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[PARTS I-IV

THE STUDY OF ŚĀMĀKĀRĀCĀRYA*

BY

DANIEL H. H. INGALLS

Let me begin my address by asking a question. What is there about Śāmkarācārya to excite the interest of an intelligent audience? It is now over a thousand years since Śāmkara lived and taught. At an early age of what appears to have been a brief life, he gave up everything in which most of us seem to be chiefly interested, family, property, the land of his birth and the social system in which he was raised. He wandered about India with

* Address delivered by Prof. Ingalls on the occasion of the 27th anniversary of Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar solemnised at the Institute on 25th August 1952, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan presiding. Prof. Ingalls prefaced his address with the following words :

[First let me thank you for the honour you have shown me in asking me to address you under so distinguished a presidency and on so notable an occasion as the anniversary of this Institute. A guest, I think, meets with no greater hospitality than this willingness to hear him speak. Unfortunately, his thanks can only be measured by what he has to say. In view of this fact I chose for the subject of my address the study of Śāmkarācārya, for this is the subject on which I am now working and for which I have come to India. It is one where a Westerner's thanks to India cannot fail to be sincere, for most of the work done on the subject has been done by Indians.

At the time of my choice, though, I did not think of the incongruity of Dr. Radhakrishnan's introducing me. It is incongruous that he should call on a man from so far away to speak on a subject on which he himself is the most eminent authority].

nothing more than a cloth, a begging-bowl and a staff. What he wrote is in a language that only a handful of men still speak and that very few men still read. And what he wrote of was not love or politics or war or any of the other things with which intelligent people are supposed to concern themselves. What is there here to excite one's curiosity ?

What first excited my own curiosity was the boldness of Śaṅkara's thought. There are times when this affects one almost as a physical act of courage. Perhaps a passage at the end of his commentary on the third book of the *Bṛhadāraṇyako-paniṣad* may serve as example. Śaṅkara here comments on the three words *vijñānam ānandam brahma*: knowledge, bliss, brahma. He points out that the word bliss is commonly used of pleasure that is cognised and that there are scriptures which might lead one to suppose that the man who has won release is conscious of bliss in that state. He then applies a very acid criticism. How can bliss or pleasure be cognised when there is no sense or mental organ left to cognise it? How can brahma be conscious of bliss when there is nothing outside of brahma of which brahma can be conscious? Or if you say brahma is conscious of itself or receives pleasure in itself, does this statement have any meaning ?

This is only the beginning. The argument extends over several pages, in the course of which one by one the supports for an eternity of enjoyment fall away. And then comes Śaṅkara's answer. Brahma knows no object; it simply is knowledge. It takes pleasure in no object; it simply is bliss. One may or may not be sympathetic to this philosophy. But one cannot fail to be impressed by a certain magnificence. If one has a taste for grandeur, if one relishes, for example, the poetry of Lucretius with its "flaming walls of the universe," one cannot be unmoved by the soporous prose of Śaṅkara where these flaming walls are tumbled down.

Śaṅkara, I think, was not unaware of his literary gifts, but he makes no needless display of them and purple passages are rare in his works. When they come, however, their effect is overwhelming. Such are the full-dress arguments put in dialogue form in

the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Brahmasūtra* commentaries. Quite aside from the question of philosophy, these dialogues simply as dramatic literature are magnificent.

This literary gift from Śaṅkara's own point of view is incidental. He thought of himself not as a master of prose but as a teacher and commentator. With one exception all the works that can be ascribed with absolute certainty to Śaṅkarācārya are commentaries on sacred texts. In the West we think of commentators as dull creatures, lacking in imagination, who take some one else's text to furnish themselves with ideas. And it is true that most Western commentators, when they go beyond the writing of footnotes, are dull. But the Indian tradition is different. The most original and imaginative products of the Indian intellect are given us in the form of commentaries. The Indian authors may try to hide their originality, borrowing from tradition as much as they can, attributing even their new ideas to some ancient sage, but the originality is still there. Often it may be as great in a pious Sanskrit commentary as in a professedly revolutionary tract written in English or in German. The Indians are not less original; they are simply more anonymous.

