

## Major Points of Vācaspati's Disagreement with Maṇḍana\*

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The first two works of Vācaspatimiśra I, the *Nyāya-kaṇikā* and *Tattva-samīkṣā*<sup>1</sup>, are commentaries on Maṇḍanamiśra's works. This indicates that Vācaspati initially studied Mīmāṃsā, focusing especially on Maṇḍana. His study of Maṇḍana's Mīmāṃsā works made him gradually develop his interest further in the latter's Vedānta work, the *Brahma-siddhi* (BSi), before he found his way to Nyāya. As a result, Vācaspati's tenets are influenced by Maṇḍana's thought, particularly insofar as they reflect Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta<sup>2</sup>. The *Bhāmatī*, which establishes a distinct school of interpretation of the *Brahma-sūtra-śāṅkara-bhāṣya* (BSŚBh), is mainly based on the foundation of the *Brahma-siddhi* and Vācaspatimiśra's commentary thereon, the *Tattva-samīkṣā* (TSam). It is not unknown to the scholars of Indian philosophy that most of distinctive features of the *Bhāmatī*-school have their roots in Maṇḍana's views as set forth in the *Brahma-siddhi*. In the *Bhāmatī*, Vācaspatimiśra resorts to the *Brahma-siddhi* whenever he faces unclear points in the *Śāṅkara-bhāṣya*, and so invariably explains the text convincingly. Therefore, Vācaspatimiśra is blamed by some traditional authors for following Maṇḍanamiśra blindly.

My impression, however, is that this is not always true, at least in the final stage of his writing career. It is true that Vācaspatimiśra appears to have been heavily

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<sup>1</sup> On chronological order of Vācaspati's works, see ACHARYA (2006: xxxi–xxxiii).

<sup>2</sup> Following the line of Maṇḍanamiśra and further developing it, Vācaspatimiśra brings together the Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya theories of error as two dimensions of a combined theory of error in Vedānta, which, if observed from two different angles, is equally acceptable to all these three schools (see ACHARYA (2006: lxvii–lxviii)). I intend to compare concerned passages at some other occasion in near future.

influenced by Maṇḍanamiśra's ideas but, at the same time, we find him reconsidering the latter's positions and refining them in the *Bhāmatī*. There it appears that he developed further arguments or even new ideas from simple points made by Maṇḍana and blended them with the ideas of Śaṅkara. Not only that, Vācaspatimiśra in the *Bhāmatī* seems to differ from Maṇḍanamiśra on a number of crucial points. I shall reflect upon them here briefly.

### 1. Levels of Brahman Realisation

Firstly, Vācaspati does not agree with Maṇḍana on the levels of realisation of Brahman. At the beginning of the *Niyoga-kāṇḍa*, Maṇḍana mentions three possible levels of Brahman realisation: verbal knowledge, meditative knowledge and the final intuitive knowledge. In the *Tattva-samīkṣā*, Vācaspati briefly comments on the passage, saying nothing specific from his side, but in the *Bhāmatī* he delimits the third as the profound meditation (*nididhyāsana*) in the form of continuity of the mind (*citta-santati-maya*) and identifies the intuitive knowledge as a fourth form at the top, and proceeds to justify its necessity. This fourth level of realisation is an original idea on the part of Vācaspati; however, his speculation is grounded in Maṇḍana's discourse. Let us compare the following passages from the *Brahma-siddhi* and *Bhāmatī*:

‘There are three [levels of] realisation with regard to Brahman. The first comes from verbal knowledge (lit. word). Another is the realisation variously known as meditation, contemplation and cultivation, which is a continuation of the first realisation from the verbal knowledge, and the other takes the form of intuitive perception, when the state of completion occurs and all mental fabrications have ceased.’<sup>3</sup>

‘There are four [levels of] realisation with regard to Brahman. The first is reached by merely studying sentences from the Upaniṣads; this is known as the “act of hearing”. The second is reached by studying of the same Upaniṣadic sentences but at the same time reflecting on them; this is known as the “act of reflection”. The third is the profound

<sup>3</sup> BS1 1.74: *tisraś ca pratipattayo brahmaṇi. prathamā tāvac chabdāt, anyā śabdāt pratipadya tat-santānavatī dhyāna-bhāvanōpāsānādi-śabda-vācyā, anyā tato labdha-niṣpattir vikalpa-nikhila-vikalpā sāḥkāra-karaṇa-rūpā*, see ACHARYA (2006: 156).

