

Notes and References

1. The literal translation of the phrase used in the *Gītā* would be 'those who say that nothing else exists'.
2. On the question of the authorship of the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras* and the *Brahma Sūtras*, see Nakamura, *History of Early Vedānta Philosophy*.
3. Ibid, p. 330.
4. Śādhū Śāntinātha is perhaps the only exception to this statement. His book entitled *Sāadhanā* tries to explain and explore this phenomenon. However, nobody seems to have taken it seriously, perhaps because of his negative conclusion that the very structure of meditational practices ensures that whatever the theoretical truth with which one starts it, is bound to be realized as existentially true because of the very nature of the meditative practices through which its truth is sought to be actualized and realized in consciousness. The positive counterpart of this contention is perhaps more explicitly exemplified in the life of Shri Ramakrishna which has attracted more attention and appreciation without any attempt at its epistemological analysis or comparison with Śādhū Śāntinātha's negative conclusions.
5. It may be said that the predominance of the Buddhist texts during the first millennium AD may be due to the availability of Buddhist texts outside India where they were better preserved. But this can hardly explain the overwhelming discrepancies in the proportion of the texts; or the fact that even the Jain texts during this period outnumber those of the Vedānta, the Nyāya, the Mīmāṃsā the Sāṃkhya, etc. The Jains, of course, were confined to India alone and hence the question of their texts being preserved outside India does not arise.

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Where are the Vedas in the First Millennium A.D.?^{*}

I

The Vedas are supposed to be the most authoritative source both for rituals and knowledge in the non-Śramanic and non-Āgamic traditions of India. In fact, many people in contemporary India believe that they contain all knowledge including that of modern science if one has the capacity and insight to find it there. Many others, like Śri Aurobindo and those who have followed him in the understanding and the interpretation of the Vedas, feel that they are the store-house of all mystical knowledge that man might possibly possess. Yet, their exact place in the Indian tradition has never been clearly stated. Nor do we

^{*} This article is dedicated to Prof. R.N. Dandekar, one of the most outstanding Vedic scholars in the world today, whose paper entitled 'Commentators of the *Rgveda*: A Recapitulation' has provided much of the substantive evidence referred to in it.

have a clear history of the attempts at the understanding of the Vedas in the long Indian tradition since they were composed. In fact, one does not even know as to what exactly is to be understood by the term 'Veda', that is, what to include and what to exclude from it. Normally, one is told that the term 'Veda' includes the *mantras*, the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Nāmādheya* in it. But this is a Mīmāṃsā contention and obviously excludes the *Āraṇyakas* and the Upaniṣads which are generally held to be an integral part of the Vedic corpus. Even, with respect to the texts known as the *mantras* and the *Brāhmaṇas*, it does not clearly articulate the fact that the texts known by these names differ in the different *śākhās*, and that any meaningful talk about the texts known as the Vedas has first to indicate the *śākhā* to which one is referring.

These are well-known facts and yet they are generally ignored in any discussion of the Vedas. The problems are glossed over by saying that the difference between the *śākhās* is not very great and that the term '*Brāhmaṇa*' in the Mīmāṃsā definition includes the *Āraṇyakas* and the Upaniṣads also. No one, of course, pays any attention to the implications of the use of the word '*saṁhitā*' in connection with the *mantra* portion of this Veda, nor to the fact that there are repetitions of the *mantras* of the *Rgveda* not only in the other *saṁhitā* but also in the *Rgveda* itself.

The term '*saṁhitā*' is generally taken to mean a collection or an edition implying that someone had collected and arranged the texts in the order that we have them; but a 'collection' means a selection, that is, that certain portions have been omitted which the editor did not consider important enough to be included. On the other hand, even if one concedes the possibility that the editor only arranged and organized the material without excluding anything, the principle of organization would itself impose a pattern on the material that was earlier present in an unorganized, scattered form. The arrangement of the *Rgveda* in different *maṇḍalas*, each having its own *ṛṣi* and *devatā*, suggests this. But, if we take the idea of the *śākhā* seriously, then we will have to accept the fact that each of the *saṁhitās* belonging to each of the *śākhās* was edited by a different person belonging to that *śākhā* and that he made the selection according to his own judgement and the tradition of

the *śākhā* to which he belonged.

The first task in respect to the Vedic texts, then, should be to find out the difference between the *saṁhitā* texts of the different *śākhās* and to find what has been rejected or added to the central corpus of the *mantras* which perhaps was the common property of the Vedic seers of those times. Next, will come the task of seeing as to what portions of the *Rgveda* have been repeated in the other *saṁhitās*. It is, of course, well known that the *Sāmaveda* is not an independent Veda but consists mostly of the *mantras* taken from the *Rgveda*. Was this selection made on the basis of their suitability of being sung in the Vedic ritual, as the *mantras* in the *Sāmaveda* are supposed to be sung? In case this is so, it would have to be found as to whether there is any essential difference between the *mantras* in the *Sāmaveda* and the other *mantras* in the *Rgveda*, and if the former were considered more suitable for singing rather than the latter. Moreover, as a distinction has been made in the *mantras* of the *Sāmaveda* between those which are supposed to be sung in the forests and those which are supposed to be sung in the villages, it will have to be found whether there is any distinction between these. The distinctive names for them, as given in the *Sāmaveda* are '*araṇya gāna*' and '*grāma geyagāna*'. Furthermore, the distinction suggests that all of these *mantras* included in the *Sāmaveda* were not meant exclusively for being sung at the Vedic sacrifices, and that they would be sung on other occasions for other purposes as well.

However, once the distinction between the *śākhās* is made central to all the texts, the question of what is included in the other *saṁhitās* from the *Rgveda* would have to be seen in the context of the *saṁhitās* belonging to that *śākhā* alone. It is only after this is done that a comparative study could be made of the texts belonging to the various *śākhās* and the repetitions in them. The context in which the repetition is made and the probable purpose for which it might have been made are other questions which may have to be taken into account after initial work has been done. There is, of course, the question of repetitions in the *Rgveda* itself, but as Bloomfield pointed out long ago, this cannot be completely determined unless a reverse concordance is made. But, as far as I know, it has not been attempted until now and one has to totally depend upon Bloomfield's concordance on the basis

of which he had found the repetitions mentioned in his well-known work on the subject. Yet, if one accepts the primary distinction between the *sākhās*, then one would have to distinguish between the text of the *R̥gveda* itself as belonging to one *sākhā* or the other, and the repetitions would have to be found within them and across them. The same distinction would also have to be made in respect to the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Āraṇyakas* and the Upaniṣads, except that the assignment of many of these to the *Atharvaveda* has generally been done in a residual manner and hence a radical distinction may be made between those belonging to the first three *saṁhitās* and the *Atharvaveda*. The question as to whether the text of the *Atharvaveda* itself varies depending upon the *sākhā* to which it belongs needs to be examined as well as the question as to why some scholars assign it to a period even earlier than that of the *R̥gveda*.

II

These, of course, are preliminary questions which should have been decided and settled long ago. It is surprising that they have to be raised, even though the Vedas are supposed to be not only the oldest but the most 'authoritative' texts in the Indian tradition. Normally, one would have expected a better treatment of the texts considered so fundamental to the whole tradition and also a continuous serious concern with the explication and understanding of their meaning. Yet, the moment one looks at the history of this 'concern' with the Vedic texts, one is surprised to find that though there was certainly a sustained attempt at the preservation of the *mantra* portion of the texts, there was little attempt at understanding what they meant. The first serious evidence of such a concern with the elucidation of the meaning of the Vedic text occurs, as is well known, in the *Nighaṇṭu* and the *Nirukta* ascribed to Yāska and placed some time around the fifth century BC. The first only gives the synonyms and homonyms of the words which occur in the Vedas and which, according to the author, need to be taken into account to understand the meaning of the Veda. The ambiguity involved in such an exercise can easily be understood if one considers that, according to the author of the *Nighaṇṭu*, the same word may stand for many different things and many different words may stand for the

same thing. The *Nirukta*, which is the second work in this connection, considers many of the issues that had been raised in connection with the Vedic interpretation and is clearly aware of the difficulties in any such attempt. It says at the end that the older *rsis* have disappeared and now it is only with our own intellect and reason that we may hope to explicate and understand the meaning of the Veda.¹ However, it should be remembered that the *Nirukta* is not a *bhāṣya* on the *mantras* of the *Samhitās*. There is no such thing as a *mantra* by *mantra* commentary to explicate what it means or even to give possible alternative meanings as held by different interpreters of the text. The *Nirukta*, of course, is the first work to deal with the problem of the interpretation of the Vedas but it does not do what one would have expected it to do, that is, to seriously take the text word by word, line by line and *mantra* by *mantra* explaining it and relating it to the meanings of the other *mantras* and thus build a complete, coherent body of meanings embedded in the text. Surprisingly, not only Yaska does not do this but no one else seems to have done it after him.

The period between Yāska and Skandasvāmin lasts almost a thousand years, if not more, and during this whole period there is no evidence of any serious attempt to understand the *mantra* portion of the Vedic texts. In fact, there seems to have emerged a powerful school which roundly declared that the Vedic texts were meaningless and that their efficacy and purport consisted totally in their being recited in the proper manner and in the proper order. This was the idea of Svarānukramaṇī, Varṇānukramaṇī and Śabdānukramaṇī. Thus, even the type of understanding exemplified by the *Nirukta* was not followed for almost a thousand years, if not more, let alone was there any attempt at an understanding of the *Samhitā* texts, *mantra* by *mantra*, as would normally have been expected in the tradition. This certainly requires an explanation even though it has hardly struck anyone as requiring one. Professor Dandekar is, of course, an exception and we shall refer to him later.

Perhaps, this stunning absence of any attempt at understanding basic Vedic texts derived from the fact that the Vedic corpus itself underwent a radical transformation as the texts known as the Upaniṣads developed out of it. These texts, though generally regarded as an integral

part of the Veda display an attitude which is indicative of a self-conscious attempt on their part to distance themselves from it. Nārada, in the well-known story that occurs in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* mentions the four Vedas as included in all the branches of knowledge that he had mastered and had yet remained dissatisfied with all that was contained in it. The Upaniṣads, thus, replaced the *mantra* texts of the *Samhitās* for those who wanted to understand their meaning. This is clearly evidenced in the *Brahma Sūtras* which concentrate exclusively on the Upaniṣads in an attempt at discovering a unified meaning in them. On the other hand, for those who were interested, in the performance of the sacrifices enjoined in the Vedas, the *Śrauta Sūtras* and the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras* replaced the *mantra* texts exclusively and, to a large extent, even those portions of the texts known as the *Brāhmaṇas* which dealt with the performance of the ritual. Thus the *mantra* portion which constituted the *Samhitās* became totally irrelevant for both the votaries of the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras* and the *Brahma Sūtras*, except for the fact that they were to be preserved in their purity to the utmost possible extent. The so-called *Āraṇyaka* portion of the Vedic corpus got assimilated into the portion known as the Upaniṣads, just as the *Brāhmaṇa* portion was assimilated into the *mantra* portion which was supposed to be required only for the performance of the Vedic sacrifices, the procedure for performance of which was detailed in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts.

