ŚAṆKARA’S CLARIFICATION
OF
CERTAIN VEDĀNTIC CONCEPTS

By

SRI SRI SATCHIDĀNANDENDRA SARASWATI
SWĀMIJI

Serial No. 146

Publishers:
Adhyātma Prakāsha Kāryālaya
HOLENARSIPUR-573 211
(Hassan District, Karnataka State, India)

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PREFACE

The Contents of this little book constitute an adaptation of the Series of lectures in Kannada delivered by me at Mysore during the Thirty ninth Saṅkara Saptāham which lasted from 21-4-1969 to 29-4-1969 both days inclusive. The substance of these lectures has been published in the Kannada philosophical monthly, "Adhyātma Prakāśha".

I have rearranged and somewhat enlarged upon the original speeches in order to make this work self-complete as far as possible. I hope that this attempt will be of some assistance to the critical reader in appreciating Saṅkara’s interpretation of the Upanishads and their essential teaching. I am grateful to the authorities of the Adhyātma Prakāśha Kāryālaya for having undertaken to publish the work even in its incomplete form. My heartfelt Nārāyaṇa Smaraṇams to all those who have contributed to make this publication a success.

Holenarsipur Swāmi Satchidānandendra Saraswati 25-9-1969

PUBLISHER'S NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In deference to an increasing public demand for this edifying treatise of Swāmiji, of revered memory, we take pleasure in bringing out this second edition.

Holenarsipur Thandaveshwar Arkalgud 20-3-1996  Chairman
(Ugadi Day) A. P. Kāryālaya
INTRODUCTION

THE TWO SETS OF UPANISHADIC TEACHING

The Upanishads contain two sets of teaching regarding Brahman or Reality, addressed to two different levels of the mind. To the highest grade of the aspirants, belongs the disciple who has attained the mental equipment necessary for entering upon the course of study, either in this birth or possesses an introvert mind as a result of discipline undergone in his last lives, qualifying him to grasp the teaching imparted in the Śruti.

This class of seekers comprises two grades. The first needs only reminding of the true nature of one’s Self by the Śruti through an experienced adept who has himself experienced the truths of Vedānta, while the second requires guidance for the contemplation of the spiritual steps through which one has ultimately to reach that same Self. It is to this class of both the grades that the present booklet is expected to be of some assistance in the study of Vedānta.

The other set of Upanishadic teachings according to Śaṅkara, consists of injunctions for the meditation of the so-called Apara (lower) Brahman. This meditation is a mystical discipline, quite different from the practice of contemplation or the Adhīyatma-Yōga (referred to in the present works on page 84), which leads the seeker to the direct realization of Brahman in this very life. Like the meditation taught in the non-Hindu religions, Upanishadic Meditation of Brahman also assures eschatological benefits in the Highest Heaven, here called the Brahma-lōka. A separate treatise would be necessary for the guidance of the students of this class, whose practice of meditation is to be mainly founded on faith and hope. It may be remarked, in passing, that Upanishadic mysticism is perfectly rational in that it rests on the secure foundation of the proven results that can be experienced in this very life, by disciples of the first class mentioned above.*

* For the benefit of the students who are tolerably well acquainted with Sanskrit, a small book called the “Brahmavidyaśāsya vivṛti” has been published in the Kārṇālaya. It contains instructions in meditation of the Apara-Brahman as well as the method of realizing the Para-Brahman.

THE CORRECT VEDĀNTIC TRADITION

Of the teachers whose Vedāntic works have survived up to our times, three famous repositories of this genuine tradition deserve mention here. It was Śri Gauḍapādācārya and subsequently Śri Śaṅkarācārya and Śri Sureśvarācārya, that clearly pointed to the true line of demarcation between the two sets of Upanishadic teachings to which we have here drawn the student’s attention. Before and after the time of those stalwart champions we find that Upanishadic teachings have been uniformly treated by all interpreters as leading to some one of the systems which are mostly a conglomeration of the logical and mystical doctrines with a sprinkling of the Śaṅkya or the Yōga system or both. In controversial works on Vedānta brought out in recent times we find an inclination to succumb to the temptation of using the phraseology of Neo-logic also.

Śri Śaṅkara was perhaps the first Vedāntin to lay emphasis on the traditional method of Adhīyatma-Apavāda and to disentangle the Upanishad texts purporting to reveal the true nature of Brahman as the non-dual Self of all the phenomenal world from the texts which have the sole purpose of enjoining meditation. He was also the first to extricate the Upanishadic teaching from the exclusively theological trends to which they were drifting in the hands of the ancient Advaityins. His clarification of certain Vedāntic concepts and principles of interpretation to be applied to the Upanishadic teaching as contrasted with that of the Karma-kānda (portion of the Vedas treating religious works) has greatly helped us to see how the Upanishads are not mere authoritative mystical utterances to be implicitly believed in, but contain certain revelations which take us to direct intuition here and now of undeniable verities with regard to our Real Self.

It is with the object of drawing the attention of the critical student of Śaṅkara’s Vedānta to the genuine aspect of Vedāntic reasoning based upon intuitions, that I have been making a sustained attempt by writing a number of books in Sanskrit and English as well as in Kannada. The following pages contain a systematic account of the clarification of certain Vedāntic concepts as presented in Śaṅkara’s classical writings, especially in his Śūtra-Bhāshya. It is an adaptation of the substance of
the Kannada lectures delivered by me during the Śaṅkara-Saptāham celebrations at Mysore in April this year. I shall feel amply repaid for the trouble taken in its preparation if it adds in any way to a better understanding of the matter and method of Śaṅkara’s Vedānta on the part of earnest seekers of truth.

My heartfelt Nārāyaṇa Smaraṇams to Swāmi Brahmanandendra Saraswati and Sri N. S. Ranga Swamy, who went through the manuscript and offered suggestions for the improvement of the work.

My Nārāyaṇa Smaraṇams also to the authorities of the Adhyātma Prakāsha Kāryālaya, who have undertaken the publication of the booklet as they have done with regard to my other writings. May Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa be pleased with this humble offering of my endeavour to present Śaṅkara’s view of Vedānta, as I understand it.

Holenarsipur  Swāmi Satchidānandendra Saraswati 25-9-1969

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ŚAŃKARA’S CLARIFICATION OF CERTAIN VEDĀNTIC CONCEPTS

1. THE ĀTMAN

1. One of the great obstacles in the way of those who try to understand the real teaching of the Upanishads, seems to be the want of sufficient efforts to determine the exact significance of certain fundamental concepts common to all of them. An attempt will be made in the following pages to discuss some of the most important of such concepts, in the light of Śaṅkara’s Bhāshya, the most ancient one available on the Badarāyaṇa’s Sūtras.

The concept that deserves our foremost attention is obviously that of the Ātman. Śaṅkara introduces his Bhāshya with the declaration that all the Upanishads purport to teach the Knowledge of the Unity of Ātman (Atmaikatva-Vidyā-Pratipattaye).

2. And this is in harmony with the teaching of the Upanishads themselves. The Māṇḍūkya Upanishad, for instance, says that Ātman is Brahman (अय्यमात्म ब्रह्म) and says that Brahman which is unobjectifiable has to be “realized solely by means of the concept of Ātman...”
(एकात्मप्रत्ययसाराम् मा. 7), and *Mṇḍaka* declares that Brahman which is the Light of lights, only the knowers of Ātman can know (तत्तेषु ज्ञोत्सं ज्ञोत्सदाधित्वादिद्वित: Mu.2-2-10). The Bhāshya on that Upanishad explains the passage thus: “Only those that follow the trail of the concept of Ātman, can know it and not those that pursue the concepts of external objects, for it is the brightest light within (ते आत्मविदयतः: आत्मप्रत्ययानुसारिणः: yasmāt pṛthi: ātma-tattva tathādhi:; nātīre bāhārāpratītyānūsārāṇ: Mu. 2-2-10).” Again the *Bṛhadarāṇyaka* says:

स योजयत एवैक्यपापास्ते न स वेदास्ति अहं प्रेषयत एवैक्ये भवत्यामेवोपासीतत्त क्षोभस्य सर्वे एवं भविनति ॥

“So whosoever devotes himself to any one of these concepts, he knows not the truth; for he becomes only partial by being tied to these ideas severally. One should therefore regard oneself as the Ātman alone, for herein are comprehended all these ideas.” Br. 1-4-7.

This *Śruti* says that to regard oneself as the living soul, as a speaker, seer, hearer, or thinker, is to conceive oneself but partially; for these are notions drawn exclusively from the functions of the soul. But the most comprehensive way of regarding oneself is to think of oneself as the Ātman, for in the Ātman all the other aspects are comprehended.

In the *Chāndogya* again, we find the following text:

स य एशोरणियेतदत्त्त्यमिदं सर्वे तत्सनि स आत्मा तत्त्यमिदं श्रेत्तिनेति ॥

“As for this subtle principle, all this Universe has it for its essence. That is Reality, that is the Ātman, that thou art, O Śvetaketu.” Ch. 6-14-3.

It is obvious that the word ‘Ātman’ here refers to the Reality underlying all the phenomenal world, and that each individual soul is identical with it.

3. The word Ātman is used in Sanskrit as a reflexive or emphatic pronoun also like words compounded with self in English. It then denotes the individual or individuals denoted by the antecedent noun or pronoun. For example, in अहम आत्मनः गृह गङ्गाम (I am going to my house), तयय आत्मनः गृह गङ्गाम: (We go each to his house), देवदत्त आत्मनः गृह गते: (Devadatta went to his house), तयय आत्मनः गृहे गङ्गाम (you are going to your house) etc., the word Ātman means my own, our own, his own, and your own. But as used in the above-cited texts, it is clear that the word is no pronoun but denotes the essential real nature of the whole world of animate and inanimate beings.

4. Basing himself on a passage in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (3-9-26) Śaṅkara calls this Ātman the *Upanishadic person* (औपनिषद्व: पूरः) and says,

(१) “योजयत एवैक्यपापास्ते न स वेदास्ति अहं प्रेषयत एवैक्ये भवत्यामेवोपासीतत्त क्षोभस्य सर्वे एवं भविनति ॥

“Now this Purusha, who is known only from the Upanishads, and who is not a transmigratory soul but Brahman itself, is not possible to assert that this Purusha does not exist, or that he cannot be known. For in the passage ‘Now this is the Ātman, described as not this, not this’ (Br. 3-9-26) this Purusha is referred to by the word Ātman (the Self), and it is impossible to deny one’s own Self, because the very denier is himself the Ātman.” SBh. 1-1-4
Here Śaṅkara says in so many words, that the Ātman is the real Self of each one of us, whether one believes, doubts or denies the existence of this Ātman.

Now, lest it should be supposed that this Upanishadic Ātman is identical with the individual ego of living beings, Śaṅkara brings forward an objection and provides a rejoinder clarifying the Upanishadic concept of Ātman:

(२) “नन्तु आत्मा अद्वैतविविशयत्वात, उपसन्नस्वेद विज्ञायो इत्यनुतप्पम्। न। तदन्तरेकः च प्रत्युक्तवात। न द्वेषद्वोषविक्रयवच्यते सत्साक्षी सत्त्वपूर्वत्वः। समः। एकः कृत्यनिधिः। पुनः विदिकाण्डे। तर्कसमयं वा केनविज्ञगति। सत्त्वसाक्षात्सत्त्वात्।”

“Objection: Ātman being the object of the notion ‘I’, it is not reasonable to say that he is known only from the Upanishads.

Reply: Not so. For we have refuted this position by saying that this Ātman is the witness of that ego. (To explain):—Other than the agent who is the object of the notion ‘I’, there is the Witness thereof residing in all beings, the same in all, the one unchanging eternal Purusha, the Self of each and every one, who is never known to any one from the Vidhikānda (Vedic portion enjoining religious works), or from the speculative schools.”

This is a bold claim that the Ātman as the Witnessing Consciousness, as distinct from the individual soul is the real Self of each and every creature, and is identical with Brahman or Divinity itself. This Witnessing Ātman, it is claimed, is to be known and can be known only from the Upanishads and that there is no inkling of this concept in any theological writing or speculative system. While Śaṅkara was referring only to the Karmakānda of the Vedas and to the Darśanas prevalent during his times, it is strange and nevertheless undeniably true of the entire body of theological or speculative systems in the whole world to this day. This self-evident concept of Ātman as the eternal unchanging Witnessing Principle in each one of us, is known only through the Upanishads and can never be traced to any other source. And Śaṅkara, is the only thinker who has clarified this Vedantic concept. With an unsurpassed and unsurpassable spiritual intuition he found that the Upanishadic pronouncement was convincing and contained the only final soul-saving Truth.

(३) एको देवः सर्वपूर्वारः गुढः। सर्वव्यापी सर्वपूर्वत्तात्तत्त्वात्।
सर्वव्याप्तः सर्वपूर्वाहिंशात्। साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुण्णः।”

“The one Deva (God) is hidden in all beings. All-pervading, the one inmost Self of all creatures, presiding over all, the Witnessing Consciousness residing in all creatures, One without a second and having no qualifying adjuncts.”

Sve. 6-10.
2. Vidyā AND AVIDYĀ

5. The word ‘Ātman’ really means that which pervades (आपैत्तिक) all. And we have seen that our genuine Ātman is the only Reality underlying all the phenomenal Universe, according to the Upanishads. Indeed the Chandogya declares:

अथ आत्मदेव एवातैवात्मकदात्मकोपरिश्रादात्मकं पश्चात् दक्षिणत आत्मोत्तरत आत्मेऽवेद सर्वेष्वः II

“Now, therefore, the teaching concerning Ātman alone is begun. Atman alone is below, Ātman above, Ātman behind, Ātman in front, Ātman on the right, Ātman on the left. All this is Ātman alone.”

Ch. 7-25-2.

How then is it, it will be asked, that we see this manifold universe in which live so many individual beings? How is that I, you, or anybody else in this world, firmly believes that each one of us is a limited being full of desires and not this great Ātman?

6. The Upanishads reply: It is because of Avidyā or ignorance. When Nachiketas asked Yama, the God of death, to reveal the nature of Ātman to him, the latter replied:

(१) दृष्टे विरोधते विद्या या च विद्ये विज्ञता ज्ञाता।
विद्याभीषिपिनं नचिकेतसं मन्ये न त्वा कामना बहुव्याप्तन। II

विद्या-यामधृते कर्मनां: स्वं पीता: पण्डितम-नयनानां:।
द्वार-यमानां: परिचितं मुद्धा अर्जैचैर नीयनां यथाय। II

“These two are wide apart, running in opposite directions, Avidyā and that which is known as Vidyā. I consider thee Nachiketas, as longing for Vidyā, for the numerous desires have not weaned you away from the right path. Resting in the midst of ignorance, but considering themselves discriminative and wise, deluded persons go round and round through crooked ways like blind men led by one who is himself blind.”

Ka. 2-4, 5.

How and when is this darkness or nescience to be dispersed? The Upanishad replies:

(२) पुरुष एवेद विचं कर्म ततो ब्रह्म ज्यातम ।
एतत्सेवेद निहितं गुहायं सोविद्याध्रयिं विकिर्तितोऽस्म । II

“All this karma and tapas is Purusha, the highest immortal Brahman alone. Whosoever knows this as hidden in the cave of the heart, cuts the knot of ignorance, my dear boy.”

Mu. 2-1-10.

7. Now what exactly does this ‘Concept of ignorance’ stand for? Since it is the ignorance concerning Brahman or the real Ātman, the Self of us all, it cannot be, obviously, a function of the mind, which consists in not knowing or misconceiving an object. The Ātman is as we have already seen (p.5), the Witnessing Consciousness in each of us, and there is nothing of which it is not the witness. So it can never be the object of the intellect, which is itself one of the objects of that Consciousness. But nevertheless, we have no other instrument of knowledge, associated with which we can talk of
ourselves as ignorant of, or knowing anything. What then can the Upanishads possibly mean, when they speak of the ignorance of Ātman?

