since it leads one to the knowledge of its reality, even the false form caused by adjuncts is granted as though it were an attribute of the knowable, as expressed in 'on all sides it has hands and feet,' and so forth. Thus say the true knowers of the tradition: 'That which is devoid of the manifold is explained through the process of superimposition and cancellation.' "[388]

Once we understand the overall scheme of teaching which Śaṅkara sees the scriptures to follow, it ensues that the scriptural statements that present the Absolute as the source for the manifestation of the states of waking, as well as the *nivṛtti* practices that are based on these very scriptural passages, are solely acceptable as helpful means to teaching the one reality without a second. For such scriptural statements and practices merely 'assume' the existence of such states. Consciousness has nothing to do with dreaming, sleeping, and waking. These three are erroneously perceived by those in ignorance, and on that account, they become a springboard for teaching non-duality. It is nevertheless astonishing that in such a context of teaching that is marred in ignorance and replete with false assumptions, a student should arrive at the conviction that he is the source of all that he encounters in his experiences. The value of this practice, however, is obvious. Discriminating the states from their witness leads the student to focus his mind on and identify with that most worthy source of creation, the only real principle that enlivens the illusory forms of the two states with complete detachment. In addition, by revealing the falsity of the waking and dream, this practice, which culminates in the intuition of the witness as self, helps to lessen the student's attachment to

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[388] See ft.292 and the related argument developed pp.126-8.

the crudest and most unfavorable aspects of duality, most important of which is the manifestation of the waking mind-body complex that cannot be the means to know the Absolute.

3.3 Retractions of all theistic attributions on the Absolute

Although it is clear that Śaṅkara wishes to transpose the scriptural views of the Absolute (the Highest Deity, Supreme Self, etc...) as the origin, the controller, and the place of dissolution of the world, to the level of the aspirant's immediate experience, they nevertheless remain to be canceled since they too involve duality. Because the Absolute, *Brahman*, is non-relational—*māyā* being non-existent—it cannot *really* be a creator or a ruler. Nor can it be a witness, for witnessing involves something to be witnessed, whether it is a particular object in the waking or the dream state, or the coming and ceasing of the states themselves. In the final analysis, and in accord with the conception of the Upaniṣads as the *antya pramāna* or last means of knowledge ("This truth is taught only by the expedient, 'not this, not this'" Bṛ.2.3.6), Śaṅkara retracts all the theistic attributions, inclusive of the Absolute as the sole material and efficient cause of the universe, its witness, controller and regulator, and so forth. These tenets, although demonstrable on the basis of experience (for those who follow the *nivṛtti dharma*), are entirely contingent on the student's perception of the world of plurality caused by his ignorance of reality. Śaṅkara draws out this point in very clear terms:

"In this way, the lordship, omniscience, and omnipotence of *Īśvara*, are dependent on the limiting adjuncts that are of the nature of ignorance. However, from the highest standpoint, the use of 'ruler,' 'ruled,' 'omniscience,' etc., with regard to the self whose form is devoid of all limiting adjuncts, is not possible. Hence, it is stated: 'Where one sees no other, hears no other, knows no other, that is the infinite' (Ch.7.24.1). 'For this world, the Lord creates neither agency, nor actions. Nor does he proceed to associate actions with their results, for it occurs naturally. The all-pervading one does not give [the result] for the merit or demerit of anyone. Knowledge is covered by ignorance, it is in this way that beings get deluded' (BG.5.14-15)" (BSBh.2.1.14).[389]

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[389]*"tadevamavidyātmakopādhiparicchedāpekṣameveśvarasyeśvaratvaṁ sarvajñatvaṁ sarvaśaktitvaṁ ca na paramārthato vidyayāpāstasarvopādhisvarūpa ātmanīśitrīśitavyasarvajñatvādivyavahāra upapadyate / tathācoktam —"yatra nānyatpaśyati nānyacchṛṇoti nānyadvijānāti sa bhūmā" iti...tatheśvaragītākhapi—"na kartṛtvaṁ na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ / na karmaphalasaṁyogaṁ svabhāvastu pravartate // nādatte kasyacitpāpaṁ na caiva sukṛtaṁ vibhuḥ / ajñānenāvṛtaṁ jñānaṁ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ iti"* BSBh, p.201.

4 Concluding remarks

In Śaṅkara's system, the appeal to scriptures occurs first to confront the problem of the aspirant's natural ignorance through postulating central theistic concepts like that of an omnipotent God who acts as a creator, world regulator, and so forth. These are necessary for the development and the maturation of moral qualities that are indispensable to the pupil, as he proceeds on the spiritual path of knowledge. And it is precisely on this path that theistic tenets are shifted to the domain of the pupil's own experience. For Śaṅkara, theistic statements like those relating to the creation of the universe may be validated or demonstrated in an immediate and direct way through such teaching strategy as the examination of the three states. It leads the pupil to take the broadest possible phenomenological perspective—the witness-standpoint—from which scriptural postulates like the creation of the world find an exact correspondence with the content of his experience.

Concerning the discipline of knowledge, it is significant for Śaṅkara to anchor theistic principles in immediate experience rather than speculation and faith. The qualified student who follows the spiritual discipline of *nivṛtti* is able to develop a strong sense of discrimination which, in turn, allows him to directly apprehend the reality of his being as the witnessing consciousness that is not taking part in the world of *saṁsāra*, but from which *saṁsāra* itself arises. This however, still stops short of the final aim of Advaita Vedānta, which is the eradication of all sense of duality. To achieve this goal, it is once again necessary to appeal to the scriptures to eliminate such limiting adjuncts as the states, lordship, and individuality, which are provisionally taught in the scriptures. Let us recall that for Śaṅkara the Upaniṣadic teachings constitute the last means of knowledge because they eliminate all superimpositions, including all factors of knowledge.[390] And the last and most subtle superimposition to be cancelled is the Absolute as witness. The aspirant's realization of his eternal freedom is concomitant with the elimination of the wrong notion that there is anything second for consciousness to create, witness, sustain, or pervade, like the limiting adjuncts of the states.

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[390] See ft.88-89.

Ultimately, the 'knowers of the tradition' tell us, the Self never sleeps, dreams, or wakes up.[391] The existence of three distinct states is accepted because of the student's natural but erroneous perception of a stable and variegated world. And the lordly and witnessing qualities of the Absolute, which are assumed for the same reasons, are taught as the characteristics of that entity which one should strive to realize. At the level of the *nivṛtti* discipline, identifying with the self so conceived, brings forth a fundamental shift in the identity of the student which is conducive to the final realization of the state-free and non-conceptual reality.

[391] "When the individual wakes up from the sleep of beginningless magic (appearances), then he realizes his non-dual condition as birthless, dreamless, and sleepless" (GK.1.16 See also MāBh.7). Refer to the appendix.

Chapter V

The Significance of Devotion and Grace in Śaṅkara's Soteriology

1 Preliminary remarks

In his commentarial work, Śaṅkara holds that the unitary knowledge that qualifies liberation is born of such spiritual practices as *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyasana*, which lay great emphasis on knowledge. This conception underlies the enduring yet false notion that devotion has little or no place in Śaṅkara's thought. This assumption about the quasi absence of devotion in the teachings of Śaṅkara,[392] led to the perception of the Advaita Vedānta tradition as a 'dry' system rooted in complex principles of philosophical argumentation and logic, and deprived of the bliss that is inherent to the traditions that hold devotion as the main means or/and the acme of their system. In an effort to do away with this 'negative' image of Advaita Vedānta, wrongly thought to be traceable to the pen of Śaṅkara himself, some Advaitins have drastically altered the Advaita tradition by propounding that devotion, like knowledge, is a separate and independent path leading to liberation. Separately, many academic works (particularly since the 1950's) have strongly argued against the view that Śaṅkara shows but little interest on devotion and other theistic issues like grace. P.Hacker argues convincingly that Śaṅkara's soteriology shows ties with the flourishing of the Vaiṣṇava religion in the seventh and eighth centuries C.E. He assumes that the theistic background of Śaṅkara's philosophy (and by this he means Vaiṣṇavism) "is a constituent of his personal life."[393] However, he also states

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[392] In our introduction, we have already emphasized that according to modern scholarship, the works that are legitimately Śaṅkara's are his commentaries on the Upaniṣads, the BS, and the BG, as well as his independent treatise, the *Thousand Teachings*. There is a great deal of treatises, poetical works, etc., traditionally ascribed to Śaṅkara and which tenure is overtly devotional. Nonetheless, there is a consensus among mainly Western scholars that the bulk of these works are from later authors, attributed to Śaṅkara for reasons of prestige or/and authority. See Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, pp.30-31 & Hirst, pp.23-24.

[393] *Philology and Confrontation*, p.34.

that "Śaṅkara's philosophy includes no specifically Vaiṣṇava views."[394] Other scholars, however, do not rest content with stressing Śaṅkara's acquaintance with Vaiṣṇava doctrines and deliberate use of Vaiṣṇava religious symbolism and practice. Scholars like Mayeda, Nakamura and Malkovsky, for instance, think that Śaṅkara actually favored Vaiṣṇavism.[395]

Certainly, we cannot doubt that Śaṅkara was familiar with, and even made use of components of the Vaiṣṇava religion, and that this had an impact on the way he discussed such important topics as those of devotion and grace in his system. Terminology, symbols, and ways of worship peculiar to the Vaiṣṇava religion are a familiar sight in Śaṅkara's writings, and particularly in places where theistic ideas predominate. The links may even be stronger than we think, if Hacker's suggestion about the existence of a 'Viṣṇuite Advaitism'[396] prior to Śaṅkara's time is correct. Śaṅkara would then presumably be one of its representatives. In any case, we cannot rely too much on Śaṅkara's acquaintance with and borrowings from the Vaiṣṇava religion to secure a comprehensive understanding of Śaṅkara's teachings on the above-mentioned matters. I think and hope to show that devotion and grace can be seen as harmoniously woven into and sympathetic to Śaṅkara's non-dual system, and that his position on these subjects is broadly indebted to the teaching method and the spiritual disciplines specific to his own school of Advaita, handed down to him from his predecessors. Śaṅkara's familiarity with and use of certain components of the Vaiṣṇava religion do not amount to Śaṅkara favoring this religion.

In the pages that follow, we shall first examine a significant aspect of B.J. Malkovsky's research on the role that grace and divine personalism play in Śaṅkara's soteriology. Although Malkovsky begins his work by stating that it "seeks to establish that divine grace and personalism play an important role on the path leading to enlightenment and liberation," one of the significant views that emerge from his study is that Śaṅkara accepts some form of divine benevolence as the *last*

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[394] *Śaṅkarācarya and Śaṅkarabhagavatpāda. Preliminary remarks concerning the authorship problem.* Essay by P. Hacker in New Indian Antiguary, 1947. Quoted from Bradley J. Malkovsky: *The Role of Divine Grace in the Soteriology of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya*, p.59.

[395] See H. Nakamura, *A History of Early Vedānta Philosophy*, p.4, and Malkovsky's essay: *Śaṅkara on Divine Grace*, New perspectives, pp.70-83.

[396] Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, p.28.

(as in ultimate) means for the attainment of liberation. If this were the case, I believe it would mean that Śaṅkara owes a great deal more to the Vaiṣṇava religion than it has so far been acknowledged. Although I accept that there is room for grace in Śaṅkara's soteriology, as Malkovsky shows through a systematic study of Śaṅkara's writings, I shall challenge his assertion that liberation ultimately depends on a divine act of grace. In order to clarify my position, it will be necessary to re-examine the most important textual passages that Malkovsky uses to build his argument, and to draw on arguments developed in this study, which do not not favor Malkovsky's contention that in Śaṅkara's view, divine grace is the ultimate means to acquire the liberating knowledge.

Thereafter, we will turn to an examination of devotion in Śaṅkara's soteriology. Following the general teaching division followed by Śaṅkara, we will divide our study of devotion into the two heuristic categories that we have been using for this study, and proceed to examine devotion a) in the *pravṛtti dharma*, and b) in the *nivṛtti dharma*. Basically, these two categories indicate the devotion to the Supreme Being or any deity conceived as other than oneself, and the devotion to the Supreme Being as self, respectively. In the *pravṛtti dharma*, devotion is a means contributing to self-knowledge. In the *nivṛtti dharma*, devotion is a spiritual practice that involves discriminative insight. To explain the latter type of devotion, it will be important to explain the practice of *nididhyasana* that Śaṅkara qualifies as the 'highest' form of devotion, a contemplative practice of the knower-renouncer that is carried out on the basis of his discriminative insight secured through such traditional instructions as the examination of the states.

2 Liberation and the Supreme Being's grace

In the last chapter, we have examined an important way in which Śaṅkara conceptualizes *Brahman* in relational terms: *Brahman* in relation to the world (and the states). There, we noted that the lordship of *Brahman*, not always but often called *Īśvara*, played a preponderant role. For Śaṅkara, the concept of *Īśvara* remains the scriptures' best representation of the Absolute when duality is perceived and needs to be explained, when inferior views on causality are to be refuted, or

simply when reality is to be taught to someone ignorant of it. For it matters greatly to scriptures and the teachers to incite the aspirant who cultivates the wrong understanding about his identity, to know the Absolute as something to be known, for this is what is conducive to liberation.

We now turn to the second theistic conception of the Absolute to be examined in this work: the notion that the Supreme Being dispenses his grace to liberate his devotees. Some scholars are now inclined to think that Śaṅkara's soteriology is not averse to and perhaps even sanctions the notion that liberation ultimately occurs to a devotee through a divine act of grace. I would like to begin treating this issue by making some general remarks on the possible influence of Vaiṣṇava traditions on Śaṅkara's soteriology. This is important since Vaiṣṇavism puts a great emphasis on God's salutary actions towards his devotees.

Scholars such as Malkovsky, Hacker, and Hirst, have argued that scholarship on Advaita Vedānta has generally underestimated the influence of the Vaiṣṇava religion on Śaṅkara's thought. Of course, no one can seriously doubt the presence of certain aspects of Vaiṣṇava theology in Śaṅkara's writings. To be convinced of this fact, it suffices to look at BGBh.15.6 and BSBh.4.3.10, where Śaṅkara compares liberation to attaining the supreme abode of Viṣṇu. However, it is clear that the presence, in Śaṅkara's work, of another tradition's terminology and even doctrines, does not amount to his accepting the final views of that tradition, certainly not those which define the nature of and the direct means to liberation. The textual passages Hacker draws from to show Śaṅkara's proximity to the Vaiṣṇava religion are solely significant at a very basic level where, for purposes of meditation, the Absolute is superimposed on a concept, an image, and so on. And this Hacker says, reveals no philosophical leaning towards Vaiṣṇavism.[397] I join him on this point. If we were to consider Śaṅkara's use of Sāṁkhya and Buddhist material, we would realize that what Hacker calls Śaṅkara's 'sympathy'[398] for the Vaiṣṇava religion is not really unique. For instance, Śaṅkara adopts a great deal of Sāṁkhya cosmology, notably the 25 true principles or *tattvas*. One could even think that the

[397] Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, p.35.
[398] Ibid., p.37.

teaching about knowledge expressed in BGBh.13.2 as the discrimination between the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajña*, is but the Sāṁkhya view that liberating knowledge comes with discriminating the 25th principle, the witnessing *puruṣa*, from the 24 others. Nevertheless, it would certainly be wrong to equate these two teachings. For unlike the followers of the Sāṁkhya school, Śaṅkara affirms that there is a single *puruṣa* (the *kṣetrajña*) in all the *kṣetras*. Śaṅkara's statement that the *kṣetrajña* is *Īśvara* (as well as the constant witness in all beings) categorically opposes the Sāṁkhya system, which does not accept the existence of *Īśvara*. Also, in BSBh.2.2.42, we see that Śaṅkara accepts the view of the followers of the Pañcarātra school (*Bhāgavatas*) that the Supreme Being divides himself into many forms because such a view conforms to the Veda (for instance, Ch.7.26.2). However, he dismisses their theory that the individual selves originate from the Supreme Being *Vāsudeva*, as being opposed to the scriptures and sound reasoning. Generally speaking, Śaṅkara accepts principles, concepts, and doctrines of other systems, to the extent that they do not oppose scriptures and their conclusion. This does not point to a passive influence of other traditions on Śaṅkara's thought; rather, it points to a commitment to use the views, ideas, and concepts of other systems, to the extent that they contribute to the overall goal of the Advaita soteriology. The continuity of Vaiṣṇava ideas, terminology, etc., in Śaṅkara's work, like the continuity of Sāṁkhya ideas, does not make the Vaiṣṇava religion or the Sāṁkhya system congenial to Śaṅkara's radical non-dualism. This being said, we must concede that *Viṣṇu* was most probably Śaṅkara's chosen/favored deity, due to the family in which he was born, his larger environment, or, if Hacker is correct, by the simple fact of belonging to a non-dual strand of Vaiṣṇavism.