This, perhaps, is the possible explanation for the unbelievable absence for such a long time at any attempt at understanding the Vedic texts even though the tradition of writing both the *bhāṣya* and the *vārtika* had already been developed on all the major texts of the tradition right from the time when Kātyāyana wrote his *vārtika* on the *sūtras* of Panini. But then the question arises as to why the *mantra* portion of the Vedic texts suddenly became the subject of interpretation from the seventh century onwards. Something must have happened to trigger this activity which has been regarded as totally unnecessary for almost a millennium until Sāyaṇa in the fourteenth century. His is the only available fully published commentary on the Vedic *Samhitās* that we have with us today, according to Prof. Dandekar, the most outstanding authority on the Veda of our time. He writes that it is 'the only completely

published commentary on the *Rgveda*'. It should be remembered in this connection that this was a collective enterprise of the Vijayanagar Empire undertaken by a number of scholars under the leadership of Sāyaṇa, who was perhaps the Prime Minister of the state, and his brother Mādhava. Only then can its significance be understood as a self-conscious attempt to revive the Vedas and to make them relevant to the political and cultural conditions of those times.

It is an amazing phenomenon, that after a neglect of more than a millennium and a half, there occurs a sustained, self-conscious, collective attempt at an understanding of the Vedic texts *mantra* by *mantra*. The earliest of such attempts seems to date from the early seventh century AD, when a group of scholars attempted to write commentaries on the Veda, though they are only partially available now. Most of these commentators were concentrated at Valabhi in Gujarat which was then the centre of a powerful Jain revival where the compilation of the authoritative texts of the Jain tradition was going on. The leader of this group was Skandasvāmin, followed by Nārāyaṇa, Udgīta and Mādhava. The first three appear to have collectively written a commentary or *Bhāṣya* on the *Rgveda* while the fourth, that is Mādhava, wrote on the *Sāmaveda*. It is not known whether this activity was undertaken at the royal behest, or whether it could be seen as a response to the Jain revival in the same region.

The Valabhi enterprise seems to have had little impact as there is hardly any evidence of any renewed interest in Vedic exegetics after it until almost 300 years later, that is around the tenth century, we have Venkatamādhava who wrote a detailed commentary on the *Rgveda* entitled, the *Rgārthadīpikā* of which only portions are available. After him we have Ṣadguruśiṣya in the twelfth century who is supposed to have written a work entitled *Vedārthadīpikā*. It is, however, not clear whether it is a detailed commentary on the Vedic texts or merely a general elucidation of its meaning. There is a difference of opinion about its date.² After Ṣadguruśiṣya, we have, according to Nilakanṭha Śāstri, Bharatasvāmin who wrote a commentary on the *Sāmaveda* and lived during the period of Hoysala Ramnath (twelfth century). After Bharatasvāmin, according to Dandekar, there occurred Bhaṭṭa Govinda, who wrote a full commentary on the *Rgveda*, called

Śrutivikāśa around 1311 AD.; though at present, we have only the commentary on the last eight *adhyāyas* available to us.

Thus, before Sāyaṇa who wrote a full length commentary on the *mantra* texts, we have only eight or nine commentators if we include Ūvaṭa, who according to Gonda is mentioned by Skandasvāmin as a predecessor. The total number of these does not even add up to a dozen, and most of these occur only after the tenth century and that too in the south. If we compare this with the commentaries on the *sūtra* literature that we find during this period, the neglect of the Vedas, which were supposed to be the foundation of the whole tradition, would appear even more surprising.

Even after the tenth century, the situation does not seem to improve very much as we have only six commentators up to Sāyaṇa, even if we include Mudgala whose *ṛtti* is sometimes mentioned after Sāyaṇa.

The situation after the tenth century may show a slight improvement if we include all those persons who had written on the individual *mantras* of the *Ṛgveda*, namely, Haradatta (ninth century AD), Guṇaviṣṇu (end of the eleventh century), Halāyudha (AD 1171-1201), Śatrughna (AD 1528), Rāmnath Vidyāvācaspati (seventeenth century). Besides these, we also find mention of Ātmānanda (thirteenth century), Rāvaṇa (early fifteenth century), Dinakara Bhaṭṭa (1575-1640) and Bhaṭṭoji Devasvāmin, Hastāmalaka (eighth century), Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara (eleventh century), Lakṣmaṇa (eleventh century), Dhātuskayahvan (twelfth century), Varadarāja (1600-1650). If we include all these five persons in the list of those who are said to have commented on the *Ṛgveda* in the first millennium AD, we then have a total of twelve persons most of them occurring from the seventh century onwards, while in the second millennium AD, we have eighteen up to the seventeenth century. Thus there is, *prima facie*, a significant increase in the number of those who have either fully or partly commented upon the Vedic texts or who are referred to as having done so. The situation dramatically changes from the nineteenth century onwards when there is a renewed interest in Vedic exegetics starting from Dayanand Saraswati in the first half of the nineteenth century followed by others such as Śri Aurobindo and those influenced by him, such as Kapāli Śāstri and Anirvanaji. On

the other hand we have Madhusudana Ojha who seems to have given his interpretation against the one given by Dayanand. The same is probably true of Swami Karpatriji. It is interesting to note that all these interpretations ignore the ritualistic *yajña*-centric interpretation of the Veda and emphasize its non-ritualistic; mystical meaning. The work of Sāyaṇa and his collaborators remains the pivotal point in the second millennium AD which summarizes to a large extent the work of earlier interpreters and provides the point of controversy for all subsequent commentators. It is surprising to note, however, that there does not seem to be a pro-Sāyaṇa school of interpretation defending him against the new interpretation of the Veda. This is in contrast with the continuous debate that we find between the Advaitic and the non-Advaitic interpretation of the Upaniṣads and the *Brahma Sūtra*.

III

The long gap between the *Nirukta* of Yāska in the fifth century BC and Ūvaṭa or Skandasvāmin in seventh century AD, however, remains an enigma which defies any explanation of the normal understanding of the picture of Indian civilization during this period which was drawn by putting the Vedic tradition and the tradition deriving directly or indirectly from it at its centre. In fact, the disappearance of the original Vedic texts from the centre of sustained attention and interest during this long period has hardly been noticed. Prof. Dandekar is perhaps the only person who has highlighted this fact and also tried to account for it by suggesting possible reasons which might have led to this situation. He asks, for example, in his article entitled 'Commentators of the *Ṛgveda*: A Recapitulation', why there should have occurred a break of nearly 1100-1200 years between the second and the third stages of the '*Ṛgvedic* Exegetical tradition'. He suggests the following possible hypotheses: (1) During this period somehow, no great urgency or ardour may have been felt in regard to the understanding of the purport of the Veda or in producing the necessary literature for that purpose. (2) Conscious efforts towards the popular propagation of the knowledge of the meaning of the Veda and averting its secularization. (3) Only the oral tradition of Vedic exegesis was sponsored during that period. Consequently, no written commentaries

were produced and a few which might have been produced were presumably lost. But, this is not an isolated phenomenon. It is not as if the Vedic texts alone did not get the attention they deserved if they were regarded as the source of the so-called 'orthodox' tradition during this long period. The situation was practically the same in respect to the *Brahma Sūtras* which had summarized the Upaniṣadic tradition centring on the knowledge of the *Brāhmaṇa* as we pointed out in our article, 'Vedānta in the First Millennium AD.' Not only this, the situation is similar with marginal differences in respect to the whole tradition which, directly or indirectly, considered itself as deriving its authority and inspiration from the Vedas. We have already pointed out this fact in our article, 'Indian philosophy in the First Millennium AD.'

If we take all of these facts together, a clear-picture emerges which questions at its foundations the total picture that has been built of India's philosophical tradition in the first millennium AD, stretching back to the period from the appearance of the Buddha. This whole period of a millennium-and-a-half is dominated by the intellectual and spiritual presence of Buddhism which has either been ignored or presented as a minor motif in the usual pictures that have been painted until now. The story has to be changed and drawn in the light of inconvertible factual evidence that we had amassed in the two earlier articles and in the present one. The *nihsanga buddhi* should have also no preferences and no special attachment either to one point of view or the other. It should only consider the facts as dispassionately and objectively as possible and try to build a picture based on them. The history and philosophy of India from 500 BC to 1000 AD has to be totally rewritten placing Buddhism in the centre and treating it as a chief protagonist as it not only outnumbered all other schools of philosophy both in quantity and quality but set the agenda for them by radically refuting the necessity for postulating the reality of any substance universals or wholes for understanding experience, thus reducing all knowledge to a mental construction behind which there was only a succession of discreet disparate self-identical momentary reals (*svlakṣaṇas*) or only a void (*śūnya*) indescribable and uncharacterizable in principle.

Notes and References

1. मनुष्या वा ऋषिषूक्तामत्सु देवानब्रुवन् । को न ऋषिर्भविष्यतीति । तेभ्य एतं तर्कमूर्षि प्रायच्छन्मन्त्रार्थचिन्ताभ्युहमभ्युल्लहम् ।
तस्माद्यदेव किंचानूचानोऽभ्युहत्यार्षं तदवति ॥ १२ ॥
"हृदा तष्टेषु मनसो जवेषु यहब्राह्मणाः संयजन्ते सखायः ।
अत्राह त्वं वि जहुर्वेद्याभिरोहब्राह्मणो वि चरन्त्यु त्वे ॥ १३ ॥
(ऋवे. सं. १०-७१-८)
"हृदा तष्टेषु मनसां प्रजवेषु यहब्राह्मणाः संयजन्ते समानाख्याना ऋत्विजः । अत्राह त्वं विजहुर्वेद्याभिर्वरितव्याभिः
प्रवृत्तिभिः । ओहब्रह्मण ऊहब्रह्मणः ऊह एषां ब्रह्मेति वा ॥
निरुक्ते-त्रयोदशाध्यायः (परिशिष्ट) section ६२-६३
2. There appears to be an inconsistency with regard to the date of Ṣaḍguruśiṣya. While Gonda places him in the twelfth century, Nilakantha Sastri places him in the middle of the thirteenth century. Also, while the former refers to his work entitled *Vedārthadīpikā* the latter does not mention this work at all but mentions that he commented on the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka*, and Kātyāyana's *Sarvānukramaṇī*. The works on the Mīmāṃsā number around 12 while those on Nyāya add up to 15, Vaiśeṣika 10, Samkhya 11, Vedānta 8, Advaita 14, Jainism 39. It becomes even more remarkable if we remember that the commentaries on the *sūtra* literature begin only from around 100 AD; the *Nirukta* dates back to around the fifth century BC.