8. This question of the nature of the concept of Avidyā was never raised by the ancient Advaitins, nor has it received the close attention it deserves, at the hands of the Post-Śaṅkaras. The author of the Pañcapādikā regarded it as a postulate of Vedānta, for he says:-

अवश्यमेण अविद्वारः: बाह्यव्याप्तिकेषु वस्तुं तस्ववधेता
साधारणतःसनुविवेचनी अनुष्ठानतः। अन्यथा विद्वारकविन्दसारप
पते: II

“This power called Avidyā must needs be assumed, as clinging to the very nature of all internal and external things; for otherwise, false appearances can never be accounted for.”

P.P., p. 41.

But it is evident that this power is not really a logical necessity, since none of the other thinkers have recognized it and yet their systems have not suffered in any manner just because they dispensed with the postulates.

Śaṅkara’s explanation of this enigmatical concept is as follows:

(1) अस्मात्मात्यकोचरो विविधविविधेचिदात्मके युक्तत्वयोग्यत्रस्य
विषयस्य तद्वहल्लो चाच्यास्य: तद्वपेश्येत्वा विविधविविधान्तःसनुविवेचनाः
ि विषयेद्वैतात्मको विद्या इति भविततुं युक्तम्। तथ्यात्म अविद्यायत्मकायम्
अन्योन्यात्मकायम् अन्योन्यात्मकायम् अद्याय इत्यादित्वात्वेचेक, इति
िइति तन्त्रोऽचाँ ‘ह्न्यमधम’ ‘मेधम’ इति त्रेतीर्योऽचाँ लोकव्यवहारः II

(2) तत्त्वपक्षरक्षणमु अव्यासः प्रणयता अविद्याति मन्यते; तत्त्वपक्षरक्षणमु
वस्तुस्वभावान्तरण विद्यताहु: II

The sum and substance of these two extracts, from the famous introduction to Śaṅkara’s Śūtra Bhaṭṭārya is this:- Ātman, the real ‘I’ of each one of us, is the Witnessing Consciousness. That alone is really real according to Vedānta, since it is absolutely undeniable as we have seen (p. 4). The non-self which is made up of the body, the senses and the mind is an unreal appearance, set up by ignorance or privation of knowledge. Now the human intellect has an innate tendency to project the non-real Not-self (Un-Ātman) and confound the identity of the real and the unreal whenever it functions. This mixing up of the real and the unreal and the delusion which prompts the mind to submit itself to a mistaken transference of the mutual properties of the Self and the non-self, is what is called Avidyā. This tendency is so natural to all mankind that no one suspects that he is under the influence of this primary ignorance due to want of discrimination (अविदेशकार्य) when he talks of ‘me and mine’. It follows that this Avidyā or ignorance is finally wiped off as soon as one discriminates the real and the unreal and determines their true nature. This discrimination and determination of the true nature of these, is what is termed Vidyā, knowledge.

9. How and when was this mutual super-imposition of identity and mistaken transference of properties caused? This question is obviously illegitimate, for we have learnt that it is an innate tendency of the human mind to confound the real and the unreal. All human action and experience of
the fruits of action presuppose intellection and intellection itself is based on this natal error. Human behaviour is on a par with animal behaviour in this respect for both are the result of this natural want of discrimination. Śaṅkara’s dicta on this point are incontrovertible for they are all based upon universal intuition.

(1) तमेतमविद्याश्यम् आल्पानात्मनोत्तरस्वां पुरुस्कृत्य सवें प्रमाणप्रमेयपरिवर्त्त्या लौकिका वैदिकाः प्रकृतः, सर्ब्बाणि च शास्त्राणि विधिप्रतियोगिनोऽपराणि।।

“It is on the presupposition of this mutual superimposition of the Self and the non-self, called Avidyā that all conventions of the means and objects of right knowledge – whether secular or sacred – proceed, as also all the Śāstras dealing with injunction and prohibition or final release.”

Introduction to SBh.

(2) यथा हि पश्चादि: शब्दादिभि: श्रीस्वादीनां संबंधे सति शब्दादिविधानां प्रतिवेदैरे जाते ततो नवीनतेः, अनुवृत्ते च प्रवत्तनां-यथा तुष्टोत्तरकरं पुरुषप्रभुमुखयुगल्यं माहतुमयमवर्तित पतालिष्ठ मार्गं, हरिन्यानुरूपाणाशिरमुक्तां तेन प्रत्येकमुक्तं वर्तं — एवं पुरुषाः अपि व्युपपरिज्ञान: कृप्तिन्यानु अक्रोशत: ख्रिष्टोत्तरकरणुं बलवत उपलब्ध ततो निवर्तने तद्विपरीतानुं प्रति प्रवत्तने। अतः समान: पश्चादि: पुरुषाणां प्रमाणप्रमेयपरिवर्त्त्या च श्रीस्वादीनां च प्रतियोगिविवेकमुः सर: प्रत्यक्षादिविधानाः। सत्तमानययद्यनानात्, श्रवनयिनमात् पुरुषाणां प्रत्यक्षादिविधानवर्त्तकाः: समानं इति निःश्चये।।

“And because there is no difference between the (lower animals) like beasts and man. (To explain:) Beasts and other animals run away from any sound etc. that contact their ear and other organs of sense whenever the knowledge is unfavourable, but proceed towards them whenever the knowledge is pleasant. As for instance, when they see a man approaching them with a raised hand with a club, they begin to run away from him fearing that he intends to beat them, but when they see one with a tuft of green grass in his hands they proceed towards him. So also, even men with intellect developed, turn away when they see strong fierce-looking persons shouting with upraised swords in hand, but come forward towards those who are opposite to this in nature. It is well-known that knowledge through perception of the lower animals presupposes non-discrimination. Since the behaviour of even intelligent persons is seen to be similar to that of animals, their perception etc. also at the time can be concluded to be similar.

[The meaning is that while men do have the faculty of re-thinking about their behaviour, the process of behaviour itself is the result of superimposition due to want of discrimination. This shows that all human activity based upon perception and means of knowledge, is in the field of an innate error due to want of discrimination between the real and the unreal.]

(3) एववपमनादिवर्तनातो नैसिग्निकाध्यायवर्ताः प्रत्यक्षां लौकिका वैदिकाः अर्थात्तथात: प्राप्त: आल्पानात्मनोत्तरस्वां पुरुस्कृत्यविवेक, ख्रिष्टोत्तरकरणुं बलवत उपलब्ध ततो निवर्तने तद्विपरीतानुं प्रति प्रवत्तने। अतः समान: पश्चादि: पुरुषाणां प्रमाणप्रमेयपरिवर्त्त्या। श्रीस्वादीनां च प्रतियोगिविवेकमुः सर: प्रत्यक्षादिविधानाः।

“Thus, this beginningless and endless innate superimposition of the nature of a false notion engenders agency and experience of the fruits of action that all humanity is familiar with. In order to destroy this source of all evil, all the Upanishads are begun to propound the Vidyā of the oneness of Ātman.”

Introduction to SBh.

10. The clarification of the concept of Avidyā then, is a special contribution of Śaṅkara to Vedānta. Nowhere else, in the whole range of Vedāntic
literature do we find this precision of thought which distinguishes this root-Avidyā, which is responsible for the whole process of human knowledge and activity, from the individual instances of the ignorance of objects in ordinary life. This Avidyā is beginningless not because, as has been egregiously ill-conceived by some followers of Śaṅkara, there is a beginningless series of individual Avidyā flowing in a continuous stream, but because it is itself the conjurer of time in which any series can be conceived to exist. Avidyā is no actual concept of Ātman, because Ātman can never be perceived or conceived by the mind, the mind itself being a superimposition on the Self. So it is a notion having the semblance of a false concept (विद्यास्यवल्लक्ष्यम्). And Vidyā, in its turn, is not knowledge of Ātman in the ordinary sense, for the simple reason that Ātman can never be an object of knowledge. It is rather the intuition of Ātman by Ātman himself. We shall have occasion to discuss the nature of this Vedāntic knowledge later on.

3. CREATION, MĀYĀ AND CAUSATION

II. The concepts of Creation and Māyā demand clarification to justify the monistic systems of Vedānta. Māyā is of especial importance for Śaṅkara’s system, because much ink has been spilt on the question as to whether or not the doctrine of Māyā in Vedānta, is a borrowing from Buddhism.

The following are some of the Upanishadic texts referring to creation:

(१) स प्राणमुखजः प्राणाचर्चा संवाधित्यितव: सुझिविन्मित्
मन: । अनुमन्नानीयते मनो मन:। कर्म सोऽऽका लोकस्तु च नामि च ॥

“He created life, from life faith, ether, air, light, water, earth, senses, mind and food. From food vigour, tapas, mantras, religious works, the worlds and in the worlds, name.”

Pr. 6-4.

(२) अत्यो वा इत्या भयं आलंकारवत्कत् सिद्धान्तुं। स
ईश्वर वा इति। स इमाल्लोकान्यज्ञात। अभो
परीक्षोपरिपापः ॥

“This was indeed Ātman alone in the beginning and nothing else, sentient or non-sentient. He thought, ‘Let me create the worlds’. He created these worlds— Ambhas (the upper aquatic regions), Mareehies, Mara, and Apah (the Nether aquatic regions).”

Ai. 1-1, 2.
But this sort of Self-transformation is repugnant to the Upanishads. For a subsequent text in this self-same Chândogya Upanishad says:

(5) स य एयोदिक्षितदत्त्वमिदं सर्वं तत्सत् स आत्मा
वत्त्वसि संभवेऽविभूति ॥

"Now for this Subtle Being: All this Universe has it alone as its essence, that alone is real, that is the Âtman, that thou art, O Svetaketu!"  Ch. 6-8-7.

[It is declared that the Pure Being alone which created the Universe is strictly real, and that alone is the genuine Âtman. By implication, the Universe, is comparatively unreal, and the individual selves are not the genuine Âtman.]

Here is another passage which declares that the Paramâtman alone is really real:–

(5) सोहाकामयत। वहुः स्वयं प्रजायेति। स तयोऽत्त्वम। स
tतस्यात्मा। इति सर्ब्बमूर्तज। यदिद तरुः। तत्वपुरुषः।
तत्तदुप्रविश्यं। सस्य दश्यमवत्। निस्ते चानिस्ते। च।
निलव्यर्थवानुच। च। विज्ञानां च। सवं चारुः च
सत्सायमवत।। यदिद तद्देव। सत्त्वमविभूति।॥

'He wished ‘may I become plenteous, may I be born as the manifold'. He thought it over; having thought it over, He created all this, whatsoever we find here. Having created it, He entered the very same (creation). And having entered it He became this (actual) and that, the definable and the undefinable, the substrate and the non-substrate, the sentient and the non-sentient. The Real became both the real and the unreal, whatever there is here. They call it Reality.'  Tai. 2-6.

[The really real Paramatman has entered into the created Universe and appears as all the differentiated things, and the individual selves. The distinction of the real and the unreal, is
also unreal from the standpoint of the really real. More of this
distinction of views anon.]

12. And now for the concept of Māyā in the
Upanishads:

छःदिवस यज्ञः क्रत्यो शतानि भूति भर्ति यज्ञ वेदाद वदनि।
अस्मानाविने सुकोक्त विमंततस्तस्मानो मायया सनिरूऽ।
पायतु प्रकृति विद्यामाययिने तु परस्परात्।
तस्यावधवापूर्वैस्तु व्याप्तं सर्वार्थं जगत्।

“The various Chandas (metres), Yagnas and Kratus
(sacrifices with and without the Yupa-post), austerities
(like the Candrayana), and the existent entities as well as
results to be achieved, which the Vedas reveal—all these
are born of this (Great Being), The Māyin (magician)
creates all this Universe, and in it is another bound by
Māyā. Prakriti is to be known as the Māyā, the Great
Lord as the Māyin (magician). All this world of moving
and non-moving beings is pervaded by (individual souls)
which are his parts.” Śve. 4-9, 10.

Here appears the word ‘Māyā’ which has scared
many a scholar. Bāskarāchārya, Yāmunāchārya and
others, took advantage of the employment of this
word and argued that Advaitins who employ the
Māyā-doctrine are the crypto-Buddhists and some
oriental scholars have openly charged Gauḍapāda
with having borrowed the doctrine from the
Buddhists, while some of them have gone to the
length of concluding that the Śvetāsvatara, must be a
later Upanishad just because it contains this bugbear
of the word Māyā. And yet, what is there in this
innocuous epithet of Māyin as applied to Isvara and
Māyā, as the material out of which he creates the
world? No section of the Buddhists ever postulated
an Īśvara or invested him with Māyā, whether as a
power or anything else. And when we closely examine
Śaṅkara’s Bhaṭṭha, we find that there is nothing to
be afraid or ashamed of when we entertain this highly
philosophical doctrine which so satisfactorily explains
the phenomena of life while keeping the Advaitic
Absolute perfectly intact.

13. First of all, we should dismiss the idea of the
Post-Śaṅkaras who have stumbled into the mistake
of identifying Māyā with Avidyā, misled by the
collocation of those two words in stray passages of
Śaṅkara’s Bhaṭṭha, such as the following—

एक एवं परमेश्वरः कुत्स्तनिन्यो विद्धानात्मोः
अविद्यान्याया मायाविविक्तेः अनेकाय विभाग्ये,
नान्यो विज्ञानार्थातः।

Sīh. 1-3-19.

This passage simply means that there is only one
principle essentially of the nature of changeless
Consciousness, and that is Brahman or the Supreme
Lord, and that he is regarded to be many through
Avidyā, just as a magician on account of his Māyā, is
looked upon to be many, while there is really no
sentient entity other than Brahman or the Lord. It
has nothing to do with the identity or difference of
the Vedāntic concepts of Avidyā and Māyā.

14. And in the second place, some thinkers misled
by the word ‘Sakti’ occurring in Śaṅkara’s Bhaṭṭha
as well as in the Śrutis, think that Māyā is a power
exercised by God to delude souls. The following
excerpts not only dispel any doubt as to what Śaṅkara
exactly means by this word, but also lay down a clear-
cut principle which enables us to distinguish the concept of Māyā from Avidyā.

(1) परमेश्वरस्य नियमस्वाभावः प्रागवस्था जगतेऽभुवंगमये न वस्ततः। सा च चावश्याधुपणतर्था। अविभित्र त्यं हि सा। न हि तत्वत बिना परमेश्वरस्य सृष्टिः नियत्तिः। शक्तिहृदलितिः तत्त्व प्रकृत्यपुरुषः।। नूतनम च भुनुरुपतिः। कुलः? विवेधा तत्त्वत बिना भूतत्वदेतिहतः। अविभाविकाः हि बीजाभिः। अभ्यासविदनिद्रित्या परमेश्वरस्य मायायमिया महादुपितः; यथा सर्वमार्गतिवेषयित्तः। जेते संसारिणो जीवाः। तदेद्वयस्य क्वचितः आकाशाः। निदित्त्वम्; 'एकस्मिन खलन्यसे गार्याकाश ओद्याद प्रोख्ते' (भु. ३-८-११) इति श्रुते। क्वचिदस्मादचतित्तम्; 'अद्वातस्य: परः;' (भु. २-१२) इति श्रुते। क्वचिदचन्द्राः इति सृष्टितम्; 'भायाँ तु प्रकृति विविधानाविद्य तु महाश्रुतम्' (श्रेण्य. ४-१०) इति मन्त्रविन्यासत। अविभाविकाः हि सा माया तत्त्वन्तिनिर्देशाय आकाशवाचः।।

“What is admitted by us is, however, only a previous state of the world dependent on the Supreme Lord, not independent of Him. And it has to be necessarily admitted, for it serves a purpose. To explain: Without it, the Supreme Lord cannot be a creator, since without this potentiality, He cannot be active. And on this supposition only, the released souls cannot be reborn, for in this case the causal potentiality is burnt up by Vidyā. The causal potentiality is called Avidyā (or the Unmanifest), having its locus in the Supreme Lord is the illusory universal sleep, in which all the transmigratory souls are sleeping deprived of the knowledge of their true nature. Now this Avidyā is sometimes denoted by the word Akāśa (ether), as for instance in the Śruti ‘It is in that Imperishable indeed, O Gargi, that the Akāśa is woven as the warp and the woof’ (Br. 3-8-11). Sometimes it is denoted by the term Akshara, as for instance in the Śruti ‘He is greater than the great Akshara’ (Mu. 2-1-2). And sometimes it is called Māyā. For the Mantra says Prakṛti is to be known to be Māyā, and the Supreme Lord to be the Māyin.’ (Śve. 4-10).”