In his work, *The Role of Divine Grace in the Soteriology of Śaṅkarācārya*,[399] Malkovsky contends that the Supreme Being's grace is the final element in the process of securing liberation. Although he quotes profusely from Śaṅkara's works in his effort to arrive at a comprehensive view on the latter's teachings on grace, it is Hacker's clarification of Śaṅkara's own linguistic usage, notably the equation

[399] See also Malkovsky's essay: *Śaṅkara on Divine Grace,* New perspectives on Advaita Vedanta, pp.70-83.

between *para-brahman* and *parameśvara*, which leads Malkovsky to postulate that the Advaita conception of the Absolute may be, in some sense, personal.[400] Being aware of the passages where Śaṅkara affirms the Lord's total impartiality towards all *jīvas* (i.e., BGBh.9.29) Malkovsky thus speaks of two aspects of grace emanating from one and the same Supreme Being. The first aspect expresses itself as *Īśvara*'s passivity and impartiality towards all creatures in conformity with what he calls, "the demand of a correct rational theology." According to this conception, *Īśvara* meets the demands of the law of *karma*, he guarantees that all creatures receive their due in accordance with their meritorious or non-meritorious acts. The second aspect expresses itself in terms of *Īśvara*'s dynamic and personalistic response to *jīvas*, above and beyond the strict demands of the law of *karma*. He concludes this point saying,

"those to whom he tends to grant such a bountiful display of mercy are those who are his true devotees, who, moreover, seek liberation to the exclusion of every other desire. What the Lord, perhaps finally out of pity (*anukrośa*), grants to the suffering and yearning devotee is liberation itself."[401]

Some of the textual passages Malkovsky refers to in his study of Śaṅkara's teaching on grace (KaBh,2,2,13; BSBh.1.2.7; Bṛh.5.1.1; PrBh.5.2; ChBh.1.1.1), do bear the signs of Vaiṣṇavite religious practices. It is important to point out that these texts mostly deal with meditative practices. In this regard, we should also take note of a significant passage of the BG.12 (verses 6-12) where a series of meditational techniques of different kinds are enumerated and which, Śaṅkara thinks, aim at easing the hardship of the aspirant who is continuously identified with his body. Śaṅkara's commentaries on these verses are of interest to us here, because they speak of the benevolence of *Īśvara* towards certain of his devotees (those who cannot cease identifying with their body). *Īśvara*'s benevolence is expressed through the variety of meditational techniques, which he imparts to Arjuna, the archetype of the aspirant. This variety of disciplines corresponds to different spiritual capacities of students. In verses 8 to 11, where four practices are enjoined successively, we may say that the Supreme Being

[400] Malkovsky (2001), p.381.
[401] Ibid., pp.385-7.

responds differently to different aspirants, and in such a context, *Brahman* may be viewed, in some sense, as relational:

"Concentrate your mind on me alone; direct your thought to me [in my cosmic form]. Following this, there is no doubt that you will come to abide in me alone" (BG.12.8).
"If you cannot permanently concentrate your mind on me, then Arjuna, strive to attain me through the *yoga* of repetition" (BG.12.9).
"If you are still unable to practice this *yoga* of repetition, give yourself to performing but my work; for even by performing works for my sake, you will attain perfection" (BG.12.10).
"If, likewise, you cannot do that [and yet] intent on uniting with me, then, restrain yourself and give up the outcome of all your actions" (BG.12.11).[402]

In the specific texts that Malkovsky selects to show that Śaṅkara accepts *Īśvara*'s personal act of grace as the ultimate means to liberation (BSBh.2.3.41, 3.2.5; TaiBh.1.11.4; BGBh.2.39), some passages do reveal the same possible Vaiṣṇava influence in the sense that they speak of a divine 'movement' towards some devotees. However, these passages are not placed in a context that deals with the direct means of liberation, and cannot be interpreted as indicating Śaṅkara's commitment to a theory of *final* liberation through grace. We will examine some specific passages below.

Besides the influence of Vaiṣṇavism, there is a significant reason that leads Malkovsky to attribute liberation by means of *Īśvara*'s grace to Śaṅkara's teachings. Malkovsky tends to frame the issue by placing the factors of liberation linked to the *jīva's* effort as well as the Upaniṣadic teachings (which he deems to be always ultimately inefficacious), in opposition to the gracious action of *Īśvara* that does ultimately bring about the liberating knowledge. The context in which the question of grace arises in Śaṅkara Vedānta, he says, is that in which,

"the *jīva* is incapable through his own power of passing beyond the state of ignorance and attaining the blissful and liberating intellectual experience (*anubhava*) of the Self or Brahman. To reach this state of higher awareness Śaṅkara, drawing on the teachings of the revealed Upaniṣads, prescribes a path to liberation that, although absolutely essential in its purificatory function, is ultimately insufficient to bridge the chasm between the world of suffering and the state of liberation from that suffering."[403]

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[402] "*mayyeva mana ādhastva mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya / nivasiṣyasi mayyeva ata ūrdhvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ*"; "*atha cittaṁ samādhātuṁ na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram / abhyāsayogena tato māmicchāptuṁ dhanañjaya*" ; "*abhyāse'pyasamartho'si matkarmaparamo bhava / madarthamapi karmāṇi kurvan siddhimavāpsyasi*"; "*athaitadapyaśakto'si kartuṁ madyogamāśritaḥ / sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṁ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān*" (BG.12.8-11).
[403] Ibid., p.400.

Here, Malkovsky overlooks Śaṅkara's understanding of the function of the Upaniṣadic teachings. He seems to consider the practices of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*, which are prescribed in the Upaniṣads, as mediate means of knowledge. He understands them to be three obligatory sequential steps to be followed by the student, and to "indirectly aid the emergence of the liberating *vidyā*."[404] Although he is right to say that they are 'actions,' he misses Śaṅkara's significant point that they are not practices that depend on the agent; they depend, rather, on the object of knowledge. I shall not, here, characterize these practices further since we have already done so earlier, and because we have yet to examine *nididhyāsana* as a devotional practice (3.2. below).

When examining TaiBh.1.11.4, a text that Malkovsky selects to argue his thesis, we see that Śaṅkara champions the teachings of the Upaniṣads as the ultimate means to liberation. This section of the lengthy TaiBh.1.11 purports to clarify whether it is knowledge alone, action, or different combinations of knowledge and action, which provides liberation. The opponent's final objection is that since liberation is born from the elimination of the entire demerit accumulated in the past by means of actions, the hearing of the Upaniṣads and other such means become useless. Śaṅkara replies that,

"it is not so because of the absence of such a precept. And there is no precept [to the effect that] knowledge arises from the mere destruction of the obstacles and not from the grace of *Īśvara*, the practice of religious austerities, meditation, and so forth. And while non-violence, celibacy, etc., are of mutual assistance for knowledge, hearing [the Upaniṣadic teachings], reflecting, meditating, and such, are the direct cause [of knowledge]. Hence, it is settled that all people within other stages of life [can acquire] competence for the highest knowledge, and that the supreme good is attained exclusively through knowledge."[405]

This passage makes it clear that for Śaṅkara, *Īśvara*'s grace is not a direct cause of knowledge. Grace is presented as one auxiliary factor among others, which facilitate the rise of knowledge. It is *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*, which are enumerated as causing knowledge in a direct way. And we have already seen in our examination of Śaṅkara's conception of the Upaniṣads as the *antya*

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[404] Malkovsky, pp.86-87.

[405] "*na / niyamābhāvāt / na hi pratibandhakṣayādeva vidyotpadyate na tvīṣvaraprasādatapodhyānādyanuṣṭhānāditi niyamo'sti / ahiṁsābrahmacaryādīnāṁ ca vidyāṁ pratyupakārakatvātsākṣādeva ca kāraṇatvācchravaṇamanananidhyāsanādīnām / ataḥ siddhānyāśrmāntarāṇi / sarveṣāṁ cādhikāro vidyāyāṁ paraṁ ca śreyaḥ kevalāyā vidyāyā eveti siddham*" Īśādi, pp.353-4.

pramāṇa, that it is the Upaniṣadic instruction alone that takes the aspirant beyond the delimitations of his individuation, by their teaching:

"When, awakened by the scriptures, having risen above the aggregate of body, senses, mind, intellect [through the teaching]: 'you are not the aggregate of body, senses, mind, and intellect; you are not a transmigratory being; what then? That which is truth, that *Ātman* whose nature is mere consciousness, 'you are That!' Then, rising from the identification with his body, etc., he awakens to the self whose nature is the unchanging, eternal witness" (BSBh.1.3.19).[406]

In chapter three, we concerned ourselves with showing how, for Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣads constitute the last means of liberating knowledge. Our exposition focused on one of the many traditional *advaita* teachings that always resort to the stratagem of first superimposing the existence of certain qualities or attributes to the Absolute, and then negating them. Our study looked at the working of this teaching technique in the context of the examination of the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep. Despite the significance of this particular teaching and the important quantity of related material throughout Śaṅkara's commentaries, the latter gives no hint at all that in addition to hearing this teaching, pondering over its meaning, and applying proper reasoning to it (reasoning that accords with experience), the grace of *Īśvara* is needed. And in the various places where Śaṅkara defines the important concept of *antya pramāṇa*, he never refers to *Īśvara*'s grace. Furthermore, Malkovsky's reference to a state of "passive, hopeful, and trusting expectation" for the liberating grace of *Īśvara* in which the student finds himself after treading the merely preparatory path of liberation,[407] seems to oppose the very strategy used by the Upaniṣadic seers to teach the Absolute. Surely, the Upaniṣads favor repetition over passive expectancy. This is particularly obvious in Ch.6.8-16, where time and again, the sage Uddālaka teaches the non-dual self to his son Śvetaketu. Each time the teaching fails to fully indicate the Absolute as Śvetaketu's self, another request ensues, and a new way of instructing is devised, which culminates in the formula, "All this [universe] has that which is this subtle principle as its essence; that alone is true, that is the Self, and That you are, Śvetaketu." Evidently, the Upaniṣadic instructions, along with the appropriate

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[406] See ft.76.
[407] Malkovsky, pp.382 & 401.

reasoning intending to elucidate the texts stating the identity between the Absolute and the individual self, are to be resorted to as long as they do not bear fruit. And they do bear fruit as Ch.6.8.16 shows, with Śvetaketu realizing the truth. This does not mean that Ch.6.8.16 is clearer or superior to the previous teachings in the series. Liberation takes place with the hearing of this last teaching on account of the cumulative effects of all the previous ones, and because it removes the student's last doubt or confusion.

Let us now examine three passages from BGBh.14.26, BGBh.2.39, BSBh.3.2.5, the latter two being texts where Malkovsky thinks Śaṅkara openly affirms that divine grace is the final cause of liberation. I suggest that if in the above-mentioned passages, *Īśvara's* grace plays a significant role, it is not as a direct means or as the last means to liberation.

In Śaṅkara's commentary on BG.14.26,[408] grace is involved in making the aspirant fit for the liberating knowledge:

"The person who serves me *Īśvara Nārāyaṇa,* established in the heart of all beings, by continuously practising the *yoga* of devotion [whose form is discriminative knowledge, and which is born from the grace of the Supreme Being], this person, whether an ascetic or someone who performs actions, going beyond the *guṇas,* he is competent for liberation."[409]

Here we have a clear formulation that explains how the competence for the liberating knowledge is secured. Śaṅkara places exclusive devotion to *Īśvara,* here wedded to discriminative knowledge, as prerequisites for the liberating knowledge of the Self. And it is exclusive devotion that is said to originate from the grace of the Lord, not *mokṣā*, although indirectly, the grace of the Lord does facilitate the rise of knowledge just like the practice of austerities, meditation, and the like, do.

A similar idea is expressed in his annotation to BG.2.39:[410]

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[408] "He who, with the unwavering yoga of devotion, serves me, transcends these constituents and becomes fit for the status of Brahman" (Tr. Warrier).

[409] *"māṁ ca īśvaraṁ nārāyaṇaṁ sarvabhūtahṛdayāśritaṁ yaḥ yatiḥ karmī vā...yaḥ vyabhicarati bhaktiyogena... tena [vivekavijñānātmakena] bhaktiyogena [sa hi bhaktiyogaḥ bhagavadanugrahaprasādajaḥ bhavati] sevate saḥ guṇān samatītya etān yathoktān brahmabhūyāya...mokṣāya kalpate"* BGBh.14.26, p.487.

[410] "This knowledge of the sāṁkhya has so far been imparted to you. Now listen to the knowledge of yoga by acquiring which, O Arjuna, you will discard the bondage of works" (Tr. Warrier).

"With the knowledge relating to this *yoga [karma-yoga]*, O Arjuna, you will eliminate the bondage of action—action alone is bondage, whether it is called meritorious or unmeritorious—by acquiring the knowledge through the instrumentality of *Īśvara*'s grace. This is the meaning"[411]

In this passage, the knowledge in question is not the liberating knowledge (*sāṁkhya*) but an ancillary means which leads to securing the liberating knowledge, as Śaṅkara states earlier in his commentary:

"This knowledge of *sāṁkhya*, the discerning of the absolute entity was declared to you. Because it is direct/immediate, it causes the elimination of the defects responsible for transmigratory life, like grief, delusion, and so on. But [*karma*] *yoga* is a means to secure that [knowledge]."[412]

In BSBh.3.2.5, Śaṅkara speaks of the powers of knowledge and lordship, which both *Īśvara* and the *jīvas* share, but which the majority of *jīvas* remain unaware of. However, he says that for some devotees who meditate on the Supreme Being, the removal of darkness and the manifestation of perfection (*saṁsiddhi*) occur due to his grace. The issue, here, is to understand the sense in which the grace of *Īśvara* allows some devotees to become aware of their inherent knowledge and lordship. The answer, I suggest, is to be found in the definition that Śaṅkara gives of '*saṁsiddhi*' in BGBh.18.45-46 & 50.