5

Vedānta in the First Millennium A.D.: The Case Study of a Retrospective Illusion Imposed by the Historiography of Indian Philosophy

Vedānta is supposed to be the most dominant and distinctive philosophy of India, accepted and propagated as such by innumerable writers on Indian philosophy. And yet, if one searches for its presence in the first millennium A.D., one is surprised to find very little evidence of its presence before Śaṅkara and even for quite some time after him. It is true that the Upaniṣads are supposed to be the source of Vedāntic philosophy and had flourished sometime during the later half of the first millennium B.C., or even some centuries earlier than that. It is commonly supposed that as the Upaniṣads form the last part of the Vedic corpus. The term Vedānta is applied to them literally meaning the end of the *Vedas* or the concluding portion thereof and the thought propounded therein. This, of course, is a myth as not only many of the Upaniṣads do not form the concluding portion of the Vedic corpus but also continued to be composed till as late as the 13th century, that is, a long time after Śaṅkara wrote his commentaries on them. As we argued in an article written some time back entitled, “The Upaniṣads:

What are they?”, many of the major Upaniṣads do not occur as a last part of the Vedic corpus, that is, the *Samhitās*, the *Brāhmaṇas* or the *Āraṇyakas* but rather in the middle followed by other portions which are sometimes regarded as separate *Upaniṣads* with a different content, or, what is the case many a time, as not *Upaniṣads* at all. It is well known, for example, that the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* consists of chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the second *adhyāya* of the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, excluding the third *adhyāya*, even though, it explicitly proclaims itself as an upaniṣad.¹

However, in any discussion of Vedānta in the first millennium A.D., the status of the Upaniṣads and of the thought propounded by them in the philosophical scene of those times is a secondary matter as what is of relevance in the assessment of the position of Vedānta in the 1st millennium A.D., is the attempt at a coherent, unified presentation of their thought by Bādarāyaṇa in his *Brahma Sūtras* (50 A.D.). The presence of Vedānta in the 1st millennium A.D., thus, is a function of what happens to the *Brahma Sūtras*, and the attention they aroused in the philosophical world of India after they were composed. Normally, the impact of the foundational *Sūtra* literature of the various schools of Indian philosophy is known by the commentaries that they generated upon them and by the discussions and refutations they met at the hands of their opponents. Surprisingly, the *Brahma Sūtras* remained entirely unnoticed until the appearance of Śaṅkara who wrote his commentary on them along with the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagvadgītā* which resulted in the famous myth of the *Prasthāna Trayī*, that is, the view that the source of Indian Philosophy lies in these three texts when even the so-called different schools of Vedānta do not treat them in such a way, as except for Śaṅkara and Madhva, no one else has commented on all the three to establish his position as to what the Vedānta really means.

Before Śaṅkara, the only thinkers, who are mentioned in connection with the *Brahma Sūtra* in Potter’s new *Bibliography*, are Baudhāyana (350 A.D.), Dravidācārya (525 A.D.), Bhartṛprapañca (550 A.D.), Viśvarūpadeva (600 A.D.), and Brahmadaṭṭa (660 A.D.). As for Baudhāyana, it is doubtful whether he wrote anything on the *Brahma Sūtra*, though there is sufficient evidence that he wrote on the Mīmāṃsā Sūtra, particularly on the *Śaṅkara-Śāstra* going by Nakamura in his work on early Vedānta philosophy.²

Dravidacārya, mentioned after Baudhāyana in Potter's *Bibliography*, finds no mention in Nakamura and Potter's work only says that he wrote a Bhāṣya which exists in manuscript form which has neither been seen nor published by any one. Also it appears that the work has not been referred to by subsequent thinkers in the tradition.

As for *Bhartṛprapañca*, he is supposed to be an exception to the general position held by most Vedāntins that Brahman cannot be known by reasoning, and that it can only be known through the Śruti or perhaps even through intuition.

As for Viśvarūpadeva, he is not mentioned by Nakamura in his comprehensive work on early Vedānta, though he is mentioned in Potter's *Bibliography* and is supposed to have written a work called *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*. As for Brahmadatta, he is supposed to have held a position regarding the relations between self and Brahman as both identical and different, a position held by thinkers who have been referred to in the *Brahma Sūtras*, and generally not supported by it.

The earlier thinkers referred to in the *Brahma Sūtras* are, as is well known, Kārṣṇajini, Kāśakṛtsna, Ātreya, Auḍulomi, Āśmarthya, Bādarī and Jaiminī.

Besides the five thinkers who have been mentioned in Potter's *Bibliography* between Bādarāyaṇa and Śaṅkara, there is the independent work of Gauḍapāda who occurs in 600 A.D. (new) and 550 A.D. (old) and whose *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* is a well known work in the tradition of Advaita Vedānta strongly influenced by Buddhism and is by common consent supposed to have influenced Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* in a significant manner. However, his is an independent work which has nothing to do with the *Brahma Sūtra* and thus is an independent source of Vedāntic thinking in later times. In fact, Nakamura mentions him along with Bādarāyaṇa and Bhartṛhari as precursors of Śaṅkara and specifically assigns the strong advaitic position to him rather than to Bādarāyaṇa.³

Thus in the pre-Śaṅkara period, the total presence of thinkers who could even be remotely designated as Vedāntins, is not only negligible but many of them have to be included just because they have been mentioned by some one else or because their work has a

marginal mention. As for the notice of the Vedāntika thought being taken seriously by others, that seems to be even less for, according to Nakamura, we find direct references only in the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras* where the Vedāntika position is supposed to be refuted twice and while, according to him, there is no mention of it in the *Nyāya-Sūtras*, it is referred to in Vātsyāyana's *Bhāṣya* on the *Nyāya-Sūtras* and by Udyotakara in his *Vārtika* on the *Bhāṣya*.⁴

The situation does not seem to improve much even after Śaṅkara, for, if we exclude his immediate disciples, he does not seem to have made as much of an impact as is made out by his admirers and the author of the *Śaṅkara Digvijaya*. In fact, there is little evidence of the so-called *Digvijaya* as it is the philosophers of the other schools who continue to outnumber the Vedāntins in the centuries after Śaṅkara. Not only this, even the Buddhists are ahead of the Vedāntins, both in quantity and quality, thus nullifying the myth that they were defeated by Śaṅkara. Hastāmalaka, Troṭaka, Padmapāda and Sureśvara are the well known disciples of Śaṅkara and Maṇḍana Misra, the author of *Brahmasiddhi*, can be regarded as almost half his disciple. If we exclude these, then in the post-Śaṅkara period, we have, besides Bhāskara, who has written an independent *Bhāṣya* on the *Brahma Sūtras*, we have Gopālāśrama (780 A.D.), Jñānaghana (900 A.D.), Jñānottama Bhaṭṭāraka (930 A.D.), Vimuktātman (960 A.D.), Vācaspati Misra (960 A.D.), Prakāśātmana (975 A.D.) and Jñānottama Misra (980 A.D.). Thus we have only eight Vedāntins listed in the post-Śaṅkara period in the 1st millennium A.D., if we exclude his disciples and Mandana Misra. Within almost the same period we have Buddhist thinkers-Jain thinkers. As for the so called orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy, the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* number about sixteen (11+5).

The first serious notice of the *advaita* position seems to have been taken by Jayanta Bhaṭṭa in his explicit refutation of that position in his *Nyāya mañjarī*. But he does not refer to Śaṅkara by name. As his date is supposed to be 870 A.D., it can be assumed that the presence of Śaṅkara and his disciples on the philosophical scene had established the *advaitic* position as one of the philosophical positions to be taken into account. Udayana, whose date is supposed to be around

984 A.D., is another example of this as he, not only, refutes the Vedānta position but also seems to give the Vedāntika realization of non-difference a position just below the *Naiyāyika* realization of *mokṣa*. However, he is supposed to have referred only to Bhāskara and not to Śaṅkara, thus suggesting that Śaṅkara's pre-eminence was not established by that time.⁵ In fact, it appears that Udayana in his *Ātmātattvaviveka* has given six stages of realization of the self which he gives in ascending order and at least two of which are ascribed to *Advaita-Vedānta*. The first stage is characterized by the appearance of object in consciousness wherein it alone is treated as real. This, according to him, is the stage of Cārvāka and Mīmāṃsā thought in philosophy which treats action for the satisfaction of oneself through the acquisition of objects alone, as "real" and "meaningful". The second stage is characterized by the appearance in consciousness of the meanings of objects and is associated, according to him, with the Yogācāra school of Buddhism where it is not objects but their meanings which alone are considered as real. The third stage is supposed to be characterized by a realization of the unreality of all meanings by consciousness and is closely related to the position of Śūnyavāda Buddhism on the one hand and *Advaita-Vedānta* on the other. The fourth stage is the arising of a discriminatory consciousness where the consciousness becomes aware of its radical distinction from the object. This stage, he attributes to Sāṅkhya. The fifth stage of realization is where the focus of consciousness shifts from the discriminatory awareness and centres on the self luminosity of consciousness itself. This, according to him, is also the state of *advaitika* realization, though it is different from the *advaitika* realization of the third stage. The last stage or realization goes beyond this where the self is not aware of even its own self and abides completely in its own reality. This, according to him, is the highest stage and is characterized by the realization which *Nyāya* postulates for the self at its highest level.⁶

There seem, however, some problems regarding the delineation of these stages and the association of the third and the fifth with Advaita Vedānta. It is not clear to whom the third position is being ascribed. As for the fifth stage, it is difficult to say that it is the exact position held by Bhāskara, as it seems to describe Śaṅkara's position

more correctly. In any case, it seems from all this, that the positions of Vedānta are only vaguely known and not in the sharp, focal manner in which they were formulated by the *advaitins* in the second millennium A.D.

We, thus, have to divide the question regarding the presence of Vedānta in the first millennium A.D., in two parts, the first relating to the period after the *Brahma Sūtra* and before Śaṅkara's *Bhāṣya* on it in the early 8th century A.D. and the second after Śaṅkara, that is roughly from 700-1000 A.D. There can be little doubt that the *Brahma Sūtras* had little impact on the philosophical scene in India after their composition and in fact were practically nowhere on the philosophical scene if we compare them with the influence exercised by the other *Sūtras*, particularly those relating to Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika. Even the impact of Sāṅkhya which may be regarded as independent from the traditions deriving from the Vedic corpus was far, far greater in the period than that of the *Brahma Sūtras*. We have, for example, between 50-750 A.D., 10 Sāṅkhyan thinkers, many of whom have written independent works of their own. In fact, if we take *Ṣaṣṭhitantra* as the first important Sāṅkhyan work, then we have in the first millennium A.D. not only the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* around 350 A.D., but *Svarṇasaptati* 655 A.D., and other works totaling eight in number before Vācaspati Miśra's work on Sāṅkhya.⁷

The situation is no different if we try to find the presence of the *Brahma Sūtras* in non-Vedic traditions of philosophizing such as those of the Buddhists and the Jains. Nāgārjuna, who occurs around 150 A.D., and is the first great thinker belonging to the Mādhyamika School of Buddhism, shows hardly any awareness of Vedānta as propounded in the *Brahma Sūtras*, even though more than 100 years had elapsed since its composition. The situation does not seem to improve later as his disciple Āryadeva (180 A.D.) shows no awareness either. The Yogācāra School which seems to start with Maitreyanātha (270-350 A.D.) and develops through Asanga (360 A.D.) and Vasubandhu (360 A.D.) does not show any awareness of the *Brahma Sūtras* either. This is specially, significant, as they do discuss other schools of Indian philosophy such as Nyāya. The first clear cut reference to Vedānta as a distinctive school of philosophy occurs in the work of Bhavya or Bhāvaviveka⁸ in 550 A.D., that is, more than

five hundred years after the composition of the *Brahma Sūtras* and about 150 years before Śaṅkara appears on the scene. However, in his presentation, the elements of the Vedāntika doctrine of the Ātman seems to be inexplicably intermixed with the doctrine of the Puruṣa which finds no place either in the *Brahma Sūtras* or in Gauḍapāda of Śaṅkara. Also, though he is aware of the distinction between the Jīva and the Ātman or the embodied self and the liberated self, and treats the distinction between the two as analogous to the way the infinite space is limited by adjuncts such as pot etc., he is still not aware either of the doctrines of *Avidyā* or *Māyā* which were to play such an important role in Śaṅkara's thought later. In fact, the situation does not seem to improve even with Śāntarākṣita who occurs a little later than Śaṅkara as though he discusses both *puruṣa* and *Ātman* he hardly refers to Śaṅkara. The same seems to be the case with Kamalaśīla who has written a prose commentary on Śāntarākṣita's *Tattvasaṅgraha*.⁹

It seems that the composition of the *Brahma Sūtras* had hardly any effect on the philosophical scene of India as it remained unnoticed at least till five hundred years after its composition. And even after that its major attempt, to present in a unified manner the conflicting positions of the Upaniṣads, and give a *Brahman*-centric interpretation of it, was not clearly grasped in the philosophical world of India.

