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Philosophy of Advaita Vedānta according to Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s Gūḍhārthadīpikā

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in the Study of Religions

2014

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Declaration for PhD thesis

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Abstract

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (ca. 16th century CE), one of the seminal figures in post-Śaṃkara Advaita Vedānta, authored various works, including the Advaitasiddhi, a polemic of the highest kind against theistic dualism. It is considered to be one of the influential works of the Advaita Vedānta (i.e. non-dualism) school of Śaṃkara. In addition, his Bhaktirasāyana is the only extant independent exposition on the nature of devotion written by a staunch exponent of Advaita. In his work, we see a remarkable attempt to accommodate two apparently incompatible concepts, viz. non-dualism and devotion.

Building on the Bhaktirasāyana, Madhusūdana has given a running commentary on the Bhagavadgītā, viz. the Gūḍhārthadīpikā, in which the doctrine of Advaita is expounded with a special emphasis on bhakti. In this work he occasionally disagrees with Śaṃkara’s interpretation of the Bhagavadgītā. He also treats some rival views that developed in post-Śaṃkara Vedānta (e.g. concerning whether the individual self is one or many) as viable alternatives within Advaita Vedānta.

While the Gūḍhārthadīpikā is considered to be an original and independent commentary on the Bhagavadgītā written from the Advaita point of view, some of the later commentators belonging to the same school did not accept it in toto. They even expressed the view that as compared to the Gūḍhārthadīpikā, Śaṃkara’s commentary exhibits better the true import of the Bhagavadgītā. Ironically, a few later commentators belonging to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school (who are generally opposed to Advaita) have found the Gūḍhārthadīpikā impressive. This dissertation attempts to establish that the Gūḍhārthadīpikā succeeds to a considerable extent in
accommodating devotion as an aid to the means of attaining liberation, a fact that has been overlooked in some contemporary works on Madhusūdana.
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Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction:- Apart from the scope and methodology of this thesis and the principal questions that are addressed therein, the introductory chapter gives some general idea about the monastic lineage of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, a chronological account of his principal works, the intellectual background of Advaita Vedānta, including the development of post-Śaṅkara schools, the commentarial tradition of the Bhagavadgītā before Madhusūdana and the available editions, commentaries and translations of the Gūḍhārthadīpikā together with its mutual references in other works of Madhusūdana, as also mutual references to other commentaries on the Bhagavadgītā and a note to consider the Gūḍhārthadīpikā as a perfect example of good exposition (vyākhyā).

Chapter 2: Available Modern Scholarship on Madhusūdana Sarasvatī:- A comprehensive review of the existing scholarly work regarding the works of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in general, and the Gūḍhārthadīpikā in particular, is undertaken in the second chapter. The objective here is to identify the limits of previous scholarship on the Gūḍhārthadīpikā, thereby justifying the need for undertaking the present venture.

Chapter 3: Madhusūdana’s Introduction (upodgāta) to the Gūḍhārthadīpikā as a Summary of the Bhagavadgītā:- This chapter aims at dealing critically and in more depth with the unique treatment of the Bhagavadgītā as laid down in the forty six
verses of the introduction to the Gūḍhārthadīpikā, in order to determine what Madhusūdana focuses on throughout his long commentary on the Bhagavadgītā.

Chapter 4: Realities (tattva-s): the Supreme Self (brahman), the Individual Self (jīva), and the Universe (jagat):- In this chapter we discuss Madhusūdana’s treatment of the three important doctrines of the Vedānta philosophy concerning the supreme self (paramātman) or brahman, the individual self (jīva) and the cosmic universe (jagat), as well as his view of these principles as forming the metaphysical ground of the Bhagavadgītā.

Chapter 5: Liberation (mokṣa) and the Means (sādhana) of Attaining It:- This chapter aims at exploring how Madhusūdana, with his distinctive philosophical approach, handles the state of liberation and the process of attaining it. The goal of this chapter is to show how Madhusūdana explains the Bhagavadgītā as a śāstra presenting a coherent philosophical teaching, leading to its ultimate goal of guiding seekers in the process of attaining liberation or emancipation (mokṣa/mukti).

Chapter 6: The Gūḍhārthadīpikā of Madhusūdana and the Commentarial Tradition of the Bhagavadgītā:- While Madhusūdana himself has referred to the views of many other commentators of the Bhagavadgītā, a number of subsequent commentators have also made use of Madhusūdana’s Gūḍhārthadīpikā or adversely criticised it. A comparative analysis pertaining to the Gūḍhārthadīpikā of Madhusūdana and other traditional commentaries on the Bhagavadgītā will be
made in this chapter in order to assess what influence prior commentators had on Madhusūdana, and how subsequent commentators have reacted to him.

Chapter 7: Conclusion:- The concluding and seventh chapter makes a critical evaluation of the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* on the basis of issues discussed in earlier chapters. The question of the ways in which Madhusūdana follows Śaṃkara’s tradition, as compared to the way in which he innovates (i) in terms of interpretation of the text, (ii) in terms of authority used, and (iii) in terms of method of exposition will be reviewed in this chapter. Thus, this chapter will point out the fact that the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* makes a successful attempt to provide room for devotion as an aid to the means of attaining liberation, thereby indicating Madhusūdana’s place within and influence upon the intellectual and religious discourse prevalent in India.
1

Introduction

1.1. Scope and methodology of the study

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (MS) (ca. 16th century CE) was a preeminent post-Śaṃkara Advaita thinker from Bengal. An uncompromising defender of Śaṃkara’s nondualistic Vedānta with vast erudition and amazing polemical skills, MS produced works like Advaitasiddhi (AdS), Siddhāntabindu (SB) and Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa (AdRR). At the same time, his emphasis on devotion (bhakti) is especially noteworthy when compared to other exponents of non-dualistic Vedānta. This can be seen in works such as Bhaktirasāyana (BhR), Gūḍhārthadīpikā (GD), a commentary on the Bhagvadgītā (BhG), Mahimnastotraṭīkā (MST), Bhāgavatapurāṇaprathamāślokavyākhyā (BPPŚV) and Harilīlāvyākhyā (HLV). Most of the avowed critics of Advaita, especially the Vaiṣṇavite founders of theistic Vedānta schools, including Rāmānuja (11th century CE), Madhva (13th century CE) and Vallabha (15th century CE), had already claimed that Advaita is incompatible with the sentiment of devotion, which entails a total surrender by the devotee to a personal Godhead like Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa or Hari, whom these thinkers identify with brahman. They also claim that the highest reality is saguṇa brahman (qualified brahman), and not nirguṇa brahman (unqualified brahman) as claimed by the Advaita Vedāntins. The BhR and GD vary greatly in subject-matter and approach, but in both texts, MS took up the challenging task of giving bhakti a prominent

1 Refer to Appendix II for a detailed account.
place within the fundamental tenets of non-dualism and renunciation that are the hallmark of the Advaita Vedānta. Thus, in order to evaluate his contribution to the debate on the place of bhakti in the Advaita Vedānta, the GD and BhR are the principal texts that should be studied intensively. The speciality of the GD is that here, unlike in his other devotional works, MS summarises the basic non-dualistic principles that are defended in detail in works like the AdS and SB. He also asserts in the GD and AdS that he knows no other higher reality but Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus, MS, while being an ardent follower of Śaṃkara, has formulated a remarkable synthesis of the paths of knowledge (jñāna-mārga) and devotion (bhakti-mārga), for realizing the highest reality and attaining liberation, the highest end. Most scholars hold that MS’s emphasis on bhakti is meant to counter the criticisms of theistic Vedāntins that adherents of the Advaita Vedānta cannot give a convincing account of the path of devotion recommended in the BhG. The current study has been undertaken with a view to examine how MS successfully combines the path of devotion with the basic tenets of the Advaita Vedānta in his commentary on the BhG, namely the GD.

MS begins the GD with a proclamation of allegiance to his great predecessor Śaṃkara, whose BhG commentary established the superiority of renunciation (saṃnyāsa) and the path of knowledge. While in large measure endorsing Śaṃkara’s views, MS uses subtle reasoning and copious scriptural citations to accommodate the path of bhakti within the Advaita tradition. At the same time, he resolutely defends the Advaita Vedānta from the attacks of Vyāsa Tīrtha (15th century CE), an adherent to Madhva’s dualistic school of Vedānta. MS’s strong allegiance to Advaita indicates that his ideas of bhakti are significantly different from those of theistic Vedāntins like Rāmānuja, Madhva and Caitanya (15th century
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CE). Significantly, apart from Śaṃkara and his annotator Ānandagiri (14th century CE), the only other commentator whom MS refers to by name is Śrīdhara Svāmin (14th century CE). Though Śrīdhara adhered to Śaṃkara’s non-dualism while describing the nature of reality (tattva) in the BhG, he admitted the superiority of devotion as a means to liberation, making his work acceptable to the Vaiṣṇava groups like the followers of Caitanya in Bengal.²

Thus, the principal question that will be addressed in this dissertation is: how does MS’s commitment to bhakti in the GD influence the way he interprets basic Advaitic concepts and their interrelations? Several related issues will be studied in detail, including, (i) What is distinctive and unique about the interpretations provided by MS as compared to other commentators of the Advaita tradition? How successfully does MS achieve his objective of integrating the path of bhakti with the basic tenets of Advaita Vedānta? (ii) Does MS’s attempt at incorporating bhakti in the larger Advaitic framework alter the traditional and popular understanding of Advaita? (iii) How does he utilise the works and thoughts of previous scholars, Advaitins as well as non-Advaitins, as he seeks to present a comprehensive and persuasive reading of the famous text of the BhG?

This task has been undertaken with occasional reference to the Gūḍḥārthatattvāloka (GTL), a sub-commentary on the GD by Baccā Jhā (early 20th century CE) that has so far been neither studied nor translated. In explaining philosophical concepts in the main body of the thesis, references to the BhG commentaries of Śaṃkara, Rāmānuja and Śrīdhara will be made in order to trace

² In the antyalīlā of chapter seven of the Caitanyacaritāmṛtā, Caitanya himself is said to have paid high regard to Śrīdhara Svāmin and his commentary on the Bhāgavata (Mukhopādhyāya 1997: p. 321).
MS’s indebtedness to them, if and when it is found. In addition, mention will be made of the BhG commentators who have been cited by MS, either explicitly or implicitly, and later commentators who have referred to MS, in order to assess the importance of MS’s own views in the wider tradition of BhG commentary. This study will review MS’s philosophical stances in the GD in relation to his other works, as also the extent to which he is in agreement with Śaṅkara’s positions as understood by the tradition. Thus, the present study will focus primarily on textual analysis, with minimal reliance upon historical or hagiographical accounts. The next section provides a brief biographical detail of the author in order to understand better the place of this text in its historical context and within the author’s own oeuvre.

1.2. The author and his works

Like most writers from traditional Indian philosophical schools, MS has not given any significant autobiographical details in any of his works other than his name and the names of his preceptors, which appear in colophons and salutary verses. References to MS in later literature are the only sources upon which a biography of the author may be based, but these are often hagiographical in nature. Leaving aside these secondary references, we will depend here on the first-hand information available from the extant works of our author.

The fact that MS is the author of the GD can be substantiated with ample internal textual evidence. Apart from colophons at the end of each chapter, giving the name of the author, one of the concluding verses of the GD clearly mentions that the author of the GD is Madhusūdana and that he is a member of a monastic
order. The *Catalogus Catalogorum* of Theodor Aufrecht mentions nearly twenty authors named Madhusūdana. However, only one of them carries the ‘Sarasvatī’ suffix and is named as the author of a *Bhagavadgītāgūḍhārthadīpikā* among other works. In the *New Catalogus Catalogorum*, ten authors are named Madhusūdana, one of whom is also a ‘Sarasvatī’ and is identified as the author of the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* and other works. Vasudev Shastri Abhyankar, in his introduction to a commentary on the *SB* of MS, mentions that twenty five authors in the history of Sanskrit literature are named Madhusūdana, and that five of them have ‘Sarasvatī’ affixed to their names. One of these is the author of the *Advaitasiddhi* and *Siddhāntabindu*, a disciple of Viśeśvara Sarasvatī and teacher of Puruṣottama Sarasvatī, who lived in the 17th century. This is the same as our author MS, whose *GD* forms the focus of this thesis.

That Śrīrāma, Viśveśvara and Mādhava are his preceptors, and that he belongs to the monastic order, are stated by MS at the beginning of his *AdS*. MS has dedicated both the *AdS* and *GD* to these three teachers, using almost the same expression in both works. The second benedictory verse of the *Saṃkṣepaśārīrakasārasamgraha* (SŚSS), which bears the name of the same three teachers, corresponds to the second benedictory verse of the *AdS* and the

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3 *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, colophons at the end of each chapter and the 3rd concluding verse at the end of chapter 18, p. 775.
6 *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: *Upodghātaḥ*, p. 27 (Also see Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. II).
7 *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: Introductory verses 2 and 4 of chapter 1, p. 8.
8 Compare the last concluding verse at the end of the *GD* with the second introductory verse of the first chapter of the *AdS* (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 775 and *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 8).
concluding verse of the *GD*. One of MS’s commentators Brahmānanda Sarasvatī (17th century CE), while commenting on the second benedictory verse of the *AdS*, refers to Śrīrāma, Viśveśvara and Mādhava as MS’s *parama-guru* (teacher’s teacher), *guru* and *vidyā-guru* respectively.\(^9\)

MS dedicates his *AdRR* to Viśveśvara Sarasvatī,\(^11\) his preceptor, as attested in the colophons at the end of each chapter of his other works, including the *GD*, *SŚSS* and *SB*.\(^12\) The beginning of the *SB*, the second introductory verse of the *Vedāntakalpalatikā* (*VKL*) and the beginning and the colophon of the *MST*, all pay obeisance to Viśveśvara Sarasvatī.\(^13\) Puruṣottama Sarasvatī, while commenting on the *SB*, describes Viśveśvara as the preceptor of MS.\(^14\) At the third concluding verse of the *AdS*, MS salutes Mādhava Sarasvatī as among the finest self-controlled ones (*yamināṃ varāḥ*), with high proficiency in the scriptures (*śāstrārthe pariniṣṭhitāḥ*). In the course of commenting upon this verse, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī describes Mādhava Sarasvatī as MS’s teacher of the *śāstra* (*vidyā-guru*), and, while explaining the fifth concluding verse of the same work, he refers to Viśeśvara Sarasvatī as MS’s *guru*, i.e. preceptor.\(^15\) On the basis of these textual references, we can draw a *guru* lineage for MS that includes Śrīrāma, Viśeśvara and Mādhava Sarasvatī-s.\(^16\) Furthermore, as MS quotes Śaṃkara in several occasions throughout

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16. Though the appellation ‘Sarasvatī’ is clearly found in the case of Viśeśvara Sarasvatī and Mādhava Sarasvatī in MS’s own works, the same appellation may be appropriate in the case of
his commentary on the BhG\textsuperscript{17} to be an authority, his identity as a monk belonging to the Śaṃkarite tradition is confirmed.

Among the disciples of MS, we have already mentioned Puruṣottama Sarasvatī, who wrote a commentary on the SB, called the Bindusandīpana, wherein he pays homage to MS as his vidyā-guru, eulogising him as a Bṛhaspati, the preceptor of the gods.\textsuperscript{18} Puruṣottama also pays homage to MS in the concluding verses and colophon of the Bindusandīpana.\textsuperscript{19} In his commentary on the Sarvasiddhāntarahasya of Śaṃkara, Śeṣagovinda pays tribute to MS by describing him as one by whose grace the four goals of human life (puruṣārtha-catusṭaya) are attained, who is an incarnation of goddess Sarasvatī, and who has compassionately instructed him (Śeṣagovinda) [karunā-pūrita-cetasopadiṣṭa].\textsuperscript{20} In the concluding verse of the SB, MS mentions that he has made this short composition for the sake of Balabhadra,\textsuperscript{21} who requested him earnestly. Brahmānanda Sarasvatī describes Balabhadra as a celibate disciple of MS,\textsuperscript{22} while Puruṣottama says Balabhadra Bhaṭṭācārya was a devoted disciple of MS, who was also well-versed in Vedāntic

\textsuperscript{17} See chapter 6.2-3 infra.
\textsuperscript{18} Though Purusottama Sarasvatī is said to have written a commentary on MS’s AdS as well, named the Siddhisādhaka, it is not extant (Divānji 1933: Sanskrit section, pp. 20 and 70).
\textsuperscript{19} Siddhāntabindu 1986a: Bindusandīpana, introductory verse 4, concluding verses 1 and 3, and colophon, pp. 2 and 146).
\textsuperscript{21} Balabhadra also wrote a commentary on the AdS, called the Siddhiyākhyā which refutes the Nyāyāmṛtatarangini of Rāmatīrtha or Rāmācārya - 16th/17th century CE and the Nyāyāmṛtaprakāśa of Śrīnīvāsamṛtiśāstra of Śrīnīvāsatīrtha - 13th century CE). Besides, he is said to have written the Advaitasiddhīsamgraha (See Nyāyāmṛtadvaitasiddhī 1984 and Ghoṣa 1931: Advaitasiddhibhūmikā, p. 179).
\textsuperscript{22} Siddhāntabindu 1989: Last concluding verse and Nyāyaratnāvalī thereon, p. 462.
These textual sources help us determine the community of teachers and disciples of our author MS with some degree of certainty. Despite the lack of concrete evidence regarding the precise date and biographical details of MS’s life, it is safe to accept the general agreement of scholars that MS flourished in Bengal sometime between the 15th and 17th centuries. As in the case of his biographical details, concrete details of other works of our author are uncertain. In the Catalogus Catalogorum, Theodor Aufrecht, has mentioned the following works under the heading of MS: Advaitabrahmasiddhi, Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa, Ātmabodhaṭīkā, Ānandamandākini, Rgvedajñātādyāṣṭavīkritīvivaraṇa, Kṛṣṇakutūḥalanaṭaka, Prastānahabha, Bhaktisāmānyanirūpana, Bhagavadṛṣaṇa-gudhārthadīpikā, Bhagavadbhaktirasāyana, Bhāgavatapurāṇapratirathmaṃlokavyākhyā, Mahimnāstotraitikā, Rājāmpratibodha, Vedastutīṭikā, Vedāntakalpalatikā, Šaṅḍilyasūtraṭīkā, Šāstrasiddhāntalesaṭṭikā, Šaṅkṣepaśārīrakasārasaṃgraha, Sarvavidyāsiddhāntavaranṇa (Prastānahabha?), Siddhāntatattvabindu, Harilīlāvyākhyā, and Bhāgavatapurāṇādyaslokatrayavyākhyā.

Though some of the works contain internal evidence suggesting identical authorship, it is difficult to accept all the works mentioned by Aufrecht as the works of the same author, and Aufrecht himself was doubtful about it. However, on the basis of primary evidence such as references to MS’s teachers and/or to his name in

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23 Divānji 1933: Sanskrit section, p. 83.
25 The first work mentioned in the list, called the Advaitabrahmasiddhi is probably the mistaken form of the AdS of MS. We find a separate work called the Advaitabrahmasiddhi, written by Kāśmiri Sadānanda Svāmin or Sadānanda Yati (17th century CE) [See also Advaita-Brahmasiddhi 1993].
the colophons and the internal references among these works, we can list the works of which MS’s authorship is more likely.

The *Saṃkṣepaśārīraka (SŚ)* is a summary of the commentary on the *Brahmasūtra (BS)* of Śaṃkara by Sarvajñātmamuni (8th century CE) in versified form. Though MS’s commentary on it, called the *SŚSS*, does not have any reference to any of his other works and none of his other works refer to it, this text can be placed among the works of our author on the grounds of other evidence we find in different works of MS.27 Besides, the colophons at the end of each chapter of this commentary confirm MS’s authorship.28

The *VKL* is one of his earliest works, as it seems to have referred to no other work of MS but the *SB*.29 Though his teacher is not named in the colophon of this work, there are expressions in it that are similar to expressions in his other works, which authenticate its authorship by MS.30 The *SB* is a commentary by MS on the *Daśaślokī* of Śaṃkara. This is also called the *Cidānandadaśaślokī*.31 The reason for undertaking this work has been mentioned by the author himself at the end. The colophon also mentions MS’s authorship and there are references to the *VKL* in it.32

The *AdS* is considered to be the *magnum opus* of MS. Its authorship can easily be ascertained by the colophon of each of the four chapters, which runs ‘Thus ends the …in the *Advaitasiddhi*, composed by the renowned Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, a disciple at the illustrious feet of the renowned Viśveśvara Sarasvatī, a

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27 Refer to the notes on MS’s teachers’ lineage in this section above.
30 Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. vi (Also see colophons of his *AdS*, *GD* etc. along with the colophon of the *VKL* - Karmarkar 1962: p. 176).
32 Siddhāntabindu 1986: Last concluding verse, pp. 154, 133, 141.
peripatetic teacher of the highest order of monkhood. It refers to other works of the author like the GD, SB, and the VKL. The AdRR, like the AdS, is a dialectical work containing twenty different topics and is intended as a refutation of the Naiyāyika Śaṃkara Miśra’s Bhedaratna (1442 -1542 CE). Its authorship can be attributed to MS from its reference to his other works like the AdS, VKL, and the SB.

MS also wrote a number of devotional works. The MSṬ is a commentary on the Mahimnastotra of Puṣpadantācārya, which is apparently a eulogy of Lord Śiva (Hara). Being an ardent devotee of Lord Viṣṇu (Hari) MS, interpreted the original verse to praise both Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu. The colophon at the end of the work supports MS’s authorship of it. Moreover, the VKL is referred to in this work. The colophon of each of the three divisions of the BhR confirms the authorship of MS. Besides this, the work refers to the SB and VKL.

The colophons at the end of each chapter of the GD stating that its author is MS contain almost the same wording as those of the chapters of his SŚSS, AdRR and SB. Moreover, his commentary on the Gītā (i.e. the GD) refers to his other works

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33 ādiḥ śrīmadparamahāmsaparivrājakācāryaśrīviśveśvarasarasvatīśrīcaraṇaśisya śrīmadhusūdanasarasvatīśrīcaraṇaśisya advaitasiddhau (Advaitasiddhi 2005: Colophons of each of four chapters).
34 Advaitasiddhi 2005: p. 750 (The same verse is also found as the first concluding verse of chapters 15 and 18 of his BhG commentary, Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 632 and 775); pp. 490, 537, 546, and 579 (Also see Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 34); and pp. 524, 537, 678, and 866 (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 8).
35 Bhedaratna 2003.
36 Advaitararaksana 1917: pp. 24, 26, 28, 37, and 44 (Also see Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 54).
37 Śivamahimnastotra 1996: Madhusūdanī, colophon at the end of the text, p. 135; Madhusūdanī, pp. 103 and 107 (Also see Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. VIII).
39 Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: BhR 1.24, p. 43; BhR 1.19, p. 39.
like the SB,\textsuperscript{41} BhR,\textsuperscript{42} and AdS.\textsuperscript{43} Like the GD, the BPPŚV, a commentary on only the first verse of the BP, is another theological work of MS. The only work of MS referred to here is the BhR. The colophon at the end of the text also attributes its authorship to MS.\textsuperscript{44} The HLV is a commentary on the Harilīlāmṛta, a summary of the BP by Vopadeva (13\textsuperscript{th} century CE). In this work, there is only reference to his BPPŚV (the Paramahaṁsapriyā).\textsuperscript{45} There is no reference to any of his teachers in this work, but the colophons of all its twelve chapters name MS as the author.\textsuperscript{46}

Among the works to which authenticity of authorship of MS is less certain, the following may be referred to. The Ānandamanākinī (ĀM) is a work praising Lord Kṛṣṇa and is composed on the legends as depicted in the BP. The last two verses of the work bear the title and the name of its author. There is no reference to this work in any other work of MS and vice versa, nor does it refer to any of his teachers referred to in his other major works. The colophon of the ĀM also is distinctly different from those of his other works, though it is stated that MS is the author.\textsuperscript{47}

The Īśvarapratipattiprakāśa (ĪPP) is a short text with a summary of various theories of God both in the orthodox and heterodox schools. There is no mention of any of the teachers of our author in the ĪPP, nor does it have any of common

\textsuperscript{41} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā on BhG 2.18, p. 64 (Also see Modi 1985: Introduction, footnote 41, p. 49).
\textsuperscript{42} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā on BhG 7.16, 18.65, and 18.66; pp. 363, 751, and 754.
\textsuperscript{43} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā on BhG 2.16, 2.18, and 5.16; pp. 59, 64, and 263.
\textsuperscript{44} Harilīlāmṛta 1933: Paramahaṁsapriyā, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{45} Harilīlāmṛta 1933: Harilīlāmṛte prathamaskandhakathāśāraḥ 3, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{46} While P. C. Devānji (Devānji 1933: Introduction, pp. VIII-IX) is doubtful about its authorship, and P. M. Modi (Modi 1985: Introduction, pp. 14, 37-8) deems it the work of MS; Sanjukta Gupta (Gupta 2006: p. 9) holds it to be one composed by our author and says that the author refers to his commentary on the 1\textsuperscript{st} verse of the Bhāgavata in this work too.
\textsuperscript{47} Kāvyamālā 1987: Ānandamanādākinī 101-2 and colophon, p. 154 (Also see Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 31).
colophons we find in his other works, excepting that MS is the author of the work.\textsuperscript{48} The *Bhāgavatapurāṇādyaślokatrayavyākhyā* (BPĀŚTV), that is, a commentary on the first three verses of the *BP* is also said to have written by MS. Unlike the *BPPŚV*, MS’s commentary on the second and third verse of the *BP* does not refer to any of his other works, but his own name occurs at the colophon of the work.\textsuperscript{49} The *Kṛṣṇakutūhalanāṭaka* (*KKN*) is a devotional work written in the form of a dialogue (drama) in seven acts. It has no reference to any of his other works, nor does it mention any of his teachers known to us. It is mentioned in the colophon that the illustrious monk MS is the author of the work.\textsuperscript{50}

In summary, based on internal textual references, we find that the *VKL* and *SB* refer to each other; the *BhR* refers to both the *SB* and *VKL*; the *MSṬ* refers to the *VKL*; the *BPPŚV* refers to the *BhR* and the *HLV* refers to the *BPPŚV*. The *magnum opus*, the *AdS* refers to the *SB*, *VKL* and *GD*; while the *GD* refers to the *SB*, *BhR*, and *AdS*. Finally, the *AdRR* refers to the *AdS* and *VKL*. We may therefore tentatively arrange MS’s major works chronologically as, the *SŚSS*, *VKL*, *SB*, *AdS*, *GD* and the *AdRR*. Other texts, i.e. the *MSṬ*, *BhR*, *BPPŚV* and the *HLV* were composed after the *VKL* and *SB*.

\textsuperscript{48} Ḣvārapratipattiparakāśā 1921: Colophon, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{49} Bhāgavata 1815 Śakābda: Colophon, p. 20 (This printed version contains the author’s commentary on the first three verses of the *Bhāgavata* with a clear colophon like those in his other works). P. C. Divānji and P. M. Modi think that, as it is stated at the end of the *BPPŚV* that all the varieties of emotional sentiment of devotion has also been mentioned in the *BhR* and that some of them will be dealt with here also, it seems that the author had the intention to write a commentary either on the whole work or on a greater part of it than on only one verse of the same (*Harīlīlāmṛta* 1933: *Paramahaṃsapriyā*, p. 73) [Also see Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. VI and Modi 1985: Introduction, pp. 44-5].
\textsuperscript{50} Kṛṣṇakutūhala 1990: Colophon at the end of the seventh act, p. 146.
1.3. Vedānta with special reference to Advaita and its post-Śaṃkara development

The Vedānta is an orthodox (āstika) philosophical school in Indian philosophy. The etymological derivation of the word vedānta is veda (the Vedas) + anta (end), and thus refers to the concluding part of the Vedas (ca. 1500 – 500 BCE), i.e., the Upaniṣads. By extension, the word vedānta has come to refer to the philosophy of the Upaniṣads and, more particularly, to the methodological study of the Upaniṣadic teaching. Again, the word mīmāṃsā is understood as meaning the critical examination of statements of sacred texts that are objects of veneration (pūjitavacanavicāraḥ mīmāṃsā).

According to tradition, the discipline of Mīmāṃsā is effectively divided into two schools, the Pūrvamīmāṃsā and Uttaramīmāṃsā. The former, also called the Karmamīmāṃsā, Dharmamīmāṃsā, or, simply Mīmāṃsā, concerns itself with the portion of the Veda (karma-kāṇḍa) dealing with rituals and is associated with Jaimini (2nd century BCE). The latter, also called the Śārīrakamīmāṃsā, Jñānamīmāṃsā, Brahmamīmāṃsā or Vedānta, concerns itself with the portion of the Veda dealing with soteriological knowledge (jñāna-kāṇḍa), particularly the knowledge of brahman, and is associated with Bādarāyaṇa (BCE).

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51 Thus the ancient law maker Manu explains the terms ‘orthodox’ and ‘heterodox’ in a clear term. He holds that those who accept the Vedas as the authority are regarded as orthodox and the opponents are called heterodox (nāstika) [nāstiko vedanindakah] (Manusmṛti 1920: Verse 2.11).
52 Karl. H. Potter holds ‘Upaniṣad’ to be ‘a term of doubtful etymology’ (Potter 1998: p. 3).
55 MS too, in his Prasthānabheda (PB), classifies Mīmāṃsā into Karmamīmāṃsā and Śārīrakamīmāṃsā (Sarvadarśanasamgraha 1977: Prasthānabheda, p. 6).
Some modern scholars, such as Karl H. Potter and Asko Parpola,\(^{56}\) have suggested that, originally, the Mīmāṃsā was a single hermeneutic discipline dealing holistically with the Veda as a whole, and was only later split into different and competing schools as the subject matter of the two sections of the Veda led in different directions and began to seem mutually exclusive. Indeed, certain thinkers in the extant tradition ascribe a similar view to what is known as the \(jñāna\)-\(karma\)-\(samuccaya\)-vāda, according to which the two disciplines are complementary in their aims.\(^{57}\) Indeed, many of the maxims (\(nyāya\)-s) for interpreting the Vedic injunctions that were formulated in the Pūrvamīmāṃsā were employed for explaining the import of the Upaniṣadic statements by the followers of the Vedānta school.

The Vedānta philosophy is born from the critical interpretation of the Upaniṣads. However, because of the multifaceted nature of the Upaniṣadic teaching, many divergent interpretations were possible, leading to radically different schools of thought within the Vedānta itself.\(^{58}\) Some schools, like the non-dualistic school of Śaṃkara, hold that the individual self (\(jīva\)) has no reality apart from that of \(brahman\), while the world (\(jagat\)) is an unreal transformation (\(vivarta\)) of \(brahman\), and also a genuine transformation (\(parināma\)) of nescience (\(avidyā\)) of the individual-self about the nature of \(brahman\). So they accept only one reality,\(^{59}\) i.e. \(brahman\)/\(ātman\), which is pure consciousness (\(śuddha\)-\(caitanya\)) and impersonal, devoid of any quality (\(nirguṇa\)) and a unitary whole (\(akhaṇḍa\)). According to this school, \(jīva\) attains liberation (\(mokṣa\)) when the knowledge of non-difference (\(abheda\)) between the supreme reality and the individual self dawns.

\(^{57}\) See Sharma 1976: p. 211.
\(^{59}\) See Siddhāntabindu 1986: p. 150 for a proper account of this view.
By contrast, the qualified non-dualistic school of Rāmānuja (i.e. the Viśiṣṭādvaita school)\(^60\) admits the absolute reality as something that is qualified by dependent matter (*acit*) and individual-souls (*cit*), viewing it as personal Godhead (*iśvara*). With divine grace (*prasāda*) accessed through worship or meditation (*upāsanā*) and self-surrender (*prapatti*) to God (*iśvara*), the individual self realizes itself as the body of *brahman* and attains liberation, but does not become identical with *brahman*. The Dvaita school of Madhva holds that the individual self and *brahman* are completely different from each other. Other than these, we also have the school of Dualism cum non-dualism (Dvaitādvaita) of Nimbārka (ca. 12\(^{th}\) century CE), Pure non-dualism (*Śuddhādvaita*) of Vallabha (15\(^{th}\) century CE); and Acintyabhedābheda of Caitanya (1486-1533 CE), which admits identity-in-difference that obtains between *brahman*, *jīva* and *jagat*, and the nature of which is essentially indescribable and unthinkable due to the unthinkable power of God.

Despite the importance of Śaṃkara’s Advaita system, the origins of the Advaita viewpoint cannot be traced exclusively to him.\(^61\) Advaita teachings are also found in the epics and Purāṇas, as also, of course, in the Upaṇiṣads.\(^62\) We find mention of some teachers and schools supporting the non-dualistic positions anterior to Śaṃkara\(^63\) and Bādarāyaṇa\(^64\) in their respective works. There is however no doubt that Śaṃkara’s thought was a watershed in Advaita theory, so that the development of the Advaita tradition can be divided into pre-Śaṃkara and post-Śaṃkara periods. Bādarāyaṇa, Upavarṣa (BCE), Gauḍapāda (6\(^{th}\) century CE), and

\(^{60}\) See Buitenen 1968: Foot note 1, p. 1 for etymology of this term, the Sanskrit equivalent for which is *viśiṣṭādvaita*.


\(^{63}\) For example, *BSB* 3.5.53 (*Brahmasūtra* 2000: p. 850) [Also see Potter 1998: p. 9 ff.].

\(^{64}\) For example, *BS* 1.2. 29, 1.2.30, 1.4.21, 1.4.22, 3.1.9, 3.4.44 etc. (Also see Parpola 1981: pp. 156-7 and Potter 1998: p. 10).
Bhārtrhari (7th century CE) have been named by some as pre-Śaṅkara Advaitins.  
Sureśvara (7th century CE), Padmapāda (7th century CE), Vācaspati Miśra (9th century CE), Prakāśṭman (11th century CE), Citsukha (13th century CE), and MS are the most notable figures of the later Śaṅkarite tradition. Furthermore, Maṇḍana Miśra (7th century CE), the author of the Brahmasiddhi, and Sarvajñātman are two seminal figures in the pre-Śaṅkarite and post-Śaṅkarite traditions respectively.

As our aim is to evaluate the degree to which MS was influenced by the thought of the different post-Śaṅkara schools, we must first discuss the basic tenets of these schools. In the history of the development of Advaita since Śaṅkara’s time, three lines or schools have come into prominence (i) Sureśvara and his follower Sarvajñātmanamunī, (ii) Padmapāda and his commentator Prakāśātmayati, and (iii) Vācaspati Miśra and his followers.

Sureśvara, a direct disciple of Śaṅkara, is known in the tradition as the Vārtika-kāra (an author of the critical treatment of a commentary) and the tradition initiated with him is called the Vārtika-kāra-prasthāna. His famous works are Brhadāraṇyakabhāṣyavārtika, Taittirīyabhāṣyavārtika and Naiṣkarmyasiddhi. Though brahman, the only reality (sat), is the substratum (āśraya) and the material

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66 See Bhattacharya 1975: p. 255.
67 There is debate about whether Maṇḍana Miśra was before, after, or contemporaneous with Śaṅkara (See Thrasher 1993: Appendix A etc.).
68 Though the schools followed by Padmapāda and Vācaspati respectively are considered to be the twofold division of post-Śaṅkara Advaita, the views held by Sureśvara are considered by some in the tradition as well as the modern scholars to constitute a separate school of thought in post-Śaṅkara era. Some modern scholars are of the view that only Sureśvara had the proper understanding of Śaṅkara’s intent (See Potter 2006: p. 6).
69 See Bhattacharya 1975: p. 257.
70 It has been a matter of debate whether Sureśvara is identical with Maṇḍana Miśra, the famous author of the Brahmasiddhi (For details, see Hiriyana 1923 and 1924, Kane 1928, Brahmasiddhi 1994, Balasubramanian 1962, Sastri 1936-37 etc.).
71 A vārtika has been defined as a work which explains what is said (uktā), what is left unsaid (anukta), and what is imperfectly said (dūrūkta) in the original [uktānuktaudūrūktaḥavyakti (cintā kāri tu vārtikam)] (vārttika changed to vārtika) [Apte 1998: p. 845].
cause (upādāna-kāraṇa) of the world, Sureśvara holds, māyā (illusion) or avidyā (nescience) is its mediate cause (dvāra-kāraṇa). It is through māyā that the unalterable (avikārin) brahman appears as the multiple world of existence. Whereas from the standpoint of supreme reality (pāramārthika-sattā) neither māyā nor its creation exists, the practical (vyāvahārika) standpoint of the ignorant jīva-s makes māyā appear in brahman.72 Thus, brahman is both the locus (āśraya) and the object (viṣaya) of avidyā.73 The Vedic texts like ‘tattvamasi’ (CU 6.8.7) etc. produce the immediate knowledge (aparokṣacjāna) of ātman as brahman by removing avidyā.74 This theory is known as the śābdāparokṣa-vāda. According to Sureśvara, avidyā cannot be twofold; it must be one, the supreme-self, brahman, being both its support and its object.75 The individual self (jīva), Sureśvara holds, is but the reflection of brahman (cidābhāsa) in the mind (antahkaraṇa), a product of avidyā, whereas its reflection on avidyā is called God (īśvara). This reflection (pratibimba), being different from the original (bimba), is an illusory appearance (ābhāsa) of the absolute brahman; thus, it is known as the theory of appearance (ābhāsa-vāda).76

For Sureśvara, action (karma) is necessary until the desire for knowledge (vividiṣā) arises. Knowledge which gets the self liberated is not produced, as it already exists (siddha).77 Having supported the doctrine of liberation while living (jīvanmuktī) held by Śaṃkara, Sureśvara thinks that the body need not fall off as soon as one realizes one’s unity with the supreme self.78 Sarvajñātmamuni has

72 See Bhattacharya 1975: p. 258.
73 Mahadevan 1972: Verse 183a, p. 94 (Also see Deutsch and Buitenen 1971: pp. 227-8).
74 Mahadevan 1972: Verse 178a, p. 91.
76 Also see Siddhāntabindu 1986: pp. 42-6.
followed many of Sureśvara’s views.79 Thus, having differed from Maṇḍana Miśra in many respects, Sureśvara’s interpretation of Advaita had immense bearing on the later Śaṃkara schools, particularly on that which is known as the Vivaraṇa.

The later disagreements regarding the interpretation of Śaṃkara’s commentary on the BS,80 specially the conflicting views regarding the support (āśraya) and object (viṣaya) of nescience (avidyā), gave rise to two other lines of thought (prasthāna) soon after Śaṃkara. These are the Vivaraṇa-prasthāna, initiated by Padmapāda and developed by Prakāśātmayati, and the Bhāmatī-prasthāna, initiated by Vācaspati Miśra and developed by Amalānanda Sarasvatī (13th century CE). The followers of both the Vivaraṇa-prasthāna and the Bhāmatī-prasthāna cite the authority of Śaṃkara in support of their respective and mutually conflicting views.81

Padmapāda, a direct disciple of Śaṃkara, wrote a sub-commentary on the master’s BSB, called the Pañcapādikā, the oldest gloss (ṭīkā) on it.82 Besides this, Padmapāda is said to have composed the Ātmabodhavyākhyā or the Vedāntasāra.83 Though several commentaries84 and sub-commentaries have come to be written on the Pañcapādikā, the Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa by Prakāśātmayati stands foremost among them, lending its name to the Vivaraṇa school. Padmapāda holds that indefinable nescience (anirvacanīyāvidyā) is both the material cause of

80 Though unlike Padmapāda and Vācaspati Miśra, Sureśvara did not write any commentary on Śaṃkara’s BSB, his vārtika-s on Śaṃkara’s work justifies him to initiate a new line of interpretation. 81 For example, see Brahmastūtra 2000: BSB on BS 1.4.3, p. 378; BS 2.3.41, pp. 619-20.
82 The very name of the work indicates that it consists of five explanatory parts (pāda-s), i.e. padaccheda, padārthokti, vigraha, vākya-yojana, ākṣepa-samādhāna. Though only first four aphorisms including the introductory adhyāsa-bhāya portion of Śaṃkara are only available, there has been a tradition to indicate that the author commented on the whole (Also see Pañcapādikā 1958; Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 200; and Potter 1998: p. 563).
84 For other commentaries on Pañcapādikā, see Roodurmun 2002: p. 40 and Pañcapādikā 1958.
superimposition (adhyāsa) and the appearance of the world.\textsuperscript{85} This point is further elaborated by Prakāśātmayati who holds avidyā to be a positive entity (bhāva-rūpa).\textsuperscript{86} And being so, it becomes the material cause of superimposition and the concealment of the true nature of reality, viz. brahman.\textsuperscript{87} Though avidyā exists in pure-consciousness (śuddha-caitanya or brahman), it affects the individual selves through its power of concealment (āvaraṇa-śakti). Thus, brahman becomes both the substratum and the object of avidyā,\textsuperscript{88} which shows the allegiance of the Vivarana-prasthāna to the line of Sureśvara discussed above.

Unlike Sureśvara, both Padmapāda and Prakāśātmayati hold the reflected images (pratibimba) to be as real as the original (bimba). Thus the jīva-s, which are the reflected images of brahman in the mind, are as real as brahman.\textsuperscript{89} Just as bimba and pratibimba are essentially identical, so too are brahman and the jīva-s. Since the manifest world (prapañca) cannot be treated either as existent (sat) or as non-existent (asat), and is destroyed with the emergence of true knowledge of the self (brahma-jñāna), and is sublated (bādhita) in its own locus (brahman),\textsuperscript{90} its falsity (mithyātva) is evident.

Regarding the relation of action to liberation and the role of the Vedic sentences in the generation of immediate knowledge of brahman-ātman, the Vivarana school follows what we find in the works of Sureśvara.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{85} See Bhattacharya 1975: p. 263.
\textsuperscript{86} See Balasubramanian 2004: p. 253.
\textsuperscript{87} See Bhattacharya 1975: p. 263.
\textsuperscript{88} See Balasubramanian 2004: p. 246.
\textsuperscript{89} Also see Siddhāntabindu 1986: p. 46.
\textsuperscript{90} A rope appears to be a snake in darkness, but the existence of snake, which we know can never be existent in the rope, is negated as soon as the rope is brought in light. See Bhattacharya 1975: pp. 264-5.
\textsuperscript{91} See Balasubramanian 2004: pp. 279-80.
text ‘ātman should be realized’ etc., Vivaraṇa-kāra holds the injunction ‘śrotavyaḥ’ to be a restrictive one (niyama-vidhi), i.e. one should endeavor to hold discussion on brahman. Thus, according to this school, śravaṇa stands foremost among the three means for the direct realization of brahman [i.e. Vedantic study (śravaṇa), reflection (manana), and contemplation (nididhyāsana)].

The Bhāmati-prasthāna of Vācaspati Miśra also had considerable influence on the later Advaitins. Vācaspati was an independent commentator on almost all of classical systems of Indian philosophy (sarva-tantra-svatantra). Apart from the Bhāmati, his famous sub-commentary on the BSB of Śaṅkara, Vācaspati authored a number of important commentaries and independent works on various systems, which have been listed at the end of the Bhāmati, including the Tātparyaṭīka (on the Nyāyavārtika of Udyotakara), Nyāyasūcīnibandha, Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī (on the Sāṃkhya-kārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa), Tattvavaiśāradī (on the Vyāsabhāṣya of the Yogasūtra-s), Tattvabindu (an independent treatise on the Mīmāṃsā school), Nyāyakaṇikā (on the Vidhiviveka of Maṇḍana Miśra) and Brahmatattvasamīkṣā.

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92 ‘You see, Maitreyi- it is one’s self (ātman) which one should see and hear, and on which one should reflect and concentrate’ (ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ maitreyi, BU 2.4.5).
93 Pañcapādikā 1958: Pañcapādikā, dvitiyavarnākam, p. 196; Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa, prathamavarnākam, pp. 33-8; dvitiyavarnākam, p. 451: 195-10; navamavarnāka, p. 773: 354-1 (Vedic texts conveying injunctions are known as vidhi-vākyas which are generally classified into three kinds; apūrva-vidhi which is found in the Vedas, and not anywhere else, niyama-vidhi which is concerned with controlling activity, and parisaṃkhyā-vidhi which excludes others means in order to follow a particular way).
95 Tradition holds that Vācaspati named the work after his wife Bhāmati (Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 209). For a list of the important commentaries and sub-commentaries on the Bhāmati, see Roodurmun 2002: pp. 36-7 and Brahmasūtra 2000.
97 The Brahmatattvasamīkṣā, long thought to be lost, has recently been discovered in a Nepal manuscript. It has been critically edited in 2006 by Diwakar Acharya, as part of the Nepal Research Centre series from Stuttgart. Except Vaiśeṣika, Vācaspati wrote on the other five of the six orthodox
In contrast to the Vivaraṇa-prasthāna, Vācaspati Miśra holds that brahman is the material cause of the world but not the locus of nescience, because it is of the nature of knowledge (vidyā). Rather, jīva is the locus of avidyā and as jīva-s are many, there must be a plurality of nesciences held by different jīva-s. With regard to the appearance of jīva-s, he maintains that even though avidyā in one individual self is negated by the realization of the supreme reality brahman, it remains in other selves to limit the infinite self in them, giving them a feeling that separate individuals are moving in bondage. In contrast, the consciousness transcending the limiting adjunct is called Ṛśvara. This view, known as the theory of limitation (avaccheda-vāda) is upheld in Vācaspati’s notions of jīva and brahman.

Despite his acceptance, in agreement with Sureśvara and Padmapāda, of karma as a remote cause (ārādupakāraka) of liberation, his disagreement with them is conspicuous when he denies the claim that the Vedic texts can produce the immediate knowledge of brahman. Vācaspati, following Maṇḍana, holds that the mind (antahkaraṇa) is a sense-organ, which, when purified by meditation (nididhyāsana), produces the final intuition, i.e. the immediate knowledge of brahman-ätman, though śabda may be a help to cleanse the mind. Unlike Sureśvara, Vācaspati does not accept ‘śrotavyah’ as an injunction, but only as a restatement (anuvāda) of what we are capable of knowing with our ordinary senses. Moreover, for him, meditation (nididhyāsana) carries a higher value than systems (sad-darśana). His last work seems to be Bhāmatī, as it lists all his other compositions (Tattvasamikṣā 2006 and Brahmasūtra 2000: p. 1020).

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100 Brahmasūtra 2000: BS 1.1.1, Bhāmatī, pp. 55-8 (Also see Bhattacharya 1975: pp. 267-8).
101 Brahmasūtra 2000: Bhāmatī on BS 1.1.4, 1.4.6, 3.2.5, 3.4.6, 3.4.8, 4.1.1, 3.4.14 etc. (Order in the BS cited here seems to be in the order of adhyāya, pāda, and adhikaraṇa, not in the order of...
the Vedāntic study (śravaṇa) and reflection (manana). Thus, Vācaspati’s views mark a departure from Śaṃkara’s disciples, owing much to Maṇḍana Miśra.

1.4. The influence of post-Śaṃkara Advaita on Madhusūdana’s thought

Having familiarized ourselves with the basic tenets of the post-Śaṃkara schools of Advaita and their followers, we may discuss the influence that they had upon MS’s works. MS often refers to Sureśvara with great respect, referring to his work as vārtikāmṛta (vārtika, the nectar). Following Sureśvara’s theory of appearance or semblance (ābhāsavāda), MS argues that the same brahman could be both the individual self (jīva) and God (īśvara).

In reply to an objection that one should attain immediate liberation when knowledge of an object covered with ignorance is produced, MS says in the SB that ignorance is not completely destroyed but is only overpowered by the mental modifications (vṛtti-s), and that final absolution is possible only when complete obliteration of ignorance is made. He also says that avidyā, which is destroyed by the knowledge produced by the Upaniṣadic great sentences (mahāvākyā-s), has brahman as its object (viṣaya). Since ignorance of an object presupposes the antecedent non-existence of its knowledge (jñāna-

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103 Anubhūti Svarūpācārya (13th century CE), in his sub-commentary on the Brahmasūtrabhāṣya of Śaṃkara, called the Prakāṭārthavivaraṇa, referred to Vācaspati Miśra’s dependence on Mandana Miśra derogatorily as ‘maṇḍanapṛṣṭhasevī’ (Also see Bhattacharyya 1974: pp. 344-7, Mahadevan 1961: p. 292 and Roodurmun 2002: p. 35).


prāgabhāva), it has to be accepted that there are as many ignorances as there are knowledges. Thus, this view is a clear case of admitting the view of the Vārtika-kāra. His reverence for Sureśvara is such that he places him on equal footing with Śaṅkara as the true systematisers of the Vedāntasūtra-s.

Sarvajñātman, a follower of the Vārtika-prasthāna, has also been referred to by MS. In his commentary on Sarvajñātman’s ŚŚ, MS identifies his teacher Deveśvara as Sureśvarācārya. In the SB, MS quotes Sarvajñātman’s view regarding the identity between brahman and jīva, which is inherited from Sureśvara and developed in the Vivaraṇa-prasthāna. Sarvajñātman is again referred to as an authoritative writer in his other works, such as the AdRR, AdŚ etc. Following the view of Sarvajñātman that indivisible consciousness is both the locus and content of ignorance, MS accepts that brahman is both the substratum (āśraya) and the object (viṣaya) of avidyā. Even in explaining the Upaniṣadic great sentences (mahāvākya-s), MS follows Sarvajñātman’s manner of exposition. The theory of one-self (ekajīva-vāda) is also discussed in agreement with Sarvajñātman. Thus, the Vārtika-prasthāna of post-Śaṅkara Advaita is attested in MS’s writing as he develops his own view.

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106 This is a kind of non-existence (abhāva) attributed by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, which implies the non-existence of an object before its production.
108 See Gupta 2006: p. 3.
112 Advaitaratnarakṣana 1917: p. 5.
114 āśrayatvavisayatvabhāginī nirvibhāga citireva kevalā (Veezhinathan 1985: Verse 1.319, pp. 305-6).
115 avidyāyā āśrayastu śuddhaṃ brahmaiva… (Advaitasiddhi 2005: p. 577) and Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 356 (Sarvajñātman is also referred to by MS in the GD on BhG 18.2 --- Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 676).
Padmapāda is also referred to in the AdS\textsuperscript{118} and GD\textsuperscript{119} of MS. The views of Prakāśātmayati, better known as the Vivaraṇa-kāra in post-Śaṅkara Advaita Vedānta, is also supported by MS in various respects.\textsuperscript{120} He is referred to in the AdS of MS several times.\textsuperscript{121} In order to establish (siddhi) non-dualism, MS first tries to falsify the existence of the multiple-universe (jagat-prapañca) which is the product of avidyā. In order to do so, he has given five different definitions of falsity (mithyātva). Among them, the first three are based on the Vivaraṇa-prasthāna and the remaining two seem to have a likeness with those provided by Citsukha (13\textsuperscript{th} century CE) and Ānandabodha (12\textsuperscript{th} century CE) respectively.\textsuperscript{122}

In order to explain how brahman gives rise to God and the individual self, MS supports the reflection theory (pratibimba-vāda) of the Vivaraṇa-kāra. While supporting the view that inference removes only the notion of non-existence (abhāva) of an object, and that direct awareness, i.e. perception alone, can destroy its non-manifestation (abhānatva), MS quotes Vidyāraṇyamuni,\textsuperscript{123} a follower of the Vivaraṇa-prasthāna. Vidyāraṇya is also implicitly cited when MS talks about yoga and jñāna as two distinct ways of liberation.\textsuperscript{124} In line with yogic ideas, MS holds that the self in the dream state (svapnāvasthā) possesses a special modification (vṛtti) of avidyā, called sleep (nidrā), a stance supported by the Vivaraṇa-kāra.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{118} Cf. Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. XCII (He has also made use of Vivarana-kāra’s doctrines, Advaitasiddhi 2005: pp. 486-7) [See Gupta 1966: Introduction, p. Xvii].
\textsuperscript{119} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 379.
\textsuperscript{120} Cf. Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. CVII (Also see Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 743).
\textsuperscript{121} Cf. Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. CVIII.
\textsuperscript{122} Advaitasiddhi 2005: pp. 48-51, 94-100, 160, 182-183 and 195-203 (For details, see Gupta 2006: p. 28 ff.).
\textsuperscript{123} Siddhāntabindu 1986: pp. 46, 66.
\textsuperscript{125} Advaitasiddhi 2005: pp. 558-9 (Also see Gupta 2006: pp. 97-8).
The views of Vācaspati Miśra, the exponent of the Bhāmatī school, are also referred to in MS’s AdS.\textsuperscript{126} Having stated Sarvajñaatman’s view that pure consciousness is both the substratum and object of avidyā, MS goes on to state Vācaspati’s contention that brahman is the content of avidyā supported by the individual selves, for, being beginningless (anādi), avidyā and jīva are not interdependent (anyonyāśrita).\textsuperscript{127} In the AdRR, MS’s view that the Vedic texts can generate only mediate (parokṣa) knowledge of brahman, and that the mind alone, prepared through different means of liberation, i.e. śravaṇa, manana, and nididhyāsana, can produce the immediate knowledge of the supreme reality, clearly support the prasamkhyāna theory held by Maṇḍana Miśra etc., which is upheld by Vācaspati as well.\textsuperscript{128} MS again mentions the limitation theory (avaccheda-vāda) attributed to Vācaspati and his followers as an explanation of the relation of pure consciousness and the individual self.\textsuperscript{129} The corollary of this doctrine, i.e., that there are as many ignorances as there are individual selves, is upheld by MS when he says that only that individual self whose ignorance is dispelled gets liberated.\textsuperscript{130} In another context, the role of a modification of the mind (vṛtti) in generating knowledge is also supported by the theory of limitation.\textsuperscript{131}

Summing up, we find the influence of the Vārtikacprasthāna on the Vivaraṇa prasthāna and the influence of Maṇḍana on the Bhāmatī-prasthāna. As far as MS is concerned, we find that he makes frequent reference to the views of Sureśvara, Sarvajñaatman, Padmapāda, Prakāśātman etc., and is generally considered to be a

\textsuperscript{126} Cf. Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. XCIX.  
\textsuperscript{128} Cf. Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. XCIX.  
\textsuperscript{129} Siddhāntabindu 1986: p. 47.  
\textsuperscript{130} Advaitaratnarakṣana 1917: p. 6.  
\textsuperscript{131} Siddhāntabindu 1986: pp. 58-61.
follower of the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna*. In the *GD* of MS, we may point out his preference for the views of the *Vārtika-prasthāna* (e.g. references to the *Vārtika-kāra* in the *GD* on *BhG* 2.29, 2.40, 3.20, 3.29, 3.27, 4.24, 5.1, 5.21, 12.20; and the views of Sarvajñātman in his *ŚŚ* that *brahman* is both the substratum and object of nescience on *BhG* 8.3 and 18.2). While asserting verbal testimony (*śabda-pramāṇa*) to be the cause of the immediate knowledge of *brahman/ātman* in introductory verse eighteen of the *GD*, he accepts an important doctrine of the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna*. In addition, the view that MS has largely followed the doctrines of the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna* in his *GD* is substantiated by the following: References in the *GD* to the *dṛṣṭi-srṣṭi-vāda* (on *BhG* 2.28, 5.22 and 18.14); the *eka-jīva-vāda* (on *BhG* 4.5); *brahman* as the substratum (*āśraya*) and object (*viṣaya*) of ignorance (on *BhG* 5.16 and 7.6); the arising of *brahman*-knowledge on maturity of *nididhyāsana* (on *BhG* 5.17, 25); citations of the *JMV* of Vidyāraṇya (on *BhG* 6.36); the *pratibimba-vāda* as a Vedāntic theory for explaining the relation between *brahman* and *jīva* (on *BhG* 2.15, 7.14, 14.6 and 15.7); the *Pañcapādikā* of Padmapādācārya (on *BhG* 8.3); and the *Vivaraṇa-kāra* (on *BhG* 18.56). Nevertheless, he is not totally opposed to Vācaspati and his *Bhāmatī* line of interpretation, and makes use of it at certain points (e.g. references to the *śabda-parokṣa-vāda* on *BhG* 2.29 and 5.16, the *avacheda-vāda* on *BhG* 15.7, Maṇḍana Miśra on *BhG* 18.18). In short, MS made use of building blocks from all the major Advaitic systems prevalent in his time to construct his own philosophical edifice.

As noted above, the Vedānta philosophy has its roots in the hermeneutics of scriptural sources. Specifically, there are three canonical texts (*prasthāna-trayi*)

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upon which all Vedāntic thinkers rely. These are the Upaniṣads (śruti-prasthāna), BS by Bādarāyaṇa (nyāya-prasthāna), and the BhG (smṛti-prasthāna). As MS’s GD is a commentary on the last of these, it will be useful to say a few words about the text our author was working with, together with a brief note on the tradition of the BhG commentary that preceded MS.

1.5. The Bhagavadgītā and its commentarial tradition

The BhG is contained within Book 6, the Bhīṣmaparvan, of the Mahābhārata (MBh), the great Sanskrit epic of ancient India. It covers eighteen chapters (23-40) and runs to seven hundred verses both in anuṣṭubh (generally of thirty two syllables) and trṣṭubh (of forty four syllables usually) metre. The BhG consists of a dialogue (saṃvāda) between Arjuna and Lord Kṛṣṇa as recounted by Sañjaya to Dhṛtarāṣṭra (MBh 6.23.1). One of the principal teachings of the BhG is that it does not ask all seekers to abstain from action but to perform it without having a desire for its fruit (niskāma-karma). It considers Lord Kṛṣṇa as the supreme puruṣa, to whom the seekers are asked to surrender completely with utmost devotion. Throughout the text, the Lord teaches Arjuna the means for attainment of liberation (mokṣa), the supreme goal of human kind, and accords a pre-eminent place to devotion to the Lord as a means to liberation.

There are many opinions regarding the date, authorship, structure and philosophy of the BhG, and its relation to the MBh. As we are concerned here only

133 Some scholars hold that the BhG is not treated as important as the other two foundational sources by the Advaitins; for despite its Advaitic element, it represents a profound theistic orientation (See Deutsch 1973: Footnote 1, p. 3).


135 See Malinar 2007: p. 207.
with how MS understood the text, however, these various views need not detain us here.\(^{136}\) However, before discussing the commentarial tradition of the BhG, let us briefly say a few words about the place and utility of the commentarial method (bhāṣya-prakriyā), one of the fundamental characteristics of Indian philosophical tradition. Commentary is intended to analyse the texts and maintain their continuity intact. All texts, whether terse philosophical sūtra-s,\(^{137}\) the Vedic lore, literary epics, texts on grammar, ethics, law and drama, are subject to commentary and sub-commentary. This tradition provides exegesis to reveal the true import of a text, which may be too obscure for most readers. This presumes, of course, that the text contains a coherent and unified, if hidden, inner meaning (gūḍhārtha) that an able commentator can convey to the reader in its full integrity.

There are several different kinds of commentary corresponding to the type and extent of exegesis needed. As Karl H. Potter writes, ‘Various sorts of commentaries are composed on sūtras, and then sub-commentaries and further commentaries on those. Traditionally, a bhāṣya is an extensive explanation of the meaning of the sūtras, a vṛtti is a brief explanation, a vārtika a critical treatment of a bhāṣya, and so on.’\(^{138}\)

Of course, a commentator does not always slavishly follow the author whose work he is explaining; sometimes he points out the author’s shortcomings and tries

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\(^{136}\) See Appendix I for a detailed note on the historical background, formation, and teaching of the BhG.

\(^{137}\) The Parāśara Upapurāṇa defines ‘bhāṣyam’ as that which explains aphorism (sūtra-s) word by word with comments of its own and what is called such by the wise (sūtrārtho varṇyate yatra padaih sūtrānusāribhiḥ / svapadāni ca varṇyante bhāṣyam bhāṣyavido viduḥ //) [Śāstrī 2005: Foot note 3, p. 543; added ‘yatra padaih’ instead of ‘yatra vākyaiḥ’]. A sūtra is a short sentence or an aphoristic rule providing the strings or the threads that bind a subject together. It is often described as being composed of few letters, concise, suggestive of its claim and meaningful in every way (alpākṣaram asandigdham sāravat viśvatomukham / astobham anavadyaṃ ca sūtram sūtravido viduḥ //) [Deva 1967: Pt. 5, p. 394].

\(^{138}\) Potter 1998: pp. 4-5.
to find a remedy for them by formulating his own views. However, even when a commentator disagrees with one or another point of the main author, his overall goal is generally to defend the author’s broader argument or viewpoint. This may, at times, require the commentator to make adjustments to the traditional argumentation, even to alter it and reject certain points within it.

The commentator is often a creative thinker in his own right. Though he may avoid claiming credit for original thinking, he is often responsible for great innovations of thought. Remarking on the function of commentary within the Sanskrit tradition, Daniel H. H. Ingalls observes as follows:

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 writings 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 their new ideas to some ancient sage, but the originality is still there.¹³⁹

Charles Wilkins, the first translator of the Gītā into English (1784 CE), regarded commentary as essential for understanding the text. He observes;

…the commentators of India are not less fond of searching for mystery, and wandering from the simple path of their author into a labyrinth of scholastic jargon … the comment written upon it by one Sree-dhara Swamee, whose notes upon the whole are held in as much esteem as the text, which at this day, they say, is unintelligible without them (sic).¹⁴⁰

It should be noted that in the vast literature of ancient Gītā commentaries prior to MS’s time we find mainly the followers of various schools of the Vedānta philosophy, viz. Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita, Dvaitādvaita, Śuddhādvaita and Bhedābheda, while the Kasmirian commentators on the BhG represent a distinct philosophical outlook.¹⁴¹ Except for the Advaita and Kasmirian traditions, the

¹³⁹ Ingalls: 1952, p. 3.
¹⁴⁰ Wilkins: 1902, p. 134.
¹⁴¹ As noted earlier, though barring Śaṅkara, Ānandagiri, and Śrīdhara Svāmin, MS did not refer to any of his earlier commentators of the BhG explicitly while commenting on the BhG, he must have
commentators are mostly supporters of the jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vāda. These commentaries are now listed below in chronological order and in accordance with the respective schools of thought to which they belong. Following Karl H. Potter, we have cited mainly those commentaries on the BhG which seem to have been written up to the probable period of our author, MS. Theodor Aufrecht has also mentioned a number of commentaries on the BhG, but we have restricted ourselves to the list given by Potter. On the same ground, the detailed BhG literature mentioned in the New Catalogus Catalogorum, the Epic and Purānic Bibliography (upto 1985) annotated and with indexes has likewise not been cited below.

Commentators before Śaṅkara: The Gītābhāṣya of Śaṅkara is the earliest extant commentary on the BhG available. Earlier commentaries had, however, been written, as is evident from Śaṅkara’s own remarks:

This well-known Gītā scripture is the quintessence of the teaching of the Vedic lore, but its meaning is difficult to grasp. Even though many have tried to bring out its import by constructing the meaning of its words and sentences with the aid of logical arguments, I have observed that it has been grasped by the common people as a collection of self-contradictory and divergent ideas. I shall, therefore, write a brief commentary in order to bring out its contents with due discrimination.

Though Śaṅkara does not mention the names of the commentators preceding him, his passing criticism suggests that they must have adhered to the

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been aware of the views of such earlier commentators of the BhG, as is evident throughout his comments.

146 *tad idam gītāśāstrāṃ samastavedārthasārasāramgrahahātaṁ durvijñeyārthaṁ tadārthaśākṣaraṁ anekārthāviṣkaraṇāya anekārthāv...
doctrine of \textit{Jñāna-karma-samuccaya}. Among these, mention may be made of the \textit{Vṛtti-kāra} referred to by Ānandagiri and Bodhāyana, referred to by Rāmānuja, and Bhartṛprapañca, a \textit{Jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vādin}, as possible authors of lost pre-Śaṃkara commentaries.