In verses 45 and 46, Śaṅkara writes that one who performs his work in accordance with his particular social status as worship to *Īśvara*—who is the source of all creatures, and pervades everything—will obtain perfection (*saṁsiddhi/siddhi*). Śaṅkara characterizes perfection as "the capacity to devote oneself to knowledge."[413] Since Śaṅkara always insists that the path of knowledge demands purity of mind from the pupil, *saṁsiddhi* seems to mean just that much. Śaṅkara's commentary on verse 50 recapitulates the steps leading the aspirant to liberation, and confirms that he sanctions the utility of *Īśvara*'s grace on a plane marked by *pravṛtti* practices only: "[The aspirant's] acquired perfection, which is characterized by the fitness of the body and senses for [his] abiding in knowledge, originates from his [*Īśvara*'s] grace; [the aspirant] has secured perfection by

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[411] "*buddhyā yayā yogaviṣayayā yuktaḥ he pārtha karmabandhaṁ karma eva dharmādharmākhyaḥ bandhaḥ karmabandhaḥ taṁ prahāsyasi īśvaraprasādanimittajñānaprāptyā eva ityabhiprāyaḥ*" BGBh.2.39, p.62.

[412] "*eṣā te tubhyaṁ abhihitā uktā sāṁkhye paramārthavastuvivekaviṣaye buddhi jñānaṁ sākṣāt śokamohādisaṁsārahetudoṣanivṛttikāraṇam yoge tu tatprāptyupāye*" Ibid.

[413] "*jñānaniṣṭhāyogyatālakṣaṇāṁ siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ*" BGBh.18.46, p.590.

performing his work as worship for *Īśvara.*"[414] This perfection is not an end in itself; it is for the sake of what comes after (*tadanuvādaḥ uttarārthaḥ*),[415] that is to say, for the process that leads to the abiding in knowledge, to the perfection of non-action, technically called *naiṣkarmyasiddhi.*[416]

Hence, in view of the conception of *saṁsiddhi/siddhi* that Śaṅkara gives in his BGBh, the *saṁsiddhi* used in BSBh.3.2.5 may also refer to the first of a series of steps—born from the grace of *Īśvara* (though caused by devotion to Him)—that lead the pupil to recognize his own inherent divine qualities of knowledge and lordship.

Perhaps the most compelling argument for saying that Śaṅkara's soteriology does not include a final appeal to *Īśvara*'s grace appears in his explanation of BGBh.12.13. There, he clearly affirms that grace can only make sense in the context where a devotee is unaware of the identity between his inner self and the Supreme Being. It is for this devotee alone that *Īśvara* can take the role of granting liberation to his devotees. In this respect, Śaṅkara quotes BG.12.7 where *Īśvara* is called 'the liberator':

"In BGBh.12.4, 'they attain me alone,' it was said that those who worship the imperishable attain oneness independently. BGBh.12.7 'I am their liberator,' shows the dependence of other [devotees] on *Īśvara*. When, on account of their perception of non-difference, they consider themselves as the self of *Īśvara*, their own nature/essence being the imperishable alone, it becomes unwise to refer to them as 'objects' of an act of liberation."[417]

For the devotee who is dependent on *Īśvara*, who did not secure the vision of non-difference between the latter and himself through the scriptures and the teacher, *Īśvara* may be spoken of as acting favorably towards him. This, again, is not problematic for Śaṅkara who accepts the distinctions between *Īśvara* and the multiplicity of selves, as well as among the individual selves, so long as one identifies with the physiological and psychological aggregate.

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[414] "*siddhiṁ prāptaḥ svakarmaṇā īśvaraṁ samabhyarcya tatprsādajāṁ kāyendriyāṇāṁ jñānaniṣṭhāyogyatālakṣaṇāṁ siddhiṁ prāptaḥ*" BGBh.18.50, p.598.

[415] Ibid.

[416] "For the man of discrimination, the procedure by which the perfection characterized as non-action, whose nature is the abiding in the knowledge of the one Self, is to be mentioned" (*utpannātmavivekajñānasya kevalātmajñānaniṣṭhārūpā naiṣkarmyalakṣaṇā siddhiḥ yena krameṇa bhavati tat vaktavyam*) ibid., p.598.

[417] " '*te prāpnuvanti māmeva' (12.4) iti akṣaropāsakānāṁ kaivalyaprāptau svātantryaṁ uktvā itareṣāṁ pāratantryāt īśvarādhīnatāṁ darśitavān 'teṣāmahaṁ samuddhartā' (12.7) iti / yadi hi īśvarasya ātmabhūtāḥ te matāḥ abhedadarśitvāt akṣarasvarūpāḥ eva te iti samuddharaṇakarmaviṣayavacanaṁ tān prati apeśalaṁ syāt*" BGBh.12.13, p.394.

Within the context of self-knowledge and its direct means, however, there is room for accommodating the notion of grace, provided that it is not understood as a specific action affecting the devotee from without. Essentially, the scriptures—via the teacher—are the *pramāṇa* for the Self; and according to this conception, the teachings about *Brahman* may be viewed as gracious. The 'grace' made available to the student by both the scriptures and the teacher is comparable to the 'grace' provided by the knowledgeable passer-by to the despondent monks who mourn the loss of the tenth monk, believed to have drowned while crossing a river. The passer-by, in that instance, extends his grace, that is to say, his knowledge, by merely telling the monks that each of them is the tenth monk. In both instances, the grace merely consists in reminding one of a fact that has been overlooked. The scriptures are benevolent and compassionate for they resort to presenting *Brahman* with attributes and functions to the aspirant who cannot apprehend the Absolute as it really is, free from all attributes. Therefore, I think Malkovsky is correct to say that the Absolute may in some sense be personal—the relationship between scriptures, teacher and student is certainly personal—but not in the sense that it would bestow the final gift of liberation to certain devotees.

A. J. Alston's review of Śaṅkara's writings dealing with the concept of the Absolute as the Lord of *māyā* seems to concur with this view. He says that *Īśvara* is involved, through his *māyā*, in preserving the paths of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti dharma*, and in dispensing favors to those who tread the path of *pravṛtti:*

"The Lord does not merely accord beings the deserts of their deeds. He also freely assumes special forms within the world of his *māyā* for the preservation of the path that leads to worldly welfare and final liberation and for the good of those of his devotees who cannot worship Him in abstract 'qualitiless' form."[418]

However, Alston here points out that *Īśvara* is benevolent concerning both *dharmas*, even that which is characterized by knowledge and renunciation. When they are in decline, it is he alone who resorts to his *māyā* to take birth in the world and uphold these two *dharmas* equally. For both need

[418] Alston (1980), p.70.

to be upheld for the benefit of all. Thus, it appears that specific benevolent or gracious acts of the Highest Deity are also relevant in the context of knowledge, since Śaṅkara sees *Īśvara* as engaged in preserving this spiritual path of knowledge leading to *mokṣa* (BGBh.4.6). Still, this does not amount to the contention that *Īśvara*'s gift of grace ultimately triggers liberation, and this is because of Śaṅkara's significant use of the term *māyā* in his commentary on BGBh.4.6, a verse that describes the Supreme Being taking birth to uphold the two *dharmas*:

"Assuming control over this, my nature, I am "born." This means I appear to have a body, as "as if" born, through My own magic power (*māyā*). It is not a real birth, like birth in the world."[419]

Here, Śaṅkara urges his reader to see such benevolent action as the birth of the Supreme Being—his embodiment in such forms as that of Kṛṣṇa—as a sort of magic. What prevents an individual from recognizing his nature as the Supreme Being, the entity that is unbounded awareness, is the duality, the magic that Śaṅkara tirelessly explains as being caused by ignorance. In this context, it seems only natural that correcting one's erroneous understanding of reality involves a good deal of 'magic' too. If *Īśvara*'s gracious acts towards his devotees (upholding both *dharmas)*, allow them to gradually re-discover their true nature of being, they are very much part of the Lord's magic, they are his *māyā;* and *māyā,* both Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara tell us, does not exist (GKBh.1.17).

I think that to fully understand the place that *Īśvara* holds in the process of liberation, we need always remember what one is to be liberated from. Liberation is, as everyone agrees, from ignorance. Śaṅkara defines it as an innate misconception caused by non-discrimination between *prakṛti* and our essential subject of being, the self-reflexive witnessing awareness. This misconception translates itself as the mixing up of the essential natures and qualities of *prakṛti* and the knower or witness. For him, a misconception can only pertain to the mind of an individual, and it is there only that its elimination can take place. This misconception, Śaṅkara tells us in his *Adhyāsabhaṣya,* is the presupposition of all dealings, whether mundane, philosophical, or religious. It is through this

[419] BGBh.4.6. Tr. Alston (1980), p.85.

fundamental error that one becomes someone who acts, knows, and experiences, always involved with means and objects of knowledge. This entails that no one ever begins to feel bound, seeks liberation, and, ultimately, obtains liberation, unless this misconception is there first; for it is the root cause of our individuation, our '*jīvahood*.' In this study, we have seen that according to Śaṅkara, there is no reality called '*jīva*,' just like there is no reality called 'world.' '*Jīvas*' and 'world' are realities for one who is in the grips of ignorance, and are utilized as mere pedagogical tools for both scriptures and the teacher, in their attempt to communicate the one self without a second to a deluded pupil. The teachings concerning *Brahman* can only begin by way of conceding to the standpoint of ignorance, which all ordinary human beings naturally adopt and from which the manifold world is perceived. This is a conclusion that can be reached by adopting the standpoint of the witness, which means intuiting one's nature of being as *Iśvara*, the always cognizant consciousness that is devoid of all manifestations, inclusive of the waking individual with his 'natural' ignorance. Śaṅkara never tires of repeating that there is no time at which the devotee is not *Īśvara*. Still, from the viewpoint of the waking state where the devotee thinks of himself in terms of the body-mind complex, Śaṅkara teaches that by performing *karma-yoga* assiduously, such a devotee obtains purity of mind through *Īśvara*'s grace, which in turn qualifies him for the path of knowledge. The notions that the Absolute condescends to the level of our humanity, takes a material form to uphold the two-fold *dharma*, provides his creatures with results on a fair or partial basis, and so on, are all theistic tenets that aid the dissipation of ignorance. However, these scriptural tenets are surpassed when the student, identifying with the Highest Deity, remains untainted by the waking state and both its worldly and religious contents. This experiential standpoint excludes any factual operation of liberation from a higher order.

It appears to me, then, that Śaṅkara cannot be credited with the doctrine of final liberation through divine grace. If grace plays a contributing role in the process of liberation, it is at the level where desire-prompted aspirants are to be guided towards the *nivṛtti* practices, that is to say, towards the direct means of knowledge. It is in this context alone that Śaṅkara speaks of the Absolute in

terms of a real bountiful and gracious Supreme Being who blesses his deserving devotees with special favors. A realist interpretation of the function of grace in Śaṅkara's thought is ruled out on the basis that the notion of *Īśvara* who acts favorably towards some of his devotees is anchored in the far reaching self-misconception that everyone cultivates, except those who have ceased identifying with the not-Self.

To conclude, the benevolent aspect of *Īśvara* in Śaṅkara's thought is especially significant in the *pravṛtti dharma* where the injunctions to turn away from unwholesome desires and activities, through *karma-yoga*, have a purifying effect. There, the grace of *Īśvara* consists in assuring the existence and the availability of such a discipline that will prepare Advaitin pupils for the path of knowledge. However, because the spiritual practices linked with the *nivṛtti dharma* are grounded in discriminative knowledge, the Advaitin pupil is able to appreciate both the scriptures and the teacher as being compassionate and benevolent. For they are the non-mediate means to his realization that he never was a limited individual who required the help of a really gracious divinity to put an end to an existence of perpetual births and deaths.

3 Devotion in Śaṅkara's conceptualization of the Vedic *dharma*

3.1 Devotion in the *pravrtti dharma*

In the previous chapter, we have already stressed that Śaṅkara sees scriptural statements that distinguish between the Absolute and creation—while asserting a relationship between them as cause and effect—as a teaching technique that aims at drawing the aspirant to the realization that the entire phenomenal world is, in fact, its cause, *Brahman*. These, we noted, are understood to function on the basis of ignorance, that is, within the natural, beginningless, and endless superimposition between the Self and the not-Self, which forms the invariable context of teaching (pp.48, 126-8). Similarly, Śaṅkara considers all scriptural statements distinguishing between *Brahman* or the Highest Deity

(*Īśvara*) and the individual selves, to have the same intent. Also, all prescriptions to worship or meditate on the Absolute have ignorance as their starting point:

"All worldly and Vedic actions, [involving] means of knowledge and objects of knowledge, as well as all scriptures—whether concerned with injunctions, prohibitions, or liberation—proceed by following this mutual superimposition of the Self and not-Self called ignorance."[420]
"These sentences, in the thousands, show the dual forms of *Brahman* in accordance with the different conditions of knowledge and ignorance. Then, it is in the state of ignorance that *Brahman* is involved in all dealings, comprising object of meditation, someone who meditates, and so on."[421]

Therefore, it follows that for Śaṅkara, the totality of the elements involved in the devotion to deities, including the Absolute with or without attributes, is within the purview of ignorance. This, however, does not render devotion inconsequential. Indeed, while some devotional practices yield life in a spiritual realm with the possibility of liberation upon the dissolution of the universe,[422] others afford a pupil the capacity to tread the spiritual path of knowledge by way of purifying his mind. Others, again, are integral to the path of knowledge. The variety of devotional practices reflects the diversity of devotees. In the BG, Kṛṣṇa mentions four kinds of devotees amongst whom the knower is superior:

"Arjuna, men of good deeds devoted to me are of four kinds: the afflicted, the seeker after knowledge, the seeker after wealth, and the knower" (BG.7.16).
"Among them, the knower who is always united, entirely devoted, is superior. I am especially dear to the knower and he is dear to me" (BG.7.17).[423]

Explaining these verses, Śaṅkara says that the devotion practiced by the first three types of devotees (strangely without differentiating between the seeker of knowledge and the other two devotees) is of an inferior kind because such devotees are not always united to the Self and thus not exclusively devoted to the Supreme Being as the knower is. Cravings are what underpin their devotional activities.[424] With desires, grief and delusion as their root, these activities fall into the *pravṛtti dharma*. The fourth type of devotion is characteristic of the aspirant who treads the path of

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[420] See ft.105
[421] "*evaṁ sahasraśo vidyāvidyāviṣayabhedena brahmaṇo dvirūpatāṁ darśayanti vākyāni / tatrāvidyāvasthāyāṁ brahmaṇa upāsyopāsakādilakṣaṇaḥ sarvo vyavahāraḥ*" BSBh, p.35.
[422] BṛBh.5.9; ChBh.4.15.5
[423] "*caturvidhā bhajante māṁ janāḥ sukṛtino'rjuna / ārto jijñāsurarthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha // teṣāṁ jñānī nityayukta ekabhaktirviśiṣyate / priyo hi jñānino'tyarthamahaṁ sa ca mama priyaḥ*" BG.7.16-17.
[424] BGBh.7.20.

nivṛtti dharma. Having adopted the Upaniṣadic perspective whereby he can contemplate himself as the Supreme Being or the awareness that is free from all actions, the knower seeks nothing other than being established in that knowledge.[425]

There are thus two essential devotional approaches to the Absolute according to Śaṅkara, the devotion to the featureless, non-manifest Absolute, and the devotion to the Absolute with features. These approaches go with two types of aspirants: those who have discernment and those who do not. While examining these two approaches, we shall take Śaṅkara's commentary on BG.12 as our guiding text, for it is where these two devotional approaches are clearly laid out.