The non-existence of Vedānta as a significant philosophical force in the first millennium A.D., will become even more clear, if we notice the fact that Haribhadra Suri, the great Jain thinker belonging to 750 A.D., who wrote perhaps the first survey work on the various schools of Indian philosophy, did not even mention Vedānta as a separate, distinctive school of Indian philosophy, even though he mentions not only Buddhism but also Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya explicitly and even Lokāyata which certainly was not regarded as a major school of philosophy by anybody in India. As both Śāntarākṣita and Kamalaśīla belong to this very period, it appears that the influence of Śaṅkara and his disciples had not permeated the philosophical atmosphere as is usually alleged by those who regard *Śaṅkara Digvijaya* as an authentic work descriptive of his triumph over all other philosophical schools of India. However, as the millennium moves towards its closure there seems some evidence of

the spread of the influence of Śaṅkara's thought as one finds, for example, in Udayana's "*Ātmattavivēka*" in which there seems to be a distinctive attempt to come to terms with the Advaitic position, as regards ultimate realization. Within Nyāya framework, particularly the one relating to the denial of the self luminosity of the *Ātman*. Udayana's work comes closest to *advaitika* position even though it does not declare itself to be such. But even if one does not accept such a characterization of Udayana's work, there can hardly be a debate about the presence of powerful *advaitika* leanings in that work. The whole work in fact closes with a recommendation to meditate on the self and suggests the gradual stages of realization which would occur during the course of the meditation. It is interesting to note in this connection that the Mīmāṃsā position is equated almost with that of the Cārvaka and that the Sāṅkhya position of discrimination between the self and the object is placed very high in the scale of meditational realization on the self. The millennium, which had shown during most of its course no signs of Vedānta, closes with signs of its impending dominance in the forthcoming millennium where it establishes its supremacy, particularly after the disappearance of Buddhism in east India with the destruction of Nālandā. The only rival, that it has in the second millennium A.D., is Nyāya on the one hand, which repudiates Udayana's attempt of advaitising the Nyāya position and Rāmānuja and Madhva Vedānta on the other. There is, thus, practically no Vedānta in the first millennium A.D., and the idea of its dominant presence, there is a superimposition by the historiography of Indian Philosophy due to its being dazzled by the picture in the second millennium A.D. The propounders of the theory of *adhyāsa* have perhaps themselves imposed one on the history of Philosophy in India.

Notes

1. See on this whole point my article "The Upaniṣads—What are they?" in *Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspective*. Delhi, OUP., 1991.

2. Upavarsa who occurred around 150 A.D., is sometimes mentioned in this connection. However, to Potter he is only supposed to have written a *Vṛtti* on the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra*, while according to Nakamura, he has also written on the *Samkarṣakanda*.
3. Hajimae Nakamura, *History of Early Vedānta Philosophy*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1983, p.127.
4. *Ibid.*, pp.330-356.
5. *Ibid.*, p.67.
6. *Āmatattvaviveka*, Translation, Explanation and Analytical critical summary by N.S. Dravid, Shimla, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1995, pp.455-458.
7. *Ibid.*, See p.335.
8. *Ibid.*, p.184.
9. *Ibid.*, pp.226-229.

❧ 6 ❧

Pratītyasamutpāda—Does it Say Anything New?

Pratītyasamutpāda is supposed to be the central doctrine of Buddhism which, by common consent, is regarded as its unique contribution to world of philosophy. Many scholars have proclaimed it to be distinctive of Buddhist thought founded on Buddha's foundational insight into the human situation and think of it as providing the key to all else that the Buddha said. But what is the "insight" and what does the doctrine propound so as to be regarded as "significantly new", as has been claimed by everybody?

Generally, *pratītyasamutpāda* is understood to mean the doctrine of universal causation and is translated as such. But understood in this way, it can hardly be regarded as something so radically new, as has generally been claimed for it. It may be seen as the denial of the notion that everything happens by chance or that even something happens due to it. It is difficult to understand what the notion of 'chance' means in this context. Could it mean that things happen because they happen and that there is no reason why they occur as they occur? It may be

taken as a denial of the possibility of “understanding”, why anything occurs or how does it occur. It is not clear, if this is what is meant by “*Yadṛcchāvāda*” a doctrine which the Buddha is said to have rejected along with its opposite, that is, “*niyatīvāda*” or the doctrine that everything is determined by fate. A better term for the doctrine that everything happens by chance would perhaps be “*Yadṛcchāvāda*”.

But the problem is not how best to translate what is conveyed by the doctrine that everything happens due to “chance”; rather, it is to understand, what exactly the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda*, is supposed to deny. If it is taken to deny that things happen by chance, then it should be taken to assert that there are ‘causes’ or ‘reasons’ for the way something happens. There may be differences regarding what exactly is to be understood as the ‘cause’ or the ‘reason’, but these do not affect the general contention that for anything that happens there is a sufficient cause or reason in terms of which it can be understood. Also, whatever the differences may be, regarding what is to be considered as ‘cause’ or ‘reason’, for anything that happens there is a sufficient cause for the particular event concerned and there is no disagreement that there are ways and means of deciding whether what one claims to be the ‘cause’ or ‘reason’ is actually so. In other words, it is a “cognitive” claim open to objections, revision and verification. There are criterias of validation and rejection accepted amongst those who share the cognitive concern and belong to the field.

But the claim, that something is a ‘cause’, can only be verified, if that which is claimed to be a ‘cause’ is of such a nature, that it can recur and one can observe, that the effect of which it is claimed to be a ‘cause’, occurs or does not occur. To say that everything has a cause is, therefore, to say that things have a recognisable identity of their own and that they have such relations between them that if one occurs, the other must occur, and that there are repeated occurrences of them, again and again, so that we can find whether the imputed relation of ‘cause and effect’ between them is correct or not. But Buddhism is not supposed to believe in all this, and hence the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* cannot be the same as the doctrine of ‘cause-and-effect’.

It is true, that the Buddha did propound the doctrine that “suffering” is universal, and that it has a ‘cause’, and that it can be ‘removed’. The ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ are, however, not seen here as ‘recurrence’ phenomena which themselves come and go or appear, disappear and reappear again. Rather, they are ever present, beginningless, permanent conditions of ‘existence’ which can be annulled or stopped by human effort in the light of the knowledge of the way that the Buddha recommended for removing the cause.

The ‘cause’ and the ‘effect’ thus, though permanent and beginningless, are removable by human effort and can be ended. This is very similar to what is usually said about ‘*avidyā*’ or ‘*māyā*’ in other traditions. This is also the Buddha’s answer to the other extreme position which asserts that everything is determined and that nothing can be done, a position that is known as ‘*niyatīvāda*’. The chain of causality is not so absolute that nothing can be done about it. But this is a position held by everybody, at least in practice, and may be called the copresence of ‘freedom’ and causality in human situation.

But all this has nothing to do with the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* which is regarded by many as the most important doctrine propounded by Buddhism. It only says that everything has ‘origination’ implying thereby that nothing is permanent. What is being denied, therefore, is *nityatva* and not, as is usually thought, the two opposed doctrines mentioned above. The doctrine that every thing is ‘originated’ or comes into being does not necessarily imply that it cannot be relatively permanent or lasting.

If the mere fact of ‘origination’ mean that what is so originated will not last at all, none will ever make any effort in bringing anything into being through his action. It is generally forgotten that every action aims at originating something or produce a state of affairs which is more satisfactory than what one obtains. ‘Origination’ is, thus, not just a natural process which occurs all the time. It is also, at least some time, the result of willed action that is undertaken to reverse the natural process of ‘origination’ that goes on occurring independently of it all the time. Seeking of ‘Nirvāṇa’ is an instance of this, and, surely no Buddhist will hold that it is transit or impermanent in nature.

The state of liberation, it has been argued, at least in the context of *Mokṣa*, can not be a result of human action, since if it were to be so, it will have an end as it is produced. What has a beginning must have an end, and the *mokṣa* or *nirvāṇa* can have no end. It was, perhaps, this argument that leads to the doctrine that the *ātman* is ever-liberated, and the idea of bondage, thus, itself is an illusion. *Mokṣa*, it has been urged, is thus, *nityasiddha*, that is, ever realised. It is not *sādhanaśiddha*, or realised through any *sādhana* or any active effort on the part of man. It is eternally realised, and it is only through ignorance of this fact that man does not know that such is the case.

Thus, of course, it makes nonsense of all *Sādhana* of whatever kind. But, as Nyāya pointed out long ago, one need not accept that if something has a beginning, then it must have an end also. It pointed out, that even though it is a fact that when something is destroyed, its destruction or non-existence has a beginning it does not have an end. The *dhvansābhāva* is endless, even though it has a beginning. Similarly, when a thing comes into being, its prior non-existence or *prāgabhāva* which, though beginningless, comes to an end.

The *advaitin* accepts a strange version of the latter, as he argues that *avidyā*, though beginningless, can have an end, as *mokṣa* will be impossible if this were not accepted. But the *advaitin* does not appear to have raised the question whether the *avidyā* is one or many. For, in case *avidyā* is regarded as one, its cessation or destruction will mean the cessation of the whole realm of plurality or *māyā* at every level. On the other hand, if *avidyā* is regarded as multiple in character, then there will have to be as many *avidyās* as there are *jīvas* in the world, and we will have the problem whether the number of *jīvas* is fixed and final or flexible and changing all the times. In the latter case, there will be the problem as to how new *jīvas* come into being, while in the former case, besides the problem of their origin, there is the question as to how their number was fixed.

The plurality of the *jīvas*, whether fixed or flexible, is closely tied up with the plurality of *avidyās*, as both are two facets of the same phenomenon. Both, however, are integral parts of the theory of *karma* which presupposes them in an essential manner. The cycle of *karma* is

basically a cycle of *avidyās*, where the disappearance of one give rise only to another *avidyā* implying thereby that some other *avidyā* has taken hold of one's being. It is not the desire for the fruit of one's action, but the *avidyā* regarding all the elements involved in it that is the cause of one's bondage.