SBh. 1-4-3.

[Here it is clear that Śakti is synonymous with Prakṛti, the causal potentiality of the world, and is called Māyā also. The individual souls in that state, are enveloped in ignorance of their true nature, to wit, perfect identity with Brahman.]

The causal potentiality or Māyā is said to be Avidyātmika (of the nature of Avidyā) which expression may be wrongly understood by the unwary to have a meaning identical with Avidyā. The following extract effectively wards off the possibility of such a mistake.

(2) ‘सर्वस्येष्येष्यस्य आत्ममुक्ते इवविद्याकलयते नामरूपेऽ
तत्त्वस्यवार्ताप्रविष्टाय संसारप्रकृतिप्रविष्टे, सर्वस्येष्ये
स्त्राय प्रकृतिः; प्रकृति: — इति च हृदिस्वतुलोपितेऽपि।

“Fictitiously imagined by Avidyā as though they were identical with the omniscient Lord, name and form undefinable either as (Īśvara) Himself or distinct from Him, the cause of this manifold world of mundane life, are called in the Śruti and the Smṛti, ‘Māyā’, causal potentiality and Prakṛti.”

SBh. 2-1-14.

Here we find Māyā described as the figment of Avidyā, and identified with Prakṛti, the original state of the world before creation. It is called Māyā (illusory appearance) clearly because it cannot be defined to be identical with Īśvara or Brahman or quite distinct from Brahman. Elsewhere, in the Bhāshyas, the expression Anirvacanīya (तत्त्वस्यवार्ताप्रविष्टे) has been explained by the illustration of foam which is not quite the same as water, but yet not a different entity either. This expression, by the way, gave rise to the theory of Sadasadanirvacanīya (प्रकृतिः ज्ञात्वेत्) which are neither being nor not-being developed in the sub-commentaries on Śaṅkara's works. In this
passage, not quoted here at full length, we find variants for the expression Avidyākalpita, such as Avidyāpratyupasthāpita, Avidyākṛta, and Avidyātmaka (presented by Avidyā, made up of Avidyā, and of the nature of Avidyā) all of which mean the objective appearance due to Avidyā. Māyā, then, according to Śaṅkara is the illusory causal seed of the world, due to Avidyā (Adhyāsa or mutual superimposition of Ātman and un-Ātman, occasioned by want of discrimination).

15. The clarification of the concepts of creation and Māyā is, incidentally, also the clarification of the concept of the Vedāntic concept of ‘causality’. We have seen that the Āranykas speak of Brahman both as the creator and the material cause of the universe. But in what sense precisely is Brahman the cause? In order to be in a position to answer this question, it is necessary to understand the nature of the effect, the Universe itself. Here is Śaṅkara’s picture of the Universe:

(१) अव्यय जगत्: नामरूपार्थि व्याकृतस्य अनेककार्योन्यक्रम: संरक्षस्यः, मन्नसाधितयत: रचनारूपस्य जन्मविवेकितवर्तमान: व तद्वर्त्तम: सर्वविषयः सर्ववशेषः: कारणवत: प्रवाहत ततो ब्रह्म॥

“The omniscient and omnipotent cause from which proceeds the origin, sustentation and dissolution of this universe – the universe which is differentiated by name and form, comprehends many agents and experiencers (of the fruits of actions), and is the abode of the fruits of actions regulated by particular places, times and causes (the universe) whose creation is not even conceivable by the mind – that cause is Brahman.”

SBh. 1-1-2.

This description is so comprehensive, including as it does even time, space and causation, in its scope, evidently forbids the conception of Brahman as the ‘cause’ of the universe in the ordinary sense of the word. Nor can we think of Brahman as the ‘maker’ of the world in the same sense that a carpenter is the maker of a table, for all agents of action are within the universe, and Brahman or Īśvara cannot be thought of as an agent who forms an idea, makes a plan of what he is to make, and then executes it. In what sense, then, is Brahman the cause and the world its effect? Here is Bādarāyaṇa’s reply according to Śaṅkara:

(२) कार्यमाकारात् वहुप्रकृतत: जगत्, कारण परं ब्रह्म:।
तस्मात् कारणात् परमार्थात्तेजस्य व्याप्तिकेष्वा: कार्यस्याव- गयते:। कृत:? आरामणानात्तदिदिः।॥

“The effect is this manifold world consisting of ether etc., and the cause is the Highest Brahman. The non-existence of the effect in reality apart from that cause is concluded. On what grounds? For the reason that Āranyka declares that the effect is merely the play of words (वाचारणाम) and for other similar reasons.”

SBh. 2-1-14.

The word Ādi (etc.) in Bādarāyaṇa’s Sūtra refers to the texts teaching the identity of the world with Brahman. Accordingly Śaṅkara says:

(३) ‘आरामणानात्तदिदिः.’ इत्यादिकान्त, ‘एवत्तदात्मायथं सर्वं सत्त्यं स आत्मा तत्तत्त्वम्’ (छ. ६-८-६), इदं सर्वं यथायत्त्वम् (बु. २-४-६), ‘ब्रह्मवेदे सर्वम्’ (?), ‘आरामणात्तदिदिः’ (छ. ७-२५-५), ‘नेपान्ति किञ्चन’ (बु. ४-४-२९) — इत्येवभाबस्य आलौकिकव्यदिक्षविदानपरं वचनात्तेजस्याव।॥

सू. भान. २-१-१४.
Here the Chāndogya, the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and other Śrutis teaching essential unity of the world with the non-dual Ātman or Brahman, are appealed to. It follows that this apparent world, as we are aware of, is only the effect of Māyā, and is essentially identical with and has no independent existence apart from Brahman. The following are explicit statements to this effect in the Bhāṣya:

(४) ननु शाश्वदिहीनं ब्रह्म जगतः कारणम्। बालम्। न तु शाश्वदिहितस्कार्यं कारणमात्मना हीनं प्राणसृन्तेरिदानी वा अष्टि॥

"Objection:– But (according to you) Brahman devoid of qualities such as sound is the cause of the Universe (full of qualities)!

Reply:– Quite true, but the effect with qualities like sound, never exists except in its essential forms as the cause whether now or before the creation."

SBh. 2-1-7.

(५) तस्मात् तथा घटकरकाशकाशायान्यम् बहाकशाशकाशायान्यम्। कारणम्। बालम्। न तु शाश्वदिहितस्कार्यं कारणमात्मना हीनं प्राणसृन्तेरिदानी वा अष्टि॥

Therefore it must be concluded that just as jar-space and pot-space and other apparent spaces are not other than the one ethereal space, and just as water in a mirage and other appearances are not other than the desert etc. for those ethers and water etc. are of the nature of being perceived and vanishing, undefinable in their apparent nature, so also this manifold world of the experienced and experiences is not other than Brahman in essence.

SBh. 2-1-14.

This extract places it beyond all doubt that by the Vedāntic word ‘effect’ Śaṅkara understands nothing more than appearance, and consequently the ‘cause’ for him stands for the substrate on which appearances are superimposed. The students must be forewarned, however, that the so-called theory of origination of appearances from Avidyā (प्रतिपादितक्रस्वार्सतिविवाद), a pet doctrine of the Post-Śaṅkaras, is conspicuous by its absence in the Bhāṣya. The doctrine of three grades of existence transcendental (परापर्यावर्तकाधम), empirical (व्यवहारावर्तकाधम) and apparent (प्रतिपत्तिवर्तकाधम) is quite unknown to the Sūtra-Bhāṣya. On the contrary, Śaṅkara emphatically declares that there are no grades of existence:

(६) यथा च कारणं ब्रह्म त्रिपु कालेपु सर्वं न व्यवाहितरं, एवं कार्यमियं जगतित्व न कालेपु सर्वं न व्यवाहितरं। एवं च युनः सर्वं अतोड्डवन्यत्वं कारणात् कार्यस्य॥

"Just as Brahman the cause never deviates from existence in all the three periods of time, so also the effect, the world, never deviates from existence in all the three periods (of creation, sustenance and dissolution). And existence again is only one. So for this reason also, the effect is none other than the cause."

SBh. 2-1-16.

Accordingly Śaṅkara says: ‘तथा च लोकस्वभवः— शृवत्तिका हि रजतवद्वंसस्ते, एकाः सद्भोगवेव इति।’ “And such is the experience of the common man – who says it is the nacre that looks like silver’, ‘The one moon appears as though she had a duplicate.” (Int. SBh. p. 2). So according to him, it is only Brahman, that appears as the world and we have no real origination of the world at all. He avers this in so many words when he says:–
(७) अविद्याकल्पितेन च नामस्मृतिः वै नामस्मृतिः नामस्मृतिः
अविद्याकल्पितेनततः व्याधितासद्विज्ञानान्तरः
व्यवहारसङ्कायस्य निर्माणसंगतिः; पारस्परिक्षेः च रूपस्य
रूपविन्दुः सर्वव Hyderabad अपरिपातम्
अन्तःकारणम् अनवतिक्षः।

dati न निरववल्लं ब्रह्म: कुम्भिति।

“Brahman becomes an object within the purview of empirical thought and expression dealing with transformation etc. in its special aspect of name and form, of the nature of the differentiated or the undifferentiated, which is undefinable either as (Brahman itself) or something other than it. In its own real nature, however, it transcends all empirical thought and expression and is never changed.”

S Bh. 2-1-27.

This clarification of the concept of Māyā is to be found nowhere else except in Śaṅkara’s exposition. Empirically speaking, Māyā is the causal potentiality of the world, projected by Avidyā, or Superimposition; it is but a special aspect of Brahmā which evolves itself into the world. But Brahmā, in its true and real nature, is above all causation.

“And inasmuch as the special aspect of Brahmā, fictitiously created by Avidyā, is a mere play of words. The fact of Brahmā, being impertible remains, uncontradicted.”

S Bh. 2-1-27.

16. Before closing this discussion of creation and Māyā, we have to answer one more question. If there be really no creation, and causation be wholly Māyic only, a figment of Avidyā, how is it that we find so many different accounts of creation in the Upanishads? Is it a mere waste of words? Here is Śaṅkara’s answer:

(१) न चेचे परिणाममुक्ति: परिणामप्रतिपादनार्थी, तत्त्वात्मसही
भाष्यवाहिनी चेचे परिणामविन्द्यम” इत्यतः यथा
अमर्च वे जनक प्राप्तोऽसि” (Br. ४-२-४) इति।
तस्मात्मप्रत्येकं कष्टिदपि
दोषप्रक्रिया भिन्नतिः।

“Nor does this Śruti, teaching evolution, really purport
to teach evolution as such; for, no fruit is known to accrue
by that knowledge. It rather aims at teaching the Ātman
of Brahmic Nature, for, its knowledge is known to yield
a good result. (To explain:) Yājñavalkya commences his
teaching with the proposition ‘This is the Ātman that
has been described as ‘not this, not this’ and concludes
‘Fearlessness, O Janaka, hast thou attained indeed, (Br.
४-२-४). So, there is no defect in our interpretation of the
Śruti.”

S Bh. 2-1-27.
4. ĪŚVARA

17. The concept of Īśvara is as enigmatical as, if not more so than, the conceptions of Māyā and Causation in Advaita to most of the modern critics of Śaṅkara. This is because these are all uniformly influenced by the current discussions of such topics in the light of the later sub-commentaries on Śaṅkara’s works. The Vivaraṇa of Prakāśātman, for instance, brings forward several alternative theories about the cause of the world such as these: (1) The original Brahman whose reflections are the individual souls, and which is associated with Māyā, is the cause; (2) Brahman reflected in Māyā-Avidyā is the cause of the world; (3) The individual souls themselves, each of them, manifest Brahman as the world through their private Avidyā; and there are as many worlds projected as there are Jīvas; (4) Brahman itself changes into the world through its Avidyā, just as individuals manifest a world each. – P.V. p. 232.

And Appayya Dikshitar’s Siddhānta-Leśa Saṅgraha, brings forward a theory that Brahman associated with qualities is the cause of the world, and that released souls attain union with the Saguna-Brahman or Īśvara only, until all the souls are ultimately released (SLS. p. 534-535). Unconsciously swayed by such scholastic systems perhaps, the late Dr. Thibeaut wrote in the Introduction to his translation of Śaṅkara’s Sūtra-Bhāṣya as follows:—

“Placing myself at the point of view of a Śaṅkara, I am startled at the outset by the second Sūtra of the first Adhyāya, which undertakes to give a definition of Brahman. … What, we must ask, is this Sūtra meant to define? – That Brahman, we are inclined to answer, whose cognition the first Sūtra declares to constitute the task of the entire Vedānta, that Brahman whose cognition is the only road to final release, that in fact which Śaṅkara calls the highest. But here we must object to ourselves, the highest Brahman is not properly defined as that from which the world originates. … That from which the world proceeds can by a Śaṅkara be accepted only as a definition of Īśvara —, of Brahman which by its association with Māyā is enabled to project the false appearance of this world and it is as improbable that the Sūtras should open with a definition of that inferior principle from whose cognition there accrues no benefit, as it is unlikely that they should conclude with a discipline of the state of those who know the lower Brahman only.”

Vedānta Sūtras Intro. p. XCII.

In this extract we find a glaring confusion of the connotations of the terms, Īśvara, Para Brahman, and Lower Brahman. But where do we have any warrant either in the Upanishads or in Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya, for the supposition that Apara Brahman is ‘lower’ than the Para Brahman, or that Īśvara is an inferior principle in comparison with Para Brahman? Let us first see what the Śrūtis themselves have to say on the subject.

18. We shall first of all cite the text where the terms ‘Para Brahman’ and ‘Apara Brahman’ occur:

(1) एतेऽस्त्वयाम परं चापरं च ब्रह्म यदेक्षरस्त्वपदिष्टमेति

"Verily, O Satyakāma, this Omkāra is both the Higher
and the Lower Brahman. Therefore the devotee goes to either of these only through this source.” Pr. 5-2.

Perhaps this is the only text which expressly makes the distinction between the Higher and the Lower Brahman. There is another text in the Muṇḍaka which refers to Paramam Brahman:–

(2) स यो ह वै तत्त्वर्मं ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मव भवति, नास्य-ब्रह्मविकुले भवति। तत्त्वः यो तत्त्वः पापमेण गुणापक्षयो विचिन्तेऽऽहो भवति।

“Whosoever knows that Supreme Brahman indeed, becomes that very Brahman. In his family, no one is born that knows not Brahman. He crosses lamentation, crosses sin; freed from the knots of the heart, he becomes immortal.” Mu. 3-2-9.

[This Brahman whose knowledge results in attaining identity with Brahman, has been called Akshara (the Imperishable), Satyam (Reality), and Purusha (Person) also in this Upanishad.]

We find the word ‘Īśvara’ in the following Śrutis:–

(3) तत्त्वतः परमं प्रवेशं तं दैवत्तानं परंमं च दैवत्तम।
पति पत्नीं परमं परस्ताविद्याः देवं भुनेश्वरीपदयम्।

“Him the Greatest Ruler of all rulers, Him the Highest God of all the gods, the Greatest Protector of all protectors, beyond all of them do we regard that Shining one (देवम्) Praiseworthy Ruler of the world.” Śve. 6-7.

[The next two verses contain the word Śakti (साक्ति:) and Kāraṇam (कारणम:) which we have already discussed.]

It is clear that the Śruti makes no difference between Para Brahman and Īśvara.