\textbf{Advaita commentators:} Śaṃkara, Anubhūtisvarūpācārya (1270 CE, a commentator of Śaṃkara’s \textit{Gītābhāṣya}), Śaṃkarānanda (1290 CE), Pišāca (Hanumān, before 13/14\textsuperscript{th} century CE), Ānandagīri (14\textsuperscript{th} century CE, a commentator of Śaṃkara’s \textit{Gītābhāṣya}), Śrīdhara Svāmin (14\textsuperscript{th} century CE), Rāmānanda (ca. 14\textsuperscript{th} century CE, a commentator of Śaṃkara’s \textit{Gītābhāṣya} and the author of an independent commentary on the \textit{BhG}, called the \textit{Gītāśaya}), Daivajña Paṇḍita Sūrya (ca. 1440 CE, a commentator of Śaṃkara’s \textit{Gītābhāṣya}), Nilakaṇṭha Sūri (ca. 16\textsuperscript{th} century CE), and Sadānanda Yogīndra (16\textsuperscript{th} century CE) are the adherents to the Advaita school of Vedānta.

\textbf{Viśiṣṭādvaita commentators:} In this group, one may place Yāmuna (10\textsuperscript{th} century CE), Rāmānuja, Veṅkaṭanātha (13/14\textsuperscript{th} century CE, a commentator of Yāmuna and Rāmānuja’s \textit{Gītābhāṣya}), Varavaramuni (14\textsuperscript{th} century CE, on

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147 According to this doctrine, liberation is attained through the knowledge of \textit{brahman} along with the performance of duties recommended by the scriptures. Śaṃkara’s vehement criticism against this view is found in his \textit{bhāṣya} on \textit{BhG} 2.21, 3.1, 4.18, 24, 13.12 and 18.6. (See Sarma 1932-33: p. 46, Buitenen 1965: p. 109 and Mainkar 1969: p. 58).

148 \textit{Bhagavadgītā} 1999: Ānandagiri\textsuperscript{ī}vyākhya, p. 5; on \textit{BhG} 3.1, pp. 134-9; on \textit{BhG} 4.18, pp. 200-9 etc. (See also Radhakrishnan 2009: Vol. I, footnote 39, p. 452 and Ingalls 1952: pp. 10-11).

149 Mainkar thinks that this \textit{Vṛtti-kāra} and Bodhāyana, the author of a gloss on the \textit{BS} of Bādarāyaṇa, are the one and same person whom Rāmānuja mentions in his \textit{Śrībhāṣya} (See Mainkar 1969: p. 3).


Yāmuna’s *Gītābhāṣya*), and Pratyakṣadevayathācārya (on Yāmuna’s *Gītābhāṣya*).

**Dvaita commentators:** Madhva, Padmanābha Tīrtha (1320 CE), Narahari Tīrtha (1330 CE), Jaya Tīrtha (1370 CE), Kṛṣṇa Śrīnivāsa Tīrtha, Vidyādhirāja Tīrtha (1388-1412 CE), and Śrīnivāsa belong to this group.

**Śuddhādvaita commentators:** Vallabha (15th century CE) has made no explicit explanation on the BhG but has written an independent work, called the *Tattvārthadīpa* or *Tattvadīpanibandha* (with his own gloss, the *Prakāśa*). Viṭṭhalanātha Dīkṣīta (1518 -1588 CE), Kalyāṇa Bhaṭṭa (16th century CE), Vallabha (1617 CE, the fifth grand son of the founder Vallabha), and Puruṣottamaǰī (1668 -1764 CE) are other commentators from this school.

**Other commentators:** The only notable commentators from the early Bhedābheda and the later Dvaitādvaita schools are Bhaśkara (ca. 750 CE) and Keśava Kāśmīrī Bhaṭṭa (1510 CE) respectively. Vasugupta (ca. 9th century CE), Ānandavardhana (ca. 9th century CE), Rāmakaṇṭha (970 CE), and Abhinavagupta (1014 CE) belong to the Kashmirian group.

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152 There are two prose commentaries on the *BhG* along the Viśiṣṭādvaita lines, by people named Yāmuna, only one of whom is Rāmānuja’s predecessor (Also see Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II p. 439 and Callewaert and Hemraj 1983: p. 91, 109-10, Aufrecht 1962: Pt. I, p. 393, and *Bhagavadgītā* 2000).


154 Callewaert and Hemraj 1983: p. 93, list 197, p. 109, list 49, p. 100; and Bhatt 1949: pp. 131-4 for manuscript citations, as also *Bhagavadgītā* 1968: Editorial note, p. xiv and *Bhagavadgītā* 2000. The *Tattvadīpikā* is generally held to be a work of Vallabha, the proponent of the Śuddhādvaita school, and the *Aṃrtatarangini* as a sub-commentary on it by Puruṣottamaǰī (See Bhatt 1949: Footnote 1, pp. 131and 134).

1.6. A bird’s eye-view of the Gūḍhārthadīpikā

The title of the Gūḍhārthadīpikā means, literally, ‘the illuminator of the hidden meaning’. It is evident that for MS, the text of the BhG is not always transparent, and that he considers his work to reveal the true import of the text which, it may be implied, has been missed by other interpreters. However, as will be discussed in due course, MS’s decision to name his commentary ‘Gūḍhārthadīpikā’ after an assiduous study of Śaṅkara’s commentary on the BhG may also mean that MS wants to illuminate the hidden meaning of Śaṅkara’s BhG commentary. In his own work, MS affirms a philosophy which recognises other means of self-realisation, such as yoga, devotion to God (bhakti) and the analytical approach of the Sāṃkhya.156 In spite of being an ardent follower of Śaṅkara Vedānta, MS’s principal aim in commenting on the BhG seems to have been to give a philosophical justification for the way of devotion (bhakti-mārga) that he followed himself.157

MS divides the BhG into three sections of six chapters each, offering a unique justification for it. According to him, the first six chapters deal with the means relating to the path of sacrifice and social duty (karma-yoga). This, however, is considered merely as a means to the final goal, which is liberation (mokṣa). MS seeks to establish logically the essence of the pure self, indicated by the term ‘thou’ (tvam) of the Upaniṣadic dictum ‘That thou art’ (tattvamasi). The middle six chapters deal with the means, relating to the yoga of devotion (bhakti-yoga), making a transition from action (karma) to knowledge (jñāna) feasible. It determines the concept of ‘that’ (tat), the principle of supreme reality, through

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156 See Gambhirananda 2000a: Front flap.
instructions of devotion to and worship of the deity. The last six chapters expound the yoga of knowledge (jñāna-yoga), leading to the great equation made in tattvamasi.\(^{158}\)

Among the remarkable features of this commentary, one may highlight from the start its attempted synthesis of the paths of knowledge (jñāna) and devotion (bhakti), as well as its attempt to reconcile, as much as possible, the other Vedic schools of philosophy with the main tenets of Advaitic thought.\(^{159}\) Unlike other commentaries on the \(BhG\), it deals with almost every single word of the text, attributing to each a most nuanced connotation.\(^{160}\) MS’s unique style in the commentary can be seen in his expressions of abundant devotion to God coupled with the firm adherence to Śāmkara’s Advaita, evident in his original verses at the beginning and at the end of the chapters.\(^{161}\) MS points out variant readings of the text of the \(BhG\), even where they do not substantially impact his understanding of the text.\(^{162}\)

As noted earlier, Patañjali’s system of Yoga has been explained extensively in the \(GD\), and the \(YV\) has also been frequently referred to.\(^{163}\) Amidst all these remarkable features, the sole idea of complete surrender to God (śaraṇāgati), a total union of the individual with the absolute and a merger of the unqualified (nirguṇa) with the qualified (saguṇa) through love and devotion (bhakti), occupy the central

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\(^{158}\) \(GD\), introductory verses 8-10.

\(^{159}\) Gupta 1977: Translator’s preface, p. x.

\(^{160}\) \(GD\), introductory verse 1 (Also see Gambhirananda 2000a: Introduction, p. 17).


\(^{162}\) See Appendix III.

In the concluding part of the book, the author justifies the synthesis of devotion (*bhakti*), action (*karma*), and knowledge (*jñāna*).\(^{165}\)

In spite of disagreements at times with Śaṃkara’s explanation of the *BhG*, MS does not deviate from the fundamental Advaitic tenets of Śaṃkara.\(^{166}\) Thus, it would seem that MS was willing to differ from Śaṃkara’s interpretation of the *BhG* but not from his formulation of Advaita doctrine (*advaita-siddhānta*). In a few important instances, however, MS does offer an independent understanding of basic doctrine, such as when he argues that, by the knowledge of the Vedāntic great sentences (*mahāvākyas*), we realise none but the supreme reality Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa.\(^{167}\) This is in sharp contrast to Śaṃkara, for whom the absolute (*brahman*) is devoid of any personal characteristics.

The main editions of MS’s *GD* are those of Kāśīnāthaśāstrī Āgāše (*Bhagavadgītā* 1912), Wāsudev Laxman Shāstrī Paṇsīkar (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), and Jivaram Lallurama Shastri (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001). Variant readings (*pāṭhabheda*) of MS’s commentary are found in all three editions.\(^{168}\) The present study is based primarily on Paṇsīkar’s edition, which includes the only available sub-commentary on MS’s *GD*, the *Gūḍḥārthatattvāloka* (*GTL*) of Baccā Jhā (1860-1918 CE), also known as Dharmadattaśarmā or Baccāśarmā.\(^{169}\) Another sub-commentary on the *GD* by one Hariyaśomiśra (18th century CE) is not extant.\(^{170}\) Baccā Jhā’s work is not a complete commentary on the *GD* and is heavily technical, revealing the high

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\(^{164}\) Gupta 1977: Translator’s preface, p. X.


\(^{166}\) *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 85-9, 95-7, 298, 752-5.

\(^{167}\) *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p.751.

\(^{168}\) See Appendix VI.

\(^{169}\) *Bhagavadgītā* 1999.

Navya-nyāya scholarship of the author, but is nevertheless very original in nature. Thus, though of limited use, it may not be ignored in our study of how MS understands the *BhG*.

An author’s references to his own works indicate not only the chronological order of his writings, but also trace the path of his inner journey towards establishing his own philosophical outlook.  171 Therefore, the other works of MS referred to in his commentary on the *BhG* may be cited. The references here are both explicit (where the author names the works referred to or quotes the same line occurring therein) and implicit (repeating the same ideas expressed elsewhere). Thus, the *SB* is referred to while MS argues about the nature of mind,  172 *Bhr* in the course of discussing the nature and means of devotion,  173 and *AdS* with regard to naming his preceptors, expressing his heart’s joy to Lord Kṛṣṇa and examining the nature of mind.  174 On the other hand, though the *AdS* does not refer to the *GD* by name, there are similar verses in both the works.  175

With regard to the available translations of the work, we have found two in English; one by Swami Gambhiranananda (Gambhiranananda 2000a) and another by Sisir Kumar Gupta (Gupta 1977). In addition, there are Hindi translations by Svāmī Sanātanadeva (Sanātanadeva 2005), Harihara Kṛpalu Dvivedī (Dvivedī 1975), and Madan Mohan Agrawal (Agrawal 2005) and a Bengali translation by Bhūtanātha

171 Pandey 1978: p. 87.
172 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 64 [Also see Madhusūdanīvyākhyā on *BhG* 2.13, 2.15 and 2.28 in comparison to Siddhāntabindu 1986: pp. 11-2 (cf. Modi 1929: Introduction, footnote 41, p. 49)].
174 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 59, 64, and 263.
175 Advaitasiddhi 2005: p. 750 and Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 632 and 775 (Also see Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, the fifth concluding verse of chapter 18, p. 775; and Advaitasiddhi, first line, introductory verse 2, p. 8).
Saptatīrtha (Brahma 1986). This thesis has profited extensively from all these, but has relied mostly on Gambhirananda’s translation.  

As mentioned earlier, the GD explicitly names only Śaṃkara, Ānandagiri and Śrīdhara as earlier commentators of the BhG. Among the BhG commentators cited implicitly, Rāmānuja and Jaya Tirtha (a commentator of Madhva) are noteworthy. In later commentarial literature on the BhG, we find explicit references to the GD in the commentaries of Veṅkaṭanātha (16th century CE, teacher of Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra), Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri (16th century CE, the famous commentator of the Mahābhārata and an Advaitin), Vallabhācārya (17th century CE, grandson of Vallabhācārya, the founder of the Śuddhādvaita school), Puruṣottamajī (18th century CE, a proponent of Śuddhādvaita) and Viśvanātha

176 For a detailed note on these translations, refer to chapter 2.4.4 infra.

177 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā: pp. 1, 81, 83, 100, 108, 117, 141, 160, 188, 208, 212-213, 219, 298, 319, 326, 531, 554, 660, 664, 671, 682, 691, 695, 718-719, 755, 761, 772, and 775 [References to the comments on the BS and the Upanisads by Śaṃkara: pp. 61 (BS 1.1.4), 63 (BS, implicit), 171 (BU 1.3.1), 232 (MU 1.2.12), 235 (BS 3.3.12), 405 (BS 4.3.2), and 691 (BS 3.1.8, implicit)].


Cakravartin\textsuperscript{186} (18\textsuperscript{th} century CE, an exponent of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism). Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa (18\textsuperscript{th} century CE, an adherent to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism)\textsuperscript{187} and Dhanapati Sūri (1750-1850 CE, a proponent of the Advaita school of Śaṅkara)\textsuperscript{188} do not refer to the \textit{GD} by name in their respective commentaries on the \textit{BhG}, but copious anonymous citations confirm their awareness of the views expressed in the \textit{GD}.

1.7. Distinctiveness of the \textit{Gūḍhārthadīpikā} as a commentary on the \textit{Bhagavadgītā}

Source texts of Indian philosophy may be classified into two types, in accordance with their method of presentation, viz. the systematic definition of truth (\textit{tattva-nirūpaṇa}) or a general instruction of truth (\textit{tattvopadeśa}). The \textit{BhG} may be placed under the latter category. In the same way, we find two types of works in commentarial literature,\textsuperscript{189} the topical (\textit{adwikaraṇa-prasthāna})\textsuperscript{190} and polemical

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Bhagavadgītā} (date not found): \textit{Sārārthavarṣiṇī}, pp. 120, 122, 123, 142, 199, 254, 385, 387, and 404.
\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Bhagavadgītā} (date not found): \textit{Gītābhūṣaṇa}, pp. 6, 121, 204, and 207-8; and \textit{Bhagavadgītā} 1999: \textit{Madhusūdanīvyākhyā}, pp. 9, 186, 357, and 362-3.
\textsuperscript{189} See Nair 1990: p. 27.
\textsuperscript{190} ‘\textit{Adhikaraṇa}’ generally means a topic, subject, section, a complete argument treating a particular subject etc. \textit{Sūtra}-s of Vyāsa and Jaimini are divided into the \textit{adhyāya}-s, \textit{adhyāya}-s into the \textit{pāda}-s and \textit{pāda}-s into the \textit{adhikaraṇa}-s or sections. The general \textit{adhikaraṇa}-s consist of five limbs:- the subject or matter to be explained (\textit{viśaya}), the doubt or question arising upon that subject-matter (\textit{viśaya} or \textit{samsāya}), the view taken by the opponent (\textit{pūrvapakṣa}) and the rejoinder or demonstrated conclusion (\textit{uttara}) by the \textit{siddhāntin} (\textit{uttarapakṣa}), and the final conclusion (\textit{nirnaya}) arrived at after judging the two views of arguments for and against or relevancy (\textit{samgati}) [\textit{viśaya viśayaścaiva pūrvapakṣastathottāram / nirnayaścettī siddhāntah śāstre’dhikaraṇam smṛtam //}]. The
\end{footnotesize}
(vāda-prasthāna). The commentaries on the BhG can be brought under the former head.

While commenting on the BhG, MS has taken into consideration many other commentaries on it, criticizing them whenever he found them antagonistic to his own views. He has also discussed various doctrines of other Indian philosophical schools. In the GD, MS does not indulge in hair-splitting argumentation and a dialectical method of presentation as in the AdS and AdRR. The commentary rather follows the adhikarana-prasthāna style to convey the author’s catholic outlook, where he takes note of the views held by different sub-schools of the Advaita Vedānta.

MS’s GD is basically an exposition (vyākhyā) of the BhG. In order to examine how far the GD satisfies the basic criteria to be fulfilled by a proper exposition, it is pertinent to mention some views of reliable authorities in this connection, and judge the GD in the light of them.

The Abhinavabhāratī, a famous commentary on the Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharatamuni by Abhinavagupta, describes ten principles that a good commentary must satisfy, (i) declaring the correct reading as the desirable one, (ii) mentioning the readings that are not proper, (iii) explanation of the text commented upon in a clear manner, (iv) solution of (apparent) contradictions, (v) complete and exhaustive elucidation, (vi) following definitions in a proper manner, (vii) consideration of statements that are ambiguous, (viii) indication of relevance, (ix) consideration of contradictions, (x) complete and exhaustive elucidation.

Vedāntins put saṁgatī in the third place and saṁdhiṇa in the last (tatra ekaikamadhikaranam pañcāvayavam, viśaryah sañcehahan saṁgatih pūrvapakṣah saṁdhiṇaṣca) [Apte 1965: pp. 43-4].

191 ‘Debate’ (vāda) is one of the sixteen subjects held by the Naiyāyikas (e.g. means of right knowledge, object of right knowledge etc.). It is a kind of polemical discussion aiming at obtaining the truth (See Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. I, p. 294).

192 See chapters 6.2-6.5 infra.
justification of (apparent) repetition, and (x) summing up in brief the result of such
analysis. Vaidyanātha Pāyaguṇḍe (ca. 18th century CE), the author of the Chāyā, a
gloss on Nāgeśa’s Uddyota, which is a sub-commentary on Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya,
quotes the Parāśara Upapurāṇa, and says that any commentary must (i) isolate the
individual terms after disjoining the euphonic combination (sandhi), (ii) expound
word-meanings, (iii) explain compound words (samāsa), (iv) state the meaning of
the complete sentence, (v) anticipate possible objections and (vi) provide the
solutions and answers to these.

MS’s commentary meets all of these criteria for a well-executed and
effective commentary. While commenting on the BhG, MS mentions a number of
different readings of the text, often explaining the existing one as consistent with
them or giving his own explanation for them (the GD on BhG 1.46, 8.16, 9.21, 11.8,
11.17, 11.37, 11.40, 13.20, 14.25, 15.5 etc.). He also declares the correct or
different reading of the text as the desirable one (the GD on BhG 11.21, 14.23 etc.).
In some places, he has pointed out the redundancy of the word employed in the
verse, as the idea sought to be conveyed is already contained in another word
employed in the same verse (the GD on BhG 18.55 etc.). MS often explains the
terms employed in the verse clearly to explicate the intent of the verse (the GD on
BhG 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 6.2, 6.40, 11.46 etc.). He also gives the etymological meaning and
grammatical nuances of the word employed in the verses of the text (the GD on
BhG 3.18, 6.48, 11.8 etc.). MS often sums up the intent of the verses at the end of
their explanation (the GD on BhG 1.11, 16.17 etc.). In some places, MS justifies his

193 upādeyasya sampāṭhastadanyasya pratīkanam / sphūṭavyākhya virodhānām pariḥāraḥ supūrṇatā
// laksānusaraṇanāṁ śliṣṭavaktavyānāṁ vivecaṇam / sangatiḥ paunaruktyānāṁ samādhānasamākulaṃ
// sangrahaścetyaḥ vyākhyāprakāro ’tra samāśriṭaḥ // (Nāṭyaśāstra 1956: Verses 5q7a, pp. 1-2).
194 padachedaḥ padārthāṣca vigraho vākyayojanā / ākṣepaśca samādhanāṃ vyākhyāṇāṃ śadvidham
own explanation to the preference of the prevailing one (the GD on BhG 2.39 etc.), and in others, he gives a complete and exhaustive explanation (the GD on BhG 6.15, 6.25, 6.26, 6.28 etc.). He defines the terms employed in the verses (the GD on BhG 7.11, 8.1, 9.22, 10.40, 11.5, 11.36, 11.38, 14.27 etc.). He mentions the relevance of the explanation of a particular expression in a certain verse, so as not to contradict the remaining part of that verse or the following verse (the GD on BhG 2.48, 10.4, 13.19 etc.). He also gives explanation why the euphonic combination (sandhi) is maintained in a verse where it may not be necessary and vice versa (the GD on BhG 11.44, 12.8 etc.). He also anticipates why some other term or expression is not used in the verse instead of the one employed therein, and gives reason for that (the GD on BhG 10.18 etc.). In some places, MS gives reason for using (or not using) the compound (samāsa) in the text (the GD on BhG 13.12 etc.), anticipates the probable objections, and replies to them (the GD on BhG 2.13, 2.15, 2.16, 2.18 etc.).

Thus, we may conclude that the GD exhibits all the above-mentioned classic features that are the hallmarks of a proper commentary. A commentator of high calibre always wants to provide some novel explanation of the text that he is commenting on, and perhaps this is why he has differed from Śaṅkara in some cases, or even construed the text of the BhG in a different way in some cases (e.g. reading ‘hi mahānubhavān’ in BhG 2.5 as ‘himahānubhāvān’).

Dharamarāja Adhvarīndra (16th century CE) in his Vedāntaparibhāṣā (VP) points out that two types of word-meaning (padārtha) are generally admitted in Advaita, viz. denotative or primary meaning (vācyārtha or mukhyārtha) and implied or secondary meaning (lakṣyārtha or gauṇārtha).195 In addition, there is the third

type called suggested meaning (vyaṅgyārtha), which is admitted by some grammarians and rhetoricians (ālāṅkārika-s), and which is supposed to be present in the works of great poets. In the VKL, while describing various functions of the word (śabda-vṛtti), and in his interpretation of the BhG, MS has hinted at the admissibility of this third type of word-meaning.196

Throughout the BhG, Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna have addressed each other using different names [for Lord Kṛṣṇa, ‘Mahābāho’ in BhG, 6.35, 6.38, 11.23, 18.1 etc.; ‘Kṛṣṇa’ in BhG 17.1 etc.; ‘Keśiniṣūdana’ in BhG 18.1 etc.; ‘Hṛṣikeṣa’ in BhG 18.1 etc.; and for Arjuna, ‘Paramṭapa’ in BhG 4.5 etc.; ‘Arjuna’ in BhG 4.5 etc.; ‘Bharatasattama’ in BhG 18.4 etc.; ‘Puruṣavyāghra’ in BhG 18.4 etc.]. In the GD, MS not only explains the role played by conjunction like ‘but’ (tu), ‘and’ (ca), but also explains the appropriateness of these different names in their context. For example, in BhG 4.5, Arjuna has been addressed both as ‘Arjuna’ and ‘Paramṭapa’. MS comments that as ‘Arjuna’ is also the name of a tree, which is covered by bark, so also Arjuna’s power of understanding is covered by nescience, while he is called ‘the slayer of enemies’ (paraṃṭapa) because he is deluded by the sense of difference (bheda-drṣṭi) to kill others as his foes. Thus, these two words convey two aspects of nescience, covering (āvaraṇa) and distorting or projecting (vikṣepa) respectively.197 As we have discussed earlier, nescience is said to possess both powers: concealment (āvaraṇa-śakti), which covers the real nature of the object (i.e. brahman), and projection (vikṣepa-śakti), which creates the illusion of multiple objects, whereas in fact there is only one undivided entity (brahman). These two kinds of power of nescience are obviously not the primary meanings of the terms

197 See Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 186 and chapter 4.2.1 infra.
‘Arjuna’ and ‘Paraṃtapa’ respectively. They are not also the implied meanings of these two terms (i.e. ‘Arjuna’ and ‘Paraṃtapa’), since the implied meaning of an expression is admitted only when there is any inconsistency (anupapatti) in understanding the relevant expression, and that is not the case here. It is a distinctive approach on MS’s part to make a philosophical point using the suggested meaning (vyāṁgyārtha) of the word, as distinct from its denotative or primary meaning (vācyārtha or mukhyārtha) and implied or secondary meaning (lakṣyārtha or gauṇārtha). It may be kept in mind that the BhG is a part of the MBh, the great epic of India, and admitting suggested meanings in its verses seems perfectly appropriate.

Regarding the method of exposition of the BhG, MS has shown some novelty as well. It has been a tradition among the traditional commentators of the BhG to divide the text into three parts taking six chapters each. Prior commentators such as Yāmuna and Rāmānuja, as well later ones like Keśava Kāśmīri Bhaṭṭa and Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri, have divided the BhG into three parts (kāṇḍa-s), dealing with karma, bhakti, and jñāna respectively. MS has also divided the BhG in the same manner, but what is novel is that he sees an Advaita message even in this structure, by taking these three parts of the text as representing the three words of the Upaniṣadic great sentence ‘That thou art’ (‘tattvamasi’, CU 6.8.7) [while viewing the BhG, this Upaniṣadic text should be in the form of ‘Thou art that’]. As we have pointed out earlier, this idea of explaining the BhG as an explanation of this Upaniṣadic text has been pointed out also by Ānandagiri in one of the concluding verses of his commentary on the BhG. Thus, while we find Ānandagiri’s influence
on MS in this connection, it is to be noted that a detailed exposition of the BhG in accordance with this Upaniṣadic text is MS’s own idea.\footnote{198 See chapters 3.1.2, 3.1.4 infra.}

1.8. \textbf{Note on translation}

Unless otherwise specified, all translations and summaries are our own. We have translated MS literally only on few occasions, though we have paraphrased him when required. Furthermore, all quotations from the Upaniṣads, BhG, and the BS are from the translations of Patrick Olivelle, J. A. B. van Buitenen, and Swami Gambhirananda respectively.
2

Available Modern Scholarship on Madhusūdana Sarasvatī

2.1. General overview

Due to his immense contribution to the development of Advaita Vedānta, MS’s works have received some degree of scholarly attention. Encyclopaedic surveys of Indian philosophies, anthologies, translations and scholarly articles provide some general information on the life and philosophy of MS, with varying levels of detail, in introductory chapters and footnotes.

The present study is primarily concerned with philosophical rather than historical issues. That is, MS’s treatment of basic Advaitic concepts and of devotion (within those Advaitic parameters) in his GD. Accordingly, the criterion for our review of prior scholarship on MS will be its relevance for the study of the GD. Thus, instead of organising the review chronologically, we will organise them by theme and text. As many works available in Indian languages (e.g. Sanskrit, Hindi and Bengali) contribute significantly to our understanding, we have included some of them.

With regard to the determination of MS’s date, his works, and his biography within its socio-historical context, there have been various efforts since the second quarter of the last century. Scholars such as Telang (1886), Shastri (1912), Farquhar (1925), Divanji (1927, 1928), Chattopadhyaya (1927, 1928), Tadpatrikar (1927), Sastri (1928), Chakravarti (1928, 1930), Bhattacharya (1937), Ray (1938-39), Sarma (1941), Jagadiswarananda (1941), Nachane (1949), Kātre (1950), K. H.
Potter (2001), Rajagopalan (2003), and Nelson (2007) may be mentioned in this connection.

In the second volume of his great work on Indian philosophy, Dasgupta (2000-07) states that MS may have been born in the first half of the 16th century CE, and provides a list of works that may be ascribed to him with a high degree of probability. In the course of evaluating MS’s philosophical views, he writes, ‘It is, however, interesting to note that, though he was such a confirmed monist in his philosophy, he was a theist in his religion and followed the path of bhakti, or devotion, as is evidenced by his numerous works promulgating the bhakti creed.’ While reviewing MS’s VKL, which compares doctrines of other Indian philosophical schools with those of the Vedānta in more detail than his other works, Dasgupta concludes that MS is guilty of misinterpretation when he asserts that the Advaita Vedāntic notion of salvation supersedes all other views.199 In his fourth volume, Dasgupta offers a lengthy discussion of issues such as the falsity of the world, the nature of knowledge and the world as illusion, as discussed in the AdS, Nyāyāmṛta of Vyāsa Tīrtha (15th century CE) and the Tārāṅginī of Rāma Tīrtha (ca. 16th century CE).200

Radhakrishnan (2009), in the second volume of Indian Philosophy, includes MS as an important post-Śaṅkara Advaitin, belonging to the 16th century.201 Banerji (2004) presents an anthology on Sanskrit works and their authors, especially of those which were either written in Bengal or influenced its cultural history. In the context of prominent Vedānta philosophers, a brief biographical note on MS and a

200 MS’s AdS contains a word-by-word criticism of the Nyāyāmṛta, while the Tārāṅginī is a word-by-word criticism of the AdS (See Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. IV, chapters XXIX and XXX, pp. 204-319).
discussion of his *magnum opus* the *AdS* has been provided. MS is said to have flourished in the first half of the 16th century CE.

Nachane (2000) offers an extensive survey of major post-Śāṅkara Advaita writers up to 18th century CE and treats MS’s biography and works. The date of MS, according to the author, is ca. 1540-1645 CE. After giving a short summary of each of MS’s important works, Nachane states the doctrinal conclusions as set forth in the *SB* and *VKL* respectively. This author affirms that MS’s treatment of *bhakti* does not contradict Advaita views, supporting this conclusion with copious quotations from MS’s *VKL*, *GD* and *ŚŚŚS.*

Mahadevan (1938), while giving a systematic exposition of the Advaita philosophy with special reference to Bhāratītīrtha Vidyāraṇya (15th-century CE), mentions that Bhāratītīrtha recommended a moderate means towards attainment of liberation. Mahadevan refers to MS in this context briefly to show that Bhāratītīrtha’s point finds support in MS’s treatment of devotion. He observes:

> The tendency to liberalise Advaita reached another stage in Madhusūdana who was the first to claim that the path of devotion (bhakti) leads to non-dual realization. …He accepts the *Bhāgavata* view that of the two paths, jñāna and bhakti, the latter is superior, since it leads to the goal more quickly than the other. …Whether we agree with him or not in bestowing on bhakti the importance which he gives it, we cannot but admire the catholicity of spirit which animates his exposition of Advaita (*sic*).203

Rao (1980) has devoted a brief chapter on MS entitled ‘Sri Madhusudana Saraswathi & Advaita Bhakti,’ in connection with the discussion of different Vedāntic issues in his *Advaita Vedanta: Problems and Perspectives*. The author holds that though a synthesis of monistic philosophy with devotion is not generally found in works of the Advaita Vedānta, there is no intrinsic contradiction in the

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acceptance of the path of devotion by the Advaitins; for Śaṅkara’s acceptance of bhakti as a purificatory means is also consistent with the presence of this element in his personal life. Rao provides a short biographical detail of MS, dating him to the middle of the 16th century CE, and highlights the uniqueness of how MS synthesizes philosophizing about bhakti with the Advaita doctrines. Following the BP, MS terms bhakti a mental mode (manogati) of a devotee, which is like a constant flow towards the Lord. When the mind is melted, the bhagavān becomes reflected in it like a reflection in a mirror, thereby assuming the form of the bhagavān. Thus, Rao concludes that, ‘What Madhusūdana did for the thinking world was to remove the misconception that Advaita is opposed to bhakti, for the internal and essential spring of bhakti is drawing together and not repelling, and if openness is not the basic truth this would not happen (sic).’

Kattackal (1982) in his Religion and ethics in Advaita has devoted a short chapter on MS. Following the views of modern scholars such as S. N. Dasgupta, V. Rajagopalan, P. M. Modi, Eliot Deutsch, J. A. B. van Buitenen, and Sanjukta Gupta, the author highlights MS’s attempt at showing (i) the effectiveness of the path of devotion (bhakti-mārga) to be on a par with that of knowledge (jñāna-mārga), (ii) the nature of liberation (mokṣa) and the means to its attainment, (iii) the utility of the Upaniṣadic great sentences (mahāvākyas) in relation to the process of hearing (śravana), reflection (manana) and contemplation (nididhyāsana) as the means to liberation, (iv) various stages towards the attainment of liberation and its grades with special reference to the YV, (v) the nature and stages of devotion with special reference to the BP, (vi) the notion of devotion as depicted in the BhG in

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204 Rao 1980: pp. 201-205.
contrast to that of Śāṅkara, (vii) amalgamation of the way of knowledge with that of devotion etc.\textsuperscript{205} He also fixes MS’s time as the first half of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century CE. In short, Kattackal’s assessments of MS as stated above are solely based on those of the modern scholars mentioned above.

In his \textit{Whither Indian Philosophy: Essays on Indian and Western Epistemology}, Pandey (1978) has emphasised the importance of identifying an author’s references to his own works throughout his corpus. Pandey calls this the method of self-reference. And in order to explain this method, Pandey has chosen MS and cited in a tabular form as many as twenty nine passages from his (MS’s) various works together with the work/s mentioned in those passages, and the topic referred to therein. After examining the important topics referred to by MS in his various works, Pandeya enumerates fourteen doctrines as the principal contributions of MS.\textsuperscript{206} These touch upon all the most important tenets of Advaita, such as distinction between reality and unreality, the falsity of the world and the reality of \textit{brahman}, along with a refutation of dualism, the nature, scope and inter-relationships of \textit{śravaṇa}, \textit{manana} and \textit{nididhyāsana}, as well as a reconciliation of \textit{bhakti} and \textit{jñāna}. Pandey discusses how all these doctrines developed in MS’s personal journey as a devotee, a debater and a philosopher of the highest caliber. Pandey has then shown the utility of this method of self-reference as a research method in exploring the development of philosophers of ancient times, particularly for those with multiple works to their credit.\textsuperscript{207}

\textsuperscript{206} Pandey 1978: pp. 89-92, 95.
The only extensive monograph on MS available to us is that of Gupta (2006). In addition to a short biographical detail and works of MS in the introductory chapter, the author discusses all the major philosophical issues -- metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical -- on the basis of a thorough study of MS’s works. Having given a short but solid account of the philosophical and religious milieu of MS and its influence on his distinctive philosophical stance, the author provides a tentative biography and bibliography based on the views of various scholars and textual sources. Since the AdS is the masterpiece of MS, Gupta takes it as the basis for determining the authenticity of his other works and presenting his general philosophical standpoint.

The various aspects of the Advaita theory of nescience (avidyā/ajñāna), as formulated in MS’s AdS, are discussed in the second chapter of Gupta’s work. In the third chapter, MS’s views on epistemology are discussed. The nature, types and origination of valid knowledge are described here in detail with the answers to the opponents’ objections. In chapter four, the nature of brahman and the establishment of the supremacy of the unqualified brahman (as opposed to the contention of the dualist Vedāntins that the qualified brahman is the highest reality) have been argued by Gupta with evidence from MS’s works, thereby showing how MS refutes the rival views of Madhva, Rāmānuja etc. Gupta has analysed, in Chapter Five, MS’s examination of various causal theories, as well as his exposition of the Advaita views on jīva, īśvara, and sākṣīn, in relation to brahman and the primordial ignorance. The status of the created world, different opposing causal theories that

have been discussed and refuted by MS, the nature of liberation and the different stages leading to it have been taken up in chapters six and seven of Gupta’s work.

Having given a detailed exposition of MS’s basic philosophical stance, Gupta discusses in the final chapter of her work, MS’s notion of bhakti. The factors that may have been important in shaping MS’s view in this regard become explicit in Gupta’s following observations:

He obviously knew Śrī Caitanya’s teachings as well as the teachings of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (BhP). In his exposition on bhakti in the Bhakti-rasāyana he used the Bhāgavata Purāṇa as his scriptural source and illustrated each of his views with extensive quotations from the text…Probably he was familiar with the exposition of bhakti in the Muktāphala by Vopadeva along with Hemādri’s commentary…he still followed Rāmānuja’s bhakti-yoga or upāsanā in his attempt to define bhakti. However, his personal feeling was clearly always closer to the passionate love for Gopāla Kṛṣṇa than to the sedate bhakti-yoga of the earlier Pāncarātra tradition.209

In order to substantiate this, Gupta sketches a brief historical development of bhakti according to the BP, Bhaktisūtra-s, and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava thought, leading to the conclusion that MS’s notions of bhakti, which are largely found in his BhR, are based mainly on the BP. Sporadic references to MS’s GD, SB, AdS and VKL have also been made in this context in order to delineate a comprehensive view of devotion as described by MS.

In this connection, Gupta’s positive assessment of MS’s attempt at synchronizing devotionalism with the non-dualistic views is noteworthy. She maintains:

So to gain a complete picture of Madhusūdana’s achievement it is imperative to discuss both these aspects. He proves that monistic metaphysics and devotionalism go hand in hand in the search for perfection and unlimited bliss…His originality is most advantageously expressed in his exposition of the BhG…That is why, in spite of being a great non-dualist Vedāntin, Madhusūdana admits the paradox of his personality.210

2.2. Early works of Madhusūdana

2.2.1. Saṃkṣepaśārīrakasārasaṃgraha

Giri (2007) contains Hindi translations of both the SŚ and MS’s exposition on it called the SŚSS, along with the Sanskrit originals. Apart from a detailed introduction to both works, the translator has added his own explanations in the body of the translation.

2.2.2. Vedāntakalpalatikā

This work has been edited and translated by Karmmarkar (1962). The detailed introduction describes MS’s biographical details and his works, a summary of the VKL and its critical appreciation. Deutsch and Buitenen (1971), in A Source Book of Advaita Vedānta, have selected some portions from this work, observing that, ‘Madhusūdana is often credited with being the first to reconcile fully the metaphysical principles of Advaita with the path of bhakti, of devotion to a personal deity.’

Panicker (1995) has made a study of the VKL. His introduction clearly states why a study of MS is relevant in present-day discussion of Indian philosophies.

In the 16th century, the influence of the bhakti movement became very decisive among the scholars and laymen alike. The absolutistic philosophy of Śaṅkara did not satisfy the theistic thirst of the people. Some sort of philosophic compromise was the need of the hour to uphold Absolute Monism. Madhusūdana Sarasavati comes to the scene in this historical juncture. With his subtle reasoning and logical arguments he resisted the theistic attack on Advaita of Śaṅkara effectively. But to keep up the absolutistic theory intact without deviating from the main track, Madhusūdana boldly introduced the element of bhakti within the monistic thinking. It is not at all surrender to the theistic schools, but a bold attempt to uphold the individuality of Advaita Vedānta. The concept of bhakti introduced by Madhusūdana is also different from the one propagated by Rāmānuja, Madhva and Caitanya. It has its roots in the theoretical Advaita. …Here rests the importance of Madhusūdana who had cut a new path within Advaita, the path of jñāna-bhakti synthesis (sic).

Part I of the work introduces MS, his works, and the *VKL* in detail, while the author makes a thorough textual analysis of the *VKL* in part II of this work, which also discusses the concept of liberation in Advaita Vedānta (the central topic of the *VKL*) and its establishment by discarding opposing views, along with other related concepts [namely, knowledge and nescience, inability of the significative force of a word (*śabda-vṛtti*) for producing the realisation of *brahman* and correct understanding of the Upaniṣadic passages as the means of attaining liberation]. Part III of this work contains general observations based on the previous discussions.

### 2.2.3. *Siddhāntabindu*

Modi (1985) is a reprint of a 1929 English translation of the *SB*. In his introduction, Modi has critically analysed the date and works of MS with support from various textual sources. He assumes the time of MS to be from about 1490 to 1580 CE. MS’s special contribution to Śaṃkara’s Advaita philosophy is described, based especially on the *GD, BhR* and other devotional works. Modi’s observations in this regard may be cited below.

As regards the special contribution of Madhusudana to the Sankara Vedanta, it may be noted that inspite of his being a follower of Śaṃkara’s monism, he was an ardent devotee of Sri Krishna. To Madhusudana, this was neither self-contradictory nor surprising. He could show by a careful examination of the Bhagavata Purana that the metaphysics of Śaṃkara and the ethics of Vallabha can be combined together to form a religio-philosophical system. … Just as in the days of Kumarila Bhatta and Śaṃkara the most important problem was the reconciliation of Karma and Jnana, so in the days of Madhusudana and Vallabha the greatest problem was that of Jnana and Bhakti. The question had already drawn the attention of Bopadeva, Vidyaranya and Sridhara but it was left to Madhusudana to solve thoroughly and inculcate a new line of thought in the Sankara Vedanta (*sic*).  

Critical analysis of all the available works of MS in the introduction of this work throws light on MS’s literary acumen. Besides the translation of the *SB*, Modi

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has added, in the Appendices, some very informative, if uncritical, discussion on the devotional sentiment of MS. Modi’s conclusion at the end of Appendix III on ‘Madhusudana and Sankara on Bhaktimarga in Gita’ is pertinent to the ascertainment of the influence of Šaṅkara’s Gītā commentary on that of MS;

Thus although Madhusudana was a disciple of Šankara, he differed widely from Šankara and his followers. As distinguished from the latter, Madhusudana re-established the exact meaning of certain verses of the Bhagavad Gītā, insisting on the fact that he was bound down by Šankara’s interpretation which he always kept before him when he wrote his own commentary on the Gītā, that according to Šankara there are only two Paths mentioned in the B.G. but Madhusudana emphatically stated that there are three Paths to absolution discussed in the B.G. and that in his opinion the Path of Devotion was as good as that of Knowledge and as such he himself followed that Path, though he did not adversely criticise the Jnānamarga (sic).

Divānji (1933) has critically edited and translated the SB into English with critical notes and explanations, as also a detailed biographical account, including a genealogical chart provided by someone who seems to have belonged to MS’s family lineage. Divānji concludes that MS flourished during 1540-1647 CE and provides an account of the historical development of the Advaita Vedānta prior to this time. This edition also contains a Sanskrit commentary on the SB by Puruṣottama Sarasvatī, called the Bindusandīpana.

Acalānanda (1981), Subramanian (1989) and Sastri (2006) are the more notable recent English translations of the SB, including the Sanskrit original. Explanatory notes by all these translators contain much useful material about MS and his thought. Pant (1932) is a Hindi translation of the SB by an anonymous translator, with a lengthy introduction and notes, recently re-edited by Giri (2002). Śāstri (1334 Bengali Era) is a Bengali translation of the SB that also contains one of the original Sanskrit commentaries on it called the Nyāyaratnāvalī by Brahmānanda.

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Sarasvatī. Cidghanānanda (1995) is a critical edition of the SB along with a Bengali translation and explanations based on Sanskrit commentaries on the SB.

2.3. Dialectical works against Nyāya and Dvaita Vedānta

2.3.1. Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa

Yogendrānandagiri (1977) has translated the AdRR of MS into Hindi. Besides the translation, explanatory notes on intricate passages are of immense help in understanding the import of the text, which is as technically polemic in nature as the AdS.

2.3.2. Advaitasiddhi

Compared to other works of MS, his AdS has been studied in greater detail and translated often in modern scholarship. Ghoṣa (1931) is a valuable translation into Bengali of the latest commentary on the AdS (up to the section on ‘falsity of falsity’ of its 1st chapter), called the Bālabodhinī, composed in the early 20th century by Mm. Yogendranātha Tarkasāṃkhyavedāntatīrtha. The introduction gives a detailed account of MS with the support of different legends against the socio-historical background, suggesting the period between 1525/30-1632/37 CE as his probable date. Though the introduction does not separate history from legend, it points to reliable sources for obtaining biographical details of MS. Apart from the translation and notes on the first definition of falsity by the translator together with the text, the editor has provided a detailed introduction with a historical development of the Advaita Vedānta from the Vedic period down to the time of publication. The text of the Nyāyāmṛta, up to the refutation of first definition of falsity in the AdS is also

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given in the appendix. Thus, this work has made this portion of the AdS more accessible to scholars.

Jha (1990) provides an English translation of the first chapter of the AdS. Though the language is dated, this translation is of immense help in understanding the textual part covered here. Besides, the translator has provided a synopsis at the beginning of each topic, following the Advaitasiddhisiddhāntasāra of Sadānanda Vyāsa (16th Century CE). Bhattacharya (1992) has translated into English five definitions of falsity together with the concept of the falsity of falsity (named Mithyātvasāṁānyopapatti), from the first chapter of the AdS. The preface pinpoints what the word ‘falsity’ really means for the Advaitins, in contrast to Western philosophy and the Nyāya. Translations are followed by the Sanskrit texts and detailed explanatory notes on each of the six topics.219 Pereira (1991) has a partial English translation of the AdS, as part of an anthology of important Hindu texts. Swaminathan (2001) has paraphrased the entire AdS by mentioning the core textual statements from each of the hundred and eight topics, besides giving their English translations. Apart from a brief introduction to the AdS and its author in the introduction and sporadic notes next to the translations, Swaminathan has also given notes on Indian Logic (Nyāya) and Sanskrit Grammar in his appendices. Raychaudhuri (1955) has made a study of the concept of falsity following the AdS of MS. This author delineates the views about the self as held in the Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, and Advaita philosophies as well as the concept of falsity. Out of the five definitions of falsity described in the AdS, three have been discussed by this author.

Śāstrī (1963) in his *Vedāntadarśana-Advaitavāda*, has devoted a section on MS. Apart from giving biographical details and an account of MS’s works, the author has summarised the basic philosophical stance of MS, as found in *AdS*. He also thinks that the period from the last quarter of the sixteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth century may be the life period of MS. Singh (1966) has written a doctoral dissertation on MS’s justification for Advaita metaphysics, mainly following the discussion in the *AdS*, with occasional references to his other works. A table of cross references found in various works of MS and his enumeration of as many as fourteen principal doctrines of MS are useful scholarly aids. Chakraborty (1967) refers to the concept of falsity based on the *AdS* and its commentary by Brahmānanda Sarasvatī. Besides a detailed introduction on why and how the concept of falsity is necessary for the Advaitic discourse, the author has examined in the rest of the work all the five definitions of falsity and also the notion of the falsity of falsity.

Nair (1990) has prepared a brief but very coherent and systematic study of the *AdS*. Apart from a bird’s eye view on Indian philosophical schools, especially the Vedānta system, the author gives biographical details of MS, based on textual evidence and the views of other scholars. Nair holds that MS flourished between the second half of the 16th and the first half of the 17th centuries CE. The discussion provides an introduction to the *Siddhi* literature in the Advaita tradition, in which the *AdS* occupies a central place, and the historical development of controversy between the dualist and non-dualist Vedāntic thought, from the time of Bādarāyaṇa to that of Madhva and his followers. After a critical study of the *AdS* and its
available commentaries, Nair concludes that MS is mainly a follower of the *Vivarana-prasthāna*, who initiated a branch of monistic theism within this school.

Mishra (1990) has studied Advaita epistemology with special reference to the *AdS*. The Advaita Vedānta, unlike other systems of philosophy, accepts a method of knowledge in so far as empirical truth is concerned, but also tries to transcend all methods. After a survey of how epistemological problems are handled in Advaita, Mishra critically examines all five definitions of falsity and that of the falsity of falsity in the *AdS*, which invariably proves the falsity of the world. He touches upon Western views as well whenever necessary in the course of his discussion, quoting copiously from MS and other Advaitic writers, noting that

From the survey of *Advaita* epistemology as given by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and supported by other preceptors of *Advaita*, it may be concluded that the primary aim of *Advaita* epistemology is to prove the falsity of the world. It does not aim at devising methods to comprehend Reality but tries to transcend them. Thus, the problem of the world are not solved but are dissolved. It leads us to a point where the problems of the world are no more pertinent but become utterly meaningless. They are only discussed by way of establishing the truth of non-duality.220

Devī (1994) has made a study in Hindi on the *AdS*. In addition to biographical details and the discussions on falsity, the author highlights the place of reasoning (*tarka*) in the works of Śaṃkara and post-Śaṃkara writers, with special reference to the *AdS* as compared to other authors before MS, along with a detailed note on the treatment of *bhakti* in MS’s works.

Sharma (1994-99) has made a critical analysis based on passages from the *Nyāyāmṛta* and *AdS*. While the first part of it deals with textual sources from both these texts, the second part is concerned with Upaniṣadic sentences like ‘*tattvamasi*’ and other Advaita *śrutis* in relation to the views of the Mādhva school. Sharma’s re-appraisal makes clearer the presentation of the *AdS* as a criticism of the dualistic

220 Mishra 1990: p. 201
school of Madhva, of which Sharma himself is an authority.\textsuperscript{221} Similarly, Anantakrishna Sastri’s *Nyāyāmṛtādvaitasiddhī* (1984) provides a lengthy introduction in English, with a detailed account of MS, the *AdS* and all its related texts and their authors.\textsuperscript{222}

Fort (1998), in the course of discussing the concept of living liberation (*jīvanmukti*) as admitted in traditional Advaita Vedānta, has discussed views expressed in the *AdS*. According to MS, *jīvanmukti* is due to the continuity of some trace of ignorance, even though ignorance itself has been destroyed. Nelson (1996) may also be consulted in this connection.

Pellegrini (2011) has analysed the second and fourth definitions of falsity given in the *AdS*, which initially appear to be mere reiterations of one another. After a thorough textual analysis of both the definitions following MS and his commentators and subcommentators, the author has concluded that, as all five definitions of falsity in the *AdS* convey the same ontological status of falsity, they are to be treated as equal in their literal sense (*vācyārtha*) but different in intended senses (*tātparya*). Pellegrini asserts that MS, while responding to his opponents in this regard, has kept this distinction in mind.\textsuperscript{223}

\section*{2.4. Devotional works of Madhusūdana}

\subsection*{2.4.1. *Krṣṇakutūhalanāṭaka*}

Diwanji (1931-32) has written an article on the *KKN* of MS. After scrutinizing a manuscript of it, the author felt the urgent need of its publication and appealed to other scholars for preparing a critical edition of the text in order to validate its

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{221} Sharma 1994-99.
\item \textsuperscript{222} *Nyāyāmṛtādvaitasiddhī* 1984: Introduction, pp. 1-95.
\item \textsuperscript{223} Pellegrini 2011: pp. 441-2 and 457-8.
\end{itemize}
authorship,\textsuperscript{224} though Diwanji himself left no stone unturned to substantiate his view in the article. A short summary of the entire text has also been provided by the author.

\textbf{2.4.2. Mahimnastotraṭīkā including Prasthānabheda}

A portion of MS’s \textit{ṭīkā} on the seventh verse of the \textit{Mahimnastotra} is called the \textit{Prasthānabheda (PB)} and is often discussed independently. Max Müller (2008) in \textit{The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy} has made an appraisal of the \textit{PB}, with extracts of MS’s views on the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy. Müller bases much of his discussion of these schools on his paraphrase of the concluding ideas of the \textit{PB},\textsuperscript{225} observing that

\begin{quote}
What the Brāhmaṇas themselves thought of their philosophical literature we may learn even from such modern treatises as the Prasthāna-bheda… But it shows at all events a certain freedom of thought, which we see now and then in other writers also, such as Vijñānabhikṣu, who are bent on showing that there is behind the diversity of Vedānta, Sāmkhya, and Nyāya one and the same truth, though differently expressed; that philosophers, in fact, may be many, but truth is one (sic).\textsuperscript{226}
\end{quote}

MS says at the beginning of the \textit{PB} that all \textit{śāstra}-s, directly or indirectly, have the Lord as their purport. The conclusion of the \textit{PB} asserts that all the \textit{prasthāna}-s (lines of thought) that have been discussed are meant to establish the non-dual supreme God. Hanneder (1999) has taken this as a guide in showing the unique character of Hinduism in accommodating both rigidity and flexibility in doctrine, highlighting its mechanisms of adaptation and conservatism. He observes;

\begin{quote}
One work that is often mentioned in this context is Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s (16th century) \textit{Prasthānabheda}, which addresses the issue of integrating various religious and philosophical systems within the framework of Vedicism and would therefore hold as a forerunner for a modern conceptualisation of Hinduism. Moreover this brief tract on the scriptural sources of knowledge (\textit{prasthāna}), has been one of the first texts known to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{224} Diwanji 1931-32: pp. 15-6.
\textsuperscript{225} Max Müller 2008: pp. 74-84.
\textsuperscript{226} Max Müller 2008: pp. 75 and 82 (diacritics used uniformly).
Western Sanskritists to present a conspectus of the religious and philosophical literature of the “Great Tradition” within Hinduism.\textsuperscript{227}

Hanneder discusses whether the \textit{PB} is an independent work of MS inserted into the \textit{MSṬ} or an extract from it, but does not provide a concrete answer to this issue.

Śarmā (2001) has made a translation of the \textit{MSṬ} into Hindi that also seeks to explicate the intent of particular words and sentences as parenthetical comments. Sengupta (1339 Bengali Era) is a translation of the \textit{PB} into Bengali. The preface of the translator gives brief biographical details of MS, along with a discussion of how this text came to light and influenced western scholars to undertake studies of Hinduism and its texts.\textsuperscript{228} Informative footnotes in the translation, together with information in appendices about source books on the eighteen kinds of learning \textit{(aṣṭādaśa-vidyā)} cited by MS open a window to a wide Vedic literary lore. Śarmā (1989) has published the text of the \textit{PB} with a simple Hindi explanation. The foreword throws some general light on MS and his work.

\subsection*{2.4.3. Bhaktirasāyana}

This is the only available independent treatise on devotion by a staunch Advaitin. It has been edited and translated into Bengali by Sāṃkhya-Vedāntāṭhita (1404 Bengali Era). The \textit{bhakti-sūtra-s}, i.e. aphorisms on the nature of devotion, ascribed to sages like Śāṇḍilya and Nārada discuss the nature of \textit{bhakti} or devotion, but the doctrines upheld in such texts have been stated very briefly, without adequate and sophisticated philosophical argument in favour of these doctrines. In contrast, the treatment of \textit{bhakti} in the \textit{BhR} is highly philosophical, since MS has tried to

\textsuperscript{227} Hanneder 1999: p. 575.
\textsuperscript{228} Sengupta 1389 Bengali Era: \textit{Avataranikā}, pp. 15-23.
substantiate his claims with the help of arguments and copious quotations from scriptural texts. In his brief introduction to MS and the BhR, Sāṃkhya-Vedāntatīrtha has beautifully outlined this idea. In addition to the translation of each kārikā and MS’s commentary thereon, in the first ullāsa, there are numerous footnotes in Sanskrit. As MS’s commentary on the second and third ullāsa-s is not available, the translator has provided his own Sanskrit commentary along with its translation into Bengali.

Pāṇḍeya (1998) has translated the BhR into Hindi. The prefatory remarks (prāstāvikam) in this edition discuss MS’s understanding of bhakti as presented in the BhR, apart from giving an account of life and works of MS.229 Further, while Pāṇḍeya has given his translations of and notes on MS’s commentary on the first ullāsa, his own explanations of the second and third ullāsa-s of the BhR together with notes are found in this work.

In an article on devotional sentiment (bhakti-rasa) as discussed in the BhR, Kar (2006) has shown how the mind in its different modifications gives rise to devotion. She has paraphrased a few kārikā-s from the BhR along with MS’s commentary on them. A distinction between devotion and knowledge is drawn here. Devotion (bhakti) is the transformation of the mind in its melted state into the form of God (bhagavān), while knowledge of brahman (brahma-vidyā) is the mode of the mind in the form of attributeless non-dual brahman in its (mind’s) non-melted state.230

Śāstrī (1940), in the course of discussing Indian philosophical views of aesthetics, makes numerous references to the BhR. MS’s understanding of worldly

(laukika) and transcendental (alaukika) pleasures and sorrows,\textsuperscript{231} his arguments in favour of categorising bhakti as a rasa, like grief or love and his emphasis on the fact that pleasure brought forth from bhakti-rasa is inherently supreme, are but a few examples given by Śāstrī. Chatterjee (1972) in a critical study in Bengali of the development of bhakti-rasa in its historical and theoretical milieu has discussed many topics found in the BhR. Thus, MS’s view that bhakti-rasa is superior to all other rasa-s, his opinion that pleasure obtained from worldly rasa-s is limited and incomplete, while that of bhakti-rasa is impartite and complete, his classification of bhakti-rasa into pure (śuddha) and mixed (miśra) have all been examined by Chatterjee, comparing them to the views of the rhetoricians (Ālaṃkārikas) and the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas.\textsuperscript{232}

A profound study of the BhR has been made by Nelson (1986) in his PhD dissertation entitled Bhakti in Advaita Vedānta: Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s Bhaktirasāyana. The thesis includes an annotated translation of the first ullāsa together with MS’s commentary on it. Nelson demonstrates how the concept of bhakti, rather than concepts of a personal or impersonal Godhead, gave rise to the dualistic schools of Vedānta that are opposed to Śaṁkra’s Advaita Vedānta. He asserts the importance of MS’s position in unequivocal terms: ‘He was one of the few traditional writers that sought to integrate bhakti and non-dualism in a way that remained true to the strict boundaries to Śaṁkara’s system, and the only one to work at this problem systematically.’\textsuperscript{233} Nelson quotes various works of MS bearing evidence of his staunch adherence to Advaita in combination with an outlook that gives great efficacy to devotion. Perhaps the most striking reference is in MS’s AdS

\textsuperscript{231} Śāstrī 1940: pp. 199-200, 289-91,
\textsuperscript{233} Nelson 1986: pp. 7-8.
(2.7), which is a eulogy to the personal God, placed in a context where MS is primarily engaged in showing the tenability of attributeless *brahman*. Given the attitude taken by MS in his various works, this does not appear as an inconsistency on his part. In order to have a more critical assessment of MS’s thought on devotion, Nelson has made an attempt to explore the true import of the *BhR* in its social, historical, philosophical, and religious background. Keeping in mind the view of MS on what he was really seeking to establish in the *BhR*, Nelson follows a historical and preliminary analysis with his translations of the first *ullāsa* of the *BhR* and his critical observations. Nelson highlights the considerable theoretical difficulties that MS had to face in presenting his views in the *BhR*, observing that, ‘No matter how convincing Madhusūdana’s efforts to establish the experiential superiority of devotion, it is not at all clear that he is successful in demonstrating that it has a greater ontological value than *mokṣa*, or indeed even an equal ontological value.’

Nelson also discusses the notion of *bhakti* as found in the *GD* of MS, concluding that as compared to the *BhR*, the final philosophical stance and intent of MS comes through better in the *GD*. The following concluding observations of Nelson are noteworthy while undertaking any critical research on MS.

Madhusūdana’s writings on *bhakti* represent an important phase of Advaitic thought, one that strains the limits of the system to their utmost, and in the process, raises important questions for the tradition as a whole. It is my feeling that a careful and creative consideration of the problem that Madhusūdana’s works raises would make a significant contribution to the ongoing vitality of Advaita in its modern context.

Nelson (1989) observes on MS’s somewhat paradoxical attitude towards ascetic renunciation and sentimental *bhakti-rasa*: ‘A more ascetic, contemplative

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234 Nelson 1986: p. 11 ff (The same verse is also found at the end of chapters 15 and 18 of the *GD*).
236 Nelson 1986: pp. 354-5,
and essentially unitive style of devotion supersedes them as Madhusūdana’s highest goal. No doubt, it is one more appropriate to the emotional life of a sophisticated non-dualist renunciate.'²³⁸ Nelson (2004) shows that the transition of *bhakti* from the psychological to its ontological aspect runs parallel both in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism (especially in the works of Rūpa Gosvāmī) and MS, but finds the effort of the former more convincing than that of the latter. Nelson also opines that MS was perhaps aware of Rūpa Gosvāmī’s works, but his treatment of *bhakti* was influenced more by other predecessors like Śrīdhara.

### 2.4.4. *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

Coming to the *GD* of MS, the subject matter of our thesis, the following significant scholarly works are available to us. Gupta (1977) has made probably the first English translation of the *GD* of MS. The translator’s preface to the work introduces the reader not only to the basic features of the *GD* but also to the textual formation and relevance of the *BhG* itself in the modern context. A short biographical note on MS is followed by this preface. Apart from the translation, this work contains the original Sanskrit text of the *BhG* together with its translation, though the translation of verses expressing devotional sentiment of MS found in beginning or end of many of the chapters of the *GD* is not found therein. An alphabetical index of the verses of the *BhG* is also added to the work. In judging this work, we can quote here Nelson (1989), ‘Sisir Kumar Gupta’s translation …

while perhaps helpful for the general reader, is often seriously inaccurate, tending to make the text’s presentation of devotion appear more liberal than it is.\textsuperscript{239}

Gambhirananda (2000a) is another translation of the GD of MS into English that is more accurate and useful than that of Gupta. The Introduction of the work contains a short account of the biography and the works of MS, based on available scholarly works available to the translator, besides a brief estimate of MS’s views expressed in the GD. The work also contains original Sanskrit texts of the BhG and their translations. Exhaustive footnotes are also given at important instances, along with a few variant readings of the GD. A detailed glossary of philosophical terms and concepts, and the index of verses of the BhG in alphabetical order have made it easy for the English speaking reader to study this valuable text of MS.

Dvivedi (1975) is a Hindi translation of the GD, including the text of both the BhG and GD. Explanations are added by the translator with a view to make the import of the GD more explicit. An index of the BhG verses in alphabetical order is also given. Sanātanadeva (2005) and Agrawal (2005) are other Hindi translations of the GD, both containing copious footnotes and the original texts of the BhG and GD. Both translations also provide detailed accounts of MS’s life and much additional useful material. Sanātanadeva (2005) compares MS’s distinctive approach to the BhG as compared to those of Śaṅkara and Dhanapati Śūri (a critic of MS, 19\textsuperscript{th} century CE), while Agrawal (2005) carries alphabetical indices of the BhG verses, a glossary of important proper nouns and technical terms, an extensive bibliography and also identifies sources of the quotations cited in the GD.

\textsuperscript{239} Nelson 1989: Footnote 12, p. 86.
Brahma (1986) has edited Bhūtanātha Saptatīrtha’s Bengali translation of the *GD*, with a brief introduction containing a bird’s eye view of MS’s treatment of the *BhG*. The work contains the original Sanskrit texts both of the *BhG* and *GD*, besides their Bengali renderings. The prose order exhibiting the syntactic relation (*anvaya*) between the constituent words of each the *BhG* verse is also given. As one of the basic features of the *GD* is that MS often deals with other views extensively to the extent they are in conformity with and helpful in reaching his own philosophical consideration on a firm basis, additional explanatory notes on important passages along with the translations have been provided that are helpful for understanding the text. A discussion on the true import and essence of the *BhG*, and an account of its merits (*Gītā-mahāmya*) are appended to the work.

Three articles by Nelson (1988, 1989a, 1998) are based on different chapters of his doctoral thesis (Nelson 1986). While both the *BhR* and *GD* have a devotional dimension, MS’s peculiar philosophical stance of being simultaneously a non-dualist and a devotee can be understood by considering the teaching of the *BhR* is preliminary to the understanding of the purport of the *GD*. Nelson (1988) highlights that while Śaṃkara took renunciation (*samnyāsa*) to be the main objective of the *BhG*, MS considered it to be the complete surrender to God (*bhagavad-eka-śaraṇatā*).\(^{240}\) MS’s final Advaitic outlook is expressed more in the *GD* where, notwithstanding a prominent place given to *bhakti*, it is subordinated to the path of knowledge and accommodated within a traditional Vedāntic discipline through the *mahāvākya*-s, whereas in the *BhR*, *bhakti* presents itself as an independent path to the ultimate goal, independent of the Vedic path of knowledge. Nelson therefore

\(^{240}\) Nelson 1988: p. 78.
suggests that in the BhR, MS is addressing a general audience consisting of learned lay devotees of Śaṃkara’s Advaita Vedānta, whereas the GD is mainly meant to advocate devotion to the renunciates of that tradition. Nelson’s critical analysis of the devotion in both these texts will be examined again in this thesis when dealing with the handling of various philosophical concepts in the GD.

Sharma (1967) has made a critical and comparative study of the western ethical outlook of Butler and the Advaitic outlook towards action (karma) with special reference to the GD of MS. Sharma finds considerable accord between MS and Butler with respect to duty, virtue and the relation between ethics and religion. Sharma opines that in the GD, MS especially distinguishes himself from other BhG commentators by combining spiritual knowledge and works together with the help of bhakti or devotion to God. Having discussed Butler’s moral philosophy in the first five chapters, Sharma devotes the next four chapters delineating MS’s ethical considerations and their contrast with those of Butler; before drawing a general conclusion at the end of the work.