It is no contradiction in terms to speak of Śaṅkara as an inspiring commentator. He follows a long tradition, but he fits the tradition to his purpose with perfect ease and so not only enlightens us on the basic texts but gives us new insights of his own.

This will indicate some of the elements in Śaṅkara's works which may excite one's interest. What I have spoken of is only the bouquet of the wine. The body of the wine produces a stronger effect. It leads one to the study of Śaṅkara and his works.

This study may follow one of several directions, that is, one of several methods which are not wholly compatible. Accordingly, each student must make his choice how to proceed. I have, therefore, made mine. But I wish to avoid being dogmatic. I wish to avoid the fault of which Voltaire accused Descartes. Descartes, he said, was born to remove the errors of antiquity

and for them to substitute his own. One must keep an open mind and one must respect those who do not share one's opinions.

The first method is the traditional one. Its followers are marked out from travellers on other roads by their sense of absolute conviction. Actually, their road starts with doubt, passes through traditional instruction and only then comes to belief, a belief which seems so natural to those who hold it that they call the object of this conviction a *bhūtavastu*, an actual thing, as plain as a post. To them their distinguishing mark appears rather to be a simple matter of sight where others are blind. This road deserves first mention, for it is the oldest method and the method which Śaṅkara obviously intended for his readers. In his *Upadeśasāhasri* he sets the exact curriculum to be followed. There are certain prerequisites for those who would try it. They may still have doubts in their minds on many questions, but there must be no doubt about two things. For the workaday world the student must have a total disinterest if not an actual distaste; and he must be anxious for release, he must be *mumukṣu*. There are other moral and intellectual requirements, but these two seem to me essential. I think a man who lacks them is unwise to try or to pretend to try the traditional method. For those who are qualified and who pass on to the stage of honest conviction, and I have known some such men, I have the very highest respect.

Then there is the philosophical method. This method has been followed by more than one person here present. It allows of great variety. It may be comparative and here it may compare Śaṅkara with other Indian philosophers as Dr. Belvalkar has done or with both Indian and European philosophers as Dr. Radhakrishnan has done. Or it may be deductive in the sense of attempting to deduce from Śaṅkara's works a system to fit the present generation of thought. Professors Raju and Datta and a large number of others have followed this road.

Finally, there is the historical method and I plan to devote most of my time to this branch of the study of Śaṅkara. I shall try while doing so to remember that it is only one of several

possible paths. I have made this choice for more than one reason. First, it seems to me that the philosophical interpretation of Śaṅkara cannot proceed much beyond what has already been accomplished without further aid from history. Again, it is the method I have chosen for myself. And finally, this institute seems a most appropriate place in which to discuss this type of study, for the application of the historical method to the works of Śaṅkara is not essentially different from the application of that method to the Mahābhārata. In both cases the historian in one sense is transgressing the very spirit of the works he studies; in another sense he is trying to understand them in a new framework thereby to give them new meaning and new life. This requires a word of explanation.

Hindu civilization differs from other civilizations in a number of points, but the most striking, I think, is this. It developed a cultural harmony which is almost without parallel in the history of mankind. Its social system is explained by its religion, its art by its metaphysics. Everything is interwoven. Even its theories of geography are drawn up rather with a view to the harmony of the universe than to its immediately observable details. This harmony is achieved only at the expense of an historical sense, in fact, could not have existed in this form in the presence of an historical sense. Accordingly, this harmony is the despair of modern scholarship. It overlays all the irregular details that we now associate with reality. In the orthodox tradition nothing must be irregular. Eighteen armies fought in the Bhārata war and they fought for eighteen days. Thus, there must be eighteen books of the Mahābhārata, eighteen chapters of the Gītā, eighteen Purāṇas and so on. The proliferation is infinite. The same is true of Śaṅkara. All the statements of the Upaniṣads must be based on a single concept of truth. If the origin of the world is said in one passage to be from the existent and in another passage from the non-existent, then only one word must be used in a primary sense. Again, Bādarāyana must have intended his sūtras to convey exactly this same basic intent that is present in every sentence of the Upaniṣads. And Śaṅkara, so he claims, is doing nothing more than reasserting the basic truth. What is more curious is that Bhāskara and Rāmānuja, who frequently

disagree with Śaṅkara and with each other, make exactly the same claim.