The levels of *avidyās* and their myriad forms has not been a subject of investigation or phenomenological exploration except perhaps in the Buddhist tradition. There is also the problem of distinguishing between *avidyās* as that alone can form the basis of the distinction between the *jīvas*. Further more, the history of a *jīva* will be the history of the succession of the *avidyās* in which it gets involved one after the other. Even if one accepts the notion of a foundational *avidyā* as in Advaita Vedānta, consisting in the identification of the self with the not self, there would remain the distinctions arising from the specificity of the not-self with which the self identifies itself.

Avidyā, however, is not the same as *ajñāna*, as the former involves some sort of *adhyāsa*, or mistaking something for another, while the latter involves only the ignorance or *abhāva* of what is the case and no 'knowledge' of even the fact that there is such an absence. The fact that one was ignorant is discovered later. The 'knowledge', which reveals that one was actually ignorant of it, however, might itself be *avidyā*, that is, erroneous in nature.

There are, thus, two cycles involved in the theory of *karma*: the one where *ajñāna* is replaced by *avidyā* and the second, when a particular *avidyā* is replaced by another *avidyā*. That something *is* and *avidyā*, however, is also learnt only retrospectively, just as the fact of one's being in *ajñāna* is learnt only later when one has, at least *prima facie* learned to be so.

The skepticism that haunts the Indian mind is deeper than the one that has troubled the western philosophical world. It pertains not only to the fact that one may be mistaken about what one considers as "knowledge", but that one may be totally ignorant of what actually obtains in one's seeking and that one may not even be aware of the fact.

But whatever the *ajñāna* or the *avidyā* may be, action can not

wait as the exigencies and necessities of life demand incessantly that one intervenes to do something to prevent the situation from deteriorating further or for changing it in the direction of what is desired. The 'action', however, is always based on 'some' sort of 'knowledge' of 'causal expectancy' involving a belief that if one does this, then it is most likely that what one desires to take place will happen. There is, thus, a double 'causal efficacy' presupposed in human action. One, relating to the 'causal relationships' in the world and the other relating to the mind and the will. Both are, however, necessarily rooted in *avidyā* and thus must result in failure.

The doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* addresses itself neither to these two forms of 'causal expectancy' nor to the problem of action in general. Nor does it seriously discuss the question as to what sort of 'reality' should be ascribed to that which is brought into being by something that is rooted in *avidyā* on the one hand and *ajñāna* on the other.

The doctrine of *Pratītyasamutpāda* thus, does not seem to be conceived very clearly. And, even though it is supposed to be the Buddhist doctrine *par excellence*, it is not clear, what exactly the contention it makes and what are the grounds on the basis of which it argues that the contention may be accepted as true, or even as describing adequately the situation in respect of the reality it talks about. To use the Buddhist terminology itself, it is not clear, what exactly is the *Apoḥa* in apposition to which it alone can acquire its distinctive meaning and be considered for serious philosophical discussion regarding its adequacy or correctness in respect of that which it tries to grasp through its theoretical and conceptual formation. Nor, are the presuppositions and implications clearly stated. One does not know, for example, its relation to such well-known doctrines of Buddhism as *arthakriyākāritva* and *Kṣaṇabhangavāda*. Also, it is not clear whether it purports to be a phenomenological description of the incessant flow of events in the external world as they are apprehended in mind or, it is just an explication of time-consciousness and its radical implications which have not been noted by any body. But whatever it be, it is time that the scholars conversant with the intricacies and complexities of Buddhist thought to tell us in as clear a language as possible what it is, so that it may be philosophically assessed and evaluated for what it is. Till then,

the usual claim made on behalf of the doctrine that it says something new and profound, seems without any foundation and it is surprising that this simple truth has not been seen by any one who has written on the subject two and a half millennia since Buddhism appeared on the Indian scene.

7

How *Anekāntika* is *Anekānta*? Some Reflections on the Jain Theory of *Anekāntavāda**

Jain philosophical thought, as is well known, is centered around the concepts of *anekāntavāda*, *syādvāda* and *saptabhaṅgīnaya*. The three concepts are intimately related to each other and provide the foundation for Jain metaphysics, epistemology and logic respectively. But even amongst these, the concept of *anekānta* is foundational as it provides the justification for the epistemological doctrine of *syādvāda* which in its own turn is articulated in the form of *saptabhaṅgīnaya*. However, though the relation between the ontological contention and the epistemological and logical formulation is close, it is not so tightly knit that one cannot conceive of different epistemological or logical

* This article was occasioned by Prof. Tushar K. Sarkar's article entitled 'Some Reflections on Jaina Anekāntavāda and Syādvāda', published in the *Jadavpur Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1992, pp. 13-35. However, it has only tangential relation to it, even though, in my opinion, it is one of the most original discussions on the subject that I have seen for a long time.

formulations even if one were to hold the ontological contention regarding the *anekāntika* nature of reaction. But what exactly is meant, or could possibly be meant, by the contention that the nature of reality is intrinsically and *anekāntika* in character?

The term '*anekanta*' does not provide any clue except the negative one that it must be more than one. But that does not help us much, for it leaves the possibility open that it may be any number, excluding the numerical singularities of characteristics. The term, however, has usually been understood as standing for 'indefinite' or 'infinite'. But both these interpretations of the term are highly unsatisfactory. The term 'infinite' is too precise in the post-Cantor mathematics with transfinite numbers to be of any help in understanding the characteristics of reality as essentially '*anekāntika*' in character.

Possibly what is meant is that no finite set of predicates can ever exhaust the nature of reality. But if this is the contention, there is nothing extraordinary about it, as it is not an unusual contention regarding the nature of ultimate reality whenever it is sought to be positively described. On the other hand, as each characterization is ordinarily meaningful only when it excludes other characterizations that are opposed or incompatible with it, all characterizations are denied of ultimate reality as nothing in principle can be excluded from it. Both the positive and the negative moves are well known in the history of philosophical thought, even though it is not quite clear as to how the negative valuational characteristics can ever be accepted as being ultimately real. The difficulty is usually attempted to be overcome by taking recourse to the view that the negative valuational apprehension in respect to reality is primarily due to the incomplete-ness, ignorance and finitude of the apprehending consciousness and therefore does not belong to that which is regarded as 'really real'.

The Jain position may be regarded as novel in the sense that what has usually been said regarding ultimate reality is supposed by them to characterize objects of ordinary apprehension as well. The usual examples given by them seem to corroborate this. But as the Jains also postulate the 'reality' of an omniscient human being, that is, Mahāvīra, and admit the possibility of such beings in their system, the first question

that needs to be clarified is whether the reality is *anekāntika* for a *sarvajña* or not. For, if it be held that it is not so for a *sarvajña*, or a being who is omniscient, then the doctrine cannot be regarded as ontological in character. On the other hand, if the *sarvajña* also sees the reality as *anekāntika* in character, then at least the doctrines of *syādvāda* and *saptabhaṅginaya* will not apply in his case. In fact, they will be seen to result from the ignorance of a finite and imperfect being who does not know that he is such and hence mistakenly thinks that what he alone knows is true, that is, is *aikāntika* in character. But once one realizes that one is finite and imperfect, what would be the point of adding *syād* to it except to remind oneself once again that though what one knows is only *aikāntika*, but really is *anekāntika* in character? This reminder, however, would be pointless, for the reality one would know will always be *aikāntika* in character and that alone should provide the basis for one's action.

What exactly is this reminder? And, what does it exactly mean to say that though reality appears to be *aikāntika*, it is not really so, but is *anekāntika* in nature. First, does it really 'appear' to us, finite and imperfect beings as we are, to be *aikāntika* in nature? A rose, for example, 'appears' to us as being red or pink or yellow, depending on the colour it has. But it also 'appears' to us to have a certain shade along with its brightness and intensity and fragrance and beauty and that it is a half-opened bud or a full-bloomed flower. One may add to these as many other characteristics as one likes, say, the softness of its petals, its shape and its size, its being on a short or tall green stem, its distance from other flowers, and so on. All these, it should be remembered, appear fused together in one's consciousness and are separated only for purposes of description and analysis.

Ordinarily, apprehension is thus intrinsically *anekāntika* in character, and not *aikāntika* which needs to be corrected by the Jain insight. But then the apprehending consciousness, it may be said, tends to invest this *anekāntika* apprehension with a 'permanence' which it does not possess, and which the Jain doctrine of *syādvāda* seeks to rectify by reminding one of the essential impermanence of each such characterization. This would obviously be a Buddhist interpretation of the Jaina doctrine. The Buddhist's is a far more radical doctrine as it

seeks to question not the illusory permanence imposed by the apprehending consciousness, but the very determinate, positive nature of what is apprehended. The '*anekānta*' itself, it may be said, should be understood in the light of the doctrines of *syādvāda* and *nayavāda*, and not the other way round, as we have been trying to do. The very characterization of anything in any way is questionable, as the denial of that characterization is equally legitimate and, as both are legitimate, it has to be jointly and simultaneously characterized in terms of both its affirmation and negation.

The negative characterization, however, is both too wide and too vacuous to be regarded as significant in terms of actual predication, for if, say, there is such a thing as a red rose and we are saying that 'this rose is red', we are not only denying that it has other colours, but also the fact that it is an elephant or any of the other myriad things which are not meant by the term 'rose' in the English language. But what could possibly be meant by saying that the object designated by the term 'rose' is not any of these things? It is, of course, being assumed that the other terms are not synonymous of the term 'rose', just as it is being assumed that the term 'rose', itself a homonym designating other things, is used in different contexts.

One must distinguish, therefore, between different kinds of meaningful denial which may possibly be asserted in a situation. The denial that the rose is something which is not a rose is radically different from the denial that the 'redness' that it possesses is some other colour which is not red. One may, of course, think of the rose itself as a predicate belonging to some ultimate 'substance' which takes many forms, only one of which is what we name as 'rose'. This is what is implicitly stated in such a sentence, as 'This is a rose' where 'this' refers to that indeterminate substance to which 'rose' is being ascribed as a temporary manifestation of itself. Spinoza might have meant some such thing as this when he argued that there is only one substance which is identical with reality itself, as it alone has the ground of its being within itself. The rose that we see obviously does not have the ground of its being within itself as it comes into being and disappears again without our knowing, except very tentatively; we cannot say how it has come to be and why it has disappeared, or become 'non-

being'. In a sense, modern physics also tends to think in the same way as it tries to see everything as a specific form of one ultimate force which thus is treated as the ultimate ground of all there is. It is, of course, true that the four ultimate forces that are known to physicists have not been unified until now, but the relative success of Abdul Salam in this direction by unifying at least two of these forces suggests that the ideal is not intrinsically unattainable. But the *anekāntika* character in this perspective would belong only to this ultimate substance, force, or reality and not to any specific object that we ordinarily know. It would be something like the indeterminate *Brahman* or the pure *Sein* of Heidegger, if it be assumed that all the specific *Da-seins* or the particular objects are truly modifications of the *Brahman* or the same being. The Upaniṣads had already talked of something akin to this when they said '*rūpam, rūpam pratirūpo babhūva*'. However, it will be difficult to say, that the Jain view is like any of these, for normally it is supposed to maintain the doctrine of *anekāntavāda* in respect to the ordinary thing that we perceive.