Siṃha (1994) presents a critical study of the GD in Hindi, comparing MS’s approach to liberation and its various means of attainment as popularly understood (karma, jñāna, and bhakti yoga-s) with that of Śaṃkara. Referring to the comments on BhG 18.66 where, in sharp contrast to Śaṃkara’s assertion that the BhG teaches jñāna-niṣṭhā as preceded by the renunciation of all actions, MS advocates bhakti-niṣṭhā as the conclusion of the BhG, viewing the other two means, i.e. karma-niṣṭhā and jñāna-niṣṭhā, as the means and fruit of bhakti-niṣṭhā. Siṃha concludes that this is a bold step on MS’s part, making this one of his most noteworthy contributions to the Advaita Vedānta.
In the context of discussing the concept of liberation while living (jīvanmukti) in later scholastic Advaita, Fort (1998) points out the influence of the devotional and yogic works on the GD. From the copious references to the JMV and YV, and MS’s own treatment of jīvanmukti and the means to its attainment in the GD, Fort comes to the conclusion that the GD is influenced by the Yogic Advaita, which is rather uncommon in most other Advaita works, including the AdS.241

Marcaurelle (2000), in the course of an extensive study of renunciation in the tradition of Śaṃkara’s Advaita Vedānta, has critically analysed several passages from the GD together with other post-Śaṃkara writers on the subject. With the help of copious textual references to the works of both Śaṃkara and MS, Marcaurelle assesses the role of physical renunciation and of renunciation of all actions (sarvakarmasaṃnyāsa) in attaining liberation. He concludes that although MS tried to provide a complete understanding of the path to liberation, he was inconsistent and misunderstood Śaṃkara in many places as well.242

In an essay that draws mainly from the BhR and GD, Gupta Gombrich (1991) has reflected on how MS reconciles his devotional attitude to Kṛṣṇa with his own Advaitic philosophy, and whether MS can accept the doctrines of both Rāmānuja and the YV in some manner. In this analysis, the author takes into consideration MS’s overarching allegiance to the Advaita Vedānta in combination with his usage of the literary theory of aesthetic experience, which owes much to Abhinavagupta and the Kashmir Śaiva school and his reliance on the BP, which presupposes a very different current of thought derived from the southern

Vaiṣṇavism, a movement inspired by the Tamil poet-saints, the Ālvārs, who cared more for a certain religious attitude and pure soteriology, rather than philosophy.

After a detailed examination of various points pertaining to MS, Rāmānuja and Abhinavagupta, Gupta Gombrich shows that MS was influenced by both these predecessors, in addition to Caitanya and the YV (e.g. GD 3.18 follows the YV scheme of levels of yogic development). Discussing MS’s delineation of the eleven stages of spiritual development of a devotee in the BhR, Gupta Gombrich concludes that his attempt to reconcile bhakti with Advaita tenets remains unconvincing and problematic.

One glance at these stages reveals Madhusūdana’s basic problem of being a strictly rational philosopher of Advaita Vedāntic affiliation and at the same time swept off his feet by the passionate Kṛṣṇa-bhakti taught by Caitanya and his followers in Bengal. His attempt to reconcile these two contradictory streams remains unsuccessful. Still his scheme of a devotee’s spiritual development remains unique. All his inspiration comes from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, where various levels of experience are illustrated by citing examples from the myths about Kṛṣṇa contained in the text. Thus like Rāmānuja he too depends on the purānic authority to justify his personal views on bhakti. As a clear thinking philosopher, Madhusūdana was keenly aware of the contradictions in his theory of bhakti experience. He repeatedly admitted this ambivalence in charming verses scattered in his various works.

Sitamahalakshmi (1972) however points out that there is a legitimate place of bhakti in the Advaita Vedānta. This is evident from the following words of this author:

An elaborate discussion on the concept of bhakti, beginning with Śrī Śaṅkara and culminating in Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s famous treatise Bhaktirasāyana and his commentary Gādhrāthadipikā on the Bhagavadgītā, proves that bhakti is not only possible but also necessary in Advaita. …We may here state in passing that bhakti has its legitimate place on the practical side of Advaita. The conception of Īśvara who is a complex of nirguṇa Brahman and avidyā as the material and efficient cause of the phenomenal world has been there in Advaita allowing room for devotion to Īśvara by jīva who also is viewed as a complex of nirguṇa Brahman and avidyā and its product-mind. The world is illusory only from the stand-point of the ultimate reality.

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Having given the basic philosophical stance of Advaita in a nutshell, the author now discusses how bhakti plays a role in attaining liberation. While pointing out various proximate means (antraṅga-sādhana) of the intuitive knowledge of brahman, as attested by the tradition, she provides textual support from Śaṅkara and other early authors that bhakti is indeed well attested as one of these means.²⁴⁶ The author goes on to discuss the nature, means, and classifications of devotion, mainly following the BP and MS’s BhR, and with sporadic references to the GD, concluding that relying on the Gītā, both Śaṅkara and MS accept bhakti as an important and helpful means to knowledge, which leads to self realisation.²⁴⁷

Mishra (2009) provides a survey of bhakti in Vedānta, from the Rgvedic times to the 16th-17th centuries. He describes MS, along with others such as Brahmānanda Sarasvatī (17th Century CE), Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha (17th century CE) and Kāśmīraka Sadānanda (17th century CE) as representatives of an era of neo-bhakti in the Advaita Vedānta, who admit the role of bhakti even in the state of jīvanmukti and also its (bhakti’s) independent status, like knowledge, as a path of liberation.²⁴⁸ With copious references to the BhR and GD, and to Brahmānanda Sarasvatī and Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, both of whom wrote commentaries on MS’s works, Mishra concludes that MS’s notable contribution to the place of bhakti in the Śaṅkara Vedānta tradition lies in establishing the compatibility and interdependency of the paths of knowledge and devotion towards attaining liberation.²⁴⁹ Thus, the following observations of Mishra may be cited in this context.

According to the Bhāgavata, Premabhakti is essential for a Jñāna-yogin aspiring for the highest knowledge which it produces, and at the same time highest Jñāna is essential for a

²⁴⁶Sitamahalakshmi 1972: pp. 6-10.
Bhaktiyogin aspiring for the highest Premabhakti, which it achieves in this case. ... The views of Śrīdhara, Bopadeva, Hemādri, Madhusūdana and Nārāyaṇa are the same as those of the author of the Bhāgavata. It is in fact, these views of the last two of the five great stalwarts of Bhakti which, as repeatedly remarked, constitute the newest and the finest contribution to the concept of Bhakti in Śāṅkara Vedānta.\footnote{Mishra 2009: p. 236.}


2.5. Room for further research on the Gūḍhārthadīpikā

As already mentioned earlier, MS’s commentary on the BhG has not been approved on all issues by later commentators, including Nīlakaṇṭha Sūrī, Veṅkaṭanātha and Dhanapati Sūrī, who are, like MS, adherents to the Advaita Vedānta. Besides, MS’s efforts to place bhakti within the parameters of Advaita doctrine – a fact considered to be the unique contribution of MS to the tradition of Advaita – is not unanimously regarded as successful by modern scholarship. Two modern scholars, Lance Nelson and Sanjukta Gupta, who have studied MS’s views in the BhR and GD, seem to hold divergent views, while Marcaurelle asserts that MS occasionally failed to understand the intent of Śaṅkara’s commentary on the BhG.
Therefore, on the basis of modern research available on MS in general, we can state with confidence that while there have been some studies of the GD of MS, none of them is fully exhaustive in its treatment of the text, as proposed in this thesis. Though the GD is a widely available complete commentary on the BhG, this thesis, in its modest way, will be the first extensive and critical study of this text, in the process of which it will try to fill some gaps in the available research on MS. Moreover, this thesis places the GD in the context of the history of the commentarial tradition of the BhG and discusses the views of post-Madhusūdana commentators on his work.
Madhusūdana’s Introduction (upodghāta) to the Gūḍhārthadīpikā as Summary of the Bhagavadgītā

‘The Lord has divulged all this in the scripture Gītā. So my mind is very much keen to explain it.’

-- GD, introductory verse 40

MS’s introduction (upodghāta) gives not only an excellent summary of his own commentary on the text of the BhG, but also of the teaching of the Gītā itself. As one of the English translators of MS’s commentary on the BhG rightly remarks, ‘His introduction gives the essence and the evolution of the Gītā with a brilliant perspicuity.’ It also propounds explicitly a resume of the means of liberation and the role of devotion in it. Therefore, it will be useful to examine the introduction in some detail as a means of comprehending what MS aims at throughout the rest of the lengthy text.

In the discourse of Indian philosophical texts, the introduction often contextualises what follows and foreshadows its purport. A classical description of upodghāta is as an introduction that sets out the suitable place (sthāna) or occasion for the study of a text, the reason (nimitta) for it, the speaker (vaktā), the listener (śrotā), the use it offers for the listener (śrotṛ-prayojana) and an explanation of the relationship (sambandha) of all these to the discourse proper.

Prakāśātmayati, in his Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa, defines an upodghāta as an

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251 etat sarvam bhagavatā gītāśāstre prakāśitam / ato vyākhyātum etanme mana utsahate bhrāṣam //
252 Gupta 1977: Translator’s preface, p. x (italics added).
253 Gambhirananda 2000a: p. 16.
254 cintām prakṛtasidhyarthām upodghātam pracakṣate (Quoted in Panoli 2003: p. 6).
introductory consideration of alternative meanings to better explicate the goal that is sought to be established. Such introductory passages often contain the four unifying factors necessary for beginning the study of a philosophical work, namely the person for whom the work is meant (adhiścārin), the topic or subject-matter of the text (viśaya), the relation of the subject-matter to the text (sambandha), and the purpose served by studying it (prayojana). These four unifying factors are technically known as anubandha-catuṣṭaya, as explained systematically in the Vedāntasāra (VS) of Sadānanda Yogīndra (16th century CE). The knowledge of these four factors produces the inclination (pravṛtti) of the person concerned to engage with the text.

In Advaita, the typical person with eligibility for the knowledge of brahman (adhiścārin) is one whose mind has been purified through prior performance of prescribed actions and the fourfold inner disciplines (sādhanacatuṣṭaya). The non-difference between the supreme reality and the individual self is the topic for discussion (viśaya) in the text, the connection between this knowledge and the text that establishes it is the relation (sambandha) and the dispelling of nescience with the rise of non-dual knowledge, thereby attaining the highest bliss is the purpose of

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256 *pratipādyam artham buddhau samgrhyam prāg eva tadartham arthāntaram upodgātah* (Pañcapādikā 1958; Pañcapādikāśaṅkara, p. 46).
257 Nikhilananda 1997: VS 1.5, p. 3.
258 Also see Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śastra 1978-83: Vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 10.
259 Kumārila Bhātha (7th century CE), the founder of the Bhātha school of Mīmāṃsā, emphasises this too in the Ślokavārtika that a listener listens to a śastra only when its purpose and its relation to its subject- matter are already known (siddhārthaṃ jñātasaṃbandham śrotāṃ śrotā pavartate / sāstrādau tena vaśtvam sambandham saprayojanaḥ //)[Shastri 1978: Pratiṣṭhā-sūtra, śloka 17, p. 6].
260 Nikhilananda 1997: VS 1.6, p. 3 (Also refer to Brahmaśūtra 2000: BSB 1.1.1, pp. 71-5; Cidghanānanda 1995: Tattvabodha 1, p. 1; Śrīśāmkara-granthāvalī 1999: Vol. 3, VC 17-8, p. 5 etc.).
its study (*prayojana*).\(^{260}\) A proper introduction provides the full orientation to the
text, touching upon all these aspects.

MS’s introduction to his commentary on the *BhG* consists of forty six
verses, which form the focus of this chapter. This study will critically compare this
with the introductions to the *BhG* commentaries of Śaṃkara, Ānandagiri (on
Śaṃkara’s commentary on the *BhG*), Rāmānuja and Śrīdhara on distinct issues, in
order to explore how these earlier authors may have influenced theoretical
considerations in MS’s *BhG* commentary. Other works of MS and Śaṃkara, as also
texts that are traditionally accepted as authoritative and may have shaped MS’s
thought, will also be taken into consideration.

3.1. Structure of the introduction to the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

The versified introduction to the *GD* can be divided into thematic units. Verses 1-3a
provide an invocation, and set out the author’s reason for undertaking a
commentary on the *Gītā*. Verses 3b-7 describe both the Vedas and the
*BhG* as being
similarly tripartite in structure and serving the same purpose, concluding with the
predominance of bhakti-niṣṭhā. The threefold division of the *BhG* as the means of
establishing the unity of jīva and brahman, as stated by the Upanisadic dictum ‘That
thou art’ (*tattvamasi*) is described in verses 8-10. The means of liberation (*mukti-
sādhana-parvan*) with special reference to Pātañjala Yoga are covered in verses 11-
27, while the next two verses described the one who is liberated while living
(*jīvanmukta*). Verses 30-40 touch upon the importance of devotion to God
(*bhagavadbhakti*) for the liberated while living in attaining the final emancipation

(videha-mukti). The last six verses eulogize the Gītā as the eminent means of eradicating hindrances to liberation (mokṣa), the supreme attainment of human life (parama-puruṣārtha).

3.1.1. Verses 1-3a: The invocation, the purpose of Bhagavadgītā and Madhusūdana’s commentary

MS begins his commentary with a traditional verse offering salutations (maṅgalācaraṇa) to Lord Rāmacandra, who is worshipped by the highest order of mendicants (parama-haṃsa-s) and who resides in the hearts of devotees.261 Note that Śaṃkara also begins his commentary on the BhG with obeisances to Lord Nārāyaṇa, but by quoting a Purānic verse, rather than composing an invocation of his own. Ānandagiri, who starts his gloss on the BhG commentary with a salutation to Lord Vāsudeva (Hari) and Śaṃkara,262 explains that Nārāyaṇa is Śaṃkara’s chosen deity (iṣṭa-devatā), with a popularly cited cosmic significance as given in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. The primordial waters are created by the supreme person (nara) and are therefore called nāra. They also become his abode (ayana) at the time of dissolution, so that this supreme person is called Nārāyaṇa.263 Ānandagiri also provides a subtler conception, whereby the word nara refers to all bodies, moving and unmoving, so that ‘nāra’ means the individual embodied selves, which are the reflections of the supreme consciousness, while Nārāyaṇa is the inner controller

261 oṁ namāḥ paramahāṃsaśvādita caranakamala cimakarandāya bhaktajanamānasanivāśaśī Śrīrāmacandrāyaḥ (Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyakhya, maṅgalācaraṇan, p. 1).
(antaryāmin), the substratum of all embodied selves. Śaṃkara’s introduction also describes Nārāyaṇa as Viṣṇu, the original creator (ādikartā), who incarnated as Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva and Devakī, for the protection of the earthly brahman (the spiritual order of the world) and the spiritual life (brāhmaṇatva) and gave the BhG to teach the ultimate reality called Lord Vāsudeva, the supreme brahman.

Rāmānuja’s invocation to his BhG commentary salutes his great predecessor Yāmunācārya and lists numerous attributes of Lord Nārāyaṇa, who is also of the nature of infinite knowledge and bliss (ananta-jiñānānandaika-svarūpa), and narrates his (Nārāyaṇa’s) advent on earth as Lord Kṛṣṇa and his subsequent appearance in the battle field of Kurukṣetra. Śrīdharā Svāmin at the beginning of his commentary on the BhG pays homage to Lord Mādhava (Śrīkṛṣṇa), who is of the nature of supreme bliss (paramānanda), and Lord Viṣeśvara (Śiva). We may note in this context that Śaṃkara’s BSB too describes devotion to God (iśvara-pranidhāna) as well-established in the Vedas and the Smṛti texts. MS’s homage to Lord Rāmacandra as the qualified (saguṇa) brahman in his invocatory verse is in consonance with both the theistic Vedānta of Rāmānuja and his own predecessors in the Advaita school.

MS then points out his purpose in undertaking a commentary on the BhG and justifies his naming it ‘Gūḍhārthadīpikā’. While staying faithful to his predecessor Śaṃkarabhagavatpāda in interpreting the text, MS proposes to deal with almost each and every word of the BhG. All this is conveyed in the 1st verse of

265 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā, pp. 4-7.
268 Brahmasūtra 2000: BSB 2.2.42, p. 573 (Also see Śitamahalakshmi 1972: p. 4).
the introduction; ‘After having discussed the meaning of the commentary of the revered one (bhagavatpāda) with great care, I will render, almost word for word, the illumination of the hidden meaning of the Gītā (i.e., the Gītāgūḍhārthadīpikā).’ In the tradition of Vedānta philosophy, the relation between the master and his disciples in a monastic order is of utmost importance, and the disciples are often regarded as the successors of their masters. MS’s reference to bhagavatpāda in his introductory verses in the GD is clearly to Śaṃkara. While other commentators of the BhG may have overlooked the unintelligible portions in it, MS proposes to deal with them in detail. MS intends to explain even the words (terms) or pada-s that are known as particles (nipāta), including ‘but’ (tu), ‘and’ (ca), ‘or’ (vā) etc. in the BhG, that other commentators would have typically passed over without explanation. This is the implication of the expression ‘almost word for word’ in the verse. Thus, while keeping the non-dualistic doctrine of Śaṃkara centreste in his interpretation, MS intends to make clear all the intricacies that his predecessors may have overlooked. Indeed, MS gives some indication that he wishes to explicate even the intricacies of Śaṃkara’s BhGB in minute detail. Some scholars think that, since the commentators in their work often do not reveal their sectarian doctrines that are kept secret (sāmpradāyika-rahasya) to the readers, MS wants to bring those secrets to light in his commentary.

269 bhagavatpādabhāṣyārtham ālocyātiprayatnataḥ / prāyah pratvaksaram kurve gītāgūḍhārthadīpikām //, GD, introductory verse 1 (‘pratipadaṃ’, Bhagavadgītā 1912).

270 śrutismṛtipurāṇānām ālayaṃ karuṇālayam / namāmi bhagavatpādaṃ śaṃkaram lokasāṃkaram // (Śrīśāṃkaragranthāvalīḥ 1999: Sampradāya paramparā ślokāni 4). This is an oft-cited verse in the Advaita tradition that identifies Śaṃkara as bhagavatpāda.

Having paid obeisance to both the Lord and his predecessor in the tradition, MS lays down the philosophical foundation of his commentary. By terming the BhG, in verse 2, a scripture (śāstra), and identifying its purpose (prayojana) as the highest good (paraṃ nihśreyasam), i.e. liberation or salvation (mokṣa), MS makes it clear that he regards the BhG on par with the Upaniṣads, which also aim to teach the means of obtaining the complete termination of transmigratory life and its cause. To quote MS; ‘It has been said that the purpose of the scripture of the Gītā is the highest good, which is of the nature of final cessation of transmigration (samsāra) together with its cause (nescience).’

In the same vein, Śaṅkara’s introduction to his BhGB had also referred to the text as a scripture whose purpose is to teach liberation, characterized by the complete termination of transmigration and its cause.

In his commentary on verse seven of the Mahimnastotra, MS had held that the expression, ‘all scriptural sources of knowledge’ (śāstra-prasthāna-s) referred to the ‘three’ (trayī), which include the eighteen vidyā-s: four Vedas (the Rk, Yajuḥ, Sāma, and Atharva) six Vedāṅgas (the Śikṣā, Kalpa, Vyākaraṇa, Nirukta, Chandas, and Jyotiṣa), four Upāṅgas (the Purāṇas, Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, and Dharmaśāstras), and four Upavedas (the Āyurveda, Dhanurveda, Gāndharvaveda, and Arthaśāstra). MS adds that the Upapurāṇas are included in the Purāṇas, Vaiśeṣika in Nyāya, Vedānta in Mīmāṃsā, while Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata, Śāṅkya, Pātañjala (Yoga), Pāśupata, and Vaiṣṇava texts are included in the category of Dharmaśāstras.

272 sahetukasya samsārasyaḥvartoparamātmakam / paraṃ nihśreyasaṃ gītāśāstraśoṣyaḥ prayojanam //, GD, introductory verse 2.
Heterodox schools like the Cārvāka, Baudha and Jaina have their separate scriptural sources of knowledge, but MS holds that these are non-Vedic and not even indirectly helpful in obtaining puruṣārtha-s, so that they are to be ignored.\textsuperscript{275}

In the GD as well, by the word śāstra, MS means the Vedas, and the related texts like the Smṛtis, Purāṇas etc. that can be considered Vedic.\textsuperscript{276} For Śaṅkara too, the BhG represents the quintessence of the entire teaching of the Vedas.\textsuperscript{277}

MS holds that the BhG, rendered in the form of a dialogue between the Lord and Arjuna, is meant to extol the knowledge of brahman (brahma-vidyā), as found in different Upaniṣadic dialogues like those between Janaka and Yājñavalkya (BU), Naciketā and Yamarāja (KU) etc.\textsuperscript{278} Considering the BhG to be on a par with the Upaniṣadic expositions, MS quotes the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Jābala Upaniṣad etc. which bear references to Kurukṣetra.\textsuperscript{279} This idea is also supported in one of the customary verses of meditation (dhyāna-śloka) on the BhG, where all the Upaniṣads are called cows, the son of Nanda (Krṣṇa) is the milkman, the BhG is the supreme milk (dugdha) akin to nectar (amṛta) and Arjuna (Pārtha) is the calf, and the wise (sudhī) are the enjoyer (bhoktā).\textsuperscript{280} While the Upaniṣadic dialogues convey lofty philosophical doctrines, the BhG explains the essentials (sāra) of those philosophical principles in an abbreviated form. Furthermore, there are several

\textsuperscript{275} Śivamahimnaḥstotram 1996: Madhusūdani, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{276} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdaniyākhyā, p. 650 (Also see Hanneder 1999: p. 578).
\textsuperscript{277} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{278} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdaniyākhyā, p.8.
\textsuperscript{279} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdaniyākhyā, p. 9.

Some scholars hold that, since the BhG is treated to be an explanatory part of the Upaniṣads, it could be a part of any of the Vedas. As the text of the BhG is not found in the Vedas, it seems to be an extinct part of the Vedas at the time of Vedavyāsa, who composed the MBh on the basis of the historical truth of the Vedas (See Brahma 1986: Footnote, pp. 10-11).
\textsuperscript{280} sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopālanandanaḥ / pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīrbhoktā dugdham gītāṃ mahat // (Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmadbhagavadgītāmaṅgalācaraṇam 4 ).
Upaniṣadic texts found quoted in the BhG, with minor variations. Thus, the BhG, considered as an explanatory part of the Upaniṣads, is regarded as an authoritative scripture.

We may note that Vācaspati Miśra in his Bhāmatī quotes the Ślokavārtika (śabda-pariccheda, śloka 4) of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, according to which that which advises one to engage in obligatory duties and to abstain from the prohibited actions is known as scripture, be it eternal or non-eternal. From this traditional consideration as well, the BhG, which prompts Arjuna to undertake his own duty (svadharma) and dissuades him from others’ duty (para-dharma), is certainly a scripture. Kumārila also says in his Ślokavārtika that; ‘It is true of all śāstra-s as well as of all courses of actions that none of them is adopted by any one as long as the purpose (served by it) is not mentioned.’ By setting its purpose (viz. liberation or salvation that entails the total obliteration of saṃsāra and its cause) in view, BhG fulfils this criterion as well. Thus, for both MS and Śaṅkara, BhG is an eminent śāstra teaching liberation, a fact that finds support not only within their own works, but also broadly from the commentarial tradition that they represent.

For MS, the supreme reality, i.e. the unqualified brahman, is none other than the qualified brahman (Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa). The word Viṣṇu is used in the MBh in the sense of all-pervading brahman. The Vedas aim at attaining the supreme state of Lord Viṣṇu (viṣṇoḥ paraṃ padam). As part of describing the nature of

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281 For details, refer to Sastrigal 1990.
283 Shastri 1978: Praphiṣṭhyā-sūtra, śloka 12, p. 5.
285 He says that he does not know any of the realities higher than Lord Kṛṣṇa (Advaitasiddhi 2005: p. 750 and Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, 1st concluding verse of chapters 15 and 18, pp. 632 and 775).
286 ‘bṛhattvāt viṣṇurucyate’ MBh 5.70.3 [quoted in Agrawal 2005: Vol. 1, footnote 6. (i), p. 2].
salvation or liberation, the second introductory verse of the GD shows the first step, i.e. getting rid of transmigration along with its cause (avidyā/ajñāna), while the third begins with delineating the final stage, which is attainment of the supreme state of the Lord (paramānanda-prāpti), thereby explaining the complete nature (pūrṇa-svarūpa) of salvation. Thus MS says, ‘That supreme state of Lord Viṣṇu is in the nature of existence, knowledge, and bliss; and is absolute.’

In the third verse, the term ‘sat’ refers to that which is true, not sublated in all three periods of time (trīkālābādhita), i.e. eternal (nitya), ‘cit’ refers to knowledge that is self-manifest (svayaṃ-prakāśa), and ‘ānanda’ refers to unending bliss (niratiśaya-premāspada). The Vākyasudhā, a topical text (prakaraṇa-grantha) of the Advaita tradition, says that all physical entities partake of five characteristics, namely existence (asti), appearance (bhāti), value as ‘it is blissful’ (priyam), as also name (nāma) and form (rūpa). The first three are the essential nature (svarūpa) of brahman and the last two are attributed to the physical world. While all physical entities exist, shine and become blissful or favorable (anukūla) on account of their being superimposed on brahman characterized as existence, consciousness and bliss (saccidānanda-lakṣaṇa), the last two characteristics in the group are only momentarily real in terms of the first three. Therefore, it follows that Lord Viṣṇu who, according to MS, is nothing but existence-consciousness-bliss (saccidānanda) by nature, is alone the subject-matter (viṣaya) of the text of the BhG. Śaṅkara too says that Lord Vāsudeva, in the nature of supreme brahman, is set forth as the subject-matter of the BhG. With this, in agreement with Śaṅkara, the second

287 saccidānandarūpaṃ tatpūrṇam viṣṇoh param padam /, GD, introductory verse 3a.
288 asti bhāti priyam rūpaṃ nāma cetyamsaṇaṇaṃkam / ādyam trayam brahmaṇarūpaṃ jagadrūpaṃ tato dvayaṃ // (Cidghanānanda 1995: Vākyasudhā 20 and the explanation of it by Ānandagiri, pp. 355-6).
factor of *anubandha-catustaya*, namely *viṣaya*, is established in MS’s introduction to the *GD*.

Thus, according to MS, the attainment of the supreme state or abode of Lord Viṣṇu (*brahman*) having the essential nature of existence, knowledge and bliss and being the absolute, preceded by the complete cessation of transmigration with its cause, is the purpose (*prayojana*) of the *BhG*.290 Though Śaṃkara, as noted above, explicitly mentions the complete cessation of transmigration with its cause to be the purpose of the *BhG*, his explicit statement that attaining the state of Lord Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu or Vāsudeva is the subject-matter of the *BhG* also agrees with the view of MS in question.

3.1.2. Verses 3b-7a: Vedas and *Bhagavatgītā* are similar in structure and identical in purpose

Having defined the nature of *mokṣa*, which is the purpose (*prayojana*) of the *BhG*, MS states the relation (*sambandha*) between the *BhG* and liberation (*mokṣa*) in the second half of verse 3 by saying that the tripartite Vedas containing *karma*, *jñāna*, and *upāsanā kāṇḍa*-s are the means for obtaining that *mokṣa*. To quote MS; ‘The tripartite Vedas have been commenced for the attainment of that (highest state)…..’291

As stated earlier, Śaṃkara views the *BhG* as the essence of the whole teaching of the Vedas. While the Mīmāṃsakas accept the Veda as not having any human authorship (*apauruṣeya*) and consider it beginningless (*anādi*), the Advaita Vedāntins, following Śaṃkara, treat the Veda as having its source in *brahman* and


291 yatprāptaye samārabdhā vedāḥ kāṇḍatrayātmakāḥ //, *GD*, introductory verse 3b.
in turn being the source of *brahman* knowledge (*śāstrayoni*). After describing Lord Viṣṇu, whose essential nature is existence-consciousness-bliss, as the subject-matter of the *BhG*, MS defines the content of the text with greater philosophical precision. In his unique way of establishing similarity in structure between the Veda and *BhG*, MS draws functional equivalences between the three sections of the Vedas and three sections of the *BhG*, focusing on action (*karma*), meditation or worship (*upāsanā*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) respectively. Thus, he argues in verse 4; ‘Just as the tripartite Vedas have the parts that deal with action, meditation or worship, and knowledge, the *Gītā*, consisting of eighteen chapters, also has three sections.’ How MS justifies and interprets this similarity in structure will be discussed in further detail below.

In the traditional Indian philosophical systems, we find mainly two distinct parts of the Vedic texts, dealing with two separate things, viz. i.e., action (*karma*) and knowledge (*jñāna*), ultimately giving rise to the systems of Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta respectively. Śaṃkara too, in an introduction to his *BhG* commentary, talks about two principal laws of the Vedas (*vaidika-dharma*). According to him, the Lord, after creating this cosmos (*jagat*) and for the sake of ensuring its existence, promulgates two principal Vedic laws. One is the law of embracing action (*pravṛtti-lakṣaṇa-dharma*), which ensures the continued existence of the order of creation, leading to worldly accomplishment (*abhyudaya*). The other is the

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293 *karmopāstis tathā jñānam iti kāṇḍatrayam kramāt / tadrūpāṣṭādaśādhyāyairgītā kāṇḍatrayātmikā //* (*‘tadrūpāṣṭādaśādhyāyī gītā’, Bhagavadgītā 1912), *GD*, introductory verse 4.

294 The Mīmāṃsā deals with the earlier portion of the Vedas, i.e., the Mantra and the Brāhmaṇa, called the part dealing with action, rituals and the sacrifices (*karma-kāṇḍa*), they are regarded as the Pūrvamīmāṃsā or the Karmamīmāṃsā; whereas the Vedānta is regarded as the Uttaramīmāṃsā or the Jñānamīmāṃsā due to their acceptance of the later portion of the Vedas, i.e., the Upaniṣads, being called the part dealing with the knowledge of reality (*jñāna-kāṇḍa*) [See also chapter 1.3 supra].
law of cessation of works (nivṛttī-laksana-dharma), which ensures preservation of
the Vedic truth (knowledge), leading to salvation (niḥśreyasa). This would
indicate that Śaṅkara mainly accepts a two-fold division of the Veda, and perhaps a
similarly two-fold division in the BhG, since according to him; the BhG is the
essence of the entire Vedic teaching. Śaṅkara’s commentary on the BhG does not
actually support a textual division of the BhG into two sections, but the theme of
pravṛtti versus nivṛtti occurs repeatedly throughout the text. Also note that there has
always been a current of Vedāntic thought advocating a theory that knowledge-
cum-action (jñāna-karma-samuccaya) is the means to liberation.

However, there are many places in Śaṅkara’s writing where meditation or
worship (upāsanā) is mentioned. In his commentary on the BS, a traditional
opponent’s view is that though the jñāna portion of the Veda teaching the identity
of the individual self with brahman, is different from the karma portion presenting
rites and sacrifices, the Upaniṣads are actually meant for enjoining actions like
worship and meditation. In this manner, the third subject, namely upāsanā, can
indeed be considered an important topic taught in the Veda. The BhG, being a text
of Vedānta, also discusses all these three topics. The karma-kāṇḍa and jñāna-kāṇḍa
of the Vedas lead to the Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta schools correspondingly, but the
Vedānta, which also speaks of the saguṇa traits of brahman, also expounds various
forms of upāsanā or bhakti, thereby resulting in the three parts of the Vedas dealing
with karma, upāsanā/bhakti, and jñāna respectively. Here lies the justification of

But for him, the latter has the supremacy to the former being opposed to the Pūrvamīmāṃsaka view
(See Hirst 1993: pp. 124-5).
296 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā, p. 5.
297 Brahmāsūtra 2000: BSB 1.1.4, p. 100.
MS for dividing the *BhG* into three parts corresponding to the three divisions of the Vedas.\(^{298}\)

For MS, the Vedic teaching and, consequently, the teaching of the *BhG* (through their corresponding three sections) delineate three ways of achieving what is to be accomplished, viz. steadfastness in action (*karma-niṣṭhā*), steadfastness in loving devotion to God (*bhagavadbhakti-niṣṭhā*), and steadfastness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*). MS also gives philosophical justification for this chronological order. MS holds that action and knowledge, being opposed to each other, cannot be co-related, i.e. they cannot be present simultaneously in the same self. Devotion, not being a contradiction of either action or knowledge, is placed in the middle and mediates between them.\(^ {299}\) Action presumes an agent (*kartṛ*) and is occasioned by the quality of activities (*rajo-guṇa*). Knowledge of *brahman* is dependent on its object (*viṣaya*) and is occasioned by the quality of truth (*sattva-guṇa*). As both these qualities cannot be present in one’s mind at the same time, steadfastness in action and steadfastness in knowledge are mutually opposed and cannot be simultaneously present in the same mind. This calls for mediation, so the Lord does not mention them successively in the *BhG*, but places devotion in the middle.\(^ {300}\)

\(^{298}\) It has been a tradition, particularly among the Vedāntins, to divide the *BhG* into three parts taking six chapters each and considering their respective subject-matters. Though Śaṃkara has not made such explicit division in his commentary, later commentators such as Yāmuna, Rāmānuja etc. have mentioned this division clearly according to their philosophical considerations (*Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Gītārthasaṃgrahopodghātaḥ* 2-4, pp. 21-2 and *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 2, *Rāmānujabhāṣyam*, p. 4; vol. 3, *Rāmānujabhāṣyam*, p. 5). Besides, Keśava Kāśmīrı́ Bhaṭṭa also describes the *Gītā* in his commentary on it, called the *Tattvaprakāśikā*, as having three *kāṇḍa*-s of *jñāna*, *karma* and *upāsanā*, and as the essence of the entire Vedic lore (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001: Vol. 1, *Tattvaprakāśikā*, p. 2).

\(^{299}\) *yataḥ samuccayo nāsti tayor ativirodhataḥ / bhagavadbhaktiniṣṭhā tu madhyame parikīrtitā //*, *GD*, introductory verse 6.

There is a traditional maxim in this context, known as the *dehalīdīpam-nyāya*: a lamp placed on the threshold of a house is lit from a lamp hanging outside the threshold, but illumines both inside and outside the threshold, thus serving two purposes at one time (See Apte 1998: p. 574).

The views of other philosophical streams contrast with that of MS in this regard. According to the followers of the doctrine that knowledge-*cum*-action leads to liberation (*jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vāda*), the cause of liberation is not just knowledge conveyed through the texts, but knowledge gained through meditative practice and insight (*upāsanātmaka-jñāna*). To this way of thinking, there is no contradiction between knowledge and action. On the other hand, Rāmānujācārya does not accept this theory of combining action and knowledge. Rather, he holds that though knowledge and action do not contradict each other, they are not of equal importance in giving rise to liberation. Only knowledge, which comes from devotion to the Lord, leads to liberation, while action helps merely as preparatory to attaining the knowledge of *brahman*, by purifying the mind. By contrast, and in agreement with Śaṃkara, MS sees *karma* and *jñāna* as opposed to each other, but he also gives great importance to devotion as mediating between the two.

### 3.1.3. Verse 7b: The predominance of steadfastness in devotion (*bhakti-niṣṭhā*)

MS maintains that devotion to God is intimately connected with both action and knowledge, and is effective in removing obstacles to bringing them together: ‘Since (steadfastness in devotion) is inherent in both (steadfastness in action and steadfastness in knowledge), it removes all obstacles. It is of three types: mixed with rites and duties (*karma-miśrā*), pure (*śuddhā*), and mixed with knowledge (*jñāna-miśrā*).’

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301 The view is also echoed in the introduction to the BhG commentary of Śaṃkara (*Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, p. 7).  
302 ubhayānugatā sa hi sarvavighnāpanodini | karmamiśrā ca śuddhā ca jñānamiśrā ca sā tridhā //, *GD*, introductory verse 7.
There are many natural obstacles to accomplishing action. In order to remove the obstacles to the primary scriptural (śrauta) and the secondary scriptural (smārta) actions, rituals like chanting hymns, recitation of the name (japa) and worshipping (pūjā) of Lord Gaṇeśa etc. are performed. It is an established view that such obstacles are removed by devotion to God (iśvara-prāṇidhāna). Likewise, as Advaita views steadfastness in knowledge to be synonymous with desisting from all action, there are numerous obstacles to accomplishing that as well. MS already indicates in his introduction that steadfastness in devotion helps remove those obstacles as well. Unlike MS, Śaṃkara does not explicitly mention bhakti at his introduction to the BhGB, though he refers to pravṛtti (i.e. karma and bhakti) and nivṛtti (i.e. jñāna), and considers the former to be of help in purifying the mind when performed with a sense of dedication to God, thereby leading to the latter. MS may have been influenced by the theistic Vaiṣṇava thinking while making this threefold division of bhakti. However, note that while MS says the BhG has three sections devoted to karma, bhakti, and jñāna, he also speaks of three types of bhakti, viz. karma-miśrā, śuddhā, and jñāna-miśrā. The word anugata in verse 7 also means that bhakti is also at work in the two other paths, i.e. those of karma and jñāna as formulated in the BhG. It would seem that in his opinion, bhakti has been expounded throughout the entire BhG.

303 See Dvivedi 1975: Vol. 1, upodghāta, p. 5.
305 Viśvanātha Cakravartin, too, following the tradition of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, has classified bhakti into two types: kevalā-bhakti (pure devotion) and pradhānī-bhātā-bhakti (a process outweighed by bhakti) in the introduction to his commentary on the BhG. While he holds that the former is independent, staunch, and bereft of the mixture of karma and jñāna; the latter is mixed with karma and jñāna (Bhagavadgītā: date not known, p. 2).
306 See Das 2008.
3.1.4. Verses 8-10: The threefold division of *Bhagavadgītā* as corresponding to

‘*tat tvam asi*’

Having pointed out the similarity between the Vedas and *BhG*, MS now shows that there is a fundamental identity between the teaching of the *BhG* and the Upaniṣads and that the *BhG* expounds, in its own way, the key of the Upaniṣadic dictum, *tattvamasi* (*CU* 6.8.7). In order to justify the three-fold structure of the *BhG*, MS devotes verses 8-10 to describe the terms *tat*, *tvam* and *asi*, the constituent words of this sentence. The individual self (*jīva*) is denoted by the term ‘thou’ (*tvam*) and is ‘established’ through performance of rites and duties as well as their renunciation (*karma-tyāga*), the supreme self (*paramātmā*) is denoted by the term ‘that’ (*tat*) and ‘determined’ through devotion to God (*bhagavadbhakti*), while the identity of ‘thou’ and ‘that’, denoted by the term ‘are’ (*asi*), is grasped through steadfastness of knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*). Hence in verse 10, MS says, ‘In the third section, the meaning of the Upaniṣadic dictum (‘That thou art’) as a unity of the referents of those two terms (i.e. ‘that’ and ‘thou’) has again been explained explicitly. Thus, here (in the *BhG*) as well, all the sections are mutually related.’

‘Great sentences’ (*mahāvākyac*) indicate the Upaniṣadic statements which refer to the non-difference between the individual self (*jīva*) and the supreme self (*brahman*). ‘Consciousness is *brahman*’ (*prajñānam brahma* – *Rg Veda*, *AU* 3.3), ‘That thou art’ (*tattvamasi* – *Sāma Veda*, *CU* 6.8.7), ‘I am *brahman*’ (*ahaṃ brahmāsmi* – *Yajur Veda*, *BU* 1.4.10), and ‘*Brahman is this self*’ (*ayam ātmā brahma* – *Atharva Veda*, *MāU* 2) are regarded as the principal great sentences in

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307 *trīye tu tayoraikyaṃ vākyārtho varṇyate sphuṭam / evam apyatra kāṇḍānāṃ sambandho’sti parasparam //*, *GD*, introductory verse 10.
the four Vedas respectively. Whereas in the CU the sequence is ‘*tat*’ (that) followed by ‘*tvam*’ (thou), the other three sentences have those two terms in the opposite order. On the other hand, statements referring only to the nature (*svarūpa*) of God or only to the individual self are called subsidiary sentences (*avāntara-vākya*-s). In the *AdS*, MS says that realization of the ‘pure consciousness’ (*svarūpa-caitanya*) in the ‘great purport’ (*mahā-tātparya*) is reached with the help of the subsidiary purport (*avāntara-tātparya*), as in ‘One without second’ (‘*ekam evādvitiyam*’) etc.

The primary meaning (*mukhyārtha*) of the statement ‘That thou art’ can be shown in the following way. ‘That’ (*tat*) is the supreme self (*brahman*), viewed as the source of the universe, while ‘thou’ (*tvam*) is the individual self (*jīva*), the ātman conditioned by the body-mind complex. The secondary sense (*gauṇārtha*) of the sentence is that ‘that’ means pure consciousness, which is by nature existence, consciousness and bliss; and ‘thou’ denotes pure consciousness, which is the witness (*sākṣī*) of the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. As the term *tat* refers to remote consciousness (*parokṣa-caitanya*) and the term *tvam* refers to immediate or direct consciousness (*aparokṣa-caitanya*), they lack the fitness (*yogyatā*) to express the identity (*abheda*) of their respective referents. So, for the Advaitins, the identity between the referents of these two terms can be conveyed through what is called ‘exclusive-cum-non-exclusive implication’

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308 See Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, part 1, p. 102. Works like *Śvārōjyasiddhi* by Gangādharendra Sarasvatī (1792 CE) are written solely for explaining the Upanisadic great sentences (See Mangalahari Muni 1934 and Acharya 2004: p. 395).

309 This is also the order in which the *BhG* conveys this identity, as per *MS* (See Sanātanadeva 2005: *Upodghāta*, footnote 2, p. 3).


(jahadajahallakṣanā or bhāga-lakṣanā). In this kind of implication, the direct meaning of a word constituting the sentence is partially omitted, but partially retained. Thus, both the terms in this sentence imply consciousness as such, but the immediacy and the remoteness associated with consciousness, which are denoted by them respectively, are left out. Thus, having accepted the common and compatible meanings and omitted the different and incompatible ones, the statement refers to non-difference between what is signified by these two terms (viz. tat and tvam).\textsuperscript{312}

There is some dispute among the Advaita Vedāntins about the type of lakṣanā that has to be admitted while interpreting the sentence ‘tattvamasi’. Some modern scholars are of the opinion that Śaṅkara does not speak of any specific kind of lakṣanā in this case. Some post-Śaṅkara Advaita Vedāntins like Sarvajñātmamuni admit jahallakṣanā, where the primary meaning of a term is totally discarded and a secondary meaning is adopted, in order to make sense of the identity expressed in the sentence. Dharmarāja Adhvārīndra (16\textsuperscript{th} century CE) maintains that one does not require any type of lakṣanā for getting the desired meaning of the sentence ‘tattvamasi’.\textsuperscript{313} Nevertheless, while the Upaniṣadic great sayings directly advocate the unitary knowledge of jīva and brahman, the purpose of the BhG is seen as a restatement and interpretation of the Upaniṣads. MS’s view of the text has been partly anticipated by Ānandagiri, a commentator on Śaṅkara’s

\textsuperscript{312} See Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, part 1, pp. 102-3.
BhGB, who holds that the text can be classified into three parts, jīvakāṇḍa, brahmakāṇḍa, and aikyakāṇḍa, each of them containing six chapters.\textsuperscript{314}

Thus, MS’s assertion that the structure of the BhG aims to establish the unity of the meanings of tat and tvam, thereby itself becoming an explanation of the meaning of the Upaniṣadic mahāvākya, is quite commensurate with the general trend of Advaita Vedānta. However, this attempt has been questioned by later commentators, including Puruṣottamajī (1668 -1764 CE), a proponent of the Śuddhādvaita Vedānta school, who criticises MS on this count. This critic asserts that there is no real textual support for attempting to divide the BhG into karma, upāsanā, and jñāna kāṇḍacs and for then, drawing an equivalence between this structure and the Advaitic explanation of the Upaniṣadic great sentence (e.g. ‘tattvamasi’).\textsuperscript{315}

3.1.5. Verses 11-27: Pātañjala Yoga and the means to liberation (mukti-sādhana-parva)

Each chapter of the BhG describes various aspects of the means to liberation (mukti/mokṣa), which is considered the highest good in Vedānta. As the Advaitic tradition generally considers yogic practices to be of practical help in the process, MS’s introduction gives a detailed account of the yogic steps involved: ‘The subject-matter of each chapter will be discussed in the respective chapters themselves. However, as the purpose of the BhG is liberation, the steps in the means

\textsuperscript{314} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Ānandagirivyākhyā, 1\textsuperscript{st} concluding verse, p. 775 (Also see Sastrigal 1990: p. 2).

\textsuperscript{315} Bhagavadgītā 2000: Vol. 1, Puruṣottamajikrtā’mrtataraṅginyupodghātah, p. 18.
of liberation are now described.\textsuperscript{316} In this manner, MS addresses the relation (\textit{sambandha}), the third factor of \textit{anubandha-catu\ṣṭaya}, demonstrating how liberation, the goal of the \textit{BhG}, is addressed in the text, by describing the means to the goal.

Śaṃkara also holds the purpose of the \textit{BhG} to be the attainment of liberation, which is the final cessation of transmigration along with ignorance, its cause; but he doesn’t provide much detail of the steps leading to liberation, quickly declaring knowledge of the self (\textit{ātma-jñāna}), preceded by renunciation of all actions (\textit{sarvakarma-saṃnyāsa}) to be its means.\textsuperscript{317} MS takes up the first requisite, i.e. an eligible person or a qualified aspirant after liberation (\textit{adhikārin}), in order to show the steps that an aspirant needs to undergo for attaining emancipation. Thus, the first step, he holds, is ‘to undertake disinterested action after discarding both the desire-prompted action and forbidden action. Furthermore, the utmost merit reposes in reciting the name of and praising Lord Hari, and so on.’\textsuperscript{318}

The performance of disinterested actions, i.e. actions performed after renouncing its fruits (\textit{niśkāma-karma}), is combined with the forsaking of both those Vedic rituals that are performed solely out of desire for some personal gain (\textit{kāmya-karma})\textsuperscript{319} and those that are forbidden in the Vedas (\textit{niśiddha-karma}).\textsuperscript{320}

Subsequently, disinterested action includes actions like \textit{japa} (recitation), \textit{stuti
Thus, by describing recitation of the name of and the praising of the Lord as activities that yield the highest merit, MS demonstrates the superiority of meditation/worship to other means of liberation. This is in consonance with his equation of the qualified brahman (which, according to him, is no other than LordKrṣṇa, the supreme reality) with the Advaitic unqualified brahman.

Śaṃkara’s introduction to his commentary on the BhG also says that the performance of actions prescribed by the Vedas, when performed in accordance with one’s caste and life-stage, leads to the attainment of heaven, but if done with a sense of dedication to God and without desire for its fruits, results in purification of the mind. This, in turn, is conducive to the highest good by leading to the knowledge of reality. Thus, actions prescribed by the Vedas are of indirect help in attaining emancipation. In his Vivekacūḍāmaṇi (VC) too, Śaṃkara reiterates the view that disinterested actions only purify one’s mind and that they do not have any direct role in the realisation of reality. It is through the discriminative analysis or enquiry (vīcāra) that the reality is known. Since devotion to God is an affirmative engagement of the senses, body and mind, it can very well be put within the realm of actions recommended by the Vedas (pravṛttī-laksana-dharma) as admitted by Śaṃkara. However, being a purificatory cause, devotion distinguishes itself from actions as such, and even from actions performed with renunciation of their fruits.

The mind, being rid of defilements on account of the performance of disinterested action etc., becomes fit for undergoing the fourfold mental disciplines

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321 See Das 2008.
323 Śrīśāṃkaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 3, VC 11, p. 5.
324 See Das 2008.
aimed at achieving the knowledge of \textit{brahman} and for the enquiry into \textit{brahman} (\textit{brahma-jijn\={a}s\={a}}). These fourfold mental disciplines consist of discernment between things eternal and transient (\textit{nity\={a}ntyya-vastu-viveka}), renunciation of desire for fruits of actions here and hereafter (\textit{ih\={a}mutra-phala-bhoga-vir\={a}ga}), six-fold inner virtues of calmness, temperance etc. (\textit{\=samadam\={a}di-s\={a}dhana-sampat}), and intense desire for liberation (\textit{mumuk\={s}utv\={a}}). Accordingly, MS says, ‘When the mind, being free of impurities, has the capacity for discrimination, then arises the firm discrimination between the eternal and the transient.’\textsuperscript{325}

In his commentary on the first aphorism of the \textit{BS}, Śaṃkara says that virtuous deeds (\textit{dharma-jijn\={a}na}) resulting in prosperity (\textit{abhyudaya-phala}) depend on the performance of Vedic enjoined actions, whereas knowledge of \textit{brahman} (\textit{brahma-vijn\={a}na}) alone, bereft of any accessory action, results in liberation (\textit{ni\={h}\={s}reyasa-phala}). While virtuous deeds are to be accomplished through human effort, the realization of \textit{brahman} does not result from any human endeavour as \textit{brahman} is an eternal and pre-existing entity. Vedic statements imparting the knowledge of virtuous deeds impel people to perform prescribed deeds, while statements communicating \textit{brahman} are the primary valid means of knowing \textit{brahman}, without enjoining action. The prerequisites to be met by the aspirant before undertaking reflection on \textit{brahman}, i.e. \textit{s\={a}dhana-catu\={s}\={t}aya}, are established by Śaṃkara in this context.\textsuperscript{326} MS in the \textit{VK} refers to \textit{BS} 1.1.1 and also indicates that

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{325} k\={s}\={i}nap\={a}pas\={y}a cittasya viveka yogy\={a}t \=a yad\=a / nity\={a}ntyayaviveka\=h tu j\=ayate sudr\={e}\=dha\=h tad\=a //, GD, introductory verse 13.
\item \textsuperscript{326} \textit{Brahmasūtra} 2000: \textit{BSB} 1.1.1, pp. 69-75 (and Gambhirananda 2000: pp. 8-9). Also refer to \textit{Śrīśaṃkara-granṭhāvalī} 1999: Vol. 3, VC 17-20, pp. 5-6 and \textit{US}, \textit{gadyapraban\=dha\=h}, 1.2, p. 115 and \textit{padyapraban\=dha\=h}, 17.53, 17.87, pp. 206, 211; Cidghanānanda 1995: \textit{Tattvabodha} 2, p. 1 for the reference to \textit{s\={a}dhana-catu\={s}\={t}aya} cited by Śaṃkara.
\end{itemize}

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the word ‘then’ (atha) in this aphorism refers to the seeker possessed with the fourfold qualifications.327

Discernment, or nityānitya-vastu-viveka, is the first step in the fourfold disciplines, i.e. śādhaṇa-catuṣṭaya. Śaṅkara holds that this discernment lies in the firm conviction that brahman alone is permanent (nitya), and all else other than it is transient (anitya). This is what is meant by nityānitya-vastu-viveka.328 Thereafter, the aspirant acquires the ability to acquire the other three prerequisites included under śādhaṇa-catuṣṭaya. However, some scholars think that, although nityānitya-vastu-viveka is a pre-requisite of the enquiry into brahman, it cannot be considered as something that has been accomplished. It is rather to be treated as a capacity for rational investigation into the permanent and the impermanent that helps in knowing the ultimate reality, i.e. brahman.329

Now, although the aspirant may know brahman to be the only reality, he may as yet be unable to identify it as his own essential nature, because of being attached to objects of enjoyment, both visible (drṣṭa) ones like kingdom, progeny and sensory pleasure, and invisible (adṛṣṭa) ones like heaven and immortality. He must therefore disengage from these and cultivate a spirit of indifference (ihāmutrārtha-bhoga-virāga) to them, forsaking totally what seems to be other than brahman. Thus, MS says; ‘Indifference towards things of this world and after is called control; after that, in sequence, renunciation should be established through the accomplishment of calmness (and the five other virtues).’330

330 ihāmutrārthavārāgyaṃ vasikārābhidham kramā t tatāh śaṅdisampattyā samnyāso niṣṭhito bhavet /, GD, introductory verse 14.
By affirming the utility of renunciation (saṃnyāsa) in this context, MS agrees with Śaṃkara, who quotes several passages from the Anugītā (in MBh 14) and BhG 18.66 and considers renunciation to be the primary requisite for attaining liberation.\(^{331}\) However, it is noteworthy that MS equates the state of the mind forsaking the objects of this world and beyond with vaśīkāra-vairāgya cited in Patañjali’s Yogasūtra (YS),\(^{332}\) where the craving of the enjoyment of objects is completely done away with. As will be seen, MS’s extensive references to Pātañjala Yoga throughout the GD not only indicate an important feature of his commentary on the BhG, but also have bearing on how he thinks about bhakti.\(^{333}\) This dispassion and attendant renunciation is not a departure from the world, out of disgust and aversion, but a conviction towards understanding the nature of what ultimately leaves the aspirant dissatisfied.\(^{334}\) MS also says that when one acquires the third factor of sādhana-catuṣṭaya, i.e. the six-fold inner virtues or treasures (śamādi-ṣaṭka-sampatti) [calmness (śama), self-control (dama), restraining of the external senses (uparati), fortitude (titikṣā), concentration with the mind thus restrained (samādhāna) and faith (śraddhā)],\(^{335}\) one becomes established in renunciation (saṃnyāsa). Thus, with emphasis on saṃnyāsa, MS here agrees with Śaṃkara to whom, as we will see, the central teaching of the BhG is saṃnyāsa. Besides, in the

\(^{331}\) Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyopakramanikā, pp. 6-7 (Also see Das 2008).

\(^{332}\) Mukerji 2000: YS 1.15 and 1.40, pp. 37, 87.

\(^{333}\) Vairāgya is of two kinds - para and aparā. Aparā again, according to Vācaspati Miśra’s Tattvavaiśāradī is of four types – yatamāna, vyatireka, ekendriya and vaśīkāra (For details of Vācaspati’s explanation, see Yogasūtra 1963: Tattvavaiśāradī on YS 1.15, pp. 17-8) [Also see Agrawal 2005: Vol. 1, footnote 8, pp. 4-5 and Brahma 1986: Footnote, p. 3].

\(^{334}\) See Das 2008.

\(^{335}\) For Śaṃkara’s understanding of all these six factors, though they are almost in conformity with what we have meant here, refer to Cidghanānanda 1995: Tattvabodha 5-6, pp. 1-2 and Śrīśāṃkaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 3, VC 23-27, pp. 6-7. Besides, some scholars think that these six-fold treasures may be found correspondingly to BhG 6.3, 2.58, 18.66, 2.14, 2.53, and 4.39 (See Amṛtavānanda 1998: p. 19).
BSB, Śaṃkara describes these six-fold inner virtues as the proximate means (antaraṅga-sādhanā) for attaining knowledge of brahman, and therefore to be cultivated by the aspirant.\textsuperscript{336}

According to MS, as a result of mastering the first three qualifications, renunciation of all worldly objects (saṃnyāsa) is established and an intense desire for liberation (mumukṣuṭva), the last step in sādhanā-catuṣṭaya, arises, thereby completing the sādhanā-catuṣṭaya. The last discipline, the intense desire for liberation, is of utmost importance, as this step alone leads an aspirant to the enquiry into brahman.\textsuperscript{337} The aspirant who is endowed with this fourfold means of liberation acquires then the fitness to approach a competent teacher to be instructed about the Upaniṣadic truth, i.e. the absolute knowledge. To quote MS; ‘Thus, from total renunciation arises a strong longing for liberation. Then follow approaching a teacher and receiving (scriptural) instructions from him.’\textsuperscript{338}

The qualified seeker now follows another set of triple proximate process to liberation, consisting of hearing (śravaṇa), reflection (manana), and contemplation (nididhyāsana),\textsuperscript{339} under the guidance of a learned teacher. This is referred to by MS in the next two verses, i.e. 16 and 17. In verse 16, MS says, ‘Then in order to dispel doubt, listening to Vedāntic teaching etc. (reflection on it and contemplation

\textsuperscript{336} Brahmasūtra 2000: BSB on BS 3.4.27, pp. 899-900.
\textsuperscript{337} Control of the senses etc. and acquiring of six qualities cause intense desire for liberation, indifference to the fruits of actions here and hereafter causes control of the senses etc. and acquiring of six qualities, and discrimination between permanent and impermanent entities causes indifference to the fruits of actions here and hereafter.
\textsuperscript{338} evaṃ sarvaparityāgān mumukṣaḥ jāyate drdhā / tato gurūpasadanam upadeśagrahastataḥ //, GD, introductory verse 15.
\textsuperscript{339} The triple process is described in the \textit{BU} in the course of a dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī; ‘You see, Maitreyī— it is one’s self (ātman) which one should see and hear, and on which one should reflect and concentrate’ (\textit{BU} 2.4.5, 4.5.6).
thereafter) are followed. In this context, the entire lore of Uttaramīmāṃsā (Vedānta) scripture is employed.  

Listening to Vedānta scriptures (śravaṇa) is not just hearing about the truth from the teacher or the scriptures. Śravaṇa is the investigation into the meaning of the Upaniṣadic texts. Thus, listening to the Vedāntic scriptures from the teacher is an investigation of its purport (tātparya) in order to know the non-dual reality, brahman/ātman. Śravaṇa includes the whole method of Vedāntic teaching and all the traditional methods like adhyāropa-apavāda (the theory of prior superimposition and subsequent denial), neti, neti (not this, not this) etc. under the guidance of a competent teacher.

Hearing about brahman is followed by reflection (manana) on the non-dual reality that the aspirant has heard about from the teacher. Reflection is a mental action involving argumentation towards refuting the possible contradictions from other means of knowledge (perception, inference etc.) about the meaning ascertained through scriptures (i.e. Upaniṣadic texts). This process removes the doubt of an aspirant about the nature of the object (prameya) to be contemplated, brahman, and disperses all the misgivings about the Advaita system, giving rise to a tranquil state of mind that is needed for the last process, i.e. nididhyāsana. In short, manana is not mere reasoning (tarka) but reasoning that is in conformity with Śruti (śrutyanugṛhi-tarka). It is subsidiary to śravaṇa, being of help in removing

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340 *tatāh sandehahānāya vedānta śravanādikam / sarvam uttaramīmāṃsāsāstram atropayujyate //, GD, introductory verse 16.
342 It is a method followed by the Advaitins to lead a seeker to the knowledge of reality by superimposing attributes to an attributeless entity and subsequently denying them.
343 Advaita holds that since any conceptualisation is limited in nature, it cannot be applied in the case of brahman. So, the best suitable means to describe it is to say, not such, not such’.
346 See Malkovsky 2001: p. 86.
the obstacles towards grasping direct knowledge.\textsuperscript{347} Thus, while Advaita recognises the utility of analytical reflection, it also holds that the process of reflection must be rooted in the Vedas and also harmonious with them.\textsuperscript{348} MS’s assertion that the entire Vedāntic scripture becomes useful and meaningful through the process of śravaṇa, manana and nīdidhyāsana is reiterated in the VK as well, with the support of Śruti citations.\textsuperscript{349}

MS holds that, as the process of śravaṇa and manana matures, one becomes fixed in nīdidhyāsana, the constant dwelling on or contemplation on the learning obtained through the earlier two stages (i.e. śravaṇa and manana). The entire meditative apparatus prescribed in Pātañjala Yoga is to be used at this stage. Accordingly, he shows in the following verse (i.e. verse 17) the utility of yogic practices towards obtaining the knowledge of self.\textsuperscript{350} To quote him; ‘Then, with the maturity of that (listening to Vedāntic teaching and its reflection), contemplation on it (nīdidhyāsana) is followed. The entire Yoga scripture, in fact, gets its purpose accomplished at this stage.’\textsuperscript{351} Constant contemplation or nīdidhyāsana is a steady state of the mind about the meaning of the scriptural texts augmented by reflection.\textsuperscript{352}

\textsuperscript{348} For details of Śaṅkara’s views on reflection, see BSB 1.1.1; 2.1.6, 2.1.11; BUB 3.1.1--Intro., 1.4.6; KUB 1.2.8, MāUKB 3.1-- Intro. etc. (cf. Rambachan 1991: pp. 101-8).
\textsuperscript{349} See Karmarkar 1962: pp. 12-3.
\textsuperscript{350} In contrast with the assertion made by MS, Śaṅkara’s acceptance of nīdidhyāsana to be identical with brahma-jñāna and rejection of yogic discipline to be an independent means to it is noteworthy. Being dualists, the Sāṃkhya and Yoga schools fail to grasp the unity of the self, which, according to Advaita, brings forth liberation. Yogic practices mere help in bringing about concentration and purification of the mind towards attainment of liberation (For details of Śaṅkara’s views in this regard, see BSB 1.3.33, 2.1.1, 2.1.3, 2.3.1, BUB 1.4.7, MāUKB 3.39-40, BhGB 5.26-29 etc. – cf. Rambachan 1991: pp. 112-3; notes 65-73, pp. 157-8).
\textsuperscript{351} tatataṣṭāpāṇaḥ nīdidhyāsanaṁ apiḥ / yogaśāstraṁ tu saṃpūrṇamupaksiṇaṁ bhavediha ||, GD, introductory verse 17.
\textsuperscript{352} Pāncaśīkā 1958: Navamavarnākam, p. 352.
Though in the tradition of Advaita this triple process (of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana) stands for the principal proximate aid to liberation, the individual role of each of these three constituents in realising brahma-jñāna is described differently by the interpreters. Śaṅkara holds that although listening to the scriptures precedes the other two, viz. reflection and contemplation, right perception (samyagdarśana) of the unity of the self is only possible when they are all unified, and not through the help of mere hearing (which is the first step). The post-Śaṅkara Advaitins like Vācaspati Miśra, Prakāśātmayati and their followers hold different views in this regard. Vācaspati Miśra and his followers in the Bhāmatī tradition hold that only contemplation is the proximate cause (sākṣātkāraṇa) of realising brahman, reflection being the cause of contemplation and hearing the cause of reflection, so that all three processes are the causes of brahma-jñāna, but in relatively distal fashion. In the Vivaraṇa tradition, however, Prakāśātmayati and others accept hearing about the Vedāntic teaching to be the primary cause of brahma-jñāna, and consider the other two processes, viz. reflection and contemplation as subsidiary (aṅga) to the former (aṅgi).

When, following the above-mentioned, threefold mental discipline towards acquisition of the knowledge of brahman (brahma-jñāna), the mind gets rid of its impurities even further, the direct (aparokṣa), non-conceptual (nirvikalpa) knowledge of the identity between the individual self (jīva) and the supreme self

353 Śriśaṅkaragonḍḥavali 1999: Vol. 10, BUB 2.4.5, p. 304. Śaṅkara himself did not offer a detailed discussion regarding these three aids, though the later Vedāntins took it up (See Brahmaśūtra 2000: BSB 1.1.4, pp. 100-55 and Rambachan 1991: Footnote 60, p. 157).


(brahman) arises therein through the Upaniṣadic dictum ‘tattvamasi.’ To quote MS in verse 18; ‘Then, when the mind gets rinsed of impurities, knowledge of the Upaniṣadic great saying (e.g. ‘tattvamasi’) arises. From the scriptural authority (the Upaniṣadic great saying) itself, is born the non-conceptual, direct awareness of the fundamental unity of being.’

Following Padmapāda, Sureśvara, Prakāśtmayati, Sarvajñātmamuni, Vidyāraṇya etc., MS holds verbal testimony (śabda-pramāṇa) to be the cause of immediate knowledge of brahman/ātman, which is technically known as śabdāparokṣacvāda in Advaita. In the VK, MS holds that the Upaniṣadic great saying (‘tattvamasi’) only gives rise to the immediate knowledge of reality if it is freed from the four impediments, viz. longing for enjoyment of the objects of senses (viṣayacbhogacvāsanā), impossibility in respect of the means of knowledge (prameyagatāsaṃbhāvanā), impossibility regarding the object of knowledge (pramāṇagatāsaṃbhāvanā), and contradictory ideas (viparītacbhāvanā). Again, in his SB, MS says that when nescience and all misery brought into existence by it (i.e. 