Let me not be thought to disparage this Hindu harmony. It is one of the great accomplishments of mankind, for it allowed the human components of this culture, at least those who carried on its intellectual tradition, to be aware of the unity of the universe and of their share in it and so to lead in some ways a fuller and more satisfactory life than was lived elsewhere. One might say of them as Catullus said of the golden age: then indeed did the gods come down and visit with men.

But times change. No cultural achievement can remain alive without renovation. No one but the mystic or the fossil can remove himself from the present. And while I feel that India should draw on her past, far more than she should draw on Europe or America, surely this past must be reinterpreted. It is not, I think, too fanciful a hope that one may be able to establish a new form of harmony, built out of the old materials but no longer blind to the element of time. This, then, is the philosophical apology I offer for Indian historical studies, an apology which is necessary if one would avoid the charge of irreverence and destructiveness.

To come to the particular tasks of the historian who would deal with Śaṅkarācārya. His first task as in the case of the Mahābhārata, is to disentangle the later accretions from the original body of work. This should be easier in the case of Śaṅkara than of the Mahābhārata, for there is a general principle that may serve as a constant guide.

There are four texts that we know are by Śaṅkara on the evidence of men living in his own lifetime, his direct pupils. These texts are his commentaries on the *Brahmasūtras*, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Taittirīya* Upaniṣads, and his independent work the *Upadeśasāhasrī*. For the commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* we now have in addition to the evidence of Sureśvara the internal evidence painstakingly gathered by Käthe Marschner. These four texts together make a stout set of volumes and in them Śaṅkara has covered a wide area of speculation. Especially is this true of the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* which is an

attempt to investigate systematically the problems of Vedānta. Accordingly, if in the whole stretch of this literature we fail to meet with a single occurrence of some distinctive theory on a problem of Vedānta philosophy, and if we then find this theory in another work, whatever the traditional ascription of this other work may be, we have *prima facie* evidence that it is not by Śaṅkarācārya.

Let me consider this principle a bit further. If an author wrote sermons, we cannot deny that he may have written love-poetry. The combination is unusual but not impossible, as is shown by the example of John Donne. But if we find an author writing whole volumes on *saccidānanda brahma* and constantly reemphasizing the epithet *ānanda* at the expense of the other two, then it is improbable that the same author should write another work in which the emphasis is directly reversed.

Thus, to come to a specific instance, it is improbable that Śaṅkara wrote the *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi*. The improbable becomes impossible when we pass from this question of general emphasis to specific theories. The author of the *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi* makes an absolute equation of the waking and dream states after the fashion of Gauḍapāda. Śaṅkara may liken the two to each other, but he is careful to distinguish them. Again, and most decisive of all, the *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi* accepts the classical theory of the three truth values, the existent, the non-existent and that which is *anirvacanīya*, indescribable as being either existent or non-existent. The workaday world according to the classical theory is *anirvacanīya*.

Now, Paul Hacker has pointed out that when Śaṅkara uses the word *anirvacanīya*, he uses it in a sense quite different from that of the classical theory. He uses the term in connection with his theory of creation. Before creation primary matter, which he calls *nāmarūpa*, was in a state of *anirvacanīyatva*. It was an indistinguishable mass—*tattvānyatvābhyām anirvacanīya*, a mass in which one could describe nothing as being a this or a that. There is no implication here as to the state of its existence.

If there is reason to deny Śaṅkara's authorship of the *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi*, I can see no comparable reason to deny his authorship

of the commentary on the Gītā. It is true that the word *māyā* is used here in the sense of a cosmic rather than a psychological force, a usage which seems un-Śaṅkaran but which may be due to his following an earlier commentator. When we come to the controversial passages, however, which are more certainly original, there is scarcely an argument in the Gītā commentary that cannot be paralleled in one or another of the basic texts.