One might interpret the doctrine with respect to an ordinary object in the context of the notion of possibility, as normally one holds that before an event occurs or a thing comes into being it was 'possible'. This 'possibility' is always a determinate possibility and yet it is held that it has come into being. But the ontological status of a determining unactualized possibility has never been seriously discussed in the literature on the subject. Professor Quine, who tried to pen the discussion in his well-known paper 'On What There Is' did not directly deal with the issue of what exactly is meant by the notion of something being possible. There is the usual distinction between the 'possible' and the 'probable' based on the ground that while the latter is warranted by our empirical knowledge, the former is grounded on the fact that what is being asserted as possible is not logically impossible, that is, self-contradictory. Empirical knowledge is itself changing and hence what seems improbable in the light of past knowledge becomes not only probable but even actual later. As for the notion of the logically impossible or that which is self contradictory, it is only clear in the context of a purely formal deductive system, but even there it depends upon the postulates that have been assumed for the system.

The notion of an 'unactualized possibility' with respect to anything, thus, suggests the thing cannot be completely understood in terms of what it manifestly appears to be, but that it has hidden possibilities which may at any time manifest themselves and thus surprise us by their appearance. Some of these hidden properties have been mentioned in the literature as 'dispositional properties' as they are actualized only when certain conditions are fulfilled. To say, for example, that sugar is dissolvable in water only means that in case it is put in water, it will dissolve. But if such a condition is never realized, one will never know whether it dissolves or not. However, many of these properties are known and ascribed to objects, for we know that they have manifested those properties when those conditions have obtained. But as we cannot know all the properties that an object will display under all the possible conditions under which it may be placed, many of these properties are never known to us and yet by the very fact that an object when it comes in relation to other objects displays unexpected characteristics, it may be supposed to have them.

The contention that reality is *anekāntika* in character may then be taken to mean that an object has an indefinite number of unactualized probabilities along with those that are actually known to us. In other words the actual manifested properties of an object do not exhaust its reality and hence it is an illusion to think that it has only those finite sets of properties which it manifests to us. However, even if we understand the Jain contention in this way, we will still have to distinguish between the unactualized possibilities of one object from those of another, as otherwise it would become meaningless to regard them as two different objects. The difference between one object and another object must ultimately be in the fact that one possesses certain characteristics which the other one does not. Also, one may have to distinguish between the actualized and the unactualized possibilities, not only because many of the latter may not be known to us, but also because the distinction itself is important and is the ground of the assertion of the so-called *anekāntika* character of an object. The two sets of qualities cannot, then, be simultaneously asserted of an object without adding the words 'actual' and 'possible' to them. The possible qualities are not actually present in the object

and these cannot be ascribed to it in the same sense as those which are supposed to be present. Thus there is a necessary temporal element in the ascription and the simultaneity of assertion cannot overcome this intrinsic temporal limitation, especially with reference to those objects which are essentially spatio-temporal in nature. The present qualities which are 'actual' may, of course, fade away and thus not belong to the object to which they once belonged. The coming into being and passing away of qualities, however, cannot make them simultaneously present and absent as the Jain epistemologist would want us to believe.

The situation, of course, is different with respect to those objects which do not have a spatio-temporal nature such as the objects of mathematical knowledge. They are supposed to have all their properties simultaneously present in them even though we may not know all of them because of our ignorance. But, though the distinction between the actual and the possible properties will not operate in the same way that it does with those objects which are essentially spatio-temporal in nature, their *anekāntikatā* would also have to be different in the case of different objects if these differences are to be preserved.

The term '*anekāntika*' might be taken to imply that an object develops 'new' relational properties by virtue of coming into relationships with other objects, and that these kinds of emergent properties are ultimately indefinite in number. While in the realm of mathematics, the possible and the 'actual' may be deemed to coincide in the sense that if some number is shown to be mathematically possible, it is taken to be mathematically real as well, it is not so with other kinds of objects. Even in the case of mathematics if one opts for 'intuitionism' and does not accept 'indirect proof' then many mathematical entities usually accepted as real cannot be accepted to be so. And, even in the case of spatio-temporal objects where the distinction between the 'actual' and the 'possible' radically obtains, everything that is possible need not become actual. In case one were not to accept this, one would treat the possible as if it were necessary.

There is also the problem that if one possibility is actualized, others cannot be. The realization of one possibility itself means the exclusion of those which are opposed to it, or different from it. Moreover, what

is 'actualized' has a causal efficacy and this not only closes doors to possibilities different from itself, but also opens doors for others just by virtue of the fact that it has come into being.

The Jain thought about *anekānta* not only ignores all this complexity, but also fails to come to grips with the notion of 'impossibility' which would obviously set a limit to the *anekāntika* character of the *anekānta*. There cannot be such things as 'square circles' or 'a barren woman's son' and, if so, one cannot assert both 'is' and 'is not' of them, as the Jain logician wants to do. In fact, the term '*asti*' and '*nāsti*', which the Jains use in this context, are highly ambiguous, for all sorts of things do not 'exist' in the same way. A character in Kalidasa's plot does not 'exist' in the same way as a historical personage nor does the square of minus one (-1) or, say, the Himalayas.

The theory of *anekānta*, therefore, has to be detached from both the theories of *syādvāda* and its formulation in the doctrine of *saptabhaṅginaya*. The addition of '*syād*' or 'conditionality' to every assertion makes no sense as the moment one specifies the conditions which are presupposed by or under which the assertion is being made, it becomes unconditional. Similarly, to say that the simultaneous assertion of '*asti*' and '*nāsti*' is to say something which is *avaktavya*, if the joint assertion of '*asti*' and '*nāsti*' is justified from any point of view. To hold the latter position, as the Jain thinkers do, and still regard them as 'unspeakables' because it *involves* a contradiction, is to fall back into the old way of thinking, for in the new way they are *not* contradictories at all.

The doctrine of *anekānta*, however, runs into another difficulty, at least within the Jain perspective. The Jains carry, like all the other schools of Indian philosophy, a lot of metaphysical baggage. One of these is the notion of '*sarvajña*' which is so foundational to their thought that they cannot give it up. And, unfortunately for them, the person whom they regard as *sarvajña* has made definite pronouncements about which there can be no *anekāntikatā* at all. According to the Mahāvīra, space is finite and so is a *dravya*, while both *kāla* and *pariyāya* are infinite. This, he is supposed to have said when he was asked whether

'*siddhi*' is both *sānta* and *ananta*, that is, has an end or is unending. The answer may be seen as saying that '*siddhi*' is both *sānta* and *ananta* from different points of view, and hence supports the *anekāntika* position. But it does not do so, as these are *not* forms of sensitivity or categories of understanding in the Kantian sense. They are supposed to be 'objectively' real, as the distinction between 'finite' and 'infinite' will not make any sense, if it were not so. In fact, *dik* or space is given exact quantitative measurement in Jain thinkers, and it cannot be more or less than this. Similarly, *dravya* and *pariyāya* are not like substance and qualities, categories in the Aristotelian sense, but rather ontological entities.

The metaphysical baggage of the Jains extends far beyond these and they have no doubt about it. And there is no hint of there being any '*syād*' in their assertion or any idea of their being *anekāntika* in character. These epithets are only reserved for their opponents, or for positions different from their own. All the others are supposed to be based on a one-sided *drṣṭi*, but their own view is another *drṣṭi*. Rather, it is the *samagra drṣṭi*, encompassing *all* the others, both actual and possible and thus alone 'true'.

The issue of *anekāntikatā*, then, will have to be disengaged from the doctrines of *syādvāda* and *sapatabhangīnaya*, but also from the way Jain thinkers have thought about it. The Jains may want to 'own' it, but the 'ownership' of thought is as illusory as the ownership of anything else. And, even if it be conceded that the doctrine originated amongst the Jains, it need not remain their 'monopoly' forever. All ideas 'originated' with some person in some particular culture or civilization, but basically they are the property of all human kind. Philosophical thought need not be treated as an exception to this. It is time, therefore, that such 'parochial' identifications are given up, even though many eminent thinkers, particularly in the West, continue to do so. One need not quarrel over the heritage that various civilizations have bequeathed to us, as one does in respect to wealth or power which is more difficult to give up. Let at least the realm of ideas remain untouched by the 'egoisms' and 'pettinesses' that seem to plague the human family since the beginning of history.



Mīmāṃsā before Jaiminī: Some Problems in the Interpretation of Rule in the Indian Tradition

Mīmāṃsā as a school of Indian philosophy is too closely identified with Jaimini's *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra*, as if there was no thinking about what the *Mīmāṃsā* dealt with before him. In a sense this is true of the other so-called schools of Indian philosophy also, even though each one of them refers in a greater or lesser degree to other thinkers before the crystallization of their position in the various *Sūtras*. Jaimini, however, may be considered as an exception among them, for he not only gives the '*pūrvapakṣa*' of the position he has expounded, but also gives the name of the person to whom the *pūrvapakṣa* is ascribed. The authority of Jaimini seems to have obliterated the memory of those who hold positions different from that of Jaimini.

However, there should be little difficulty in reconstructing their positions regarding the issues that Jaimini discusses in his *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra*. These may be regarded as alternative *Mīmāṃsā* positions held by *Mīmāṃsakas* other than Jaimini, and thus we may have pre-Jaimini *Mīmāṃsā* positions which were considered as legitimate or correct at

least by the thinkers to whom he ascribes these positions.

These positions, however, are not about any theoretical issues regarding, say, epistemology or metaphysics. They are concerned with the procedure or the *Vidhi** according to which the Vedic *Yajña* is to be performed. *Mīmāṃsā*, it should be remembered, is not concerned, at least directly, with any theoretical issues whether in Jaimini or anyone else. Its main interest is to determine the correct procedure with which a 'Vedic *Yajña*' is to be performed and as far as it is concerned, the *mantras* and the *Brāhmaṇas* are the final authority for deciding the issues regarding the correctness of any procedure that is advocated. This is the sole task that Jaimini conceives for himself. The rest is all subsidiary. Each *siddhānta* that he propounds relates to the exact procedure with which a particular Vedic *Yajña* is to be performed, for without proper performance of the *Yajña* the desired result cannot be obtained.

In fact even if the *Yajña* is performed without the desire for any specific fruit or which the *Śruti* has prescribed just for the sake of attaining merit or of warding off the undesirable consequences if it is not performed, it would not attain its purpose, unless it is performed in the proper prescribed way. In fact, in that case, it cannot even be called a 'Vedic *Yajña*' in the proper sense of the word. This would, in principle, apply equally to the daily *Agnihotra*, for unless it is performed in the proper way, it is as good as not performed at all and hence cannot ward off the *pratyavāya* which it is supposed to do.