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356 κṣīṇadoṣe tataścitte vākyāttattvamatiḥ buddhiḥ / sākṣātkāro nirvikalpaḥ śabdādevopajāyate //, GD, introductory verse 18.
357 For Sureśvra, as in the case of ‘daśamastvamasi’ (It is a popular example where by hearing it the person immediately realises that he is the tenth), immediate knowledge of ‘I am the tenth’ brings forth from the verbal knowledge rather than from the senses, immediate knowledge of the unity of being springs from the knowledge of the Upaniṣadic great sayings (BrVaSB 208).
358 For Prakāśtmayati’s view in this context, refer to Pañcapādikā 1958: Pañcapādikāvīvarana, prathamavarnakam, pp. 403-10: 172-5, 6; dvitiyavarnakam, p. 452: 196-1.
359 Reference to the popular example of ‘I am the tenth’ in terms of immediate knowledge is given by Vidyāraṇya in his PD (Pañcadāsī 2008: PD 7. 23 ff., 7. 57 ff.; p. 117 ff.).
360 On the other hand, Vācaspati and his followers consider the mind or the inner organ as the source or instrumental cause (karana) of the knowledge about the unity of being. This view is known as śabda-parokṣa-vāda, that is, verbal testimony causes the mediate knowledge of brahman/ātman (See Brahmasūtra 2000: Bhāmatī on BS 1.1.1, pp. 55-8).

MS in his VK rejects this view by saying that happiness, misery etc. are perceived by the witnessing-self and they cannot be viewed by the mind. Thus, the mind or intellect gives rise to the direct perception of reality through gaining the modal cognition or cognition of partless mental modification (akhaṇḍākāra-vrtti-jñāna), of which verbal testimony is the instrumental cause, not the intellect or mind (For the discussion on śabda-pramāṇa and śabdāparokṣa-vāda, also see Karmarkar 1962: pp. 166-7; Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śastrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, part 1, pp. 171-2).
nescience) are removed through the partless modification of intellect (*akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti*)\(^{361}\) produced by the Upaniṣadic text, one remains as supreme bliss, having attained his aim.\(^{362}\) Thus, with the dawn of knowledge of reality (*tattvamasi*), nescience (*avidyā*), i.e. the material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*) of the world or that which causes reciprocal superimposition (*adhyāsa*)\(^{363}\) of self and not-self, is eradicated. Thus, in verse 19, MS says, ‘When knowledge of reality dawns, ignorance is eradicated. Then, as the veil (concealment) of ignorance is dispelled, doubt and error (as the projection of ignorance) get dispersed.’\(^{364}\)

The concept of ignorance/nescience/illusion (*avidyā/ajñāna/māyā*) plays an important role in Advaita metaphysics, epistemology, and ethical orders. In order to emphasise the fact that nescience is not merely negative, it is said that it appears positive (*bhāvarūpa*). Ignorance (*ajñāna*) has two aspects. Whereas in its negative aspect (*āvaraṇa*) it conceals\(^{365}\) the reality and is called nescience (*avidyā*), in its positive aspect it projects (*vikṣepa*) the plurality of the world on the reality and is called illusion (*māyā*). We find explicit reference to these two-fold powers of ignorance and their effects in Śaṃkara,\(^{366}\) Vācaspati,\(^{367}\) Sarvajñātman,\(^{368}\) Vidyāranya\(^{369}\) and MS.\(^{370}\) Ignorance hides the true nature of an object by concealing

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\(^{361}\) This mental modification (*vṛtti*) is called partless (*akhaṇḍākārā*) when the implication is ultimate reality, *brahman*. It annihilates every other *vṛtti*, leading to and leaving the direct knowledge of reality before destroying itself too.


\(^{363}\) Since superimposition is produced by beginningless nescience, it (superimposition) is also termed nescience (For details, see *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* 1.1.1, p. 6 ff.).

\(^{364}\) *avidyāvivṛttistu tattvaajñānodaye bhavet / tata āvaraṇe kṣīne kṣīyete bhramasaṃśayau //, GD*, introductory verse 19.

\(^{365}\) The fact is supported by the *BhG* also; ‘…ignorance obscures insight- that is why people get confused’ (*BhG* 5.15).


\(^{367}\) Projective power of ignorance has been referred to by Vācaspati etc. in the *BS* (*Brahmasūtra* 2000: *Bhāmatī* on *BS* 2.2.2, p. 492).

\(^{368}\) Veezhinathan 1985: *SŚ* 1.20-1.21, pp. 159-60.

\(^{369}\) Details on the power of concealment of nescience in terms of *brahman* are given in his *PD* (Swāhānanda 2005: *PD* 7.44 ff., p. 250 ff.; *PD* 7.90, 7.92, pp. 272-3).
in two ways – by showing non-existence of an object (asattāpādaka) and its resultant non-perception (abhānāpādaka). While the former is located in the consciousness limited by the mind (antahkaraṇāvacchinnacaitanyaniṣṭha), the latter is located in the consciousness limited by object (viṣayāvacchinnacaitanyaniṣṭha). By immediate knowledge (aparokṣacvṛtti), both these types of concealment are destroyed. Thus, we have a cognition such as ‘there is a pot’ (ghaṭaḥ asti) ‘the pot is perceivable’ (ghaṭaḥ bhāti) etc. On the other hand, by mediate knowledge (parokṣa-vṛtti) the former (asattāpādaka) alone is destroyed. Thus, we have inferential knowledge, in the form ‘there is a fire’ (vahniḥ asti), rather than in the form ‘fire is being perceived’ (vahniḥ bhāti) etc. Thus, in verse 19, MS holds that when knowledge of reality dawns, nescience gets obliterated, together with its two-fold powers of concealment and projection.

MS now shows how the knowledge of reality (tattva-jñāna) leads the aspirant to undertake the other means that are conducive to reaching liberation proper. With the emergence of the knowledge of reality, the results of unripe or accumulated actions (anārabdha/saṅcita-karma) -- i.e. actions performed either in this life or a past one, but which have not yet begun to produce their fruits -- get eradicated completely. The effects of actions-yet-to-come (āgāmin/kriyamāna-karma), i.e. actions that are being done in the present life, to fructify in the normal course of events, are restrained (verse 20). However, the latent tendencies

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370 Refer to MS’s elucidation on Sarvajñātman’s ŚŚ 1.20-1.21 in his ŚŚŚŚ (Giri 2007: Pt. 1, pp. 51-4). For details on MS’s treatment of the power of concealment of ignorance, see Advaitasiddhi 2005: p. 587. Again, while commenting on the first verse of the Bhāgavata, MS mentions two aspects of ignorance, i.e. concealment and projection, and the subdivision of projection respectively. He also mentions how these two-fold powers of nescience delude the individual-self from realising the supreme reality brahman together with suggesting the ways for their termination (Bhāgavata 1815 Śakābda: p. 5).

371 For the reference to Śaṃkara, see Cidghanānanda 1995: Tattvabodha 42, p. 10.

372 Refer to Cidghanānanda 1995: Tattvabodha 41, p. 10 for Śaṃkara’s reference.
do not get obliterated, due to the distractions offered by accumulated past or ripened actions (*prārabdha-karma*), i.e. those that were performed in the past life, and whose fruits are still working with the creation of the present physical body.\(^{374}\) In general, Advaita holds that, for a knower of *brahman*, *prārabdha-karma* continues until the fall of the present body (*videha-mukti*), while the accumulated or stored up (*sañcita*) actions are destroyed and actions-yet-to-come (*agāmin*) are restrained. Śaṅkara also holds that *sañcita* and *agāmin* karma-s are destroyed by the firm conviction that ‘I am *brahman* only’ (*brahmaivāhamasmīti*), and *prārabdha-karma*-s are destroyed only when their results are experienced.\(^{375}\) MS even goes to the extent of saying that despite the grace of the Lord, *prārabdha-karma*-s do not get destroyed. They only terminate when the result produced by them are experienced by the person concerned.\(^{376}\)

The consequences of *prārabdha-karma* may not be terminated in one life, paving the way for engaging in the cycle of birth and death (*saṁsāra*). Therefore, one has to undergo different stages to control the body, senses and mind to achieve the cessation of suffering caused by it; that is, to keep latent tendencies or predispositions under control. This is mentioned in the verses 21 and 22. To quote MS; ‘But, due to the distraction resulting from accumulated past actions, past impression (*vāsanā*) does not get destroyed; it ceases completely through restraint, which has the maximum strength.’\(^{377}\)

\(^{373}\) *GD*, introductory verse 20.

\(^{374}\) See Cidghanānanda 1995: *Tattvabodha* 43, p. 10 for Śaṅkara’s refernce.


\(^{376}\) Advaitasiddhi 2005: pp. 892-3 (Also see Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 19).

\(^{377}\) *prārabdhakarmavikṣepādvāsanā tu na naśyati / sā sarvato balavatā sanyameno paśāmyati //, GD*, introductory verse 21.
Next to the means of constant dwelling on the supreme reality (nididhyāsana), comes complete absorption in meditation on that reality (samādhi). However, following the line of Yoga philosophy of Patañjali, MS delineates the means of liberation in order to serve his purpose. Thus, verse 22 says, ‘Restraint (samyama) consists of the three, i.e., fixation of the mind on a particular object, meditation, and absorption. The five disciplines, viz. yama etc., being precedent to them, become conducive to these three’.

The eight-fold limbs of Yoga are the path of austerity for an aspirant to control his mind. Having undergone these stages, the seeker is on the path to become liberated in this life (jīvanmukta). The eight-fold limbs are: yama (restraints), observances (niyama), āsana (postures), prāṇāyāma (control of breath), pratyāhāra (withdrawal of the senses from their objects), dhāraṇā (fixing one’s attention), dhyāna (meditation), and samādhi (unifying concentration). While the first five limbs are called external aids (bahiraṅga-sādhana) to the goal of Yoga, the latter three are called the internal aids (antaraṅga-sādhana) to it. Thus, all the eight limbs prepare the aspirant towards attaining emancipation, i.e. the unitary knowledge of brahman-ātman.

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378 Dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi together on the same object are called samyama, though Vyāsa mentions it to be the technical term for the Yoga scripture (See YS 3.4 and Vyāsabhāṣya on it; Yogasūtra 1963: p. 106).

379 samyamo dhāraṇā dhyānam samādhihirītī yat trikam / yamādipicakam pūrvam tadarthamupayuṭjate //, GD, introductory verse 22.

380 ‘Restraints, observances, postures, control of breath, withdrawal of the senses from their objects, fixing one’s attention, meditation, and unifying concentration are the eightfold limbs to attaining Yoga’ (yama-niyamāsana-prāṇāyama-pratyāhāra-dhāraṇā dhyānasamādhyo ’aṣṭāvaṅgāṇi) [Mukerji 2000: YS 2.29, p.206].

381 It is noteworthy that, though both the external and internal spiritual disciplines mentioned in the eight-limbed yoga are meant for samprajñātā-yoga, asamprajñātā-yoga takes place even in the absence of the internal disciplines. So the internal disciplines, viz. dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi become external as far as asamprajñātā-yoga or nīrbīja-yoga is concerned (See Vyāsabhāṣya on YS 3.1, 3.7-8; Yogasūtra 1963: pp. 104, 107).

382 Yājñavalkya also in his Yogīyājvalkya 1.43 thus mentions that yoga is the union of the individual and the supreme-self (cf. Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 2, p. 59).
Having thus established all the limbs to be followed for attaining absorption (samādhi), MS now mentions the means conducive to speed up its attainment. Here lies the utility of absolute self-surrender to God (īśvara-prāṇidhāna). Through this special devotion to God, He (God) favours the devotee with grace towards fulfilling his (devotee’s) wish. The result obtained thus makes samādhi’s attainment imminent.\(^{383}\) Mind is the material cause (upādāna-kāraṇa) of inclination (pravṛtti), whereas actions are the efficient cause (nimitta-kāraṇa) of it.\(^{384}\) In the preliminary stage of asaṃprajñāta-yoga, there remains inclination after the destruction of actions, though in the final stage it also gets eradicated. Thus following observance of yoga in the form of action (kriyā-yoga), of which Īśvara-prāṇidhāna is a step, impurities or rather modifications of the mind arising out of worldly objects and afflicted by predispositions (vāsanā) are annihilated.\(^{385}\) Śaṅkara also says that mind is that which makes choices, considering pros and cons of a subject (‘saṃkalpavikalpātmakaṃ maṇah’).\(^{386}\) MS, however, couples the practice of Yoga intimately with bhakti, in the next verse, ‘Mental absorption gets accomplished fast through absolute devotion to God. Then follows abolition of the modifications of the mind and predispositions.’\(^{387}\)

Latent desires or past impressions cause mental impressions like anger, jealousy etc, which stand in the way of dissolution of the mind.\(^{388}\) Though this is the same as yogic ‘citta-vṛtti-nirodha’ (YS 1.2),\(^{389}\) its value in Vedānta is different,

\(^{383}\) Also see YS 1.23 and Vyāsabhāṣya on it (Yogasūtra 1963: p. 23).
\(^{384}\) See Chatterjee Sastri 1989: p. 79.
\(^{385}\) Yogasūtra 1963: YS 2.2 and Vyāsabhāṣya on it, p. 52.
\(^{387}\) Īśvarapraṇidhānātta samādhiḥ siddhyati drutam / tato bhavenmanonāśo vāsanākṣaya eva ca //, GD, introductory verse 23.
because Vedānta accepts only a provisional status of individuality, but by including
the dissolution of mind as a function of renunciation, merges it finally in the
Universal self. The knowledge of reality (tattva-jñāna), along with elimination of
mental modifications (mano-nāśa) and predispositions (vāsanā-kṣaya), takes the
aspirant to final emancipation in this very life. The seeker remains in this world in
human form (jīvanmukta) as long as the consequences of the prārabdha-karma
continue, as attested by Vidyārṇya too in Vivaraṇaprameyasaṃgraha (VPS) 1.1.
Thus, MS says in verse 24, ‘Knowledge of reality, annihilation of the mind and
destruction of past impressions: when these three are practised together, liberation
in this life becomes firm.’

These three spiritual techniques, viz. the knowledge of the reality,
dissolution of the mind, and annihilation of past impressions, are not isolated from
each other, but together constitute a comprehensive spiritual discipline. In this
connection, it is noteworthy that a modern scholar who has studied these three
spiritual techniques as detailed by MS leaves room for further research. In his
comments on BhG 6.32, MS holds that even in the presence of the knowledge of
reality (tattva-jñāna), some aspirants cannot enjoy the bliss of jīvanmukti because of
the absence of mano-nāśa and vāsanā-kṣaya, thereby contradicting Śaṃkara. If the
knowledge of reality in question is viewed as the immediate knowledge of the unity
of brahman and the individual self (aparokṣa-brahmātma-jñāna), which is obtained

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392 tattvajñānam manonāśo vāsanākṣaya ity api / yugapatritayābhyaśājīvanmuktirdṛdhā bhavet //,
GD, introductory verse 24.
at the cessation of nescience, then it can be said that as per Śaṅkara’s own comments on *BU* 1.4.7, 1.4.10 and *BS* 4.1.2 and 4.1.12-13, a further need to undergo mano-nāśa and vāsanā-kṣaya in order to experience the bliss of jīvanmukti cannot be supported. The arguments put forth by MS in favour of the utility of mano-nāśa and vāsanā-kṣaya for the knowers of nirguṇa-brahman for enjoying the bliss of jīvanmukti do not find much support in the mainstream Advaita textual sources, but may be explained as being due to MS’s predilection for the *YV*.

In short, MS’s position is that in spite of being in this world in liberated form, and acquiring the knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna*), the aspirant cannot enjoy the ecstatic situation due to the presence of prārabdha-karma. Then he accepts renunciation through knowledge (*vidvat-saṃnyāsa*). To quote MS, verse 25, ‘As effort is needed for accomplishing that part (among *tattva-jñāna*, mano-nāśa, and vāsanā-kṣaya) which is not still mastered, renunciation through knowledge is talked about in the Vedas.’

Having expounded the different limbs of *yoga* mentioned above as the means of attaining and experiencing liberation while living, MS talks about its final limb, i.e. *samādhi*, together with its stages of accomplishment, in verses 26 and 27. After the attainment of conscious unifying concentration or absorption

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395 *Saṃnyāsa* is of two types: *mukhya* and *gaṇa*. Again, whereas *mukhya-saṃnyāsa* is of two kinds: renunciation preceded by a sense of detachment from the world (*vividīśa-saṃnyāsa*) and renunciation proper which is preceded by the dawn of knowledge of reality (*vidvat-saṃnyāsa*), *gaṇa-saṃnyāsa* is of three folds according to the qualities of serenity (*sattva*), activity (*rajas*), and inertia (*tamas*) [cf. Brahma 1986: Footnote, p. 5; also see *BhG* 18.5].
396 *vidvat-saṃnyāsa*-kathanam etad arthaṃ śrutau kṛtam / prāgasiddho ya evāṁśo yatnaḥ syātasya sādhane //, *GD*, introductory verse 25.

Though in the Vedas, the knower of the reality only takes to *saṃnyāsa*, a distinction is made here between *vidvat-saṃnyāsa* (renunciation through knowledge) and *vividīśa-saṃnyāsa* (renunciation through detachment) [For details, refer to Mokṣadānanda 2006: *JMV* 1, introductory verse 12 therein etc., pp. 1-74]. Vidyāranya also mentions how *vividīśa-saṃnyāsa* and *vidvat-saṃnyāsa* help to attaining videha-mukti and jīvanmukti respectively. Besides, he classifies the *saṃnyāsins*-s into *kuticaka*, *bahiḍaka*, *hamsa*, *paramahamsa* etc. (See Mokṣadānanda 2006: *JMV* 1, introductory verses 2-10, pp. 1-3).
(savikalpaka-samādhi), there occurs supra-conscious unifying concentration or absorption (nirvikalpaka-samādhi) in the mind in three successive stages, (i) where the aspirant awakens from it to empirical experience by himself, (ii) where he is roused by others, and (iii) where there is no arousal at all (being ever absorbed in the reality). Though all the modifications of the mind are restrained in the preliminary stages of asamprajñāta-yoga, the impressions left behind by those modifications still remain there. In the final stage, because of constant practice, they are also removed, and the aspirant gets merged in that supreme reality. Thus, in order to concentrate the mind on the eternal object or the supreme reality by restraining it (i.e. the mind) from the external objects, the yogic practices are of utmost importance.

3.1.6. Verses 28-29: The characteristics of the living liberated (jīvanmukta)

After undergoing the various steps of attaining liberation explained above, the seeker thus becomes liberated in this life (jīvanmukta). Having said so, MS

397 See GD, introductory verses 26-7.
398 ‘Nothing is known in this stage’ (na kiṁcit samprajñāyate asmin). Nirvikalpaka-samādhi takes place when the mind rests on the absolute consciousness like the flame of a lamp placed in a windless place (See BhG 6.19 and Pañcadasī 2008: PD 1.55, p. 27).
For details of how savikalpaka-samādhi gradually leads to nirvikalpaka-samādhi, also see YS 1.18, 3.9, 3.11, 3.12 etc. (Mukerji 2000: pp. 45, 257, 261, 263).
399 Thus MS’s unstinted admission of yogic practices prescribed by Patañjali makes his gloss a distinctive one. But it is important to note that, though Śaṅkara refutes the Yoga and its discipline as a direct means to brahmajñāna, in his commentary on BS 2.1.2 he candidly admits that the doctrines of Pātañjala Yoga that are not opposed to the teaching of the Upaniṣads are acceptable to the Advaitins (Brahmasūtra 2000: p. 439). Moreover, many minor Upaniṣads like the Sāmānyavedānta, Mahā, Tejobindu, Varāha, Annapurnā, Muktiśā etc. and many post-Śaṅkara works like the YV (800 CE), and the JMV, PD of Vidyāraṇya (14th century CE), the GD of MS (16th century CE) etc. lay great emphasis on Śaṁkhya ideas and Yoga practices incommensurate with Advaitic notion. This kind of development in Advaita can be regarded as the Yogic Advaita (See Fort 1998: pp. 84-125).
400 After presenting the various steps of emancipation as set forth by MS in the introduction to his commentary on the BhG, it can be inferred that he mentions eighteen factors that constitute the means to liberation on the basis of eighteen principal teachings of the eighteen chaptered BhG (though not presented in chronological order) are as follows:
emphasises the role of devotion (bhakti) for the aspirant who is liberated while living (jīvanmukta). The path of devotion (bhakti-mārga) consists of worshipping the qualified brahman (Viṣṇu) with love (prema) and surrender (prapatti). MS describes the liberated soul (jīvanmukta) not only as an expounder of Vedānta (brahmavādin-s), beyond the three qualities (guṇātīta), endowed with steady knowledge (sthita-prajña), ever engrossed in the self (ātma-rati), but also as one who is a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu (viṣṇu-bhakta), with immense devotion (parā-bhakti) to both the deity and the teacher. Such a person is indeed one who has accomplished everything that needs to be accomplished (kṛtakṛtya), so that no scriptural injunctions are applicable to him, and being devoid of all desire, anger and jealousy, he is beyond the pale of caste and life stage (ativarṇāśramin). Thus, in verses 28 and 29, MS says, ‘He who is such a Brahmin is the best of the expounders of Vedānta. He is also called one beyond qualities, a man with firm wisdom, and a devotee of Viṣṇu,’


MS’s emphasis on Patañjali’s Yoga in this context becomes more explicit if we notice below the characteristics of a jīvānmukta, as attested by the system, with MS’s own enumeration. During the practice of yoga the seeker gradually achieves the highest stage of knowledge (prānta-bhūmi-prajñā) and becomes liberated in this life (jīvanmukta) or proficient (kuśala) being endowed with the discriminatory knowledge (viveka-khyāti) [See Yogasūtra 1963: YS 2.27, Vyāsabhāṣya on it, pp. 86-8; and Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śastṛi 1978-83: Vol. 2, p. 51].

evambhūto brahmānaḥ syādvarūṣītho brahmavādīnām / guṇātītaḥ sthitaprajñā viṣṇubhaktaśca kathyate ||, GD, introductory verse 28.
liberated self in this life, and an absorber (only) in the self. Since all is accomplished (in him), even the scriptures withdraw from him.\textsuperscript{403}

Śaṅkara says that those who have developed the sense of realisation of brahman in all beings through the teaching of a realised spiritual guide (sadguru) and the Vedāntic texts are called jīvanmukta. Just as one having the firm conviction of the form, ‘I am the body’, ‘I am a man’, ‘I am a Brahmin’, ‘I am a śūdra’ etc. is in bondage, so also one who has the firm conviction of the form of immediate knowledge, ‘I am the unattached, of the form of existence-consciousness-bliss and effulgence, and am the inner guide of all (sarvāntaryāmin), of the form of all-pervasive space’, is a jīvanmukta.\textsuperscript{404} MS’s assertion that a jīvanmukta possesses the characteristic of being a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu is therefore noteworthy. While Śaṅkara views the sthita-prajña purely in an Advaitic light, both Vidyāranya and MS impart significance to yogic discipline as well.\textsuperscript{405} Also noteworthy is the fact that in mainstream Advaita, a sthita-prajña, a jñānin, may exhibit bhakti because of residual vāsanā, but not inevitably so. For MS, a jñānin having no residual vāsanā after undergoing mano-nāśa and vāsanā-κṣaya is necessarily devoted to Lord Viṣṇu.

3.1.7. Verses 30-40: The importance of devotion to God (bhagavadbhakti) in attaining the final emancipation (videha-mukti)

Having mentioned the necessity of yogic practices and that of devotion to God (bhagavadbhakti) for a jīvanmukta, MS now puts forward the claim that devotion is

\textsuperscript{403} ativarṇāśramī jīvanmukta ātmaratistathā / etasya kṛtakṛtyatvāt śāstrasmānnivartate //, GD, introductory verse 29.
\textsuperscript{404} Cidghanānanda 1995: Tattvabodha 37-8 p. 10.
\textsuperscript{405} See Fort 1998: pp. 124-5.
a key factor also for the final emancipation, i.e. videha-mukti (liberation at the time of leaving one’s physical body). MS says that along with the knowledge of reality (tattva-jñana), devotion to God in all circumstances, with body, mind and speech, becomes useful for attaining videha-mukti, and that devotion must thus be adopted in all stages of the quest for liberation.406 A Śruti text (ṢU 6.23) highlighting bhakti is the first full quotation in his versified introduction: ‘Only in a man who has deepest love for God, and who shows the same love toward his teacher as toward God, do these points declared by the Noble One shine forth.’ MS reiterates that devotion practised in the preceding stage (stages in nirvikalpaka-samādhi referred to in verse 27) is to be brought to the higher (later) stage. Otherwise, the accomplishment of success (in one’s sādhanā) becomes very unlikely because of the abundance of hindrances.407 Thus, devotion must be followed in all the stages of the quest for liberation.

Even though bhakti is held by MS as practicable at this higher stage, it is quite noticeable how MS posits bhakti again at the stage of nirvikalpaka-samādhi.408 MS continues to quote the BhG texts (BhG 6.44-45) according to which, through past habit itself, one is moved forward in the way of achieving liberation, attaining the highest goal after many births. However, although spiritual achievements may be made without effort in some cases, due to past impressions, the grace of God obtained through the perfection of practising disciplines in past lives (prāksiddha-sādhanābhyāsa) is hard to make out (durjñeya).409 Here, MS hints that in order to receive the grace of God, one needs to continue spiritual discipline (sādhana).

406 GD, introductory verse 31.
407 GD, introductory verses 30 and 32.
408 See Das 2008.
409 GD, introductory verses 33-5.
Thus, MS reiterates that after each stage of this spiritual journey is accomplished, devotion to God is prescribed for attaining the subsequent stages; for without it, these later stages cannot be accomplished. In the state of jīvanmukti, MS holds, no result of devotion can be imagined. Just as the qualities of non-enmity etc. to others are natural to the jīvanmukta-s, so too is the worship of Lord Hari. At this stage, MS quotes the BP (BP 1.7.10) according to which, even for the sages who are self-immersed and freed from all bondages, devotion to God becomes spontaneous in the state of jīvanmukti. This indeed is the greatness of Lord Hari,\(^{410}\) that even as they are liberated while living, they are inclined to worship the Lord. Following the text of the BhG itself (BhG 7.17), MS says further that among all devotees, one who is guided by single minded devotion to God is considered the supreme, which is referred to in verse 39; ‘Following the sentence of the Lord that of them (i.e. devotees) those who are wise, endowed with steady resoluteness and single pointed devotion are said to have excelled, it is said that one who is endowed with loving devotion is the best.’\(^{411}\)

All these considerations of MS regarding bhakti in the present context become again explicit when we look at his view on it as a means of self-realisation in his famous work AdS. MS holds that the way of devotion is superior to that of knowledge, as the former gives rise to the realisation of reality more quickly than the latter, and that there is also no difference in the degree of liberation achieved through either of them.\(^{412}\) In his ŚŚŚŚ too, MS echoes the view that devotion to the

\(^{410}\) GD, introductory verses 36-8.
\(^{411}\) teṣāṁ jñānti nityayukta ekabhaktir viśiṣyate / ityādīvacanāt premabhakto’yaṃ mukhya ucyate //, GD, introductory verse 39.

\(^{412}\) Advaitasiddhi 2005: p. 897 (Also see Sharma 1967: p. 132).
Lord is natural for a man of steady knowledge (sthita-prajña). Further, one of the commentators of MS meticulously supports the characteristics of a jīvanmukta, as set forth by MS above. While commenting on MS’s eulogy to Lord Kṛṣṇa in the AdS, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī observes that even in the state of jīvanmukti, MS’s remembrance of Lord Kṛṣṇa is caused by his past dispositions of worshipping the Lord. It is clear that MS has always been understood as holding that a self-less bhagavadbhakta is the highest jñānin and a jīvanmukta is spontaneously devoted to Lord Hari.

Having thus stated the above points with regard to the specific features of the BhG, MS expresses his attitude in verse 40 by saying, ‘The Lord has divulged all this in the scripture Gītā. So my mind is very much keen to explain it.’ This again emulates Śaṃkara’s words in his upodghāṭa, where he says that the Lord has imparted the twofold Vedic law of righteousness to Arjuna, who is submerged in the vast ocean of grief (śoka) and delusion (moha). These Vedic laws thus taught by the Lord, Śaṃkara adds, have been compiled by the venerable Vedavyāsa in seven hundred verses under the name Gītā.

3.1.8. Verses 41-46: The Bhagavadgītā as the means to attainment of liberation (mokṣa)

While setting forth the attainment of liberation (mokṣa) as the purpose of the BhG at the beginning of the introduction, MS points out the means of attaining it as well as

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415 etat sarvam bhagavatā gītāśāstre prakāśitam / ato vākyātum etanne mana utsahate bhrśam //, GD, introductory verse 40.
416 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyopakramanikā, p. 5.
the factors that may act as hindrances to it. We can summarise MS’s view in the following way. Performance of duties without desire for results (niṣkāma-karma) is said to be the root cause of liberation (verse 40). Sorrow (duḥkha) and delusion (moha), arising due to the performance of forbidden actions through deviation from one’s own duty (svadharma), are the hindrances to it. As these hindrances are natural to mankind, they bind people in the series of suffering, paving the way for the continuation of the cycle of birth-death (janma-maraṇa-cakra), which all living beings want to overcome, because suffering is abhorrent to them.\textsuperscript{417} In the concluding verses of the introduction, MS says that the Lord has explained this scripture (Gītāśāstra) to instruct those who are eager to obtain the highest end of human life (puruṣārtha), and wish to know how to achieve the arduous task of eradicating sorrow, delusion etc. which cause beginningless transmigration. To quote him, ‘In order to enlighten a person who intensely desires to get rid of the cause of suffering (i.e. grief, delusion etc.) and eager to attain the end in human life, the Lord has uttered this revered scripture.’\textsuperscript{418}

MS, like other commentators on the BhG, makes Arjuna the representative of the entirety of human beings for whom the text is meant. And thus, the deluded mass, represented by Arjuna, is the eligible person (adhikārin) for studying the BhG. Śaṅkara too says that in order to facilitate the well-being of the common people, the Lord imparted in the BhG two Vedic laws (of action and renunciation respectively) to Arjuna, who is submerged in the ocean of sorrow and delusion.\textsuperscript{419} Again, Rāmānuja echoed the same view in accordance with his doctrinal teaching.

\textsuperscript{417} See GD, introductory verses 40-45.
\textsuperscript{418} \textit{evamākāṅkṣayaṃ viṣṭaṃ puruṣārthonmukhaṃ naram / bubodhayiṣurāhedaṃ bhagavāṃśāstraṃuttamam //}, GD, introductory verse 46.
\textsuperscript{419} \textit{Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyopakramanikā}, p. 5.
He holds that the Lord, the highest person (purusottama), master of all gods (sarveśvareśvara), assumed the human form to help the world and made Arjuna the warrior from the chariot (rathī), and himself the charioteer (sārathī).\textsuperscript{420}

In continuation of the summary of the teaching of the BhG, as found both in the introductory verses in MS’s commentary on it and the text of the BhG itself, it can be said that the foremost idea derived from the teaching of the BhG is a synthesis of different ways of realising God, i.e. knowledge (jñāna), devotion (bhakti), and action (karma).\textsuperscript{421} It has been a debated issue from time immemorial in Indian philosophical discussion whether the way of knowledge (jñāna-mārga) or the way of action (karma-mārga) or a combination of both (jñāna-karma-samuccaya-mārga) is conducive to liberation. The Gītā explores all alternatives, prescribing the acceptance of the way of knowledge and performance of actions, without desire for its results.\textsuperscript{422} This view can be found in the Upaniṣads too.\textsuperscript{423} In due course, in line with the Vedāntic views, complete relinquishment of action and acceptance of renunciation through knowledge (karmatyāgī-saṃnyāsa / jñānamūlaka-saṃnyāsa-mārga) and performance without desire (jñānayukta-karmaljñānamūlaka-karma-mārga), two philosophical ideas, viz. ‘sāmkhya-mārga’ and ‘yoga-mārga’ came to be originated. The BhG aims at exploring the latter. In the colophon of each chapter in the BhG it has been described as being included in

\textsuperscript{420} Bhagavadgītā 2000: Vol. 1, Rāmānujabhāṣyopodghātaḥ, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{421} As per the modern Psychology, man has three principal faculties -- intellect, will and emotion. Intellec provokes him into enquiry (knowledge - jñāna), will to action (karma) and emotion to devotion (bhakti). The distinction among these aspects of the mind is made possible only mentally, not in the reality. These entire mental aspects stand synthesised towards man’s complete being which is in a way called ‘yoga’. BhG teaches a unique synthesis of all these mental phenomena (See Sharma 1976: p. 33).
\textsuperscript{422} See discussion above on GD introductory verses 6-7.
\textsuperscript{423} ‘Just performing works in this world, you should desire to live your hundred years.’ (ĪU 2), ‘Knowledge and ignorance -- a man who knows them both together, passes beyond death by ignorance, and by knowledge attains immortality’ (ĪU 11).
the Yogaśāstra in the Upaniṣads etc. In keeping with his devotional outlook, as found in the introduction to MS’s BhG commentary, MS has upheld the importance of devotion (bhakti) in the final chapter as well. MS holds that, though devotion is a means for attaining success in both the ways of action and knowledge, it is the fruit (phala) of them too, being the highest teaching of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

In short, both the invocation and the subject-matter of the versified introduction to MS’s BhG commentary suggest that MS wants to convey through it his Advaitic teaching to the highest mendicants of Śaṃkara’s order, of which he was also a member; though the strong presence of devotion to the Lord (bhagavadbhakti) makes him accept, to some extent, the attitude of the theistic Vedānta as well. And thus, the traditional fourfold requisites for studying a text, known as anubandha-catuṣṭaya, are properly maintained in his introduction (upodghāta) to the BhG commentary, in conformity with the principles of Advaita, and with an apparent mild deviation from it for accommodating his own philosophical stance.

424 For example, ‘Thus, the first chapter entitled ‘Yoga of despondency of Arjuna’ in the Upanisads in the Bhagavadgītā in the knowledge of brahman in the science of Yoga in a dialogical form between Śrīkṛṣṇa and Arjuna’ (iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasamvāde arjunaviṣādoyoga nāma prathamodhyāyaḥ, Bhagavadgītā 1999: Colophon of BhG 1, p. 29).

The import of colophon of each chapter of the BhG is understood by some scholars in the following way. The BhG is compared with other Upanisads, and as the Upanisads deal with the knowledge of brahman (brahmavidyā), the BhG too on being included in the path of yoga (yoga-mārga) in the Upaniṣads is described as ‘brahmavidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre’ etc. This Yoga scripture BhG has eighteen chapters and each chapter deals with different yoga-s. So is the name of each chapter there (See Ghoṣa 1994: p. 10).


As stated before, the BhG, along with the BS and the Upaniṣads, is considered a sourcebook of the Vedānta philosophy. Mutual references among these works are also conspicuous. For example, the BS often refers to the BhG as a Smṛti text, while BhG 13.4 mentions that the theory of ‘the field’ (kṣetra) and ‘the knower of the field’ (kṣetrajña) has been determined by the arguments in the Brahmasūtra. The BhG also contains verses that appear also in some key Upaniṣadic texts (e.g. KU 1.2.18-19) with minor variations.427

The preceding chapter discussed how MS summarizes his commentary on the BhG in his versified introduction. In this chapter and the next, we will follow the GD’s treatment of important philosophical doctrines of Vedānta, including the supreme self (paramātman) or brahman, individual self (jīvātman), universe (jagat) and liberation (mokṣa), as also how the means (sādhana) to its attainment forms the basis of philosophical discussion in the BhG. In the process, we hope to give a coherent account of the philosophical teaching of the BhG along with MS’s understanding of it.

In the SB, MS writes that the perceiver is the pure self, or brahman, together with its variations (caused by limiting adjunct) in the forms of God (īśvara), the individual self (jīva), and the witnessing self (sākṣin), while the perceived consists

of nescience and its products or the empirical existence (jagat-prapañca). MS adds that only these two categories are accepted by the Vedāntins (Advaitins), and that all the categories accepted by other schools are included in these two.\footnote{Siddhāntabindu 1986: pp. 89 and 93.} This sharp contrast of the seer and the seen, the perceiver and the perceived, is a key feature of much of Advaita dialectic. This can be understood in the sense that just as the individual self is nothing over and above brahman, the universe too lacks existence independent of brahman, owing to its being an illusory appearance of brahman. These three ontological entities of Vedānta, viz. paramātman or brahman, jīvātman, and jagat are not only the interrelated categories for the Advaitins, but also the distinctly acknowledged metaphysical entities described in the BhG, to which we now turn our attention in order to elucidate MS’s view about these three categories.

4.1. The supreme self (brahman)

It is pertinent to begin with a brief account of brahman in the words of Śaṃkara, in order to appreciate MS’s position. Śaṃkara holds that brahman is of the nature of truth, knowledge, and bliss.\footnote{Śrīśāṃkragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 8, TUB, 2.1, line 15, p. 696.} It is, by nature, auspiciousness,\footnote{Śrīśāṃkragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 8, PUB, 6.3, line 18, p. 297.} eternal, pure, and free. It is bereft of any attribute (nirguṇa or nirviśeṣa) and one without a second (advitiya). It is devoid of all sorts of limiting-adjuncts and modifications like birth, age and death. No connection with action in the sense of doership (kartṛtvā) and enjoyership (bhokṛtvā) can be thought of for brahman, as it is non-dual. It cannot be an object of logical insight and is without fear (abhaya). It is all-pervasive, like space, yet it dwells in the hearts of all beings. Notwithstanding this, it appears to the ignorant (avidyācchanna) to be possessed of name and form, on account of which it
is regarded as the qualified entity, i.e. God. The scriptures provide two descriptions of brahman, e.g. (i) one with the characteristics of name, form and other attributes, and (ii) one without any of those characteristics. Though really formless, brahman assumes forms with its magical power, in order to grace devotees. While it is nirguṇa, it seems to create the empirical world in the sense of being its material cause that is transformed into the world, just as milk is transformed into curd. Such transformation is, however, only apparent in the case of brahman. The creation of the world is not meant to serve any purpose of brahman, as it is ever contented by nature. Possessed with immeasurable power, it creates the world out of its own divine play (līlā). Whereas nirguṇa brahman appears with limiting adjunct (i.e. as God) to the ignorant and so becomes for them the object of worship (upāsyā), the enlightened one (avidyā-nirmukta) realises its transcendental nature without any kind of limiting adjunct, and attains it with knowledge alone, thereby identifying himself with brahman.

Thus, Śaṃkara’s theory of the supreme-self establishes the core identity of brahman with the individual self and with the world, as he asserts outright that there is nothing whatsoever apart from brahman. The individual self is a reflection of the supreme self in the internal organ, like the semblance of the sun in water. It is only the supreme-self that, in spite of remaining immutable, appears as the individual self with transient features owing to an association with limiting adjuncts. The fact that brahman is, by nature, free from sin and other flaws shows the transcendental nature of the individual self. While the awareness of difference between the individual self and brahman arises due to the latter’s association with the limiting adjuncts, the notions of the worshipped (upāsyā) [i.e. brahman] and the worshipper
(upāsaka) [i.e. the individual self] comes into being. There are also innumerable references in Śaṃkara’s writing to scriptural passages describing the creation out of brahman of the elements of the universe, starting with space.431

In Śaṃkara’s non-dualistic version of Vedānta, there is only one eternal reality, i.e. brahman, all other realities subsisting in it. The theoretical basis of the Advaita philosophy is based on the axiom that brahman, in spite of being attributeless and non-dual, appears with attributes due to association with nescience (ajñāna) and other limiting adjuncts forms. The following presents a brief account of brahman with attributes, the Lord, as described by MS in the GD.

4.1.1. A note on ‘Lord’ (bhagavān) as admitted by Madhusūdana in the Gūḍhārthadīpikā

In the BhG, the term ‘Lord’ (bhagavān) bears the same connotation as the supreme self or Lord Krṣṇa or Vāsudeva. While explaining the term ‘Lord’ when it first occurs in BhG 2.2, MS quotes the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (VuP): ‘Of the fullness of the presence of divine glory (aiśvarya), righteousness (dharma), fame (yaśas), auspiciousness (śrī), detachment (vairāgya) and liberation (mokṣa); these six (qualities) are technically known as bhaga (VuP 6.5.74).’ Here, the word ‘liberation’ means its cause, viz. knowledge (jñāna) and the Lord (bhagavān) is he, in whom all these qualities are eternally present, without any kind of obstruction. Quoting further from the same source, MS says that all these meanings of the term

431 Brahmasūtra 2000: BSB, 1.3.19, line 10, p. 307; 1.2.8, line 1, p. 236; 1.2.14, line 20, p. 462; 1.1.11, lines 8-9, p. 176; 1.1.20, line 3, p. 196; 3.3.12, line 12, p. 767 (cf. Caṭṭopādhyāya 1972: p. 279); 2.1.32, lines 6-9, p. 480; 2.1.33, line 6, p. 480, line 1, p. 481; 3.2.32, line 3, p. 725; 2.3.50, line 1, p. 625; 2.3.18, lines 3-4, p. 604; 1.3.19, lines 6-7, p. 303; 1.2.4, lines 4-5, p. 234; 2.3.7, line 24, p. 586.

432 aiśvaryasya samagrasya dharmasya yaśasah śriyāḥ / vairāgyasyātha mokṣasya samām bhaga itīṅganā //
bhagavān show that it is applicable to Lord Vāsudeva only. ‘The Lord is one who knows the origin (upatī) and destruction (vināśa), prosperity and paucity, and knowledge (vidyā) and ignorance (avidyā) of creatures (VuP 6.5.78).’

It may also be noted that while quoting VuP 6.5.74, MS maintains that the expression ‘in full’ (samagra) is connected with each of the six qualities mentioned in this verse. The term ‘liberation’ (mokṣa) indicates its cause, viz. knowledge (jñāna), while iṅganā means the technical name or appellation (saṃjñā). He is the Lord (bhagavān), in whom all these divine qualities (aiśvaryādi) are present eternally and without any obstruction, i.e. uninterruptedly (nityam apratibandhena). MS emphasizes that the suffix -vān added to bhaga is used in the sense of everlasting possession. Baccā Jhā explains that the word samagra has to be understood as qualifying each of the six qualities mentioned in the VuP verse, but taken together, not in isolation. He does this by raising the objection that the word bhagavān is used even in the cases where great sages are addressed, even though such people may not be characterised simultaneously by the fullness of all six qualities. If the word bhagavān can be so employed, then the word bhagavān will not serve the purpose of expressing the supreme excellence that characterises the Lord. Baccā Jhā holds that MS uses the expression nityam apratibandhena in order to avert this objection. None of these qualities, when characterising the great sages, can be regarded as eternal, since in such cases, these qualities are produced

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433 upatīm ca vināśaṃ ca bhūtānāṃgatim gatim / vetti vidyāmavidyām ca sa vācyo bhagavānīti // Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 31-2. There is a clear indication in VuP 6.5.76 that the term bhagavān can only mean Vāsudeva as the supreme brahman, and nobody else. Curiously, this verse is not quoted by MS, perhaps inadvertently (Dvivedī 1975: Vol. 1, footnote 1, p. 75 and Sanātanadeva 2005: Footnotes 1q2, p. 42).

434 E.g. divine glory, righteousness, fame, auspiciousness, detachment and liberation.

435 samagrasyeti pratyekam sambandhah. mokṣasyeti tatsādhanasya jñānasya. iṅganā saṃjñā. etādṛśam samagram aśvāryādkam nityam apratibandhena yatra vartate sa bhagavān (Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 32).
(utpanna). Furthermore, in such cases, such qualities may also be obstructed. But in the case of the Lord, such qualities are eternal (nitya) and not subject to any obstruction (apratibandha). However, Baccā Jhā also says that the word ādi employed in the expression samagram aiśvaryādikam cannot be applied to righteousness (dharma), because in the case of the Lord, dharma cannot be a property that is produced. This is based on the standard Mīmāṃsā position that dharma is always something that is produced. On reflection, Baccā Jhā explains that the word dharma means the absence of all demerits (samagra-pāpma-nivṛtti), which is indeed a characteristic of the Lord. Alternatively, dharma may also indicate the activities that produce merit (puṇya-janaka-kriyā). Since the Lord, at the beginning of each new creation (srṣṭi), instructs people to perform meritorious deeds (sampradāya-pravartana), dharma, when understood in this sense, may very well be present in the Lord. Furthermore, the word ‘full’ (samagra) cannot be related with ‘liberation’ (mokṣa), because in the Advaita Vedānta, liberation is of the nature of eternal-pure-non-dual-brahman (nitya-śuddha-brahma-svarūpa), and cannot admit of degrees. In order to justify the application of samagra in the context of ‘liberation’, MS says that the term ‘liberation’ denotes here ‘knowledge,’ the cause of liberation.

4.1.2. The Lord as the supreme self in Bhagavadgītā and Gūḍhārthadīpikā

It needs to be mentioned at the outset that by the time MS wrote the GD, the essential nature of brahman as existence, consciousness, and bliss had been

437 See Sanātanadeva 2005: Footnote 2, p. 41 (Sometimes, a word is used figuratively to indicate the cause of the entity denoted by that word. This is known as ‘kāraṇe karyopācāraḥ’).
discussed thoroughly by the earlier Advaitins. In order to defend himself against the fierce attack of the then Vaiṣṇava schools, such as that of Madhva, MS had to determine cautiously to what extent ‘existence’ and ‘consciousness’ are distinctive as the essential nature of brahman, and whether ‘bliss’ could be mentioned along with them. Thus, the SB states that brahman is all-pervasive, non-dual and of the nature of supreme bliss and consciousness. However, in the AdS, MS justifies at length that in spite of being marked (upalakṣita) by all these characteristics, brahman is in fact unconditioned or unqualified in nature. Let us now proceed to discuss in brief how the BhG depicts brahman and how MS describes it accordingly in his GD.

The second group of six chapters of the BhG (dvitīya-ṣaṭka, i.e. chapters 7-12) is said to mainly deal with the reality of the supreme self (paramātman) or brahman. MS holds that ‘the supreme self’ is the referent of the term ‘that’ (tat) in the Upaniṣadic mahā-vākya ‘That thou art’, further specifying that it is of the nature of supreme-bliss (paramānanda). While chapter seven of the text (jñāna-vijñāna-yoga) imparts the knowledge of the supreme self in all its facets, the eighth chapter (akṣara-brahma-yoga) deals with meditation on the imperishable brahman, the ninth articulates the greatness of the supreme self, i.e. the greatest knowledge (rāja-vidyā), the tenth describes the manifestation of divine powers (vibhūti) of the Lord, the eleventh gives a detailed account of the universal form (viśva-rūpa) of the Lord, and the twelfth discusses unceasing devotional meditation (bhakti-yoga) on the supreme self as the means of attaining it.

438 Siddhāntabindu 1986: p. 82 (For details, see Gupta 2006: p. 66).
According to MS’s commentary, the BhG (BhG 10.12-13 etc.) unequivocally equates Lord Kṛṣṇa with the brahman of the Upaniṣads. BhG 7.7 asserts that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the absolute metaphysical reality, as there is nothing whatsoever that transcends him. BhG 11.43 also declares him to be unequalled, the mightiest in all the three worlds. The depiction of his divine power and universal form of the Lord, in chapters ten and eleven, clearly portray Lord Kṛṣṇa as the supreme brahman, but endowed with determinations or attributes (saviśeṣa/saguṇa). If it is asked as to how Kṛṣṇa, the son of a man named Vasudeva, can be equated with the Lord, in terms of the Upaniṣadic brahman with attributes, BhG 4.6-8 resolves it by drawing on the concept of divine descent or incarnation (avatāra). Here the Lord says that although unborn and imperishable, he is born out of his own power or innate māyā (ātma-māyā). All these views have been explained in a thoroughgoing manner in the GD.

While explaining the concept of the divine incarnation of the Lord, MS quotes Śaṅkara’s introduction to the BhG commentary and Ānandagiri’s sub-commentary, to the effect that in spite of being birthless (aja), changeless (avyaya), the Lord of all creatures, eternal, pure, conscious and free by nature (nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāva), the Lord appears as if he is embodied (dehavān iva) through his magical power (māyā). With no purpose of his own to serve, the Lord appears for the sake of showering grace on creatures in bondage. MS holds that Śaṅkara’s comments mean that the eternal causal limiting adjunct (kāraṇopādhi) of brahman, which is named as māyā, and which possesses numerous powers, is the body (deha) of the Lord. MS here refers to a different view (that is also stated later

by Nīlakaṇṭha) which holds that in the case of supreme Lord, there cannot be any relation of a body and its possessor (deha-dehi-bhāva). The supreme self, Lord Vāsudeva, is eternal, omnipresent (vibhu), a mass of existence-conscious-bliss (saccidānanda-ghana), full (paripūrṇa), and unconditioned (nirguṇa), and is himself his body. He does not have either a material (bhautika) or an illusory (māyika) body. MS, however, does not pass any judgment about this second interpretation, but merely seeks to substantiate his view by quoting BS 2.3.9 and 2.3.17 along with the Śruti texts (Śaṇḍilya Upaniṣad 2.1.3, BU 4.5.14 and CU 7.4.21). MS asserts that despite there being really no such relation of a body and the embodied in the case of the Lord, such a relation appears to pertain to the Lord as mere māyā. MS expresses his devotional outlook in this connection with the support of the BP texts: ‘Know that Kṛṣṇa is the self of all beings. In spite of that, he appears here as an embodied being, through māyā, for the benefit of the world’ (BP 10.14.55) and ‘Oh what good luck, oh what good luck, for the cowherd Nanda and the inhabitants of Vraja, whom the eternal brahman, of the nature of fullness and supreme bliss, has befriended!’ (BP 10.14.32). Having said this, MS indicates in an indirect manner the view of others like Rāmānuja etc., who admit the actuality of this relation (of a body and its holder) in respect of the Lord, but desists from criticising them, on the grounds that it would be a futile exercise.441

Ānandagiri makes Śaṃkara’s view explicit, saying that in the case of Lord, the fact of his being born is merely an apparent truth (prātibhāsika-satya), and not the transcendental or absolute one (pāramārthika-satya).442 While explaining BhG

441 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 188-90 (For Rāmānuja’s view, refer to Bhagavadgītā 2000: Vol. 1, Rāmānujabhāṣyopadgītāh, pp. 5-6; Rāmānujabhāṣyam, pp. 79, 91, 366-8 etc.).
4.5, MS maintains that from the empirical point of view, acceptance of bodies for the Lord is like admitting the rising of the sun, which in fact neither rises nor sets, but is ever present. One may now wonder if by ‘acceptance of bodies for the Lord’ is meant by MS that the body of the Lord is ever present, being māyā itself. MS justifies, through the theory of divine incarnation, the Advaita view regarding the unqualified nature of brahman which, due to māyā, appears to be qualified in nature. By referring to the views of Śaṅkara, Ānandagiri, and an unnamed author whose view has been referred to also by Nīlakaṇṭha, and also with the textual support of the BP, MS not only remains rooted in his own non-dualistic stance, but also ensures that his view regarding the Lord is not at odds with those who (like Nīlakaṇṭha) are not antagonistic to the propagation of the spirit of devotion within the parameters of a non-dualistic ontology. Viśvanātha Cakravartin (18th century CE), who follows the tradition of Gaḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, refers to this view of MS along with those of Śrīdhara Svāmin and Rāmānuja in this context in his commentary on the BhG, which is called the Sārārthavarṣiṇī. This is an indication of a broad level of acceptability for MS’s resolution of this issue for the dualistic devotional Vedāntin authors, though it is not quite in conformity with that of Rāmānuja, as MS himself has indicated.

4.1.3. The nature of the supreme self

After describing his two primordial natures (prakṛti-s), inferior (aparā) and superior (parā), which include both insentient and sentient beings (BhG 7.4-7.5), the Lord expresses his supremacy over these, saying that he is the creator and

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444 Bhagavadgītā (date not found): Sārārthavarṣiṇī, p. 120.
destroyer of the entire cosmos, as all beings have their source in these two prakṛti-s (BhG 7.6 and 10.8). MS says in this connection that the Lord, in association with his limiting adjuncts in the form of the ‘field’ (kṣetra) and the ‘knower of the field’ (kṣetrajña), is omniscient (sarvajña), the Lord of all (sarveśvara), omnipotent (ananta-śakti), endowed with nescience as limiting adjunct (māyopādhī-upahita), the cause of origination (prabhava) and destruction (pralaya) of this entire world consisting of all products, whether dynamic or static. This view is also echoed in the BS, which says ‘That (is Brahman) from which (are derived) the birth etc. of all this.’ Śaṅkara comments that in this aphorism, brahman is the source of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe, as the same order is also found in the Śruti text; ‘That from which these beings are born…’ (TU 33.1.1).445 MS further adds that just as in the case of dream objects the individual self is the cause of its creation and destruction, so the Lord himself, being the basis (āśraya) and object (viṣaya) of nescience, is both the material cause (upādāna-kāraṇa) and seer (draṣṭā) of this illusory world-appearance.446 In his SB too, MS maintains that brahman, being qualified by omniscience etc. becomes the material and efficient cause of the universe.447 The GD asserts that this brahman is called Vāsudeva, and is the cause of origination as the material and efficient cause of the universe, and that the sustenance and destruction of this universe also proceed from him.448

We saw that MS refers to ‘the knower of the field’ (kṣetrajña) as a limiting adjunct (upādhi) of the Lord. Baccă Jhā explains that kṣetrajña is said to be in the nature of its limiting adjunct when considered from the standpoint of the jīva, i.e.

447 Siddhāntabindu 1986: pp. 76-7
448 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam and Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 447.
consciousness associated with the jīva (jīvopahītacaitanya).\footnote{Bhagavadgītā 1999: Gūḍhārthatattvālokaḥ, p. 131.} He also explicates MS’s stance about brahman as the material (upādāna) cause and efficient (nīmitta) cause of the world by analogy with the spider, which is both the material and efficient cause of the web it weaves.\footnote{The reference is also found in Śaṅkara’s comments on BS 2.4.27 (Brahmasūtra 2000: pp. 428-9) and VS by Sadānanda (Nikhilananda 1997: VS 2.55-56, pp. 40-42).}

One may question how brahman, which is pure consciousness, can be the material cause of an unconscious world, as an effect and its material cause have to be homogeneous. Moreover, a material cause must undergo some transformation when the effect is produced, but brahman is said to be immutable. In answer, it is said that brahman is by nature ever conscious and is the substratum of the entire cosmos, which is by nature inert, as the material cause that undergoes transformation is inert nescience (avidyā). The cosmos is also an illusory appearance or apparent transformation (vivarta) superimposed due to nescience on brahman, and not a real transformation (parināma) of brahman.\footnote{Bhagavadgītā 1999: Gūḍhārthatattvālokaḥ, p. 137.}

Another verse, BhG 18.61, says that the Lord resides in the heart of all beings, revolving them through his power (māyā), as if they were mounted on a machine. MS, following Śaṅkara, says that here the term ‘Lord’ (iśvara) means one who is capable of ruling (iś), and he is none other than Lord Nārāyaṇa, the internal ruler of all (sarvāntaryāmin). In support of his views, MS quotes the Śruti texts, ‘This self (ātman), who is present within but is different from the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body is the earth, and who controls the earth from within, he is the inner controller, the immortal (BU 3.7.3)’, ‘The entire creation, whatever is seen or heard, Nārāyaṇa exists by pervading all that from within and
without’ (*Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* 9.5). MS adds that though the Lord is all-pervasive, he resides in the heart or the internal organ of all beings, just as, despite being the ruler of seven continents, Lord Rāmacandra manifested himself in Uttarakośala. Śaṅkara, too, while explaining the above-mentioned *BU* text, refers to the Lord as Nārāyaṇa, who restrains and governs the earth. The above-mentioned statements in the *BhG* point to the immanence of the supreme self as the inner controller (*antaryāmin*) of all beings. This supreme being is variously described as being characterized by *parā* and *aparā prakṛti* (*BhG* 7), *kṣetrajña* and *kṣetra* (*BhG* 13), *kṣara* (mutable or transient) and *aksara* (immutable or intransient) *puruṣa* (*BhG* 15). However, at the end of the fifteenth chapter called *puruṣottama-yoga*, the Lord declares that he is beyond *aksara* and *kṣara puruṣa*, and is known as the supreme person (*puruṣottama*). He who knows him as this supreme person knows all that is to be known (*BhG* 15.18-19). Thus, the Lord who is immanent in all beings as the inner controller is also the transcendent supreme being or the supreme person (*puruṣottama*) [*BhG* 15.18].

MS highlights this, holding that God, who has been thus described as distinct from *kṣara* and *aksara*, is the supreme person (*puruṣottama*). He holds that the supreme God (*paramēśvara*) is most excellent (*utkṛṣṭatama*), the immutable seed of everything (*sarva-kāraṇa*), superior to māyā, the unmanifest (*avyākṛta*), and even *brahman*, as has been stated previously in ‘…I am the foundation of *brahman*…’ (*BhG* 14.27) and ‘…that supreme domain of mine…’ (*BhG* 15.6); and also in the Śruti passages like ‘That person, indeed, …farther than the farthest, imperishable’

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452 Translation from Gambhirananda 2000a: p. 982.
453 *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 748.
(MuU 2.1.2) and ‘He is the highest person’ (CU 8.12.3). MS does not fail to express his personal devotion to this Lord when he says that it is well known in the world [in common speech] that Lord Hari alone is stated in poems as the supreme person. MS summarises his views in two verses, the first of which may be translated in the following manner:

The glory of Narayana, the supreme person, whose body is made up only of existence, consciousness, and bliss (saccit-sukhaikavapusa); and who, behaving like a human being out of compassion, taught Pärtha his (Naräyaña’s) own divinity by advising him about the supreme realities, is beyond measure in magnitude.456

While explaining the Upaniṣadic texts cited above by MS, Śaṅkara adopts his usual non-dualistic approach that helps us place his position on a par with that of MS. While commenting on MuU 2.1.2, Śaṅkara says that the other indestructible, called the unmanifest, is higher than all changes (vikāra), and that the person, the unconditioned, is superior to the high unmanifest.457 While commenting on CU 8.12.3, he says that just as a rope, which appears as a snake due to delusion before the discriminatory knowledge between rope and snake arises, but fuses into its own form as rope once it is viewed in bright light, so also, compared to a person that is destructible (kṣara-puruṣa) and indestructible (akṣara-puruṣa), the person who is established in his own nature is the highest person (uttama-puruṣa). Śaṅkara adds further that the BhG too explains the ‘highest person’ in the same way.458

Viśvanātha Cakravartin, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava author, quotes from the GD on BhG 15.19-20 (where MS eulogises Lord Kṛṣṇa) and notes that both Śrīdhara

456 kāreyate naravatā cācaraṁ parārthāṁ pārthāya bodhitvam niyam īśvaratvam. saccitsukhaikavapusaḥ purusottamaṁ nārāyaṇasya mahimāṁ na hi mānameti (Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyāṁ, pp. 629-30).
457 Śrīśāṅkara-granthāvali 1999: Vol. 8, p. 344 (The order in this edition as MuU 2.2 is the same as MuU 2.1.2) [Also see Panoli 2008: Vol. III, MuUB, 2.1.2, p. 153].
Svāmin and MS have described the supremacy of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is equated with the Advaitic unconditioned brahman per se. Viśvanātha explicitly salutes and notes his agreement with these two Advaitic interpreters of the BhG, saying that there can be no objection against their explanation of verses BhG 15.16-18 (which eulogise Lord Kṛṣṇa).459

Thus, by describing the Lord as puruṣottama, as distinct from kṣara and akṣara puruṣa, MS, following the lead of Śaṅkara, hints at the unconditioned nature of brahman in spite of its apparent conditioned nature. Yet his overflowing devotion to the qualified reality as described above is certainly a distinctive mark of his own commentary, which is held in high esteem by the later commentators of the BhG, who prefer to adopt the dualistic devotional approach. Further, the nature of the supreme self is explicated by the Lord himself when he says; ‘For I am the foundation of brahman, of the immortal and intransient, of the sempiternal Law, and of perfect bliss’ (BhG 14.27). Though there seem to be two separate entities expressed by the terms ‘I’ and ‘brahman’ in the present context, since brahman cannot be its own ground, MS, following Śaṅkara’s non-dualistic doctrine, distinguishes between two aspects of brahman, i.e. unconditioned and conditioned, in order to explain the expressions ‘I’ and ‘brahman’ respectively. He holds that the unconditioned (nirvikalpaka) Vāsudeva is the implied meaning (lakṣyārtha) of the term ‘that’ (tat) (employed in the sentence ‘That thou art’) and is the supreme reality in the nature of unconditioned and attributeless existence, consciousness and bliss. This is the base/ground (pratiṣṭhā) of brahman, who is conditioned

459 Bhagavadgītā (date not found): Sārārthavarsinī, p. 404.
(sopādhika), the cause of origin, sustenance and dissolution of the world, and is the expressed meaning (vācyārtha) of the term ‘that’ (tat) [in ‘That thou art’]. As Lord Vāsudeva is by nature natural, bereft of imaginary attributes (kalpita-rūpa-rahita), one meditating on the unconditioned brahman becomes eligible for becoming brahman. Lord Vāsudeva is the basis of brahman, who is indestructible (vināśa-rahita), bereft of transformations (vipariṇāma-rahita), without decay (apakṣaya-rahita), happiness (sukha) in the nature of supreme bliss (paramānanda-rūpa) that transcends space and time, and he is also attainable through merit (dharma), which is characterised as steadiness in knowledge (jñāna-niṣṭhā).

In order to substantiate the point under discussion, MS quotes the BP verses, and subsequently conveys their import in his own way. In one of the relevant verses, Brahmā tells Lord Kṛṣṇa: ‘You are the only self, immortal, the ancient one, the truth, self-effulgent, infinite and without beginning, eternal, imperishable, immense bliss, pure, complete, non-dual, free, and bereft of any limitation (BP 10.14.23).’ Accordingly, MS holds that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the brahman, the self devoid of all limiting adjuncts or limitations (sarvopādhicśūnya). In another verse, Śuka also says to king Parīksit without any eulogy: ‘The essential substance of all beings rests in the conditioned brahman, and of that again, Lord Kṛṣṇa is the essence, so what can there be beyond him?’ (BP 10.14.50). MS goes on to say that all effects have their essential nature, the supreme reality in the form of being located in the conditioned (sopādhika) brahman, which assumes the form (ākāra) of the effects, for no effect can have more reality than that of its cause. As the conditioned brahman is imagined on the unconditioned brahman, and as what is imaginary

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cannot have any other reality than what belongs to its own substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*), Lord Kṛṣṇa is by nature the absolute truth, the unconditioned (*nirupādhika*) brahman, the basis of all imaginary creations, the supreme reality that is the culminating point of all the characteristics of brahman mentioned above. MS in his usual manner concludes the discussion of this point by eulogising the supreme brahman equated with Lord Kṛṣṇa in the following terms: ‘I salute that ineffable light, the son of Nanda, who takes away the bondage of his supplicants, who is the supreme brahman in a human form as the essence of all that is the quintessence of loveliness.’