19. We may now proceed to consider Śaṅkara’s views on the point. While opening the discussion about the interpretation of the text ‘स एकानृ ब्रह्म गमयति’ (He leads these to Brahman) Śaṅkara writes as follows:–

(1) ‘स एकानृ ब्रह्म गमयति’ (छाँ. ४-१५-५) इत्यत्र विचिन्तम् – कि कार्यमयं ब्रह्म गमयति, आहोस्वतं परमेश्वरं अविकृतं गुणं ब्रह्मं? – इति। कुट: संशयः? ब्रह्मश्वतप्राप्यवर्त, गतिशुद्धेऽऽह। तत् कार्यमयं सर्गमयं अपरं ब्रह्म एकानृ गमयत्वमाव: पुरुषः। – इति बादिराचार्याः पन्यते। कुट:? अस्य गतिशुद्धेऽऽह।

“The doubt arises whether the devotees are led to Kārya (effect), Apara (Lower), or Param (Higher) Brahman itself, Avikram (unmodified), Mukhyam (Brahman in the primary sense). Whence this doubt? Because of the word Brahman, and because of the Śruti teaching movement. He the teacher Bādari thinks that it is the Kārya (effect), Saguṇa (with qualities), Apara (Lower) Brahman, for motion is applicable only to this Brahman.” SBh. 4-3-7.

In this context, Śaṅkara gives variants of both the terms Para-Brahman and Apara-Brahman. Now, do these denote two distinct entities or one and the same Brahman? The following excerpt will answer this question:–

(1) तत्त्व पाराब्रह्मविवेकानवारेण अपरिमुच्यु ब्रह्मण वर्तमान गतिशुद्धं; परस्यमुच्च अध्यायोंवति। कि हे ब्रह्मणो भर्म अपरं चेति यद्य हे, ‘पूर्वाः सत्यम्यम परं च यम च ब्रह्म यदोद्वारः।’ (प्र. ५-२) इत्यादिश्रवीनातृ। कि: परं ब्रह्म किमपरम्पतितं?
उच्छस्य यत्र अख्यातिश्रवीनादेव देवोदिश्वयं।

It is clear that the Śruti makes no difference between Para Brahman and Īśvara.
"Here Śrutis teaching movement in the context of Apara-Brahman, have been wrongly applied to Para-Brahman, merely because of failure to discriminate between the Higher and the Lower Brahman.

Question:– Are there two Brahmans then, the Higher and the Lower?

Answer:– Yes, there are two. (This is borne out) by the Śruti: ‘O Satyakāma, verily this Omkāra is both the Higher and the Lower Brahman.

Question:– Which is the Higher Brahman then and which is the Lower?

Answer:– We reply: Where Brahman is taught by means of words like Asthūlām (not gross), negating specific features such as name and form created by Avidyā, that is the Higher Brahman. Where, on the other hand, that same Brahman is taught as qualified by some specific features for the purpose of meditation, as for instance by means of such words as मनोवृत्ति: (made up of mind), प्राणार्थी (having Prāṇa as his body), भास्कः: (of the nature of light) etc., that is the Lower Brahman.

Objection:– The Śruti teaching non-duality would be violated in this case, then!

Reply:– No, for this has been obviated by stating that the form with attributes is due to the conditioning adjunct of name and form created by Avidyā.”

Sbh. 4-3-14.

It is clear that one and the same Brahman is regarded as higher or lower according as specific features are denied in the Śruti or ascribed to it for the sake of meditation in the sphere of Avidyā for the convenience of aspirants who cannot rise to the level of the absolutely featureless Pure Brahman. Brahman in itself, of course, remains in its pristine purity even when it is mediated upon as endowed with qualities by mediocre intellects. Hence it is that Śaṅkara does not hesitate to style even Brahman meditated upon as ‘Para Brahman’, when the context is clear enough that it is Brahman with qualities. Witness the following quotation:–

(४) ‘अप्राणी भ्राम्य: ूः:’ (प्र. २.२२) इति श्रुति: साज्ज्वहाविविषय:। इति तु ‘मनोवृत्ति: प्राणार्थी:’ (छ. ३.१३–२२) इति साज्ज्वहाविविषया इति विशेष:। आय विवक्षितप्राणार्थी: परमेव भ्राम्योपस्यवेव पदार्थविशेषतिः गायते॥

"‘Without Prānas, without mind, pure’ – is a Śruti relating to the Pure Brahman, while this Śruti – ‘Made up of mind, having Prāṇa as his body etc.’ (Ch. 3-14-2) refers to Brahman with qualities. This is the difference between the two texts. Therefore since the qualities intended to be taught by the Śruti apply to Brahman only, we have to conclude that it is Para Brahman alone that is to be meditated upon.”

Sbh. 1-2-2.

It is obvious that Saguna Brahman intended for meditation has been itself styled Para Brahman, as nobody would fall into the error of imagining that Brahman without qualities is meant by that term. As to the propriety of applying the epithet ‘Higher Brahman here, it has to be noted that qualified Brahman is higher relatively as compared with the individual self. That this line of reasoning is justifiable according to Śaṅkara, is vouched by the following:

(४) नु अपरभ्राम्यापरिपदे परेपुरुष: इति विशेषाय नेपवापदे। नैप दोष:। पण्डितक्षणा प्राणस्य परत्स्यपदे:॥

"Objection:– If the lower Brahman is taken to be meant in this passage (Pr. 5-5), the epithet ‘Param Purusham’ (the higher Person) would not be consistent.
Reply:—This fallacy cannot be imputed here. For Praṇa may himself be well regarded as ‘higher,’ relatively in comparison with Virat.” SBh. 1-3-13.

This is a discussion devoted to the interpretation in the Prashna Upanishad (5-2-5) where it has to be determined which Brahman is meant by ‘the Higher Purusha’ to be meditated upon through the symbol Aum. The prima facie view that it is the lower Brahman is sought to be justified by arguing that the word ‘higher’ is only relative.

20. So much for the apparent inconsistency in the use of the adjectives ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ with respect to Brahman. We have found that lower Brahman is not, according to Śaṅkara, either distinct from or inferior to higher Brahman in any way. It is identically the same Brahman that is sought to be known by the seekers of the highest grade or to be meditated upon by the middling aspirants. That Brahman is regarded as that from which the Universe originates, cannot militate against its being regarded as the higher Brahman, is readily seen from Śaṅkara’s clarification of the concept of causation already discussed in the previous section. Without tarrying any more to discuss this objection, we may now proceed to an examination of the concept of Īśvara as understood by Śaṅkara.

21. In his commentary on the second Sūtra of Sārīraka, Śaṅkara writes:

(१) अस्य जगत: नामस्थाल्यं व्याकृतस्य, अनेककर्मस्वस्य: संयुक्तस्य, मनसाया-विन्यःचनारुपस्य जन्मस्थितिमुद्यत: सर्वजात: सर्वस्वेत: कारणादु: भवति तदलाव...। न यथौत्तिप्रेषणस्य जगत: यथौत्तिप्रेषणम् ईशवरं पुल्लवं अयति: प्राध्यात्म अचेतनात्म, अगुणोदभावात् संसारिणो

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वा उत्तरादि संभावितं शक्यम् II

The first sentence which describes the nature of the Universe has already been translated on page 20. The second sentence says that,

“The origination etc. of the Universe with these characteristics cannot be possibly conceived to be effected by any cause other than the Īśvara possessing these qualities.” SBh. 1-1-2.

It is clear that the secondless Brahman is equated here with Īśvara (Ruler) who is omniscient and omnipotent.

This apparent self-contradiction—that Brahman is featureless and at the same time possesses the qualities of omnipotence—what puzzled Thibaut and made him remark: “Placing myself at the point of view of a Śaṅkara, I am startled at the outset by the second Sūtra of the first Adhyāya” (Vs. Int. p. XCTI). But Śaṅkara persists in this identification of the absolutely featureless Brahman with Īśvara in the body of his Bhāshya throughout. Take for instance, the following extract—

(२) एवं प्राणं अवर्धवते। योऽवयम्यमल्लगिताम्। कृपयेत्वद्वग्नये। कामविज्ञान ईश्वरम्। परमा प्राणतः। न यथौत्तिप्रेषणस्य जगत: यथौत्तिप्रेषणम्। ईशवरं पुल्लवं अयति: प्राध्यात्म अचेतनात्म, अगुणोदभावात् संसारिणो।

“To this objection we reply: This source of all beings, the possessor of qualities like invisibility etc. is the highest Lord only and nothing else. How is this conclusion arrived at? Because His attributes have been cited. (To explain) The clause ‘He who is all-knowing and all-perceiving’ evidently refers to the exclusive attribute of the Highest
Lord.” SBh. 1-2.21.

It is evident that negations of specific features has been here spoken of as though they were qualities, and that very Brahman without features has been styled as the Highest Īṣvara.

22. The derivative meaning of the word Īṣvara is ‘ruler’. It would be interesting to enquire how Saṅkara, an Absolutist who postulates One Brahman without a second, reconciles himself to the idea of a ruler and admits the distinction of an omniscient ruler and the ruled into his system without self-contradiction. The following extract throws abundant light on this point:—

(1) कृष्णदेशप्रवेशाय ईश्वरस्य । यशोऽभिषेकः सर्वायमान्यः।

The objection is started here that for one who holds the doctrine of the unity of the one changeless Brahmātman, there can be no distinction of a ruler and something ruled, and hence, this would counter the fundamental tenet of accepting Īṣvara as the cause of the world. And the answer is that the doctrine of Causality is Māyic, but the omniscient Īṣvara himself is distinct from the Māyic name and form. We have quoted this portion of the Bhāshya already (on p. 19), in connection with the clarification of the concept of Māyā.

The sequel to this portion has now to be reviewed in connection with the concept of Īṣvara, which is the subject-matter of the present section. Saṅkara here says:

"Thus (Brahman) conditioned by name and form set up by Avidyā becomes Īṣvara, just as universal ether limited as it were by jars, pots etc. And empirically speaking, He (the Īṣvara) rules over the souls conditioned by individual consciousness (Vijñānātmakha) called Jīvas, who are really one with Himself, but who like the jars-spaces of the illustration depend upon aggregates of the body and the senses effected by name and form presented by Avidyā. Thus the Lordship of the Lord, his omniscience and omnipotence are only relative to the limitation caused by the conditioning of adjuncts of the nature of Avidyā. But in the Atman, really divested of
all conditioning factors, on the dawn of Vidyā, there cannot be any room for conceptions like the ruler and the ruled, omniscience etc. Accordingly, it has been declared in the Śruti: ‘That is the Infinite, where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, knows nothing else’ (Ch. 7-24-1) and also by the text beginning with – ‘But when for this one all has become the Ātman alone, then what could one possibly see and with what?’ (Br. 4-5-15).”

SBh. 2-1-14.

23. If Brahman alone is really real, and without a second, in what sense is it Sarvajña (omniscient), Sarvaśakta (omnipotent)? Is it not a contradiction in terms to say that there is no act of knowing on the part of Brahman and yet it is all-knowing, it exercises no power and yet it is all-powerful? How can Brahman know at all before creation since it has no corporal adjunct then and, as we all know, body is a necessary pre-requisite for consciousness to arise?

The Śruti says in reply to all this:

(१) न तस्य कार्यं करणं च विद्यते न तत्सप्तमञ्चविविधं छयते || परास्य श्रीविष्कृष्टं सृष्टवे स्वभविकृ ज्ञानविक्रिया च ||

“He has no body and no senses. There is none equal to or greater than Him. His supreme power is heard to be variously described, and belonging to His very nature is His knowledge, strength and act.”

Śve. 6-8.

[Consciousness is here described as Brahman’s very nature, and so is His power.]

The following extracts from the Bhāshya, pondered over, would throw abundant light on the true nature of the consciousness and power ascribed to the changeless Brahman without a second:

(२) कर्मस्य हि सर्वविष्कृष्टमार्गम ज्ञानं निवशिष्ट, सोसर्वज्ञ इति विष्कृष्टिहृदय् || अतःविभेहि हि ज्ञानस्य वहुविधानाति, कदाचित्र ज्ञानात्मायायश्च ज्ञात, नानात्माज्ञाते देवोपि भूति ||

“It is a self-contradiction to maintain that one who possesses eternal Consciousness capable of throwing light on everything, is not omniscient. If His knowledge were impermanent, He could know things sometimes, and could not know at other times, and consequently it would follow that He may not be omniscient. This defect is inconceivable in case His Consciousness is eternal.”

SBh. 1-1-5.

[Consciousness being His very nature, it is inconceivable that He does not know certain things on certain occasions.]

(३) शक्तिः कारणस्य कार्यनिवयायं कल्याणानां नान्य, अस्ती वा कार्यं नियमस्ते। अन्यविनियमेऽवत्, अन्यत्वात्शेषात्। तमपरं, कारणात्सार्यस्तमृतात् शक्तिः, शक्तिः त्वस्यमृतस्य।

“The power which may be supposed to inhere in the cause in order to ensure a particular effect (and no other), cannot ensure the production of the particular effect if it is other than the cause, or non-existent. For in that case, it would be quite like any other thing which is non-existent or other than the cause (and there could be no valid reason why that cause alone should produce the particular effect). Hence we have to conclude that the power is identical with the cause, and the effect is identical with the power.”

SBh. 2-1-18.

24. To sum up, Sankara’s concept of Para Brahman, Apara Brahman and Īśvara is that the same Brahman is called Higher Brahman when it is made the subject of enquiry as Reality, Lower Brahman when it is recommended in the Śrutis as an object of meditation, and Īśvara or the omniscient and omnipotent when it is thought of as the cause and
ruler of the phenomenal world containing individual souls. The distinction is admitted only from the thought-position of the student of Vedānta and there is no distinction or difference allowed in Brahman itself. The so-called Consciousness and power of the Divine being are eternally identical with the Being and it is only relativity that makes Vedāntins speak of God’s knowing or being the potential cause of an effect, just as it is in empirical life when we say ‘fire burns the faggot’, ‘the river flows’ or ‘the sun shines upon the snake when it creeps out of the anthill’. It is clear that the Absolutism of Advaita is in no way affected by these conventional ways of thinking or speaking.

5. BONDAGE AND RELEASE

25. We have seen that Śaṅkara’s clarification of the concept of Īśvara demands the supposition of two distinct stand-points. Īśvara controls the destiny of individual souls only in the sphere of the common-sense view (जोवाच्यन्ति विज्ञानत्तत्व: प्रत्येकः व्यवहारविषयः); from the standpoint of the really real, however, there is no distinction of the ruler and the ruled, or omniscience and limited knowledge at all. (न परमार्थत: ... आत्मनि उपपत्ति:) On what basis this distinction of the two view-points is formed, we shall consider later on. Meanwhile, if we grant that the distinction of the Ruler and the ruled is true on the empirical plane only, it follows as a corollary that the idea of bondage and release for the soul is also true on that plane only. The Śruti sanctions this deduction:

(१) संयुक्तमेतत् क्षरमक्षरं च व्यक्ताव्यकं भ्रह्मेतिविश्वमिसः।
अनीश्वरत्वाय कुचिते भोजनामात्र जातान् देवं कुचिते सत्याः॥

“This changeful and the changeless, both the evolved and the involved Universe mutually correlated, the Īśa supports. The helpless individual Ātman is bound on account of being an experiencer (of fruit of action). By knowing that Shining One, however, he is freed from all bonds.”
Śve. 1-8.

(२) पुरुषकारशाधारितव्यवहारविषयः॥
अनुश्रव्य न शोचति विपुंश्य विपुच्यते॥
Accordingly the Śrutī reaffirms this nature of *Saṁsāra* as described above when it says: 'There is indeed no freedom from the oppression of pleasure and pain for a being so long as it is embodied' (Ch. 8-12-1), and since contact of pleasure and pain is denied for the liberated one by the Śrutī, 'Pleasure and pain, indeed, do not touch one who is without a body' (Ch. 8-12-1), it can be inferred that unembodiedness called Mōkṣha is not an effect of meritorious deeds (yām) known through the Vedic injunctions.' SBh. 1-1-4.