Concerning the devotees who suffer from cravings due to lacking discernment, Śaṅkara tells us that they are enjoined to practice a particular *yoga* of devotion that is based on the assumed difference between the devotee and *Īśvara*. In this context, the aspirant who is mortal, impure, ignorant, and bound, is set in opposition to *Īśvara*, the eternal, pure, conscious, and free Being. For them, *yoga* entails concentrating the mind on the entity whose forms are conceived to be the entire universe. There, Śaṅkara also correlates this *yoga* practice with that of working for the sake of the *Īśvara*.[426]

It is thus for the aspirants who cannot rise to the path of knowledge that Śaṅkara thinks the Vedānta texts speak of an essential distinction between *Īśvara* and the *jīvas*. This is what makes possible the surrendering of the aspirant's works to *Īśvara*, a practice that is rendered necessary for all seekers who continue identifying with their body (ch.1). Commenting on BG.12.5,[427] Śaṅkara asserts

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[425] "Since the knower is engaged in rising [for good] to the condition: 'I alone am the Lord *Vāsudeva* I am none else,' his mind being thus intent on unity with the Self, he endeavors to attain me alone, the supreme *Brahman*, the highest goal" (*āsthitaḥ āroḍuṁ pravṛttaḥ saḥ jñānī hi yasmāt 'ahameva bhagavān vāsudevaḥ na anyaḥ asmi' ityevaṁ yuktātmā samāhitacittaḥ san mām eva paraṁ brahma gantavyaṁ anuttamāṁ gatiṁ gantuṁ pravṛttaḥ ityarthaḥ)* BGBh.7.18.

[426] "In the present context, it is said that one-pointedness of mind on *Īśvara* whose form is the universe, is characteristic of *yoga*. This [practice] rests on the difference between *Īśvara* and the individual self. And so too is performing work, etc., for the sake of *Īśvara*" (*atra ca ātmeśvarabhedaṁ āśritya viśvarūpe īśvare cetaḥsamādhānalakṣaṇaḥ yogaḥ uktaḥ īśvarārthaṁ karmānuṣṭhānādi ca)* BGBh.12.13 (introduction). Some typical examples of meditation on *Īśvara* in the forms of the universe are found throughout the Vedic literature, i.e., in Ś. *Brāhmaṇa* where Prajāpati's limbs represent the entire cosmos (ch.1), and in Ch.5.18 where Vaiśvānara's anthropomorphic forms correspond to the elements and other aspects of the cosmos.

[427] "Their toil is harder, their minds being set on the unmanifest; embodied beings find it hard to tread the path of the unmanifest" (Tr. Warrier).

that devotion towards the non-manifest is much more difficult than devotion towards the manifest, on the basis that the former necessitates the absence of identification with the body.[428] For Śaṅkara, the next seven verses (6-12) describe various devotional techniques of different orders, which ease the spiritual difficulties of the aspirant who continuously identifies with the psychological and physiological complex. The gloss on these verses, as we saw in our previous examination of the concept of divine grace in Śaṅkara's soteriology, suggests that the sort of devotional means that involve a clear separation between the pupil and the Supreme Being displaying multifarious attributes, are the result of the latter's compassion towards aspirants with different spiritual capacities, all of them being unable to cease identifying with their body. This is clear in both the BG and Śaṅkara's use of language. In verses 8 to 11, for instance, four practices are enjoined successively. Each recommended practice is presented as being more accessible than the previous one:

"Concentrate your mind on me alone; direct your thought to me [in my cosmic form]. Following this, there is no doubt that you will come to abide in me alone" (BG.12.8).
"If you cannot permanently concentrate your mind on me; then Arjuna, strive to attain me through the *yoga* of repetition" (BG.12.9).
"If you are still unable to practice this *yoga* of repetition, give yourself to performing but my work; for even by performing works for my sake, you will attain perfection" (BG.12.10).
"If, likewise, you cannot do that [and yet] intent on uniting with me, then restrain yourself and give up the fruit of all your actions" (BG.12.11).[429]

However, verse 12—"knowledge is superior to repetition; meditation is superior to knowledge; giving up the fruit of all actions is superior to meditation; from this renunciation, peace comes immediately"[430]—seems to question the meaning of verses 8-11. In that verse, the series of practices is reiterated in a different order, which appears to suggest that it is the renunciation of the results of all actions that is championed. Śaṅkara begins to explain this 'oddity' by urging the reader to

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[428] " Although the difficulty for those who perform my work, etc., is significant, it is even more so for those who behold the Highest Self, whose self is the imperishable, because they have given up their identification with the body, their mind being attached to the non-manifest... those who identify with their body secure the goal whose nature is the imperishable, [through] hardship" (*yadyapi matkarmādiparāṇām adhikaḥ eva kleśaḥ adhikatarastu akṣarātmanāṁ paramātmadarśināṁ dehābhimānaparityāganimittaḥ avyaktāsaktacetasām...gatiḥ akṣarātmikā duḥkhaṁ dehavadbhiḥ dehābhimānavadbhiḥ avāpyate*).
[429] See ft.402.
[430] "*śreyo hi jñānamabhyāsājjñānāddhyānaṁ viśiṣyate / dhyānātkarmaphalatyāgastyāgācchantiranantaram*" BG.12.12.

consider the context of the verses. He points out that a) the renunciation of the results of action was not given at the start of the series of means; b) this practice is prescribed for the aspirant who cannot undertake the more complex set of devotional means that Kṛṣṇa establishes before; and c) it is but a step in the series of means which culminate in knowledge. For Śaṅkara, the 'superiority' of this renunciation is relative to a particular type of aspirants. For a pupil like Arjuna, the 'superior' devotional practice is the renunciation of all actions: "And since the Lord desires what is most beneficial to Arjuna, he teaches him the *yoga* of actions, based on the perception of duality, and unsupported by the right vision [of the Self]."[431] The *yoga* of actions that entails surrendering the results of all acts to *Īśvara*, may be said to be a 'superior' practice because it is what can best benefit a pupil (like Arjuna) who has little or no discrimination.

Still, doesn't naming a *pravṛtti* practice 'superior' contradict Śaṅkara's understanding that devotion to the non-manifest excels all other means because it is based on the pupil's identification with the immutable self? There can be no contradiction on the basis that both objects of devotion are, in essence, the same. Qualities and functions attributed to *Brahman* for the sole purpose of instruction are what set these objects of devotion apart, as it were. This is mentioned in a section of BSBh.4.3.14 that proposes to clarify scriptural texts that indicate movement in relation to the object of knowledge, as in: "The knower of Brahman attains the supreme" (Tai.2.1.1). There, Śaṅkara discusses the connection between the two conceptions of the Absolute, namely, the *apara-brahman* (lower *Brahman*, the creator...) and the *para-brahman* (the superior, immutable, and non-manifest *Brahman*):

"-Are there two kinds of *Brahman*, the higher and the lower?
-Exactly, there are two *Brahman*, for in the scriptures we read: 'That which is *omkāra*, Oh Satyakāma, that is in fact the lower as well as the higher *Brahman*.'
-And what are the higher and the lower *Brahman*?
-It is answered: Where, through words like 'it is not gross', etc., *Brahman* is taught by negating distinctions like name and form that are created through ignorance, that is [to be understood as] the higher *Brahman*. Where that [*Brahman*] alone is taught for the purpose of meditation/devotion, as having some particular feature like name, form, and the like, through such expressions as: 'one who

[431] "*yasmācca arjunasya atyantam eva hitaiṣī bhagavān tasya samyagdarśanānanvitaṁ karmayogaṁ bhedadṛṣṭimantam eva upadiśati*" BGBh.12.13 (introduction).

is made up of mind', 'one whose body is the breath', 'one whose form is light', etc., that is [to be understood as] the lower *Brahman*.
-If it is so, the non-duality [taught] in the Upaniṣads would not stand.
-No, because that [*Brahman* with attributes] is preserved on account of the limiting adjuncts of name and form caused by ignorance."[432]

On the basis of Śaṅkara's above explanation, we understand that it is the same featureless reality that is taught as the lower and the higher *Brahman*. The teachings concerning the Supreme Being's resolve, "Let me become many," indicating that he alone serves as the material and the efficient cause of the universe, his control over all things and all beings from within,[433] and even his giving rewards or punishments to individuals through leading them closer or away from him, in accordance to their deeds,[434] are all useful to the pupils who are not capable to rise to the discipline of knowledge. Śaṅkara speaks of all such scriptural statements as being 'superior,' in so far as they are helpful to the rise of knowledge. They are superior because they alone have the ability to prepare the pupil to the path of knowledge by way of purifying his mind.

In the context of liberation too, Śaṅkara seems to defend the unity of the higher and lower *Brahman*. Explaining Bādarāyaṇa's BS.4.4.7, which indicates the absence of contradiction between the two scriptural descriptions of *Brahman* (*evamapyupanyāsāt pūrvabhāvādavirodhaṁ bādarāyaṇaḥ*), he says that while the liberated one realizes his own nature as *Brahman* in the form of unbounded consciousness, it does not entail abandoning the references to *Brahman* with features such as might, etc., which remain valid from a non-absolute viewpoint. The overall point seems to be that the exceptional marks of power displayed by *Īśvara* could not pertain to any other entity than the featureless *Brahman* that is pure consciousness:

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[432] *"kiṁ dve brahmaṇī paramaparaṁ ceti / bāḍaṁ dve 'etadvai satyakāma paraṁ cāparaṁ ca brahma yadomkāraḥ' ityādidarśanāt / kiṁ punaḥ paraṁ brahma kimaparamiti / ucyate / yatrāvidyākṛtanāmarūpādiviśeṣapratiṣedhādasthūlādiśabdairbrahmopadiśyate tatparam / tadeva yatra nāmarūpādiviśeṣeṇa kenacidviśiṣṭamupāsanāyopadiśyate 'manomayaḥ prāṇaśarīro bhārūpaḥ' ityādiśabdaistadaparam / nanvevamadvitīyaśrutiruparudhyeta / na / avidyākṛtanāmarūpopādhikatayā parihṛtatvāt"* BSBh, pp.501-2.
[433] See the entire section of Bṛ.3.7.
[434] BSBh.2.3.40.

"The teacher Bādarāyaṇa thinks that although one experiences his own nature as mere consciousness from the highest standpoint, nonetheless, his experience in the form of the supremacy of *Brahman* arrived at previously from a non-absolute standpoint, is not contradicted."[435]

Thus, from the absolute viewpoint, the distinctions of master and subject, object worshiped and devotee, and the like, are absent. This final viewpoint is not, however, opposed to the viewpoint arrived at when the illusory distinctions of name and form are apprehended, that is to say, prior to the liberating knowledge. From the latter standpoint, *Brahman* is distinct from and rules over its creation. Here, I join scholars like Hacker and Mahadevan for whom Śaṅkara views the Absolute without qualities and with qualities as a single reality. And in this respect, Hirst is right to point out that Śaṅkara does not just always identify the Supreme Being (*Īśvara)* with the 'lower *Brahman*' where qualities are retained for meditation and specific results. Significantly, she points out that some qualities of *Īśvara* are useful in both contexts of meditation as well as knowledge.[436] And in this study, it has become apparent that the quality of witnessing, ascribed to the attributeless *Brahman*, is extremely relevant in the context of knowledge (*nivṛtti dharma*). It is necessary to bear in mind that for Śaṅkara, the qualities ascribed to *Brahman* in both contexts are only pedagogical devices. However, it is significant to underscore that while the followers of the *pravṛtti dharma* accept *Īśvara*'s divine qualities on the sole strength of the authority of scriptures, the followers of the *nivṛtti dharma* accept them on the basis of scriptural authority and, at the ultimate level of their practice, on the basis of immediate and direct experience. For we have seen (chapters 3 & 4) how the critically guided exploration of the states—requiring a skillful teacher well-versed in scriptures—allows for the student's direct identification with *Īśvara* and his qualities, i.e., the originator and witness of all.

In the previous chapter, we stressed that adopting the witness-stance brings about a fundamental shift. It shifts the functions generally attributed to a Supreme Deity (i.e., world creation and sustenance...), as found in all major religious traditions, to the immediate experience of the Advaitin pupil. Another significant development made possible through adopting this witness-standpoint

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[435] "*pāramārthikacaitanyamātrasvarūpābhyupagame'pi vyavahārāpekṣayā pūrvasyāpyupanyāsādibhyo'vagatasya brahmasyaiśvaryarūpasyāpratyākhyānādavirodhaṁ bādarāyaṇa ācāryo manyate*" BSBh.4.4.7, p.507.
[436] Hirst, p.119.

born from the Upaniṣadic teachings, is a unique approach to devotion. Its uniqueness rests on the total identification with *Īśvara*. This is the form of devotion that Śaṅkara deems superior because it is based on the recognition of identity between *Īśvara* and the devotee (BGBh.7.17). This recognition is indispensable to devotion in the *nivṛtti dharma*.

3.2 Devotion in the *nivrtti dharma*

Devotion in the *nivṛtti dharma* concerns the knower only. In this context, living a life of devotion is not associated with an expectation for some reward. Nor is it associated with the awe that is felt by the devotee who looks upon the Supreme Being in terms of his might and/or with regard to the spiritual favors he or she could receive from Him. Commenting on *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* 6-8[437] and BG.7.17 (ft. 423), Śaṅkara tells us that it is due to his 'vision' of the Self that the knower is engaged in devotion to the Supreme Being in an exclusive way. It is this vision that differentiates him from all other devotees, placing him beyond the reach of delusion and sorrow, and beyond the need to fulfil any desire:

"[with such statements as] 'What shall we do with children, we to whom this is the Self, this is the loka?' it is shown that those who have known the Self by renouncing the three desires comprising a wife, and so on, are exclusively established in the Self as opposed to being established in actions" (ĪśāBh.8).[438]

The objects of desires sought after by all devotees other than the knower (the pupil with discrimination), are summed up into three: sons, wealth, and the heavenly worlds. In contradistinction to them, the knower establishes his devotion on the strength of his vision of the Absolute as witness. Such devotion is opposed to actions that are prompted by the three objects of desires. The knower renounces these three desires along with their means, all being not-Self.

"Among the four of them, the knower knows the truth. Being a truth-knower, he is always united and uniquely devoted [to me (*Vāsudeva)]*, seeing nothing other to be devoted to... 'Dear' (BG.7.17), because I am the knower's self, I am exceedingly dear to him. That the self is dear is well known to

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[437] "When a man sees all beings within his very self, and his self within all beings, it will not seek to hide from him" Īśā.6.

"When in the self of a discerning man, his very self has become all beings, what bewilderment, what sorrow can there be regarding that self of him who sees this oneness" Īśā.7.

[438] "*jāyādyeṣaṇātrayasaṁnyāsena cātmavidāṁ karmaniṣṭhāprātikūlyenātmasvarūpaniṣṭhaiva darśitā kiṁ prajayā kariṣyāmo yeṣāṁ no'yamātmāyaṁ lokaḥ ityādinā*" Īśādi, p.6.

everyone. Therefore, the meaning is that *Vāsudeva* is dear because it is the knower's self. And the knower is exceedingly dear to me, being me, the very self of *Vāsudeva*" BGBh.7.17.[439]

We see that for Śaṅkara, renouncing all desires and their causes is closely associated with the apprehension of the Self. The first three aspirants mentioned in BG.7.16 have no discernment and consequently, they remain enmeshed in desires, their devotion aiming at securing tangible results. Yet, from the moment the renunciate recognizes the absence of difference between himself and *Īśvara*, he surpasses all other devotees, for he does not have to resort to other deities and means of worship, being free from desires and, consequently, from actions. This recognition, as we will see, does not eliminate all possibilities of devotion, but it marks the beginning of an exclusive type of devotion, which is based on the student's direct apprehension of the Supreme Being as his very self.

3.2.1 The devotional practices of the knower

On the basis of BGBh.7.17, we have seen that for Śaṅkara, the exclusive devotion to the Supreme Being is possible for those who follow the path of *nivṛtti*, which is solely concerned with knowledge and renunciation. Nevertheless, is it not self-contradictory to state that the knower is involved in some activity, even that of contemplating the Supreme Being as himself? Is it not knowledge itself that eliminates the need to pursue all spiritual practices, whether based on knowledge or not?