The idea that Lord Viṣṇu should be equated with brahman is upheld by MS in clear terms also in the first benedictory verse of the *AdS*: ‘Viṣṇu, who is the substratum of the illusory world of duality such as the notions of the cogniser (*pramātṛtva*) etc., who is of the nature of truth, consciousness and bliss, who is to be apprehended through the impartite knowledge arising from the *mahāvākyā*-s like ‘*tattvamasi*’ etc. which are like the crown of the Śruti, surpasses on his own, after shaking off the bondage (of the primordial nescience-*mūlāvidyā*) and being bereft of all mental constructions, i.e. visible objects imagined through nescience (*vikalpa*) as if having attained liberation, which is by nature the supreme bliss only.’ While commenting on it, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī refers to Viṣṇu to be *jīva*, when understood in the sense of pervasiveness. In another context in the *AdS*, while resolving the apparent contradiction among the Śruti texts that arises from the fact that they cannot describe both the qualified and unqualified brahman as possessing

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463 Advaitasiddhi 2005: *Gaudābrahmānandī* (*Laghucandrikā*), p. 2 (Also see Nair 1990: p. 35).
the absolute reality, MS maintains that while the Śruti texts conveying the qualified brahman possess empirical truth, those of conveying the unqualified brahman enjoy absolute truth, thereby affirming the fact that Śruti talks about the dual aspects of brahman, qualified and unqualified,\textsuperscript{464} which also finds support from Śaṅkara’s explanation of BS 1.1.11.\textsuperscript{465}

In the present context, we may take note of Śaṅkara’s understanding of the two above-mentioned terms ‘I’ and ‘brahman’ as used in BhG 14.27, in order to compare how MS effectively emphasises the devotional aspect. According to Śaṅkara, ‘I’ here means the indwelling self (pratyag-ātmā) that is the abode of brahman, the supreme self, which is of the nature of immortality (amṛtatva) etc., and that the indwelling self is determined to be the supreme self by right knowledge (samyag-jiñāna). This fact, Śaṅkara asserts, has already been stated in the immediately preceding verse ‘He who attends on me unstrayingly with the discipline of the yoga of devotion and thus transcend the guṇas is fit to become brahman’ (BhG 14.26). Thus, for Śaṅkara, the expression ‘right knowledge’ is the culmination of unswerving adherence to the discipline of the yoga of devotion (avyabhicāri-bhaktī-yoga) [referred to in BhG 14.26]. Śaṅkara maintains that since the power and its possessor are non-different, the power of God through which brahman shows his grace to his devotees is the same as brahman. Alternatively, Śaṅkara says, ‘I’ and ‘brahman’ refer to the unconditioned and conditioned brahman respectively, where the former is the ground of the latter.\textsuperscript{466}

\textsuperscript{464} Advaitasiddhi 2005: Advaitasiddhi text and Gauḍabrahmānandī thereon, p. 720 (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 68).
\textsuperscript{465} Brahmasūtra 2000: p. 136.
\textsuperscript{466} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 606-8 (Also see Vāsudevānanda 2006: pp. 992-3).
Śrīdhara Svāmin mentions that the referent of the word ‘I’ (i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa) is the foundation (pratiṣṭhā) or image (pratimā) of brahman. In other words, ‘I’ (i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa) refers to the brahman amalgamated (ghanībhūtaṁ brahmaivaṁham), just as the solar orbit (sūryamaṇḍala) is light amalgamated (ghanībhūta-prakāśa). The idea is that, just as the sun is both the form of light and also the basis of light, Lord Kṛṣṇa, being himself brahman, is also the basis of brahman. The interpretation of these two terms (viz. ‘I’ and ‘brahman’) proposed by MS is similar. Viśvanātha, in the course of explaining the point in question and in order to highlight the role of devotion in this context, refers to the respective BhG interpretations of Śrīdhara Svāmin and MS. Apart from Śrīdhara’s interpretation of the BhG, Viśvanātha also refers to Śrīdhara’s commentary on VuP 6.7.76 to the effect that Lord Viṣṇu is the shelter or basis of the omniscient self or supreme brahman. While referring to MS, Viśvanātha says that MS explains the context by saying that the referent of ‘I’ (i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa) alone is the basis or culmination (paryāpti) or complete fullness (paripūrṇatā) of brahman. Viśvanātha also cites MS’s verse eulogising Lord Kṛṣṇa as the son of Nanda etc.

Thus, it can be concluded that the GD stresses the personalistic brahman, who, being endowed with characteristics (saviśeṣa), is known as Kṛṣṇa, Vāsudeva, Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu etc., although, in accordance with Śaṅkara’s non-dualistic interpretation, MS also identifies the supreme self with the supreme reality. In summary, MS admits brahman as having dual ontological status (with attributes (saviśeṣa or saguṇa) and without (nirviśeṣa or nirguṇa)) and this is what is indicated by the term ‘that,’ which occurs in the sentence ‘tattvamasi’.

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468 Bhagavadgītā (date not found): pp. 387-8.
4.2. The individual self (jīvātman) as indicated in the Bhagavadgītā and the 
Gūḍhārthadīpikā

We have seen that MS divides the BhG into three parts, viz. karma, bhakti, and 
jñāna-kāṇḍa-s, corresponding respectively to ‘thou’, ‘that’ and ‘art’ of the 
Upaniṣadic mahā-vākya ‘That thou art’. We have also seen that the terms ‘thou’ 
and ‘that’ are understood to be personified by the two principal characters of the 
text, Arjuna (as the representative of the individual selves or all human beings in 
general) and Lord Kṛṣṇa (the supreme self) respectively. According to MS’s 
division, the first six chapters of the text are concerned with explicating the 
meaning of ‘thou’, chapters 7-12 are concerned with ‘that’, and the remainder with 
‘art’, though not understood in the strict sense of absolute identity.

The referent of the term ‘thou’ is understood in terms of Arjuna’s character 
as depicted in the BhG, in which he represents the individual self (jīvātman) after 
being instructed by the supreme self (paramātman), represented by Lord Kṛṣṇa. 
Arjuna is bewildered by grief and delusion due to the lack of discriminative 
knowledge between body and self, and thus he must be instructed about the various 
means of self-realisation, viz. karma-yoga, bhakti-yoga and jñāna-yoga, which are 
to be followed by the individual self throughout its quest for liberation. Though the 
term ‘individual self’ is used in the BhG in the sense of self or supreme-self or 
brahman, there are also other words that have been used to denote the individual 

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469 We have mentioned earlier that, though this division implies considerable originality of thought, 
it is not to be viewed firmly. The ideas of karma, bhakti and jñāna are scattered throughout the text, 
though the said division corresponds to the respective ideas strongly. However, despite lack of 
agreement regarding the subject-matter of each six chapters of the text it has been a practice among 
many traditional commentators to consider it having three sections that consist of six chapters each. 
470 GD, introductory verses 4-6. 
471 Śaṅkara in his commentary on the BS says that when brahman, that is, consciousness is accepted 
as the seer in its primary sense, usage of the word ‘self’ in the sense of individual-self is justified 
(Brahmasūtra 2000: BSB 1.1.6, p. 173).
self, namely *puruṣa, brahma, aksara, kṣetrajña, parā-prakṛti* etc. Though all these words convey different meanings in different contexts and are sometimes interpreted differently by various commentators, they usually denote the individual self in the context in which they are used.\footnote{Srinivasa Chari 2005: pp. 207-8.}

After this brief note on *jīvātman*, as depicted in the *BhG*, let us now discuss MS’s philosophical view regarding this ontological entity.

### 4.2.1. The nature of the individual self (*jīvātman*)

The second chapter of the *BhG* primarily deals with the exposition of the individual self. The imparting of self-knowledge as a philosophical teaching by the Lord to Arjuna begins from the eleventh verse onwards. In order to ascertain the nature of the true knowledge of the self that was imparted to Arjuna, MS, an astute dialectician, ascertains the eternal nature of the self first by applying the technical terminology of the Navya-nyāya (i.e. the Neo-logic). That the self is not the counter-correlative (*pratiyogin*) of an antecedent non-existence (*prāgābhāva*),\footnote{According to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the non-existence of an effect (like a pot) before its production is called prior non-existence or antecedent non-existence (*prāgabhāva*) of that effect, while the pot is the counter-correlative (*pratiyogin*) of that non-existence. The self is not a counter-correlative of its prior non-existence, as it is always existent. It is not a counter-correlative of its non-existence caused by its destruction (*pradhvamsābhāva*) as well, as it cannot be destroyed (See Virupakshananda 1994: *TS* 1.9, p. 35). However, while the Naiyāyikas accept non-existence due to destruction to be indestructible, the Vedāntins term it destructible, as for them, with the destruction of the substratum of destruction, (e.g. the pieces of a jar), non-existence due to destruction is also destroyed. The knowledge of *brahman*, the substratum of all imaginary creations, destroys all imaginary creations imposed on it. As the destruction of an imaginary thing is deemed to be the same as its substratum, this destruction (as non-existence) is also not eternal (See Mādhavānanda 1997: *VP* 6, pp. 137-8).} he says, is attested by the Lord’s statement, ‘Never was there a time when I did not exist, or you, or these kings’ (*BhG* 2.12). That the self is not a counter-correlative of non-existence caused by destruction (*pradhvamsābhāva*) is proved by the other part of the Lord’s statement; ‘Nor shall any of us cease to exist hereafter’ (*BhG* 2.12).
Thus, the self, being associated with existence (sattā) in all three times (kālatraya), is eternal (nitya), and also distinct from the body, which is impermanent (anītya).474

Śaṃkara, living as he did before the Navya-nyāya evolved, does not employ heavily technical logical terminology, but he makes his non-dualist stance clear when he says that BhG 2.12 means that in spite of the destruction of the body, the individual self exists in all three times, since the self is eternal in nature. The term ‘we’ in the verse stands for the multiplicity of the bodies, not for the multiplicity of selves.475 With the support of various Śruti texts, Śaṃkara points out the eternal nature of the individual self in his commentary on the BS in a more explicit manner. In his opinion, it is to be understood that the individual self (jīva) is eternal, birthless, and changeless; it is the unchanging brahman itself appearing as the individual self, therefore, the individual self is none but brahman. It is only the supreme brahman itself, which in spite of being unchangeable, appears as the individual-self, by becoming associated with limiting adjuncts.476 Thus, by denying multiple selves and affirming it only of the bodies in the above BhG verse, Śaṃkara denies the theory of the Sāmkhyas that the individual selves are many in number (bahu-puruṣa-vāda).477

The BhG repeatedly asserts the indestructible character (avīnāśītvā) of the individual self as compared to the destructible character (vīnāśītvā) of the physical body. Therefore, while explaining the text of BhG 2.16 in terms of distinguishing the real (sat) [i.e. self or brahman] from the unreal (asat) [i.e. the whole creation consisting of duality (dvaitaprapaṇca) that is superimposed on the former] MS says

474 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 47.
475 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 47.
476 Brahmāsūtra 2000: BSB 2.3.17-18, pp. 602, 604 (Also see Swaminathan 2005: p. 17-8).
that the unreal, which is delimited (paricchinna) by time (kāla), space (deśa) and other objects of experience (vastu),\footnote{478} has no being (bhāva) or absolute reality (pāramārthikatva) that belongs only to what is free from the three limitations of unreal, and is not also limited by what has the reality not less (anyūna) than itself (svānyūna-sattāka-tādṛśa-pariccheda-śānya).\footnote{479} In his opinion, a pot (ghaṭa) is an example of something unreal, since it is subject to origination and destruction, as it is a counter-correlative (pratiyogin) of its prior non-existence (prāgabhāva) and annihilative non-existence (pradhvāṃsābhāva), as it does not exist before its production and after its destruction. Thus it is delimited by time and space. MS here refers the reader to his AdS for a more detailed discussion.\footnote{480}

Though MS, like Śaṃkara, has thus tried to establish the nature of ‘real’ and ‘unreal’ in order to show the reality of the self with neo-logical argumentation,\footnote{479} By ‘objective limitation’ (vastu-pariccheda) MS means the three kinds of difference (bheda), i.e. homogeneous difference (sajātīya-bheda) like a tree is different from another tree, heterogeneous difference (vijātīya-bheda) like a tree is different from a stone, and internal difference (svagata-bheda) like a tree is different from its leaves, flowers etc. By ‘objective limitation’ MS also means the dualistic Vedānta (Dvaita Vedānta) view that difference is fivefold, i.e. the difference between God and individuals, between individuals and the world, between different individuals, between God and the world and between the world and world in its various forms (Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 54).

That the self or brahman is bereft of svajātīya, vijātīya, and svagata bheda-s is also mentioned by Vidyārānya in his PD (Pañcadaśī 2008: PD 2.20-21, p. 38).

Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 54.

Brahman, the absolute reality, is devoid (śūnya) of limitations of time, space and objects, as the reality of these three limitations is not equal to or greater, but surely lesser, than that of brahman, i.e. the absolute reality possesses not less reality than that of the empirical world. All these limitations, having lesser reality than brahman and being superimpositions on the latter, do not affect its (i.e. brahman’s) absolute reality, and are subsequently sublated by its knowledge. Thus, according to MS, that which is limited by time, space and other objects of experience is transitory (vyabhicārī), and that which is present somewhere in sometime and remains absent elsewhere in another time is unreal (asat). So, all worldly objects are unreal. On the other hand, that which is present in all time and in all places, i.e. the supreme reality, brahman, is the real. In this way, it is established that reality (vastu) is brahman which is without a second (advaya) and is existence, consciousness and bliss (saccidānanda); and by unreality (avastu) one should understand nescience and all other insentient beings (ajñānādīsakalā-jāda-samūha) [See Gambhirananda 2000a: Footnote 2, pp. 97-8 and Nikhilananda 1997: VS 2. 33, p. 20].

Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 54 and 59.
Dhanapati Sūri has termed MS’s explanation erroneous.\textsuperscript{481} He holds that in this interpretation, the sentence ‘There is no becoming of what did not already exist, there is no unbecoming of what does exist…’ (\textit{BhG} 2.16) has been virtually reduced to two inferences, in each of which the probans (\textit{hetu}, the middle term in a syllogism on the basis of which something is inferred) and the probandum (\textit{sādhyā}, the major term in a syllogism or that which is to be proved in the syllogism) have become virtually identical, which is a logical defect in the eyes of all logicians. Dhanapati holds that MS’s explanation could be admitted if it is corrected in accordance with the view of Śaṅkara, but does not propose how it could be amended in this fashion.

Veṅkaṭanātha finds further faults with the explanation of MS on this verse, i.e. \textit{BhG} 2.16. MS holds that the word \textit{asat} is applicable to things having three types of limitation, i.e. the limitation of space, time, and matter (\textit{deśa-kāla-vastu-pariccheda}). Veṅkaṭanātha points out that though worldly objects like pot etc. are also characterised by the three types of limitation, they are not said to be \textit{asat}.\textsuperscript{482} He also maintains that the term that the Advaitins use in describing things like pots etc. is \textit{mithyā}. Thus, the interpretation offered by MS in this context is not strictly in accordance with the philosophical usage of the Advaita Vedāntins.\textsuperscript{483}

Further, in the context of \textit{BhG} 2.17, MS says that what is delimited by time, space and objects (\textit{deśa-kāla-vastu-paricchinna}) is perishable (\textit{vināśi}); and the opposite, i.e. that which is devoid of spatial, temporal and objective limitations

\textsuperscript{481} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Bhāṣyotkarṣaṇadīpikā, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{482} The term \textit{asat} is applicable to what is totally fictional, e.g. a sky-flower, which can never be an object of our experience. Thus, even illusory objects, which are subject to sublation, are not called \textit{asat}, but something that is neither \textit{sat} nor \textit{asat}. While \textit{asat} means non-existent, \textit{mithyā} means mistaken cognition.
\textsuperscript{483} Bhagavadgītā 2000: Brahmānandagiri, p. 107.
(deśa-kāla-vastu-pariccheda-śūnya) is imperishable (avīnāśī). MS further adds that the self, being free from all limitations, is imperishable; and it acts as the substratum of the sense world, which in itself is devoid of reality and self-effulgence (sattā-sphūrti-śūnya). Just as an illusory snake (sarpa) or a streak of water (dhārā) appear on a rope (rajju) that acts as the substratum (adhiṣṭhāna) of the illusory snake etc., the imperishable self that is by nature one (eka), all-pervasive (vibhu) and eternal self-effulgence (nitya-sadrūpa-sphurana) acts as the substratum of the world (which is bereft of reality and self-effulgence), which accounts for the fact that the world is experienced by us as something that exists and is also revealed. While explaining BhG 2.18, where destructible bodies are spoken of as belonging to the eternal, imperishable, and incomprehensible embodied self (dehāśrita ātmā), MS reiterates the Vedāntic view that the self (śarīrī), the conscious reality (sphuraṇa-rūpa-sat), is indestructible (and one), while the bodies (śarīra) that are destructible are superimposed (adhyasta) on the self due to ignorance. He reiterates that here, by the use of the plural number in the context of ‘body’, are meant all bodies, cosmic (samaṣṭi), including the gross cosmic body (virāt), subtle cosmic body (hiranyagarbha or sūtra), and unmanifest (avyākṛta) and individual (vyaṣṭi), in the form of gross (sthūla), subtle (sūkṣma), and causal (kāraṇa) bodies. In order to substantiate his view, MS quotes the Śruti text ‘the torso (ātman) is bliss; and the bottom on which it rests is the brahman’ (TU 2.5), and holds that brahman is the substratum (adhiṣṭhāna) of all five sheaths (pañca-koṣa) of individual bodies, i.e. physical (annamaya), vital (prāṇamaya), mental

484 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 60. Just as a snake or a streak of water which does not have reality and effulgence on its own and appears to be a self-effulgent reality after being superimposed on a rope as its ground, this world of existence lacking its own reality and self-effulgence appears to be real after being superimposed on the self, i.e. the real, consciousness.
(manomaya), conscious (vijñānamaya), and blissful (ānandamaya). The point is that these sheaths are illusory, but their ground or substratum, i.e. brahman is real.\footnote{Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 62.}

Following Śaṅkara, MS explicates the self-effulgent nature of the self. MS explains that, though the self by nature is self-effulgent consciousness (svaprapakāśa-jñāna-svarūpa), it is called the witnessing-self (sākṣī) when conditioned by nescience (avidyopahita), and is said to be the knower or cognisor (pramātā or pramātṛ-caitanya) when associated with the mind with its modifications (vṛtti-madantaḥkaraṇopahita).\footnote{Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 63-4.} Baccā Jhā in this context mentions the Vedāntic theory that the witnessing self is one (ekasākṣi-vāda); according to this view, though the witnessing self, due to the multiplicity of the mind, gives rise to the multiplicity of the individual witnessing self (jīva-sākṣī), it is one in the case of God (īśvara-sākṣī).\footnote{Bhagavadgītā 1999: Gūḍhārthatattvālokah, p. 17.} MS also shows the distinction (viveka) between the witnessing self and the knower. The knower, through the external organs like eyes etc. that are employed as instruments (karaṇa), coupled with the modifications of the mind, illuminates the external objects like pot etc., because the consciousness of brahman is reflected in the various modifications of the mind that is transparent (svaccha), and that assumes the forms of these objects. The same illuminating consciousness (bhāsaka-caitanya) becomes a knower while depending on the mental modifications in order to perceive an external object, and a witnessing self while not depending on the mental modifications in order to perceive the mind and its modifications like happiness, sorrow etc. MS mentions here that he has explained this point elaborately in his AdS and SB.\footnote{Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 64.}
The eternality of the self, as stated in the \textit{BhG}, is established by yet another argument in the \textit{GD}. The self is eternal, being bereft of the alternatives of having a beginning (\textit{ādi} or \textit{pūrva}) and an end (\textit{anta} or \textit{uttara}), and is not something that can be produced (\textit{anupādyā}). It cannot also be ephemeral like space and time. MS quotes the \textit{BS} to show the Vedāntic view that unlike space and time, which are delimited by earth, and hence, are produced, the self, being devoid of origination and of any limitations, is not non-eternal. This has been explained in the aphorism ‘But (space is a product), for separateness persists wherever there is an effect, as it is seen in the world’ (\textit{BS} 2.3.7).  Śaṃkara also explains this \textit{BS} text with the support of various Śruti texts that declare space to be a product of \textit{brahman}.

As regards the immutability of the self, MS says that any action consists in being associated with any one of the possible outcomes of action (\textit{kriyā}), viz. production (\textit{upatti}), acquisition (\textit{āpti}), transformation (\textit{vikṛti}) and change of condition (\textit{saṃskṛti}). The self, being ever in the same state, is immutable (\textit{sanātana}) and cannot be the locus of any of these results of action. In the same vein, Śaṃkara says in the introduction to his commentary on the \textit{Īśopaniṣad} (\textit{ĪU}) that the self in its true nature, being eternal, pure, one, bodiless, all-pervasive etc., cannot have any genuine association with \textit{karma} (action or rituals) since it is not produced, transformed or attained; and is not also a doer or an enjoyer.

While explaining the text, ‘I have known many past births, and so have you, Arjuna. I remember them all, while you do not, enemy-burner’ (\textit{BhG} 4.5), MS states the Vedāntic views regarding the nature of the individual self. The phrase

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Bhagavadgītā} 1999: \textit{Madhusūdanīvyākhyā}, p. 78.
\item Also see \textit{Brahmasūtra} 2000: \textit{BSB} on \textit{BS} 2.3.7, pp. 584-6 for a detailed elucidation on it, and Gambhirananda 2000a: Footnote 1, p. 113 in order to understand the cryptic idea expressed here.
\item \textit{Bhagavadgītā} 1999: \textit{Madhusūdanīvyākhyā}, pp. 78-9.
\item Śrīśaṃkarāγrāntāgravali 1999: Vol. 8, \textit{ĪUB}, pp. 5-6 (Also see Vāsudevānanda 2006: pp. 843-4).
\end{itemize}
‘and yours’ (tava ca) in this verse, he holds, suggests that either there are other individual selves (aneka-jīva) or there is but a sole individual self (eka-jīva). By addressing Arjuna as ‘Arjuna’ in the verse, which is the name of a tree as well, Kṛṣṇa implies that Arjuna’s power of understanding, like a tree that is covered by its bark, remains covered by ignorance. The expression ‘enemy burner’ (paraṃtapa) implies that Arjuna, who is subject to the illusory awareness of difference (bheda-drṣṭi), is set to kill others whom he wrongly considers to be his foes. Thus, these two words of address to Arjuna convey two aspects of nescience, i.e. covering (āvaraṇa) and projecting (vikṣepa). MS holds that while Arjuna, being an ignorant individual whose power of intellect is imperfect due to obstruction, does not know even his own births; the omniscient and omnipotent God knows them all (i.e. births of his own as well as those of Arjuna and of others). Baccā Jhā adds that addressing Arjuna as ‘Arjuna’ indicates the covering power (āvaraṇa-śakti) of nescience, while the word paraṃtapa indicates his tendency to kill enemies etc., which is not possible without the power of projection (vikṣepa-śakti) possessed by nescience, which accounts for its being followed by action.

Śaṅkara also remarks in this connection that Arjuna, with his cognitive power (jñāna-śakti) obscured by impressions of his past good (dharma) and bad actions (adharma), does not know his past births, but the omniscient and

493 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 186. This theory, known as eka-jīvāda within Advaita, holds that there is but one individual-self and one material body. Individual self is both the material and efficient cause of the world. Individual self is one because the limiting adjunct (upādhi) of it is the collective nescience (samaṣṭi ajñāna), not the individual effect (vyaṣṭi kārya) of nescience like the internal organ (antaḥkaraṇa) etc. (Also see Gupta 2006: pp. 87-98ff. for MS’s treatment on the subject in his AdS, SB etc.; Mādhavānanda 1997: VP 7, pp. 178-83 ff., Grimes 2009: p. 157 to have a general idea of this problem).
494 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 186 (Also see chapter 3.1.5 supra for elaborate discussion of the dual power of māyā).
495 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 186.
496 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Gūḍhārthaṭatatvālokah, p. 95.
omnipotent God, being eternally pure, intelligent, free (*nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta*) and endowed with unobscured cognitive power (*anāvaraṇa-jñāna-śakti*), knows them all.\(^497\) Thus, for both MS and Śaṃkara, the distinction between the individual self and the supreme Lord lies in terms of their respective capacity for understanding and power. Such a distinction between the individual self and the supreme Lord is explained in terms of the distinction between their limiting adjuncts, which do not affect the nature of the ultimate reality, which is pure consciousness (*śuddha-caitanya*), one, without a second, eternal and immutable.

In short, MS’s position can be summarized as one where the individual self (*jīva*), delimited by individual limiting adjuncts (*vyāsti upādhi*) such as the internal organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*), cannot have omniscience (*sarvajñatva*), whereas God (*īśvara*), possessing illusion (*māyā*) [i.e. the ultimate cause of everything, subtle and gross alike] as his limiting adjunct, is endowed with the knowledge of past, present and future entities and events, and therefore is omniscient. Here, the following objection has been anticipated and answered.

The eternal God, being bereft of merit and demerit of past actions, cannot have birth. But *BhG* 4.5 says that both the Lord and individual self have several births, which is clearly inadmissible.\(^498\) While explaining the verse ‘Although indeed I am unborn and imperishable, although I am the lord of the creatures, I do resort to nature, which is mine, and take on birth by my own wizardry’ (*BhG* 4.6), Śaṃkara and MS both reply to this objection as follows. Although the Lord is the unborn (*janma-rahitā*) and immutable self (*avyayātmā*), who is the possessor of undiminishing power of knowledge (*akṣīna-jñāna-śakti*) and the master of all

\(^{497}\) Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 186.

\(^{498}\) Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 186.
creatures from Brahmā down to a bunch of grass, he only appears to be endowed with a body, but does not possess one in the real sense. This is by virtue of his power of becoming (māyā), i.e. prakṛti, that consists of three constituents; viz. sattva, rajas and tamas, and belongs to him as Viṣṇu. It is on account of this that one is deluded and does not know that one’s very self is none but Vāsudeva. MS reiterates Śaṅkara’s view in this connection.499

4.2.2. The relation of the individual self to the supreme self

Having thus mentioned the ontological status of brahman and jīva, a brief note pertaining to their relation may be relevant in order to see what the BhG has to say about it, and how the Advaitic commentators interpret it. The BhG apparently talks about jīva (represented by Arjuna, the seeker after enlightenment and a dedicated pupil) and brahman (represented by Lord Kṛṣṇa, the goal of enlightenment and the teacher) as two distinct entities. Yet the Advaitins hold them to be non-different, by either saying that the former is essentially the same as the latter (since the former is nothing but the latter as conditioned by the limiting adjuncts in the form of body and internal-organ (antaḥkarana) produced by nescience) or by saying that the former is nothing but the reflection of the latter in the internal organs etc.500 Both of these views are found in BS 2.3.43-51. Śaṅkara himself, with the support of the Upaniṣadic texts, claims in his BSB that the individual self is eternal, unborn, unchangeable, and that it is non-different from the unchanging brahman. It is nothing but the unchanging supreme brahman, which, being associated with

limiting adjuncts, appears to exist as an individual self.\textsuperscript{201} A few examples from the \textit{BhG} verses will suffice to substantiate the point under discussion.

In \textit{BhG} 15.7, the Lord says that the individual selves are his integral parts: ‘A particle of myself, as the eternal individual soul in the order of souls.’ While explaining this verse, MS states the objection of the opponents against the statement in a previous verse, ‘on reaching which they do not return’ (\textit{BhG} 15.6) and answers it. Against the objection that every action of going has the act of coming back (\textit{nivartana}) at the end, so that reaching the state of Viṣṇu must also be followed by the act of returning back to this world, MS says that the goer, i.e. the individual self (\textit{jīva}), and the destination (\textit{gantavya}), i.e. \textit{brahman}, are non-different (\textit{abhinna}). The use of the term ‘reaching’ in this verse is figurative (\textit{aupacārika}), so there is no logical necessity of a return. Since \textit{brahman} becomes mediate (\textit{vyavahita}) [from the individual self] due to nescience (\textit{ajñāna}) and the individual self identifies itself with \textit{brahman} at the dawn of knowledge, describing this knowledge as ‘the attainment of \textit{brahman}’ (\textit{brahma-prāpti}) is purely figurative (\textit{vyapadeśa}).\textsuperscript{502}

In support of his view, MS now puts forward in the \textit{GD} the different Vedāntic theories regarding the relation between the individual self and the supreme self. He holds that the \textit{jīva} may be regarded as the reflection (\textit{pratibimba}) of \textit{brahman}. Just as the sun reflected in water (\textit{jala-pratibimba-sūrya}) merges with the sun itself on removal of the water and does not return to water, similarly, on account of \textit{upādhi}, the \textit{jīva} appears to be different from \textit{brahman}, and, on cessation of \textit{upādhi}, it does not return to its former stage. Alternatively, the \textit{jīva} may be conceived of as a part of \textit{brahman}. Like the space confined in a pot (\textit{ghaṭākāśa}),

\textsuperscript{501} \textit{Brahmasūtra} 2000: BSB 2.3.17-18, pp. 602-4.

\textsuperscript{502} \textit{Bhagavadgītā} 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 618-9.
which merges with the cosmic space (mahākāśa) on the destruction of the pot, upon the removal of the limiting factor of the intellect (buddhyavachinna), the formerly limited ātma does not return to its previous state. The individual self, when identified with its unconditioned essential nature (nirupādhī-svarūpa, i.e. brahman), on removal of the individual self’s limiting adjuncts (upādhi), realizes identity with brahman, and does not return any more to its former state. In the same vein, in the SB as well, following Sureśvara, Sarvajnātman, Prakāśtman and Vācaspati Miśra, MS discusses elaborately the different Vedāntic theories concerning the relation between ātma and brahman. Also, in the AdS, quoting the Śrutti text, ‘One quarter of him are all creatures, three quarters the immortal in heaven’ (CU 3.12.6) and BhG 15.7, which affirm brahman as having ātma as a part of brahman, MS holds that these authoritative texts prove the basic identity of brahman and ātma. He maintains that ātma cannot be a part of brahman in the sense of a limited portion, for brahman is beginningless and partless. Since there cannot be any genuine part in brahman (nispradeśa-brahma), MS asserts that the so-called different parts of brahman must be admitted to be based on imaginary distinctions.

Śaṃkara faces an objection that the partless (niravayava) supreme self cannot have any component part (avayava), and if it has component parts, then it is likely to be destroyed once those parts get disintegrated, and responds by pointing out that the so-called portions of brahman delimited by the limiting adjuncts of nescience are admitted as merely imaginary entities. He adds that this view has been explained in detail in the chapter on kṣetra (BhG 13.2). MS too replies to the

505 Advaitasiddhi 2005: p. 846 (Also refer to Gupta 2006: p. 80 ff.).
same objections by saying that, though the supreme self is essentially partless, it is imagined through nescience in the world [i.e. domain of embodied beings (jīva-loka)] as something that has parts due to reflection, delimitation etc.\textsuperscript{507}

As has been noted before, the Lord has categorically asserted that the sentient beings (jīva-s) belong to his superior primordial nature (parā-prakṛti), as contrasted to his inferior primordial nature (aparā-prakṛti) consisting of insentient beings (jada). The Lord also says he is the creator and destroyer of the entire universe made of these two prakṛti-s (BhG 7.4-6). Regarding the parā-prakṛti of the Lord which takes the form of the individual selves (jīva-bhūta), MS holds, in consonance with Śaṃkara, that it is (i) conscious by nature (cetanātmikā), (ii) characterised as the knower of the field (kṣetrajña), (iii) entirely pure (viśuddha) and (iv) identified with the Lord (mamātmābhūta), who upholds together this entire material world. In support of his view, MS quotes the Śruti text, ‘I establish the distinctions of name and appearance by entering these three deities with this living self’ (CU 6.3.2). The world cannot be held together without the presence of the conscious self.\textsuperscript{508} Śaṃkara’s explanation of the Śruti text lends support to MS, as Śaṃkara says that the deity here stands for the absolute (sat), which is the origin of fire, water and food, which manifests itself in distinct names and forms through the individual self, which in turn is of the nature of consciousness, non-different from the supreme self.\textsuperscript{509}

In another context, the Lord says, ‘The lord of all creatures is inside their hearts and with his wizardry he revolves all the creatures as if mounted on a water

\textsuperscript{507} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 619.
\textsuperscript{508} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 346-7.
\textsuperscript{509} Śrīśaṃkaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 9, CUB 6.3.2, pp. 353-5 (Also see Panoli 2008: Vol. IV, CUB 6.3.2, pp. 584-8).
wheel’ (BhG 18.61). As explained before, this verse apparently suggests that the Lord resides in the hearts of all beings (sarveśāṃ prāṇinām), and thus affirms the immanence of the supreme self in the individual self, thereby indicating some sort of difference between them.\(^{510}\) The explicit mention of identity between the individual self and the supreme self is, however, found in the Lord’s own assertion in chapter 13 (i.e. Kṣetra-kṣetrajña-vibhāga-yoga) of the BhG; ‘Know, Bhārata, that I too am such a guide, but to all the fields; this knowledge of guide and field I deem knowledge indeed’ (BhG 13.2). Though by kṣetra is meant the physical body (śarīra), kṣetrajña means the knower of the physical body in BhG 13.1, and the fuller implication of these two terms is brought out in MS’s explanation of BhG 13.2, which conveys the identity between the individual self viewed as kṣetrajña; residing in the body, and the supreme self, denoted by the word māṃ, that has been employed in BhG 13.2.

According to MS, this verse expresses the view that the knower of the field is by nature self-effulgent, consciousness, eternal and all-pervasive, on whom the empirical ideas of agentship (kartṛtva), enjoyership (bhokṛtva) etc. are superimposed through nescience. It is to be known as ultimately non-different from the Lord, who is by nature transcendental (asamsārī) and non-dual brahman in the form of bliss (advitīya-brahmānanda-rūpa).\(^{511}\) Thus, the field is something illusory or unreal that is imagined through nescience, and the knower of the field is the absolute truth (paramārtha-satya), which is the substratum of that illusory idea. This fact is really the knowledge of reality, which leads to liberation; and it is of the nature of revelation (prakāśa), which is opposed to nescience. MS says here that the


\(^{511}\) Thus, the empirical conditioned individual self and the Lord in the nature of pure consciousness and bliss are in fact identical with each other (See Brahma 1986: p. 888).
‘commentator’ (i.e. Śaṃkara) has discussed in detail the position that a difference between the individual self and God, which is felt from an empirical point of view, is imagined due to nescience, the individual self and God being identical from the ultimate point of view.\(^{512}\)

It is to be noted that Śaṃkara has established with elaborate arguments based on scriptural passages and the doctrine of avidyā the view that the supreme self, though undifferentiated, gets diversified into many kṣetrajña-s because of the limiting adjuncts in the form of various kṣetra-s or bodies and antahkaraṇa-s (i.e. the internal organs) that are the products of nescience. Once the limiting adjuncts are sublated or removed, the kṣetrajña-s or jīva-s become identified (i.e. non-different) from the non-dual supreme self.\(^{513}\) Śrīdhara maintains that, though the kṣetrajña during its transmigratory nature is considered as jīva, in reality, only the supreme lord, who is all-pervading, is present in all bodies (kṣetra-s) as kṣetrajña, since the nature of the supreme lord is the same as that referred to as the conscious part (cidaṃśa) which is indicated by the Upaniṣadic sentence ‘That thou art’.\(^{514}\)

Rāmānuja, however, holds that while the Lord is the self of the knower (jīvātmā) present in all bodies in the form of gods, men etc.; he is also to be admitted as the body (kṣetra) as well. Just as the body, being the distinguishing attribute (višeṣaṇa) of its knower (i.e. the self), remains inseparable (aprthaksiddha) from the latter on account of the principle of grammatical co-ordination (sāmānādhikaranya); so also both the body and its knower, being the distinguishing attributes (višeṣana) forming the body of the Lord, remain inseparable from the Lord, their inseparability being known by virtue of the terms expressing them being

\(^{514}\) Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīdharīvyākhyā, pp. 524-5.
grammatically co-ordinated. It is attested in the text (*BhG* 15.16-18) that the supreme *brahman*, Vāsudeva, is different from the body and its knower, who (i.e. its knower) is both bound (*baddha*) and free (*mukta*), and is also denoted by the words *kṣara* and *aksara*.

Thus, we find that the verse in question regarding the relation of the knower of the field to the supreme-self has been explained by MS, in unanimity with Śaṅkara and Śrīdhara, and in direct opposition to Rāmānuja. While the former three commentators, admitting the doctrine of *avidyā*, claim that it expresses the identity of the individual self and the supreme reality *brahman*; Rāmānuja thinks that it expresses the design of immanence of the supreme self in all sentient beings and the cosmic matter as the indwelling self (*pratyagātmā*), thereby having an organic relation with them (i.e. sentient beings and the cosmic matter). It may be noted that *BS* 2.3.43 which declares the *jīva*-s to be parts of *brahman*, seems to convey both the difference and non-difference between *jīva* and *brahman*; since a ‘part’ (*aṃśa*) is normally viewed as some sort of qualified substance (*viśiṣṭa dṛavya*), which is compatible with the view of Rāmānuja. However, while explaining this aphorism, Śaṅkara reiterates his view that the individual is only *apparently* a part of God, as the partless *brahman* cannot have any part in the literal sense of this term, though he accepts that both the difference and non-difference between *jīva* and *brahman* are acknowledged in this text.

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518 *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* 2.3.43, p. 622 (Besides, there are innumerable places in his commentary on the *BS* such as on *BS* 2.3.30, 2.3.40, 2.3.44-45, 2.3.50 etc. where Śaṅkara has dealt with the relation between the supreme-self and the individual-self in detail).
4.3. The universe (jagat)

Along with the two other entities, viz. brahman and jīva, the cosmos (jagat) also has a distinct role to play not only in the Vedānta but also in Indian philosophical discussion at large. We have seen earlier that the Lord univocally declares that he is the creator and destroyer of this cosmic universe, and that all beings have their origin in his two primordial natures, i.e. the insentient or lower (aparā prakṛti) and the sentient or superior (parā prakṛti) [BhG 7.4-6]. With this idea in view, let us discuss how the various commentators interpret how this important entity has been presented in the BhG.

4.3.1. The origin and ontological status of the universe

The BhG asserts in key places that the entire universe is created by the Lord, but elsewhere also says that the Lord does not in fact create anything. It is the creative power of nature (prakṛti) that gives rise involuntarily to the whole aggregate of beings, ‘Resting on my own nature, I create, again and again, this entire aggregate of creatures involuntarily by the force of nature’ (BhG 9.8). MS argues that the Lord does not create this world for his own enjoyment, as he is the pure consciousness in the form of cosmic witness. Otherwise, he would be an empirical entity, which would bar him from being God. He does not create this universe for anybody else, because there could be no other conscious entity but the Lord, who resides in every living being as the individual consciousness (jīva-s). Nor can the creation be for any insentient being, which can never be an enjoyer, and creation is supposed to facilitate the enjoyment of pleasure and pain. Nor can it be accepted that creation is meant for liberation, since there is in fact no real bondage, and since
creation is opposed to liberation. MS holds further that just as the dreamer projects a dream-world (svāpna-prapañca), or a magician projects various creations; the Lord creates the world or the aggregate of elements through mere imagination. And thus, the view that the entire process of creation is nothing but a false appearance is held by MS in an unambiguous manner, when he says that the untenability (anupapatti) regarding the possibility of creation compels one to regard it as unreal. Hence, the thesis that the world is illusory does not run counter (pratikūla) to the Advaita Vedāntins. In this way, MS establishes his claim that the world that is supposed to be created can never have the status of brahman, which is the ever-existent reality.

In another context, the Lord asserts that prakṛti, which is described as the large brahman (mahat brahma) is his womb (yoni), where he plants the seed and from which all beings originate (BhG 14.3). MS explains that during the time of creation, the Lord, in order to bring the knower of the field (kṣetrajña, i.e. jīva) [which remains merged with the Lord at the time of dissolution] into contact with nescience, desire, the results of past actions, and with the field (kṣetra) [i.e. the object to be enjoyed as the body-organs complex], deposits the seed (garbha) in the form of modification of māyā by ejecting ‘semen’ that is otherwise called semblance of consciousness (cidābhāsa). It thus gives rise to the state of creation of space, air, fire, water, earth etc. MS continues that from this so-called insemination

519 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 417. With this, the view of the Sāṁkhyas is also refuted, which proclaims creation to be meant for the enjoyment of the puruṣa and for the attainment of emancipation (Also see Brahma 1986: p. 728).
(garbhādhāna) originate all beings from the hiranyagarbha downwards, though without this process of insemination initiated by the Lord, no creation takes place.\textsuperscript{521}

Śaṅkara and Śrīdhara too interpret this verse (BhG 14.3) in a similar manner.\textsuperscript{522} The BhG does not mention clearly the process of evolution of the products of prakṛti, but merely enumerates its evolutes (in BhG 7.4. 13.5 etc.). MS has explained both the views of the Sāṃkhya and Vedānta in this regard with an assertion that the latter is the better one.\textsuperscript{523} Again, we find that BhG 14 describes in detail the nature of prakṛti as consisting of three guṇa-s (triguṇāmikā), i.e. sattva, rajas, and tamas. The fact that prakṛti is the same as māyā of the Lord is asserted by the BhG throughout (BhG 4.6, 7.14, 18.61 etc.\textsuperscript{524}, which has also been interpreted in a non-dualistic manner by MS. In his PB, MS refers to the different theories of creation as held by various schools of Indian philosophy and asserts that both the non-dualist and dualist Vedāntins (i.e. the Vaiṣṇavas) agree with the view that the supreme Lord, the one without a second, is the creator of the world.\textsuperscript{525}

With regard to the ontological status of the universe as set forth in the BhG, we may mention that, though the description of glories of the Lord in BhG 10 and elsewhere establishes the reality of the cosmos, it is held in BhG 7.7, 9.4 etc. that the subsistence of the cosmos depends on the supreme self or Lord. Further, in another important context, the Lord says in the BhG that the entire universe is pervaded by him in an unmanifest form, though he does not exist in it (BhG 9.4). MS has explained this verse in the following way. He holds that just as due to ignorance a rope is imagined as a snake or a line of water, and the existence and

\textsuperscript{521} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 589.
\textsuperscript{522} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam and Śrīdharīvyākhyā, pp. 588-9.
\textsuperscript{523} For details, see Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 344-6 and 541-2.
\textsuperscript{524} See Śrīnivasa Chari 2005: pp. 218-9.
\textsuperscript{525} Sarvadarśanasamgraha 1977: p. 10.
manifestation of the snake or line of water depend on that of the rope, similarly this world consisting of all visible elements and their effects are imagined through ignorance about the Lord, but are pervaded by the Lord, his supreme reality being the substratum of this world and accounting for the existence and manifestation of the latter. Against the doubt that Vāsudeva, the Lord, being a limited human being, cannot pervade the entire universe, as it is opposed to common experience, MS argues⁵²⁶ that, though all the mundane elements etc. and their products are pervaded by the unmanifest form of the Lord which transcends our senses and is of the form of self-effulgence, non-duality, consciousness and eternal bliss (svapprakāśādvaya-caitanya-sadānanda-rūpa), he does not at all subsist in these illusory elements, as there can be no genuine relation between the imagined (reality) and the non-imagined (illusory).⁵²⁷

In his BhGB, Śaṅkara declares clearly in this connection that the Lord is the inmost core even of space (ākāsasya api antaratamaḥ).⁵²⁸ In the same tune, as noted before, in his BSB too, Śaṅkara maintains that space also originates like fire etc. and that (in order to avoid contradicting the Upaniṣads) it is established that space is a product of brahman.⁵²⁹ Thus, the Upaniṣadic passages describing the origin of the world clearly imply that, though brahman is by nature bereft of any form by nature (avyakta-svarūpa), all entities, both sentient and insentient, nevertheless subsist in brahman, which is their self and inner-controller, though they are not aware of its

⁵²⁶ MS bases himself on Śaṅkara’s explanation on the BS: ‘…whenever there is a superimposition of one thing on another, the locus is not affected by the merits and demerits of the thing superimposed’ (BSB, introduction). See Brahmāsūtra 2000: p. 40.
⁵²⁷ Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 413-4.
⁵²⁹ Brahmāsūtra 2000: BSB on BS 2.3.6-7, pp. 582 and 588.
existence. In short, the universe does not exist apart from brahman, though brahman is not dependent on the universe for its existence.\textsuperscript{530}

Thus, in an important verse in the BhG, the Lord asserts: ‘In water I am the taste, Kaunteya, in sun and moon the light, in all the Vedas the syllable OṂ, in space the sound’ (BhG 7.8), which equates the supreme-self with the cosmos. While the comments of Śaṃkara and MS in this regard equate brahman with the cosmic universe,\textsuperscript{531} Śaṃkara’s explanation on the Upaniṣadic texts; ‘Brahman, you see, is this whole world…’ (CU 3.14.1) conveys that this cosmic universe, being in various names and forms and the object of perception etc., has brahman as its source. Śaṃkara further adds that, since the cosmic universe is the greatest of all, it is known as brahman.\textsuperscript{532}

Having noted thus the nature of the supreme self and that of the cosmos according to the BhG, we may now ask whether these two ontological entities are stated to be related in the BhG, and if the answer is yes, then how? The clear-cut answer from the Advaitins would be that, though from the empirical point of view the universe exists, from the viewpoint of the supreme reality it has no independent existence; since it is non-different from brahman. The cosmos appears to be existent due to our ignorance of the sole reality, brahman, there being no other reality than brahman.

Accordingly, in his AdRR MS, vehemently refutes the dualist Naiyāyika view that the world is real, where in the introductory verses MS pays obeisance to brahman, who by its very nature is existence, consciousness, and bliss, and has

\textsuperscript{530} See Srinivasa Chari 2005: pp. 97 and 199.
\textsuperscript{531} For details, refer to Bhagavadgitā 1999: Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam and Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 351-2.
\textsuperscript{532} Śrīśāṅkaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 9, p. 173.
assumed the human form (of Lord Kṛṣṇa). He asserts that his aim in undertaking this venture is to establish the gem of non-duality by rebutting the dualist opponents who pose as logicians, but put forward defective arguments.\textsuperscript{533} As has been noted before, in order to establish the supreme non-dual reality, i.e. brahman, MS has given elaborate arguments in his AdS for showing the unreality of empirical objects.\textsuperscript{534} In the same vein, in his AdRR, MS, having quoted Śaṅkara, Sureśvara and Sarvajñātman, maintains that there cannot be any genuine association between brahman (sat), the only existent reality, and empirical existence (anṛta or mithyā), because, while the former is bereft of any association (asaṅga), one without second (advitīya), conscious (cinmātra), and transcendentally real (paramārtha satya), the latter, like a dream, is imagination that is based on nescience.\textsuperscript{535} In accordance with the true import of non-dualism, MS asserts that, though both brahman and nescience are generally regarded as the material cause (upādāna-kāraṇa) of the universe, brahman, being unchangeable, is the non-evolving cause through false appearance (vivarta) due to nescience, while nescience is the evolving cause (parināmi kāraṇa) of the universe. He thereby affirms that brahman is neither the material cause nor the efficient/instrumental cause of the universe in the proper senses of these terms.\textsuperscript{536} Further, in a more firm tone, MS asserts in his SB that from nescience, as associated with the reflection of pure consciousness, proceeds the empirical existence, of which God (īśvara)\textsuperscript{537} is the creator.\textsuperscript{538} In Śaṅkara’s commentary on BS 2.3.13 it is attested that God, as the locus of the elements of

\textsuperscript{533} Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa 1917: Introductory verses 1-2, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{534} Advaitasiddhi 2005: AdS 1.3-8, pp. 48-232.
\textsuperscript{535} Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa 1917: p. 5 (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 83).
\textsuperscript{536} Advaitasiddhi 2005: p. 757 ff. (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 102 ff.).
\textsuperscript{537} Īśvara itself, according to Advaita, is conditioned by nescience.
\textsuperscript{538} Siddhāntabindu 1986: p. 89 ff. (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 102 ff.).
space etc., creates the products of these elements. All these statements are in agreement with Śaṅkara’s unambiguous assertion in *BSB* 3.2.32 that, due to the fact that when *brahman* is known everything else is known, the independent existence of anything else other than *brahman* cannot be thought of.

Having thus noted above in brief the nature of the three important entities discussed in the Vedānta philosophy, i.e. *brahman*, *jīva*, and *jagat*, which are also the cornerstones of the philosophic teaching of the *BhG*, as admitted by Śaṅkara and MS, and as reflected in their works and those of other commentators of the *BhG*, we may assert firmly that in performing the task of establishing the non-dual Vedāntic stance, MS is on a par with Śaṅkara.

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539 *Brahmasūtra* 2000: p. 595 (Also see Nair 1990: p. 85).
540 *Brahmasūtra* 2000: p. 725 (Also see Śaṅkara’s comments on *BS* 2.3.5, pp. 580-1 in the same edition).
Liberation (mokṣa) and the Means (sādhana) of Attaining It

In the two preceding chapters, we have discussed at some length the summary of the BhG as presented by MS in his introduction to the GD, and the three principal Vedāntic metaphysical realities, i.e. brahman, jīva, and jagat. As the final goal of any śāstra is to ensure its followers liberation or emancipation (mokṣa/mukti) from suffering, the BhG too holds liberation to be its ultimate goal. In the present chapter, the nature of liberation as held by the Advaita Vedānta and the process of attaining it will be discussed.

At the outset, the following observation of Sanjukta Gupta about the concept of liberation admitted in the Advaita Vedānta in general and by MS in particular may be pertinent:

In Advaita-vedānta, liberation is not the resultant state that jīva should attain. According to this school, liberation (mukti/mokṣa) is an ever-accomplished fact; it is nothing but Brahman itself. It is the revelation of absolute bliss. Absolute cessation of misery, which precedes liberation, implies the blissfulness of liberation, and jīva aspires to achieve it for that bliss. Vedāntic mokṣa is thus not mere cessation of misery. It is absolute bliss. Madhusūdana maintains that liberation is in fact identical with one’s own real self, ātman, which is integral, all-blissful, non-dual consciousness. It is pure and non-dual consciousness.⁵⁴¹

In consonance with Gupta’s observation mentioned above, the present chapter of the thesis is devoted to the explication of the concept of liberation and the means of attaining it, as propounded by the BhG and as explained by MS in his GD.

5.1. The nature of liberation as upheld by Bhagavadgītā and Gūḍhārthadīpikā

At the outset, it may be mentioned that for Śaṅkara, ‘Liberation is the state of identity with brahman [by the individual self]’ (‘brahmabhāvaśca mokṣaḥ’, BSB on BS 1.1.4).\(^{542}\) The BhG states that liberation is the supreme goal of human life (parama-puruṣārtha), but it does not give the details of its nature. This idea is envisaged there in different contexts. In some verses (BhG 4.31, 5.24, 8.24, 13.30, 18.50 etc.), it is described as reaching brahman; or in some verses (BhG 4.9; 7.23; 8.7, 15, 16; 9.25, 28, 34; 10.10; 11.55; 12.4; 18.55, 65, 68 etc.) as reaching Lord Kṛṣṇa, that is, being fit to become brahman or being fit to become non-different from Lord Kṛṣṇa. The BhG describes various means for attaining this liberation (i) through knowledge (BhG 4.9 etc.), (ii) through action (BhG 5.2-6 etc.), (iii) through a combination of knowledge and renunciation of action (BhG 9.28, 12.12 etc.), (iv) through devotion (BhG 8.22 etc.), or (v) through the grace of the Lord (BhG 18.56, 62 etc.).\(^{543}\)

As regards the nature of liberation, the BhG describes it as a state beyond death, a release from the sickness and suppression of birth, a dwelling from where no one comes back. It is the supreme end, a state of the greatest accomplishment. That a jñānin or a bhakta is viewed as equally capable of reaching this state according to the BhG is clear from its various verses. While it asserts that it is only through devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa that he can be reached (BhG 11.54, 18.55 etc.), it is also uttered by the Lord himself that the jñānin is his own self (BhG 7.18 etc.). Again, in one context, it is said that the devotee, having attained identity with the

\(^{542}\) Brahmasūtra 2000: p. 128.
\(^{543}\) Cf. Mainkar 1969: p. 43.
Lord, goes beyond birth and death (BhG 14.2). Thus, the BhG unequivocally asserts that a jñānin or a bhakta becomes fit for liberation.\footnote{See Mainkar 1969: p. 43.}

In another context, the BhG holds liberation to be the supreme domain of the Lord, on reaching which there can be no return to any earlier stage (BhG 15.6 etc.). As to the practice of jñāna-yoga, it is said that the enlightened being, having been freed from the bondage of rebirth, reaches the state beyond any affliction (BhG 2.51 etc.). Further, it is said that on account of their sins being washed away by knowledge, the seekers of liberation attain the state of no return (BhG 5.17 etc.). Regarding the practice of bhakti-yoga, it is uttered by the Lord himself that on reaching him, the seeker attains the highest perfection and does not return to the state of rebirth, which is the impermanent abode of suffering (BhG 8.15 etc.). The Lord also says that, though all states, including the world of Lord Brahmā, are such that those who them have to be reborn, once the Lord is reached there is no question of rebirth (BhG 8.16 etc.). It is held that by the observance of bhakti-yoga, the seeker attains the Lord alone (BhG 18.65 etc.). Through devotion, the devotee knows the Lord in reality, and consequently, enters him forthwith (BhG 18.55 etc.). So, all these passages of the BhG show that the supreme goal to be reached is to attain the Lord, the supreme self, since the individual self, united with the supreme self, overcomes bondage.

Besides, there are a few statements in the BhG which imply that jīva, on being enlightened, reaches the status of brahman, i.e. merges with brahman. Such a state is known as brahma-bhāva or brāhmī-sthiti (BhG 2.72 etc.). The BhG also declares that one who is steadfast in knowledge (sthīta-prajña) arrives at this state,
i.e. brāhmī-sthiti (BhG 2.54, 55 etc.). Attainment of the status of brahman or becoming brahman (brahma-bhūyāya) by the seeker is also indicated in BhG 5.24-26, 14.26, 18.53 etc. Together with the above-mentioned verses in the BhG; the verses 13.3, 12, 18; 14.19; 8.23-26; 13.12 etc. of the BhG may also be looked into in this connection.

Having thus shown above the specific verses in the BhG where the idea of ‘liberation’ has been defined in its various nuances, let us discuss below in brief how MS explicates this idea in his GD in particular and in other works in general.

As explained before, MS mentions in the versified introduction to his GD that indicating the path for the attainment of the highest good or salvation is the purpose (prayajana) served by the BhG śāstra, and that this highest good is the supreme abode of Lord Viṣṇu, being of the nature of sccidānanda. We have also seen that MS has explained in the GD the various means of attaining this highest good (param niḥśreyasya) or the highest goal (parama-purāśārtha) with an emphasis on the principal means of action, devotion, and knowledge, which are interwoven in the BhG itself together with other ways subsidiary to such principal means.

In connection with becoming fit for reaching brahman or Lord Krṣṇa being described as obtaining liberation, MS explains in BhG 4 that those who know and perform all the twelve sacrifices referred to in this chapter reach the eternal reality, brahman, i.e. they go beyond the cycle of birth and death or transmigration (saṃsāra) through the purification of the mind and attainment of knowledge. Śaṅkara had also held in this connection that the aspirants for liberation reach brahman in course of time, through different stages (kramamukti), i.e. after

attaining knowledge that follows after the purification of the mind etc.\textsuperscript{548} While explaining the Lord’s assertion (\textit{BhG} 5.24) that a \textit{yogin}, who is satisfied within, attains oneness with \textit{brahman}, which is final emancipation (\textit{nirvāṇa}), MS, following Śaṅkara, maintains that \textit{brahman}, by virtue of its nature of supreme bliss, is itself the final emancipation, owing to its being the cessation of world-duality, which is imaginary (since the cessation of whatever is imaginary is the same as the substratum on which that thing is imagined). As that \textit{brahman} is the substratum of false world-appearance, the \textit{yogin} (as described before) attains the ever-attained (i.e. \textit{brahman}) with the dissipation of the veil of ignorance that is the cause of world-appearance, while he (i.e. that \textit{yogin}) is indeed eternally one with \textit{brahman}. In support of this claim, MS quotes the Śruti text: ‘Brahman he is, and to \textit{brahman} he goes’ (\textit{BU} 4.4.6) and the \textit{BS} text: ‘Kāśakṛtsna thinks (the statement about the identity in the beginning of the text is in order) because of the existence of the supreme Self as the individual self’ (\textit{BS} 1.4.22). While explaining the above Śruti text, Śaṅkara says that the expression ‘to become absorbed in \textit{brahman}’ is a figurative one, meant for one who holds a different view from that of the Upaniṣads, which convey the undifferentiated character of the self (as \textit{jīva} by nature is \textit{brahman} eternally).\textsuperscript{549} Śaṅkara’s non-dualistic stand is also found in the explanation of the \textit{BS} text cited above where he maintains, with the support of various Śruti and Smṛti texts, that this statement (of the teacher Kāśakṛtsna) of non-difference is right because of the subsistence of the very supreme self in the form of the individual self.\textsuperscript{550}

\textsuperscript{548} \textit{Bhagavadgītā} 1999: \textit{Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam}, on \textit{BhG} 4.31, p. 229.  
\textsuperscript{549} \textit{Śrīśāṅkaragranthāvali} 1999: Vol. 10, p. 623.  
\textsuperscript{550} \textit{Brahmasūtra} 2000: p. 416 ff.
In the same vein, while explaining BhG 5.26, MS asserts clearly that those who have direct realisation of the self are presented with \textit{brahman} as final emancipation (\textit{brahmanirvāṇa}) whether they are alive or dead, since liberation is eternal and cannot be sought for in future owing to its not being an object of aspiration or an end to be arrived at (\textit{sādhyatvābhāva}).\textsuperscript{551} Śrīdhara emphasises the point by saying that the liberated merge in \textit{brahman} not only after death but also while they are alive.\textsuperscript{552}

While explaining the contention of the Lord that the knowers of \textit{brahman} attain \textit{brahman} while departing from this world by the path of deities [i.e. the path of fire, flame, the day, the bright fortnight, and the six months of the sun’s northern course (\textit{BhG} 8.24)], MS, in agreement with Śaṅkara, maintains that meditation on the \textit{saguṇa-brahman} helps the seeker reach gradually the \textit{nirguṇa-brahman}. With the support of the \textit{BS} text ‘Bādari thinks that the souls are led to the conditioned Brahman, for it (alone) can reasonably be the goal’ (\textit{BS} 4.3.7), he holds that the worshippers of the conditioned or qualified \textit{brahman}, by departing by the path of deities (\textit{deva-yāna-mārga}), attain \textit{brahman} having delimitation by effects functioning as limiting adjuncts, since unconditioned \textit{brahman} is attained in gradually reached liberation (\textit{karma-mokṣa}) that can be obtained through the realisation of the conditioned \textit{brahman}.\textsuperscript{553}

Śaṅkara’s stance in this connection becomes explicit when he asserts, quoting \textit{BU} 4.4.6, that there is neither going nor returning for those who are established in right knowledge (\textit{samyag-darśana-niṣṭha}), as they are immediately

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\item \textsuperscript{551} \textit{Bhagavadgītā} 1999: \textit{Madhusūdanīvyākhyā}, p. 276.
\item \textsuperscript{552} \textit{Bhagavadgītā} 1999: Śrīdharīvyākhyā, p. 276.
\item \textsuperscript{553} \textit{Bhagavadgītā} 1999: \textit{Madhusūdanīvyākhyā}, p. 405.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
liberated (sadyo-mukti-bhājana). The vital breaths of such aspirants merge in brahman alone, and they become brahman indeed.554 Again, Śaṅkara explains the above BS text cited by MS by saying that for the conditioned brahman (kārya-brahman), there is the destination to be reached, as it has a place. But in respect of supreme brahman, the question of goer, destination etc. does not arise, owing to its being all-pervading and the indwelling self of the goers.555

In another verse, the Lord says that when the seeker sees the diversities of created beings as being rooted in one brahman and as being emanated from that brahman, he becomes identified with brahman (BhG 13.30). MS, in line with Śaṅkara, states that this identification is attained by one who follows the instructions of the scriptures and the teachers, ponders over the fact that the separateness of all the material existence, whether movable or immovable, is imagined on the self which is existence by nature (sadrūpa). These imaginary objects are nothing but the self, because they are superimposed on the self and do not have any reality other than their substratum. He realizes that the manifestation or divergence of created beings is like a dream, arising from the non-dual self due to illusion. Due to the non-perception of the difference existing between two objects belonging to the same class (sajātīya bheda) and that of belonging to different classes (vijātīya bheda), he becomes brahman indeed, which is devoid of all evils. MS substantiates himself with the support of the Śruti text: ‘When in the self of a

555 *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* on BS 4.3.7, p. 994.
discerning man, his very self has become all beings, what bewilderment, what sorrow can there be, regarding that self of him who sees his oneness’ (īu 7).  

While explaining the said Śruti text, Śaṃkara maintains in his inimitable manner that there cannot occur any delusion or sorrow for one to whom all beings have become the very self because of realising the reality of the supreme self (paramārthātmadarśanādātmaivābhūt). Sorrow and delusion occur to one who does not know the seed of various desires and their respective actions, but not to the one who has realised the oneness of the pure self. Śaṃkara also asserts that here (i.e. in the case of a perceiver of the self), by indicating the unfeasibility of sorrow and delusion (i.e. the effects of ignorance), the total annihilation of the empirical existence (saṃsāra) together with its cause (i.e. ignorance) has been shown. The idea embedded here, that sorrow and delusion are due to ignorance (avidyā), which is the root cause of saṃsāra, has been indicated in the beginning of Śaṃkara’s BhG commentary as well. In order to explain the bewildered nature of Arjuna, Śaṃkara holds that the text starting from BhG 1.2 and ending with BhG 2.9 is meant to show the root cause of the defects in the form of sorrow and delusion, which shape the transmigratory life (saṃsāra) of all living creatures. He also maintains that the cessation of sorrow and delusion is possible only by the knowledge of the self, preceded by the renunciation of all actions, and not by any other means. Thus, in his commentaries on the Upaniṣad and on the BhG, Śaṃkara finds fitting circumstances to mention that effects of ignorance like grief and delusion, which

characterise the beings subject to transmigration, are done away with the attainment of the true knowledge of the self.\footnote{See Panoli 2006: Footnote 1, p. 51.}

As indicated before, according to the \textit{BhG}, obtaining liberation is also the same as reaching Lord Vāsudeva or Krṣṇa. In one such verse (\textit{BhG} 4.9), the Lord asserts that one who knows his (i.e. Lord’s) divine birth and actions in reality is not reborn after giving up his body, and attains him (i.e. the Lord). MS explains this verse by holding that the seeker reaches here Lord Vāsudeva, who is of the nature of the amalgamation of existence, knowledge, and bliss (\textit{saccidānanda-ghana}), thereby becoming free from transmigration.\footnote{Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 192.}

Thus, bearing in mind the non-dualistic notion about liberation that it is ever accomplished and is the supreme reality \textit{brahman} itself, as pointed out and revealed by the above discussion, a bit of additional discussion of it is continued below in order to explicate the nature of liberation as admitted by MS.

In his \textit{AdS} too, in response to the objection that for the self, being bereft of any attachment to sensual objects (\textit{nirviṣayatva}), there would be no revelation of bliss at the time of self-realisation (\textit{mokṣa}), and that thus no one would identify this bliss with \textit{mokṣa}, MS maintains that the revelation is itself bliss, and it is not the revelation of bliss.\footnote{Advaitasiddhi 2005: pp. 301-3.} Again, in his \textit{AdRR}, MS says that liberation, being the ultimate end of human life (\textit{carama-puruṣārtha}), implies the cessation of misery. At the time of liberation, though there is the impossibility of temporary happiness (\textit{anitya-sukha}), there is the possibility of eternal happiness (\textit{nitya-sukha}). MS further adds
that though the aspirants after liberation aim to achieve the cessation of misery in the popular sense (laukika-duḥkhābhāva), they desire for attaining the bliss of brahman (brahmānanda) that is entailed by the cessation of misery. However, the most conspicuous discussion on liberation (mokṣa) is found in his VKL. In connection with establishing his own view on the nature of liberation and the means of attaining it, after refuting rival views, MS maintains that the followers of the Upaniṣads (aupaniṣada-s), graced by Lord Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of the Blue-mountain (nīlācalacnāyaka), hold liberation to be precisely the same as the self, which is in the form of unsurpassed bliss and consciousness (niratiśayānanda-bodha-rūpa). It is further characterised by the cessation of beginningless nescience (anādyavidyā-nivrtyupalakṣita). He also states that, though liberation does not need any means for its attainment, the idea of the means of its attainment is spoken of only metaphorically. Again, MS categorically asserts that liberation (or salvation) is indistinguishable from one’s own self, which is said to be the cessation of nescience, and is also known as the mere complete bliss and non-dual consciousness and existence (akhaṇḍānandādvitiya-caitanya-sanmātra). Thus, he adds, here lies the zenith of all the ends of human life (sarva-pumartha-viśrānti).

Thus, the above note on the nature of liberation, as held by MS in his different works, substantiates the view that he remains faithful to the general non-dualistic stand while explaining the nature of this philosophical concept (i.e. liberation), besides showing his inclination towards the qualified supreme reality.