Obviously there is not time for me to continue through the list of the hundred or so works ascribed in one place or another to Śaṅkara. But I believe the same principle of criticism must be used in each case. I pass on to a second principle of historical study.

We must realize that of all that Śaṅkara wrote only a part was his original contribution, although that part may have been very original indeed. Anyone who has worked with Vedānta philosophy will have been impressed by the reverence with which older works are treated. When they become canonical like the Upaniṣads they are accepted *in toto*. But even when they are of less sanctity they are repeated so far as they do not disagree violently with the repeater's views. If they disagree just a bit, he would rather interpret than change. Much of Śaṅkara's commentaries must be simply repeated from what teachers had written down before him.

Thibaut pointed out that a considerable amount of matter is common to Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja and he was impressed by this in view of their sharp disagreement on certain crucial points. In the case of Bhāskara I find the coincidence even more striking, for if a Vedānti is capable of hatred, Bhāskara truly hated Śaṅkara's philosophy. In one place, after quoting from Śaṅkara he says "No one but a man in his drunkenness could put forth such an argument." And after describing Śaṅkara's concept of final release he says "Some of us would rather be jackals in a forest than have your kind of release." This was no man to copy from Śaṅkara out of love. And yet in sūtra after sūtra we find perfect agreement. Only where specific questions arise such as *jīvanmukti*, *jñānakarma-samuccaya* and such like do the two commentators split widely apart. This fact can be explained

only by supposing that for most of their interpretations both commentators drew on a common traditional source.

Here is a point where the philosophical and the historical view of Śaṅkarācārya must diverge. For the philosopher must take the whole of Śaṅkara and regard what he says as a single body of thought to be compared with other views of life in other lands or at other times. The historian, however, will concentrate on what is peculiar to Śaṅkara, not the whole body of his thought, but on that portion of it which altered the stream of the Indian intellect.

How are we to determine what this portion is? Primarily by the comparison of what other commentators have said on the same basic texts. But here there arises a difficulty. Of all the commentaries that have been written on the Upaniṣads, the *Brahmasūtras* and the *Gītā*, Śaṅkara's are the oldest we now have. We know that there were many commentators before him, in some cases we know their names, but in no single instance is such a pre-Śaṅkaran commentary preserved. It may seem probable that later writers are not simply copying from Śaṅkara, but can we prove it?

On this point my recent reading has convinced me that we are not in quite so hopeless a position as at first appears. The writings of Bhāskara, I think, come to our aid. The philosopher Bhāskara was well-known by 850 A. D. and so must have been almost a contemporary of Śaṅkara. Perhaps he actually was so as tradition asserts.

My views on the relation of Bhāskara to Śaṅkara are somewhat unorthodox and I regret that I have not the time to furnish all the proofs that they require. I shall try at least to give a clear account of the theory.

There can be no doubt that Bhāskara had read or perhaps heard Śaṅkara's comment on the *Brahmasūtras*, for his refutations of it follow Śaṅkara's arguments point by point. On the other hand, there is no such specific evidence to show that Śaṅkara knew Bhāskara. Despite this, Śaṅkara seems to have been well acquainted with all the philosophical views that are found in Bhāskara's work. In various passages scattered through Śaṅkara's

works and with no actual quotations from Bhāskara these views are condemned and refuted.

What gives rise to this situation I think is this. Bhāskara, though he may be slightly later than Śaṅkara, represents a pre-Śaṅkaran school of Vedānta philosophy.