Vācaspatimiśra's commentary on this passage runs as follows (ACHARYA (2006: 156–157)): “*ātmā jñātavyaḥ*” *iti hi kila brahmaṇi pra[ti](pattir vidhīyate, ti)sraś ca tāḥ sambhavantīty āha—tisraś cēti. anyā tataḥ santānavatyāḥ pratīter ādara-nairantarya-dīrgha-kālāsevāna-labdha-paripākāyā (labdha-niṣpattir viga)lita-nikhila-vikalpā, viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣya-bhāva-nirbhāso 'vacchinna-viṣaya-pratyayo vikalpaḥ, tad-rahitēty arthaḥ.*

meditation in the form of a continuation of the mind, and the fourth is the state of the intuitive perception in the form of a particular mode of the mind. Absolute unity is an inherent property of this fourth state.’<sup>4</sup>

In the above passage from the *Bhāmatī*, Vācaspati clearly states that verbal knowledge continues up to the second level, and on the third level merely continuity of thought prevails, while on the fourth level intuitive realisation occurs from a particular operation of mind.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, according to him, a particular operation of the mind following upon impressions of ‘hearing’ (*śravaṇa*), ‘reflection’ or ‘spiritual cultivation’ (*manana*) and ‘meditation’ (*nididhyāsana*) causes the final and direct realisation of Brahman. For the followers of the *Vivaraṇa*-school of Śāṅkara Vedānta, the latter is caused by the hearing of the Upaniṣadic sentences being perfected by spiritual cultivation and meditation. This is one of the major points of difference between the two schools of interpretation among the followers of Śāṅkara Vedānta.

This question is of great importance because it involves another controversial point of debate concerning the capacity of the Upaniṣadic sentences. In Vācaspati’s scheme, spiritual cultivation is fundamental and necessary; the Upaniṣadic sentences can produce only indirect knowledge of Brahman, and without spiritual cultivation direct realisation of Brahman is not possible. This is not acceptable to the followers of the *Vivaraṇa*-school, since it limits the capacity of the Upaniṣadic sentences.

In Maṅḍana’s three-level scheme, the third level is already the final stage of intuitive perception and is said to be a culmination of the second level and free of all fabrications and diversities.<sup>6</sup> This level is already the level of final culmination, and there is no scope for the fourth in this scheme.

In the *Brahma-sūtra-śāṅkara-bhāṣya* there is not the slightest allusion to a fourth level or a passage that would admit such a stage. In the *Pañca-pādikā* (PP) and *Vivaraṇa*, there is no mention of the fourth level either. Therefore, we must say that

<sup>4</sup> *Bhāmatī* ad BSSBh 3.4.26: *catasraḥ pratipattayo brahmaṇi. prathamā tāvad upaniṣad-vākya-śravaṇa-mātrād bhavati yām kila ācaḥṣate śravaṇam iti. dvitīyā mīmāṃsā-sahitā tasmād eva upaniṣad-vākyaḥ yām ācaḥṣate mananam iti. tṛtīyā citta-santati-mayī, yām ācaḥṣate nididhyāsanam iti. caturthī sāḥṣāt-kāravatī vṛtti-rūpā, nāntaryam hi tasyāḥ kaivalyam iti.*

<sup>5</sup> This operation of the mind in later Vedānta texts is identified as being in a pure and undifferentiated state.

<sup>6</sup> It is not clear from Maṅḍana’s passage, however, whether or not the verbal knowledge which is continued in the second level continues till the third, where it is culminated. This can be interpreted either way: Ānandapūrṇa in BhŚu thinks that this final culmination takes place by means of hearing (*śravaṇa-dvārā*); and if he is right, Prakāśātman is closer to Mandana. In any case, Maṅḍana’s stance is less disputable than that of Vācaspati’s.

this is an original idea on the part of Vācaspati which is not in agreement with Maṇḍana's thought.

## 2. Liberation in life

Once Brahman is realised, what happens to the realised person? Does his body immediately collapse, that is, does he die, due to the total annihilation of ignorance (*avidyā*) and *karman* brought about by the realisation of Brahman? If not, how does his body remain functional after such an annihilation?