562 Advaitaratnakṣara 1917: p. 23.
5.2. Various means of liberation and their relative importance as held by Śaṃkara and Madhusūdana in relation to the Bhagavadgītā

Having thus noted briefly in the preceding section as to how MS views the nature of liberation, we examine the means that he prescribes for its attainment to see whether, if at all, MS differs in this regard from his great predecessor Śaṃkara.

It may be pointed out again that, while mentioning the various steps of attaining liberation (mukti-sādhana-parvan) in the versified introduction to his GD, MS has emphatically stated that devotion to God (bhagavadbhakti) plays an integral part in this process. We have also seen that MS has mentioned there that all the three paths of attaining liberation, viz. karma, bhakti, and jñāna are upheld respectively in the BhG in accordance with its (i.e. BhG’s) subject-matter. It is to be noted that at the beginning of his BhR, MS, with the support of the BP, asserts emphatically that it is the well-known fact that there are four kinds of yoga as the means of attaining the end of human life, i.e. the yoga of action, eight-limbed-yoga, yoga of knowledge, and the yoga of devotion.

He also maintains that the eight-limbed yoga is to be included in the yoga of knowledge. While giving a sketch of the contents of each chapter of the BhG, at the beginning of his commentary on the third chapter of the BhG, MS holds that what has been introduced in the first chapter of the BhG as the entire meaning of it (BhG) has been aphoristically stated in its second chapter. There is, he holds, initially resoluteness in disinterested actions (niṣkāma-karma-niṣṭhā); then follows purification of the mind (antahkaraṇa-śuddhi); from this takes place the renunciation of all actions (sarva-karma-samnyāsa) preceded by the fourfold aids to

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564 Śāmkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: MS’s comments on BhR 1.1, p. 2.
liberation (sādhana-catusṭaya); then arises steadfastness in devotion to God (bhagavadbhakti-niṣṭhā) coupled with the reflection (vicāra) on the Vedāntic sentences; from this follows steadfastness in the knowledge of reality (tattva-jñāna-niṣṭhā); the result of which is embodied liberation (jīvanmukti) reached through the cessation of nescience, which continues until the fructification of accumulated past actions (prārabdha-karma); and after that, follows disembodied liberation (videhamukti).

Śaṅkara also, as mentioned earlier, says in the introduction to his commentary on the BhG that the Vedic law of actions (pravrtti-lakṣaṇa-dharma), when performed with a sense of dedication to God (iśvarārpaṇa-buddhi) and without expectation of fruits (phalābhisandhi-varjita), purifies the mind, which becomes the means of attaining the steadiness of knowledge, and causes the rising of knowledge that leads to liberation.

In the preface to his commentary on the second chapter of the BhG, Śaṅkara mentions that it is the established view in the BhG that liberation is attained through the knowledge of reality (tattva-jñāna) only, and not by combining it with action (jñānākarma-samuccaya). In his words, ‘It is therefore the definite conclusion in the Gītā-śāstra that liberation is attained through the knowledge of reality only, and not through its combination with action. That such indeed is the teaching (of the Gītā), we will show separately in the relevant parts (of the Gītā).’

At the beginning of his commentary on BhG 3, Śaṅkara declares outright that ‘It is the established conclusion of the Gītā and all the Upaniṣads that liberation can be attained only through knowledge.’

567 tasmādgītāsu kevaladeva tattvajñānānmoṣaprapīḍitādī niścito ‘rthah (Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 45).
568 tasmātkevaladeva jñānānmoṣa ityevor‘rtho niścito gītāsu sarvanāpiṣatsa ca (Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 139).
while commenting on *BhG* 8.22, Śaṃkara says that the highest person is to be attained by exclusive devotion characterised by knowledge that has, for its object, the self (as is stated in *BhG* 7.17 etc.). At one place in his commentary on *BhG* 18.66 too, Śaṃkara, citing a number of verses (*BhG* 2.19, 21; 3.3, 26, 28; 5.8, 13, 6.3; 7.18; 9.21, 22; 10.10; 12.6-11 etc.), mentions that all actions have for their basis nescience and desire (*avidyā-kāma-bīja*). So, while action is meant for the ignorant, the steadfastness in knowledge preceded by the renunciation of all actions (*sarva-karma-saṃnyāsa-pūrṇikā-jñānaṃśīthā*) is undertaken by the enlightened. It affirms Śaṃkara’s distinction of two types of aspirants, viz. mendicants (*parivrājaka*-s) and householders (*gṛhastha*-s). While the former are entitled to embrace the path of knowledge after renouncing all actions, the latter need to undertake prescribed actions in order to gain mental purity (*śattva-śuddhi*); thus facilitating the path of knowledge.

Thus, the above-mentioned portions chosen at random from the *BhG* commentary of MS and also that of Śaṃkara indicate that both these commentators, despite keeping the non-dualistic stance that the sole and ultimate means of liberation is knowledge (i.e. the realisation of identity of *jīva* and *brahman*) intact, admit the utility of all the three principal means of liberation (i.e. action, devotion, and knowledge) and those of the means subsidiary to them; thereby viewing *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* as the aids to *jñāna-yoga*. Again, though both of them accept the efficacy of dedication to God in the process of reaching liberation, MS’s explicit emphasis on devotion to God (as it is held by him that devotion to God,

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571 As we have seen, both Śaṃkara and MS support the view that performance of disinterested actions with a sense of allegiance to God purifies the mind, which then becomes suitable for acquiring knowledge that leads to liberation.
together with the knowledge of the Upaniṣadic great sentences, gives rise to the knowledge of reality; and that this knowledge of the reality leads to liberation) indicates a slight shift in philosophical views.

Furthermore, at the very beginning of the introduction to his *GD* (i.e. in introductory verse 1 of the *GD*) MS directly asserts that he will follow the lead of Śaṃkara throughout. In his commentary on *BhG* 3.2, MS states that he is interpreting the text of the *BhG* only after studying Śaṃkara’s commentary, though he is only explaining what the Lord intends in the *BhG* and not what Śaṃkara reads into it. In the third concluding verse of his *GD*, MS writes that, though Śaṃkara has explained the *BhG* word for word, MS himself is explicating again it for the purification of his own understanding. These passages may be chosen at random as the yardstick for measuring how far MS remains loyal to Śaṃkara in explaining the import of the *BhG* verses. Thus, our aim here is to find out the extent to which MS follows this ‘yardstick’ while explaining the means of liberation, which forms a vital theme of the *BhG*. While both Śaṃkara and MS have many points in common, we will mainly focus on those points where the latter seems to say something novel. And in this connection, in order to highlight the differences between MS and Śaṃkara, a review in some detail of MS’s attempt to put some devotional and yogic colour in the *GD* may not be out of place.

### 5.2.1. The path of Yoga (*yoga-mārga*)

As noted before, the utility of the eight-limbed *yoga* (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*) or Pātañjala Yoga has been mentioned by MS himself in his *BhR*, where he places this eight-
limbed yoga along the three other yoga-s (i.e. karma, jñāna, and bhakti yoga-s) as the means of attaining the supreme goal of human life. By asserting that āstāṅga-yoga is included in jñāna-yoga, MS shows its utility in an emphatic manner. On the other hand, in spite of his assertion under BhG 6.29 that the followers of Śaṅkara do not find it necessary to adopt Pātañjala Yoga for realising brahman, MS’s exhaustive discussion of Pātañjala Yoga in BhG 6 and a few other places, including the versified introduction to the GD, indicates that he holds this spiritual means to be extremely helpful for those who seek liberation through the means of psychical control, thereby positing it to be an important requirement for practising jñāna-yoga, which is otherwise known as dhyāna-yoga or samādhi-yoga. Besides, in consonance with the non-dualistic view that deep meditation on one’s self together with its identity with the supreme self leads to the knowledge of the supreme reality brahman/ātman, MS has referred to the yogic practices mentioned in the YV, thereby indicating his support for yoga and its practice as admitted by the followers of Advaita for realising the true nature of the self. Thus, in order to show how some verses of the BhG may possibly be explained with reference to the doctrines of Yoga as well as that of Vedānta, MS has made use of the YS (the GD on BhG 4.27, 5.22, 6.2, 6.35, 9.14 etc.), YV (the GD on BhG 3.18, 6.35, 6.36 etc.), Yogabhāṣya of Vyāsa (on BhG 5.22, 6.15 etc.), and the Gaudapādākārikā (the GD on BhG 5.22, 6.23, 6.26 etc.) as the authorities in his discussion of Yoga.

While describing the different stages of such a knower of brahman, who is contented only in the self (ātma-saṃtuṣṭa), and who is beyond the performance or non-performance of actions on account of his lacking any personal interest in any

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object, as stated by the Lord in BhG 3.17-18, MS maintains that liberation or the highest good (nīhīśreṣṭa) cannot be attained through action; for, not being a product of action, liberation is eternally attained. Liberation is not a product of knowledge either, as it is of the nature of the self (ātma-rūpa) and eternally achieved (nitya-prāpta). Thus, non-achievement (aprāpti) of it is only apparent, and is due solely to the ignorance (ajñāna) about the self. Such ignorance is eradicated by the knowledge of reality (tattva-jñāna), and on eradication of ignorance by the knowledge of reality, the knower of the self (ātma-vid) is left with nothing that has to be achieved either through action or through knowledge. MS thus holds that, for the knower of the self, there remains no purpose (prayojana) in performing action or abstaining from it.

In this connection, MS quotes the seven stages of knowledge (jñāna-bhūmi) discussed in the YV, and shows how these stages of a liberated person correspond to those that are admitted in the Advaita Vedānta. The stages enumerated in the YV (i.e. YV 3.118.5-6) are: good resolve (śubhecchā), reflection (vicāraṇā), suitability of the mind (tanu-mānasā), union with reality (sattvāpatti), non-immediacy (asamsakti), absence of objects (padārthābhāvanī), and reaching the state of witness consciousness (turīya turyaga).

MS now explains that the first three among these seven stages (i.e. śubhecchā, vicāraṇā, and tanu-mānasā) correspond to the desire to be liberated (mokṣecchā), which is preceded by discrimination between eternal and transient etc. (nityānitya-vastu-vivekādi) and terminates in its fruit; viz. reflection on the Upaniṣadic sentences in the form of listening to and reflecting on it (śravaṇa-manana) after approaching a competent teacher; and capability of the mind to grasp
subtle entities (सूक्ष्म-वस्तु sūkṣma-vastu) with one-pointed concentration through undergoing contemplation (निदिध्यासन nidadhyāsana) respectively. These three phases, being of the nature of the means to liberation (साधन-रूप sādhan-rūpa), MS asserts, are regarded as the waking state (जाग्रतावस्था jāgratāvasthā) by yogins; for in these stages, the world appears to them with a sense of differentiation. That is, to the seeker of truth, the awareness of a pluralistic world characterising a waking state is not still done away with in these stages.

Thus, in order to accommodate the three yogic stages of the YV mentioned above within his own Advaitic parameters, MS puts forward the fourfold preliminary practices in Vedānta (साधन-चतुष्टय sādhan-catutsaya) [that are also mentioned in Śaṅkara’s comments on BS 1.1.1 etc.] as also another set of triple proximate processes conducive to liberation that consists of śravaṇa, manana, and nididhyāsana (that are also stated in Śaṅkara’s comments on BS 1.1.4, BU 2.3.4 etc.).

The fourth stage called the union with the reality (सत्त्वपत्ति sattvāpatti), which is revealed to the seeker as a non-conceptual (निर्विकल्प nirvikalpa) realisation of the identity of brahman and the self (brahmātmaikya-sāksātkāra), emerges from listening to the Upaniṣadic sentences. This stage, according to MS, is known as the dreaming state (स्वप्नावस्था svapnāvasthā), as the entire world appears to the aspirant to be as untrue as a dream. Thus, the person who has reached up to the fourth stage is called the knower of brahman (brahma-vid).

575 For a detailed account of sādhan-catutsaya; śravaṇa, manana, and nididhyāsana, refer to chapter 3.5 supra.
The last three stages (i.e. *asaṃsakti*, *padārthābhāvanī*, *turīya*), MS maintains, are the stages varying in degree (*avāntara-bheda*) of liberation in an embodied state (*jīvanmukti*). In the fifth stage, the aspirant, through the practice of conceptual absorption (*savikalpa-samādhi*, i.e. unifying concentration in which the subject-object relationship persists), attains the state of non-conceptual absorption (*nirvikalpa-samādhi*, i.e. unifying concentration in which the subject-object relationship ceases) where the mind gets withdrawn, leading to *asaṃsakti* (non-immediacy) or the state of dreamless-sleep (*suṣuptyavasthā*), from which the *yogin* arises (*vyutthāna*) voluntarily (*svayameva*). Such a *yogin*, MS adds, is a superior type among the knowers of *brahman* (*brahma-vidvara*). The sixth stage, known as the absence of objects (*padārthābhāvanī*), is the state of deep dreamless sleep (*gāḍha-suṣuptyavasthā*), which arises as a result of constant practice of the preceding absorptions and lasts for a longer period, and from which the *yogin* awakens not by himself, but with the efforts of others. He is even more superior among the knowers of *brahman* (*brahma-vidvariyān*), thereby indicating a still higher stage in the process of attaining disembodied liberation (*videhacmukti*). In the seventh and last stage called the state of transcendental self (*turīyāvasthā*), the *yogin* awakens neither by himself nor with the efforts of others, and possesses no sense of diversity whatsoever (*sarvathā bheda-darśanābhāva*). He remains completely self-absorbed in a ‘perfect mass of supreme bliss’ (*paripūrṇa-paramānanda-ghanā*). The *yogin* thus gives up all efforts of his own, and all his bodily functions (*daihika-vyavahāra*) are taken care of by others, while the supreme Lord (*parameśvara*) directs his life breath (*prāṇa-vāyu*). Thus, one who reaches this stage is said to have excelled all the other knowers of *brahman* (*brahma-
vidvariṣṭha). With the support of the BP and the Śruti texts, MS asserts that in this stage, the yogin (jīvanmukta) is not aware of his own physical body; and such a state leads to final emancipation on casting off physical body (videha-mukti), preceded by the total exhaustion of his prārabdha-karma (accumulated past actions). MS concludes that in the first three stages, which have not been able to produce the knowledge of the reality, the seeker still remains unenlightened (ajña) and need not do any work. So, for the jīvanmukta, possessed with the knowledge of the reality (in the course of adhering to the rest of the stages), there cannot be any possibility of undertaking any action.

While commenting on BhG 6.43 ff., which assert the utility of knowledge and yogic accomplishment of earlier births in attaining liberation in later births (in due course of efforts for liberation), MS acknowledges these seven stages of the YV in words almost similar to the passages quoted earlier. In a word, in the abovementioned seven mental places of a liberated one admitted in the YV, the first three stages (śubhecchā, vicāraṇā, and tanu-mānasā) constitute the nature of the means to the fourth stage, the fourth stage (sattvāpatti) indicates enlightenment, and the last three stages (asamsakti, padārthābhāvanī, turīya) describe the state of liberation while living (jīvanmukti); though Śaṅkara, while commenting on these BhG verses, places no such emphasis on the yogic practices while providing his non-dualistic interpretation. Thus, as mentioned earlier, in sharp contrast with Śaṅkara, the commentary of MS on BhG 6 and many verses in BhG 2, 4, 5 etc. contains an elaborate account of the eightfold Yoga prescribed by Patañjali, and

also frequent reference to the *YV*, thereby admitting their utility in the Advaitic means of liberation.

In this connection, it may be pointed out that Dhanapati Sūri finds faults with MS’s attempt to make use of the *YV*. In his comment on *BhG* 3.18, MS says that even after undergoing the first three stages of knowledge of the *YV*, the seeker fails to become fully enlightened, and that he needs to proceed further. Dhanapati alleges that MS has, by this assertion, indicated the irrelevancy of the sevenfold stages of the *YV*. However, he has not put forward any argument to substantiate this claim. Further, while commenting on *BhG* 6.29, in order to substantiate the view that self-realisation is possible by both the ways, viz. Yoga (i.e. the restraint of the modifications of the mind) and knowledge (i.e. the discrimination of the all-pervasive consciousness from the insentient matter), MS quotes from the *YV*, which refers to the two ways for the elimination of the mind (*cittanāśa*, i.e. separation of the witness from its limiting adjunct, viz. mind). MS adds that whereas the first way is followed by the followers of Patañjali, the second one is upheld by the followers of the Śaṅkara Vedānta. MS asserts that, since on having the knowledge of the substratum (i.e. all-pervasive consciousness) the non-perception of the mind and the objects (that are merely superimposed on that substratum) becomes easily feasible, Śaṅkara has nowhere talked about the necessity of Yoga for the knowers of *brahman*. In his opinion, since deliberation on the Upaniṣadic sentences causes removal of defilements of the mind, the mendicants of the highest order (*parama-haṃsa*-s) approach the teachers in order to deliberate on the Upaniṣadic sentences,

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577 *Bhagavadgītā 1999: Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā*, p. 158.
instead of practising Yoga for attaining self-realisation. In consonance with the objections raised by Nilakaṇṭha, Dhanapati has taken exception to MS in this matter as well. He has pointed out that MS’s assertion that Śaṃkara has nowhere advocated the utility of Yoga cannot be accepted, and that neither can his view that, for the Advaitins, *yogic* practice is not of much use for the attainment of self-realisation, since the purpose thereof is served by the deliberation on the Upaniṣadic sentences. In his commentary on BS 1.1.1, Śaṃkara himself mentions that the deliberation on *brahman* needs to be followed by the observance of the fourfold preliminary practices (which are undertaken by the *adhikārin* in accordance with the Śruti text: ‘You see, Maitreyī — it is one’s self (*ātman*) which one should see and hear, and on which one should reflect and concentrate’ *BU* 2.4.5), which lends support to the utility of *yogic* practice. To speak of the necessity of listening to the Vedāntic scriptures towards self-realisation validates the need of the meditative *yogic* practice for the restraint of the mind (*citta-nirodha*), just as there is the need of *karma-yoga* for the purification of the mind. Dhanapati again rebuts MS by saying that his attempt to cite the *YV* in this connection is far from satisfactory, as the citation from the *YV* in question conveys the twofold means of Yoga and knowledge as the means of annihilation of the mind (*citta-nāśa*), and not as the means of direct realisation of the witnessing self (*sākṣi-sākṣātkāra*), as is claimed by MS. Further, giving several references to the Upaniṣadic passages and the view of Śaṃkara on those passages, Dhanapati claims that in such passages, the

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580 It should be noted that both these sets of the means of liberation, e.g. *sādhana-catuṣṭaya*; and *śravana, manana, and nididhyāsana* have been considerably dealt with by MS in his *GD*, including the *VK, AdS* etc. (Specially, the latter set gets prominence in these two works).
observance of the meditative \textit{yogic} process (\textit{dhyāna-yoga}) is also admitted as one of the causes of the knowledge of reality.\textsuperscript{581}

Besides the above traditional opinion of Dhanapati Sūri about the usage of Yoga by Śaṅkara, MS etc. in the tradition of Advaita, some modern scholars also have discussed this problem. While explaining the above-mentioned seven stages of knowledge of the \textit{YV} as a means of self-realisation, Sanjukta Gupta points out that here, too, MS has judiciously maintained his support for the theistic consideration along with the Advaitic \textit{yoga} practice, especially when he reiterates that even in the final stage of this sevenfold schema, the \textit{jīvanmukta} is supported by the Lord himself.\textsuperscript{582} Andrew O. Fort, in course of dealing with the idea of \textit{jīvanmukti} in scholastic Advaita, having pointed out the emphasis on the Sāṃkya ideas and the Yoga practices that is found not only in many lesser known Upaniṣads but also in many post-Śaṅkara works like the \textit{YV, JMV, PD} etc., has also discussed the attitude of the \textit{GD} towards \textit{yogic} practices as a case of what he calls the Yogic Advaita. Based on the topics dealt with in the \textit{GD}, ranging from MS’s frequent references in the \textit{GD} to the \textit{JMV} (e.g. the \textit{GD} on \textit{BhG} 6.36 etc.), to the \textit{YV}, Pātañjala Yoga etc.,\textsuperscript{583} Fort opines that these are all distinctive of the Yogic Advaita, and are far from the views held by the Advaita Vedāntins at large that may be found in MS’s \textit{magnum opus AdS}.\textsuperscript{584} In the same tone, Gupta Gombrich also alleges that since, according to the Advaita Vedānta, the mind too ceases at the time of obtaining liberation, MS’s attempt at explaining the grades of spiritual development of the devotees with

\textsuperscript{581} \textit{Bhagavadgītā} 1999: \textit{Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā}, p. 317 ff.
\textsuperscript{582} See Gupta 2006: p. 117.
\textsuperscript{583} Compare \textit{YV} 3.118.5-6 (\textit{Yogavāsiṭha} 2008: p. 402) and Mokṣadānanda 2006: p. 284 ff.
\textsuperscript{584} See Fort 2013: pp. 65-8, 122-5, and 84-125 ff.
reference to the YV does not hold good.\textsuperscript{585} Again, many contemporary writers, on the basis of various works of Śaṅkara, have talked about Śaṅkara’s views on Yoga as a means of attaining liberation, thereby exploring the role of this means of salvation as admitted in the tradition of Advaita Vedānta. However, in the present context, we refrain from going into its detail,\textsuperscript{586} as we must turn our attention to the path of devotion or bhakti-yoga as another important means of attaining liberation in the BhG, which perhaps attracts more consideration, so far as MS’s philosophical stand is concerned.

In the remainder of this chapter, we propose to evaluate critically MS’s attempt to accommodate bhakti in his own non-dualistic philosophical consideration with special reference to his GD in particular and the greater Advaitic tradition of Śaṅkara in general. A brief account of the path of knowledge versus the path of devotion as held by MS, and MS versus Śaṅkara on the BhG will also be presented in this connection. In doing so, important verses of the BhG expressing devotional dimension will be viewed.

5.2.2. A critical estimate on the accommodation of bhakti in the

\textit{Gūḍhārthadīpikā}

MS has made a distinctive attempt at accommodating devotion to the Lord (bhagavadbhakti) in the metaphysics of Advaita Vedānta in his commentary on the BhG, our aim in this section is to make a critical assessment of this attempt of MS,

\textsuperscript{585} Gupta Gombrich 1991: pp. 239-40.
taking into account both his works and other traditional works of the Advaita Vedānta, and other well-known texts dealing with devotion; thereby bringing out his special contribution to the non-dualistic philosophy of Śaṅkara’s school, of which he is regarded as one of the last pioneering figures.

This section is subdivided into i) a prelude to \textit{bhakti} and \textit{bhakti-yoga}, ii) the nature and constituents of \textit{bhakti-yoga}, iii) and the complete surrender to the Lord.

\textbf{5.2.2.1. A prelude to \textit{bhakti} and \textit{bhakti-yoga} in the \textit{Bhagavadgītā} and the \textit{Gūḍhārthadīpikā}}

Though Śaṅkara, MS, and many other commentators of the \textit{BhG} have accorded a significant place to \textit{bhakti} in the schema of attaining liberation, Rāmanuja maintains that the Lord has promulgated (in the \textit{BhG}) \textit{bhakti-yoga}, as aided by \textit{karma} and \textit{jñāna-yoga-s} and upheld by Vedānta, as the means of attaining the supreme end of human life (\textit{parama-puruṣārtha}), i.e. salvation or liberation (\textit{mokṣa}), thereby professing \textit{bhakti-yoga} as the principal means of liberation in relation to the other two means, e.g. \textit{karma-yoga} and \textit{jñāna-yoga}. That \textit{bhakti-yoga} is the most significant part of the means of liberation in the \textit{BhG} is explicitly uttered by the Lord himself when he says that he is attained by exclusive devotion only, and not by any other means: ‘Thus, as I am and as you have seen me, I cannot be seen with the aid of the Vedas, austerities, gifts and sacrifices’ (\textit{BhG} 11.53);‘Only through exclusive \textit{bhakti} can I be seen thus, Arjuna, and known as I really am, and entered into, enemy-tamer’ (\textit{BhG} 11.54). Though the notion of devotion is understood in some verses of the first group of six chapters in the \textit{BhG} in connection with performance of disinterested actions with a sense of dedication to God etc., and also
in the observance of *jñāna-yoga* in the third group of six chapters sporadically, the
detailed discussion of *bhakti* as a means of reaching the supreme self occurs only in
the intermediate six chapters of the text.\(^{587}\)

In the introduction to his *GD*, MS clearly mentions that devotion is
absolutely necessary for removing the obstacles in the path of self-realisation, and
also that devotion can be classified into three types: mixed with rites and duties
(*karma-miśrā*), pure (*suddhā*) and mixed with knowledge (*jñāna-miśrā*). In addition,
devotion to the Lord is a necessary feature of the *jīvanmukta*-s.\(^{588}\) In the course of
his commentary on *BhG* 13.10, MS explains devotion to be love (*prīti*) for Lord
Vāsudeva, the supreme lord, arising from the knowledge that he is the most
excellent among all (*bhagavatī vāsudevē parameśvare bhaktīḥ sarvotkṛṣṭatva-jñāna-
pūrvikā-prītiḥ*). He holds that it is unwavering (*avyabhicāriī*), as it cannot be
obstructed by any adverse cause at all, and that it causes knowledge. MS
substantiates this with the support of a testimony: ‘As long as love for me, the Lord
Vāsudeva, does not arise (in oneself), he cannot be free from the association with
the body.’\(^{589}\) Again, in his *BhR*, he distinguishes between *brahma-vidyā* and *bhakti*.
He maintains that while the conceptual cognition of the Lord (*savikalpaka-vṛtti*) by
the melted mind wherein his form (*bhagavadākāra*) is reflected is known as *bhakti*,
the modal change in the form of non-dual *brahman* bereft of attributes
(*nirvikalpaka-vṛtti*), when the mind is not melted, is called *brahma-vidyā*.\(^{590}\)

\(^{587}\) The term *bhakti* along with its other similar forms like *bhakta*, *abhakta*, *ekabhakti*, *bhaktimat* and
the root word *bhaj* arises nearly forty two times in the text (*BhG* 4.3; 6.31, 47; 7.16, 17, 21, 23, 28;
8.10, 22; 9.13, 14, 23, 26, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34; 10.8, 10; 11.54, 55; 12.1, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20; 13.10, 18;
14.26; 15.19; 18.54, 55, 65, 67, 68) [cf. Mainkar 1969: Footnote 1, p. 12]. Also see Srinivasa Chari

\(^{588}\) *GD*, introductory verses 7 and 39.

\(^{589}\) *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 548 (Also see Mishra 2009: p. 192).

\(^{590}\) Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: *BhR* 1.1.19, p. 15 (Also see Mishra 2009: p. 224, Kar
In this connection, Śaṃkara holds that ‘devotion is worshipping the Lord’ (bhajanaṃ bhaktih) with single-minded concentration (ananya-yoga) in an unswerving conviction that there is nothing higher than Lord Vāsudeva, and hence he alone is our refuge. He also maintains that ‘This devotion (being the means to knowledge) is also (known as) knowledge’ (sā ca jñānam). While explaining BhG 8.10 too, Śaṃkara holds that ‘devotion’ means worshipping the Lord. On the other hand, Śaṃkara sometimes defines bhakti as jñāna. In his opinion, the word bhakti employed in BhG 8.22 means ‘devotion characterised by the knowledge of the self’ (jñāna-lakṣaṇā-ātmaviṣayā-bhaktih), as has been stated in BhG 7.17, while in BhG 12.20 it means ‘devotion characterised by the knowledge of the highest reality’ (paramārtha-jñāna-lakṣaṇā-bhakti); in BhG 18.54 it means ‘devotion as worshipping the Lord (bhajana), which is characterised by the highest knowledge (uttama-jñāna-lakṣaṇā-bhakti), as has been stated in BhG 7.16; in BhG 18.55 it means ‘devotion characterised by the steadfastness of knowledge’ (jñānanīṣṭhā-lakṣaṇā-bhakti). The view that devotion is characterised by knowledge is admitted by MS as well in his commentary on BhG 18.54-55 etc. Again, according to the Nighaṇṭu (i.e. the Vedic concordance), the terms sevā (service), bhakti (devotion), upāsti (prayer) etc. yield the same meaning.

Thus, these two explanations of what devotion means for MS show him not only as a devotee, as admitted by the dualists, but also as an ardent devotee who upholds the non-dualistic view, i.e. jñānī-bhakta.

591 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 548 (Also see his comments on BhG 14.26, p. 606).
Furthermore, throughout his BhG commentary MS refers to the instances of several devotees, viz. Vrajāsins, Uddhava, Sanaka, Nārada, Pṛthu, Śukadeva (the GD on BhG 7.16 etc.), Śrīdāma (the GD on BhG 7.25, 9.26 etc.), Ajāmila (the GD on BhG 9.30, 9.31 etc.), Prahlāda (the GD on BhG 7.16, 9.31, 18.66 etc.), Dhruva, Gajendra (the GD on BhG 7.16, 9.31 etc.), Ambariśa (the GD on BhG 18.66 etc.), gopī-s (the GD on BhG 7.16, 18.66 etc.) etc., who are spoken of quite often in the BP, but are seldom mentioned by the supporters of non-dualistic Vedānta. For a thorough account of those devotees and their experiences, MS refers the reader in the GD on BhG 7.16, 18.65, 18.66 etc. to his BhR. Further, in a typical manner, MS conveys his devotional yearning in versified form, at the beginning and end of some of the chapters of his BhG commentary (e.g. invocatory verses in the GD on BhG 7, 13; concluding verses in the GD on BhG 9-12, 14, 15 etc.).

After this short account of bhakti and its significance in the eyes of MS and Śaṅkara, we may discuss the definition of bhakti along with its nature, forms etc. as given by MS in his BhR. While stating the general characteristics of bhakti, MS maintains that ‘bhakti is the incessant flow of the modification of the mind (of the devotee) directed towards the Lord of all (sarveśvara) when it (i.e., the mind of the devotee) melts by the spiritual discipline related to the Lord (which is observed by the devotee).’ While giving his own exposition on it, MS, with the support of the BP texts (i.e., BP 7.1.31, 3.29.11-12), says that here, the ‘spiritual discipline related to the Lord’ (bhagavaddharma) means the hearing of the greatness and other virtues of the Lord, and not necessarily the performance of a religious practice. MS maintains that in the Advaita tradition, modification of the mind (vṛtti) always

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595 References are to the edition of Bhagavadgītā 1999 (Also see Nelson 1988: p. 78).
596 drutasya bhagavaddhrmmāddhārāvāhikatām gatā / sarvveṣe manaso vṛttibhaktirityabhidhiyate // (BhR 1.3).
means the mind’s assuming the form of the object of that modification. Accordingly, *bhakti* is held by the learned as a mental state assuming the form of the Lord by the mind when it (i.e. the mind) melts and possesses an incessant flow like the stream of the Ganges that arises as the instinctive reaction to the stimuli such as desire (*kāma*), anger (*krodha*) etc. as a result of hearing the virtuous qualities of the Lord (*bhagavad-guṇa-śravaṇa*). Such are the characteristics of the unqualified *bhakti-yoga* (*nirguṇa-bhakti-yoga*).597 Further, in connection with explaining the unqualified nature of devotion, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, quoting the same *BP* texts (i.e. *BP* 3.29.11-12) as MS, maintains in his commentary on the *SB* of MS that *nirguṇa-bhakti* is the highest means of attaining liberation.598

Besides the above definition of *bhakti* admitted by MS and corroborated by the *BP*, there are two authoritative works on *bhakti* later than the *BP*, giving, for the first time, a systematic exposition of *bhakti* in an aphoristic manner, and taking Lord Vāsudeva as the object of supreme love (*parānurakti*). These works are the Śāṁdilyabhatkisūtra (*ŚBhS*) and Nāradabhatkisūtra (*NBhS*). While indicating the essential nature (*svarūpa*) of *bhakti*, these two works speak almost in the same tone. It is said in the *ŚBhS* that ‘It (*bhakti*) is the highest love for God’ (*sā parā’nuraktirīśvare, ŚBhS* 1.1.2), and that ‘It (*bhakti*) is the principal means, as others (i.e. the means of *jñāna, yoga* etc.) depend on it’ (*sā mukhyetarā’peksitavāt, ŚBhS* 1.2.1). In this connection, the *NBhS* holds that ‘It (i.e. *bhakti*) is indeed of the nature of supreme love (of God)’ [*sā tasmin paramapremarūpā, NBhS* 2], ‘Some are of the opinion that knowledge alone is the means of attaining it (*bhakti*)’ [*tasyāḥ

Thus, MS’s understanding of bhakti as love for the Lord in terms of his knowledge (i.e. the knowledge of the Lord in reality) can be backed up with the views of these two bhaktisūtra-s and the BhG itself. Let us discuss below the role that this spiritual discipline (i.e. bhakti-yoga) plays in the attainment of liberation as admitted in the BhG in particular and in the Advaita Vedānta in general.

Towards the end of BhG 6 (i.e. BhG 6.46) [which mainly deals with Yoga as a means of liberation and paves the way for devotion as another means of liberation that has been discussed primarily in BhG 7-12], the Lord extols the yogin by saying that he (i.e. the yogin) excels ascetics (tapasvin-s), men of knowledge (jñānin-s), and even men of action (karmin-s); and again that among all the yogin-s, one who worships the Lord with his inner-self absorbed in the Lord and with faith ( śraddhā), is the greatest (BhG 6.47). Thus, the BhG corroborates the view that among the aspirants for liberation, the devotees are always held in the highest esteem. MS explains in this connection that the Lord, who is worshipped as Lord Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of all lords, may be treated by the devotees as either qualified (saguṇa) or as non-qualified (nirguṇa).  

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599 Śāṇḍilyabhaktisūtra 1998: pp. 4 and 59; Parisiṣṭam 2.2, Nāradabhaktisūram, pp. 75-6.
The BhG says that four kinds of people of virtuous deeds (sukṛtāỊ-s) [viz. the suffering (ārta-s), the seekers for knowledge (jīvāṣa-s), the seekers for prosperity (arthārthin-s), and the wise (jñānin-s)], the wise who are in constant union with the Lord and hold single-minded devotion to him excel, and so, are dear to him (i.e. the Lord) [BhG 7.16-17]. While explaining these verses, MS finds the paths of knowledge and devotion to be parallel. Thus, it is asserted by MS that a devotee desiring nothing in return for his love for the Lord is wise. MS maintains that among the above-mentioned four types of people of virtuous deeds, the wise, who are the knower of reality by virtue of being free from all desires, excel; as they are always engrossed in and solely devoted to the Lord, who is non-different from their indwelling selves. So, he is endowed with single-pointed devotion (ekabhakti) to God, because he does not have any other object of attachment (anuraktivishaya).

The idea is that, since the Lord, the supreme self, who is non-different from the indwelling self, is extremely dear, i.e. an object of unconditioned love (nirupādhī-premāspada) to the wise; the wise too are very much dear to the supreme Lord. MS also says that a wise is he who is ever characterised by the knowledge that consists of the direct realisation of the nature of the Lord (bhagavattattva-saksatkara-jñana), who has overcome the realm of māyā, and all whose desires have ceased. Thus, the devotee possessing disinterested love (niṣkāma-prema-bhakta) is none but the wise.

Again, he refers the reader to his BhR where he has elaborately dealt with devotion [that by its very nature is love for the Lord (bhagavadanurakti-rūpa)], along with the varieties of devotion as well as of the devotees.602

Thus, among the four types of people of virtuous deeds, MS has characterised the first three types [i.e. (i) the suffering (e.g. the Vrajavāsins, the princes imprisoned by Jarāsandha, Draupadī, Gajendra), (ii) the seekers for knowledge (e.g. Mucukunda, king Janaka, Śrutadeva, Uddhava), and (iii) the seekers for prosperity (e.g. Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa, Upamanyu, Dhrūva)] as those devotees who possess desire (sakāma), and who have also overcome the realm of māyā through worshipping the Lord; while the fourth type, viz. the wise (jñānin-s) are those devotees who are devoid of desire for the fruit of their actions (niṣkāma), and have thus overcome the realm of māyā. MS also holds that Sanaka, Nārada, Prahlāda, Pṛthu, Śukadeva etc. may be cited as examples of such devotees who have no interest for the fruit of their actions, and are also endowed with knowledge (niṣkāma-bhakta-jñānī), while the gopī-s, Akrūra, Yudhiṣṭhira etc. are the examples of the devotees characterised by lack of self-interest and pure love (niṣkāma-śuddha-prema-bhakta).

However, Vallabhācārya, an exponent of the Śuddhādvaita Vedānta or Puṣṭimārga (according to which puṣṭi or the grace of the Lord, after being occasioned by devotion, causes liberation), disagrees with MS. With the support of the BP texts (i.e. BP 11.12.6-8), Vallabhācārya maintains in this connection that, though all the devotees mentioned by MS such as Gajendra, Śaunaka, Dhrūva, Śuka etc. are admitted as those who have performed virtuous deeds in their past lives. The gopī-s, the devotees of the Puṣṭimārga etc., in spite of lacking merit (puṣya) earned by virtuous deeds performed either in an earlier life or in the present life,

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attained supernatural desire and love only through the grace of Lord (bhagavatsvarūpānugraha-balena-eva-alaukika-kāma-sneha-vantaḥ).  

At the beginning of chapter twelve of the BhG, in response to Arjuna’s question regarding the relative superiority of meditation on the supreme self as compared to meditation on the imperishable, the Lord declares the former to be more effective than the latter. According to him, the followers of the former, who meditate on the supreme self, being imbued with supreme faith and steadfastness in him, are considered to be the most adept among all yogin-s (BhG 12.1-2). MS maintains in this connection that the devotees who absorb their minds in Lord Vāsudeva, and consider him as (i) the supreme God (parameśvara), (ii) brahman with attributes (saguṇa brahman), (iii) the sole refuge (ananya-śaraṇa), regard him as an object of unbounded love. Accordingly, they constantly meditate on the Lord, who is (i) the Lord of all lords of Yoga (sarva-yogeśvarāṇāmīśvara), (ii) all-knowing (sarvajña), and (iii) the abode of all auspicious qualities (samastakalyāṇa-guṇa-nilaya) that also has a form (sākāra). Such devotees always remain absorbed (nityayuktā) in him with utmost faith.  

In the eleventh chapter of the BhG, after showing his universal forms to Arjuna, the Lord says that by no means other than exclusive devotion is he seen in his full forms, known in reality and attained (BhG 11.53-54). MS explains these two verses in the following manner. He says that, according to the scriptures, the Lord is known only through exclusive devotion, which is nothing but being established in him in the form of unbounded love (niratiśaya-prīti) for him. Not only is he known

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through unswerving devotion consistent with the scriptures; on the maturity of śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsana etc. on the Upaniṣadic sayings, the Lord is also directly realised in his true being by the devotee. Moreover, with the removal of nescience and its products as a result of direct realisation of the Lord’s true nature, he is also attained in his true nature by the devotee. Thus, in the verse BhG 11.54, the statement of the Lord that he is ‘seen in his full forms’, ‘known in reality’, and ‘attained’, refers to three different stages of bhakti-yoga, where exclusive devotion (ananyā bhakti) subsists uniformly.

Śaṅkara makes this point more explicit when he says that ‘exclusive devotion’ in this context means that devotion which never turns to any other object but the Lord, and that by which is comprehended nothing else but Lord Vāsudeva by all senses, thereby implying that there exists nothing in reality that is other than the supreme self.

The teaching of bhakti-yoga in all its dimensions is found again in a nutshell in the following utterance of the Lord: ‘Only he comes to me, Pāṇḍava, who acts for me, who holds me as the highest, who is devoted to me without self-interest and without any animosity against any creature’ (BhG 11.55). MS, in the light of Śaṅkara’s commentary, explains this statement in the following way. He maintains that one who performs actions sanctioned by the scriptures for the sake of the Lord alone, to whom the Lord alone is accepted as the supreme object to be attained (parama prāptavya), who is bereft of longing for external objects (bāhya-

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609 See Śrīnivasa Chari 2005: p. 120.
vastu-sprhā-sūnya), and who does not have animosity (vidveṣa) towards anybody, including those who harm (apakārī) him, attains the Lord in identity (abheda) with his own being. Thus, MS, following Śaṃkara, regards this verse as expressing the essence of teaching of the BhG (Gītāśāstrasya sārabhūtam artham), thereby extolling bhakti-yoga as a means of attaining the Lord i.e. liberation.Śrīdhara, too, holds that this verse expresses the supreme secret as well as the essence of all scriptures (sarva-śāstra-sāraṃ paramaṃ rahasyam).

Again, after mentioning the relative merits of the two types of meditation, viz. (i) that on the supreme self with devotion, (ii) and that on the imperishable, the Lord clearly affirms the superiority of those who undertake the former, as it is the easier way for attaining emancipation, as compared to the arduous way of worshipping the formless reality (BhG 12.6-7). This verse, in the view of MS, is extremely important. He explains that those who have dispelled all obstacles through meditation on the brahman with attributes, attain the knowledge of reality (tattva-jñāna), even without having instruction of a teacher and undergoing all hardships of the recurring practice of śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsana etc., as a result of self-revelation of the Upaniṣadic texts coupled with the grace of the Lord. Thus, with the eradication of nescience and its products, he attains the final emancipation (parama-kaivalya), the result of worshipping the unqualified brahman, after the enjoyment of divine glory (aiśvarya) in the world of Brahmi (brahma-loka). In support of his view, MS quotes the Śruti text: ‘He…beholds the fort-dwelling person far beyond this entire mass of living beings’ (PU 5.5). Therefore, even without the hardships mentioned earlier, the knowers of the

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qualified *brahman* reach the fruit of meditation on the unqualified *brahman* with the grace of the Lord.  

Śaṅkara’s explanation on the above Śruti text makes this point more explicit. He says that one who knows the syllable *OṂ* with three modes (*mātrā*), sees through meditation the person called the supreme self that has entered into all bodies, and that is far beyond *hiranyagarbha*, which is the mass of living beings.  

The magnanimity of the Lord towards his devotees is again revealed when he says that even those who are unable to observe practicing contemplation reach the Lord by performing actions as service to him (*BhG 12.10*). MS holds that with the performance of actions like hearing and chanting of the Lord’s name (*śravaṇa-kīrtanādi*), known as the *bhāgavata-dharma*, the devotee attains perfection that is typified as non-different from *brahman*, due to purification of the mind and emergence of knowledge.  

In the concluding verse of the twelfth chapter of the *BhG*, which is mainly concerned with devotion as the means of attaining the supreme self, the Lord says that those following this path are exceedingly dear to him (*BhG 12.20*). MS’s explanation of this verse shows a blending of the path of knowledge with that of devotion. He maintains that, though by practising the elixir of law (*dharmāmṛta*) with extreme faith, one becomes very dear to the supreme God, Lord Viṣṇu, and though it (i.e. the elixir of law) becomes inherent in him, even so, it should be undertaken by one who (i) desires emancipation, (ii) wishes to know the reality of the self, and (iii) wants to attain the highest state of Lord Viṣṇu. Thus, in the case of

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613 *Śrīśāṃkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 8, pp. 286-7 (Also see Panoli 2008: Vol. III, pp. 70-1).  
614 Religious practices related to Viṣṇu, which has been discussed in the foregoing discussion (i.e. on *BhG* 9.14 etc.).
one who aspires after the unqualified brahman on account of having perfection in meditation on the qualified brahman, there is the direct realisation of the reality put forth in the Upaniṣadic texts, as a result of recurring practices of śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsana etc. The claim that, since the Upaniṣadic great sayings like ‘That thou art’ leads to liberation, one should seek out the meaning of the term ‘that’ (tat) [in ‘That thou art’], is thus established in the six intermediate chapters of the BhG.\footnote{Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 509, 518-9.}

Śaṅkara’s non-dualistic interpretation is noteworthy here, where he maintains that those devotees who are renunciates and who also take resort to devotion characterised by the knowledge of the highest reality (paramārtha-jñāna-lakṣaṇā-bhakti) are dear to the Lord.\footnote{Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 518.}

While all the above-mentioned verses of the BhG state bhakti-yoga to be the sole means of attaining the supreme self or the supreme goal (i.e. liberation), the Lord advises Arjuna in the BhG to worship him for transcending this transient world of unhappiness (BhG 9.33). In a more succinct way, the Lord advises Arjuna in the following verse: ‘May your thoughts be toward me, your love toward me, your sacrifice toward me, your homage toward me, and you shall come to me, having thus yoked yourself to me as your highest goal’ (BhG 9.34). Again, the same statement is found in the concluding chapter of the BhG as the final teaching of the Lord to Arjuna: ‘May your thoughts be toward me, your love toward me, your sacrifice toward me, your homage toward me, and you shall come to me; I promise you truly, for you are dear to me’ (BhG 18.65).\footnote{Translation is not from Buitenen in toto.} All these assertions thus affirm the truth that bhakti-yoga is viewed in the BhG as a significant (and also the instant)
means of attaining the supreme reality. This view which will receive further support as we proceed, following MS in greater detail.

5.2.2.2. The nature and constituents of bhakti-yoga

We have thus shown above the utmost importance of devotion involved in bhakti-yoga as the means of attaining the supreme self, the nature and components of that means are indicated by the BhG in one of its important verses, viz. BhG 9.34 just cited before, which mentions the characteristics of bhakti-yoga as having manana with bhakti, yajña with bhakti, and namaskāra with bhakti. While ‘reflection’ (manana) is used in the sense of meditation (dhyāna), worshipping (upāsanā), contemplation (nīdhyāsana) etc., yajna means worshipping God, and namaskāra means prostrating oneself before the Lord. All these elements indicate bhakti, their combination leading to the formation of the bhakti-yoga propounded in the BhG. This view may also find support in the Nighaṇṭu (i.e. the Vedic concordance), where the terms sevā, bhakti, upāsti etc. mean the same thing. While explaining the verse, MS says, in agreement with Śaṅkara, that a person who has fixed his mind on the Lord (manmanā) with devotion (madbhakta) and adoration (madyājin), having saluted him through body, mind, and speech (namaskāra), and who has also accepted God as the supreme end (matparāyana), having taken sole refuge in him (madeka-śaraṇa), after uniting his own mind with the Lord, surely reaches the Lord or the supreme self, who is by nature self-effulgent (svapraṇāśa), supreme bliss-concentrate (paramāṇanda-ghana), bereft of all disturbances (sarvopadrava-śūnya)

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and untouched by fear (abhaya). Śaṅkara makes his non-dualistic stance explicit when by the supreme self he means here the self of all beings as well as the supreme goal.\footnote{Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 441.}

In \textit{BhG} 9.14, the basic features of \textit{bhakti-yoga} are mentioned clearly: ‘There are those who, always yoked to devotion, adore me and glorify me, while exerting themselves with fortitude, and pay homage to me’ (\textit{BhG} 9.14). Thus, the verse enumerates three significant approaches of worship, e.g. \textit{kīrtana}, \textit{yatanta}, and \textit{namaskāra}, which are explained by MS in the following way. He maintains that having approached a teacher who is always established in \textit{brahman} (\textit{brahma-niṣṭha}), and reflecting on the Upaniṣadic texts, the devotee sings the praise of the Lord’s nature (\textit{kīrtana}) which is presented by the entire Upaniṣadic lore as the nature of \textit{brahman}. Even when not sitting with the teacher, he also utters the \textit{pranava} and recites the Upaniṣadic texts. Thus, with the accomplishment of \textit{śravaṇa-manana} etc. and also of \textit{śama-damādi-sādhana-sampat} (meaning \textit{yatanta}), they pay obeisance (\textit{namskāra}) with their body, mind and speech (\textit{kāya-mano-vākya}) to Lord Vāsudeva, the repository of all auspicious qualities, the desired Lord (\textit{iṣṭa-devatā}) of all and the master (\textit{guru}).\footnote{Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 424.}

As the verse under consideration uses the conjunction ‘and’ (\textit{ca}) in the word ‘\textit{namasyantaśca},’ MS holds that by this usage of \textit{ca} is to be understood ‘listening to the glory of Lord Viṣṇu etc.’ (\textit{śravanādi}) which go along with singing his laudation (\textit{vandana-sahacarita}), as stated in the verse of the \textit{BP} enumerating the nine forms of devotion (\textit{navavidhā-bhakti}): ‘Listening to the glory of Viṣṇu, singing the praise of him, contemplating him, offering obeisance to his feet, worshipping
him with offerings, singing his laudation, feeling dependence on him as a servant, making friendship with him, and surrendering oneself completely to him’ (BP 7.5.23).\textsuperscript{622} Again, the use of the word ‘me’ (mām) repeated in the verse, MS holds, indicates the qualified aspect of Lord Viṣṇu; by the phrase ‘always yoked to devotion’ (bhaktyā nitya-yuktā) in the same verse is indicated the abundance of all the spiritual disciplines and the absence of obstacles towards attaining the Lord. MS now substantiates his stance regarding the role of devotion with the support of the Śruti: ‘Only in a man who has the deepest love for God, and who shows the same love toward his teacher as toward God, do these points declared by the Noble One shine forth’ (ŚU 6.23) and that of the YS of Patañjali (YS 1.29). MS goes on to explain that in this way, having adopted the means of śama, damā etc., and also that of śravāṇa and manana, being free from all the obstacles to spiritual progress as a consequence of conveying love and salutation to the supreme Lord and the supreme teacher, and having fulfilled all the spiritual means of self-realisation, the noble-minded ones (mahātman-s) worship the Lord by meditating constantly on him. MS maintains that this meditation is the ultimate stage of self-realisation, i.e. profound and constant meditation (nididhyāsana). Thus emerges the knowledge of direct realisation of the reality in the form of ‘I am brahman’ arising from the Upaniṣadic utterances like ‘That thou art’; which leads to, instead of mediate liberation (krama-mukti), the immediate liberation (sākṣānmokṣa) of the aspirant.\textsuperscript{623}

So, by viewing this means of worshipping the Lord (bhagavadupāsanā) as a fulfilment of all other spiritual disciplines and also admitting it as a cause of

\textsuperscript{622} śravāṇaṃ kīrtanaṃ viṣṇoḥ smaranam pādasevānām / arcanam vandanam dāsyam sakhyamātmanivedanām //

\textsuperscript{623} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 424-5.
eliminating all obstacles in the way of attaining the Lord, MS validates the supremacy of devotion over any other means of liberation.

It is unclear whether the commentary currently available on the ŚU is really made by Śaṃkara, but it is nevertheless quite consistent with his non-dualistic approach. Thus, while explaining ŚU 6.23 that has been quoted by MS, this commentary says that the best qualified person (uttamādhiḥkārīn) is one who has profound loving devotion, i.e. unadulterated (nirūpacarīta) loving devotion characterised as steady faith (acañcalā śraddhā) to God who is the supreme Lord, and who is by nature impartite (akhaṇḍa) supreme light (parajyotiḥ) identical with existence-consciousness-bliss (saccidānanda), and who has the same loving devotion to his teacher who is the knower of brahman as towards God [as without the grace of the teacher it is hard to reach the knowledge of reality (brahmavidyā)], and who has thus speeded up (tvarānvita) the process. To such a person are revealed these points declared by the noble one.624

It may be pointed out in this connection that, though Śaṃkara has given a very precise explanation on this verse in conformity with his own doctrinal considerations, MS’s detailed explanation on the same corroborates his devotional penchant. Dhanapati, however, remarks here that the views of MS may be accepted here in so far as he is not opposed to Śaṃkara, thereby hinting at a difference between the approaches of Śaṃkara and MS.625

MS’s explanation of BhG 9.14 is quite similar to Rāmānuja’s elucidation of the same verse. Rāmānuja says that the devotees of the Lord, having remembered his various names which indicate the particular specific traits of the Lord, by

uttering the names such as Śrīrāma, Nārāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa and Vāsudeva, with every part of their bodies thrilled \( \text{pulakāñceita-sarvāṅga} \) and voice faltering with joy \( \text{harṣagadgadakaṅṭha} \), undertake utmost endeavours to serve the Lord by engaging in different activities such as worship of God \( \text{arcanā} \), building temples with gardens therein and worshipping the Lord by prostrating on the ground with a whole-hearted desire to have eternal union \( \text{nityayoga} \) with him.\(^{626}\)

In this connection, reference to the \( \text{SB} \) of MS may be pertinent for substantiating his position. As noted earlier, MS in his \( \text{SB} \) has accepted two categories \( \text{padārtha-s} \), e.g. the seer \( \text{dṛk} \) and the seen \( \text{dṛṣya} \). While the former is the same as the non-dual self, the latter comprises nescience together with its effects, i.e. the empirical existence. MS adds further that because of difference made by the limiting adjunct \( \text{upādhi} \), the seer is represented as God \( \text{iśvara} \), the individual self \( \text{jīva} \), and the witnessing self \( \text{sākṣin} \). According to MS, God is \text{brahman} associated with nescience \( \text{avidyā} \), which has three constituents, viz. \text{sattva}, \text{rajas}, and \text{tamas}, each of which periodically predominates over the other two. In accordance with such prevalence, God is known as Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Rudra respectively. Besides, there are numerous incarnations, both male and female, which appear through the sport of the Lord \( \text{līlā} \) for gracing his devotees. Though MS has not proceeded with much detail on \text{bhakti} etc. in this connection, his commentators such as Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī etc. have elaborately discussed this issue. Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha holds that in accordance with the two senses of \text{bhakti} as means \( \text{sādhana-bhakti} \) and as a goal \( \text{sādhyā-bhakti} \), there are two kinds of devotee: i) one who is a spiritual aspirant \( \text{sādhaka} \), ii) one who

has already accomplished (siddha) his goal. Thus, he adds that, according to the etymological derivation of bhakti as bhajana, it means sādhyā-bhakti or prema-bhakti. With the support of Smṛti texts and that of one from the BP enumerating the nine-types of bhakti, he maintains that etymologically, sādhanā-bhakti or the spiritual disciplines also means worshipping and serving the Lord, as also the modification of the inner organ assuming the form of the Lord. 627 It may be mentioned that Nārāyāna Tīrtha’s explanation in this connection with reference to the ninefold devotion has been found explicitly in BhR as well.628 Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, too, on the basis of various Smṛti texts etc. and some verses from the BP text listing out the nine types of bhakti, maintains that devotion causes satisfaction to the Lord who is being worshipped. Brahmānanda further says that Lord Viṣṇu is the self of all the beings, and while all the beings have natural love for themselves in the sense that ‘may I always be’, devotion to Lord Viṣṇu is quite normal. Again, Brahmānanda refers to Viṣṇu both as qualified and unqualified.629

Having mentioned in the preceding verse (i.e. BhG 9.14) the different physical, mental and religious activities as part of worshipping him, the Lord now mentions in BhG 9.15 the sacrificial act that consists of knowledge (jñāna-yajña) which is followed by other group of devotees by taking him either as one (eka), or separate (prthak), or many (bahu) in meditation. MS interprets this verse by saying that being unable to practise the disciplines of śravaṇa-manana nididhyāsana, the devotees, according to their qualitative differences [viz. the best (uttama), mediocre (madhyama), and the dull (manda)] worship the Lord through different forms of cognitive or intellectual sacrifices (jñāna-yajña). Those who, due to their

628 Sāṃkhya Vedāntārtha 1404 Bengali Era: Tikā on BhR 1.1, pp. 84-5.
indifference to other means of realisation, worship the Lord without having any sense of difference, are the best among these types of worshippers. Thus, this kind of worship is named as ahamgrahopāsanā, which has its support in the Śruti: ‘O venerable Deity, I am Thou indeed; Thou art indeed me’ (Varāha Upaniṣad 2.34). Others who worship the Lord as a symbol (pratīkopāsanā) on the basis of a notion of difference between the worshipped and the worshipper, are the mediocre worshippers. He quotes in this context the Śruti text: ‘Brahman is the sun’- that is the rule of substitution’ (CU 3.19.1). Again, some others, who are unable to carry out these two types of worship, undertake the worship of some minor deities, or perform some rites prescribed by scriptures, actually worship thereby the Lord himself, who is multi-formed of all form (viśvato-mukha) and the self of all (sarvātmā). These worshippers are dull as compared to other devotees. MS reiterates that in order to worship the Lord through jñāna-yajña, one should look upon the lower form of worship as a step that leads to the subsequent upper step, that is, the men of dull competence lead to the mediocre ones, and then the best ones.

Though Śaṃkara regards this type of worship, i.e. jñānayajña, as an act performed by different kinds of devotees, he differs from MS in that he does not make any explicit classification of such devotees in this connection. Further, Śaṃkara explains the above-mentioned Śruti text (viz. CU 3.19.1) as meaning that, as the universe appears to be non-existent until its manifestation, and as that

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630 Translation is from Gambhirananda 2000: p. 587.
631 Brahma 1986: Footnote, pp. 738-9; Brahma 1988: Appendix, pp. 325-6 may also be referred to for the explanation of different kinds of upāsanā, viz. pratīka-upāsanā, sampat-upāsanā, samvarga-upāsanā, and ahamgraha-upāsanā.
manifestation is only made possible by the sun, the sun is eulogised to be viewed as brahman.\textsuperscript{633}

However, Dhanapati criticises MS, because he thinks that MS’s understanding of \textit{jñāna} (i.e. the knowledge of identity between the Lord and the individual self) in question as \textit{ahamgrahopāsanā} (i.e. worshipping oneself as equated with a deity) in a secondary sense demands critical consideration. He holds that since such a meaning may be conveyed even by admitting the primary sense of the word \textit{jñāna}, there is no reason for admitting the secondary sense of that word, since between the primary and secondary sense of a word, it is always reasonable to accept the primary sense of a word if the situation permits it.\textsuperscript{634}

Having kept the above discussion in mind, and with the support of a text from the \textit{BP} where it is said by the Lord that, though \textit{bhakti-yoga} is held to be manifold, it should be taken to be unitary in its essential nature and spirit (\textit{BP} 3.29.7);\textsuperscript{635} let us now give a brief account of how \textit{upāsanā} (i.e. meditation on or worship of a personal deity) is understood in Śaṅkara’s own works.

Śaṅkara in the introduction to his commentary on the \textit{CU} maintains that \textit{upāsanā} consists of accepting a certain object or support as the basis of thought in accordance with the scriptures, in order to ensure the uniformity of the flow of mental modification, so that there should be nothing different that interrupts such a current of thought. Though \textit{upāsanā} is not knowledge proper, it is nevertheless an aid to self-realisation, since it is a means for the purification of the mind.\textsuperscript{636} Again, though the Upaniṣadic text, ‘To suffer from a sickness is surely the highest

\textsuperscript{633} Śrīśāṅkarakaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 9, p. 197 (Also see Panoli 2008: Vol. IV, p. 325).
\textsuperscript{634} Bhagavadgītā 1999: \textit{Bhāṣyotkarsadīpikā}, p. 426.
\textsuperscript{635} Bhāgavata 2064 Vikrama Saṃvad: p. 136.
\textsuperscript{636} Śrīśāṅkarakaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 9, Introduction, CUB, p. 9.
austerity…a man who knows this wins the highest world…be placed on the fire when one is dead is surely the highest austerity…a man who knows this wins the highest world’ (BU 5.11), depicts sickness, death etc. as penance, and asserts the knowledge of this results in the attainment of the highest world, such \textit{upāsanā} here does not relate either to the sacrifices or to \textit{brahman}. Thus, there are number of Śruti texts such as ‘For this alone is the syllable that’s \textit{brahman}…one knows this syllable, he obtains his very wish’ (KU 1.2.16), ‘This is the support that’s best…one knows this support, he rejoices in \textit{brahman}’s world’ (KU 1.2.17), which talk about still higher types of \textit{upāsanā}, i.e. \textit{upāsanā}-s on \textit{brahman} (\textit{brahmopāsanā}). Śaṅkara’s elucidation of these Upaniṣadic passages makes the point all the more explicit. While explaining the first verse, Śaṅkara says that this syllable (i.e. \textit{om}) stands for both the lower and the higher \textit{brahman}. He who worships this symbol (\textit{pratīka}) as \textit{brahman} attains whatever he desires, i.e. either the lower or higher \textit{brahman}. While the higher \textit{brahman} is known, the lower one is attained by the aspirant. On the second verse, Śaṅkara comments that the support (i.e. \textit{om}) is the best of all supports for the realization of \textit{brahman}. Knowing this support, one rejoices in the higher \textit{brahman}; and being identified with the lower \textit{brahman}, the aspirant becomes suitable to be worshipped as \textit{brahman}. In his comments on \textit{CU} 1.1.1 too, Śaṅkara maintains that it is understood in all the texts of Vedānta that the syllable \textit{om} as name and image of the supreme self is the best means of its worship.\footnote{Śrīśāṃkaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 8, KUB 1.2.16-17, pp. 164-5; vol. 9, CUB 1.1.1, p. 10.}

In his commentary on the \textit{BS} as well, Śaṅkara talks at some length about worship of symbol. Though, while commenting on \textit{BS} 4.1.4, ‘(The aspirant) is not
to identify (himself) with a symbol, for he cannot understand himself to be so’, Śaṃkara maintains that there cannot be any self identification through symbols, as one reaches brahman when the names etc. are left without their transformed states (as the names etc.). On the next aphorism: ‘The sun etc. are to be looked upon as brahman because of the consequent exaltation’ (BS 4.1.5), he comments that in this case brahman alone is thus worshipped, being superimposed on the symbol, just as much as Lord Viṣṇu is worshipped in the images etc. (being superimposed on them). Besides, upāsanā in general (BS 4.1.8-11) and its different kinds, e.g. apratīkāvalambanā, e.g. sampad and adhyāsa (BS 1.1.4), ahamgraha (BS 3.3.59); pratīkāvalambanā (BS 3.3.65-66); and both apratīkāvalambanā and pratīkāvalambanā (BS 4.3.16) have been dealt with by Śaṃkara in detail in his BSB on these aphorisms.