There is a decisive bit of evidence in favor of this theory and it in turn leads to further implications. In the course of commenting on the *Brahmasūtras* Śaṅkara often refers to the opinions of what Śaṅkara's followers call the *vṛttikāra*, the commentator. What the name was of the philosopher who gained the honour of this anonymity is not certain. For the present I prefer to refer to him as the Proto-commentator. Now, in one instance after another where Śaṅkara disagrees with the Proto-commentator we find Bhāskara in complete agreement with the older views and defending them against Śaṅkara. Thus it is clear whom Bhāskara was following; he was following the Proto-commentator. But more than this can be inferred. In the first book of the *Brahmasūtras* on the question of the *ānandamayātmā*, the self of bliss, Śaṅkara first interprets eight whole sūtras quite in accordance with Bhāskara. Only at the end does he reverse his whole position, offering an exegesis more consistent with his other writings but outraging any normal interpretation of the sūtras. Here again Ānandagiri tells us that the first exegesis is that of the Proto-commentator. This shows, I think that the Proto-commentator furnished the framework for Śaṅkara as well as Bhāskara. Śaṅkara would follow him in every case where he was not repelled by the older views. Only in such cases would he break away. And even here Śaṅkara's instinct for tradition sometimes led him first to give the whole of the Proto-commentator's view and only then to put forward his own.

Much work, however, remains in order wholly to clarify this problem. For example, one must determine the relation between the Proto-commentator and Bhartṛprapañca whom Śaṅkara refutes in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* commentary and who may well have been the author of the commentary which Śaṅkara condemns in his introduction to the Gītā. The views of the Proto-

commentator may have been less pronouncedly Bhedābheda than those of Bhartṛprapañca. But if my view is correct that Bhāskara follows the Proto-commentator far more faithfully than does Śamkara, then we may use Bhāskara not only to determine what is original in Śamkara but to compare this original contribution with one school at least of pre-Śamkaran philosophy.

This brings me to the last stage of historical study, a stage on which I am not competent to do much more than report on what others have done. After deciding what Śamkara wrote and of what he wrote what is original, one must go on to compare this original element with the philosophical and religious currents that preceded Śamkara and followed him. Only in this way can we measure Śamkara's historical importance.

If the Proto-commentator represents the framework on which Śamkara built, the spiritual infusion that was necessary to produce Śamkara came from a very different source. Here again we are faced with the difficulty that most of the texts have disappeared. The date of the *Paramārthasūtra* still remains doubtful, while the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* for which Professor Atreya valiantly claimed a pre-Śamkaran date, is now shown by Dr. Raghavan to be several centuries later.

There remains the *Gauḍapāḍakārikās*, the most puzzling, perhaps, of all Sanskrit philosophical texts. There has recently appeared an elaborate edition, translation and annotation of this work by Vidhuśekhara Bhaṭṭācārya, for whose work we must be most grateful. Many questions, however, are still not fully answered, among them whether the four books of *kārikās* are all by one author and, specifically, whether the author of the last book actually was a Buddhist or whether, as Bhaṭṭācārya prefers, he was a latitudinarian Vedānti. What is certain is that the whole text is, at least three centuries earlier than Śamkara, that many of Śamkara's theories, examples and arguments appear in it, some of them in a much more extreme form than in Śamkara, and that the last book of the *kārikās* in distinction to the first three draws heavily on Buddhist material. A task of great importance which remains to be done for the understanding of Śamkara is a careful study of the commentary ascribed to Śamkara on these *kārikās*.

Of other philosophical texts in India which may shed light on the history of pre-Śaṅkara Vedānta there is the *Vākyapadīya* of Bhartṛhari, on which I hear that Jain Muni Jambuvijaya is about to publish some interesting discoveries, and the works of Maṇḍana Miśra, on which as well as on the texts of Śaṅkara's followers Paul Hacker is working in Germany.

But perhaps the most important of all, there are the sources outside of India, the sources preserved only in Tibetan and Chinese. The Institute is honoured in having present on this occasion a scholar who has done more than any one else in the study of these sources, Professor Nakamura of the University of Tokyo. He has extracted from the Tibetan text of the 6th century *Tarkajvāla* and from a 3rd century commentary on the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* all the references that could be found to early Vedānta philosophy. Unfortunately the results of his labours are so far available only in Japanese. I am sure you all join me in praying for their speedy translation into English.

My remarks on the historical method of studying Śaṅkara may conclude at this point. One may ask where this method will lead us. Naturally a man guesses at answers before the operations are performed necessary to secure them. But he is usually considered foolish to voice his guesses in public. If I do so now, it is only to suggest possibilities and I must ask you not to laugh at me five years hence if I have changed my views.