The *Yajñas* performed according to the *pūrvapakṣas* which Jaimini refutes in his *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras*, therefore, were not Vedic *Yajñas* at all, since they were not performed according to the correct procedure

* The term "Vidhi" in *Mīmāṃsā* is technically used to mean an injunction only. But as an injunction can be with regard to a procedure to be adopted or avoided and as Jaimini is primarily interested in laying down the correct procedure for the performance of the various *Yajñas* in the Vedic texts, there is little harm in using it in that extended sense also. In any case, the context should make clear the sense in which the term is being used in this paper, and it is hoped that no confusion will be generated on this account.

laid down by the *Śruti*. They obviously could not, therefore, have attained the results for which they were performed. The recourse to the idea of *vikalpa* or as permissible alternatives would not help as the situations in which a *vikalpa* is allowed is itself determined by the *Śruti*. In fact, if a sacred ritual is wrongly performed it may be expected to give results opposed to those than the ones for the sake of which it was done and if this is accepted for the Vedic *Yajña* then it would imply that all those *Ṛṣis* whose views Jaimini refutes did not, only not get the fruit for which they performed the *yajña* but got the opposite of that for which they had performed it. This would also apply to all those *Yajñas* which were performed to attain heaven and to which the well-known injunction *Svargakāmo Yajet* applies. One would, therefore, have to reluctantly conclude that all those *Ṛṣis* whom Jaimini refutes attained not heaven but hell by performing the *Yajña* in the wrong way.

The usual defence of many traditional Pandits confronted with such a situation has been to say that many of the *Pūrvapakṣas* which are refuted in the *Śāstra* are the *pūrvapakṣas* which have been *imagined* by the concerned thinker as a *possible* objection to what he is trying to establish and thus rendering his position more secure that it would otherwise be. This is evident from the fact that many a time they give more than one *pūrvapakṣa* and sometime even treat the *pūrvapakṣa* as a *siddhānta* and imagine possible *pūrvapakṣas* to it. Jaimini himself does so at many places.

The objection pertains to an important character of the philosophical enterprise in India where philosophy was seen essentially as a *vyāpāra* of the intellect (*Buddhi*) which consisted in establishing a position, through evidence and arguments which involved the refutation of all actual and possible objections that could be raised against that position. The Indian philosopher liked not only to imagine counter-arguments to his position and tried to refute them but also tried to imagine possible counter-evidence to what he was saying and tried to show that it did not affect his position substantially. But this is irrelevant as far as Jaimini is concerned for most of the *pūrvapakṣas* are explicitly ascribed by him by name to a particular thinker before him. They cannot, therefore, be regarded as imagined *pūrvapakṣas*. Rather, they were the actual *pūrvapakṣas* held by particular persons who had argued that the

correct procedure of performing the Vedic *Yajña* was according to the way they had interpreted the *Śruti*. And, as the dispute between Jaimini and his predecessors concerned the correct interpretation of the *Śruti* with respect to the *vidhi* which was prescribed for the various *Yajñas*, the question of an imagined *pūrvapakṣa* does not arise in this case at all.

The distinction between the *Nitya* and the *Kāmya Yajñas* would also not be relevant in this context, as the *vidhi* prescribed for those *Yajñas* which can be either *Nitya* or *Kāmya*, such as the *Agnihotra* or the *Darśapūrṇamāsa* have also the same problem as regards the proper *vidhi* according to which they should be performed. As the *Nitya Yajñas* which are to be performed throughout one's life are supposed to destroy accumulated sins of last life, they would obviously not do so if performed in the wrong manner. All the earlier *ṛsis* who performed the *Darśapūrṇamāsa* or the *Agnihotra*, according to the *vidhis* refuted by Jaimini in his *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras*, would therefore have wasted their whole life performing something which would not only not have washed away the sins of their previous life but perhaps added to them further by doing something which was not in accordance with the *Śruti* and thus violated in the opposite direction.

The problem in a sense does not arise only with respect to the thinkers before Jaimini who had argued for a particular *vidhi* concerning any of the *Yajñas* which happened to be different from that of Jaimini and which was explicitly rejected by him in the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras*. It continues even after Jaimini, though in a minor manner. It is, for example, well-known that according to Kumārila, some of the views regarding the *vidhi* of the Vedic *Yajñas* propounded as *siddhānta* according to Śabara's understanding of Jaimini are to be treated as *pūrvapakṣa* and not *siddhānta*. But if this is true then all *Yajñas* which were performed according to the *vidhi* understood as *siddhānta* by Śabara would share the same fate as had been the case with the pre-Jaimini performers of the Vedic *Yajñas*, if we accept Jaimini's interpretation regarding the correct *vidhi* for performing these *Yajñas*. The reason why Kumārila's observations and the theoretical and practical problems it raises have not been paid sufficient attention in *Mīmāṃsā* literature may perhaps be because of the fact that, firstly,

they are so few in number and, secondly, because they are confined only to one or two *Yajñas* which were not regarded as very important in the Vedic corpus by the actual performers of the Vedic *Yajñas*. Kumārila's authority in any case never surpassed Jaimini as interpreted by Śabara, particularly as far as the actual performance of the Vedic *Yajñas* was concerned.

The question of the actual authority of Jaimini as interpreted by Śabara with regard to the actual performance of the *Yajñas* is, of course, a highly debatable issue, particularly in the light of the fact that there not only are differences in the way some *Yajñas* are performed, but that as far as the actual procedure for the performance of any *Yajña* was concerned, it was the authority of the *Yājñika* and not the Mīmāṃsaka which prevailed in such matters. Prof. Staal has reported such an incident in his book on *Agni* where he states that the *Yājñika* on being told that the texts prescribed a different procedure continued to do the things in the way he considered to be correct which, most probably, was taught to him by the teacher who had trained him in the performance of the Vedic ritual.

The question, however, is not whether the pre-Jaimini Mīmāṃsakas were correct in their interpretation of the texts which had given the various procedures for performing the Vedic *yajñas* or it was Jaimini as understood by Śabara who interpreted them correctly just as it has usually not been considered important amongst the Mīmāṃsakas whether Kumārila was correct in his contention against Śabara that what he had taken as *siddhānta* was really a *pūrvapakṣa*. The real problem is how to decide between different interpretations of a text, particularly when it is accorded the status of *Śruti*. Jaimini is rightly regarded in the tradition as being the first person who gave explicit rules for the interpretation of what he regarded as *Śruti* proper. As for the pre-Jaimini interpreters whom Jaimini had referred to in his *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra*, they are not known for having formulated any explicit rules on the basis of which they gave their interpretation of the concerned texts. As for Kumārila, he must have given some reasons for his opinion but, as far as I know, there has been no serious discussion about what he has said in this context. But even with respect to the principles formulated by Jaimini for the correct interpretation

of the text, we must distinguish the principles he has formulated and the conclusions he has derived from them, as it is inconceivable that different conclusions could not be derived from the same principles. Such a situation is not entirely unknown in the Indian tradition. The *Brahma Sūtras* are a classic example of a text which has been diversely interpreted by the various *ācāryas* from Śaṅkara onwards. The principles which Jaiminī has formulated with respect to the interpretation of the *Śruti* had no intrinsic relationship to the *Śruti* alone in the context of which they were developed, but had a wider relevance for the interpretation of any text whatsoever.

And that is what actually happened to the principles of interpretation formulated by Jaiminī. They became the basis of legal and juristic interpretation in India, as has been shown by Kisorī Lal Sarkar in his work entitled *The Mīmāṃsā Rules of Interpretation*. Even Bādarāyaṇa adopts some of the principles, particularly the one relating to the role of the context in correctly interpreting any particular statement in a text, in his work known as the *Brahma-Sūtra*. He even added some principles of his own though they are not explicitly mentioned by him as such. One such principle to which he refers in the first chapter very often may be formulated as 'All entities having the same predicates may be regarded as the same, even though they may have different names.'

The problem of the interpretation of the *Śruti* is further complicated by the fact that Jaiminī considered only the *Vidhi Vākyas* or the imperative sentences to constitute the *Śruti* and all the other sentences as being essentially ancillary or subsidiary to them. But the principles themselves do not necessarily entail such a position and hence Jaiminī's interpretation is influenced not only by the interpretative principles he articulates, but also by his theory of language. He sees verb as the centre of meaning in a sentence. Bādarāyaṇa, on the other hand, opts for a different theory of language. For him it is the noun which carries the central core of the meaning and, therefore, he sees the *Śruti* in a different light and, accordingly, interprets it differently. What is *arthavāda* for Jaiminī becomes central to Bādarāyaṇa and what is central to Jaiminī, that is *Yajña*, becomes peripheral to Bādarāyaṇa. Thus, it is not only the principles of interpretation that determine the

interpretation of the *Śruti*, but also a theory of linguistic meaning which affects not only what is regarded as the central meaning of the text, but also how the rest of the corpus is to be interpreted as related to it.

The problem of the interpretation of the *Śruti* texts is, thus, bedeviled by the differences amongst the two schools of Jaiminī and Bādarāyaṇa regarding what is to be treated as the central purport of the *Śruti* text, that is, whether their central meaning is concerned with the *Yajñas* and the *vidhis* relating to them, or the *Brahman* as the ultimate, foundational, metaphysical reality. Surprisingly, both Jaiminī and Bādarāyaṇa believe that the descriptive empirical statements with which the *Śruti* texts are replete have no independent sense of their own and, according to them, their meaning is to be understood only in relation to either *Yajña* or *Brahman* as the case may be. This, it may be noted, is in sharp contrast to the modern orthodox opinion regarding the Vedas which regards them as the storehouse of all empirical and transcendental knowledge.

Bādarāyaṇa's Brahman-centric interpretation of the *Śruti* based on his two interpretative principles that (1) the context should determine the meaning of the specific terms which are used in a discussion, and (2) that if the same predicates are used to characterize different entities then they should be treated not as different but as one and the same, did not however, stop the diversity in the interpretations of the *Śruti* text, as is evidenced by the history of the development of Vedānta in India. In contrast, Jaiminī's authority was accepted almost without question and no rival schools arose with regard to the problem of determining what is the correct *vidhi* according to which the Vedic *Yajñas* were to be performed. There is, of course, an occasional instance of a Kumārila treating what Jaiminī, according to Śabara, propounded as a *siddhānta* to be really a *pūrvapakṣa*. But, as we pointed out earlier, these are rare instances and do not affect the situation substantially. The so-called Bhaṭṭa and Prabhākara schools of *Mīmāṃsā* do not differ about the *vidhi* according to which the Vedic *Yajñas* were to be performed, but about other matters. But though at the theoretical level it appears to be so, at the ground level the situation seems to be different. It was the *yājñika* and not the *mīmāṃsaka* who determined what was to count as the correct *vidhi* in the *Yajña* which was to be performed. And as

the *yājñika* tradition not only differed in different regions of India but also changed over a period of time, the correct *vidhi* of performing a *Yajña* also differed from region to region and period to period.¹

The problem raised by the diversity of actual practice as against the theoretical unity derived from the *mīmāṃsā* text of Jaiminī should have found some discussion in the *Śabara Bhāṣya* itself as even at that time it was an accepted fact that the Vedas had different *śākhās* and that each of the *śākhā* had its own *Brāhmaṇa* which presumably must have differed regarding the *vidhis* to be adopted for performing the particular *yajñas*.