As the first line of the verse BhG 9.34 is repeated verbatim in BhG 18.65, MS’s explanation on the latter also throws some light on his outlook about devotion. In his explanation of BhG 9.14 MS explained the phrase ‘bow down to me’ (māṁ namaskuru) that also occurs in BhG 18.65 as worshipping the Lord through body, mind, and speech (kāyena vācā manasā), that is accompanied by other acts of devoutness as observed in the Vaiṣṇava religion (bhāgavata-dharmāṇāmpalaksanām) [such as worshipping him with offerings (arcana), singing his laudation (vandana) etc.], MS refers to the same BP verse that he quotes in his explanation of BhG 9.14, enumerating the nine types of devotion (navavidhā-bhakti), whose offering to the Lord [according to Prahlāda speaking to his father Hiranyakaśipu], is construed to be the best study of Vedānta (BP 7.5.23-24). MS

638 Brahmāsūtra 2000: BSB on BS 4.1.4-5, pp. 940-43.
here refers the reader to his *BhR* for details, and emphasises that the devotees, after thus accomplishing all these acts of devoutness, will attain Lord Vāsudeva only after the knowledge of identity between *brahman* and the individual self (*brahmātmaikatva-jñāna*) is produced through the Upaniṣadic texts.\footnote{\textit{Bhagavadgītā} 1999: Madhusūdanaśīvākhyā, p. 751.}

Thus, in the *BhR*, MS’s view that the knowledge of the self is indispensable for developing *bhakti* has been explained in greater length. Following the lead of the *BP*, MS enumerates eleven stages in the evolution of *bhakti*, of which the fourth, called *hari-guṇa-śruti* is the practice of the nine types of devotion (*navavidhā-bhakti*) [enumerated in the *BP* verses just mentioned] according to one’s competence.\footnote{Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: *BhR* 1.32-35 and the author’s annotation thereon, pp. 67, 82, 67-99 ff.} It is also to be noted that Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, while commenting on the *SB* of MS, quotes verbatim all these three *kārikā-s* of *BhR* (i.e. *BhR* 1.33-35) of MS enumerating all these stages of devotion.\footnote{Siddhāntabindu 1989: *Nārāyaṇī*, p. 370.} Again, as to the fact whether there is the possibility of eulogy (*stuti*), singing laudation (*vandana*) etc. in the case of the unqualified *brahman*, MS raises this question in his commentary on the *SS*, and replies to it in his own way. He holds that, while some scholars consider *nididhyāsana* as *stuti* of the unqualified *brahman*, and some hold the determination of its essential nature (*tatsvarūpa-nirūpaṇa*) to be *stuti*,\footnote{Here MS refers to another commentary on the same, namely the *Anvayārthaprakāśikā* by Rāmatīrtha (compare Giri 2007: Vol. 1, *SSSS* of MS on *SS* 1.1, p. 10 and *Saṃkṣeṣapārāraka* 1992: p. 4, lines 7-8).} MS -- following the assertion of Padmapādācārya in his *Pañcapādīkā*: ‘Bliss, awareness of objects as well as eternity are the properties (of *brahman*)’ [ānando viṣayānubhavo nityatvaṃ ceti santi dharmāḥ] -- asserts that, since there can be no eulogy without assigning attributes (*dharma*), *stuti* in its primary sense of the description of merits is possible.
even in the case of the unqualified *brahman*, when the imaginary merits such as reality/existence (*satyatva*) etc. are taken into consideration.\(^{643}\)

Śaṃkara is more precise in his comments on the same verse of the *BhG*, where he says that by ‘bow down to me’ is meant ‘bow down to me alone’, and that by surrendering all the ends, means, and purposes (*sarva-samarpita-sādhyasādhana-prayojana*), the devotee attains the Lord only by bearing in mind that for anybody who has thus surrendered to the Lord, the fruit of liberation (*mokṣa-phala*) is certainly to follow. He thereby expresses his absolutist view.\(^{644}\)

Further, with the support of Śaṃkara’s own explanation, we can substantiate the steps of *navavidhā-bhakti* of the *BP* as cited by MS above. Thus, the step of eulogy (*stuti*) and salutation (*vandana*) finds clear support in one passage in his comments on *TU* 1.1.1, where Śaṃkara maintains that one who is eager to attain the knowledge of *brahman* must offer obeisance (*namaskāra*) to Vāyu (who is here regarded as *brahman*) for removing the obstacles in the way of the knowledge of *brahman*. Regarding *dāsya-bhakti*, we find another passage in his comments on *BU* 3.8.9. Śaṃkara explains that, since service is an act, and sacrifices, gift, offering of oblations etc. are equally acts; the result of service is seen accruing from those to whom it is intended.\(^{645}\) Śaṃkara’s elucidation on the concluding mantra of the *ĪU* (i.e. *ĪU* 18) brings forth *pādasevā* and *vandanacbhakti*. In one point, the said elucidation goes on like praying to Agni to lead along the auspicious path to get rid of the southern solstice (*dakṣiṇa-mārga*) characterised by incessant going and returning. Thus, being dejected with this path (of incessant going and returning), the aspirant begs the Lord again to lead him along the

\(^{643}\) Giri 2007: Vol. 1, SSSS of MS on SS 1.1, pp. 10-1 (Also see Mishra 2009: pp. 198-9).

\(^{644}\) Bhagavadgitā 1999: Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 751.

\(^{645}\) Śrīśāṃkaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 8, TUB 1.1.1, p. 616; Vol. 10, BUB 3.8.9, p. 449.
auspicious path, which is devoid of going and returning. But the aspirant is not able to render any service (paricaryā) to the Lord now, and so he only offers many words of adoration (namaskāra-vacanam) to the Lord with a view to serving him (i.e. the Lord) with adoration, that is, by bowing down to him (i.e. the Lord). Again, complete surrender of oneself to the Lord (ātma-nivedana) is echoed in Śaṃkara’s comments on MU 3.2.3 where it is said that aspiration after the self-realisation with the renunciation of every other thing is the only means of attaining the self.646

In addition to the above remarks of Śaṃkara, the view of one of the well-known commentators of MS (i.e. Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, 18th centuey CE) may be mentioned to show the admission of devotion as service (sevā-bhakti) to the Lord in the Advaita Vedānta. Thus, in his Bhacticandrikā, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha maintains, with the support of the BS text ‘That (is Brahman) from which (are derived) the birth etc. of this (universe)’ [BS 1.1.2], that brahman as the creator or God has to be served as a master (i.e. brahman needs to be served because of his being the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of this universe). Again, he asserts clearly that the knowledge of non-duality (i.e. the knowledge of identity between brahman and the individual self) is by no means an hindrance in the way of loving devotion.647

Apart from the primary sense of bhakti mentioned above, the ŚBhS also points out its secondary sense: ‘Since worshipping the Lord (bhajana) has been recapitulated by the word ‘loving devotion’ (bhakti), it (i.e. loving devotion) needs to be understood there in the secondary sense, as secondary devotion (gauṇī-bhakti) is the cause of primary devotion (parā-bhakti).’ [bhaktyā

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646 Śrīśāṃkaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 8, IUB 18, pp 25-6; MUB 3.2.3, p. 381 (Also see Mishra 2009: pp. 104-5 for all these Upaniṣadic references).

bhajonopasamhārdgaunyā parāyai taddhetutvāt, ŚBhS 2.2.1]. While explaining this aphorism, Svapneśvara (ca. 15th century CE), having referred to the BhG as the work that talks about the highest or primary devotion (in BhG 7, BhG 9.13 etc.) and worshipping the Lord with devotion (in BhG 7.17, 9.14, 9.29 etc.), maintains that the word bhakti has been employed in this context in the sense of devotion to the Lord (bhagavadbhakti). Both bhakti and bhajana convey the same meaning (both of them being derived from the root bhaja). Svapneśvara continues by saying that, when singing the praise of the Lord (kīrtana) etc. (as referred to in BP 7.5.23) are said to be the means of acquiring devotion (bhakti), the word bhakti is used in a secondary sense, and not in the direct sense (sakyārtha), just as ‘clarified butter is called life itself’ (āyurvit gṛtam, Taittirīya Samhitā 2.3.2) is a secondary usage, since by eating clarified butter, life becomes longer. The devotional acts, like listening to the glories of the Lord etc., are deemed secondary, as they help the devotee to get rid of impurities, making him ready for obtaining the grace of the Lord and forming passionate love for the Lord, which results in acquiring the highest love for the Lord, which is the primary sense of the term ‘devotion’. Here, the devotee gets absorbed in the Lord, where all his empirical considerations disappear. In his commentary on the ŚBhS, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, after referring to the commentary of Svapneśvara and the BP verse enumerating the nine types of bhakti (i.e. BP 7.5.23), and drawing greatly upon MS’s BhR, also mentions that, just as a plough, being a means of livelihood as a help for producing crops, is said to be life itself in a secondary sense, so worshipping the Lord by way of listening to the glory

648 Śāṇḍilyabhaktisūtra 1998: Pariśiṣṭam 1, Svapneśvarabhāṣya, pp. 30-1 (Also see Harshananda 2002: pp. 106-10).
of the Lord, singing the praise of him etc. (śravaṇa-kīrtanādi), being the means of attaining devotion, is said to be devotion in a secondary sense.  

Now, in view of the above-mentioned remarks of Svapneśvara and Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha respectively, we may recall here that, while explaining *BhG* 9.14, 18.65 etc., MS has substantiated his views with the support of the same *BP* text, in order to convey that all these nine types of bhakti lead to the attainment of the highest devotion (parā-bhakti), thereby admitting the former as a help for attaining the latter. Again, in his *BhR*, MS describes devotion to be the highest end of human life (parama-puruṣārtha), where he has employed the simile of plough, which has been adopted later by Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha as well. With the support of the *BP* verses (i.e. *BP* 11.20.31-36) etc., MS holds that it is the unanimously accepted view of all systems (sarva-tantra-siddhānta) that bliss that is ever unmixed with misery is only the highest end of human life. Just as a plough is called life in a figurative sense, so the statement that declares righteousness (dharma), wealth (artha), desire (kāma), and liberation (mokṣa) as the four ends of human life is to be viewed figuratively [i.e. all these four are regarded as the ends of human life, since they are the means of attaining the highest end of human life, i.e. the highest devotion]. MS adds that, as the knowers of Vedānta hold liberation, which is by nature the supreme bliss, to be the end of human life, and not as the absence of misery, the path of devotion to the Lord (*bhagavadbhakti-yoga*) is also the highest end of human life, since it is pure bliss unmixed with misery.  

651 Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: Author’s annotations 5, 6, 8 etc. on the benedictory verse, pp. 5-8 (Also see Vāsudevananda 2006: p. 875, Nelson 1986: pp. 244 and 246).
The claim that *bhakti-yoga* is held by MS in his *BhR* to be the highest end of human life is also admitted by Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha in his *Bhakticandrikā*.\(^{652}\) Again, while commenting on the *SB* of MS, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha maintains that despite its being neither bliss nor the absence of suffering, there is no fault in accepting *bhakti* to be the end of human life, just as in the case of cessation of nescience, bliss is implied as the delimiting factor (*avacchedaka*).\(^{653}\)

Regarding the classification of *bhakti*, we do not find any elaborate discussion of MS in his *GD*, barring his remark in one of the introductory verses (i.e. no. 7) that *bhakti* is of three types-- mixed with rites and duties (*karma-miśrā*), pure (*śuddhā*) and mixed with knowledge (*jñāna-miśrā*). As we have already mentioned, MS may have been influenced by the theistic Vaiṣṇavas while making this classification, and for that, we find Viśvanātha Cakravartin, a later exponent of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, mentioning this classification almost in the same manner in his own commentary on the *BhG* that is later than the *GD*.\(^{654}\) Besides, as noted before, MS has dealt with this subject in detail in his *BhR*. Therefore, a little more discussion on it may be pertinent.

It is assumed by some scholars that MS might have been aware of the treatment of *bhakti* in the *Muktāphala* of Vopadeva (13\(^{th}\) century CE, and also the author of the *Harilīlamṛta*, a summary of the *BP*, on which MS has written a commentary) and its commentary by Hemādri, called the *Kaivalyadīpikā*.\(^{655}\) In this connection, the view of Adya Prasad Mishra, a modern scholar of repute on the subject, may be taken into consideration. Mishra maintains that, according to

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\(^{652}\) *Śāṇḍilyabhaktisūtra* 1998: *Bhakticandrikā* on *ŚBhS* 2.2.23, p. 164 (Also see Mishra 2009: pp. 232-3).

\(^{653}\) *Siddhāntabindu* 1989: Nārāyanī, pp. 367-8 ff.


\(^{655}\) See Gupta 2006: p. 120 and Mishra 2009: p. 78.
Vopadeva’s exposition of the BP, bhakti is twofold, i.e. vihita and avihita. Further, vihita-bhakti is of two types, i.e. mixed (miśrā) and pure (śuddhā). While the former is mixed with either karma or jñāna or both of them, the latter is mixed with neither karma nor jñāna nor both of them, thereby giving rise to the three types of miśra-bhakti, e.g. karma-miśrā, karma-jñāna-miśrā, and jñāna-miśrā. While vihita-bhakti is of fourteen types [i.e. śuddhā, miśrā (jñāna-miśrā or nirguṇa, karma-jñāna-miśrā, karma-miśrā (sāttvika, rājasika, tāmasika), sāttvika (karma-kṣayarthā, viśnu-prītyarthā, vidhi-siddhyarthā), rājasika (vişayārthā, yaśo’rthā, aīśvaryārthā), tāmasika (hiṃsārthā, dambhārthā, mātsaryārthā)], avihita-bhakti is of four types, i.e. kāmajā, dveṣajā, bhayajā, and snehajā, thereby making the total number of bhakti to become eighteen. Mishra reiterates the view that while Vopadeva and his commentator Hemādri enumerate eighteen types of bhakti, MS, Narāyaṇa Tīrtha, and the author of the Bhaktivimāṇsā accept only the first fourteen types of bhakti, giving up avihita-bhakti all together. The reason why MS seems to have differed from Vopadeva lies, Mishra holds, in their understanding of the very nature of bhakti. For both Vopadeva and MS, the BP is authoritative, yet while the former considers bhakti to be the absorption of the mind to the Lord by any means whatsoever, the latter views the melting of the mind to be the essential constituent of bhakti.

While rejecting dveṣajā and bhayajā bhakti in the group of avihita-bhakti, MS seems to be in agreement with the ŚBhS, where the author terms bhakti as

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656 Muktaphala 1920: Chapter 5, Visnumbhaktiprakaranam with the commentary of Hemādri, pp. 64-72.
657 See Śāmkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: BhR 2, pp. 101-41 ff.
658 Śāṃdilyabhaktisūtra 1998: Parīṣiśṭam 2.3, Bhaktimāṇsā 2.1.3-2.2.8, pp. 82-3.
660 Muktaphala 1920: Chapter 5, Visnumbhaktiprakaranam, verse 1, p. 63 and Śāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: BhR 1.3 and author’s comments thereon, pp. 18-20 (Also see Mishra 2009: pp. 230-1,
'Devotion is by nature affection or attachment (rāga), because of its being opposed to aversion (dveṣa) and also being something to which the word ‘sentiment’ (rasa) is applied (dveṣapratipakṣabhāvādhrasāabdācc rāgah, ŚBhS 1.1.6). While commenting on this aphorism, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha quotes from the VP and BP as the authority, and denies the authenticity of dveṣajā and bhayajā bhakti;661 thereby accepting the remaining two kinds of avihitabhiṣṭa, i.e. kāmajā and snehajā.662 But it is interesting to note that, while commenting on the SB of MS, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha seems to be in complete agreement with Vopadeva in classifying bhakti into vihitā and avihitā together with their subsections, with the sole exception that he does not refer to śuddha-bhakti as one of the four types of vihitabhiṣṭa. Again, though Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha classifies vihitabhiṣṭa into karma-miśrā, karma-jñāna-miśrā, and jñāna-miśrā (leaving out śuddha-bhakti from Vopadeva’s classification of it) both in his commentary on the ŚBhS (i.e. the Bhakticandrikā)663 and that on the SB of MS, he expresses a contrary view in the Bhakticandrikā, while he refers to śuddha type of vihitabhiṣṭa in the same place of the SB in connection with explaining the various types of eligible aspirants adopting different types of vihitabhiṣṭa.664

In order to give a probable explanation of this apparent contradiction, Mishra says that here, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, in line with MS, views śuddha-prema/nirguṇa-bhakti as similar to jñāna-miśra-bhakti at the ultimate stage. That is why we find that the verse of the BP quoted by MS while explaining the

661 Besides in BhR 2.29 etc., MS explains in his GD as to why they are not be treated as bhakti. In his comments on BhG 7.16, he mentions that despite the fact that Kamsa, Śiśupāla etc. thought of Kṛṣṇa constantly out of their horror and enmity to the Lord, they were not devotees due to their lack of love to him (See Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: p. 117 and Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdaniṇīvyākhyā, p. 363).
unqualified nature of bhakti (i.e. nirguna or suddha-bhakti) in his BhR has also been quoted by Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha in explaining jñāna-miśra-bhakti in the SB. Furthermore, the idea becomes more explicit when Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, in the course of explaining the same verses in his commentary on the SB of MS, mentions that it is the nirgunauna-bhakti that is the greatest means of attaining Lord Viṣṇu. We have also seen that MS in numerous places of his GD regards suddha-bhakta-s as jñānī-bahkta-s (e.g. BhG 7.16-17 etc.).

Thus, we may conclude that MS’s tripartite classification of bhakti as karma-miśrā, suddhā, and jñāna-miśrā in his GD is not in disagreement with that of Vopadeva, as the additional karma-jñāna-miśrā type of bhakti (of Vopadeva) may very well be interpreted in terms of karma-miśrā and jñāna-miśrā bhakti (of MS). What Vopadeva and later Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha etc. have meant by suddha-bhakti has been termed clearly jñāna-miśra-bhakti by MS. The fact that the ŚBhS too had some influence on MS in this context is also conspicuous.

In the same way, as found earlier, for showing the need of sādhanā-bhakti for attaining self-realisation, MS reiterates in his VKL that the grace of the Lord of the Blue Mountain is as useful as the Advaitic inner disciplines of śravaṇa (of which śama, dama etc. are also constituents), manana, nididhyāsana etc. for obtaining liberation through the cessation of nescience and its effects (i.e. all sufferings in the form of empirical existence). Again, MS’s bold assertion elsewhere in the same work that there should be no divergent opinion in accepting the view that the devotee, getting his intuitive eyes (jñāna-cakṣu) purified through

the eye-salve in the form of devotion to the Lord of the Blue Mountain (bhagavato
nilācalā-nāthasya bhajanāṇjana-nirmalīkṛta-jñāna-cakṣuḥ), experiences the
cessation of nescience by the means of perception, substantiates MS’s attempt to
bring together the basic tenets of the Advaita Vedānta with his own view regarding
devotion.669 The same idea is stated in no uncertain terms in his GD where he states
that the jīvanmukta-s, being purified through the asceticism of knowledge (jñāna-
tapasā), develop a loving attitude, which is otherwise known as pleasure of love
(rati) or love (prema), towards the Lord.670

Regarding the precise definition of bhakti given by MS both in his GD on
BhG 4.10 and BhR, we find that for MS, devotion means the inmost passionate
yearning for and attachment to Lord Vāsudeva, and that it is a mental
modification.671 Though in the course of admitting the nine types of bhakti
mentioned in the BP etc., MS talks about sādhanabhakti, which is instrumental in
causing bhakti proper [i.e. devotion as an object to be achieved by the devotee
(sādhyabhakti)], and which has considerable bearing on the theology of the
Gauḍīya (i.e. Bengal) Vaiṣṇavism prevailing at his time, MS remains a diehard non-
dualist in his approach by aiming at obtaining the knowledge of identity of brahman
and the individual self, rather than seeking sādhyabhakti alone as a theist would
do. Besides, the two important things derived from MS’s definition of bhakti in BhR
1.3, viz. i) liquefaction or melting (dravībhāva) of the mind of the devotee due to
observance of the spiritual discipline of the Lord (bhagavadākāracittacvṛtti) like śravaṇa

671 As noted earlier, in the GD on BhG 13.10, he holds in agreement with Śaṁkara that devotion is
the love for the supreme lord Vāsudeva, that is preceded by the knowledge that Lord Vāsudeva is the
most excellent (bhagavati Vāsudeve paramāvare bhaktih sarvokṛṣṭa-jñāna-pūrvikā-prṛtiḥ); and in
BhR 1.3, he states that devotion is a mental modification in the form of the Lord (bhagavadākāracitta-vṛtti) caused by the listening to the glories of the Lord etc.
etc., ii) *bhakti* consisting in a continuous flow of the mental modification of the mind that has assumed the form of the Lord — happen to be important elements in the *rasa* (i.e. the supreme delight) theology propagated by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, and the *bhakti-yoga* initiated by Rāmānuja⁶⁷² that was followed extensively by the later Vaiṣṇava theologians, are admitted by MS in his *GD*.⁶⁷³

As we have seen, the two famous *bhakti-sūtra*-s, i.e. the *ŚBhS* and *NBhS* also refer to *bhakti* as i) acts of *bhakti* (i.e. *sādhana-bhakti*) and ii) the knowledge of celestial love, which is the end to be attained by the devotee (i.e. *sādhyā-bhakti*). Besides, as both the sects of Caitanya propagated by Rūpa Gosvāmin etc. (16th century CE) and of Vallabhācārya (1479 CE, the exponent of the Śuddhādvaita Vedānta school) drew heavily upon the *BP*, and, dealing extensively with the religious practices or *sādhana-bhakti*, developed the theory of rapturous *bhakti*, some scholars, such as Sanjukta Gupta, find an affinity between MS’s treatment of *bhakti* and that of these two schools. Further, Gupta thinks that MS’s method of exposition, especially his treatment of sentiment (*rasa*) and *bhakti-rasa* in particular, is nearer to that of Vallabha than to that of Caitanya.⁶⁷⁴

In another context, the Lord again says that, though he is the same (*sama*) to everybody, those who worship him with devotion live in him and he in them (*BhG* 9.29). MS’s non-dualistic approach is also explicit in his explanation of this statement. According to him, after the dedication of all actions to the Lord, the minds of the devotees have become very transparent due to prevalence of *sattva* therein and the removal of impurity of all *rajas* and *tamas* therefrom, and they exist

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⁶⁷³ For details, see Gupta 2006: p. 125 ff.

in the Lord by virtue of acquiring the mental mode in his (i.e. the Lord’s) form on
the basis of the Upaniṣadic authority. So, the Lord too exists in them after being
reflected in their absolute pure (atisvaccha) mental mode (cittavṛtti). This is a
view which has been prominently discussed in his BhR, which we will take up in
the following section.

5.2.2.3. Complete surrender of one’s self to the Lord (prapatti) as an aid to
bhakti-yoga

In conjunction with bhakti-yoga as a means of attaining liberation, the BhG talks
about śaranāgati or prapatti (complete surrender of one’s self to the Lord) as an aid
to that means. Having by nature a universal appeal, prapatti facilitates the removal
of obstacles that may crop up in the path of bhakti-yoga. Prapatti forms the spirit of
devotion necessary to obtain the grace of the Lord.

We find a couple of verses in the BhG where the Lord advises Arjuna to surrender completely to him and also to
take refuge in him, so that the Lord himself takes care of him. Here, Arjuna is the
representative of his devotees.

Having thus shown the importance of bhakti-yoga as a means of attaining
liberation throughout the text, in the concluding chapter of the BhG (i.e. BhG 18)
the Lord again advises Arjuna to take shelter in him only after abandoning all sorts
of righteousness and tells him that he will release him from all sins that he (i.e.
Arjuna) might have committed. He thereby emphasizes the need of one’s total
surrender to the Lord for attaining liberation. The pertinent verse reads:
‘Abandoning all rites and duties, take refuge in me only. I will liberate you from all

sins, do not grieve’ (BhG 18.66). MS’s detailed explanation of this verse is noteworthy, when compared with that of Śaṅkara. Some discussion of these two interpretations helps us in understanding the respective philosophical attitudes of these two eminent figures.

MS maintains that when the BP speaks of taking refuge in the Lord, the employment of the word ‘all’ indicates abandonment of rites and duties (dharma) without any exception -- irrespective of whether they are caste-duties (varna-dharma) or the duties of the stations of life (āśrama-dharma) or the duties of a general nature (sāmānya-dharma), or whether they are the duties that are being carried out (vidyamāna/kriyamāna) or those that are to be performed (avidyamāna/kariṣyamāna). Having abandoned all such rites and duties, the devotee should take refuge in the Lord, who is the one without second (advitiya), who superintends all our rites and duties, and who is the sole arbiter of their results (sarva-dharmānāmadhiṣṭhataṃ phaladātāraṃ ca). With the firm conviction that he will succeed through sheer grace of the Lord alone, the devotee should worship with incessant thinking (anukṣaṇa-bhāvanā) about Lord Vāsudeva, who is the embodiment of the amalgamation of supreme bliss and infinity (paramānanda-ghana-mūrtimanantam). The idea is that he should constantly think of the Lord with an excessive love (prema-prakarṣa) that is preceded by the idea that the Lord is the highest reality and that there is nothing outside him. Such a mental modification is bereft of all ideas about the non-self, and is like a continuous flow of oil (taila-dhāravadavichhinna).

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677 Translation is our own.
MS says further that the phrase ‘abandoning all dharma-s’ (sarva-dharmān parityājya) in the verse does not enjoin renunciation of actions. Rather, what is directed here for all the stations of life [e.g. student (brahmacārin), house-holder (grhaṣṭha), forest-dweller (vānaprastha), and renunciate (saṃnyāsin)] is that they should surrender themselves completely to the Lord (bhagavadeka-śaraṇatā-mātra) after disregarding (anādara) actions, even if they are directed. MS holds that the phrase ‘abandoning all dharma-s’ does not mean abandoning all righteous and unrighteous actions, as this fact is already known from the scriptures endorsing renunciation (saṃnyāsa-śāstra) and the scriptures asserting prohibition (pratiṣedha-śāstra) respectively. This phrase is also not to be treated simply as an expression that endorses renunciation (saṃnyāsa-vīdhāyaka-vacana), as what is intended to be directed here is surrendering oneself completely to the Lord. Thus, it is to be taken as a mere reiteration, because the phrase in question is neither an injunctive sentence (vidhi-vākyā) nor one that proclaims renunciation; while the acceptance of both these senses of it leads to a defect known as ‘sentential split’ (vākyabheda). Besides, having viewed it as the reiteration of ‘abandoning all righteousness and unrighteousness’, the assertion ‘complete surrender to the Lord’ has to be meant by the later phrase of the verse ‘seek me alone for refuge’ (māmekāṃ śaraṇam vraja); thereby asserting that here ‘renunciation of dharma’ is not intended to be meant by

678 While saṃnyāsa-śāstra talks about abandoning righteousness/actions that are enjoined by the scriptures, pratiṣedha-śāstra prohibits the performance of unrighteous actions, i.e. actions that are prohibited by the scriptures.

679 In Mīmāṃsāsūtra 2.1.46, Jaimini has stated that a sentence consists of words that combine to express a single meaning (arthaikatvadekaṃ vākyam) [Mīmāṃsādārśana 1984-86: Vol. 2, p. 521]. Hence, if a single sentence is interpreted in a manner that can yield two meanings, then in order to express these two meanings, the single sentence has to be reduced to two sentences, thus affecting its unity. This is known as the defect called ‘sentential split’ (vākyabheda).
the phrase ‘abandoning all dharma-s’. BhG 18.66 has been admitted as the concluding statement of the BhG scripture as it maintains ‘surrender to the Lord’ to be its final teaching. Without this surrender to the Lord, even renunciation does not fructify [i.e. renunciation does not give rise to its result (i.e. liberation)].

In this connection, Baccā Jhā’s observation on MS’s explanation on the expression ‘having abandoned’ (parityajya) may be mentioned. Baccā Jhā holds that MS explains the expression parityajya in such a circuitous way because of the fact that, in the previous chapters, the performance of prescribed action without any desire for fruits has been highly extolled; if they are now held to be something dispensable (i.e. something that should be totally abandoned), then it would lead to inconsistency. Further, Jhā explicates the expression madeka-śaraṇatā (i.e. taking refuge in the Lord only) in the context as the continuous flow of the modifications of the mind (nirantara-vṛtti-pravāha) in the form of non-dual pure consciousness (advitīya-śuddha-cid-rūpa) that arises after the removal of distraction (vikṣepa), which is again caused by renunciation of all actions by the internal organ, i.e. mind, that has already been purified by the performance of nitya-naimittika-karma-s.680

MS adds that, since Arjuna, being a kṣatriya, is not qualified for embracing renunciation, it is irrational for the Lord to advise him about renunciation. If it is held that the Lord is talking about renunciation in general by holding Arjuna as the representative, it does not seem appropriate to place the introductory and concluding statements: ‘…I shall tell it for your own good’ (BhG 18.64) and ‘…I will liberate you from all sins, do not grieve’ (BhG 18.66). Thus, in this context, only complete surrender to the Lord has been upheld by the Lord, with a sense of

ignoring the duties of renunciation (sāmnyāsa-dharma). In connection with this, as also while explaining the Lord’s contention that he will absolve his devotees unconditionally of all sins (i.e. without the performance of any atonement for committing sins), provided the devotees totally surrender to him, MS refers to Śaṅkara, who, he says, has established this point in greater detail after refuting the rival views.

MS now gives concrete details of this concept of ‘surrender to the Lord’ (bhagavaccharaṇatva) embedded in the BhG by mentioning that depending on the ripeness of spiritual practice (sādhanābhyāsa), such surrender may be of three types: (i) I am his alone (tasyaivāham), (ii) He is mine alone (mamaivāsau), and (iii) He and myself are non-different (sa evāham). In the GD, MS has referred the reader to his BhR where the detailed treatment of all these types of surrender to the Lord has been made.\(^\text{681}\) In order to substantiate that all these three types of bhagavaccharaṇatā can be traced to different theistic Vaiṣṇavite sources, MS now quotes concrete examples of them from their respective sources. The first one, MS maintains, is of a placid form (mṛdu), as expressed in, ‘O Lord! Even if the sense of differentiation withers away, I am yours, and not you mine; as the wave belongs to the sea, and certainly not the sea to the wave’ (Viṣṇuṣṭpadī 3, a stotra believed to have been composed by Śaṅkara).\(^\text{682}\) The second one is somewhat stronger (madhyama), as in, ‘O Lord Kṛṣṇa! It is not surprising that you are walking away by forcibly throwing aside my hands! But I will deem it your valour if you can go out my heart’ (Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛtam 3.96 of Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura or Līlāśuka, ca. 14\textsuperscript{th}

\(^{681}\) Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: BhR 2.60-70, pp. 132-6.

\(^{682}\) satyapi bhedāpagameṇa nātha tavāham na māmakānśavam / sāmudro hi taraṅgaḥ kkacana samudra na tāraṅgaḥ // (Śrīśāṃkaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 1, Ṣaṭpadīstotram, p. 379).
century CE). The third one is the most intense (adhimātram), as is spoken of by the king of death (Yama) to his messenger (dūta), ‘Go away from a distance from those who hold the firm conviction residing in their hearts that all these worldly phenomena and they themselves are non-different from Lord Vāsudeva, and that that supreme person, the supreme Lord, is one (i.e. identical)’ [VP 3.7.32]. MS holds that devotees like Ambarīṣa, Prahlāda, gopī-s etc. may be placed under this third category. It may be noted in this connection that while commenting on the SB of MS, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī refers to the above-mentioned three types of surrender to the Lord along with the verse of the BhG in question (i.e. BhG 18.66), and elaborates them respectively. Brahmānanda holds that the result of devotion (bhakti) in the sense of loving devotion (prema) is surrendering oneself to the Lord (ātma-nivedana). By the first type of surrendering to the Lord as ‘I am his alone’ is meant remembrance of Lord Viṣṇu. The second type as ‘He is mine only’ brings forth from the cessation of difference in respect of other beings due to the abundance of love for the Lord (prematiśaya). Regarding the third and last type, ‘He and I are non-different’, Brahmānanda adds, the sense that Lord Viṣṇu as existence, consciousness, and bliss is by nature loving devotion, while the idea of difference between the worshipped (sevya), worshipper (sevaka) etc. is obliterated.

683 hastamutkṣiapya yāto’si balātkṛṣṇa kimadbhutam / ṭraṭayādyadi niryāsi pauruṣam gaṇayāmi te //
684 sakalamidamahaṃ ca vāsudevaḥ paramapumānparameśvaraḥ sa ekaḥ / iti matiracala bhavyananteh rdayagate vraja tānvihāya dārāt //
MS asserts that the three types of steadfastness (*niṣṭhā*) in the form of goal (*sādhyā*) and the means of its attainment (*sādhana*) have been spoken of in the *BhG* in clear terms. Among them, while the steadfastness in action (*karma-niṣṭhā*) as having its utility until the renunciation of all actions (*sarva-karma-saṃnyāsa*) has been expressed in the statement ‘He finds it by honouring, through the fulfilment of his own task, him who motivates the creatures to act, on whom all this is strung’ (*BhG* 18.46); the steadfastness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*), coupled with the perfection in listening to the Vedāntic scriptures etc. which are preceded by renunciation, is conveyed in the statement ‘Through this bhakti he recognises me for who I am and understands how great I really am, and by virtue of his true knowledge he enters me at once’ (*BhG* 18.55); the steadfastness in devotion to God (*bhagavadbhakti-niṣṭhā*), being the means to and result of both *karma-niṣṭhā* and *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, has been expressed at the end in the statement ‘Abandoning all rites and duties, take refuge in me only. I will liberate you from all sins, do not grieve’ (*BhG* 18.66). However, the revered commentator Śaṃkara maintains that by tagging ‘renunciation of all actions’ (*sarva-karma-saṃnyāsa*) to the phrase ‘relinquishing all dharma-s’, steadfastness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*) has been summed up in the phrase ‘seek me alone for refuge’ (in *BhG* 18.66). With much humility, MS now expresses his difference with Śaṃkara, when he describes himself as a pitiable (*varāka*) person who is unable to explain the intent of the Lord in this context. While MS has described the expression as conveying surrender to the Lord, Śaṃkara maintains that it expresses renunciation. Thus, in order to
express his view with mildness, MS has described himself as an insignificant person who is unable to grasp the intent of the Lord.\textsuperscript{687}

As indicated by MS himself, while explaining the verse under discussion (i.e. \textit{BhG} 18.66), Śaṃkara’s interpretation seems conspicuously different from that of MS. Unlike MS, Śaṃkara explains this verse by stating that after the renunciation of all \textit{dharma-s} that comprise the performance of prescribed deeds as well as the performance of prohibited actions [so that the idea ‘freedom from all actions’ (\textit{naiśkarmya}) can be properly conveyed], one needs to take refuge in the Lord alone, conceived as the self of all, the same in all, dwelling in all beings, the Lord, indestructible, free from being conceived as a foetus in the womb, birth, old age, and death (\textit{garbha-janma-jarā-marāṇa-vivarjita}). In so doing, the aspirant must have the conviction that he himself is verily the Lord and that there is nothing else except the Lord. Pointing out a few verses in the \textit{BhG} conveying both the means of knowledge (\textit{BhG} 13.12, 18.55 etc.) and action (\textit{BhG} 2.47, 4.15 etc.) as the suitable means of attaining the supreme good or liberation (\textit{mokṣa}), Śaṃkara, after anticipating the possible objections of the opponent as to which among them — knowledge, or action, or the combination of both — should be the means for its attainment, adds that only the knowledge of the self (\textit{ātma-jñāna}) is the cause of the highest good (\textit{niḥśreyasa}) because, after dispelling the sense of difference (\textit{bheda-pratyaya}), it culminates in liberation or emancipation (\textit{kaivalya}). As the sense of difference, consisting in action, its agent, and its result (\textit{kriyā-kāraka-phala-bheda-buddhi}), is ever prevalent in the self due to nescience or ignorance (\textit{avidyā}) which

\textsuperscript{687} \textit{Bhagavadgītā} 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 752-5.
has been at work in time without beginning (*anādi-kāla*), and as the knowledge of
the self dispels nescience that propels one to engage in action with the awareness of
multiplicity, the way of knowledge (*jñāna-mārga*) is the only means of attaining
liberation, ruling out the other two alternatives, viz. the means of action (*karma-
mārga*) and that of the combination of action and knowledge (*jñāna-karma-
samuccaya-mārga*). Though liberation, being an eternal entity (*nitya-vastu*) and not
a product (*akārya*), is not produced either through action or through knowledge,
knowledge alone is the means of attaining the highest good or liberation (*ataḥ
kevalameva jñānam niḥśreyasādhanamitī*), as knowledge dispels the darkness of
ignorance (*avidyā-tamo-nivartaka*) and is seen to result in liberation, just as
darkness and illusions such as apprehending a rope as a snake etc. are dispelled by
the light of a lamp. Furthermore, knowledge requires no assistance for producing
liberation as its fruit (*mokṣa-phala*). Knowledge dispels nescience, which is a pre-
condition of action, and that nescience or ignorance cannot be its own dispeller.\(^{688}\)

Thus, Śaṃkara’s understanding of this verse as the attainment of the
supreme self as identified with the individual-self after renouncing all sorts of
action poses a sharp difference with that of MS, according to whom this means that
the attainment of the qualified *brahman* is possible through utmost self-surrender.
Further, it is interesting to note that though MS expresses a view different from that
of Śaṃkara on *BhG* 18.66, he quotes from the latter’s work (i.e. the *Viṣṇuṣatpadī*),
which is one of the many hymns said to have been composed by Śaṃkara in praise
of Lord Viṣṇu, while indicating that Śaṃkara does not convey the inner meaning of
the verse, which actually talks about total surrender to the Lord.

\(^{688}\) *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 752-7 ff.
The view of Roger Marcaurelle is noteworthy in this connection. After considering the comments of both Śaṃkara and MS on BhG 18.66, he maintains that it is a sheer misunderstanding on the part of MS that prevents him from grasping the implicit hermeneutical import embedded in the comments of Śaṃkara on BhG 18.66. As noted above, MS finds fault with Śaṃkara’s interpretation of ‘having renounced all dharmas’ in the verse as ‘having renounced all right and wrong actions, i.e. all actions in a sense of physical renunciation as a prologue to the steadfastness in knowledge (jñāna-nisīḍhā)’, owing to the fact that physical renunciation cannot be prescribed to Arjuna, who is a kṣatriya by birth, and that the idea of surrendering to the Lord is intended here. On the other hand, ironically, Ānandagiri, while commenting on this verse in Śaṃkara’s Gitābhāṣya, mentions that Lord Kṛṣṇa takes Arjuna as an incidental addressee for the steadfastness in knowledge through physical renunciation, an idea that fully contradicts MS as cited above.

Thus, Marcaurelle claims, after referring to excerpts from Śaṃkara’s comments on various verses in the BhG (e.g. BhG 4.23, 4.41, 9.2, 9.9, 18.12, 18.17, 18.49, 18.66) that by ‘having renounced dharmas and adharma’ in BhG 18.66, Śaṃkara means ‘freedom from embodiment and limitations of all actions’. Śaṃkara does not merely mean the physical abandonment of actions as a prelude to the steadfastness of knowledge, but a kind of renunciation that only liberates one from all the limitations of actions and their effects. Marcaurelle reiterates that in Śaṃkara’s opinion, even this kind of renunciation is made possible after obtaining immediate self-knowledge, leaving room for those who have not yet renounced.

physical actions for any reason whatsoever, a view that supports the case of Arjuna, who is still a seeker after liberation. In contrast, MS asserts a path to enlightenment, where physical renunciation is not in vogue. So, Marcaurelle holds that it is a paradox on MS’s part not to identify self-knowledge and liberation in a tradition where such identification is viewed favourably, even though MS has admitted the former as a minimum requirement for the latter in some places.

The manner in which MS explains the concept of complete surrender to the Lord (śaraṇāgati) was adopted earlier by Rāmaṇuja, who also supports the view that the devotees need not undertake any atonement in order to be cleansed of their sins, and that they need to seek the Lord alone for obtaining bhakti-yoga, thereby admitting śaraṇāgati as an aid (aṅga) to bhakti-yoga, which is the direct means for attaining liberation.691

As mentioned earlier, the efficacy of loving devotion is stated by the Lord outright for the first time in the second group of six-chapters, when he holds that those who take refuge in him (prapadyante) alone can overcome his divine illusion (i.e. prakṛti) consisting of three primordial natures (BhG 7.14). This verse does not refer to prapatti as an aid to bhakti-yoga proper that leads to liberation. Instead, it advises one to seek the grace of the Lord (bhagavad-prasāda) through worshipping him in order to overcome māyā, which gets in the way of the true knowledge of the supreme self. MS’s explanation of this verse seems to be pertinent in the context under discussion.

On the one hand, MS gives a purely non-dualistic interpretation of the view that the aspirant overcomes easily the divine illusion of the Lord by taking refuge in

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the Lord who, in this context, is thus characterised in non-dual terms: He one who is bereft of all limiting adjuncts (sarvopādh-irahita), the integrated whole (akhaṇḍa) that is of the nature of existence, consciousness, and bliss (cidānanda-svarūpa), who is the object of mental modification produced by the Upaniṣadic texts, which is (i) by nature non-conceptual or direct realisation (nirvikalpa-sāksātkāra-rūpa), (ii) endowed with the quality of having form of pure consciousness (śuddha-cidākārata-dharma-viśisṭa), (iii) produced from the maturity of contemplation (nididhyāṇa-paripāka-prasūta), and also opposed to all nescience and its effects (sarvājnāna-tatkārya-virodhī).

Alternatively, MS gives a pure devotional account in the following terms.692 Those who take refuge in the Lord Vāsudeva alone, having a form of supreme-bliss-concentrate (paramānanda-ghanamaya-mūrtimati), who is also beyond the world-appearance or creation (prapañca), and pass days in constant thinking of him, are not overpowered by any of the effects of māyā, since their minds are immersed in love (prema) for the Lord, who is the ocean of immense joy (mahānanda-samudra).

Śaṅkara’s comments also admit explicitly the efficacy of devotion. He maintains that those who, by abandoning all conventional laws of life, take shelter with the Lord alone, who is their very self and also the possessor of illusory power (māyāvin) as well, overcome this all-deceiving power, i.e. they become free from transmigratory bondage. Śrīdhara makes the point more explicit by interpreting that

after showing unswerving devotion to the Lord and thus getting rid of this māyā (even though it is insurmountable), the devotee knows the Lord.693

Thus, we find that, MS, along with Śaṅkara and Śrīdhara, maintains that taking refuge in the Lord as expressed in BhG 7.14 is a definite way of overcoming the bondage of transmigration. Likewise, in another verse of the eighteenth adhyāya also, Arjuna is told to take refuge in Lord Kṛṣṇa with the whole of his being, since by the grace of the Lord, he will find the eternal abode (śvāsvata-sthāna) of supreme peace (parā-sānti) [BhG 18.62]. MS’s non-dualistic-cum-devotional attitude is also conspicuous in his explanation on this verse. MS maintains that, in order to cross the ocean of empirical existence (saṁsāra-samudra), Arjuna should take refuge in the Lord in every way (i.e. by mind, speech, and action). By the grace of the Lord, which culminates in the knowledge of reality, Arjuna will attain supreme peace upon the cessation of nescience and its effects, and experience the eternal abode in the form of non-dual-self-effulgent-supreme-bliss (advitiya-svaprakāśa-paramānandarūpa).

Śaṅkara’s interpretation of the word ‘eternal abode’ in the verse as the supreme abode of Lord Viṣṇu694 is of help in treating this verse as an indicator of bhakti-yoga. The Lord’s magnanimity to his devotee is also found in MS’s explanation of BhG 7.20, where the Lord has said that other devotees, devoid of true knowledge, resort to other deities. MS maintains that here, the intention of the all-merciful Lord is that all kinds of devotees (i.e. the suffering, the seekers for knowledge, the seekers for prosperity, and the wise) without any exception attain the most excellent of all results called emancipation, by taking refuge in him alone.

694 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 749.
While explaining another utterance of the Lord of the same type (i.e. *BhG* 7.26), MS, following Śaṃkara, says that, though the Lord is the seer of all (*sarvadarśī*), except his devotees favoured with his grace (*anugraha*), nobody whosoever knows him, owing to being deluded by the magical power of the Lord, and consequently ignoring to worship him as a result of lacking the knowledge of his reality.\(^{695}\)

In *BhG* 7.29, the Lord again says that devotees resort to him with a desire to overcome worldly sufferings, e.g. old age and death etc.; and consequently, knows him and all about the indwelling self and actions. MS explains this statement in the following manner. He holds that, being disgusted with the sorrows of this world and seeking to put an end to the numerous as well as unbearable worldly pains and sufferings like old age (*jarā*), death (*maraṇa*) etc., those who, by resorting to the Lord, perform activities that are prescribed by the scriptures, and are dedicated to him without having any desire for their fruits, get their mind purified, and, consequently, realise him as the cause of the universe, the owner of illusory power and the pure *brahman* [i.e. the implied meaning of the term ‘that’ (*tat*) in ‘That thou art’]. MS continues by saying that such devotees also can realise the self, which is revealed through body and is unlimited by limiting adjuncts, by virtue of being denoted by the term ‘thou’ (*tvam*). All the means of realising the entities that are indicated by ‘that’ and ‘thou’ respectively, viz. approaching a teacher, listening to and contemplating on his teaching, with a spirit of certainty in their result etc., are also known to them.\(^{696}\)

Thus, MS quite elaborately gives justification for the dependence on the Lord, and interprets the Lord’s utterance under consideration from the non-dualistic

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\(^{695}\) Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 365-6, 371.

\(^{696}\) Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 373-4.
standpoint by showing that the aspirant, by taking refuge in the Lord, realises the individual self, the supreme self, and the means of identifying them as non-different.

Dhanapati Sūri says in this connection that what is intended by the word ‘action’ in the verse is not what MS means, viz. approaching a teacher, listening to the scriptures from him, etc. He maintains that in the verse: ‘….And the outpouring that brings about the origination of the being of the creatures is called act’ (BhG 8.3), the word ‘act’ (karma) stands for Vedic rituals like the offering of oblation of rice cooked in milk (caru), cakes (puroḍāśa) etc. to the Lord, as is clear from Śaṃkara’s commentary on this verse: ‘…the sacrificial act consisting in offering cooked rice in milk, cakes etc. to the Lord is meant by the word ‘act’…’ MS himself has also interpreted the word karma employed in BhG 8.3 in the same manner: ‘….offering consisting in yāga, dāna, homa as laid down in the scriptures…is here meant by the word ‘action’…’ Hence, when MS explains the word karma employed in BhG 7.29 in a dissimilar manner, his explanation, Dhanapati holds, becomes inconsistent and opposed to the commentary of Śaṃkara.\textsuperscript{697}

The Lord further says that in the case of those who serve him exclusively, seeking no other end but him, the Lord takes care of them (BhG 9.22). While explaining the verse, MS, like Śaṃkara, holds that those who are desireless (niṣkāma), and possess right knowledge of the reality (samyagdarśī), become dispassionate towards all kinds of enjoyment on account of being perceiver of non-duality everywhere. They contemplate on their indwelling-self as the Lord

\textsuperscript{697} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 379-80; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 379; Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā, p. 374.
Nārāyaṇa together with the idea that ‘I myself am the Lord Vāsudeva, the self of all, and no other object exists apart from him’. Such renouncers become instilled with the fourfold spiritual disciplines (sādhanacatuṣṭaya), seeing the Lord everywhere uninterruptedly. Thus, MS’s assertion in this connection is consistent with the doctrine of non-dualism and also with his devotional leanings.

Besides, there are innumerable references to dedication to the Lord in the AdRR of MS as well. In one such place, while giving advice, with the support of the BhG, MBh etc., to the devotee to propel him to the path of non-dualism to attain liberation, MS instructs the devotee to worship the Lord. When the devotee expresses his inability to follow this instruction due to his flitting mind affected by attachment to objects, MS directs him to give up these attachments and undergo the disciplines that cause the knowledge of the reality. Further, when the devotee requests MS to advise him in a more suitable way for attaining the knowledge of the reality, MS asks him to remember Lord Viṣṇu constantly, through which the devotee will be able to practise the required spiritual disciplines after getting his mind purified. When the devotee says that he is even unable to sing the praise of the Lord (bhagavannāmakīrtana), MS advises him to dedicate all actions being undertaken -- whether ordinary or Vedic -- to Lord Vāsudeva. Even in his MSṬ, in the case of Lord Hari (Hari-pakṣa) MS recommends in no uncertain term devotion to the Lord or rather surrendering by the devotee to him. While describing the Lord as ever-auspicious irrespective of the nature of his devotees, MS maintains that even when an inauspicious person, or one having bad conduct remembers the Lord.

\[698\] Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 431.

\[699\] Advaitaratnakṣaṇa 1917: p. 41 ff. (It may be viewed as a dialogue between MS and a dualist like Śāmkara Miśra).
name of the Lord, the Lord appears to him to be auspicious out of his (i.e. the Lord’s) immense affection to the devotees (ati-bhakta-vātsalya). Further, in order to lay stress upon his support for devotion, MS adds that the same view is applicable in the case of Lord Śiva (Hara-pakṣa) as well.\textsuperscript{700}

In continuation of our discussion on śaraṇāgati as an aid to bhakti-yoga, it may be said that śaraṇāgati is admitted by Rāmānuja as an aid to bhakti-yoga that helps one to overcome the hindrances to the way of bhakti-yoga as stated in the BhG, thereby recognising its due importance. Though śaraṇāgati, which is otherwise known as prapatti (though they hold subtle theological differences)\textsuperscript{701} has been given a very important place in Rāmānuja’s philosophy, he does not view it as an alternative and immediate means of liberation in his commentary on the BhG. In his commentary on the BS (especially BS 3.2.34) called the Śrībhāṣya, however, Rāmānuja hints at admitting prapatti as an independent means of attaining liberation by maintaining that the supreme person to be attained needs to be himself the means of attaining him. With the support of the Śruti text (i.e. MU 3.2.3), Rāmānuja holds that there can be no other means but the Lord himself to attain

\textsuperscript{700} Śivamahimnahstotra 1996: Madhusūdanī on verse 24, p. 94.

\textsuperscript{701} Though these two words have different textual lineages, by the time of Vedānta Deśika or Venkatanātha (13/14\textsuperscript{th} century CE) they are taken to be synonyms. Likewise, in the Yatīndramatadīpikā of Śrīnivāsaśārya – 17\textsuperscript{th} century CE, śaranāgati is said to have six limbs: to conceive what is in conformity with the will of God, to reject what is against the will of God, to have faith that the Lord will save the self, to take the Lord only as the protector, not to have any sense of conceit (to the Lord), and to have complete or absolute surrender of oneself to the Lord (ānukālyyasya samkalpah prātikālyyasya varjanam / raksiṣyatīti viśvāsō goptṛtva varaṇam tathā // kārpāṇyamātmanikṣepah sadāṅgāni pracakṣate // (quoted in Bhattachara and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-73, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 269). Here, ‘the complete surrender of oneself to the Lord’ (ātmanikṣepa) is the whole (ārūgīn) and the other five are parts (anda-s). The Lakṣmītantra, a Pāñcarāra text, mentions that ‘nyāsa’ which is synonymous with ‘nikṣepa’ has five components. Prapatti is thus synonymous with the five-limbed śaranāgati. It is also known as nyāsavidyā, tyāga, samnyāsa etc. (Gupta 2007: Lakṣmītantra 17.74 ff., 28.11 ff., pp. 94 ff., 150 ff.). Besides, some of the earliest Vaiṣāṇava Āgamas predating Vedānta Deśika refer saranāgati to be the surrender to the Lord with utmost faith (mahā-viśvāsa) that the Lord (i.e. the desired of the devotee) cannot be obtained with any other means but one’s surrender to him (with utmost faith). Thus, śaranāgati is a type of prapatti and later is being used interchangeably.
What Rāmānuja has implicitly admitted here is made explicit in another of his work called the Śaraṇāgati-gadya. Rāmānuja states there the view that śaraṇāgati is to be viewed as a different and direct means of liberation for those who are totally unable to undergo bhakti-yoga, with no other option left for them for attaining the Lord. Again, Vedānta Deśika, while commenting on Rāmānuja’s Gitābhāṣya, holds śaraṇāgati to be a separate and direct means of liberation for those unable to adopt the difficult path of bhakti-yoga, though the BhG does not mention this clearly.

5.2.2.4. Madhusūdana and Rāmānuja on bhakti-yoga

Having kept the abovementioned facts in mind along with our reference to Rāmanuja provided sporadically throughout our work, we may now make an attempt to evaluate the extent to which MS finds affinity with him, a question which has also been raised and answered meticulously by a modern scholar named Sanjukta Gupta.

At the outset, the influence of the BP, which has its origin probably in the southern part of India, is very much conspicuous among all sects of Vaisnāvism. The spontaneous fervent love for the Lord, with little philosophical speculation, of the Tamil poet-saints called the Āḻvārs (ca. 3rd quarter of 1st century CE) got expressed systematically in the BP and found later its methodical theological dimension in the Viśiṣṭādvaīta Vedānta propagated by Rāmānuja. For Rāmānuja,
brahman is non-dual but qualified in nature, possessing numerous transcendental, divine qualities -- a fact that we have pointed out at the beginning of the previous chapter in connection with explaining MS’s treatment of the very term ‘Lord’ (bhagavān) in the BhG. Besides, the famous verse of MS in both his AdS and GD that enumerates the divine qualities of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the highest reality to him: ‘I know no higher reality than Kṛṣṇa whose hands are adorned with a flute, whose complexion is like a fresh rain-cloud, who is clad in a yellow garment, whose lower lip is reddish like a bimba fruit, whose face is as beautiful as the full moon, and whose eyes are like lotuses’ makes us think that Rāmānuja’s treatment of brahman finds its zenith in this couplet.

Such a couplet, placed at a crucial place in MS’s AdS, seems to be at odds with the main thesis of this work, and the answer to the charge of incongruity due to this verse is given by one of the commentators of MS. Thus, in the second chapter of his AdS, after dealing with a section on the formlessness (nirākāratva) of brahman, MS, while taking up the next section on the fitness of brahman being knowledge or consciousness etc. (i.e. brahman does not have knowledge in the common sense of the term, as brahman by nature is pure knowledge), begins with this couplet, which is also found as the first concluding verse in his GD, in praising Lord Kṛṣṇa with a beautiful form. While commenting on this verse, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī emphasises the natural need of bhakti for obtaining mental purification etc. He points out that, though the numerous forms of the Lord are transitory and false, worshipping them is fairly possible in the empirical state, while its fruit is the


707 Compare this couplet with the introduction to Rāmānuja’s commentary on the BhG (Bhagavadgītā 2000: Vol. 1, Rāmānujabhāsyopodghātāh, pp. 5-6).
purification of the mind etc. He maintains this with the support of the following texts from the Śruti and Smṛti: ‘Only in a man who has the deepest love for God, and who shows the same love toward his teacher as toward God, do these points declared by the Noble One shine forth’ (ŚU 6.23), ‘Neither the righteousness attended with truth and benevolence nor the scholarship accompanied with penance completely cleanses oneself who is devoid of devotion to the Lord’. Brahmānanda adds that it is like a consequence of the service rendered to one’s preceptor. Even if the body of the preceptor is impermanent, services rendered to it yield certain results. In this way, worshipping the impermanent form of the Lord also produces the desired results. He adds, as noted before, in this context that MS, in spite of being a jīvanmukta, remembers Lord Kṛṣṇa because of his past dispositions of worshipping (pūrva-saṅcita-bhajana-vāsanā) Lord Kṛṣṇa. But MS seems to be aware of this possible criticism, as in his BhR he states that it is not to be mistaken as pure dispositions, but a semblance of it (vāsanābhāsa), since in the softened state of mind, nothing can enter as a disposition.

For Rāmānuja, devotion (bhakti) and meditation (dhyāna) may be used interchangeably. While commenting on BS 1.1.1, Rāmānuja, with the support of Śruti and Smṛti texts, maintains that meditation (dhyāna) is a continuous flow of remembrance (avichhinnacṣānti) like the flow of oil. He reiterates that it is known from all the Upaniṣads that the word ‘knowledge’ (vedana) prescribed as a means of attaining liberation is synonymous with the word ‘worship’ (upāsanā). Further, devotion (bhakti) is synonymous with constant remembrance, which thus becomes

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709 Sāmkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: BhR 1.7 and the author’s elucidation thereon, p. 23 (Also see Mishra 2006a: p. 126).
the same as meditation. Thus, for Rāmānuja, meditation is devotion, which is synonymous with worship.\textsuperscript{710} As Gupta holds, ‘Rāmānuja defines \textit{bhakti} as the experiencing of love for the divine who possesses countless auspicious qualities. This experience of love is intensified by direct and lasting understanding of the true nature of god as revealed in deep meditation.’\textsuperscript{711} Besides, Rāmānuja, as pointed out earlier, maintains that dedicated service to the Lord coupled with love for him makes a devotee eligible for realising the true nature of the Lord by way of obtaining his grace. While complete surrender to the Lord for his mercy is called \textit{prapatti} or \textit{saraṇāgati}, the devotee’s love for the Lord is known as \textit{parābhakti}, which, when maintained with the realisation of true nature of the Lord through regimented meditation, becomes \textit{upāsanā} both for Rāmānuja and MS. Though we do not find Rāmānuja explicitly using the expression ‘\textit{bhakti-rasa}’, he certainly admits that the unswerving meditation on the Lord in accordance with the description of his exquisite beauties or transcendental qualities deepens the devotee’s love for the Lord.\textsuperscript{712}

Turning to MS, we can see that his definition of \textit{bhakti} as the incessant flow of the modification of the mind directed towards the Lord through spiritual disciplines (\textit{BhR} 1.3) had affinity with Rāmānuja’s description of uninterrupted remembrance or meditation as \textit{bhakti}. The utility of service to the Lord for obtaining his grace is also admitted by MS in no uncertain terms. Thus, MS’s \textit{bhakti} experience as Advaitic \textit{vṛtti-jñāna} (knowledge of the modification of the mind) bears similarity with Rāmānuja’s \textit{bhakti} experience as \textit{yogic samādhi}.

\textsuperscript{710} Brahmasūtra 1989: Vol. 1, pp. 55-61 (Also see Maitra 2006: p. 213).
\textsuperscript{711} Gupta Gombrich 1991: p. 236.
In this connection, it may be noted that, though MS himself was also a Vaiṣṇava, as is evidenced from the above discussion, he differs from the other dualistic Vaiṣṇavas like Madhva etc. In an important place in his SB, after pointing out a possible objection that in the non-dualistic notion of liberation, the bliss of brahman cannot be enjoyed due to the absence of agent, senses, and the means of manifesting it, MS refutes it by asserting that the self, being of the nature of self-effulgent consciousness, does not need any means of manifestation. In this connection, MS refers to the popular axiom of the dualist Vaiṣṇavas that one can enjoy the taste of sugar only if he consumes it, and not by becoming identical with sugar. This can be understood as stating that, in like manner, one can enjoy the bliss of brahman only if he is different from brahman -- a view opposed to the non-dualistic notion of liberation.\textsuperscript{713}

Thus, before giving a brief note in the next section of this chapter on MS’s significant contribution to the Advaita Vedānta (i.e. his admission of bhakti alongside the jñāna-mārga), one may make the claim based on the above discussion that the discipline of devotion, as found in the BhG, is the surest and easiest means of attaining the supreme-self that may be adopted by all kinds of devotees.\textsuperscript{714} If it is alleged that the notion of devotion is intelligible only in a dualistic system, then the non-dualistic version of devotion that has been presented in BhG itself [BhG 4.10, 6.29, 7.23, 9.29, 11.55, 12.8, 14.26, 18.55 etc. may be cited in this context, where the devotee (i.e. the individual-self) and the Lord (i.e. the supreme-self) are considered to be being merged into each other].\textsuperscript{715} Again, bhakti is not understood as a distinct path of realisation; it is treated as a means for bringing an accord between

\textsuperscript{713} Siddhāntabindu 1986: pp. 145 ff.
\textsuperscript{714} See Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 132.
karma and jñāna, by helping in acquiring jñāna and detachment (vairāgya), which facilitate the attainment of supreme reality.\footnote{See Panigrahi 1994: p. 123.} However, the views of other commentators like Rāmānuja (who maintains at the very beginning of his commentary on the BhG that bhakti-yoga, as aided by jñāna and karma-yoga-s, is the path of liberation) and Śrīdhara (who states towards the end of his commentary on the BhG that devotion to the Lord can by itself lead to liberation), are to be taken into consideration while assessing the view of MS regarding this important path of liberation.\footnote{Bhagavadgītā 2000: Vol. 1, Rāmānujabhāṣyopodghātaḥ, p.6 and Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīdharīvyākhyā, p. 775.}

5.3. Contribution of Madhusūdana to Vedānta discourse on bhakti-yoga and jñāna-yoga

As pointed out in chapters one and two, the uniqueness of MS in the tradition of Advaita Vedānta is generally held to be his attempt at situating bhakti-mārga therein, which apparently contradicts the metaphysical foundation of the Advaita system, though we have shown above with textual support that the Advaita Vedānta does not find any difficulty in accommodating bhakti within its framework from the practical (vyāvahārika) point of view. MS’s remarkable contribution is that, in spite of being a die-hard follower of the Advaita tradition, he has made a bold step through his prolific writings to substantiate the doctrines of Advaita Vedānta, while being an ardent devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In doing so he finds no contradiction, as is clear from his comments on the SS of Sarvajñātman.\footnote{As noted, it is a versified summary of Śaṅkara’s comments on the BS.} While an unambiguous
indication of synthesising \( jñāna-mārga \) and \( bhakti-mārga \) is found at the very beginning of \( SŚ \), where the author pays obeisance to the unqualified \textit{brahman} called Lord Murāri, MS correspondingly salutes that \textit{brahman}, who, as an offshoot of religious austerity of Nanda (i.e. adoptive father of Lord Kṛṣṇa), plays his divine flute for the delight of all at Vṛndāvana, with his beautiful face similar to the moon and his eyes like a lotus, who, as the real (\textit{satya}), infinite, knowledge, and non-dual bliss (\( jñāna-ananta-advaya-sukha \)), has been realised by the great sages while attaining liberation, after approaching a teacher and attaining mystic trance or absorption (\textit{samādhi}) on that \textit{brahman}.\footnote{Giri 2007: Pt. 1, \textit{Maṅgalācaraṇam}, p. 3.} Therefore, the unqualified \textit{brahman} in Advaita has been termed by MS nothing but the qualified \textit{brahman}, i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa, an object of devotion, and that \textit{nirguṇa-bhakti-mārga} is not something new or alien to MS. Furthermore, at the beginning of his \textit{magnum opus} \textit{AdS}, MS pays salutation to Lord Viṣṇu as the undifferentiated \textit{brahman}. Having established the falsity of the empirical world in the first chapter of the \textit{AdS}, MS validates the non-dual reality, i.e. \textit{brahman}. But it is interesting to note that, at the end of this chapter, MS eulogies Lord Hari in two verses as the undifferentiated \textit{brahman}, who is also the only essence of the Śrutis. Again, MS goes further to compare himself with the all-inclusive Lord Hari.\footnote{Advaitasiddhi 2005: pp. 1-2, 659 (Also see Nair 1990: p. 109).}

And perhaps this is the reason why MS, following the lead of the \textit{BP} that promulgates \textit{nirguṇa-bhakti} extensively in terms of admitting Lord Kṛṣṇa as the unqualified \textit{brahman}, admits \textit{bhakti-yoga} as an independent goal, even to the extent of admitting it as the supreme goal of human life (\textit{parama-puruṣārtha}) in his
In his comments on the *BhG* (e.g. *BhG* 6.47, 7.16, 9.1) as well, MS hints at describing *bhakti-yoga* as an independent path of liberation. At the beginning of his comments on *BhG* 9, MS asserts that the reality of the Lord (*bhagavattattva*) and devotion to him (*bhakti*) are the means of attaining immediate liberation (*sākṣānmokṣa*). While elucidating *BhG* 18.66, he states further that the steadfastness in devotion to the Lord (*bhagavadbhakti-niṣṭhā*) is not only the means (*sādhana*) of the steadfastness in action (*karma-niṣṭhā*) and steadfastness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*), but also their result (*phala*), and that in agreement with other *śāstra*-s, the concluding teaching of the *BhG* is surrender to the Lord (*īśvara-saraṇatā*).

As we have noted earlier, for both Śaṅkara and MS, *karma* and *bhakti* are considered in the *BhG* as a means subsidiary to *jñāna*, which ultimately leads to liberation. We have also noticed earlier that, for MS, the *BhG* propagates the view that the unqualified *brahman* could also be attained through loving devotion to the Lord. Thus, while pointing out *jñāna-mārga* and *bhakti-mārga* as independent and effective means of attaining liberation in his *BhR* as well as in the *GD*, MS maintains that they are not indistinguishable, and vary in terms of their nature, means, goal, and the persons entitled to both (*adhipārin*-s). According to him, i) while devotion is a conditional modification of the mind (*savikalpaka-vṛtti*), assuming the form of the Lord after it becomes flexible or melted (*dravībhūta*), the knowledge of *brahman* (*brahmavidyā*) is an unconditional modification of the mind when it is not flexible or melted, and has only the self without a second as its object; ii) while hearing of the compositions describing the exalted qualities of the Lord is the means of devotion, listening to the great sayings of Vedānta like ‘That thou art’

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etc. is the means of brahma-vidyā; iii) while the fruit of devotion is the intense love for the Lord (bhagavad-viṣayaka-prema-prakarṣa), that of brahma-vidyā is the cessation of nescience, which is the primal cause of all evils; iv) while all beings are entitled to devotion, the mendicant of the highest order (parama-haṃsa-parivrājaka), with the possession of the ‘fourfold means’(sādhana-catuṣṭaya) is eligible for brahma-vidyā. Further, MS asserts that for both devotion and brahma-vidyā, the results of meritorious deeds (sukṛta) such as sacrifice, charity etc. are the same, just as in the case of heaven (svarga) and the desire for knowledge (vividiṣā), i.e. the inclination to undertake either the means of knowledge or that of devotion results from the performance of meritorious deeds prescribed in the Vedas. And in this way, both these means (i.e. devotion and knowledge) overlap each other, and that jñāna-yoga incorporates bhakti also. Further, while brahma-vidyā is restricted to a few, that bhakti-yoga can be undertaken by everybody irrespective of caste, sex etc. is made clear again by MS in another context in his HLV. MS maintains that not only people of certain sex and age etc. is permitted to observe bhakti-yoga, as is the case with Agnihotra etc., but it is recommended for everyone (irrespective of sex, age etc.). With this utterance, the women-folk (strīkula), young (bāla), matured (prauḍha), and the aged (vayaṣka) people also are indicated by the sage (ṛṣī).