(२) अशीर्ष्टवत्वात् धर्मायण्यं ज्ञितं चेत, न। तस्य स्वाभाविकत्वात्। 'अशीर्ष्टां शरीरिन्यस्वभव्यस्वव्यस्यन स्त्रियाः विविधात्मानां वचस्य श्रीरोत्तरायम्।' अति एवः 'ḥṛṣṭ्व' (भ. ४-३-२५) 'यज्ञिता-श्रीतिया।' अति एवः 'हि' (भ. ३-१-६) 'यज्ञिता-श्रीतिया।' अति एवः "हि" (भ. ३-१-६) 'यज्ञिता-श्रीतिया।'

"Objection: Unembodiedness may be itself the effect of Vedic Dharma.

*Reply:* No, for that is the very nature of Ātman. Witness the following Śrutīs: The wise person who knows the Ātman that is unembodied even while he is in the bodies, changeless among the changeful bodies, one who knows this great and all-pervading Ātman never grieves' (K. 2-22), 'He is indeed without Prāna (life-breath) and without Manas (mind) and pure' (Mū. 2-1-2), 'This Purusha (Person) is indeed never tainted by anything' (Br. 4-3-15). For this very reason, it is to be concluded that unembodiedness called Mōkṣha (Final Release) is quite unlike any effect of religious work which has got to be performed.' SBh. 1-1-4.

28. Śaṅkara reinforces his argument that final release is only the dispersal of ignorance and no more, by appealing to Śrutīs that teach immediate release as soon as enlightenment dawns.
29. There is a special advantage, in thus conceiving Môksha, for as Śaṅkara shows:

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तिथिपुरुत्वस्वत्सर्पमाप्नात्र
योक्ष्यानिनिवल्द्वे॥
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"Hence as the Śāstras remove the idea of one's being a transmigratory soul imagined by Avidyā and reveal one's nature as the eternally free Ātman, no blemish of impermanence can be attached to Release."

SBh. 1-1-4.

It is a tenet acknowledged by all schools of Vedānta, that Môksha is eternal, but no school other than that of Śaṅkara, can escape the charge of the so-called Final Goal being impermanent, seeing that all these schools treat the Summum Bonum as the effect of some religious act of discipline enjoined in the Śrutis. Śaṅkara's tradition is unique in treating the bondage of mundane suffering as the figment of nescience and Release as the result of right knowledge arising from the teaching of the Upanishads.

"We might likewise quote the passage (Br. 1-4-10) 'Seeing this same Brahman Rshi Vāmadeva discovered (the Maṇtra) 'I have been Manu and Sūrya' to show how the Śruti wards off the idea of something to be done in the interval between realization of Brahman and becoming all this Universe. This passage is analogous to the statement 'He sings standing' where it is conclusive that there is no action intervening between the acts of standing and singing."

SBh. 1-1-4.
6. THE VALIDITY OF ŚĀSTRA

30. ‘Śāstra’ is a name assigned by Vedāntins to the Vedas in general and to the Upanishads in particular. Thus in commenting on the third Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa, Śaṅkara writes

(१) यहतः ऋषेददे: शास्त्रस्य अनेकविद्यामानोपज्ञातस्य श्रीप्रवत्तः
सर्वार्थांव्यतिनिः, सर्वज्ञातस्य योनिः: कारणं ब्रह्म। न हीर्षास्य
शास्त्रस्य ऋषेददिल्लख्यायस्य सर्वज्ञानविन्नस्य सर्वज्ञातस्त: संप्रवाहितः॥

“Brahman is the source, the cause of the great Śāstra consisting of Rigveda etc. enlarged by various branches of learning which illumines all things like a big lamp, and which is almost omniscient. For the origination of such a Śāstra consisting of Rigveda etc., which is accompanied by the quality of omniscience, can hardly be conceived to proceed from anything but from an omniscient Being.”

SBh. 1-1-3.

[In the sequel to this para, it is argued that omniscience reaches its culmination only in the Great-Being from whom Rigveda etc. comes forth spontaneously like an expired breath.]

31. The present section is exclusively devoted to a consideration of the validity of the Śāstra in its aspect as the Upanishads. How are the Upanishads to be considered as a valid means of right knowledge? Are they the source of knowledge regarding Brahman, in the same way that the Vedas are with regard to heaven (स्वर्ग), the gods (देवता:) etc., whose existence is to be taken for granted on the exclusive authority of the Vedas enjoining certain rituals which lead to them, the performer of those religious works after death? Here is Śaṅkara’s answer:

(२) न कर्मफले हि स्वर्गदी: अनुभवात्सत्त्वेऽपि स्वादाः भवेदा
वा इति। अनुभवार्थः तु ज्ञानज्ञमात्र ‘तत्त्वादापरेशाद्वश्च’ (४. ३-
४-१) इति श्रुतेः। ‘तत्वार्थः’ (छां. ६-७) इति च स्मरितवादेशान्।
(2) यतो वायो निर्बल्ने। अप्राय्य मनसा सह।

"Whence speech (and other organs of sense) return unable to reach it, along with the mind." Tai. 2-9.

It is ineffable not because words are inadequate to describe it, but because it is the eternal subject which objectifies everything else and so can be objectified by no words.

(3) यद्वायानुजेद्वते वेद वागस्थितेः।
... यथा वाक्यानुजेद्वते वेदे वागस्थितेः।

"That which speech cannot express, but which itself expresses speech ...... That which the mind cannot think of, but which itself, they say, thinks of the mind. Know that alone to be Brahma, not this which they meditate upon as an object." Ke. 1-5, 6.

Thus, Brahma is beyond the region of the senses and the mind which alone are the instruments through which one can know objective things in ordinary life. On the other hand, it is of such a nature that it shines forth by its own inherent light and lights up both the senses and the mind and enables them to throw light on their respective objects. If so, it will be asked, how can even the Śrutis describe Brahma which is the light of eternal Witnessing Consciousness, which is the prerequisite to know even the Vedas as such?

33. Śaṅkara points out that there being no need for any means to establish the existence of Brahma-Atman (Brahman that is our very Self), the Śrutis are
called Pramāṇa (means of knowledge) by courtesy insofar as they remove the distinctions superimposed upon Brahman by Avidyā. We have seen that Avidyā is the mutual superimposition of the Self and the not-Self, and it is only through ignorance that we speak of the means and objects of knowledge:

(1) तपेत्तम् अविद्यायम् आत्मानाविद्यावते सर्वं पुरुषां प्रविष्टं, सर्वोपरि च ज्ञानानि विद्धिविद्विपयप्राप्ति II

"It is by presupposing this mutual superimposition of the Self and the not-Self, called Avidyā, that the conventions both secular and sacred of the means and object of right knowledge obtain in life, and so do the Śāstras dealing with injunctions and prohibitions and even with final Release." SBh.

(2) न ह्यात्मा आयुक्: कस्मचतुः, स्वप्नसिद्धातुः II

"Ātman or Self, as is well-known, is no adventitious thing for any one, for He is self-established." SBh. 2-3-7.

(3) अविषयते ब्रह्माण्ड: ज्ञात्वोनिल्लभापरिस्परिता सेतु, न; 
न हि शाख्यमु इदं त्यो विषयमु तः 
हि प्रायगद्वम्याविषयत्या अविषयत्वम् अविषयाकल्प्यतं वेद-वेदेद-वेदादिदेशमयमयति II

"Objection: If Brahman is not an object of any action, then it cannot be maintained that the Śāstra is the means of knowing It.

Reply: Not so, for the Śāstra purports to wipe off the distinctions superimposed on Brahman by Avidyā (To explain) The Śāstra does not indeed propose to teach Brahman as such and such an object, but it teaches Brahman as no object at all, being the inmost Self and removes all distinctions created by Avidyā such as the knowable, knower and knowledge." SBh. 1-1-4.

The word आदि (‘such as’) in this passage includes the distinctions of (1) desired object, desirer, and desire, (2) deed, doer and doing, and (3) experienced fruit of action, experiencer and experience. All of these, being superimposed on Brahman, vanish the moment that Brahman is Intuited as Reality devoid of all distinctions and differences. Appearances, as is well-known, have no existence of their own apart from the substrate on which they are superimposed and their sublation merely means the knowledge of their essential oneness with the substrate.

34. The Śāstra therefore, is a valid means of knowledge regarding Brahman insofar as it brings on the Intuition of Brahman by showing how all distinctions and differences are mere appearances superimposed on Brahman. Even the empirical means of knowledge, like perception, are held to be valid for this very same reason that they ultimately produce actual intuition of their object. Our effort to see a thing, for instance, ends with the dawn of sight, the intuition of the thing sought to be seen. But then there is this difference between the ordinary means of right knowledge and the Śāstra as a means of knowing Brahman: Even after we have perceived or inferred the existence of a phenomenal thing, the distinction of the knower, knowable and knowledge stays on as before; whereas when the Knowledge of Brahman-Ātman dawns, this distinction is sublated for good. The following remarks of Śaṅkara about this final Intuition
are worthy of note:--

(1) अथि चार्च्यमिद ग्राममु प्रामाणपूर्वात तपस्यां पहः किण्डियाकाळात्मकता? क्षण हि लोके 'व्यज्ञ' इतुके किम? केन? कथम? -- इत्याकाळातः, नैवं 'तत्त्वमिति', ‘आह ब्रह्मार्थिः’
इतुके किण्डियाकाळात्मकता असि, सत्याधिकत्वरेव मानिते। सति हि अर्धस्वतंत्रशास्त्राणि अर्थे आकाशक्ष्य र्यातः, न
उपेक्षातिसि व आकाशाक्षेति।

"Moreover, this means of knowledge revealing the unity of Ātman is final; and there is nothing else that can be sought to be known subsequently. (To explain) When, for instance, in common usage it is laid down that ‘One should sacrifice’, it is at once sought to be known, what, by what means, and how (one is to sacrifice); but there is nothing else to be sought to be known when it is said ‘That thou art’, ‘I am Brahman’; for the resulting Intuition relates to the Unity of the Self of all. It is only when something else remains, that the desire to know it can possibly arise. But there is nothing else which remains to be known over and above the Unity of Ātman.”

SBh. 2-1-14.

(2) न चेयवगतिनेऽपि तत्त्व वयक्तपूर्वातः। 'तत्त्वमिति' इत्याकाळितः।

"Nor is it possible to maintain that no such Intuition is ever produced, for there are Śrutis like the following ‘He was convinced of this instruction of his father’ (Ch. 6-13-3)."

SBh. 2-1-14.

[The Śruti is not quoted here as a mere authority, for preceding this statement there is a series of questions and answers in the train of arguments based upon Intuition.]

(3) न चेयवगतित्विविक्तेऽपि ग्यतिविविक्तेऽपि तत्त्व वयक्तपूर्वातः।
अविविक्तिवृत्तित्विविक्तेऽपि वस्तुस्तुतिनिवृत्तितः। चेतनात्मिकत्वातः।
ब्रम्हस्यस्यत्तमवर्क्ष: सत्योपविवर्क्षः। तत्त्वाचार्यं च इत्योऽर्जुः॥

"Nor, again, is it possible to assert that this Intuition is useless, or that it is a hallucination, for we do see that Avidyā is effectively removed, and there is no other knowledge to sublate it. We have already remarked that all talk of the true and the false is only before the dawn of the Knowledge of the Unity of Ātman.”

SBh. 2-1-4.

[There can be no question of error in the sphere of non-duality.]

35. This unique conception of the finality of knowledge and extinction of all means of knowledge, the Śāstra no less than the other ordinary means, at the dawn of enlightenment, has been expressly stated in so many words elsewhere by Śaṅkara:

(1) तत्त्वात, आह ब्रह्मार्थिः -- इत्येवत्तत्त्वात् एव सर्वेऽवित्, ।
सत्यवेदवेदवेदं विषयं प्रामाणिनि। न हि अर्हमाधामेव भैरवत्तव्याच्स्य निर्देश्यायां
अप्रामाणात्मकां च प्रामाणानि भविष्यादन्ती।

"Therefore, all injunctions and all other means of knowledge, end with the dawn of the Intuition ‘I am Brahman’". For when the Intuition of the secondless Ātman, neither to be accepted or shunned, arises, Pramāṇas (or means of knowledge) cannot continue to thrive, since there will be neither a knower nor objects to be known then.”

SBh. 1-1-4.

(2) ‘अत्र फिलापिता भवति’ इत्युपक्रमः 'वेदा अवेदा:'
(प्र. ४-३-१२) इत्यत्वविकानि इत्यत्व एवात्मिकः। ब्रम्हस्यस्यविकानि: प्रवेधे॥

"Since there is the text beginning with ‘Here the father ceases to be the father’ which says ‘the Vedas are no Vedas’ (Br. 4-3-22), non-existence of even the Śruti is certainly accepted by us in the state of Enlightenment.”

SBh. 4-1-3.
36. As a corollary from the validity of the Śāstra it follows that the words of a duly qualified teacher are as valid a means as the holy revelation itself, not because he is an authority on the subject, but because he has become one with the Supreme Ātman. One would reach at the truth provided that he follows the line of reasoning shown by such a teacher, but not by any independent ratiocination:

(३) नैशा तर्केण मतिरामने मूलांश्च वेदन्तेन च सुभाष्य प्रेषते ||

"This knowledge, my dearest boy, cannot be acquired or refuted by speculation, but only as revealed by a teacher other than a speculator, can it lead to conviction.”

Ka. 2-9.

(४) न नरेनान्तरं प्रेक्ष एव सुविज्ञो वहुद्व चिन्त्यमानः।
अनुप्रेक्षा गतिर्गत नासि अष्टोत्तराञ्ज्ञानप्रमाणान्।

"Taught by a person of inferior knowledge, this Ātman cannot be well-ascertained even if one should reason in various ways. There is no not-knowing, however, when taught by a teacher who has become one with this Ātman. For, He (this Ātman) is subtler than even the subtlest thing and beyond all reason.”

Ka. 2-8.

7. THE EMPIRICAL AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL VIEWS

37. Avidyā is the most fundamental of all the concepts we have so far considered. Man, as he is born, including the most intelligent of his kind who can distinguish truth from error, least suspects that deep down in his mind there might be a wider ignorance which engulfs within its range both the truth and error which he recognizes in ordinary life. That is why Śaṅkara begins his Introduction to Vedānta Sūtras with a concise and brisk statement of the nature of that error:

(१) सत्वानुष्ठिते मिथुनीकृत्व ‘अहंपदम्’ ‘नधर्मम’ इति नैसर्गिकोज्बो लोकयवहारः।

“It is a natural procedure on the part of man to base his conduct on the notions of me and mine, mixing up the real and the non-real.”

Introduction to Sūtra Bhāshya.

And the set purpose of the Upanishads is to blot out this fundamental error.

(२) अष्टान्तीहतो: प्रहाणाय, आचैत्यविधा प्रार्थने सर्वेऽवेदान्ता आरण्यात॥

“To destroy this basic cause of all evils, all the Vedāntas (or Upanishads) are begun in order to teach the Knowledge of the Unity of Ātman.”

Intro. to SBh.
38. This leads us to a consideration of the distinction of naive view of Reality and Truth and the Vedântic view of the same. Saṅkara contrasts these two view-points by the terms Loka-drśhti, and Śāstra-drśhti respectively, as for instance in the following passage:

(1) ‘उपसंहारदर्शनात्रेत येऽन्ति शाश्वद्वित’ (२-१-२४) इत्यव तु बाहारिनिर्मातनर्व्यवस्थायमिः स्वाश्ववं कार्य पवति — इत्यतः लोकेऽवधिका निर्वासितम्; शाश्वद्वित्य तु पुनः सर्वार्थसर्वप्रथमाधिमान् न पराणुहेतु॥

"In the Śūtra 2-1-24, the illustration of the milk was adduced to show that there may be a change in the substance of a thing even without an external cause, and that was only from Lokadrśhti (the common-sense view). But from Śāstra-drśhti (the Vedântic view), however, which entails the uniform dependence of an effect upon the Lord is not discarded."

SBh. 2-2-3.

Saṅkara, however, uses another pair of names for these views, the Vyāvahārika (the practical) and the Pāramārthika (Really Real), as in the following statement:

(2) अनुपाय्यम् चें व्यवहारिकं भोक्तुपोयल्लक्षणं विभागं ‘स्थालोकवद्’ इति परिहितं; न तल्यं विभागं: परमार्थलोकस्।

"The previous rejoinder, citing the illustration of the sea and its waves, was given while granting this Vyāvahārika distinction (of practical life), of the experiencer and the experienced, but from the Pāramārthika (Really Real) stand-point, however, there is no such distinction." SBh. 2-1-14.