Maṇḍana says that it all depends either upon leftover traces of the cause of the body (*avidyā*), which was once in operation (*labdha-vṛtti*), or upon the residual effect of this cause, or upon both of them.<sup>7</sup> The bodies of those who have no such traces may immediately collapse, but those who have such traces may persevere in a bodily state for some time, this state being termed 'liberation in life' (*jīvan-mukti*). Maṇḍana holds a person in this state to be a man of stable insight (*sthita-prajña*) and explains that he might not be a *siddha*, one who has already attained the goal, but still a *sādhaka*, one who has reached a highly advanced stage in spiritual cultivation and is waiting for the final realisation. He writes:

'We say, first of all, the man of stable insight is not a *siddha* (i.e. one who has accomplished the goal), for whom *avidyā* has entirely disappeared, but a *sādhaka* (i.e. one who is still progressing towards the goal) who has reached a particular state, and we do not say that the body is dropped immediately after the realisation of Brahman. He awaits the extinction of the *karman* whose effects are still in motion. Here the one enjoys immediate liberation, whereas the other suffers some delay.'<sup>8</sup>

On this point, Vācaspati does not follow Maṇḍana, and indeed even refutes him, following Śaṅkara. According to Śaṅkara, a question like whether a realised person dies or continues to live is not a matter of debate, for the realisation of Brahman brings about annihilation of only that portion of *karman* which has not fructified and begun to produce results (*anārabdha*) but not of that which has begun to produce results (*prārabdha*). Śaṅkara writes:

<sup>7</sup> Maṇḍanamisra's preference seems to be for the second alternative (see below, p. 425). As commentators think, inasmuch as differences in the mind produce impressions and the body continues to exist.

<sup>8</sup> BSi<sub>1</sub> 130–131: *ucyate—sthita-prajñas tāvan na vikalita-nikhilāvidyaḥ siddhaḥ, kim tu sādhaka evāvasthā-viśeṣam prāptaḥ syāt. na ca brūmaḥ—brahma-vedanānantara eva deha-viyogaḥ. ārabdha-kārya-karma-kṣayaḥ bhogena pratikṣata iti tatra kasya cit tat-kālo 'pavargah, kasya cit kiyāms cit kṣepah.*

‘Moreover, one should not debate in this point whether a realised person bears his body for some time or not. How could the realisation of Brahman, a conception of one’s mind, negate endurance of a body affected by some other [conception]? This point is explained in both the *śrutis* and *smṛtis* by describing the characteristics of a man of stable insight. Therefore, it can be concluded that on the strength of realisation there is extinction only of those vices and virtues the effects of which are not yet in motion.’<sup>9</sup>

As already stated, Vācaspatimiśra in the *Bhāmatī* not only accepts the position of Śaṅkara on this issue but also refutes Maṅḍanamiśra’s position by stating that a *sthita-prajña* or *jīvan-mukta* cannot be a *sādhaka* awaiting the final realisation but must be a *siddha*, and that there is no higher state than this to be accomplished. Here is Vācaspatimiśra’s commentary on the above excerpt from the *Brahma-sūtra-śāṅkara-bhāṣya*:

‘On the *mūla* expression **one should not debate...**: the man of stable insight is not one who is still progressing towards the goal (*sādhaka*), for there is not any more primal conception that could be based on the supremacy of even further meditation. Rather, the man of stable insight is without a superior and is one who has already accomplished the goal (*siddha*).’<sup>10</sup>

It should also be noted that Maṅḍanamiśra does not think that the realised person has to consume the *prārabdha-karman* by experiencing its results; he seems to say that what remains even in the state of *jīvan-mukti* is merely an impression of *prārabdha-karman* but not the residue itself. Thus he mentions the contrary position and refutes it:

<sup>9</sup> BSŚBh 4.1.15: *api ca nāvātra vivaditavyam—brahma-vidā kaṁ cit kālāṁ śarīraṁ dhriyate na vā dhriyate iti. katham hy ekasya sva-hṛdaya-pratyayam brahma-vedanaṁ deha-dhāraṇam cāpareṇa pratikṣeptuṁ śakyeta? śruti-smṛtiṣu ca sthita-prajña-lakṣaṇa-nirdeśenātad eva nirucyate. tasmād anārabdha-kāryayor eva sukṛta-duṣkṛtayor vidyā-sāmarthyāt kṣaya iti nirṇayaḥ.*