We shall attempt to answer these important questions by turning to key passages in the BGBh, notably ch.12 & 18, and by returning, once again, to Śaṅkara's examination of the traditional Advaita teaching based on the three states. Let us first begin with an examination of Śaṅkara's use of the compound '*jñānaniṣṭhā* in his BGBh.18.50 & 55. This is how Śaṅkara interprets '*niṣṭhā jñānasya*' in BG.18.50:[440]

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[439] "*teṣāṁ caturṇāṁ madhye jñānī tattvavit tattvavittvāt nityayuktaḥ bhavati ekabhaktiśca anyasya bhajanīyasya adarśanāt...priyaḥ hi yasmāt ahaṁ ātmā jñāninaḥ ataḥ tasya ahaṁ atyarthaṁ priyaḥ prasiddhaṁ hi loke 'ātmā priyaḥ bhavati' iti / tasmāt jñāninaḥ ātmatvāt vāsudevaḥ priyaḥ bhavatītyarthaḥ / sa ca jñānī mama vāsudevasya ātmā eva iti mama atyarthaṁ priyaḥ.*"

[440] "O son of Kuntī, learn from me briefly how one who has become fit attains *Brahman*, the abiding of knowledge which is the highest" (*siddhiṁ prāpto yathā brahma tathā'pnoti nibodha me / samāsenaiva kaunteya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā*).

"To show the attainment of *Brahman* which was promised to him before [in 'Learn from me...'], 'the abiding of the knowledge, which is the highest,' is mentioned. *'Niṣṭhā'* is the culmination, the final completion. [The final completion] of what? Of the knowledge of *Brahman*, which is the highest. What is it like? It is like the knowledge of the Self. What is the Self like? It is as Kṛṣṇa defined it in BG.18.17—the witness of the five factors of action—in accordance with the sentences of the Upaniṣads and reason."[441]

We see that in turn, Śaṅkara equates *niṣṭhā*, the final completion of knowledge, with the actionless Self without a second, the witness of the factors of action, which are components of *prakṛti*. To him, *'niṣṭhā jñānasya'* does not entail any effort to make knowledge more manifest, because knowledge is always fully and immediately manifest. In the case of *Brahman*, the establishment in knowledge simply involves the elimination of name and form, superimposed on the Self through ignorance. This claim appears while criticizing the 'materialists' and the followers of the 'mind only school of Buddhism', for whom the self can only be qualified by some adjunct (the body and the mind, respectively). He writes: "Because it is fully established/manifest, no effort is involved in the apprehension of *Brahman*. What is to be done is merely to reject what is superimposed on *Brahman* through ignorance" (BGBh.18.50 (3)).[442]

Śaṅkara's explanation of *jñānaniṣṭhā* in BGBh.18.55 is much more elaborate and informative concerning devotion. There, Śaṅkara openly equates *jñānaniṣṭhā* with the fourth and best type of *bhakti* or devotion, which is based on the identity of the devotee and *Īśvara*, as already mentioned in BG.7.17:

"The word *niṣṭhā* refers to the culmination, the certainty about the apprehension of the Self, which serves as the cause for the perfection of/in the rise of self-knowledge that is free from contradictions. That condition, which consists in certainty about the knowledge of one's own self, along with the renunciation of all activities that rest on the perception of difference comprising the elements involved in action such as being an agent, and so on, that is the highest [form of] abiding in knowledge, for it is based on the apprehension of the unity between the knower of the field and the

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[441] "*yā pratijñātā brahmaprāptiḥ tāṁ idaṁtayā darśayituṁ āha niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā iti / niṣṭhā paryavasānaṁ parisamāptiḥ ityetat / kasya brahmajñānasya yā parā / kīdṛśī sā yādṛśaṁ ātmajñānam / kīdṛk tat yādṛśaḥ ātmā / kīdṛśaḥ saḥ yādṛśaḥ bhagavatā uktaḥ* (BG.18.17) [*pañca adhiṣṭhānādayaḥ...na ahaṁ tu tadvyāpārāṇāṁ sākṣibhūtaḥ* (BGBh.18.17)] *upaniṣadvākyaiśca nyāyataśca*" BGBh.18.50.

K.Warrier translates *'niṣṭhā paryavasānaṁ parisamāptiḥ ityetat'* as 'the discipline of knowledge refers to a definitive achievement and a goal.' Yet the particle 'ca' that could warrant such a translation is absent. *parisamāptiḥ* simply explains *paryavasānam*, taken as 'completion' or 'definitive result'.

[442] "*avidyā'dhyāropitanirākaraṇamātraṁ brahmaṇi kartavyaṁ na tu brahmavijñāne yatnaḥ atyantaprasiddhatvāt*" Ibid, p.601.

Supreme Self. This *jñānaniṣṭhā* was spoken of (in BG.7.17) as the fourth type of devotion, other than the three devotions caused by distress, and the like."[443]

In this extract, Śaṅkara puts forth three important ideas. First, he clearly says that *jñānaniṣṭhā* is a certainty, an ascertainment that is grounded in the immediate apprehension of oneself as the Supreme Being, the witnessing consciousness, here expressed as the unitary knowledge between the knowing subject (*kṣetrajña*) and the Highest Self (*Paramātman*). For Śaṅkara, the term *kṣetrajña* refers to the single witness that objectifies the *kṣetra*, that is to say, the entire aggregate of body, mind, and senses, as mentioned in BG.13.2; it is the same entity that objectifies the five factors of action as mentioned above (ft.441). The *kṣetrajña* and the *Paramātman*, Śaṅkara writes in his BSBh.1.4.22, are but two names for the same reality.[444] Second, he declares that *jñānaniṣṭhā* is effortless in that it only involves renouncing all the dualistic concepts that are involved so long as one takes himself to be an agent, a knower, and an enjoyer. Third, in the above quoted passage of BGBh.18.55, where Śaṅkara refers back to BG.7.17—and where the most excellent devotee is described as the knower whose devotion is exclusive—*jñānaniṣṭhā* is deemed the highest form of devotion, which can only be practiced by the pupil who has directly apprehended *Īśvara*, the witness of all the constituents of *prakṛti*, as self.

Thus, the main practice of the pupil who has discrimination and follows the *nivṛtti dharma*, consists in eliminating all the false notions superimposed on the Self. Ultimately, it involves renouncing the identification with the 'I' notion, a renunciation necessary for abiding in knowledge.[445] It is by following this spiritual practice that the establishment in knowledge is easily

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[443] *"jñānasya svātmotpattiparipākahetuyuktasya pratipakṣavihīnasya yat ātmānubhavaniścayāvasānatvaṁ tasya niṣṭhāśabdābhilāpāt." "apekṣya janitasya kṣetrajñaparamātmaikatvajñānasya kartṛtvādikārakabhedabuddhinibandhanasarvakarmasaṁnyāsasahitasya svātmānubhavaniścayarūpeṇa yat avasthānaṁ sā parā jñānaniṣṭhā iti ucyate / sā iyaṁ jñānaniṣṭhā ārtādibhaktitrayāpekṣayā parā caturthī bhaktiriti uktā."*

[444] "With the correct perception concerning the unity of the *kṣetrajña* and the *Paramātman*, it is established that '*kṣetrajña*' and '*paramātman*' are different in name only...for the Self is one, albeit referred to variously on account of mere difference of names" (*sthite ca kṣetrajñaparamātmaikatvaviṣaye samyagdarśaṇe kṣetrajñaḥ paramātmeti nāmamātrabhedāt...eko hyayamātmā nāmamātrabhedena bahudhābhidhīyata iti*) BSBh, p.174.

[445] This understanding of *jñānaniṣṭhā* seems to concord with Sureśvara's characterization of *naiṣkarmyasiddhi*, a formula that indicates both the innate perfection of humans (always actionless) as well as the discipline of knowledge, consisting in dwelling in this innate perfection by means of renunciation. See *Sureśvara: La Démonstration du Non-Agir*. Introduction et Traduction par Guy Maximilien. Institut de Civilisation Indienne,

effected; and this practice itself is the highest type of devotion encountered in Śaṅkara Vedānta. Śaṅkara ends his lengthy commentary on BG.18.50 with a statement summarizing the overall technique that guides the spiritual discipline of the knower:

"Knowledge involves no effort. [An effort is necessary] only to cancel the understanding of Self in the not-Self. Therefore, the abiding in knowledge comes with ease."[446]

We shall now mention some practical aspects of this discipline useful to the renunciate-devotee who seeks to disengage from all not-Self, such as the idea of being an agent:

-Keeping the mind free from delusion. Restraining body and senses, i.e., turning away from the objects of the senses like sounds and so on, giving up seeking pleasure in objects, and giving up both attachment and aversion to everything but what concerns the mere sustenance of the body (BGBh.18.51).

-Dwelling in solitary places, eating little, practising the *yoga* of meditation, being always dispassionate for things seen or not seen, and controlling speech, body, and mind (BGBh.18.52).

-Renouncing the sense of self (superimposed on the physiological and psychological aggregate), the capacity to act based on desire and attachment, pride (the cause for transgressing *dharma*), and anger. Becoming a wandering renunciate, letting go of the sense of possession even with regard to the means that sustain the body alive (BGBh.18.53).

These various efforts undertaken by the knower, which also become his characteristics, are echoed throughout BGBh.12.13-20. Essentially, they emphasize the control of the sense organs, the mind, and the intellect, so as to allow the continuous and exclusive devotion to the highest reality. These characteristics, Śaṅkara tells us, are those of the most excellent devotees mentioned in BG.7.17:

Paris, 1975, p.3.

[446] "*jñāne yatnaḥ na kartavyaṁ kiṁtu anātmani ātmabuddhinivṛttau eva / tasmāt jñānaniṣṭhā susampādyā.*"

"The renunciate who has fixed both his mind and intellect on me, such a renunciate who is my devotee is dear to me. What is expounded here was indicated in the 7th chapter of the BG: 'I am exceedingly dear to the knower, and he is dear to me' " BGBh.12.14.[447]

We may now consider the practice of the *yoga* of meditation (*nididhyāsana*) mentioned in the above series, which enables the person of discrimination to abide in knowledge and, consequently, to remove all doubts about his non-difference with the Absolute.

3.2.2 *Nididhyāsana*, a spiritual discipline of the renunciate-devotee

In view of such passages as BGBh.18.50-53 and 12.14-20, A.P. Mishra is quite right to note that devotion in the system of Śaṅkara is closely connected to *upāsanā*, a term broadly defined as a meditative practice on a concept, symbol, or image, prescribed in the Upaniṣads. In this regard, he quotes the definition that Śaṅkara gives of this technical term in his introduction to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad:*

"*Upāsanā* means this that after accepting some object of meditation as set forth by the scriptures, one should have such a current of thought directed toward it as no other idea may arise to break the flow."[448]

Mishra explains that *upāsanā* is different from *jñāna* on the basis that the former is dependent on the agent or meditator, and always falls short of the liberating knowledge, while the latter is not dependent on the agent but on the object of knowledge, which presents the final truth. He is thus careful to draw a distinction between *upāsanā* and a 'special' type of *upāsanā* called *nididhyāsana*, on the basis of his previous distinction between the agent-dependent meditation and the object-dependent knowledge. He later reminds us that with the 'special' *upāsanā* characterized as "the constant presence of flow of the involuntary intellectual conviction that the aspirant is *Brahman*," devotion to the Supreme Being whose knowledge is object-dependent is possible. Unfortunately, Mishra does not pursue further this important topic, and he makes the skeptical remark: "The fact is

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[447] "*saṁnyāsinaḥ sa mayyarpitamanobuddhiḥ / yaḥ īdṛśaḥ madbhaktaḥ saḥ me priyaḥ / priyo hi jñānino'tyarthamahaṁ sa ca mama priyaḥ / iti saptame adhyāye sūcitaṁ tat iha prapañcyate.*"

[448] Adya Prasad Mishra. *The Development and Place of Bhakti in Śaṅkara Vedānta.* The University of Allahabad, 1967, p.18.

that we can hardly have an image or concept in our minds higher than that of the qualified *Brahman*."[449]

In the above section, we have seen that for Śaṅkara, the sole spiritual practices that can still be of significance for the follower of the *nivṛtti dharma* are those that contribute to the elimination of the impediments to liberation that is ever acquired. One of the disciplines that the discerning pupil can cultivate is prescribed by the Upaniṣads under the name *nididhyāsana*. It is this same discipline that Śaṅkara refers to in BGBh.18.52 as *dhyāna yoga*, and which the BG.6 explicates.

We noted (p.67) that concerning the highly qualified pupil, the mere listening to the Upaniṣadic teaching from the mouth of a well established Advaita preceptor can bring about the unimpaired apprehension of the Self that is liberation or *mokṣa*. We also mentioned Śaṅkara's acknowledgment that by merely hearing and reflecting on the Upaniṣadic teachings, some pupils might not decisively apprehend *Brahman* as self. It is for these students who need to fix their knowledge in a decisive way that *nididhyāsaṇa* is prescribed; for they are still open to the dangers of attachments to and desires for sense objects.[450] *Nididhyāsaṇa* is not followed with the intent to acquire a new knowledge of the Self since—it bears to repeat it again—Śaṅkara believes that the Self which the Upaniṣads point to, is immediately evident and directly known. It involves controlling both the senses and the mind, and directing the latter towards, and ultimately merging it into the Self. Following is a selection of passages from the BGBh and the KaBh, describing this process of *nididhyāsana*:

"As a turtle in fear retracts its limbs all around, similarly, one who abides in knowledge brings his senses inwards from their corresponding objects; he is firm in his knowledge" (BGBh.2.58).[451] "Bringing into the mind the hearing organs and others, from their respective objects like sounds and others, and [in turn] causing the mind to turn inward, that is *dhyānam*, since it is undivided thought" (BGBh.13.24).[452]

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[449] Ibid., p.27.

[450] "The tumultuous senses dispose him (the learned) towards the sense objects...and confounding him, they carry him off, forcibly... [although] the mind is endowed with discriminatory knowledge" (*indriyāṇi pramāthīni viṣayābhimukhaṁ hi purūṣaṁ... ākulīkṛtya ca haranti prasabha... vivekavijñānayuktaṁ manaḥ*) BGBh.2.60, p.80.

[451] "*yathā kūrmaḥ bhayāt svāni aṅgāni upasaṁharati sarvaśaḥ sarvataḥ evaṁ jñānaniṣṭaḥ indriyāṇi indriyārthebhyaḥ upasaṁharate / tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā iti.*"

[452] "*śabdādibhyo viṣayebhyaḥ śrotrādīni karaṇāni manasi upasaṁhṛtya manaśca pratyakcetayitari ekāgratayā yat cintanaṁ tat dhyānam.*"

"Abiding in knowledge is the means for the continuous contemplation on the notion of the object of the inner self, and is devotion." (BGBh.18.55).[453]
"The means to attain it [the Self] is mentioned. One who is wise, who discriminates, should bring [it] inwards. What? His speech—speech here implies all the sense organs. Where? In the mind. And he should bring that mind in the intellect, its self, whose nature is light. The intellect indeed, is the immediate self of the organs, beginning with the mind. He should bring the intellect in the immense self, the First Born. The meaning is that he should render the intellect transparent as it is inherently, like the First Born. And he should bring him, the immense self, in the peaceful one who is free from all transformations and particulars, in the foremost [real] Self who is within all, and the witness of all the modifications of the intellect" (KaBh.1.3.13).[454]

Gradually drawing back into oneself by successively merging one source of erroneous identification into a subtler one (its essence or self), commencing from the sense organs, and ending with the 'I' notion, to the point where the pupil can apprehend the Self as, "I am the witness of the 'I' notion" is, basically, the process of *nididhyāsana* in Śaṅkara's writings. Although a mental process, it offers the pupil the possibility to 'contemplate' the Self in the most direct way without identifying with the 'I' concept. This is what makes *nididhyāsana* a very 'special' *upāsanā*; it does not turn the devotion to or contemplation on the Absolute into an act of meditation, the Self being the innermost subject of the devotee immediately apprehended as witnessing all the modifications of the intellect, or witnessing the appearance and disappearance of the three states, depending on the practice followed.