We shall use these more familiar terms in our further discussion of these two stand-points.

39. The Sanskrit word Vyāvahāra comprehends not only thought and expression but also conduct based upon them. To think and talk of mother-of-pearl as silver, and proceed towards it with the intention of taking up the supposed silver, is Mithyā-vyāvahāra (wrong behaviour), while treating actual silver as silver in these three ways is Samyag-vyāvahāra or right behaviour. Now the Vedântic view is that all our ideas, speech and conduct based upon practical life (व्यवहारिक), are really due to ignorance from the Pāramārthika (transcendental, Really Real) stand-point. So then, Vyāvahārika view is the same as the view of ignorance (आविश्वासध्व), or the view that distinguishes the knower and the known (प्राणार्धार्थवृत्ति), or the view of ordinary life (लोकलक्षण), or the view based upon waking life (जागृतिलक्षण). It is on the inborn tendency of the human mind to falsely superimpose the Self and the not-Self (the body, the senses and the mind of the waking state) upon each other that this Vyāvahāric view is based.

40. How is the waking point of view known to be the result of an error? We have already seen how this view takes the body and the organs of sense etc. to be real without any warrant, and mixes up the real Witnessing Ātman and the unreal not-Self. The following description of waking as Laukika rehearses the same idea at full length.

(१) सवसु संबृक्तिस्ता वस्तुं नह वाति इति सवसु। तथा च उपलब्धः। उपलब्धः। तेन सह वाति इति सोपलम्यं च। शाश्वद्विती; सर्वव्यवहारस्यद्यस्तत्र वागहकल्लक्षणं द्वर्यं लोकलक्षणं लोकलक्षणं। जागरितम् इत्यतः। एवंलक्षणं जागरितकारणं वेदान्तेषु॥
“‘With a thing’ means that it contains objective things which are real from the stand-point of Avidyā. And ‘with knowledge’ means that it contains the knowledge of these things. That which is the field of all Vyavahāra including that of the Śāstra, the duality consisting of the knowing subject and the knowable objects, is called Laukika, the ordinary life, which is the same thing as the waking state. This is waking as described in the Vedāntas.”

GKBh. 4-87.

41. It may appear to be a bold statement to say that even the Śāstraic Vyavahāra has reality only in the field of Avidyā. Is it not self-stultifying to say that the unreal Śāstra reveals Reality? And why should we shamelessly call perception and other means of knowledge unreal while we have to deal with them all our life willy-nilly? Śaṅkara replies:

(1) नै भोजन! सर्वव्यवहाराणाय प्रागू ब्रह्मात्मात्मातिविज्ञानाम् सत्यस्योपयते।।

‘This fault cannot be imputed to our position; for, all the Vyavahāras can be consistently real before Enlightenment dawns, like the Vyavahāra in a dream before waking. (To explain:) So long as the Knowledge of the one real Ātman has not arisen, the idea of the unreality of the effects, that is, of the nature of the means of knowledge, objects of knowledge and the resultant knowledge never occurs to any one; on the other hand, every one takes the effects alone to be himself and his own and says ‘this is me, this is mine’, forgetting his own true nature of being Brahmātman. Therefore all Vyavahāra (procedure), secular and Vedic, is consistent so long as one is not awakened to the Knowledge of one’s being the Ātman of Brahmic nature. This is just like the case of an ordinary person seeing all sorts of phenomena in a dream. He is sure that he actually perceives those things before he is awakened, and does not suspect they are only simulacra of perception.”

SBh. 2-114, p. 198.

Add to this the conception of Śāstra as the ultimate means of Knowledge as described in the previous section (p. 50) and we have a complete picture of Śaṅkara’s distinction of the empirical view and the transcendental or Śāstraic view.

42. It would be interesting and profitable to contrast the significance of the several concepts we have discussed so far, from these two distinct points of view. To aid the memory of the beginner, the results of such a contrast are subjoined in a tabular form.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bondage</td>
<td>Suspension, confinement.</td>
<td>Apparent limitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release</td>
<td>Setting free, becoming free.</td>
<td>Getting rid of Avidyā, etc.</td>
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8. MATTER AND METHOD

43. Since, according to Vedānta, Brahman is absolutely void of all distinctions, and that secondless Entity is the only Reality, one might well wonder: (i) how there could be a Science of Reality, (ii) how there could be any teaching of Brahman, (iii) to whom that teaching could be addressed and (iv) what purpose the teaching could possibly serve. These four primary considerations, called Anubandhas in the realistic Darśanas cannot gain entrance in the Advaita which knows no distinctions or differences. How is then a Science or Philosophy of Advaita possible at all?

44. This difficulty is obviated in Vedānta by adopting a method of teaching called the Adhyārūpapavāda Nyāya. This method consists in the device of deliberately superimposing something on Reality for the time being, in order to remove some other superimposed characteristics, and then to rescind the presumed characteristic as well. That this is the only method adopted in the Upanishads has been shown by Śaṅkara in his commentaries on the Upanishads and explained in so many words in his commentary on the Bhagavadgītā. Thus in the course of explaining the meaning of Ślōkas (verses 13 and 14 of Ch. XIII), which are by the way a virtual reproduction of Śvetāsvatara (III, 16 and 17), he writes:—

(1) क्षेत्रार्पण पद्धति विशेषां विशेषेण क्षेत्रव्रत्या इति तद्वत्ततने ज्ञातपुरुषं 'न सत्तत्त्वार्पण्ये' इति। उपाधिकृतं विशेषं पद्धति अत्यत्वेद्यमाय ज्ञातपुरुषवत्ता परिक्षेत्य प्रत्येकम् 'सर्वेष यापाद' इत्तदा। तथा हि संस्कृतस्य वचनम् 'अध्यात्मप्राप्तावत्तयं सुनिश्चित्त य प्रकटम्' इति॥

“The several special features noticed in the Kṣhetrajña (the Self) owing to the limiting conditions caused by the different forms of Kṣhetra (the body etc.) being unreal, have been rescinded in the previous Ślōka, and Kṣhetrajña has been taught to be realized as neither being nor non-being. But in this verse (13), even the unreal nature, manifested through the limiting conditions, has been treated as though it were the property of the knowable Self just to bring its existence home, and hence the knowable Kṣhetrajña is spoken of as possessing hands and feet etc. everywhere. Accordingly, there is the well-known saying of the knowers of tradition: 'That which is devoid of all details is set-forth in detail through deliberate superimposition and rescission.'

GBh. 13-13.

(2) ॥ इत्यवशद कथातात्वकः प्रौढः तद्विधीपताः स्तेषंकारः — ॥

"Lest it should be supposed that this knowable Ātman is really possessed of the senses such as hands and feet, just because they are imputed to It, this next verse is begun (to negate them)."

GBh. 13-14.

45. We shall try to show how here this device of Adhyārūpapavāda (ascription and subsequent negation) has been applied in the Upanishads in the case of each of the concepts we have discussed in the preceding pages:

(1) (a) अष्टोपायान् महतो यदीयानात्म गुहानं निरहेक्स्य जतो: — ॥
“Subtler than the subtlest, greater than the greatest, the Ātman is hidden in the cave (of the heart) of this born being.”

Tai. Na. 10.

Here Ātman is described as residing within the heart of the Jīva, who desires to know the truth about the Self. Hence this is an ascription of a place to the Ātman who being omnipresent cannot be located. This is done with the intention of withdrawing an extrovert mind which is naturally attracted by external objects of sense.

(b) एको देवः सर्वभूतेऽवृद्धः सर्वभावाय सर्वभूतात्तरतः।
कर्माध्यक्षः सर्वभूताधिवासः साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणः।

“The one Deva (God) is hidden in all beings. All-pervading, the one inmost Self of all creatures, presiding over all, the Witnessing Consciousness residing in all creatures, the One without a second, having no qualifying adjuncts.”

Śve. 6-II.

This predication of omnipresence to Ātman as the Self of all, rescinds the ascription of its location in the heart of born creatures.

(2) (a) अविद्यायामते वर्त्तमानः स्वयं धीरमः पणिद्वितप्यन्यमानः।
द्विधिमपाणः परिचित्यम्या युद्ध सर्वायानां त्याज्यः।

“Living in the midst of Avidyā but priding in their discriminating power and learning, the perplexed fools whirl round and round in Sarīśāra like blind men led by one who is oneself blind.”

Ka. 2-5.

Here it is presumed that there are persons who do not know the real nature of the Brahman-Self. Of course, it is on this supposition of the ignorance of Brahman-Ātman, that the enquiry into the nature of Brahman is begun. It should be noted that the student of Vedānta is granted to be ignorant of his true Brahmic nature, and that Brahman is the object of enquiry. Both of these assumptions are quite necessary before the Śāstra or the teacher proposes to propound the real nature of Brahman. It is from this Adhyāropa (deliberate superimposition) standpoint that Śākara writes in his commentary on the first Sūtra of Bādarāyana:-

“एवं बहुवे विप्रतिष्ठान युक्तिवाक्यान्वयनाक्यमानः सताः।
तत्रविवाचयः यत्किंत युक्तिवाक्यान्वयनो नि:श्रीयसाद् प्रतिहितः।
अन्यां च इयात्।
तस्यात् बहुव्ययोपपायसमृद्धेन वेदात्तवाक्ये श्रीयस्वतोऽसा
तद्विधिमपानाश्रीयस्यायः नि:श्रीयस्यायः
प्रतिहितः॥”

Thus there are many thinkers who differ from one another on this subject, some of them depending upon sound arguments and genuine texts while others depend on those of seeming validity. One who would accept any one of these opinions at random without seriously pondering over the matter, would be not only prevented from attaining the highest good, but even run the risk of becoming a prey to evil consequences. Therefore through proposing the enquiry into Brahman, this sacred investigation of the meaning of Vedānta texts, with the ancillary reasoning unopposed to them, is begun with the aim of showing the way to the highest good.”

SBh. 1-1-1.

Here evidently besides the ignorance of Brahman, the validity of the Śāstra as a means to Release, and the efficacy of sound reasoning subservient to it, as also duly qualified aspirants for the final goal, are all taken for granted to be factual from the Adhyāropa-standpoint of view.
Gauḍapāda has summed up this Apavāda (abrogation) of the assumption of Vidyā and Avidyā in the following verse:

अनादिमायेऽणोऽदा जीवः प्रकृते।
अजगरितस्वप्नमिष्ठे बुद्धे तदा।

“When this Jīva awakes from his beginningless illusory dream, he then realizes the unborn, sleepless, dreamless, secondless Self.”

GK. 1-16.

[Here ‘sleep’ is the name given to not-knowing, and ‘dream’ to wrong conception or Adhyāsa.]

46. Avidyā is the most fundamental concept used as a device for showing the illusory nature of all other concepts. It is to be itself overpassed when enlightenment dawns. We may now take up the other concepts to show how they serve as devices to teach the Truth applying this self-same principle of Adhyārōpa-pavāda.

Ātman is assumed to be an individual self in order to explode the delusion that the body, the senses or the mind may be the self. Thus proceeding from the body one rises to the Consciousness of the true Self by taking for granted that the inner and more subtle non-Self is the actual Self and rejecting the grosser non-Self which was previously mistaken for the Self. Ordinarily man’s idea is so vague and confounded that he takes any one of the physiological or psychic forces or organs as his own self for practical purposes. This process is thus described by Śaṅkara:

(१) अध्यात्मासो नाम अत्तत्साकृतुः । इत्युपवेत। तथया
पुनर्माय्यद्विय विकलेषु सकलेषु वा अहंपरेव विकल: सकलो वा इति
वाहयमातु आत्माययतः । तथा देहमान स्नुलेः वा, क्सोऽहम, तथा

SBh. 4-1-3.
Thus by means of the assumption of particular pseudo-selves as the real Self, certain other such selves may be relegated to the class of not-selves, and the process might continue till at last one arrives at the genuine Ātman, the one Self in all beings.

47. Similarly the world is taught to be a creation or transformation of the Supreme Ātman in such Śrutis as (1) सौकांमयत। बहुं स्या प्रज्ञायत। स तपोत्तयत। स तपस्तत्व। इदं सर्वं मूः ज्ञात। (Tai. 2-6. ‘He desired that he might become plenteous and be born as many, and created all this’); but in another place, the material of the universe may be declared to be Māyā ātmanaḥ tu prakṛti vikṣaṇāt (Śve. 4-10) thus denying real causation and elsewhere the whole Universe may be pronounced to be Brahma alone bhūjakadviḥ prakṛtiḥ kriyātmakam (All this indeed is verily Brahma itself’ Mu. 2-2-11), while in a fourth place the whole manifestation of Brahma as with form and formless may be emphatically denied ātmacarṇaḥ nāti nāti nāti nātiḥ prakṛtiḥ prakāśyate (Now for the teaching of the real Brahma, ‘Not this, not that’; there is no other way of describing Brahma except by negation (Br. 2-3-6).

The different ways of creation, described by different illustrations are only a device to take the aspiring mind to the realization of the real Ātman. So says the Revered Gauḍapāda:-

वूल्लोहिनामुक्षं लिङ्गात्। चूडः च चौरिण्य।
उपायं सोद्वताराय नाति भद्र: कथान।

“By illustrations like those of clay, gold and sparks, creation has been described in various ways by the Śrutis. All that is only a means to take the mind to Truth. There is no difference or distinction whatever in Brahma due to creation.”

SBh. 4-1-2.
48. We may now turn towards the concept of Īśvara. The word in Sanskrit literally means a ruler and hence it is only a relative term. Brahman is spoken of as Īśvara only when contrasted with the Jīvas from the empirical point of view. The apparent inconsistency of admitting the distinction of a God and the individual souls in the Absolutism of Vedānta, has been explained by Śaṅkara by postulating Māyic conditioning adjuncts (see para 16, p. 24) invariably by citing the illustration of the distinction of the Universal Ether (Akalāśa) and ether conditioned by jars, pots, etc. And the seeming anomaly in using one and the same epithet Īśvara and even (Para-Brahman) for both the Higher and the Lower Brahmans, has been cleared up (p. 31) by drawing the attention of beginners to the fact that one and the same Reality is meant in all these cases; only one has to keep in mind the context – whether of Jñāna (Knowledge) or of Upāsanā (meditation) in which the term is used to avoid confusion.

49. Bearing this in mind, we may now proceed to see how the Adhyātma Nyāya, is applied to this concept of Īśvara. The following extract from Śaṅkara may be studied with profit in this connection:

(१) तदेतस्युपन्नोऽन्नस्थितिः पूर्वरूपमेव एव अन्नस्थितिः पूर्वरूपमेज्ज्यानां आपातसभामिष्कतुष्टे अत्यन्ति उपपादते ||

“Thus the Īśvarahood of Īśvara, has omniscience, omnipotence etc. are all due to the limitation caused by the adjuncts set up by Avidyā, while from the Paramārtha standpoint there cannot be any thought of the distinction of the ruler and the ruled or omniscience etc. in the Ātman whose essential nature is altogether free from all limiting adjuncts.”

SBh. 2-1-14.

And Śaṅkara shows how even the Śrutis constantly makes use of the concepts like Īśvara from the standpoint of practical life:–

(२) व्यवहारान्वते तु०: पुष्पाविधाय इव भूतानिन्त्यवहार: — ‘एव स्वेत्ती एव भूतानिन्त्यवहार: एव स्वेत्ती एव भूतानिन्त्यवहार: एव लोकान-मस्मे पद्माय’ (ब्र. ४-४-२२) इति ||

“In the state of practical life, in the Śrutis also the convention of Īśvara etc. has been enunciated: ‘This is the Ruler of all, this is the one Lord of all beings, this is the protector of all beings, this is the dam that maintains the boundaries so that there may not be any intermixing of the duties of these men.’ (Br. 4-4-22).”

SBh. 2-1-14.