<sup>10</sup> *Bhāmatī* ad BSŚBh 4.1.15: *api ca nāvātra vivaditavyam iti. sthita-prajñas ca na sādhaḥ; tasyōttarōttara-dhyānōtkarṣeṇa pūrva-pratyayānavasthitatvāt. niratiśayas tu sthita-prajñāḥ. sa ca siddha eva.*

Interestingly enough, Amalānanda in commenting upon this passage expressly states that Vācaspati has here refuted Maṅḍana, see KT on *Bhāmatī* ad BSŚBh 4.1.15: *bhāṣye sthita-prajña-lakṣaṇa-nirdeśo jīvan-mukti-sādhaka uktaḥ. tatra sthita-prajñāḥ sādhaḥ na sākṣāt-kāravān iti maṅḍana-miśrair uktaṁ dūṣaṇam uddharati—sthita-prajñas cēti.*—‘In the *Bhāṣya*, a mention of the characteristics of the man of stable insight [found in the Upaniṣadic and *smṛti* texts] is said to be the proof of “liberation in life”. In this context, Vācaspati takes out the fault Maṅḍana [pointed out] that the man of stable insight is one who is still progressing (*sādhaka*) but not one who has obtained the intuitive perception, and writes “**The man of stable insight...**”.’

‘Some people, however, think that cessation of the *karman* set for fruition is not possible, just as in the case of an arrow impetuous [in its course] or a wheel [in motion], and that for this reason it is necessary to wait for the cessation of such *karman*. That is not true. An arrow can certainly be stopped by setting a wall or the like in its way, and can also be destroyed by cutting it off [in flight] or by other means. In our case, too, there are pacifying rituals which are capable of destroying *karman* bound for consumption, as indicated in a dream or the like. Therefore, it is sure that the endurance of the body is due to impressions (*saṃskāra*).’<sup>11</sup>

However, both Śaṅkara and Vācaspati are opposed to this view and regard what is destroyed after realisation as only the *karman* which is not yet bound to have repercussions but not the *karman* which is set for fruition.<sup>12</sup> Thus Vācaspati not only differs from Maṇḍana on this issue but even accepts a position refuted by him.

### 3. The Relationship between *karman* and Realisation

Another controversial view of Maṇḍanamīśra that Vācaspati discards in the *Bhāmatī* concerns the relationship between *karman* and realisation. According to Maṇḍana, *karman* has a vital role to play even in the process of realisation of Brahman, the former being closely associated with the latter. Maṇḍana presents seven possible theories on this issue and affirms two of them. For him, either *karman* by virtue of its bi-functional nature is conducive to the realisation of *ātman* alongside the production of its direct result; or else it exists for the purification of the individual and perfects him so as to prepare him for Brahman realisation. Maṇḍana presents these two views as follows:

‘Others, however, say that all types of *karman* are finally governed by the realisation of *ātman* due to the property of separateness-with-conjunction, for it is stated in the *śruti* that “they desire to know by performing sacrifice” and “by whatever means he makes sacrifice, his mind becomes pure after the concluding *darvī-homa*”. Some others describe the relationship between *karman* and the governing authority of Brahman realisation with the words that “by means of sacrifices and

<sup>11</sup> BSi, 132–133: *ye tu manyante—pravṛtta-bhogānām karmaṇām pravṛtta-vegasyēṣor iva cakrasyeva vā na śakyaḥ pratibandhaḥ, ato bhogena kṣaya-pratikṣēti. tad asat. śakyo hiṣuḥ pratibandhuṃ kuḍyādibhiḥ, nāśayitum ca cchedādibhiḥ. svapnādi-sūcitōpasthita-vipāka-varitamāna-deha-bhogyakarma-kṣayārthāni ca śāntikāni karmaṇi. tasmāt saṃskārād eva sthitiḥ.*

<sup>12</sup> See ACHARYA (2006: cxxi).

great sacrifices this body is made ready for [realisation]” and “to whom the forty rites of purification and the eight virtues [apply]”.<sup>13</sup>

Later, after presenting all possible views, he returns to these two views and affirms them in the following way:

‘It is logical that that *karman* which is not dependent on some other action is subordinate to realisation according to the property of separation-with-conjunction, even as the *śruti* states that “those who contemplate Brahman desire to know it by means of sacrifice”. It is called subordinate, inasmuch as it is instrumental in attaining [realisation] but does not contribute to producing it the way *prayāja* and the like do, for realisation has no other effect to be produced. Alternatively, the other position of purification is acceptable because of the testimony of the *smṛti* and also because of the fact that realisation comes only to a purified person. Thus it is said: “and since it is prescribed, the *karman* of a particular *āśrama*, too, [is helpful in realisation]”.<sup>14</sup>

Thus Maṅḍana not only claims usefulness of *karman* in the course of realising Brahman but also says that the accumulation of *karman* accelerates the process of realisation and so should be continued until the final intuitive stage of realisation (*sākṣāt-kāra*)<sup>15</sup>.

Vācaspati criticises this view of Maṅḍana and accepts that of Śaṅkara, who believes that *karman* and Brahman realisation are quite opposed to each other and a reconciliation of the two is impossible. Though Vācaspati accepts that *karman* purifies and qualifies a person for the realisation of *ātman*, he says it is effective as long as a desire for such knowledge (*vividiṣā*) is not produced. He writes:

‘For [fear of] entering into a cumbersome assumption, it is not logical to agree upon the position which postulates that the obligatory duties have a direct relation to realisation via separation-with-conjunction,

<sup>13</sup> BSi<sub>1</sub> 27 = BSi<sub>2</sub> 21–22: *anye tu saṁyoga-pṛthaktvena sarva-karmaṇām evātma-jñānādhikāranupraveśam āhuḥ “vividīṣanti yajñena” iti śruteḥ, “yena kenacana yajetāpi darvī-homenānupahata-manā eva bhavati” iti ca. anye tu puruṣa-saṁskāratayātma-jñānādhikāra-saṁsparśaṁ karmaṇām varṇayanti—“mahā-yajñais ca yajñais ca brāhmīyaṁ kriyate tanuḥ”, “yasyāte catvāriṁśat-saṁskārā aṣṭāv ātma-guṇāḥ” iti ca.*

<sup>14</sup> BSi<sub>1</sub> 36: *idaṁ tu yuktam—kāryāntara-nirākāṅkṣāṇām api karmaṇām saṁyoga-pṛthaktvāt “tam etaṁ vedānuvacanena brāhmaṇā vividīṣanti yajñena” iti vidyāṅga-bhāvaḥ. so ’py upapatty-arthatayā, na prayājādivat kāryōpayogena, vidyāyāḥ kāryāntarā-bhāvāt. saṁkāra-pakṣo vā, smṛteḥ; saṁskṛtasya hi vidyōtatteḥ. tad uktam—“vihītatvāc cāśrama-karmāpi” iti.*

<sup>15</sup> See the passage quoted below, p. 429.

whereas these duties can be related easily with realisation [in another way], inasmuch as they purify a person by regularly disposing accumulated vice. Thus virtues are in fact acquired from the performance of the obligatory duties, whence vice goes away. Vice alone pollutes one's mind by casting an antithetic view of eternity, purity and pleasure on this mortal, impure and sorrowful world. So when vice is removed and the doors of perception and reasoning are opened, one understands by perception and reasoning the nature of this world beyond doubt as mortal, impure and sorrowful. Then a disliking for this world known as displeasure is developed, and then rises a desire to abandon it. Then one searches for the means to do so, and in this search, hearing that the knowledge of the self is the means being searched for, one desires to know the self. Thereafter, one comes to know it by following the due course, beginning with "hearing". Because of all this, it is logical to agree that the purification of the mind by *karman* is indirectly contributive to the process of realising the truth.<sup>16</sup>