Unlike other *upāsanā*, which solely follow the scriptural prescriptions, *nididhyāsana* is a devotional practice that is based on an unalterable 'object,' which the *pramāṇa* of the Upaniṣads reveals as the innermost and immediately available consciousness of the Advaitin pupil. In *nididhyāsana*, the 'object' of contemplation is the entity that creates, sustains, and dissolves everything, the subject that is equally present in all creatures and in all things, possessing such extraordinary qualities as being of the nature of light, all-pervasive, all-knowing, with all desires fulfilled, and so on. For Śaṅkara, *nididhyāsana* is thus dependent on an existent entity with all the qualities described above and with which the pupil identifies. In this light, Mishra's definition of *nididhyāsana* as "the continuous presence of flow of the involuntary intellectual conviction that the

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[453] "*pratyagātmaviṣayapratyayasantānakaraṇābhiniveśaśca jñānaniṣṭhā.*"
[454] Complete translation of KāBh.1.3.13. Īśādi, p.58.

aspirant is *Brahman*" seems somewhat off the mark. For the devotion in question cannot be described as an intellectual conviction when the mind of the pupil gets dissolved when directly experiencing the Supreme Being as himself, by way of the introspective technique that *nididhyāsana* represents.

3.2.3 The two knowers and the limits of spiritual practices like *nididhyāsana*

To decisively answer our question about the possibility for the knower to pursue any devotional practice, including that which is based on knowledge like *nididhyāsana*, it is necessary to distinguish between two kinds of knowers. The first type of knower is the Advaitin student who has discernment, but who has not been liberated through the teachings of the Upaniṣads because of such impediments as attachment to sense objects. This is the kind of student with whom we have been concerned. Such a student involves himself in a devotional discipline that consists in going into himself, as it were, and which does not exclude the use of techniques meant to prevent the mind and the senses from engaging with worldly objects, because of their natural propensity to seek out and apprehend objects. However, it is when this knower identifies with *Īśvara*, i.e., when taking His attributes and functions, that the highest form of devotion is achieved. This peculiar form of devotion prevents the usage of words expressing a general type of devotion comprising an essential distinction between the devotee and his object of devotion. Therefore, such expressions as *ekabhakti*, *para-bhakti*, and *jñānaniṣṭhā* are chosen to indicate the student's immediate and direct coalescing with *Īśvara*, as in BGBh.7.17.

The student's identification with *Īśvara*, however, stops short of liberation; for as we have seen in ch.2, the final means of knowledge, the *antya pramāṇa,* is but the teaching that eradicates all attributions, including that of being the Supreme Deity, the single witness in all beings, the principle that objectifies the field, the states, etc. For *Śaṅkara,* the *antya pramāṇa* is what puts an end to the distinctions of knower, means of knowing, and objects of knowledge (BGBh.2.69 & BSBh.1.1.4). This *pramāṇa* negates the notion of being a knower of *prakṛti*, a witness of the field, which the

scriptures themselves establish as a teaching aid to turn the aspirant away from his natural identification with the complex of physical and psychological properties, which he wrongly determines to be the subject of experience. As long as the *antya pramāṇa* remains unfulfilled, that is until the moment when all forms of false identification have ceased, the possibility of devotion for the aspirant who follows the path of *pravṛtti* or *nivṛtti*, is factual. The other knower that Śaṅkara refers to is the knower described by Yājñavalkya in Bṛ.4.5.15. One who has become the Self, Yājñavalkya says, can no longer apprehend anything, for objects of knowledge and their corresponding means are absent.[455] This is the knower who has been freed from his condition of being a witness, an all-knowing self, the last stumbling block that stands before liberation. For this knower, nothing at all can be witnessed, within or without. Does this amount to an admission that two objects of knowledge correspond to these two types of knowers, and that the *nivṛtti* discipline that the renunciant-devotee follows is, like the *pravṛtti* discipline, within the range of ignorance?

It is certain that for Śaṅkara, the identification with the Absolute—defined by the scriptures and verified by the student on the basis of his own experience—as the creator of the universe, the inner controller, the witness, and so forth, cannot be final. Indeed, he sees the finality of the Vedānta teaching as the elimination of all sense of duality, and it is not what the pupil arrives at by adopting the standpoint of the witness. For Śaṅkara, *mokṣa* demands the realization of the one reality without a second, the unqualified *Brahman*. However, this does not entail that *Īśvara*, the witnessing consciousness, and the unqualified *Brahman* are separate objects of knowledge. We will recall that in our previous discussion on creation, we found that Śaṅkara considers *Īśvara*, the witness, and the unqualified *Brahman* to be one and the same reality because scriptures describe both the higher and the lower *Brahman* as the cause of creation. This, again, is no dilemma for Śaṅkara who explains that the distinction between them is apparent since the qualifying features of *Brahman* are an effect of ignorance (BSBh.4.3.14). Even the most subtle attributes of *Brahman* such as being eternally

[455] See ft.102. See also BṛBh.4.3.22.

cognizant, Śaṅkara explains, are only figurative. The cognizing act of the witness can only be taken figuratively since the Absolute is but unqualified cognition:

"Opponent- There is this defect that the knower of the field cognizes a faulty field.
Advaitin- No, because of the figurative use of being a cognizing entity for the immutable entity whose nature is but cognition. It is like the figurative heating activity of the fire that is [in fact] nothing but heat" BGBh. 13.2(17).[456]

We see that for Śaṅkara, the *kṣetrajña* or knower of the field is none other than the unqualified *Brahman*. It follows that when the aspirant is described as taking his attributes, he too does so figuratively speaking. Hence, it is also proper to speak of devotion in Śaṅkara Vedānta in a figurative way, for when this last imputation of lordship is eliminated by the *antya pramāṇa* of the Upaniṣads, undifferentiated consciousness alone is realized as the only reality of the past, present, and future.

It is clear that what lies behind the theistic aspect of Śaṅkara's writings, though this is no less true for other aspects of his system, is his clever exploitation of the pupils' innate ignorance and its effect, the perception of duality. And in this respect, he believes that he is only following the scriptures. We have already noted that to Śaṅkara, ignorance underpins all teaching mechanisms throughout the Upaniṣads and other authoritative Vedānta texts. Of course, this becomes logically sound only if Śaṅkara convinces us that everyone does naturally and continuously mix up the Self and the not-Self; and it goes without saying that it is only the discerning pupil who can attest to *avidyā* as the mixing up between Self and not-Self. Apart from this important notion that the theistic dimension of Śaṅkara's system is embedded in ignorance, it is worth mentioning two other features that distinguish Śaṅkara's use of religious language from all other theistic systems: a) For the reasons adduced above, theistic principles and concepts are conducive to the realization of non-duality, and b) they are verifiable in experience by the student who follows the *nivṛtti dharma*, thus opposing the dogmatic morality that characterizes other theistic traditions.

This idea that ignorance is used as a main pedagogical tool in Advaita was already touched upon when we examined the way Śaṅkara makes sense of the three states in the Upaniṣads. Śaṅkara, we

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[456] Refer to ft.133.

noted, believes that the Absolute never wakes up, dreams, or sleeps, that it is never in contact with or affected by the states and their contents. For him, both scriptures and the teacher concede to the viewpoint of the ignorant pupil,[457] and impute various roles to the Absolute that is but undifferentiated awareness, out of compassion for such an ignorant person. Consequently, in the context of the *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad*, the one indivisible consciousness is referred to as *vaiśvānara* and *taijasa* to suggest the entity that creates, sustains, and experiences the states of waking and dream, respectively. And it is again this very consciousness that is called *prājña* or *ānandabhuk* to indicate the entity that experiences this state that is completely free from subject-object duality. The 'vision,' which the student derives from the examination of these states, is that his true being is the permanent self that creates, sustains, and terminates all. These functions, which are grounded in the seeker's immediate experience, are entirely concomitant with the appearance and cessation of distinct states. The pupil's ability to confirm his own condition as *Īśvara* or *kṣetrajña* is of course dependent on the erroneous conviction that 'his' body, other bodies, the states, and so on, do appear to him (the witness). Nonetheless, because the non-dual nature of the Self can never be altered, its true condition as immutable awareness always remains so regardless of the virtual appearance of bodies, states, etc. Śaṅkara sees the three states as the Absolute's limiting adjuncts conjectured by the pupil's ignorance. The one Self without a second is *vaiśvānara* from the standpoint of the waking, *taijasa* from the standpoint of the dream, and *prājña*, the causal state, from the viewpoint of the appearance and disappearance of waking and dream. These three are but the Self with different sets of adjuncts. The intention of this teaching is to negate the pupil's conviction that he is a transmigratory self, experiencing these states in succession. This is accomplished by way of teaching his nature as the Supreme Being possessing properties like witnessing the origination and cessation of states. Yet again, realization lies a step further, for to grasp the unity of Self, the attributes of lordship and so on, are to be negated, thus revealing that there never was any ignorance pertaining to the pupil, nor were there any effect of ignorance, like the perpetual succession of states that is *saṁsāra*. For the liberated

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[457] 'Conceding to the viewpoint of the ignorant pupil' refers to the student's false understanding that the three states come and go, following the waking time-space continuum.

one, the states never appeared or disappeared, there never was anything other than the immutable self. Śaṅkara compares what is apprehended as other than the Self to the water of a mirage, which cannot wet the sand of a desert:

"Therefore, *saṁsāra* is but ignorance as it is only within the range of experience. The knower of the field is exclusively free from ignorance and its result. And a misconception is not capable to defile the ultimate entity. The water of a mirage cannot make the sandy field muddy with water. Hence, ignorance cannot [defile] the knower of the field at all."[458]

With the realization of the non-substantiality of ignorance and its effect, encompassing the notions of a) bondage and release, b) *Brahman* as an entity to be known, c) efficacy of the means of knowledge, etc., the knower described by Yājñavalkya in 4.5.15 no longer needs to resort to any practice. Nothing, Śaṅkara explicates, comes subsequently to the realization of this knower, because "the fire of knowledge reduce all works to ashes."[459] For this knower, this sage, there is no special vision to cultivate, no insight to deepen, no abiding in knowledge. Unlike the renunciate-devotee, he cannot cultivate the view that the entire creation proceeds from, is sustained by, and gets dissolved back into him. This final realization entails that the Absolute has no power, no lordship, since there is no field to rule. With the imputation of lordship canceled, *Īśvara* loses its '*Īśvarahood*', it is realized as undifferentiated and self-effulgent reality. From this, we cannot but suggest that the forms of devotion that are present throughout both the *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* disciplines become non-existent when all superimpositions have been eliminated. We shall end this chapter with a passage where Śaṅkara summarizes the content of this final realization:

"The aim of this verse is to summarize the contention of the section: When it is realized that duality is unreal, that from the absolute standpoint there is only the Self—[and agreeing with this is the understanding] that all empirical and Vedic undertakings are verily within the range of ignorance—then, there is no destruction, i.e., no dissolution, no origination, no one bound, that is, no transmigrating self, no one effecting liberation, no one desiring liberation, and no one liberated" (GKBh.2.32).[460]

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[458] *"tasmāt avidyāmātraṁ saṁsāraḥ yathādṛṣṭaviṣayaḥ eva / na kṣetrajñasya kevalasya avidyā tatkāryaṁ ca / na ca mithyājñānaṁ paramārthavastu dūṣayituṁ samartham / na hi ūṣaradeśaṁ snehena paṅkīkartuṁ śaknoti marīcyudakam / tathā avidyā kṣetrajñasya na kiñcit kartuṁ śaknoti"* BGBh.13.2(13).

[459] BGBh.4.37. See also BṛBh.4.4.22, 23, etc.

[460] *"prakaraṇārthopasaṁhārārtho'yaṁ ślokaḥ / yadā vitathaṁ dvaitamātmaivaikaḥ paramārthataḥ saṁstadedaṁ niṣpannaṁ bhavati sarvo'yaṁ laukiko vaidikaśca vyavahāro'vidyāviṣaya eveti / tadā na nirodhaḥ /... utpattirjananaṁ baddhaḥ saṁsārī jīvaḥ sādhakaḥ sādhanānmokṣasya mumukṣurmocanārthī mukto vimuktabandhaḥ"* Īśādi, p.449.

Concluding remarks and retrospect

This research has shown that the theistic components of Śaṅkara's system can neither be rapidly dismissed as unimportant, nor be relegated to a merely theoretical level. We have suggested that the theistic aspects of his teachings are directly relevant to the discipline of the Advaitin student and his self-understanding. We have stressed that in order to understand how theistic principles and concepts fit in Śaṅkara's soteriological system, it is fruitful to direct one's attention to the perspective of the witness; for it is from this perspective that a unique form of theology can be seen to unfold. We saw how various theistic views and theories operate at the deepest levels of the Advaita discipline. In effect, we have suggested that some unique characteristics and functions of the Supreme Being are attributable to the competent pupil who engages in the spiritual practices that are peculiar to the *nivṛtti dharma*. If, in the ultimate analysis, the concept of the witness is but a last and most subtle teaching attribution on the path of self-realization, it is nevertheless an attributive element that a competent student—engaged on the path of *nivṛtti dharma*—may test on the solid basis of his direct experience.

Reading his commentarial works, one sees immediately that if Śaṅkara is often strictly and uncompromisingly attached to absolutism, he can also appear to be sympathetic to theistic principles and concepts. The important and enduring problem that we have addressed is to understand the role that religious language plays in Śaṅkara's teaching tradition.

I believe that this thesis contributes to solving the above-mentioned issue through showing the foundational importance of the concept of the witness in assessing the complex character of theistic views in Śaṅkara's soteriology. Works on Śaṅkara Vedānta have overlooked the vital need to consider the Vedic-based religious principles and concepts, which Śaṅkara's teachings include, from the vantage point of the witness. This, in my opinion, resulted in a great number of

opinion, resulted in a great number of misunderstandings concerning Śaṅkara's position on significant topics like creation, devotion, and grace.

To present theistic views in Advaita through a consideration of this witness-standpoint is, however, rather complex. It is complex because it requires of scholars to understand and assimilate the pedagogical and soteriological value of the texts in question, in order to access a level of textual understanding, which modern scholarship can hardly secure independently from tradition. Here, there is a need not to deny the necessity of Western methods of scholarship, but to acknowledge the importance of the non-historical soteriological path that Śaṅkara attempts to articulate. The 'modern' scholar who does not invest himself or herself in religious/spiritual matters in order to retain his/her objectivity, needs not fear to compromise the latter by committing himself to adopting this unique perspective since, as I attempted to show in chapter three, the means leading to it are based on obvious dictates of life, and do not oppose reason; they can thus find a legitimate place in modern scholarship. It has become evident that to adopt the position of the witness, a rapprochement between exegesis and traditional Advaita Vedānta discipline is needed. For tradition is an indispensable aid to recognizing the nature and intention of the language in use in the texts we were concerned with.