And the Śrutis elsewhere rescinds this assumption in the following words:

एवज्जये निम्मेवात्संस्कृतं नात: परं वेदित्वं हि किंविद्।
श्रेयन्त्स्य व्रेण्ये प्रेतितार्य च यत्व सर्व श्रेणि विक्षितं व ब्रह्मेत्॥

“This, which is eternally in one’s own Self has got to be known; for there is nothing else to be known beyond this. The experiencer, the object of experience and the Inspirer must be contemplated and known. All this, the threefold distinction mentioned here, is really Brahman.”

Śve. 1-12.

Here God, who guides the individual soul, is declared to be no other than Brahman in the same way as the soul itself. The distinction between Īśvara and the soul being based upon limiting adjuncts projected by Avidyā, disappears simultaneously with the Knowledge of their eternal Unity. So says Śaṅkara in another context:
(3) अपि च यदा ‘तत्त्वमाति’ इतथेववैज्ञानिकन्य अपेक्षितरेण अपेक्षितर्गतिः प्रतिपादितो भवति, अपातं भवति तदा जीवस्य संसारितः वहस्वात्मा साधुस्वैर्य। समस्तस्य निध्वाजनिर्विविष्टित्य समस्तवहारस्य समस्तज्ञाने बाध्यत्वः॥

Moreover, when non-duality is revealed by texts of the type of ‘That thou art’ by pointing out non-difference, then both Jiva’s liability to experience mundane life and Brahman’s creative aspect disappear, because all conventions of differences, being the display of delusion, are then banished by right Knowledge.

SBh. 2-1-22.

50. And now for the concept of Bondage and Release. The following Śruti refers to the Self in both these states:

(1) अनंतः राशि बन्धने भोक्तानां ज्ञात देव सुप्रेमोऽसरायः॥

“The self, not being able to do anything of his own free-will, is bound because of its nature of being an experiencer of the fruits of action, but on knowing the Deva, the self-shining Brahman, he is freed from all his bonds.”

Śve. 1-8.

It is evident that the text implies that bondage is due to ignorance, since Knowledge of the divine nature is declared to be the liberator. And how is Bhūkṛtva the cause of bondage? We learn from another Śruti:–

(2) अत्मेष्यांशेषु भोक्ते मुक्ते दुःखीत्रिषु:॥

“The wise ones call him Bhūkta (experiencer) who is conjoined to the body, the senses and the mind.”

Ka. 3-4.

And this so-called conjunction, we have seen (p. 41), is the result of ignorance. So then from this Apavāda (rescission) view release becomes synonymous with the Knowledge of one’s eternal nature as having no body. This point Śaṅkara makes clear in the following words:

(3) अपरार्थयो धर्मकार्यम् इति चेतुः, न, तत्त्वमेव स्वाभाविकः। ‘अनंतः राशिर्यसेवन्तः कविः। महान्तः खुश्यकातो वस्ता प्रेम्योऽसरायः॥

Objection: But this state of being freed from a body, is itself the effect of Vedic works!

Reply: No, it cannot be so. For, that is one’s eternal nature. For this, we have the authority of texts such as ‘The wise one who knows the bodiless One in all the bodies, Himself remaining changeless in all the changeful (bodies), as the great omnipresent Ātman, never grieves.’ (K. 2-22).”

SBh. 1-1-4.

So then the idea of one’s being bound by the body and obtaining Release from that Bondage ultimately, resolves itself into being ignorant of the nature of Ātman and dispelling that ignorance by means of right Knowledge. And we have clearly seen that the teaching of ignorance and Knowledge is also in its turn an instance of Adhyātma-papāvāda.

Gauḍapāda who knows the spirit of Vedānta tradition, rightly remarks:

न निरोधे न च चापरिन्दन्ति बन्धो न च साधक:॥

न मुखशुरुन्न वै मुक्तं इत्येव परमार्थिता॥

“No dissolution, no origin; no one bound, no one really practising the acts of discipline. Neither one who longs for Release nor indeed one who is Released. This is the true nature of things.”

GK. 2-32.

51. The next concept to which this principle of
deliberate superimposition and rescission has been applied, may be now taken up. How is the conception of the validity of the Šastra justifiable from the standpoint of Advaita? Adopting the Adhyārōpa point of view, the Śruti says:

(1) ‘सर्वे वेदा चतुर्दशमानमि’

“That Goal which all the Vedas teach.” Ka. 2-15.

(2) जन्तुद्विविधमुनि ते बुहन्तम्।

“No one who is not proficient in the Vedas, can know that Great One.” Tai. Brā. 3-12-9-7.

This is of course from the Adhyārōpa point of view. From the Apavāda point of view, however, they proclaim:

(3) अत्र विद्विषितं भवति पातालायात लोका अलोका देवा अदेवं वेदा अवेदा: ॥

“Here the father becomes no father, the mother no mother, the worlds no worlds, the gods no gods, and the Vedas no Vedas.” Br. 4-3-22.

[Where everything merges in the one Ātman, even the Vedas are no longer Vedas.]

It is only in the field of Avidyā that the Vedas are conceded to be a valid source of Knowledge. But when the Goal is reached there is no need for this concession, for then all is seen to be the one Ātman.

52. The concept of Vyavahāra (thought, expression and deed) is conceded only where we see duality, but there is no distinction whatever in the one Ātman and hence the concession is retracted in the context of Reality:

(१) यत्र हि द्वितिमिव भवति तदिति इतरं पश्चात तदिति इतरं जित्वश्रुति तदिति इतरं रस्यात्तिदिति इतिर्पयिवद्विति तदिति इति वृजणोति तदिति इति भूवति तदिति इति स्यूनाशिति तदिति इति विज्ञानीति यत्र तस्मि सूत्यात्कास्तु परस्येतकेन कृमीतवेतकेन कृमीति जित्वेतकेन कृमीतिवेतकेन कृमीति जित्वेतकेन कृमीति जित्वेतकेन कृमीति जित्वेतकेन कृमीति जित्वेतकेन कृमीति जित्वेतकेन कृमीति जित्वेतकेन कृमीति जित्वेतकेन कृमीति जित्वेतकेन कृमीति जित्वेतकेन कृमीति जित्वेतकेन कृमीति जित्वेतकेन कृमीति

“Where it is as if it were duality, there one sees another, there one smells another, there one tastes another, one speaks to another, there one hears another, there one thinks of another, there one touches another, there one knows another. But where to this (enlightened one), all has become the one Ātman, there who is to see whom, there who is to smell whom, there who is to taste whom, there who is to speak to whom, there who is to hear whom, there who is to think of whom, there who is to touch whom, and who is to know of whom?”

Br. 4-5-15.

The Śruti says that even while seeing another and carrying on other functions of the sensory organs, it is duality as it were, for in reality it is Ātman all the while, and so the distinction of the ordinary view and the transcendental view is itself abrogated here.
9. SANNYĀSA AND YÖGA

53. We have so far dwelt upon Śaṅkara’s clarification of the most important Vedāntic concepts relating to the central teaching of the Upanishads regarding Reality. We have now to pass on to a consideration of two other concepts, Sannyāsa (renunciation) and Yōga (contemplation). These constitute the important steps of discipline which qualify an aspirant to enter upon the study of the cardinal doctrines of Vedānta.

54. The word Sannyāsa as popularly understood is associated with the mendicant life of a certain order of monks who wear ochre clothing. The significance of the Vedāntic concept of Sannyāsa is so variously understood by commentators that it is necessary to examine it more closely in order to shed light upon its precise nature as taught in the Upanishads. Here are some texts from the Muṇḍaka and the Brhadāraṇyaka:

(१) तपःश्रद्धे ये ज्ञयस्यसत्वरण्ये
शालला विद्वत्सो भैश्यचर्या चरन: ||
सुर्यद्वारोऽते बिरा: प्रयान्ति
यत्रार्थत: स पुरुषो हृद्ययात्मा ||

"As for those who devote themselves to Tapas and Śraddha (discipline proper to their station of life, and meditation) in the forest with self-control and wisdom, and living on alms and unsullied by desire, they go through the solar-door to where the immortal Purusha of undecaying nature dwells.”" Mu. 1-2-11.

[The ‘solar-door’ represents the Devayāna-path along which devoted souls travel to reach the Brahma-Lōka.]

This life is common to both Vānaprasthas and Sannyāsins who have renounced the house-holder’s order as directed by the Smṛtis. This is quite different from the Paramahāṁsa-Sannyāsa enjoined in the Upanishad texts like the following:

(२) एतं वै तमालमानविदिल्लव्राह्मणः पुरुषस्यावधिविन्दीमायायम्
लोकेऽपिविद्वश्च भैश्यचर्यां चरति ||

"Knowing this Ātman well-known to Vedāntins, Brahmānas transcend longing for offspring, longing for wealth and longing for the (three) worlds, and live on alms.”

Br. 3-5-1.

The Bhāshya on this text remarks:

(३) विज्ञानम्मानमकार्यातू रामचत्यातू अपःचत्यातू भैश्यचर्यामचत्यातू भैश्यचर्यामचत्यातू
यदृ हि देवश्रास्त्रीयो भैश्यचर्यामचत्यातू अपःचत्यातू
तत्त्वविद्यान्तोहुः ||
विज्ञानविविधविद्यामथा
॥ तद्भतिरधिकेऽचारो भैश्यचर्यामचत्यातू
विंशति जोपिवीतिदिशाहितविद्यामु लिङ्गविद्यामु
च ||

"For there may be reasonably a Pārivrāja (going away from home, Sannyāsa), other than that which belongs to the knowing person, and is of the nature of transcending all desires. To explain: The Pārivrāja, which is of the nature of transcending the desires (Eśanās), is ancillary to the Knowledge of Ātman, for it is of the nature of renunciation of the desire opposed to the Knowledge of Brahma, and desire is only in the sphere of Avidyā. And other than that, there is a Pārivrāja in the form of an Āśrama (order of life), a means to the attainment of
Brahmaloka and other fruits of action. It is in connection with this Sannyasa that wearing Yajnopavita etc. are enjoined and that the Linga (the characteristic uniform of the order) is enjoined."

Br. Bh. 3-5-1.

[The sacred thread or wearing the cloth in a particular form is necessary for worshipping the gods, or the manner of carrying on human activities in accordance with religion. This Yajnopavita, wearing a saffron cloth, carrying a staff, a water-pot, and other items distinguishing a Sannyasin is Linga.]

This description of a Smartha Sannyasin, must be sufficient to assure us that a real Paramahamsa has no characteristic marks of a particular Ashrama. Accordingly the Jabadopanishad says:

(4) अथ परिव्रति विवर्णवासम् पुष्पोपपतिः: शुष्कि शोही शैलमाणो ब्रह्मपूर्वकः भवतीति॥

“And now for the Parivrati, wearing a slightly coloured cloth, shaven, having nothing in his possession, clean, malevolent towards none, living on alone, he attains Brahman-hood.”

Jab. 5.

55. So much for the outward form of a Sannyasin. And what would be the nature of his mind? Here is what Lord Sri Krishna says:—

(1) असत्कूचु: सर्वत्र जिज्ञासा विगतस्वूः:।

“Possessing a mind unattached to everything, self-controlled, void of all desires, he attains the accomplishment of perfect actionlessness, through Sannyasa.”

G. 18-49.

Here Shankara’s commentary explains that Sannyasa is either right Knowledge, or the renunciation of all actions through that Knowledge (सत्यद्वानिन तद्वक्षिण वा सत्यवक्षिण सम्बन्धासि). And what this internal renunciation of all actions consists in, is thus explained by the Lord himself:—

(2) सत्यवक्षिण पनसा संत्यवासाते सुखः रक्षि।

“Having mentally renounced all actions, the self-controlled embodied one rests happy in the fortress of nine doors, himself doing nothing and engaging no one else in any action.”

G. 5-13.

(3) नृत्य परिवर्तयते करोपारति युक्तः परिवर्तत।

“The Knower of Truth would think that he is doing nothing while he sees, hears, touches, smells, eats, moves about, sleeps, breathes, speaks, excretes (waste matter), grasps, opens or shuts his eyes; he would always bear in mind that only the senses function on their objects.”

G. 5-8, 9.

This is the real Sannyasa (renunciation), through Samyagijnana (right Knowledge). The right Knowledge itself, as we have seen, has been (in Shankara’s commentary on Gita 18-49) considered Sannyasa par excellence. And what that right Knowledge consists in relation to action, is summed up in the following verse of the Bhagavadgita:—

(4) कर्मणूर्मृत्य य: पश्चेदकर्मणि च कर्म य:।

“He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, he is the wisest of all men; he has a poised mind, and he alone has done all that had to be done.”

G. 4-18.
Here Śaṅkara explains:

“The wise one sees action in inaction, and inaction in action, seeing that all thought of action, means of action etc., are in the field of Avidyā alone, since engagement in action or desisting from it both depend on the doing agent, and never affect the Reality of Atman.”

GBh. 4-18.

56. Genuine Sannyāsa then consists in one’s realizing the eternally actionless Atman as identical with one’s own Self. The effect of such Realization on one’s empirical life is obvious. The normal mind which recognizes gradations of fellow-beings as regards their physique, wealth, intellect and social position, naturally finds it difficult to adjust itself to the varying factors or to react with equanimity in all cases. But the genuine Sannyāsin, by dint of the mental equilibrium gained through his Intuition and the Sannyāsin who tries to emulate him in his accomplishments for the sake of acquisition of right Knowledge (विनिविधुः), on the other hand, is unique in his equable behaviour towards all. I shall quote a few more verses from the Bhagavadgītā in illustration of this:

(२) विद्याविविधसंपन्ने ह्राष्ट्रे गये हसिनि।
धनु हृद क्षणके च पथिताः। समर्दिन:॥
इहै तांत्रिक: सर्वं रूपं सायं स्थितं थष यें:॥
निर्दोषं हि सायं श्रेष्ठं तस्मादीत्मानं ते स्थितं:॥

“The wise look upon a learned Brāhmaṇa of reputed demeanour, a cow, an elephant, a dog or an outcaste with equal regard. They have indeed overcome birth in this very life, whose mind is fixed upon the one and the same Brahman in all. Brahman in all is, as is well-known, perfectly stainless and so they rest in Brahman alone.”

G. 5-18, 19.

[The wise stay their mind on Brahman only everywhere and are for ever unaffected by the external conditioning adjuncts superimposed by Avidyā.]

57. The real aim of Sannyāsa being the Realization of the immortal Self of all, it is evident that acquisition of worldly possessions can be but a serious obstacle in the way of the aspirant for that Supreme Goal. The Śruti says:

‘न कर्मणा न प्रजाया धनेन त्यागेन् क्रियते:॥

“Not by religious works nor by progeny, nor yet by acquisition of wealth, but only through renunciation did the great ones attain immortality.”

Tai. N. 12-3.

It is strange and regrettable that this ideal of Sannyāsa taught by the Great Śaṅkarāchārya, both by precept and example, has been almost lost sight of in these days, and even upstarts putting on the ochre cloth and parading with staff and Kamanḍalu (water-pot) through busy streets or haranguing from platforms to eager crowds on the verities of Vedānta, are often admired as the harbingers of a new Vedāntic
age. One cannot guess what other ulterior motives may be lurking behind the scene!

Those that are sincere aspirants for genuine Sannyāsa, however, will refuse to be admitted into this cadre of charlatans and escapist. For such candidates there are secondary types of Sannyāsa recommended in the Śrūtis and Smṛtis:

1) The first Thyāga or Sannyāsa is giving up prohibited immoral acts (निषिद्धांग्यः):

    ‘नाबिरतो दुष्कर्मः’

    “One who has not abstained from bad conduct, cannot attain Ātman through Knowledge.” Ka. 2-24.

Then (2) renouncing the Karmas enjoined for the various fruits thereof (कामकर्मयंगः), and then (3) giving up the desire for the enjoyment of fruits of all acts whatever:

    कामानां कर्मणां न्यासं सन्यासं कवयो विदुः।
    सर्वकर्मफलप्राहुस्यां विन्विष्ण:।

    “The far-seeing regard the renunciation of Kāmya-karmas as the Sannyāsa and the wise call that Thyāga which consists in the abandonment of the fruits of all actions.” G. 18-2.