In brief, then, according to Śaṅkara and Vācaspati, once the desire for knowledge is produced and one is minded to listen to the Upaniṣads, *karman* has no further role to play and must be dropped entirely.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Bhāmātī* ad BSSBh 1.1.1: *klptenāiva ca nityānām karmaṇām nityēhitenōpātta-duritanibarhanena puruṣa-saṁskāreṇa jñānōtpattāv aṅga-bhāvōpapattau na saṁyoga-prthaktvena sāksād aṅga-bhāvo yuktaḥ, kalpanā-gauravāpatteḥ. tathā hi nitya-karmānuṣṭhānād dharmōtpādaḥ, tato pāpmā nivartate, sa hy anityāśuci-duḥkha-rūpe saṁsāre nitya-śuci-sukha-khyāti-lakṣaṇena viparyāseṇa citta-sattvaṁ malīnayatī. ataḥ pāpani-vṛttau pratyakṣōpapatti-dvārāpāvaraṇe sati pratyakṣōpapattibhyāṁ saṁsārasyānityāśuci-duḥkha-rūpatām apratyūham avabuddhyate, tato 'syāsminn anabhirati-saṁjñāṁ vairāgyam upajāyate, tatas taj-jihāsōpāvartate, tato hānōpāyaṁ paryeṣate, paryeṣamāṇas cātma-tattva-jñānam asyōpāya ity upaśrutya tat jijñāsate, tataḥ śravaṇādīkrameṇa taj jñānātīy ārād upakāratvaṁ tattva-jñānōtpādam prati citta-sattva-śuddhyā karmaṇām yuktaṁ.*

<sup>17</sup> In commenting on Śaṅkara's interpretation of the Upaniṣadic sentence *kurvann evēha karmāṇi...* ('one should aspire to live a full life by performing *karman*'), Vācaspatimīśra follows Śaṅkara in admitting the point that a realised person can continue accumulating *karman* but states that even so he is not afflicted by it. However, his inclination is to take the above statement as a recommendation to an unrealised person, and so for him it is a secondary solution, *Bhāmātī* ad BSSBh 3.4.13–14: "*kurvann evēha karmāṇi jijīviṣet*" *ity-evam-ādīṣu niyama-śravaṇeṣu na viduṣa iti viśeṣo 'sti, aviśeṣeṇa niyama-vidhānāt. "kurvann evēha karmāṇi" ity-atrāparo viśeṣa ākhyāyate. yady apy atra prakaraṇa-sāmarthyād vidvān eva kurvann iti sambandhyeta, tathāpi vidyā-stutaye karmānuṣṭhānam etad draṣṭavyam. "na karma lipyate nare" iti hi vakṣyati. etad uktaṁ bhavati—yāvaj-jīvaṁ karma kurvaty api viduṣi puruṣe na karma lepāya bhavati vidyā-sāmarthyād iti tad evaṁ vidyā stūyate.*—'In the case of the statement of rules like "One should aspire to live in this world by performing *karman*", there underlies the special point that such a



Contrary to this, Maṅḍana thinks that the process of Brahman realisation is accelerated if it is accompanied by *karman*, even though plodding on towards realisation without accumulating *karman* is also possible. In support of his view, he quotes *Brahma-sūtra* 3.4.26 (*sarvāpekṣā ca yajñādi-śruter aśvavat*) and elaborates the idea that, even as it is possible to reach a destination without a horse, although one is desirable for reaching there quickly or for the sake of convenience, in the same way *karman* is desirable in the process of Brahman realisation for the same reason. He writes:

‘In the case of ascetics living in chastity, the rise of pure knowledge could be expected even without [the performance of] those duties; still, there is difference in terms of time. Thanks to these particular means, pure knowledge is revealed quickly, [much] more quickly, while in the absence of these means it is revealed slowly, [much] more slowly. It is said: “the requirement of all types of *karman* is admitted, for the *śruti* teaches sacrifice and so on [as a means of attaining Brahman], but [these duties are] like a horse”. This is the meaning of this *sūtra*: the performance of duties is required for realisation, which is to be attained through repeated practice, as the *śruti* teaches through sacrifice and charity, just as a horse is required in order to reach a village swiftly and conveniently, even though it is possible to reach there without a horse.’<sup>18</sup>

Śaṅkara’s interpretation of the same *sūtra* is quite different, and seemingly a bit distorted. He says that as a horse is employed to draw a chariot but not to plough fields, so too *karman* is required in order to produce a desire for knowledge (*vividīṣā*), not to accomplish the final goal of Brahman realisation (*brahma-jñāna*):

prescription is not for a realised person. For this statement is made without any specification, [so that a clarification is needed]. However, in the case of this particular statement, “One should aspire...”, it is further necessary to make another point, that though depending on the context a realised person may be an agent who accumulates *karman*, the accumulation of *karman* should be viewed as something for the sake of praising the realisation of [Brahman]. Later it is said that “*karman* does not defile a [realised] person”. This amounts to saying the following: even though a realised person accumulates *karman* for his whole life, his *karman* will not cause any defilement in him, given his realisation, and thus [Brahman] realisation is praised.’