In fact the problem of the Vedic *śākhās* has not been squarely faced in the context of the so-called *Śruti Prāmāṇya* of the Veda or of its alleged *apauruṣeyatva*. How can, for example, all the *śākhās* be held to be equally authentic when they differ in essential respects? The problem would arise equally whether we accept the Jaiminī interpretation of the *Śruti* or the Bādarāyaṇa interpretation of the *Śruti*. However, it should be obvious that the problem is even more pressing in the case of the Jaiminī interpretation of the *Śruti* as it deliberately and self-consciously confined itself to prescribing the *vidhis* for the various *yajñas* and the result one may expect from their performance alone. The *śākhās* must differ about something and in the context of what Jaiminī is saying they can relevantly differ only with respect to the *vidhi* according to which the *yajñas* are to be performed. Thus, each *śākhā* would have its own *vidhi* of performing the *yajñas* and would be distinguished by the others on this basis alone.

There is another problem which arises from the existence of the different *śākhās* of the Vedas which has recently been brought to my notice by Dr. Mukund Lath in a personal conversation which relates to the unchangeable *śabdānupūrvī* character of the Veda, that is, the unchangeable sequence of the *varṇa* and the *śabda* in a Vedic *mantra*, for in case it is not so, it cannot be regarded as the same *mantra*. The Vedic *mantras*, on this view, are treated as consisting only of *Śabda* and *Śabda* alone. It has got nothing to do with *artha* or meaning, for in case it was the *artha* that was central to it, it could be said in a different way resulting in a different order of the word sequence, a possibility

which is generally not accepted with regard to the text of the Veda.²

But as it is usually accepted, even by the most orthodox interpreters of the Vedas, that such an invariant sequence of the *varṇa* and the *śabda* is a characteristic only of the *mantras*, it would follow that for anyone who regards the *mantras* as alone constituting the *Veda*, they at least would have no meaning. But as hardly anyone regards the Vedas as completely meaningless, and as most traditional interpreters of the Veda subscribe to the doctrine of the invariant nature of the sequence of *śabda* and the *varṇa* in the *mantras*, it follows that for most of them the essential part of the Veda does not lie in the *sambhitā* or the *mantra* portion of it, but somewhere else. For Jaiminī and his followers, it lies in what are called the *Brāhmaṇas*,³ while, for the followers of Bādarāyaṇa, it lies in what are called the *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upaniṣads*. However, as there are different *Brāhmaṇas* belonging to the different *śākhās*, the *yajña*-centric interpretation of the Veda would either have to accept a plurality among the correct *vidhis* with regard to the performance of the various *yajñas* depending upon the *śākhā* to which one belongs and the authority of the *Brāhmaṇa* which one accepts or to argue that there are no differences with regard to the correct procedure prescribed for the performance of the different *yajñas* in the different *śākhās* of the Veda and their *Brāhmaṇas*. But if the latter alternative is accepted, then the question arises as to what are the differences between the different *śākhās*, if it is held that they are not in respect of the *vidhis* according to which a *yajña* is to be performed. However, as far as I know, these two alternatives, which alone obtain in the situation created by the existence of the different *śākhās* of the Veda, have not been squarely faced in the orthodox *mīmāṃsā* tradition of Vedic interpretation.

For Bādarāyaṇa and his followers, the problem is of a different order. Firstly, they have to delimit the *Upaniṣads* whose authority as *Śruti* they would accept, as the *Upaniṣads* continued to be composed till as late as the thirteenth century. Most of the so-called major *Upaniṣads* to which Bādarāyaṇa is supposed to refer to in his *Brahma Sūtras* and on which Śaṅkara has written independent commentaries of his own, are not independent works but selections from a pre-existent text. One of them, the *Īsopaniṣad* is in fact a part of the *Śukla*

Yajurveda Samhitā itself. It is not quite clear whether Bādarāyaṇa or Śaṅkara or any of their innumerable followers subscribe to the doctrine of the invariance of the *śabda* and the *varṇa* sequences of the *mantras*. But if they do, then it is obvious that they cannot treat at least the *Īsopaniṣad* as having a meaning of its own which could be explicated by writing a *bhāṣya* on it.

The problem of the interpretation of the *Śruti*, therefore, is far more complex than has usually been thought in the tradition or even in modern times. A number of preliminary questions have to be settled before the various issues relating to the interpretation of the *śruti* can even be raised. The following are, perhaps, the most important of them which demand prior consideration and decision:

1. Which, amongst the existing texts, is the corpus that shall be regarded as *Śruti* proper? In other words, shall it be the *Samhitās* alone or the *Samhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇas* or the *Samhitās*, the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Āraṇyakas* or the *Samhitās*, the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upaniṣads* which are not a part of either the *Samhitās* or the *Brāhmaṇas* or the *Āraṇyakas* proper? In case we treat only the *Samhitās* as *Śruti*, what shall we do with the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* which has its *mantra* and *Brāhmaṇa* portions mixed up together? Shall we treat only the *mantra* portions of the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* as *Śruti* proper?
2. What shall we do with the *śākhās* which have their own versions of the *Samhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇas*? Shall we treat them all as *Śruti* equally or only the portion common to them all? If we include the *Upaniṣads* which are not integral parts of the *Samhitās* or the *Brāhmaṇas* or the *Āraṇyakas*, then which of them should be excluded from the *Śruti* and on what grounds? Shall we accept the *Yajña*-centric interpretation of the Vedic Corpus, particularly when it relegates the *Samhitās* to a secondary status and makes *Brāhmaṇas* the central part of the Veda? But in case *Brāhmaṇas* are treated as the central part of the Veda, how can it be regarded as *apauruṣeya*? The *Brahma*-centric interpretation of Bādarāyaṇa relegates both the *Samhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇas* to a secondary status in the Corpus and treats all statements in the Vedic Corpus

which do not concern *Brahman* directly or indirectly as meaningless what is the status of all those statements which are neither concerned directly or indirectly with the *yajña*, or directly and indirectly with *Brahman* and which in many cases deal specifically with a description of some empirical state of affairs?

These issues are independent of those relating to the establishment of the correct rendering of the text by a proper collection of different manuscripts relating to them and preparing a critical edition of them for scholarly purposes.

Notes

1. For a recent example of this, see the statement of Fritz Staal, who in his *introduction* to the volume entitled *Agni* which he edited, writes, 'When the Nambudiri ritualists are told that, according to classical texts, certain rites used to be performed differently in the past, they say, "Interesting". Not for a moment would they consider changing their own ritual practice in the light of such information. They perform the ritual as they have learnt from their preceptors. It is *their* tradition.'
2. It is, of course, true that Jaimini treats the view that the *mantras* have no meaning as a *pūrvapakṣa* and tries to establish the *siddhānta* that it is not so. The whole of *Adhyāya* I, pāda (II) *adhikaraṇa* (4) is concerned with this issue (*sūtras* 31-53). But as it is conceded in *sūtra* 46, that the so-called meaning of the *mantra* may be purely an *arthavāda*, and as it is primarily argued in *Adhyāya* II, pāda I, *adhikaraṇa* (6) that *mantras* are not injunctive, the verb occurring in them being merely expressive of assertion, the whole significance of *siddhānta* is completely, lost. For if *mantras* are not expressive of injunctions, then they cannot have anything to do with *dharma*, for *dharma* is supposed to consist only of *vidhi* or *niṣedha*, that is, of prescriptions and prohibitions.

Kumārila suggests in his *Tantravārtika* that Śabara is mistaken in thinking that the *adhikaraṇa* has anything to do with *mantras*, but then he does not make clear what does the meaning of *mantras* consist in? Prabhākara, on the other hand, is fairly clear that 'From the very nature

of *mantras* it is clear, that they cannot be taken as injunctions being as they are entirely devoid of any kind of injunctive word; also because all *Mantras* are found to construable—either by direct syntactical connection or by indirect implication, with other passages which are injunctive. So if the *mantras* themselves were to enjoin another action would be two actions enjoined by what is practically only “one sentence”. Nor are the *Mantras* found to contain any commendation or condemnation; so they cannot be taken as *arthavāda* either. He, of course, adds, ‘with all this, however, *Mantras* cannot be regarded as absolutely meaningless or useless; forming an integral part of the Veda, they must have some useful purpose, they must have some meaning, expressing something that is needful in the acts prescribed by the injunctive passages’ (*Śabara-Bhāṣya* (trans.) Gangānātha Jha, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1973, p. 201.)

The confusion could not be compounded further. If the *mantras* are not injunctive, and do not have even any *arthavāda*, what other meaning can they have? The trouble is that the *mīmāṃsaka* is led by the inexorable logic of his position to the denial of any meaningfulness to the *mantras*, but he cannot accept the conclusion of his premises as it will render the very foundation of what he wants to build upon, meaningless.

The debate regarding the meaninglessness of the *Samhitā* or the *mantra* portion of the Veda is very old. One finds various arguments for this position ascribed to Kautsa by Yāska in his *Nirukta*, and it is surprising to find that Jaimini gives no new arguments in the statement of the positions of the so-called *pūrvapakṣa* in his *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras*, nor does he seem to find any new replies to them than those which Yāska had already given to Kautsa in his *Nirukta* (Lakshman Sarup, *The Nighaṇṭu and the Nirukta*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1984, p.16 (English trans.) pp. 37-38 (Sanskrit text). But Jaimini created an insuperable difficulty for himself and his successors by opting for Śākaṭāyana’s position that all nouns can be reduced to verbs, which Yāska had refuted (pp. 13-14 and p. 36). Jaimini, of course, could not have done otherwise, as he could not have maintained the *yajña*-centric interpretation of the Veda if he had done so. But he did not see that he was landing himself in a contradiction by holding to Śākaṭāyana’s position and opposing Kautsa’s as propounded in the *Nirukta* of Yāska. Prabhākara seems to have suggested a way out of the seemingly insoluble dilemma by suggesting that the *mantras*, though meaningless

in themselves, find their use in the function they perform in the sacrificial ritual. Surprisingly, neither Jaimini nor Śabara refers to the earlier discussion of Yāska on the subject.

3. It is sometimes argued that the term ‘*Brāhmaṇa*’ in the context of the *Mīmāṃsā* includes besides what are usually called the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upaniṣads* also. The *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* II, I, 33 seems to provide a justification for this, as it defines *Brāhmaṇa* as a residual category, that is, those which are not the *mantras*. But such a construal is basically forces, as neither the *Āraṇyakas* nor the *Upaniṣads* (or the texts known by these names) would be of much help in determining the correct *vidhi* according to which any particular *yajña* has to be performed. And, if they cannot do that, they can at best be *arthavāda* which would be of little solace to those who want to see them treated as the *Śruti*. In fact, even the stray reference to an *Upaniṣad* or an *Āraṇyaka* by Śabara would not prove much for not only a few swallows do not make a supper, but the passages quoted are bound to be of the type usually found in the texts designated as *Brāhmaṇas* for, otherwise, they will be of no use to Śabara. The fact of the matter is that the usual fourfold division of the so-called *Śruti* is not only overlapping, but has no clear-cut criteria to commend itself. The *Īśopaniṣad*, which is accepted by every body to be an integral part of the *Śukla Yajurveda Samhitā*, is the clearest example of this. But there are examples galore, and the fact that the so-called believers in the authority of the *Śruti* have put up with this situation only shows how little they really believe in its authority. It is time that those who really care for the foundations of thought and culture in India re-edit the texts on the basis of criteria which are explicitly stated and rationally justified.