It seems to me likely that Śaṅkara was brought up in the Bhedābheda tradition and that he later turned away from it under the influence of a much more phenomenalist school that is now represented only by the *Gauḍapāda Kārikās*. But Śaṅkara never went so far in the direction of phenomenism as Gauḍapāda.

Śaṅkara's most original philosophical contribution seems to me the concept of the qualityless brahma. And this concept has continued to be the most distinctive mark of his followers down to the present day. It is that which first attracts those who admire Śaṅkara and most repels those who do not. Of course, in one sense the qualityless brahma is as old as the Upaniṣads. But the philosophical and dialectical development of the concept we meet with first in Śaṅkara.

Most other elements of Śaṅkara's philosophy, if taken separately, are old. As I have said, the technical framework seems to be *bhedābheda* and this in turn may well derive from Mīmāṃsā. But on the most important points the *bhedābheda* doctrines are condemned and in their place are set views many of which we find in Gauḍapāda. Some of Śaṅkara's views are still older. The double standard of interpretation, ultimate truth and conditioned truth, was used by the Buddhists as was also a theory of *avidyā* not very different from Śaṅkara's. The world as a *vivarta* or perversion of brahma instead of a *pariṇāma* or development is to be found in Bhartṛhari. The theory of *adhyāsa* or false superimposition of the non-self on the self goes back to the Sāṅkhya. It is the synthesis of these various theories that is Śaṅkara's and is something quite new in the history of Indian philosophy.

Now, the new element in Śaṅkara's philosophy as well as the new synthesis of the old seems to me directed not so much against Buddhism, which is the traditional claim, as against the Mīmāṃsā and against schools of a more realistic Vedānta such as the *Bhedābheda* which flourished in Śaṅkara's time. The 8th century had already witnessed the end of Buddhism as an intellectual force in most of India. On the other hand in the 7th and 8th centuries there had been a great rise of ritualism, materialism and elaborate temple worship. This direction of Śaṅkara's influence is even more apparent when we look at his social innovations, his intransigent stand against the necessity of ritual and social duty, his insistence on complete *saṁnyāsa*, on giving up all marks of caste or distinction, this despite the fact that he was a brahmin by birth and his pupils were brahmins.

The philosophy of Śaṅkara must be connected both as effect and cause with the history of Hindu society. Here lies a great field for the future historian to explore. If I have not spoken of this aspect of the study of Śaṅkara, it is from no underestimate of its importance, but simply from ignorance, an ignorance I hope someday to cure.

One may ask how this historical method compares with the traditional one that I mentioned at the beginning and that I have

since neglected. Let me not minimize the difference. The goal of the traditional method is timelessness. In fact Śaṅkara is very careful to distinguish between two kinds of eternity, *pariṇāmi-nityatva* which is everlastingness through change and *kūḷastha-nityatva* which is unchangeable timelessness. It is this second sort of eternity which is the goal of the traditional method. And the historical view is in contradiction to this goal.

There need be, however, no antipathy on this account between those who employ the two methods. Let me conclude my address by referring to those factors which may operate in all methods of study equally: The belief in the unity of all creation and that the operation of this unity is in accordance with rational principles. As Śaṅkara himself says: "If scripture were to tell us fire is cold we should have to refuse the authority of scripture." It is needless to quote him on the subject of unity, for it is the basic rhythm of all his writings. And, finally, a moral principle which I feel should follow from the study of history and philosophy as well as from the traditional method of belief: a respect and tolerance for those of different opinions.

त्वयि मयि चान्यत्रैको विष्णुः
 व्यर्थं कुप्यसि मय्यसहिष्णुः ।
 सर्वस्मिन्नपि पश्यत्मानं
 सर्वत्रोत्सृज भेदाज्ञानम् ॥

Since Viṣṇu dwells alike in thee and me,
 And him thou'dst hate is no one else but thee,
 Come see thyself in everything. Cast hence
 All erring thought that's built on difference.

Correction p. 8 lines 2-3. Correct "used here ... force" to "sometimes used here where one would expect *avidyā*".