<sup>18</sup> BSi, 36–37: *ūrdhva-retasām cāśramiṇām vināpi tair viśuddha-vidyodaya iṣyate. kim tu kāla-kṛto viśeṣaḥ. sādhana-viśeṣād dhi sā kṣipram kṣiprataram ca vyajyate, tad-abhāve cireṇa ciratareṇa ca. tad uktam—sarvāpekṣā ca yajñādi-śruter aśvavat. eṣo ’rthaḥ—“yajñena dānena” iti śravaṇāt karmāṇy apekṣante vidyāyām abhyāsa-labhyāyām api, yathāntareṇāśvaṁ grāma-prāptau siddhyantyām śaighryāyākleśāya vāśvo ’pekṣyate.*

‘The right knowledge, once attained, requires nothing towards accomplishing the goal, but it requires means towards its [own] rise. How so? Because the *śruti* teaches sacrifice and so on as the means thereto. ... Given their connection with the desire to know [the self], they are regarded as the means whereby [the right knowledge] arises. The expression “like a horse” in the *sūtra* points at ability. Even as a horse, because of its ability, is employed to pull a chariot but not to plough, similarly the ritual duties of [the earlier] *āśramas* are not required by the right knowledge towards accomplishing the goal, but only towards its [own] rise.’<sup>19</sup>

Maṇḍana strongly criticises this position. He postulates that *karman* and Brahman realisation are hardly opposed to each other, and repeatedly states that the former is conducive not only to a desire for knowledge (*vividiṣā*) but also to the final intuitive realisation of Brahman.<sup>20</sup>

For his part, Vācaspati rejects any positive relation between the two:

‘In this way, for a person who has not performed *karman* in this life but whose mind has been purified by his actions in the previous life and an aversion to this world has arisen in him through an apprehension of its worthlessness, there is no use performing *karman*, that is fit and favourable for the rise of aversion. For its purpose has already been served by his having performed *karman* in his previous life.’<sup>21</sup>

Thus neither of the two views concerning the relation between *karman* and realisation affirmed by Maṇḍanamiśra is acceptable to Vācaspatimiśra in this matter.

#### 4. The Significance of Renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*)

The above view of Maṇḍanamiśra regarding the relationship between *karman* and Brahman realisation has a direct impact on the question of the significance of

<sup>19</sup> BSŚBh 3.4.26: *utpannā hi vidyā phala-siddhiṁ prati na kiṁ cid apekṣate, utpattiṁ prati tv apekṣate. kutaḥ? yajñādi-śruteḥ. ... vividiṣā-samyogāc cāṣāṁ utpatti-sādhana-bhāvo ’vasīyate. ... aśvavad iti yogyatā-nidarśanam. yathā ca yogyatā-vaśenāśvo na lāṅgalākarṣaṇe yujyate, rathacaryāyām tu yujyate. evam āśrama-karmāṇi vidyayā phala-siddhau nāpekṣyante, utpattau cāpekṣyanta iti.*

<sup>20</sup> See BSi<sub>1</sub> 32–36.

<sup>21</sup> *Bhāmatī* ad BSŚBh 1.1.1: *evam cānanuṣṭhita-karmāpi prāg-bhaviya-karma-vaśād yo viśuddha-sattvaḥ saṁsārāsāratā-darśanena niṣpanna-vairāgyaḥ, kṛtam tasya karmānuṣṭhānena vairāgyōt-pādōpayoginā, prāg-bhaviya-karmānuṣṭhānād eva tat-siddheḥ.*

*saṁnyāsa*. Since *karman* is conducive to the final realisation and is effective till the end of one's life, *saṁnyāsa* should not really be necessary. A householder who continues with the performance of *karman*, specifically the obligatory duties (*nitya-karman*), should reach the goal rather earlier than an ascetic who renounces everything. Indeed, according to Maṇḍana, a householder gallops towards the goal while an ascetic is still plodding on.<sup>22</sup> This idea would in no way have been acceptable to Śaṅkara and his followers, who champion *saṁnyāsa* with almost propagandist fervour.