4) The fourth step in the ladder is to perform one’s own proper Karma – the duty enjoined by the Śāstra as proper to his station in life:

    यतः प्रवृत्तिपूर्वानां येन सर्वपिदं तत्मुः।
    स्वकर्मणा समयवर्त्सि विदुः मनवः।

“By worshipping that God from whom all creatures are born and in whom all beings live and move, and by whom all this Universe is pervaded, by worshipping that God through the performance of one’s own duty, man attains perfection.” G. 18-46.

When one has taken these successive steps, the final step can be scaled without difficulty. It is this final step that enables one to realize the goal at last.

5) सर्वंकार्यं परिवृत्त्वय यामेकं शरणं ब्रह्म।
    अहं तः सर्वपापेतो भौखिन्यापि या शुचः।

    “Giving up all actions, take refuge in me alone. I shall free thee from all stains; do not grieve.” G. 18-66.

58. The Vedantic concept of Yoga, has been mistaken for so many practices advocated by different schools, that many gullible people are taken in by the display of certain miracles by unscrupulous imitators who would have us believe that their ‘Yoga’ is a free pass entitling them to be considered as the only Vedāntins. The doctrine of the post-Śaṅkaras, stating that experience of Advaita is possible only in Śamādhi, has added strength to this current belief. Vāchaspati Miśra, for instance, says:

    (1) समाधिरितसंयमच्छल्लकस्य। धारणायथावसाध्यः कि
    संयमपदवेदन्तयाः। कथा: ‘त्रयमेको संयमः दक्षितः।
    अर्थोद्योपन्येदेषः।’ दक्षितः समाधिरितसः।
    कथा: — ‘तदेव धारणा एवमेकयानिः स्वमेके समसमथे।’
    सदोपपत्तिनि कारत्नः समयवर्त्सि सर्वकार्याः।
    आलम्बः: कर्तालम्बः आवेद्यात्तीत स्त्रायः।

This is Miśra’s comment on Bādarāyaṇa’s Vedānta Sūtra 2-3-39. Here evidently the author of the sub-
commentary on Śaṅkara’s Sūtra Bhāshya is seeking to interpret the Vedāntic text ‘आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्यः: श्रोतवयि मन्तवयि निद्ध्यायितवयि:’ (Br. 2.4-5). wherein Yājñavalkya is explaining to his wife how Ātman is to be seen, i.e., Realized. Of course, Ātman being one’s own Self can never be literally ‘seen’. The whole dialogue between the sage and his wife is devoted to show how the universe originates from Ātman, rests in Ātman while it appears and finally dissolves into Ātman, and is therefore essentially identical with Ātman. There is absolutely no reference to Yōga at all anywhere in this context and yet the author of the Bhāmati is anxious to interpret this text as though it were a passage from Pātanjali, and concludes by explaining that द्रष्यः: (Ātman is to be seen by means of experience in Samādhi or mystic trance!)

59. And the author of Vivaraṇa (commentator of the Pañchāpadikā) writes:

(२) नु च ब्रह्मात्मानुभवत् दर्शनायोः कुः साहित्यपुस्तकेऽ न वयं साहित्यं बृहम्। कदाचित्तु अस्ः प्रज्ञातात्स्थङ्कस्वर्गम, कदाचित्तु अस्ः प्रज्ञातात्स्थङ्कस्वर्गम।।

PV. p.284.

In this passage Prakāśātman is offering an explanation for the apparent inconsistency that one who has already intuited the non-dual Ātman still continues to perceive the manifold world. His explanation is that the intuition is in the Yōgic trance of Asamprajñātata-Samādhi while the perception of duality is due to the defect engendered by the Prārabdha-karma (Karma whose effects are still fructifying and can subside only after the mortal coil is shuffled off).

60. Other writers on Vedānta up to our own times also follow in the foot-steps of these way-showers and seem to think that experience of Vedāntic truths is reserved for adepts in Pātanjala-Yōga. It is therefore meet that we examine what the Śrūtis themselves have to say on the subject and how Śaṅkara himself has clarified this concept.

61. We shall first advert to the Brhadāraṇyaka text which the author of the Bhāmati feels to be redolent of the Yōga-Samādhi. I have drawn the attention of the reader to the fact that in the entire body of the dialogue, Yōga is conspicuous by its absence. As for the word ‘Nididhyāṣṭva vyaha’ where Vāchaspati Miśra smells the Yōgic Dhyāna, it reveals itself to be perfectly innocent of this denotation or connotation, when the sentence is examined as a whole. For it runs thus:

(३) आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्यः: श्रोतवयि मन्तवयि निद्ध्यायितवयि: पैवेयालयनो वा अरे दर्शिन्द्रश्यायन मध्या विज्ञानेव सर्व विद्यम्।

“Ātman alone, O Maitreyi, is to be seen, to be heard, thought over and dwelt upon; by seeing, thinking over and understanding of Ātman, O my dear, all this becomes Known.”

Br. 2-4-5.

Here it will be observed that the original word निद्ध्यायित (‘Nididhyāsana’) has been subsequently paraphrased by विज्ञ (‘Vijñāna’) which means to understand and Know. That this is the significance to be attached to this term is confirmed by a previous sentence in this connection:

(४) स होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यः: प्रिया बतारे न: सती प्रियं प्राप्ते एष्टात्मस्व व्याख्यायत्तमे व्याख्यायाय : ते व्याख्यायाय: सु: मे निद्ध्यायिता।
“And that Yājñavalkya said: ‘O how dear is my wife!
Your talk is most pleasing to me, come on and take your
seat and I will explain it to you. Listen and understand
while I expatiate on the subject.”

Br. 2-4-4.

Here it will be observed that the very word
Nididhyāṣāna is employed to denote attentive
listening and understanding the drift of what is
spoken.

62. We may now take up Vedic passages which
refer to Yōga expressly. The Upanishad that arrests
our foremost attention in this connection is the
Śvetāśvatara wherein we read:

(1) तत् कारण साल्क्य योगाबिधानमेव ज्ञान देवं मुक्ते सर्वार्थी: II

“That cause known through Sāṁkhya and Yōga,
knowing that Deva, one is liberated from all
bonds.”

Śve. 6-13.

Here Sāṁkhya and Yōga are expressly declared to
be the means of Release.

(2) जिस्नात स्थाय संयं शारीरं हंदीनिन्वितम पनसा सनिगमय
ब्रह्मस्वयं ब्रह्मस्वधा सर्वार्थी भवयाहानि II
प्राणाः प्रणीताः स युक्तेऽजः क्षीणे प्राणे नासिक्योऽवसीत I
तुह्हायुवक्ष्याय वाहमेन ब्रह्मस्व मो बारसायानाश: II
संयं सुशीवेऽशकराववित्यविविधते शक्तिताववादित्: I
मनोभूतेऽन्तु च चन्द्रश्रेयेऽन्तु ज्ञानवाताश्रयेऽन्तु योगायेत् II

The second and the third of these Mantras (Śve. 2-
8, 9, 10) refer to Prānāyāma (control of breath) and
Āsana (posture) respectively. These practices are very
much the same as those laid down by Patañjali. But

that the result aimed at is quite different here is clear
from the first verse which says:

“After keeping the body erect and straight, and
restraining the senses and detaining them by means of
the mind in the heart, the wise one should cross all the
dangerous currents by means of the boat of
Brahman.”

Śve. 2-8.

It is obvious that it is not the mere suppression of
the modifications of the mind that is aimed at; nor
are the means confined to the usual eight steps of
Yōga, for Brahman is the chief means here.

63. Śaṅkara expressly warns us that it is not the
Sāṁkhya or the Yōga recommended in the schools
named by these words that are meant in the text cited
above:

(3) चतुर्विद्युपुरुष ‘तत्कारण साल्क्ययोगानभिप्रायु’ इति, वैदिकमेव
tतत्र ज्ञान ध्यायं य साल्क्ययोगानभिप्रायु अभिलयोऽवत्ते प्रत्यास्ते: —
इत्यवाक्वायु II

“As for the realization referred to in the text ‘That
cause attained through Sāṁkhya and Yōga, it must be
concluded that it is the Vedic Knowledge (of Atman)
and the Vedic meditation that are denoted by the words
Sāṁkhya and Yōga, since that alone would be a mere
direct reference in the context.”

SBh. 2-1-3.

64. And now let us see if any other Upanishad
refers to this ‘Vedic’ Yōga. We find the following
texts in the Katha:

(1) युज्योक्तां निविषयातय विवृत्तात्मका
विविधेऽत्मका योगविधिः च कुलम् I
ब्रह्म प्राणा विविषयाद्विद्यु-
रण्योधेऽवं यो ब्रह्मस्थितमेव II

“Nachiketas got this Knowledge as well as the way of
Yōga as taught by Mrtryu, (the God of death), attained
Brahman and became free from all the taint of actions

* Śaṅkara’s reading is ‘Sāṁkhya-yogābhipannam’.
and from death. And so would he also become whoever knows this Adhyātmic Truth.” Ka. 6-18.

[Here is a reference to Yōga as a means to the Knowledge of Brahman.]

(2) अध्यात्मयोगाविशेषन देवं मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकके जहाति \| “The wise one who knows that Deva through the attainment of the Adhyātma Yōga gets rid of elation and grief.” Ka. 2-12.

Here the Yōga is specifically named Adhyātma Yōga (the Yōga of Ātman), implying that the Yōga is intended for those who would Realize the Ātman taught in Vedānta. And the details of this Yōga are to be found in the following verses of the Katha Upanishad:

(3) एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढःस्वच्छः न प्रकाशते।
\| इस्तयो त्वभवेऽछुत्वा सुसम्यस्य सुसम्यदिशिनि: \| “This Ātman is hidden in all beings, and therefore does not show himself. But with the help of the keen concentrated subtle mind, He can be seen by those who persist in the practice of observing the subtle entity.” Ka. 3-12.

The senses, the common mind, the intellect, the individual self, are successively to be merged, the grosser in the more subtle, till at last everything else is seen to be one with the Real Self, hidden in all beings. When all these apparent selves are realized to be merely appearances, and are finally dissolved into the Reality which is the substrate of all, that would be seen to be the aim of the whole process.

65. It will be noted that this Yōga, elsewhere described in the Upanishad as firm holding of the senses (स्वरूपनिर्दिष्टवाणाम् 6-11), is no creative imagination like Upāsanā (meditation). It is an effort to see subtle things as they are as, for instance, the concentrated effort on the part of a scientist when he observes minute things through a microscope. On turning inwards and closely examining, the senses are seen to be no more than functions of the mind (स्मृति) and that the mind is nothing but the intellect (ज्ञान) the determining aspect of the mind. The thoughts of a thinker are then discerned to be the thinker himself. This thinker again is really the Universal Ātman who is the changeless Witnessing Principle in each one of us.

66. This Adhyātma Yōga has been designated as Dhyāna Yōga in the Bhagavadgītā. It would be profitable to quote the relevant Ślokas here:
CONCLUSION

67. We have now exhausted almost all the fundamental concepts according to Śaṅkara. The two most primary concepts of all are the concept of Ātman and that of Avidyā. The discussion of the concept of Ātman, starts from the generic idea of the empirical self, and ultimately leads the critical enquirer to the axiomatic notion of the Paramātman or Mahān Ātman who is the Universal Witnessing Consciousness or Brahman, as is evidenced by the Jyotirbhrāhmaṇa of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka which expatiates on the subject in the form of a narration of the dialogue between King Janaka and Yāgñavalkya.

The sage Yāgñavalkya initiates the King into the mystery of the concept of Ātman by saying that even when all the external lights are extinguished, it is the Light of Ātman alone that continues to serve as the guide for all human procedure in life. The first set of questions and answers there, is as follows:

(1) कतम् आत्मेति योहवं विज्ञानमयः प्राणेषु हृदन्त्वयोऽः
पुरुषः स समानः सनुभि लोकवनस्कृति ध्यातिवीर लेलायते स
हि स्वयो भूतयेऽ लोकाचिन्मानी पृथ्वी रूपाणि।

"Question: Which is that Ātman?"

Answer: He who is of the nature of Consciousness among the Prāṇas (or the organs of sense ) and is the

[This is the best test in empirical life through which one can satisfy oneself as to whether or not he has been a perfect Yōgārūḍha.]
Light within the heart. Identifying himself with the mind, he traverses both the regions. He thinks as it were, and moves about as it were. Becoming indeed a dreamer, he crosses beyond this region and transcends the forms of death.” *Br. 4-3-7.*

Here is a clue to the fact that Ātman does not really own the aggregate of the body and the senses which make him mortal; for he transcends this mortal coil so soon as he enters the dreamland. After subsequently showing how every soul that goes into the state of deep sleep, crosses beyond ignorance, desire and action and extricating itself from the toils and moils of mundane life it is beyond all desire and grief (आत्मामय्यात्मामय्यकामायां शोकान्तरमूः ४-४-२१) even through this temporary merging in Brahman (4-3-32) — and after narrating the vicissitudes of the transmigratory soul, the sage finally concludes:—

(२) स वा एव महान्त आत्मामय्यः महाकामायां ब्रह्मायां वै ब्रह्मस्य हि वै ब्रह्म भवति य एवं वेद।। (४-४-२५)

“This great unborn Ātman indeed is unaging, undying, immortal Brahman. Brahman, as is well-known, is fearless. Verily whosoever knows It thus, becomes the fearless Brahman indeed.”

*Br. 4-4-25.*

The other concept, to wit, that of Avidyā, is unlike the concept of Ātman, only a concession to the naive mind which longs to attain final Release. Avidyā, according to Śaṅkara, is as we have already seen, the instinctive notion of me and mine entertained by all human beings owing to the mutual superimposition of the Self and the non-Self. Nobody suspects it to be ignorance till the Śāstra and a Vedāntic teacher discloses its delusive nature. The concept is a device employed by the Upanishads for the purpose of teaching the Truth. All other concepts such as causation, creation, Īśvara, spiritual discipline including Sannyāsa and Yōga and the validity of the Śruti itself as a means of right Knowledge as well as the distinction between the empirical and the transcendental views, all these presuppose the concept of Avidyā. There can be no talk of the Science of Vedānta, or of the relation of a master and the pupil aspiring for a course of instruction in that Science without the concept of Avidyā as the *prius*. The moment one rises to the mental level of Vidyā which discloses the true nature of Brahman as the only Reality, all these concepts are invalidated and the Intuition of the non-dual Brahman alone remains as the eternal Truth and Reality in one.

*Om Tat Sat*
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

His Holiness Paramahamsa Sri Sri Satchidanandendra Saraswathi Swami, the founder of Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya and author of over 200 reputed works on Advaita in Kannada, Sanskrit and English blessed the earth with his presence for ninety-six useful and rich years (1880-1975).

His works are characterized by vast and deep scholarship, clear and precise perception and an attractive and lively style. His authentic interpretation of Sankara has been greatly recognized by both the East and the West. He was not just a rare and accomplished individual but a mighty and magnificent institution.

ABOUT THE BOOK

The topics dealt with by the Swamiji in this book of 89 pages are: (1) Atman is the real Self of each one of us even if one denies its existence, (2) Vidya is the determination of the true nature of self. Mixing of the real and unreal (Self and non-self) and mistaken transference of the mutual properties of this is Avidya, (3) The true nature of the concepts of creation and Maya, (4) The concept of para/Apara Brahman and Isvara, (5) Bondage is ignorance of the true nature of Atman and Release is the result of right knowledge, (6) Sastra as the ultimate means of this knowledge which brings about the final intuition of Brahman-Atman, (7) The empirical and transcendental concepts used in Vedanta, (8) How Sastra uses the Adhyaropapavada for this purpose and, (9) the true nature of Sannyasa and Yoga as explained in Vedanta.

Swamiji has shown in this book how Sankara's clarifications of certain Vedantic concepts and principles of interpretations of Upanishadic teaching take us to the direct intuition, here and now, of our Real Self.