To show how, in Śaṅkara's writings, theistic views aids the student to realize his identity with the non-dual Self, we have found it useful to discuss Śaṅkara's reintroduction of the Mīmāṁsā notions of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti dharma* into his soteriological scheme. These two concepts are used to respond to different spiritual qualifications of students. They work as parameters within which Śaṅkara presents what he considers to be the traditional Advaita Vedānta discipline. In this study, we paid particular attention to the *nivṛtti* aspect of Śaṅkara's teachings, for it is there that the student's engagement with the Vedānta tradition allows for his adopting the perspective of the witness. This perspective yields a deep understanding of the religious language of scriptures while validating the latter in experience.

Since Śaṅkara considers the Upaniṣadic revelation alone to yield the profound understanding and appreciation of oneself as witness to the apt Advaitin pupil, we presented Śaṅkara's position on the status and function of this revelation, and explained the relationship between revelation and what can be referred to (after Satchidānandendra) as "universal intuition"(ch. 2). This intuition, which Śaṅkara frequently names *anubhava* or *avagati*, is not, as generally understood, an ultimate mode of the individual's consciousness which has the Self as its content. *Anubhava* means *being* one's real nature, and no objectification of this is possible or necessary. All that is needed, Śaṅkara never tires of repeating, is to cease wrongly identifying with what is other than the Self. It is to that end only that the Upaniṣads serve as the last means of self-knowledge. For Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣadic *pramāṇa* is 'last' because the duality that the Upaniṣads—viewed as specific texts or as a tradition—carry with them (i.e., the teaching and the subject taught) is abrogated with the student's realization of the true essence of self.

Because in the tradition of Śaṅkara, the authority of the Upaniṣads concerning the Absolute has a direct bearing on the *nivṛtti* disciplines, the chapter that followed (ch.3) examined the particular *nivṛtti* practice that is based on the analysis of the three states with the aim to exemplify the experiential approach of the Upaniṣadic teachings, as they draw the student to adopt the position of the witness. In that chapter, we tried to give an account of an *Upaniṣadic* teaching which, in the eyes of Śaṅkara, can engender a direct insight into one's nature of being as the witness of all. The particularity of this *Upaniṣadic* teaching, as Śaṅkara sees it, is that it is perfectly accessible to anyone desirous of exploring life in all its manifestations. Its ultimate aim is to disclose that all states, all times, and all things, internal or external, are non-different from the pupil's self-reflexive awareness. Significantly, we found that the process of enquiry into the three states follows the general method of teaching characteristic of Śaṅkara's tradition (*adhyāropa-apavāda*) as brought into focus by Satchidānandendra. It involves, in the interest of the Advaitin pupil who ardently desires to put an end to the world of rebirth, that the scriptures and the teacher resort to a great deal of false

assumptions as fundamental as the notions that one may be ignorant of the Self, and that the Upaniṣadic instructions can reveal its knowledge.

Of course, methods other than the examination of the states are also valid to reveal the Self.[461] Nonetheless, there is no doubt that this process of instruction based on the analysis of the states is of great importance to Śaṅkara. The result of our study aided by Satchidānandendra's insightful study of the subject, point to this conclusion. In this regard, I expressed disagreement with scholars who downplay the significance of this specific method of teaching as well as with others who overlook, in my opinion, some rather technical but critical aspects of the analysis of the states, or wrongly identify this method with a teaching of the Patañjali school of Yoga. It is worth restating, first, that no other method of teaching is resorted to as often as that of the analysis of the states. Second, the universal appeal and radical nature of this method of instruction makes it, perhaps, the most suitable for Śaṅkara who is concerned with the idea that insights derived from the Upaniṣads should be based on facts universally shared. Third, this particular method best typifies the method of superimposition and subsequent negation of attributions, which now gains currency as the central method used in the Advaita tradition of Śaṅkara. Finally, as we saw in the subsequent chapters, this process of teaching is particularly significant because it alone has ramifications in all areas of the Advaita teaching. In this respect, we have, for instance, noted the relevance of this method when attempting to appreciate how a student appropriates for himself the essential functions of *Īśvara*, in the context of the *nivṛtti dharma*. All these arguments concur to the view that this particular method is not only unique to Śaṅkara's school but also central to understanding his overall soteriology.

Following our attempt to show the ways in which Śaṅkara believes that scriptures and the teacher allow for the dawn of the recognition, "I am the witness of the 'I' notion" (through the *nivṛtti* discipline), we moved to a discussion on the creating function of the Absolute and, by extension, on its sustaining and annihilating roles. We first presented Śaṅkara's use of a technique named

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[461] See ft.203

upasaṁhāra by which he harmonizes the varied creation narratives and shows how they work in drawing the student nearer to identifying with the reality that grounds the entire universe. In this regard, we saw that Śaṅkara uses terms like *Īśvara* (the Absolute with features), *Brahman* (the undifferentiated Absolute), *Ātman* (the Self), and others, interchangeably, whenever his intention is to direct the attention of the pupil to the source of the universe. Then, we approached the most fundamental aspect of this thesis, which is to examine some important theistic concepts against the background of the Absolute as witness. There again, we resorted to the process of examining the three states, which is integral to Śaṅkara's conceptualization of the Advaita *nivṛtti* discipline. Notwithstanding the fact that theistic teachings in the *nivṛtti dharma* still operate at the level of superimpositions—though of the most subtle kinds—it is as part of an overall liberating method that aims at rooting out the student's natural but erroneous belief that he is an individual knowing agent and enjoyer in the 'real' world of wakefulness, who experiences the non-enduring states of waking, dream, and deep sleep, in a continuous series. Our examination went beyond the largely admitted view that for Śaṅkara, the witness underpins the individual's bodily and psychological activities. We saw that for our commentator Śaṅkara, the examination of the states induces a direct awareness of the creative principle, the basis and the regulator of all phenomena, as the student's own immediate consciousness. We argued that this insight leaves the student endowed with the extraordinary attributes and functions of *Īśvara*. In effect, this intuition, determines his becoming or, rather, his being *Īśvara*, the immortal one that constitutes the only source for the rising and the ceasing of states along with their contents. If this marks the theistic dénouement of Śaṅkara's soteriology, it is still in need of a final correction that the Upaniṣads, as the last *pramāṇa*, will make. Indeed, the Self is shown to be ultimately free from all functions with respect to the appearance and cessation of phenomena along with their states. This is ascertained through the last Upaniṣadic means of knowledge, which eliminates all functions of the Self in relation to the three states. All the attributes and functions of *Īśvara* are then shown to be superimpositions; but it would be wrong to suggest that they share the level of other attributions resorted to by the scriptures and the teacher. This is

because by showing the transcendental status of the witnessing consciousness, they completely exclude all other superimpositions. Through identifying with this witness that is immediately available to the student, Śaṅkara keeps reiterating almost *ad nauseam*, the knower leaves behind all prior types of associations with the particular body-mind complex that until then, he viewed as his sole subject.

We now come to review the last topics of this study, grace and devotion. In the fifth chapter, we concerned ourselves with Malkovsky's contention that Śaṅkara favors a personalistic understanding of the supreme reality with regard to the last means of liberation. Malkovsky's conclusion that *Īśvara*'s grace is what ultimately liberates the seeker from *saṁsāra,* is based on his belief that a single or repeated hearing of scriptures (*śravaṇa*), even when supplemented with the *nivṛtti* practices of reflection (*manana*), and contemplation (*nididhyāsana*), cannot provide an immediate liberating knowledge. The position that we defended is that in Śaṅkara's soteriology, the importance of grace is circumscribed to the *pravṛtti* dimension of *dharma*, which focuses on means to prepare the aspirant for the *nivṛtti* discipline. The practices characteristic of the *nivṛtti dharma* do not leave the pupil in expectation of a gracious act from *Īśvara.* For Śaṅkara, they alone produce the immediate recognition of identity between the Self and the pupil. In chapter three, we presented Śaṅkara's most convincing arguments for the view that scriptural instructions are sufficient to concretely bring about the cognition of non-difference between *Īśvara* and the seeker. The perspective of the witness that is held by the Advaitin student who is only concerned with *nivṛtti* practices, excludes a final 'gracious phase' of knowledge. Because at the level of the *nivṛtti dharma*, the scriptures and the teacher are alone involved in awakening the student to his nature as the immortal witness, the ruler of all, there is no necessity for an appeal to *Īśvara*'s grace as the last means of liberation. Although we cannot dismiss the fact that the apprehension of oneself as witness does not quite entail *mokṣa* since one still apparently witnesses something, Śaṅkara's solution to this is not anything to supplement the direct means of liberation (*śravaṇa*, and so forth) but a renewed

engagement with the sentences of the Upaniṣads which, at term, will convey the unified fact of reality: undifferentiated consciousness.

Finally, we looked at the subject of devotion in Śaṅkara's tradition. Just as grace, devotion appears like a religious 'complication' in a system whose focus is essentially fixed on non-duality. Devotion, it seems, would be unintelligible if it did not necessitate the polarization of two entities, one conceived as the highest ontological, moral, and ethical possibility, the other as the mortal individual who aspires to immortality. It is again through the guidance of the witnessing insight derived from the Upaniṣadic instructions that Śaṅkara offers his unique understanding of devotion in the Advaita tradition. We found that Śaṅkara is sympathetic towards a dualistic interpretation of devotion at the *pravṛtti* level where duality is naturally accepted and used to articulate the religious context so instrumental in creating the desire to know the Supreme Being. At the *nivṛtti* level, devotion concerns the knower, the aspirant who has adopted the perspective of the witness. For this knower, devotion is not an expression of a personal need, be it worldly or religious. It is to be seen, rather, as a trait of wisdom. And this is established through an appeal to the experience that is being the Absolute as witness, something which Kṛṣṇa refers to when stating that the best devotee is the aspirant who knows *Vāsudeva* as his own self (BGBh.7.17). This is argued by Śaṅkara who equates the practice of 'abiding in knowledge' with the best type of devotion. This peculiar type of devotion is characterized by disengagement from all not-Self, and by exclusive attachment to the *kṣetrajña* who is the witness of the 'I' notion, the awareness that grounds all the states, the inner controller that allows for motion, reflection, and knowledge. Practically speaking, this devotion translates itself in terms of a life rhythmed by the concern to give up the vestiges of not-Self like the mind and the ego, to abandon the illusion that one was, is, or will ever be different from the Self.

If devotion to an externally conceived deity like *Īśvara*, which features in the *pravṛtti dharma*, cannot independently lead a pupil to liberation, devotion to *Īśvara*, when identified as the student's

immediate awareness, which is characteristic of the *nivṛtti* discipline, can admittedly be seen as a *direct* contributor to the aspirant's self-realization.

APPENDIX

The Method Involved in the Examination of the Three States

According to Satchidānandendra, the way of teaching *turīya*, which transpires from a study of the main Upaniṣads, *Gauḍapāda's Kārikā*, and Śaṅkara's commentaries, is that of superimposition followed by cancellation (*adhyāropāpavāda*).[462] He claims that the method of attribution followed by cancellation pervades and directs the *prasthānatraya* texts as well as Śaṅkara's commentaries on them. Although it is not possible, at this time, to examine the veracity of this important claim in depth, the explicit evidence for the use of this teaching method in Śaṅkara's writings and that of his predecessors is certainly not negligible.

I shall begin by citing an excerpt from Prof. S. Kuppuswāmi Śāstri's introduction to Śaṅkara's commentaries on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, which expresses a similar opinion as Satchidānandendra's regarding the interpretive methodology adopted by Śaṅkara. There, Kuppuswāmi Śāstri identifies the process adopted in the *Madhu-kāṇḍa* of that Upaniṣad as that of *adhyāropāpavāda*, and which is determined by Śaṅkara to be the proper method for determining the nature and aim of the revelation:

"The first two chapters of the *Madhu-kāṇḍa* deal with the Vedic rites, *pravargya*, which forms a part of the ritualistic section (*karma-kāṇḍa*) of the Veda; and according to Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣad really begins with the third chapter of the *Madhu-kāṇḍa*. In this chapter, the phenomenal superimposition of the world on Brahman is set forth and its origin, its full reach and acme are indicated. All this is presented as *adhyāropa* or supposititious positing. The fourth or the concluding chapter of the *Madhu-kāṇḍa* exhibits, in a telling manner the sublation which follows and stultifies the supposititious positing of the world in the preceding chapter, and elucidates the nature of the Brahman-Ātman realization which is invariably and synchronously concomitant with the sublation; and all this is *apavāda* or sublation through the stultifying realization of the truth. According to Śaṅkara, *adhyāropa* and *apavāda* constitute the chief means of fully realizing the absolute reality called *Śuddhaṁ Brahma*. All the details of Vedic rituals, all the forms of meditation associated with them, even the greatest of them—the horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*) and the meditation associated with it, and all the results accruing from them—all these constitute the province of nescience (*avidyā*) and even the highest achievement of the *Hiraṇyagarbha-loka* or *Brahma-loka* is but a part, though the acme, of the immense cycle of transmigration. This is the substance of the account of *adhyāropa* in

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[462] "The Upaniṣads expound the *Brahman-Ātman* that is devoid of plurality through superimposition and cancellation" (*vedāntā niṣprapañcameva brahmātmānam adhyāropāpavādābhyāṁ prapañcayantīti*) *Viśuddhāvedāntasāraḥ*, p.46. See also Satchidānandendra's *Śuddha-Śaṅkara-Prakriyā-Bhāskara*, pp.51-60.

the third chapter of the *Madhu-kāṇḍa*... The fourth chapter of the *Madhu-kāṇḍa* is devoted to *apavāda* and to an elucidation of the purport of the *vidyā-sūtra*. After describing in an elaborate manner the corporeal and incorporeal forms of the corpus of the material universe superimposed on Brahman, this chapter proceeds to convey the great teaching embodied in the words of the often quoted text: '*athāta ādeśo neti neti*.'"[463]

In his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, Śaṅkara refers to the people who are proficient in the traditional method of Vedāntic interpretation and instruction as the 'knowers of the tradition':

"Even the unreal form due to adjuncts, as it leads to the knowledge of Its reality, is posited as if it were an attribute of the knowable in the affirmation 'on all sides It has hands and feet,' and so forth. Thus say the true knowers of the tradition: 'That which is devoid of plurality is explained through the process of superimposition and cancellation' " (BGBh.13.13).[464]

A more detailed formulation of this unique way of teaching the one reality without a second appears in GK3.26 and Śaṅkara's gloss on it:

"This Self is 'not this, not this.' Because it negates all that was explained, the birthless one shines forth" (GK.3.26). Śaṅkara comments: "The Upaniṣad thinks that the Self taught through the negation of all features in the text, 'Now, therefore, the teaching: 'not this, not this' (Bṛ.2.3.6), is very difficult to understand; thus, whatever was explained again and again, through various means, for the sake of establishing that very [Self], it negates all that" (GKBh.3.26).[465]

It is important to stress that the process of cancellation does not involve the 'real' elimination of anything for what is negated is only *māyā* or a magical appearance. To this effect, Gauḍapāda writes: "If the world existed, there is no doubt that it would be eliminated. This duality is solely *māyā*; from the highest standpoint [i.e., in reality], it is only non-dual" (GK.1.17). Śaṅkara elaborates on what the process of cancellation actually involves:

"Certainly, there is no snake imagined in [place of] the rope through a deluded understanding, which is actually eliminated through correct discrimination. The magic associated with the magician does not exist in reality and is not really cancelled when the illusion of one who sees it has departed. Thus, this duality that is named the manifold world is only magic and is non-dual in reality, just like the rope and the magician. Therefore, there is nothing like a manifold world that comes about or gets abrogated. This is what is intended" (GKBh.1.17).[466]

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[463] Refer to Kuppuswāmi Śāstri's introduction to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, pp.12-14.
[464] BGBh.13.13, see ft.85.
[465] See ft.293.
[466] "*prapañco yadi vidyeta nivarteta na saṁśayaḥ / māyāmātramidaṁ dvaitamadvaitaṁ paramārthataḥ*" GK.1.17. "*na hi rajjvāṁ bhrāntibuddhyā kalpitaḥ sarpo vidyamānaḥ sanvivekato nivṛttaḥ / naiva māyā māyāvinā prayuktā taddarśināṁ cakṣurbandhāpagame vidyamānā satī nivṛttā / tathedaṁ prapañcākhyaṁ māyāmātraṁ dvaitaṁ rajjuvanmāyāvivaccādvaitaṁ paramārthataḥ / tasmānna kaścitprapañcaḥ pravṛtto nivṛtto vāstītyabhiprāyaḥ*" GKBh.1.17. Īśādi, p.437.