According to Śaṅkara, *saṁnyāsa* is a necessary condition for Brahman realisation. For him, abiding in Brahman (*brahma-saṁsthatā*), in complete surrender to Brahman, is possible only for a renunciant, not for others in any of the other three stages of life. These have to perform their specific duties; if they stop performing the recommended duties, they will be committing sin. A renunciant, however, is different; he does not acquire sin by not performing *karman*, inasmuch as he has renounced all *karman*.<sup>23</sup>

Śaṅkara states that renunciation is part and parcel of the maturity leading to Brahman realisation and is recommended for a qualified person. One is called upon to renounce all *karman* after listening to the Upaniṣads:

‘As renunciation is part of the maturity leading to Brahman realisation, it is not for people other than allotted ones. And the *śruti* teaches this: “Now a mendicant with his head shaved, pale-dressed, without possessions, clean, free from malice and living on alms is [ready] for Brahmanhood”.’<sup>24</sup>

Here too, Vācaspati follows Śaṅkara, not Maṇḍanamiśra, as his commentary on the above *Brahma-sūtra-śaṅkara-bhāṣya* passage makes clear:

‘This is what is taught: Brahman[hood] is renunciation characterised by the abandonment of all types of longing through devotion to Brahman. Therefore, such a special [way of life] characterised by renunciation and abiding in Brahman is only for the mendicant, not for people in the

<sup>22</sup> See ACHARYA (2006: cxv).

<sup>23</sup> BSŚBh 3.4.20: *atrōcyate—brahma-saṁstha iti hi brahmaṇi parisamāptir ananya-vyāpārātā-rūpaṁ tan-niṣṭhatvam abhidhīyate. tac ca trayāṇām āśramāṇām na sambhavati, svāśrama-vihita-karmānanuṣṭhāne pratyavāya-śravaṇāt. parivrajakasya tu sarva-karma-saṁnyāsāt pratyavāyo na sambhavaty ananuṣṭhāna-nimittaḥ. śama-damādis tu tadīyo dharmo brahma-saṁsthatāyā upodbalako na virodhī. brahma-niṣṭhatvam eva hi tasya śama-damādy-upabṛñhitam svāśrama-vihitam karma.*

<sup>24</sup> BSŚBh 3.4.20: *brahma-jñāna-paripākāṅgatvāc ca pārvirājyasya nānadhikṛta-viṣayatvam. tac ca darśayati—“atha parivṛṇḍ vivarṇa-vāsā muṇḍo ‘parigrahaḥ śucir adrohī bhaiḥṣāṇo brahma-bhūyāya bhavati” iti.*

other stages of life. Intuitive perception, the maturity of Brahman realisation arising from verbal knowledge, is the only means of emancipation. Renunciation is prescribed as part of this maturity, and is not for people to whom it has not been allotted.<sup>25</sup>

According to Vācaspati, one should renounce as soon as desires have fallen away;<sup>26</sup> and thus he appears to assume that *saṁnyāsa* is a prerequisite for Brahman realisation.

Vācaspati generally takes the liberty to introduce new ideas and add extra remarks. Thus, though he appears to follow Śāṅkara in the last three instances above, it is important to note that he does so while refuting or discarding Maṇḍana's views. As to the first instance, it is a revised presentation of an idea found in the *Brahmasiddhi*; still, it is perfect and effective in its own way, and even leads to new avenues of philosophic pursuit.

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<sup>25</sup> *Bhāmatī* ad BSŚBh 3.4.20: *etad uktam bhavati—brahma-paratayā sarvṛṣaṇā-parityāga-lakṣaṇo nyāso brahmēti. tathā cēdṛṣam nyāsa-lakṣaṇam brahma-samsthatva-lakṣaṇam bhikṣor evāsādhāraṇam nētareṣām āśramiṇām. brahma-jñānasya śabda-janitasya yaḥ paripākaḥ sāḁṣāt-kāro 'pavarga-sādhanaṁ tad-aṅgatayā pārvivṛjyam vihitam, na tv anadhikṛtam pratīty arthaḥ.*

<sup>26</sup> *Bhāmatī* ad BSŚBh 1.1.1: “*yadi vetarathā brahmacaryād eva pravrajed grhād vā vanād vā*” *ity etāvataḥ hi vairāgyam upalakṣayati. ata eva “yadahar eva virajet tadahar eva pravrajat” iti śrutih.*

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