In BS.3.2.11, Bādarāyaṇa indicates the impossibility for the Absolute to have two contradictory characteristics, i.e., having qualities and not having qualities, and in BS.3.2.12&14, he states that *Brahman* is only formless because each characteristic is cancelled and because of the predominance of this view in the Upaniṣadic texts.[467] These *sūtras* pave the way for Śaṅkara's view that *Brahman* is completely free from attributes even when it seems to be associated with various limiting adjuncts. For the latter have no actual reality and can neither 'really' affect *Brahman*, nor be 'actually' removed when ignorance ceases:

"Even when associating with adjuncts, the nature of an object cannot take that of another. A transparent crystal cannot become not transparent due to its association [proximity] with an adjunct like a red lilac, and the like, for the idea of non-transparency is a mere delusion. Limiting adjuncts are conjectured by ignorance."[468]

That Śaṅkara sees Gauḍapāda as a 'knower of the Vedāntic tradition' is clearly established in GKBh.4.87. The fact that this reference is expressed in the commentary to this verse is not accidental since verses 87 to 90[469] constitute a concise but clear representation of the technique of superimposition followed by cancellation, adapted to the particular process of teaching the Self through the comprehensive analysis of the three states. Verse 87 declares that everyone commonly accepts perception, whether it is that of empirical objects (pertaining to the waking) or that of subtle

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[467] "Not even with regard to place (the states?), the Supreme Entity has two features; everywhere indeed [it is the same]" (*na sthānato'pi parasyobhayaliṅgaṁ sarvatra hi*) BS.3.2.11. " If it is said that it is due to duality [that *Brahman* cannot be one without a second] we say no. For we speak of the absence of each [dual aspect] individually" (*na bhedāditi cenna pratyekamatadvacanāt*) BS.3.2.12.

"Certainly, it is only formless because of the predominance of that" (*arūpavadeva hi tatpradhānatvāt*) BS.3.2.14. As Modi points out, the word '*sthāna*' in BS.3.2.11 probably refers to the three states, which are what the preceding ten *sūtras* discuss. Modi interprets the *sūtra* as follows: "...the *sūtrakāra* says that the two aspects (*ubhayaliṅga*) are applicable to Brahman in all the four states." He supports his interpretation of the *sūtra* by referring to the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. He thinks that the 'fourth' is an actual state that corresponds to scriptural descriptions of *Brahman* as being formless, while the three states of waking, dream, and deep-sleep correspond to scriptural descriptions of *Brahman* with forms. See Dr. Modi's *Critique of the Brahmasūtra*. Vol 1, interpretation of the *sūtras* III.2.11-IV. Published by Dr. P.M. Modi, Bhavnagar, 1958, pp.5&6. However, this view misses the two most important points made in Bṛ and Mā (discussed in ch.3) about the nature of deep sleep as *Brahman* alone, and the nature of *turīya* as *Brahman* alone free from the *imagined* adjuncts of the three states and their contents.

[468] "*nahyupādhiyogādapyanyādṛśasya vastuno'nyādṛśaḥ svabhāvaḥ sambhavati / nahi svacchaḥ sansphaṭiko'laktakādyupādhiyogādasvaccho bhavati bhramamātratvādasvacchatābhiniveśasya / upādhīnāṁ cāvidyāpratyupasthāpitatvāt*" BSBh.3.2.11, pp.355-6.

[469] "*savastu sopalambhaṁ ca dvayaṁ laukikamiṣyate / avastu sopalambhaṁ ca śuddhaṁ laukikamiṣyate*" GK.4.87.
"*avastvanupalambhaṁ ca lokottaramiti smṛtam / jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ ca vijñeyaṁ sadā buddhaiḥ prakīrtitam*" GK.4.88.
"*jñāne ca trividhe jñeye krameṇa vidite svayam / sarvajñatā hi sarvatra bhavatīha mahādhiyaḥ*" GK.4.89.
"*heyajñeyāpyapākyāni vijñeyānyagrayāṇataḥ / teṣāmanyatra vijñeyādupalambhastriṣu smṛtaḥ*" GK.4.90.

objects (as in the dream). The first half of verse 88 speaks of the well-known state that is devoid of both objects and perception. The second half of the verse tells us that the man of discrimination always proclaims the knowledge, the known, and that which is to be realized. In verse 89, we read that when there is knowledge, that is, when there is the threefold sequential knowledge, it (the Self) becomes self-known. This credits the view that with the sole methodological examination of the three states, the pupil comes to apprehend the witness as his true nature; for the man of great understanding who is equipped with this knowledge, all is known, everywhere. Finally, verse 90 first asserts that the three states are to be known initially. It then denies that they constitute what is to be realized at an ultimate level.

Commenting on verse 87, Śaṅkara states, "So now [this text] commences for the purpose of explaining its/his (Gauḍapāda) [teaching] methodology."[470] In this verse and the following one, we learn that Śaṅkara considers both the waking and the dream to be within the range of ordinary experience since they present themselves with the aspects of knower and known, which allow for activities to take place.[471] Commenting verse 88, he explains that the hallmark of deep sleep is the absence of these aspects, and that it is the reason why deep sleep is called the extraordinary realm (*lokottaram*) and the seed for all proceedings—whether pertaining to the waking or to the dream states.[472] There, Śaṅkara also clarifies Gauḍapāda's use of technical terminology. He explains that the dream and the waking, on the one hand, and the 'extraordinary,' on the other, are held as means to expound the highest reality, the 'object' of realization (*vijñeyam*), the unborn and non-dual self that is named *turīya* in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.* Knowledge (*jñānam*) is that by which, through the sequential knowledge of waking, dream, and sleep, *turīya* is grasped. The known (*jñeyam*) consists of the three states. [473] It is important to stress that Gauḍapāda's and Śaṅkara's use of Buddhist terminology in the fourth *prakaraṇa* of the GK needs not be interpreted as indicating their adherence

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[470] "*athedānīṁ svaprakriyāpradarśanārtha ārambhaḥ*" Īśādi, p.492.
[471] "*grāhyagrahaṇaviṣayo hi lokaḥ*" Īśādi, p.493.
[472] "*avastvanupalambhaṁ ca grāhyagrahaṇavarjitamityetallokottaram / ata eva lokātītam / grāhyagrahaṇaviṣayo hi lokaḥ, tadabhāvātsarvapravṛttibījaṁ suṣuptamityetat*" Ibid.
[473] "*evaṁ smṛtaṁ sopāyaṁ paramārthatattvaṁ laukikam / śuddhalaukikaṁ lokottaraṁ krameṇa yena jñanena jñāyate, tajjñānaṁ jñeyametānyeva trīṇi...vijñeyaṁ paramārthasatyaṁ turyākhyamadvayamajamātmatattvam ityarthaḥ*" Ibid.

to Buddhist philosophical doctrines. In verse 88 for instance, unlike the Buddhists, Gauḍapāda does not use the term *lokottara* to indicate a mystical state that is above and beyond the three states. *Lokottara* signifies the experience of deep sleep that is free from perception and objects perceived.[474]

In his explanation of verse 89, Śaṅkara traces the series of cognitive experiences that lead to the direct apprehension of the Self. When there is knowledge of the worldly, the dream, and deep sleep, and once these three are known in a sequence—starting first with the gross objects of the worldly realm (waking), being followed, in the absence of the latter, by the subtle (dream), and in turn replaced, in the absence of the subtle, by the extraordinary (deep sleep)—then, with the negation of these three states, the unborn and fearless *turīya* is revealed of its own accord.[475] Finally, Śaṅkara confirms that a man of great understanding may secure such a realization in this very world. Further, he categorically rejects the idea that such a realization may ever depart.[476]

In his *Viśuddhavedāntasāraḥ*, Satchidānandendra summarizes his understanding of the process of superimposition followed by negation, which is involved in the teaching of *Brahman* through the three states, in the context of Śaṅkara's writings, and makes insightful comments regarding the functions of this teaching stratagem. He explains that with each particular state superimposed on unbounded awareness, a particular goal is fulfilled, something which Śaṅkara does not systematically do:

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[474] "*grāhyagrahaṇavarjitamityetallokottaram*" Ibid. The work of R.King departs from the majority of Western studies done on the GK since S. Dasgupta in his *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Motilal, Delhi, 1975) first claimed that Gauḍapāda's doctrines are borrowed from Madhyāmaka and Vijñānavada doctrines (p.429) and called Śaṅkara a 'crypto-Buddhist' (p.437). King recognizes the Buddhist influence in the GK but argues that it is an Advaita perspective that is presented, albeit through a dialectical relationship with Buddhist philosophical ideas. Richard King. *Early Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism: The Mahayana Context of the Gaudapada Karika*. State University of New york Press, 1995, p.238.

[475] At the end of his long gloss on Ch.8.12.1, which terminates the story of Prajāpati teaching Indra about the immortal self, Śaṅkara also states that this teaching about the Self that has been expounded by the followers of Prajāpati's tradition is layed out in four sections (*..prājāpatyaṁ cemaṁ saṁpradāyamanusaradbhirupanibaddhaṁ prakaraṇacatuṣṭhayena" Īśādi, p.328)*. These sections correspond to the above-mentioned sequence of waking, dream, deep sleep, and *turīya* characteristic of GKBh.4.87-90.

[476] "*jñāne ca laukikādiviṣaye / jñeye ca laukikādau trividhe / pūrvaṁ laukikaṁ sthūlam /... tadabhāvena lokottaramityevaṁ krameṇa sthānatrayābhāvena paramārthasatye turye advaye aje abhaye vidite, svayameva ātmasvarūpameva sarvajñatā...ihāsmilloke bhavati mahādhiyo mahābuddheḥ /...sakṛdvidite svarūpe vyabhicārābhāvādityarthaḥ*" Īśādi, p.493.

"[A] By superimposing the condition of *vaiśvānara*, which the scriptures proceed to expound in 'In the waking, you are *vaiśvānara*, the witness of all the manifold world [of that waking], they cause a sense of aversion for the body. [B] In the dream that adjoins [the waking], the Self is thought to be seeing many false entities that are merely distinct impressions. Through superimposing [upon the Self] the condition of *taijasa* and that of *vaiśvānara*, the erroneous forms [of these two states] is shown. [C] In deep sleep, the Self is considered unconscious due to the absence of any particular knowledge resulting from a limiting adjunct [such as waking or dream]. With the superimposition of the condition of *prājña*, the condition of dream too is shown not to be natural to us."[477]

And in a closing statement on the topic of *turīya*, Satchidānandendra reiterates how these superimpositions operate:

"The attribution of the condition of *vaiśvānara* [on the Self] has for its function to eliminate the [false] understanding relating to the condition of being a body, etc. And the teaching about *taijasa* is intended to remove each preceding limiting adjunct of the Self, while the Self whose condition is described as 'not conscious of the inside,' etc., indicates that 'this self is *Brahman*' (Mā.2) through rejecting all particular forms of the Self such as being the states, and so on."[478]

On account of such explicit statements as found in the *Adhyāsabhāṣya*, BṛBh.5.1, BSBh.1.1.4 & 1.4.10, GKBh.3.26 & 4.100, BGBh.13.13, and US.19.15 (see p.126-8), and considering Satchidānandendra's above explanations on the pedagogical role that the examination of the three states plays in Śaṅkara's system, we can confidently suggest that Śaṅkara thinks that the Upaniṣads are somewhat opportunist since they resort to adopting man's natural but erroneous standpoint on life as a stratagem to instruct the ever present reality of the Self to the Advaitin pupil. This standpoint consists in superimposing the states on the boundless being, which is their true nature. Further, in the light of the scriptural and commentarial passages that deal with the negation of the three states, it becomes evident that Śaṅkara, in unison with Gauḍapāda, considers this negative part of the teaching process to be the last means of knowledge (*antya pramāṇa*), since it alone conveys the nature of the 'fourth' as the seeker's immediate awareness. Śaṅkara makes it clear that the three states are but dreams or magic (appearances), and that the pupil needs to 'wake up' or cancel this

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[477] "*taṁ pratibodhayituṁ pravṛttā śrutiḥ 'jāgarite tāvat tvaṁ sarvaprapañcasākṣī vaiśvānara evāsi' iti vaiśvānaratvādhyāropeṇa śārīratvād vyāvartayati / tadanantaraṁ svapne kevalavāsanāviśiṣṭaṁ vividhamithyābhāvadarśinamātmānaṁ manvāne tasmin taijasatvādhyāropeṇa vaiśvānaratvamapi vyabhicaradrūpaṁ darśayati / tadanu ca suṣuptau upādhikṛtaviśeṣajñānābhāvāt ajñamevātmānaṁ manvāne tasmin prājñatvādhyāropeṇa taijasatvamapi na svābhāvikamityādarśayati*" Viśuddhavedāntasāraḥ, p.46.

[478] "*vaiśvānaratvādyadhyāropaḥ śārīratvādibuddhyapanayārthaḥ, taijasatvādyupadeśaśca pūrvapūrvasopādhikarūpaniṣedhārthaśca / 'nāntaḥprajñam' ityādi tvātmano'vasthāvattvādisarvaviśeṣarūpapratiṣedhena 'ayamātmā brahma' (Mā.2) iti*" Ibid.

magic, in order to realize his true nature as the non-dual *Brahman*, ever-free from these states.[479] One should not understand from this that Śaṅkara considered *turīya* to be different from the states, for *turīya* is their very essence. It is only from the standpoint of the three virtual states[480] that the Self is thought of as the fourth (state). Similarly, the causal condition of deep sleep is a viewpoint conceded on account of the belief that the states of waking and dream actually come about. Deep sleep can only be a cause if there is an effect, i.e., waking and dream. With the elimination of the waking and the dream, deep sleep as a causal state cannot stand. *Turīya* is identical with the cancellation of all causes and effects, that is, with the negation of the three states, but it is not itself a fourth state.

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[479] "Because sleep is the beginningless magic that is the distinctive mark of ignorance, one who has awakened to his own non-dual nature is, therefore, sleepless" (*avidyālakṣaṇānādimāyānidrāsvāpāt prabuddham advayasvarūpeṇa ātmanā / ato'svapnam*)...because it is free from appearance/manifestation as well as from disappearance, which are concomitant with wrong perception (waking and dream), and non-perception (deep-sleep) respectively, its form is always effulgent and always illumined" (*sakṛdvibhātaṁ sadaiva vibhātaṁ sadā bhārūpam agrahaṇānyathāgrahṇāvirbhāvatirobhāvavarjitatvāt*) GKBh.3.36. See also GKBh.1.16.

[480] "He has three states, three dreams" (*tasya traya āvasathāstrayaḥ svapnā*) AiBh.1.3.12. Īśādi, p.23.

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