724 MS, with the support of the Pūrvamīmāṃsā and Śruti texts, explains that just like meritorious deeds, (being conducive to the purification of mind), can be a means to more than one end, i.e. devotion and the knowledge of brahman, they can also be a means either for obtaining heaven or for acquiring the desire for knowledge (vividiṣā) [Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: Ṭīkā on BhR 1.1, p. 15].

725 See Mishra 2006a: pp. 115 and 117.

726 Harililāmṛtam 1933: p. 14 (Also see Mishra 2009: p. 228).
On the basis of the theistic Upaniṣads, *BP, BhG*, and other theistic sources that posit *bhakti* as superior to *jñāna*, MS expresses the view (in his *AdS*) that the former leads to attainment of liberation more quickly than the latter, there being the same sort of achievement in both the cases. But it may be pointed out on the basis MS’s views on the difference between *bhakti* and *brahma-jñāna* that the former cannot be admitted as the direct means of liberation, since liberation results from the cessation of nescience which resides in *brahman*, and it is only through the knowledge of reality (i.e. *brahman*) that nescience is removed. Besides, *bhakti*, being determinate in nature (since it presupposes the distinction between worship, worshipped, and worshipper), cannot be related to *brahman*, which is bereft of distinctions, and hence, is also indeterminate or unqualified by nature. On the basis of various *BhG* texts (e.g. *BhG* 10.10, 13.18), MS maintains that one attains devotion as an end (*sādhyabhakti*) through the observance of devotion as a means (*sādhanabhakti*), and that liberation is achieved through the intuitive knowledge of *brahman* obtained from the Upaniṣadic texts. So, in the course of attaining liberation, one needs to pursue *bhakti* when he longs for intuitive knowledge that alone leads to liberation.

In spite of the fact that MS admits both the means of knowledge and devotion as independently effective in attaining liberation, yet his penchant seems to be for devotion, as is found throughout the *GD* as well as *BhR*, especially in his bold assertion in one of the introductory verses in the *GD* (i.e. verse 37) that even for a *jīvanmukta*, *bhakti* remains spontaneous, besides his verbatim reproduction of a *BP* verse (i.e. *BP* 1.7.10) both in the *GD* (i.e. introductory verse 38) and in the

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BhR, which also conveys the same fact (i.e. spontaneity of devotion) for the self-immersed sages (in the state of jīvanmukti). He also describes bhakti in the GD as a link between and subsisting in karma and jñāna (introductory verses 6-7). In this connection, as we have pointed out earlier, the views of both Śaṃkara and MS on treating devotion on a par with knowledge, or, at times, admitting devotion as the cause of knowledge, need to be taken into consideration, if one has to justify MS’s effort for amalgamating both the means, i.e. bhakti and jñāna-mārga-s.

Devotion as a means of liberation has been eulogised by Śaṃkara in no ambiguous terms in his VC, where he says that among all the means of salvation, devotion is supreme, and that contemplating on one’s own essential nature (sva-svarūpa-anusandhāna) is called devotion. Again, devotion is also regarded by others as contemplating on the true nature of one’s own self (sva-ātmatattva-anusandhāna). Thus, Śaṃkara’s definition of devotion as the knowledge of one’s own self (i.e. deliberation on the knowledge of self as distinct from that of non-self) in the present instance also lends support to MS’s act of equating jñānin (man of knowledge) with bhakta (devotee). Besides, for MS, a bhakta does not achieve anything extra than what a jñānin does, for, as we have pointed out earlier, MS holds that even the grace of the Lord cannot exhaust the prārabdha-karma-s; they get exhausted only after being experienced by the aspirant.

We also find the utility of devotion in the tradition echoed even by the staunch followers of Advaita like Brahmānanada Sarasvatī. While commenting on the SB of MS, Brahmānanada goes to the extent of saying that even for

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729 Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: Tīkā on BhR 1.1, p. 17.
730 Śrīśaṃkaragranthāvaliḥ 1999: Vol. 3, VC 32-33a, p. 7 (Also see Vāsudevānanda 2006: p. 565).
understanding the true import of the Upaniṣadic texts, one must have devotion.\footnote{Siddhāntabindu 1989: Nyāratnāvalī, p. 364.} In spite of all these supports, and the clear indication by MS that he follows the bhakti-mārga and treats nirguna-brahman as non-different from the saguna-brahman, i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa, his idea of deity, as is described in his various works like the GD, BhR etc., remains transtheistic.\footnote{See Nelson 2007: p. 315.} Herein lies the significance of his attempt at integrating bhakti with the doctrines of Advaita Vedānta, which is also found in the life and works of his great predecessor Śaṃkara. As one of the modern scholars points out,

It is a matter of fortunate circumstances that in the works of Sri Madhusudana Saraswathi we find monistic philosophy being synthesised with devotion, i.e., Advaita with bhakti. It is an unusual trend for Advaita, as it is commonly understood, but there is inherently nothing strange for Advaita to advocate bhakti. Bhakti or devotion was, indeed, a predominant emotion even in Sri Sankara’s life. Though ultimately Sri Sankara reduces bhakti to the level of a purificatory means, he was a great bhakta of Śrī Bhagavan Krishna in his personal form (sic).
The Gūḍhārthadīpikā of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and the Commentarial Tradition of the Bhagavadgītā

At the outset, it needs to be borne in mind that the BhG, being an important and popular philosophical and religious text sacred to all Hindus, has drawn the attention of almost all those who tried to find out some support in it for their own doctrines. A critical study of both the ancient and modern interpreters of the BhG makes one think that perhaps none of them can claim to represent faithfully the intention of the BhG in its entirety. Many of the commentators of the BhG also commented on the Upaniṣads and on the BS, and, in their opinion, all these sources express the same doctrine. Each one of these commentators has explained these texts from the particular standpoint adopted by him, and while some verses of the BhG may be easily interpreted in a manner that is consistent with such a standpoint, this need not be the case with some other verses of that work. It is thus only natural that the interpretation of the BhG by a commentator is likely to be criticised by another subsequent commentator belonging to a rival school of thought. The commentaries on the BhG by Śaṃkara and MS are no exceptions to such a general rule about the commentaries. But what is interesting to note here is that in some cases, even those commentators of the BhG who belong to the same school of thought have not been unanimous on all issues regarding the interpretation of this text. Thus, MS has respectfully disagreed with Śaṃkara in a few cases, while
Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri, Veṅkaṭanātha, and Dhanapati Sūri, all of whom belong to the Advaita school of Vedānta, have from time to time criticised the interpretation of MS and tried to show the superiority of the commentary of Śaṅkara on the *BhG*.

This chapter attempts to point out the points of agreement and disagreement between Śaṅkara and MS. We have also noted how the commentators posterior to MS have reacted to the *GD*.

6.1. Modern scholars on the *Bhagavadgītā* commentary of Śaṅkarācārya and others

While explaining the views of MS in his *GD*, we have explained and shown in detail how the other works of Śaṅkara and MS lend support to their respective understandings of the *BhG*. Most modern scholars seem not to hold Śaṅkara as an authentic interpreter of the *BhG*, especially when viewed in relation to his other works. As a detailed discussion on it would be out of place, we will just mention the views of the scholars, and subsequently deal with a few verses of the *BhG*, with a view to judge Śaṅkara’s interpretation of those places. While doing so, references to the *GD* of MS will also be taken into consideration.

As Arvind Sharma points out, any attempt to classify the *BhG* as a representative of a particular tradition of thought is bound to distort its internal integrity. In his words:

*Any attempt...to systemise it is bound to produce a twofold effect: (a) to shed more light on those verses which accord with the projected system and clarify them; and (b) to cast into greater darkness those which don’t and distort them. The attempt to systemise the Gita*
could also produce another twofold effect: (a) over-interpretation of those verses which are in accord with one’s system, and (b) under-interpretation of those which are not.734

Nevertheless, the general agreement among scholars is that the Advaita commentators, beginning with Śaṅkara, need to force far more of their interpretations of the text in order to agree with their basic philosophical principles, as compared to those who allow for some degree of dualism within their system, or those who place a greater emphasis on the paths of action and devotion.

For example, T. G. Mainkar, in a critical study of important topics of the text as interpreted by Śaṅkara and other major commentators, has argued that Śaṅkara felt the necessity to present the teaching of the BhG as consistent with his non-dual philosophy, in accordance with which only knowledge can lead to salvation, and that his strategy for achieving this involved both the imposition of his own ideas upon the text and the neglect of those passages which could not be brought into line with his non-dualist approach.735 As Mainkar observes:

Śaṅkara’s comments reverse the teaching of the Bhagavadgītā...Śaṅkara has laid quite an undue emphasis on Knowledge, even at the cost of Karman and Bhakti; and in order to achieve this, he has understood additional words, reversed the sense of the verses and finally changed the spirit of the poem. He is not a reliable interpreter of the Bhagavadgītā as the spirit of the poem is not faithfully reflected in his comments. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he is the least faithful interpreter of the Bhagavadgītā.736

Mainkar, however, considers the commentaries of Rāmānuja, Rāmakaṇṭha, or Ānandavardhana to be more faithful than that of Śaṅkara, while acknowledging that no commentator of the BhG has been absolutely faithful to the text.737

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734 Sharma 1986: p. 106.
737 Mainkar 1969: Front flap.
Likewise, P. M. Modi tries to demonstrate how Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *BhG* distorts the text, and Eliot Deutsch and J. A. B. van Buitenen think that Śaṅkara used the *BhG* as a medium for promulgating his preconceived philosophical thought. Similar estimations are offered by G. A. Feuerstein and others, while others, such as S. S. Bhawe, attempt to show that Śaṅkara’s interpretation is compatible with the text of the *BhG*.

Similarly, S. M. Srinivasa Chari, while critically evaluating the commentaries by Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva on the *BhG*, remarks in the preface of his work:

> My earlier books on the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra* based on an objective evaluation of the comments of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva have attempted to show that the main tenets of Advaita Vedānta are not reflected in these two basic sourcebooks. The present work attempts to make a similar study of the *Bhagavadgītā*, with a view to determine the nature of the philosophical doctrines adumbrated in the verses of the *Gītā*.

Thus, Chari starts his work with an intention to show that Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *BhG* is less faithful than those of Rāmānuja and Madhva.

Further, against the criticism that Rāmānuja, being a proponent of the Vaiṣṇava cult, is much closer to the intention of the text of the *BhG* than that of Śaṅkara, A. G. Krishna Warrier points out that the *BhG* is an integrated work which represents both personal and impersonal notion of God. He also holds that devotion and knowledge get merged in the *BhG* as means and end, which truly justifies Śaṅkara’s position in his comments on the *BhG*.

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739 Deutsch and Buitenen 1971: p. 213.  
741 Bhawe 1952: pp. 73-92.  
Nevertheless, Śaṃkara’s influence on Sanskrit scholarship has been so great that R. C. Zaehner believed subsequent interpreters to be in thrall to his understanding of the text and to unduly ignore other traditional commentaries. As he writes, these interpreters

‘...are conditioned by the most ancient and the most authoritative of the medieval commentaries, that of the founder of the extreme school of Vedāntic non-dualism, Śaṃkara. Meanwhile the commentaries of the ‘modified non-dualist’ Rāmānuja, so much nearer in spirit to the Gītā, and of the dualist Madhva and his successors had largely fallen into neglect.’

Again, W. Douglas P. Hill, G. A. Feuerstein etc. maintain that it would be a mistake to imagine that these other great commentators always present a perfectly accurate interpretation of the BhG, the ‘true meaning’ of the text. Rāmānuja, for example, has been judged to overemphasise the devotional aspect of the BhG. On the other hand, K. T. Pandurangi highlights Madhva’s extensive references to the Śrīs, and opines that Madhva’s extensive application of the historical point of view instead of mere textual analysis takes the BhG far away from its being an authority of a particular tradition. But criticism is made against Madhva by Hill etc. for being so extravagant in his approach that he loses the teaching of the text itself. Such being the views of the scholars, let us choose below a few verses of the BhG, with reference to the commentaries of Śaṃkara and MS.

The word māyā employed in the BhG texts has often been interpreted by Śaṃkara as consistent with his Advaitic doctrine of illusion. Sometime he equates it with prakṛti (e.g. on BhG 4.6, 7.14, 8.25, 18.61), which the BhG does not really

744 Zaehner 1969: p. 3.
747 ‘Madhva’s interpretations are so extravagant as to rob the commentary of much interest for the scholar’ (Hill 1928: p. 274).
convey. Like Śaṅkara, MS also makes a similar attempt to interpret these verses. The word *bhakti* uttered in various verses of the *BhG* (e.g. *BhG* 8.22, 9.14, 9.26, 9.29, 18.54, 18.55, 18.66) has been explained by Śaṅkara either as knowledge, or he just gives its prosaic meaning. This has also been pointed out by critics. As seen earlier, MS sometimes disagrees with Śaṅkara in explaining these verses, with a view to lend support to devotion. The concept of *brahman* has also been interpreted by Śaṅkara as the absolute reality that may be both qualified and unqualified, in accordance with his philosophical views, often ignoring the intent of the text (e.g. on *BhG* 4.24, 5.6, 14.27). As stated earlier, MS also follows Śaṅkara’s lead in explaining these verses.

6.2. Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* of Madhusūdana

We have seen that in both the introductory and concluding verses of the *GD*, MS has ungrudgingly accepted the lead of Śaṅkara. Nevertheless, his disagreements with Śaṅkara are at times conspicuous in his commentary, though, as pointed out earlier, ‘disagreement’ needs to be viewed here in terms of their interpretation of the *BhG* text, and not of their understanding of the Advaita doctrine. We have already discussed their respective views on the important metaphysical entities admitted in the *BhG*, and also the nature of liberation and the means to its attainment. A few important examples will suffice to establish the point under discussion. And in this connection, we mention below in the next two sections the

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748 See Mainkar 1969: pp. 6-11, 12-8, 19-25 ff.
749 *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 1 and 775.
places in the GD where MS has explicitly referred to the comments on the BhG, BS, and the Upaniṣads by Śaṃkara.

Besides the two references to Śaṃkara by MS in his GD in the introductory and concluding verses as cited above, we find as many as twenty seven places where MS has mentioned Śaṃkara’s commentary on the BhG. Thus, while explaining the eternality and indestructibility of the self in BhG 2.25, MS has quoted Śaṃkara’s comments on BhG 2.24 in order to substantiate his view. In support of explaining the sequence of birth and death of the eternal self (in a sense of the individual self) in BhG 2.27, MS has agreed with the comments of Śaṃkara on the same verse. MS maintains in BhG 2.41 that the knowledge of the self (sāṃkhya-buddhi) and that of the yoga (i.e. karma-yoga) are of the nature of certainty (vyavasāyātmikā) because they, being of the same kind and producing the same result, sublate all the contrary ideas and are brought forth from perfect Vedic sentences (i.e. the great sentences like ‘that thou art’ etc.); while the thoughts of those who do not have certainty about the self (avyavasāyin-s) get sublated. MS adds that this is the view that is held by Śaṃkara as well. 750 In the course of explaining BhG 2.48: ‘Abandon self-interest, Dhananjaya, and perform the acts while applying this single-mindedness. Remain equable in success and failure -- this equableness is called the application’, MS, in response to the objection as to how the sense of the word yoga that was previously explained as meaning action meant before can be reconciled with its present sense that ‘perform the acts while applying this single-mindedness’, maintains that here equanimity is called yoga. As

750 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 81 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 79-80; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 83 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 82; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 100 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 99-100.
'equable in success and failure’ is meant as *yoga* in the word ‘single-mindedness’ (*yogastha*) in the verse, and not action; there remains no contradiction at all. MS continues by saying that, in Śaṅkara’s interpretation, the first half of the verse (i.e. perform the acts…single mindedness) is explained by the second half (i.e. remain equable in success and failure…application), the fallacy of repetition is absent here. In support of his view regarding the possibility of the continuity of such happiness, which is of the nature of euphoria that is due to the mental modification born of *tamas* (*utphullatārūpā-tāmasī-cittavṛtti*), MS has quoted Śaṅkara’s definition of the expression ‘without craving for pleasure’ (*vigata-spr̥ha*) that occurs in the verse BhG 2.56.751

In the *GD* on BhG 3.2, in relation to Arjuna’s question to the Lord as to which one among two incompatible things, viz. the steadfastness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*) and that in action (*karmacniṣṭhā*), is appropriate for the respective eligible persons, MS’s humble submission is that he need not elaborate this point as Śaṅkara has already refuted the views of the opponents in greater detail with the support of Śrutis, Smṛtis, and logic. It is worthwhile to point out MS’s respect for the Lord as well as for the great predecessor Śaṅkara, even though his allegiance to the latter is not unconditional. MS maintains that he is elucidating the text of the BhG after taking into consideration the views of the earlier commentator Śaṅkara, and that he is merely explaining the intention of the Lord to refine his own speech. This indicates that MS wants to explain what the Lord means in the BhG, and that he need not always agree with what Śaṅkara reads in it.752 While explaining the

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751 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 108 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 100-8; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 117 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 116.
Lord’s intention in BhG 3.20 that Arjuna, being a kṣatriya, needs to undertake action, as he, unlike the Brahmins, is not eligible for saṃnyāsa; MS asserts that, in keeping with this intention of the Lord, Śaṃkara has ascertained that saṃnyāsa is meant for the Brahmins only, and not for others (e.g. MuUB on MuU 1.12, BUB on BU 1.4.11), though Sureśvara has made a ‘bold assertion’ by including in the list of persons eligible for saṃnyāsa the kṣatriya-s and vaiśya-s as well.

In connection with the Lord’s assertion in BhG 4.6 that, though he is unborn and imperishable, he takes on birth out of his own free will (ātma-māyā), MS has defended his interpretation by referring to Śaṃkara’s explanation of it. In the course of explaining the expressions ‘inaction in action’ etc. in BhG 4.18, MS has remarked that, since Śaṃkara has explained elaborately the intention of the Lord expressed in this connection, he himself is desisting from further elucidation. Again, in support of his views on BhG 4.21, MS refers to Śaṃkara’s elucidation on the same verse. While defending his interpretation of BhG 4.24, MS has mentioned the view of Śaṃkara that meditation through superimposition for a particular result without abandoning the accessories like ladle etc. (i.e. sampad-upāsanā) is inappropriate for attaining the knowledge of brahman.

Having referred to Śaṃkara’s comments on BhG 6.14: ‘Serene, fearless, faithful to his vow of chastity, and restraining his thinking, let him sit yoked, his thought on me, his intention focused on me’, MS states that it is the view of Śaṃkara that the yogin, having fixed his mind on the Lord and having accepted the

755 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 188 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyopakramāṇikā, pp. 4-5; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 208 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 200-9; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 212-3 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 211-3; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 219 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 217-9.
Lord as the supreme, should think of the Lord alone as the highest object of worship (sarvārādhya), unlike some person who may passionately have his mind fixed on his wife, but accepts another, a king or a deity, as the highest goal to be achieved. MS, now compares himself with a berry (guñjā-phala) and Śaṃkara with gold, hinting at his disagreement in this context with Śaṃkara with explicit humility. MS maintains that, though both Śaṃkara and he have commented upon the BhG, yet his own elucidation can no way be compared with that of Śaṃkara in importance and value (just as though berry fruit may be placed with gold in the same scale for weighing the latter, it can never be the same in worth and quality with gold), thereby indicating that, though he may have offered a different explanation of this verse, it is too insignificant when compared with the explanation of Śaṃkara. Thus, the simile has been given by MS to justify the fact that, while Śaṃkara’s elucidation on the verse is closer to his non-dualistic stance, MS finds support in this verse for his devotional stance when he holds that the mind, being free from all modifications in the form of object, attains a stream of mental modifications about the Lord (madviṣayaka-dhārāvāhikacetāvatī).

In the context of BhG 6.29, MS refers to Śaṃkara as giving only a lesser importance to the yogic path for the Advaitins, in the process of realising supreme reality. In his comments on BhG 6.34 as well, MS, in order to explain the nature of the mind, which is indeed fickle, turbulent, domineering, and tough as stated in this verse, has referred to Śaṃkara’s simile of tantu-nāga (a kind of shark; or according to MS, a kind of magical noose or a

creature named Tāntanī living in big lakes in Gujarat etc.) that illustrates the nature of the mind in this context.758

Commenting on BhG 13.2, MS says that the actual relation between the individual-self (i.e. kṣetra in this context) and the supreme-self (kṣetrajña in this context) is one of identity only, referring to Śaṃkara, who has dealt with this point with sufficient argumentation. MS points out that he refrains from further elaboration here in order to not make the GD unduly voluminous. On BhG 13.12, MS says that no word in its primary sense (mukhyacvṛtti) can refer to brahman, which can only be indicated in the secondary sense of the words in scriptural citations, referring the reader to Śaṃkara for greater details.759

While explaining the meaning of the verse BhG 17.10, MS has referred to Śaṃkara’s comments on the same in support of his own view.760 In the same manner, while commenting on BhG 17.16, MS has validated his stance by referring to the views of Śaṃkara. Again, while explaining BhG 17.28, MS has sought support for his views with the help of Śaṃkara’s comments on this verse.761

To explain BhG 18.6: ‘It is my final judgement, Pārtha, that these acts are to be performed, but with the performer renouncing all self-interest in them and all their rewards’, MS maintains that the Lord’s firm intent in this verse is that between the two views, viz. whether actions are to be abandoned or not by those who are eligible for them, the second view is to be accepted. Actions such as sacrifice etc.,

758 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 326.
759 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 531-9 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 523-38; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 554 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 550-3.
761 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 664; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 671 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 670-1.
even though they cause bondage when preceded by the desire for their result, are to be performed without a sense of attachment to them by the seeker after liberation, as performance of these actions purify one’s mind, and is thus conducive to knowledge. MS reiterates that the same view has been put forth by Śaṃkara in his comments on this verse of the BhG. But people of dull intellect fail to grasp it, as they lack expertise in it (i.e. Śaṃkara’s comments on the BhG).\textsuperscript{762}

In the course of explaining BhG 18.12: ‘Now there are three kinds of fruits to an act: disagreeable, agreeable, and mixed; but such is the karman of the nonrenouncers hereafter, but never of the renouncers’, MS has declared Śaṃkara’s explanation of this verse as highly superior, beside referring to the latter’s comments on BS 3.1.8 in support of his own position. In support of his own comments on BhG 18.14 as well, MS has referred to Śaṃkara’s elucidation on this verse. Again, while commenting on BhG 18.37, MS mentions that in this connection he is holding the same view as that of Śaṃkara. As explained earlier in detail, MS in his comments on BhG 18.66 has expressed his disagreement with Śaṃkara (the reason of which is MS’s relative faithfulness to the path of devotion) in a more polite manner. In the course of his comments on BhG 18.67: ‘This is not to be revealed, ever, to one without austerities or devotion to me, nor to one who does not wish to listen or who disbelieves in me’, MS, in order to validate his preference for devotion, has pointed out that, in spite of alternative readings in this verse, viz. ‘a man of intellect’ (medhāvin) and ‘an ascetic’ (tapasvin), Śaṃkara has maintained that, in order to be eligible to know the secret teaching of the BhG, both these aspirants are to possess the qualities of having love for the Lord

\textsuperscript{762} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 682 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 681-2.
(bhagavadanurakti), love for the teacher (guru-bhakti), and service to them (śuṣruṣā). Further, while commenting on BhG 18.75, MS has pointed out a different reading (pāṭha-bhedā) in the verse (i.e. ‘imam’) as admitted by Śaṃkara. He, however, has justified Śaṃkara on the ground that the acceptance of this different reading does not change the overall meaning of the verse in any way.\[^{763}\]

In addition to such cases, we may refer to the **GD** on a few other verses that may be relevant to this section.

Thus, while explaining BhG 2.29, ‘It is by a rare chance that a man does see him, It is a rarity too if another proclaims him, A rare chance that someone else will hear him, And even if hearing him no one knows him’, MS explains the expression ‘another proclaims him’ (anyah vadati enam) in the verse as some one who is different from all ignorant people, and not the one who is different from all those who visualise the self, because the acceptance of the latter one would lead to a contradiction (vyāghāta). MS maintains that, if one knows the self, then he usually remains self-absorbed, and hence, does not talk about the self. Even if he talks about the self out of sheer compassion, that sort of person, like the Lord, is rare to find. But Śaṃkara means by the same expression simply someone who talks about the self. Again, MS’s explanation of the remaining expression in the verse also does not go all the way along the interpretation of Śaṃkara. In this connection, MS has pleaded with the learned for excusing him for his immodesty. Again, in his

\[^{763}\] Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 691 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 690-2; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 695; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 718-9; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 755 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 751-5; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 760-1 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, p. 766; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 772 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 771-2.
Comments on BhG 2.39: ‘This is the spirit according to theory; now hear how this spirit applies in practice, yoked with which you will cut away the bondage of the act’, MS seems to have deviated from the views of Śaṅkara. While Śaṅkara maintains that Arjuna was to get rid of bondage, which is caused by action, through attaining knowledge by the grace of the Lord, MS finds fault with this explanation of the predecessors (prācīna-vyākhyā), as he thinks that this explanation involves the fault of supplying an ellipsis (adhyāhāra-doṣa), as in this case ‘obtaining the grace of the Lord’ becomes an unnecessary addition, and also that in the expression ‘bondage of the act’ (karma-bandhana) the term karma is redundant, as the term bandhana itself means the transmigratory bondage that is due to past action.764

Consider again, BhG 5.5: ‘The adepts of insight and the adepts of practice reach one and the same goal: he sees truly who sees that insight and practice are one and the same’ advocates that both the adepts of insight (sāṃkhya-s) and the adepts of practice (yogin-s) attain the same goal, i.e. ‘liberation’. While explaining the verse, both Śaṅkara and MS maintain that in order to obtain knowledge, the yogin-s perform the rites and duties prescribed by scriptures without expecting any result (phala-abhisandhi-rahita) from them, and with a sense of dedication to the Lord (bhagavadarpana-buddhi), for Śaṅkara, the yogin-s attain liberation through the knowledge of reality and renunciation of all actions, MS’s explanation of this verse suggests that MS is more concerned with physical renunciation for the yogin-s. MS maintains that the yogin-s, with their minds purified, attain liberation through the steadfastness in knowledge, which is obtained in this life or the next through

764 Bhāgavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 85-9; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 96-7 and Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam, pp. 96-8 (Also see Gambhirananda 2000: Introduction, p. 18).
listening to scriptures (śravana) etc., preceded by renunciation. Now, if this view of MS regarding the yogin-s is accepted, it would also apply to the sāmkhya-s, who are also the renouncers established in knowledge -- a fact that does not seem to be acceptable to the other commentators of the BhG at large.765

Thus, a close study of all the references to Śaṅkara in the GD mentioned above indicates that, while writing the GD, MS had always before him the commentary on the BhG by Śaṅkara, and that it exerted immense influence on MS in establishing his own Advaitic interpretation in the GD. However, MS expressed his disagreement with Śaṅkara whenever the situation warranted it, i.e. mostly when he tried to lend his support to the path of devotion. However, as noted before, in so doing, MS might have occasionally admitted a different understanding of the text of the BhG from that of Śaṅkara, but he never disagreed with the latter’s exposition of the Advaita philosophy.766

6.3. References to Śaṅkara’s other commentaries in the Gūḍhārthadīpikā

Apart from the above references to the commentary on the BhG by Śaṅkara, we find in the GD on a number of verses of the BhG where MS has referred to

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766 In some cases (e.g. in the GD on BhG 2.29, 2.39, 5.5. 3.2, 6.14, 6.29, 18.66 ), MS consciously departs from the interpretation offered by Śaṅkara, since after offering his own interpretation of the verses concerned, he mentions the different interpretation offered by Śaṅkara. But inspite of such minor differences, he fully subscribes to the Advaita doctrine propagated by Śaṅkara, which holds (i) that the ultimate reality is pure consciousness that is without a second entity and also bereft of internal distinctions; (ii) that the individual self (jīva) has no reality over and above the reality of this absolute reality (brahman), and (iii) that the world is indescribable in terms of reality and unreality (sadāsadbhāyānti antirvacanīyatvam). It is a fact that, while Śaṅkara admits knowledge (jñāna) as the sole means of attaining liberation, MS admits devotion (bhakti) as the means that is easier to be adopted by many spiritual aspirants. We have already shown that the monistic outlook of Advaita Vedānta is not inconsistent with the adoption of devotion (bhakti) and worship (upāsanā) [See chapters 5.2.2.1, 5.2.2.2, 5.3 etc.].
Śaṃkara’s comments on the BS and on the Upaniṣads in support of his own position. In his comments on BhG 2.17, MS has referred to BSB on BS 1.1.4.767 Again, the GD on BhG 2.18 refers to BSB in a general way;768 GD on BhG 3.34 refers to BUB on BU 1.3.1; GD on BhG 4.34 refers to MUB on MU 1.2.12; GD on BhG 4.37 refers to BSB on BS 3.3.32; GD on BhG 8.24 refers to BSB on BS 4.3.2; and the GD on BhG 18.12 refers to BSB on BS 3.1.8 in an implicit manner.769

6.4. Other commentators of the Bhagavadgītā referred to in the Gūḍhārthadīpikā

Besides Śaṃkara, a number of commentators of the BhG have been referred to by MS either explicitly or implicitly. They have either been criticised or referred to by MS in order to justify his own position. Among these commentators, mention may be made of the following:

Rāmānuja (11th century CE): As noted earlier, while supporting his own view on the concept of divine incarnation as expressed in BhG 4.6, MS refers to Śaṃkara and his commentator Ānandagiri, who hold that though the Lord is unborn and imperishable, he appears through his magical power (māyā) as if he is embodied. MS also puts forth a different view, to whom there cannot be any relation of a body and its possessor (deha-dehi-bhāva) in the case of the supreme Lord. Lord Vāsudeva who is the supreme self, eternal, omnipresent, an amalgam of

768 Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 63.
existence-conscious-bliss, full, and unconditioned, is himself the body of the supreme Lord, who has neither any material or māyika (i.e. caused by māyā) body. Having said so about the supreme Lord, who, according to the Advaitins, is eternal, partless, unchanging, and supreme bliss, MS mentions the view of those who admit the actuality of the relation of a body and its possessor even in the case of the supreme Lord. Therefore, MS opines that those who hold this view do not even deserve to be refuted.

This criticism is clearly directed against the supporters of the ‘qualified non-dualism’ like Rāmānuja etc., who accept three things as ultimate and real (tattva-traya), i.e. matter (acit), souls (cit), and God (īśvara). Though all the three realities are equally actual, yet the first two are totally dependent on the third reality, i.e. God, since the first two realities constitute the body of God, and God is their soul. God again is the soul of all souls.\textsuperscript{770}

In BhG 5.7, MS explains the expression \textit{sarva-bhūtātma-bhūtātmā} (identifying himself with the selves of all creatures) as meaning someone whose self (ātmā) or essential nature (svarūpa) becomes identified with all beings (\textit{sarva-bhūtātmā}) and with the self (ātma-bhūta), i.e. one who sees all beings — sentient and insentient — as the self only. MS now finds faults with others whose explanation of this expression involves imperfect grammatical usage. He maintains that the explanation of the expression as whose self becomes the self of all beings (\textit{sarveṣāṃ bhūtānātmabhūta ātmā}) can be obtained from the first part of the expression, i.e. \textit{sarva-bhūtātmā} (one who is the self of all beings) only, and therefore, the remainder of the expression, viz. \textit{ātma-bhūta} (i.e. one who has

\textsuperscript{770} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 188-90 and Bhagavadgītā 2000: Vol. 1, Rāmānujabhāṣyopodghāṭah, pp. 5-6; Rāmānujabhāṣyam, pp. 79, 91, 366-8 etc. (Also see Sharma 1976: p. 346).
become the self) becomes superfluous. MS, however, suggests that this redundancy can be avoided if the term sarvātmā is taken in the sense of insentient and sentient respectively, i.e. sarva is taken as insentient, and ātmā as sentient. This criticism seems to be directed against Rāmānuja, who explains this expression as one whose self becomes the self of all embodied beings like gods etc.\textsuperscript{771}

The expression \textit{anādimat param brahma} (beginningless supreme \textit{brahman}) in \textit{BhG} 13.12 has been explained by MS as meaning the beginningless supreme or all-surpassing \textit{brahman}, which is in no way limited by anything, and which is the supreme self. MS also maintains that though the meaning can be had from mere use of the word \textit{anādi} (beginningless) in the sense of an adjectival compound (\textit{bahuvrihi-samāsa}) [i.e. that which has no beginning (ādi) is beginningless (\textit{anādi})], yet, in order to indicate superiority (atiśāyana) or constant connection (nitya-yoga), the possessive suffix \textit{matup} (i.e. \textit{mat}) has been used here (i.e. \textit{anādi+mat=anādimat}).\textsuperscript{772} MS then mentions those commentators who prefer to explain this expression by splitting it in two other divisions, viz. \textit{anādi} (beginningless) and \textit{matparaṃ brahma} (\textit{brahman} that is superior to me). MS maintains that, according to this explanation, by the term \textit{matparaṃ} is meant the unqualified \textit{brahman} [i.e. that which is superior (\textit{param}) to me (\textit{mat}), i.e. the qualified \textit{brahman} is the unqualified \textit{brahman}]. Now, in order to justify his claim that the expression under discussion conveys the unqualified \textit{brahman} only and not the qualified \textit{brahman}, MS describes the second interpretation as a


\textsuperscript{772} It may be pointed out that if the word \textit{anādi} (beginningless) is used in the expression, then it may indicate the unmanifest (\textit{pradhāna}) of the Sāṃkhya school, which is also said to be beginningless in the process of evolution. So, in order to avoid this obscurity, the possessive suffix \textit{mat} is added to the word \textit{anādi} (See Gambhirananda 2000: Footnote 2, p. 722).
misinterpretation (apavyākhyā) of those according to whom the term matparam stands for the qualified brahman. He maintains that those who explain the expression as that brahman, of which Lord Vāsudeva [i.e. the referent of ‘I’ (aham)] is the supreme power, is erroneous; as in the context of the unqualified brahman, talking about its possession of prowess is incongruous.773

This view of MS can be explicated with the support of Śaṃkara’s explanation of BhG 13.12. Having interpreted the expression anādimat param brahma in the verse as the beginningless supreme brahman, Śaṃkara points out that some commentators explain the above expression anādimat param by splitting it up in a different manner into the two terms anādi and matparam. They, Śaṃkara says, argue that, if the meaning of a term can be obtained by treating that term as an adjectival compound, then the employment of the suffix (mat) after that term for obtaining that very meaning is not justified. Accordingly, the suffix mat employed in the term anādimat becomes superfluous, if both anādimat and anādi happen to convey the same meaning. They also justify themselves by maintaining that by matparam is meant that brahman of which Lord Vāsudeva is the supreme power. Now, Śaṃkara holds that this repetition could be avoided in the manner stated above only if the sense of being brahman that is qualified were intended here. But that is not so, as the sense of unqualified brahman is conveyed here. So, the possessive suffix and the adjectival compound convey here the same sense. The possessive suffix mat has been used here due to purely metrical reasons, i.e. for merely completing the verse.774

Now, while commenting on the same verse, Rāmānuja explains the expression anādimat paraṁ brahma, according to his own philosophical stance. Rāmānuja, with copious references to the BhG and the Śrutis, maintains that, that which has no beginning (ādī) is beginningless (anādī). As this indwelling self (pratyagātman) [i.e. the individual self] does not have any origination, it is also bereft of any end (anta). By the term matparam, Rāmānuja means ‘having me for the supreme’ (ahaṁ paro yasya tanmatparam), i.e. the soul to which ‘I’ (i.e. the supreme being Vāsudeva) is the šeṣī (i.e. the Lord and Master), as is attested by the BhG: ‘This is my lower nature, but know that I have another, higher nature which comprises the order of souls: it is by the latter that this world is sustained, strong-armed prince’ (BhG 7.5). By virtue of its being the body of the Lord and, the nature of the self finds its joy only in being dependent on the Lord. Thus, Rāmānuja did not find much difficulty in dealing with the grammatical inconsistency that apparently affects this verse, as for him the Lord possesses innumerable auspicious qualities.\(^{775}\)

Though Śaṅkara and, subsequently, MS have not specifically mentioned the name of the opponent whose views they were referring to, it can be assumed that Śaṅkara was referring to some school of the Bhedābhedavādins, who disallowed attributes to brahman but admitted supreme power in it.\(^{776}\) We find that

\(^{775}\) Bhagavadgītā 2000: Vol. 3, Rāmānujabhāṣyam, p. 49 (Also refer to Bhavani 1995: p. 387, Sampatkumaran 1969: Footnote 660, p. 376). This edition (i.e. Bhagavadgītā 2000) of the BhG counts this verse as BhG 13.13 instead of BhG 13.12, as the verse BhG 13.1 that is printed in this edition is not generally taken by other commentators excepting Purusottamaṁśi of the Śuddhādvaita school and Rāghavendra Yati and a few other commentators of the Dvaita school, and so is not available in general editions of the BhG. Though this verse BhG 13.1 is found in an edition containing Viśvanātha Cakravartin’s commentary, it is not clear whether Cakravartin has commented on this verse or he has started his commentary taking only the generally accepted 1st verse of this chapter) [See Bhagavadgītā 2001: Vol.3: 2007: Vol. 2; Bhagavadgītā (date not found): Sārārthavarṣiṇī, p. 344].

later, Rāmānuja too interpreted the term *matparam* in the manner against which both Śaṃkara and MS (subsequent to Rāmānuja) have raised objections.

**Jaya Tīrtha (1370 CE, a commentator of Madhva’s *Gītābhāṣya*):**

Madhva in his commentary on the *BhG* explains the term *anādimat* in *BhG* 13.12 as ‘being devoid of body that has a beginning’ (*ādimaddehavarjitimātyanādimat*). While commenting on Madhva’s *Gītābhāṣya* on this verse of the *BhG*, Jayatīrtha, having dealt with elaborately the grammatical objection involved therein, agrees with what Śaṃkara and MS (subsequent to Jayatīrtha) hold in this connection.777

**Ānandagiri (14th century CE, a commentator of Śaṃkara’s *Gītābhāṣya*):**

This writer is well known in the Advaita tradition as a dependable commentator of Śaṃkara’s works. MS has referred to him for establishing Śaṃkara’s position that in turn helps MS in supporting his own position. As discussed earlier, while establishing his own view on the concept of divine incarnation as enunciated in *BhG* 4.6, MS refers to Śaṃkara and explicates the master’s stance by referring to the view of Ānandagiri. Further, MS quotes the views of the commentators of Śaṃkara (such as Ānandagiri etc.) while justifying Śaṃkara’s adoption of a different reading in *BhG* 18.75.778

**Śrīdhara Svāmin (14th century CE, a famous commentator of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and an adherent to Śaṃkara’s Advaita school):** While explaining *BhG* 2.41: ‘This one spirit is defined here as singleness of purpose, scion of Kuru, whereas the spirits of those who are not purposeful are countless and…’,

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MS, following Śaṅkara, maintains that, while the knowledge of the self (śāṃkhyā-buddhi) and that of the yoga (i.e. karma-yoga) are of the nature of certainty (vyāvasāyātmikā) as they negate all the contrary ideas and are brought about from the faultless sentences (i.e. the Upaniṣadic great sentences), the thoughts of those who lack conviction about the self (avyāvasāyin-s) are normally negated. MS adds that, on the other hand, there are some commentators of the BhG who hold that one would cross the transmigratory world only through worshipping the supreme Lord, and that this kind of one-sided view is the product of karma-yoga. In a bit of antagonistic attitude to this view of other commentators, MS proclaims the superiority of jñāna-kāṇḍa of the Vedas to their ritualistic portion. Again, Śrīdhara Svāmin, in his comments on this verse, holds clearly the opinion that has been called by MS ‘the view of others’. Thus, it is obvious that MS, being faithful to his own non-dualistic stance, was not ready to accept ungrudgingly the view of Śrīdhara that worship of the Lord, as brought about by karma-yoga, leads to the attainment of liberation. While explaining the expression sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā (identifying himself with the selves of all creatures) in BhG 5.7, MS’s criticism directed against Rāmānuja that we have discussed earlier, is also pointed at Śrīdhara, who also, like Rāmānuja, explains the expression as meaning one whose self becomes the self of all beings. MS has also noted a different reading that Śrīdhara admits in BhG 6.27, though he has not expressed any opinion about it. Incidentally, it is the only place where MS refers by name to Śrīdhara. As discussed in connection with Rāmānuja, the antagonistic view held by both Śaṅkara and MS in course of explaining the expression anādimat param brahma (beginningless supreme brahman) in BhG 13.12, may also be aimed at Śrīdhara, since use of the
possessive suffix and the adjectival compound and explaining the term *matparam* to indicate the unqualified *brahman* (i.e. *brahman* that is considered superior to ‘I’ denoted by the qualified *brahman* is said to be the unqualified *brahman*) that has been criticised by MS is also found in toto in Śrīdhara’s comments on the same verse.\(^{779}\)

While explaining *BhG* 15.16: ‘In this world there are two Persons, the transient and the intransient. The transient comprises all creatures, the intransient called the One-on-the-Peak’, MS maintains that that whatever is mutable, i.e. subject to destruction in the form of entirety of effects, is called *kṣara puruṣa* (transient person), while the indestructible (*vināśa-rahita*), the seed of origin of the *puruṣa* called *kṣara*, the divine power of *māyā*, is called *akṣara-puruṣa* (intransient person). That which presents the unreality by covering the reality is called *kūṭa*, which also means deceit (*vañcanā*), illusion (*māyā*) etc. Thus, that which exists with the twin powers of concealment and projection is called *kūṭastha*.\(^{780}\) It is the limiting adjuncts of cause (*kāraṇopādhi*) in the form of divine power of *māyā*. Being endless (*ananta*) as the cause of this empirical existence, it is called *akṣara*. Having said so, MS now refutes the view of other commentators on this point, who take the word *kṣara* (transient) to mean the aggregate of insentient beings, and refer to the individual selves as *akṣara* (intransient) while employing the expression ‘the


\(^{780}\) In this context it can be noted that Vidyāranya in his *PD* classifies the absolute consciousness into four types, viz. *kūṭastha-caitanya*, *brahma-caitanya*, *Īśvara-caitanya*, and *jīva-caitanya*; just as ether is differentiated into ether in a pot (*ghatākāśa*), the omnipresent ether (*mahākāśa*), ether in water (*jalākāśa*), and ether in a cloud (*meghākāśa*) (Pañcadaśi 2008: *PD* 6.18, p. 112). Thus, *purusottama* means the unqualified *brahma caitanya*, *kūṭastha-caitanya* implies the *akṣara-puruṣa*, and the *kṣara-puruṣa* indicates *Īśvara* (collective) and *jīva* (individualistic) *pratibimba caitanya* (reflected consciousness) respectively (For the views of *Vivaraṇa-kāra* and *Saṅkṣepe-sārīraka-kāra* in this context, also see Vāsudevānanda 2006: pp. 1029-30).
intransient is called the immutable’ (kūṭastho’kṣara ucyate). MS points out that it is
the knower of the field (kṣetrajña) that is spoken of (by the Lord himself) as the
supreme person (puruṣottama) in this context (i.e. in BhG 15.17). MS, thus,
reiterates that by the words kṣara and akṣara are meant the insentient in the form of
both limiting adjuncts of cause (kāranopādhi) and effect (kāryopādhi). This is
directed against Śrīdhara, who explains the verse in the way against which MS
raises some objections. MS has also verbatim some words of Śrīdhara in the GD on
BhG 17.10, in support of his own view. In course of explaining the term saṃnyāsin
employed in BhG 18.12 in two senses — viz. primary and secondary, MS maintains
that, one who is embodied and devoid of the knowledge of the supreme self, and yet
undertakes actions without craving for their results, is a saṃnyāsin in a secondary
sense; while the other one, who possesses the knowledge of the supreme self and
being bereft of the sense of identification with the body, renounces all actions, is a
saṃnyāsin in the primary sense. While renunciation of craving for results of actions
is common in both the senses of the word (i.e. saṃnyāsin), the performer of action
(karmin) is referred to by the word saṃnyāsin. This has the support of BhG 6.1: ‘He
who performs the task set for him without interest in its fruit is the true renouncer
and yogin, not the one who does not maintain the fire and fails to perform the rites.’
MS notes here that, some of the commentators also maintain this view with the
support of this same BhG verse. It may be noted here that Śrīdhara has also offered
a similar explanation.\textsuperscript{781}

\textsuperscript{781} Bhagavadgītā 1999: Madhusūdanīvyākhyā and Śrīdharīvyākhyā, pp. 627-8; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā
and Śrīdharīvyākhyā, pp. 660; Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, p. 691 and Śrīdharīvyākhyā, pp. 691-2.
6.5. **Gūḍhārthadīpikā referred to in other commentaries on the Bhagavadgītā**

In later commentarial literature on the *BhG*, we find explicit reference to the *GD* in some of the subsequent commentaries. Such cases are noted below.

**Veṅkaṭanātha (16th century CE, a proponent of the Advaita school of Śaṃkara):** As we have discussed in chapter three in connection with explaining *BhG* 2.16 and 2.18, Veṅkaṭanātha, though an adherent to Śaṃkara’s Advaita Vedānta, finds flaws in many places in MS’s comments on the *BhG*. Besides these two instances, Veṅkaṭanātha also refers by name to MS while commenting on *BhG* 1.27, 2.8, 2.11, 2.13, 2.31, 3.28, 4.10, 5.8, 8.1 etc., and repudiates the latter’s view with a number of arguments, while accepting in almost all cases the view of Śaṃkara. He thereby indicates his full support to the great master of the tradition, with an eye to critically assess the views of MS, who himself is a pioneer in the same tradition in his own right.\(^782\)

Due to paucity of space, we note here only some of the major objections that have been raised by Veṅkaṭanātha in his commentary *Brahmānandagiri* against the interpretation of the *BhG* provided by MS.

(i) It has already been stated that according to MS, the *BhG* can be divided into three parts, each of them consisting of six chapters. MS also maintains that these three parts, when taken together, reveal the indented meaning of the ‘great sentence’ ‘That thou art’ (*tattvamasi*, CU 6.8.7). According to MS, the first part deals with *karma*, the third part deals with *jñāna*, while the second part deals with *bhakti*, which acts as a bridge between *karma* and *jñāna*. MS also says that the first part elucidates the nature of the meaning of ‘thou’ (*tvam*), the second part deals

with the nature of the meaning of ‘that’ (tat), and the third part shows the identity of these two meanings. Veṅkaṭanātha remarks that such interpretations are unsatisfactory, as there is no clear statement in the BhG to this effect.

(ii) While explaining the phrase, ‘kṛpayā parayāviśṭah’ that occurs in BhG 1.27, MS maintains that, here, the word ‘kṛpā’ stands for compassion that was by its very nature present (svatasiddha) in Arjuna. Veṅkaṭanātha holds that, in the context in question, the compassion spoken of here must have people like Bhīṣma etc. as its object, and hence, this not the spontaneous compassion that Arjuna might have for people who were poor, or helpless, or those who has sought for refuge (dīnanātha-śaraṇāgati), since in that case, Arjuna would not even have come to the battlefield. Hence, kṛpā here stands for a temporary mental state caused by delusion (āgantukah mohavikāraḥ).

(iii) While explaining the hemistich gatāśūnagatāśūṃiśca nānuśocanti paṇḍitaḥ in BhG 2.11, MS maintains that while gatāśūn stands for people who are dead, agatāśūn stands for the living relatives of those who are dead, and sorrow (śoka) for them is of the form -- ‘how can there people survive after the death of their dear ones?’ Veṅkatanātha points out that in view of the expression drṣṭveṇam svajanam etc. that occurs in BhG 1.28, the sorrow spoken of here is related to relatives of Arjuna who are still living, but are about to be killed in the war. Thus, the explanation given by MS is not satisfactory.

(iv) While explaining the hemistich dehino’śmin yathā dehe kaumāraṃ yauvanam jarā that occurs in BhG 2.13, MS says that the word dehin, which is used here in the singular number, is present for the single self that persists in the body through the phases of childhood, youth, and old age that characterise the latter.
Likewise, the single self (i.e. brahman), on account of its all-pervasiveness (vibhutva) is present in all the bodies, and hence, the distinction that Arjuna draws between one who is killed (vadhya) and one who kills (ghātaka) is illusory in nature. Veṅkaṭanātha points out that, the verse does not speak of all bodies, and moreover, MS has to supply the probans, viz. all-pervasiveness (vibhutva) through ellipsis (adhyāropa). Hence, the literal meaning of this verse should be accepted here.

(v) While explaining the expression antavanta ime dehāḥ etc. that occurs in BhG 2.18, MS maintains that, the word dehāḥ, which is in plural number, stands for all the three types of body admitted in Advaita metaphysics, viz. gross body (sthūla-śarīra), subtle body (sūkṣma-śarīra), and ‘causal’ body (kāraṇa-śarīra) that are composed by five sheaths (pañca-kośātmakah). Veṅkaṭanātha rejects this interpretation on the ground that from the context it is evident that Arjuna’s grief was caused by the very thought of destroying the gross bodies of relatives like Bhīṣma etc. that are characterised by the physical or material sheath (annamaya-kośa), since the subtle body of a person characterised by the three other sheaths [viz. vital sheath (prāṇamaya-kośa), mental sheath (manomaya-kośa), and consciousness sheath (vijñānamaya-kośa)] as well as the ‘causal’ body characterised by the bliss sheath (ānandamaya-kośa) persist till the liberation of that person, and hence, the question of Arjuna’s grief being caused by the thought about the future destruction of such bodies in the war does not arise in the first place.783

Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri (ca. 16th century CE, the famous commentator of the Mahābhārata and a supporter of Śaṃkara’s Advaita school): Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri, an

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783 Bhagavadgītā 2000: Vol. 1, Brahmnānandagiri, pp. 18, 47-8, 81-2, 95, 118.
adherent to the Advaita Vedānta school, criticises any contrary position in his Śrīmadbhagavadgītārthaprakāśa, which is a commentary on the BhG, and is also a part of his commentary on the MBh, called the Bhāratabhāvadīpa. In addition to the introductory verses 2, 3, and 5 of this work which bear the substantial similarity with the introductory verses 3 and 4 of the GD,\textsuperscript{784} we find several places in his commentary on the BhG where Nīlakanṭha, along with the other commentators of the BhG like Śaṃkara,\textsuperscript{785} Śrīdhara\textsuperscript{786} etc., refers also to MS [e.g. BhG 2.20, 3.28 (only place where MS is referred to by name by Nīlakanṭha), 4.18, 6.29, 10.6, 10.21, 17.6, 18.10, 18.25].\textsuperscript{787}

**Vallabhācārya (17th century CE, the fifth grandson of the founder of the Śuddhādvaita school, Vallabhācārya):** As has been stated before, Vallabhacārya, who is a theistic Vedāntin, finds fault with MS’s comments on BhG 7.14. The verse in question speaks about different kinds of worshippers, who have performed virtuous deeds, viz. the suffering, the seekers for knowledge, the seekers for prosperity, and the wise. MS, following the BP and the other Smṛtis, names Gajendra, Śaunaka, Dhruva, Śuka, gopī-s etc. as representative examples of such devotees. Vallabhacārya, while commenting on the same verse, states in accordance with introductory verses 2, 3, and 5 of this work which bear the substantial similarity with the introductory verses 3 and 4 of the GD,\textsuperscript{784} we find several places in his commentary on the BhG where Nīlakanṭha, along with the other commentators of the BhG like Śaṃkara,\textsuperscript{785} Śrīdhara\textsuperscript{786} etc., refers also to MS [e.g. BhG 2.20, 3.28 (only place where MS is referred to by name by Nīlakanṭha), 4.18, 6.29, 10.6, 10.21, 17.6, 18.10, 18.25].\textsuperscript{787}
with his doctrinal consideration and also with the support of the BP, that though other devotees such as Śaunaka, Dhruva, Śuka undertook virtuous deeds; the gopī-s, despite having performed no such virtuous deeds either in this life or in the past ones, could avail mystic yearning and love through the grace (puṣṭi or prasāda) of the Lord only.⁷⁸⁸

Puruṣottamajī (18ᵗʰ century CE, a proponent of the Śuddhādvaita school): As we have mentioned earlier, Puruṣottamajī, a follower of the Śuddhādvaita school of Vedānta, finds flaws in MS’s commentary on the BhG. In the introduction to his BhG commentary, which is called the Amṛtataraṅginī, Puruṣottamajī has expressed the view with the support of the Anugītā etc. that the BhG teaches śaraṇagamana, and not jñāna and samnyāsa, as has been claimed by Śaṃkara. Again, Puruṣottamajī, quoting the introductory verses 3-10 of the GD, holds that MS’s assertion about the tripartite division of the Vedas into karma, upāsanā, and jñāna correspond to each six chapters of the BhG respectively and establish the import of ‘tattvamasi’ is not supported by the text (i.e. the BhG) commented on. He says that, the term śaraṇa in BhG 18.66 needs to be admitted in its primary meaning as ‘house’, ‘protector’ etc. as cited in the Amarakośa 3.3.52, in stead of admitting it in its secondary meaning. It may be pointed out in this connection that, though Puruṣottamajī has criticised Śaṃkara and MS, yet he has referred to Śrīdhara and Rāmānuja in support of his own position.⁷⁸⁹

Viśvanātha Cakravartin (18ᵗʰ century CE, an exponent of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism): As noted earlier, there are many places in Viśvanātha Cakravartin’s commentary on the BhG, where the author reproduces verbatim from MS’s GD in

support of his own position. Besides offering almost a similar classification of bhakti in the introduction as also in his commentary on BhG 7.16 [Whereas MS classifies it into karma-miśrā, jñāna-miśrā, and śuddhā, Viśvanātha classifies bhakti, in connection with describing the four types of people of virtuous deeds (BhG 7.16), into pradhānībhūtā -- karma-miśrā, jñāna-miśrā, and yoga-miśrā; and kevala bhakti].

Viśvanātha refers by name to MS in BhG 4.6, 4.7, 4.9, 4.36, 7.7, 8.18, 9.15, 13.10, 14.26, 14.27, 15.18 etc. Viśvanātha refers to MS in his commentary on BhG 4.6, 4.9 along with Rāmānuja and Śrīdhara, while in the course of explaining BhG 14.26-27, 15.18 he mentions MS along with Śrīdhara. Viśvanātha has explored the possibility of showing that MS’s GD is not in extreme opposition to the views of Rāmānuja and Śrīdhara.

The following commentators have referred to MS’s GD in an implicit manner in their respective commentaries on the BhG, as can be inferred from the almost verbatim reproduction of the passages of the GD in such works.

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa (18th century CE, a disciple of Viśvanātha Cakravartin, and an advocate of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism): Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, who is considered a systematic propounder of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism through his comments on the Upaniṣads, BS, and the BhG, has referred to MS indirectly in his commentary on the BhG, which is named as the Gītābhūṣaṇa. In his comments on BhG 1.1, Baladeva cites MS’s definition of Kurukṣetra based on the Jabala Upaniṣad. In BhG 4.6, Baladeva uses MS’s comparison of the rising sun to the appearance of the Lord that has been provided in

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connection with the latter’s comments on BhG 4.5. While explaining the concept of 

māyā stated in BhG 7.14, Baladeva uses the same Upaniṣadic text (i.e. ŚU 4.10) as 
is used by MS in the same context, while the former’s elucidation on this verse is 
substantially similar to that of the latter.792

MS’s classification of bhakti into karma-miśrā, jñāna-miśrā, and śuddhā 
cited in one of the introductory verses of the GD is also admitted by Baladeva 
throughout his commentary on the BhG, in a modified form that is similar to the 
classification given by Viśvanātha (e.g. BhG 6.47, 8.10. 9.15, 12.1). Besides, as we 
have noted earlier, while explaining the four kinds of people of virtuous deeds 
(sukṛtīn-s), viz. the suffering (ārta), the seekers for knowledge (jñāsu), the seekers 
for prosperity (arthārthin-s), and the wise (jñānin-s) mentioned in BhG 7.16, MS 
characterises the first three types of people as those devotees who possess desire 
(sakāma), and the fourth type as those who have no interest for the fruit of their 
action (nīskāma); while the latter are again classified into (i) those who are 
endowed with knowledge (nīskāma-bhakta-jñāni), and (ii) those who possess 
disinterested and pure love (nīskāma-śuddha-prema-bhakta). Unlike Viśvanātha, 
Baladeva reflects upon the elucidation of MS on this verse, yet he does not classify 
the devotees with the help of specific names; for he describes them differently as 
saniṣṭha (i.e. performers of nīskāma-karma-yoga, followed by jñāna-yoga, aṣṭāṅga-
yoga, and finally bhakti-yoga), pariniṣṭha (i.e. those who engage in the devotional 
processes of hearing and chanting as their main sādhana), nirapekṣa or nīskāma 
(i.e. those who perform only bhakti, and reject varṇāśrama-dharma), and devotees, 
who are attached to the performance of varṇāśrama-dharma (e.g. BhG 3.25, 7.30,

792 Bhagavadgītā (date not found): Gītābhūṣaṇa, pp. 6, 121, and 204 and Bhagavadgītā 1999: 
Madhusūdanīvyākhyā, pp. 9, 186, and 357.
9.27, 12.13-14, 18.64). It is to be noted that, though Baladeva in his comments on BhG 7.30 enumerates five types of devotees (in contrast to the four types found in BhG 7.16), it is in accordance with their doctrinal consideration, as the Gauḍīya Vaisṇavism accepts bhakti as the fifth end of human life (paṇcama-puruṣārtha), in addition to the generally accepted four types of puruṣārtha-s, i.e. dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa. But we can justify Baladeva while we see that the fourth type of devotees (i.e. jñānin in BhG 7.16) is nothing but a devotee with dispassion (niṣkāma-bhakta) according to MS. Further, in his comments on BhG 18.64, Baladeva talks about sādhya and sādhana types of bhakti for the niṣkāma devotees, which also finds resemblance with the view of MS, as we have said earlier.\(^{793}\)

Dhanapati Sūri (1750-1850 CE, a proponent of the Advaita school of Śaṅkara): As we have referred to in chapter one and discussed in several places in chapters three, four, and five, Dhanapati, who often refers to commentators like Śaṅkara,\(^{794}\) Āṇandagiri,\(^{795}\) the other sub-commentators of Śaṅkara’s Gītābhāṣya,\(^{796}\) Śrīdhara,\(^{797}\) Nilakaṇṭha\(^{798}\) etc., refers to MS as many as one hundred and sixty times

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\(^{794}\) Bhagavadgītā 1999: Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā on BhG 2.11, 2.13, 2.14, 2.15, 2.17, 2.18, 2.20, 2.21, 2.22, 2.24, 2.27, 2.28, 2.29, 2.41, 3.3, 3.5, 3.41, 4.4, 4.6, 4.13, 4.17, 4.20, 4.24, 5.7, 5.10, 5.14, 5.21, 6.29, 6.38, 6.40, 8.6, 9.16, 9.21, 11.43, 13.23, 16.17, 18.6, and concluding verse 1.

\(^{795}\) Bhagavadgītā 1999: Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā on BhG 1.2 and 2.15.

\(^{796}\) Bhagavadgītā 1999: Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā on BhG 1.2, 1.7, 1.10, 1.18, 1.21, 1.35, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.14.

\(^{797}\) Bhagavadgītā 1999: Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā on BhG 1.10, 2.5, 2.25, 2.41, 2.44, 2.48, 2.49, 2.72, 3.3, 3.9, 3.15, 3.21, 3.29, 4.8, 4.10, 4.14, 4.16, 4.18, 4.20, 4.24, 4.30, 5.3, 5.4, 5.9, 5.11, 5.24, 6.1, 6.3, 6.6, 6.7, 7.4, 8.15, 8.28, 9.18, 9.21, 9.32, 10.6, 10.12, 10.21, 10.32, 11.32, 11.40, 12.3, 13.3, 13.4, 13.8, 13.12, 13.17, 13.18, 13.21, 13.24, 13.30, 14.3, 14.27, 15.7, 15.16, 17.10, 18.10, 18.13, 18.19, 18.36, and 18.68.

\(^{798}\) Bhagavadgītā 1999: Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā on BhG 1.1, 2.2, 2.7, 2.10, 2.14, 2.20, 2.28, 2.29, 2.41, 2.47, 2.66, 2.70, 2.72, 3.3, 3.20, 3.28, 3.29, 3.32, 4.1, 4.6, 4.8,4.10, 4.13,4.14, 4.16, 4.18, 4.21, 4.22, 4.25, 4.26, 4.30, 4.31, 4.35, 5.3, 5.4, 5.7, 5.13, 5.15, 6.2, 6.3, 6.6, 6.7, 7.4, 7.25, 7.26, 7.29, 8.15, 9.1, 9.2, 9.6, 9.15, 9.21, 10.6, 10.21, 10.33, 11.32, 11.35, 11.40, 12.1, 12.13, 12.16, 12.17, 13.8, 13.12, 13.17, 13.18, 13.21, 13.24, 13.28, 14.2, 14.27, 15.6, 16.8, 16.24,17.6, 17.10, 18.6, 18.10, 18.17, and 18.23,18.34, 18.36, 18.55, and 18.68.
in his commentary on the *BhG*, which is called the *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā*.\textsuperscript{799} Besides aiming at showing the appropriateness of Śaṃkara’s commentary on the *BhG*, Dhanapati refers to these other commentaries in order to show their inferiority, as they often fail to follow the lead of Śaṃkara’s *Gītābhāṣya*.

However, there are several occasions when Dhanapati refers to these commentators also in support of his own view. But we need to review at least some of the objections that Dhanapati, despite being a follower of Śaṃkara Vedānta, has raised in a great number against MS’s *GD*. As we have pointed out earlier, Dhanapati has criticised MS without naming him in a number of places, where the latter seems to deviate from or fail to grasp what the great commentator Śaṃkara wanted to convey. And in a recently published vernacular translation of MS’s *GD*, we find that the writer of the preface of that book has pointed out as many as twenty five verses, where Dhanapati objects to MS’s interpretation.\textsuperscript{800} Due to paucity of space, we note here only some of such objections.

(i) *BhG* 1.24 contains a statement of Sañjaya who tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra that after being requested by Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa placed the chariot of Arjuna between the two large armies about to engage in the Kurukṣetra war. According to MS, Dhṛtarāṣṭra hoped that after being requested by Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa would adopt the principle of non-violence, and would dissuade Arjuna from participating in the war. In order to remove this wrong assumption, Sañjaya uttered this verse. Dhanapati Sūri rejects this view on the ground that Dhṛtarāṣṭra already knew that the war was

\textsuperscript{799} For references, see footnote 188 supra.

\textsuperscript{800} Sanātanađēva 2005: *Bhūmikā*, pp. 10-3 (*BhG* 2.7, 2.11, 2.13, 2.15, 2.16, 2.19, 2.20, 2.21, 2.22, 2.24, 2.39, 2.54, 2.67, 2.70, 3.3, 3.18, 3.28, 5.7, 6.19, 6.30, 7.21, 7.29, 8.20, 9.15, etc.).
about to begin, and hence, there was no reason for entertaining such a baseless hope.

(ii) *BhG* 1.45 starts with the words ‘*yadi mām-apratīkāram*’ etc., and according to MS, Arjuna says this to Kṛṣṇa, anticipating the objection that even if Arjuna desists from war, other members of his family like Bhīma etc. would certainly take part in the war that would result in the death of his relatives. Arjuna says here that he would follow the principle of non-violence even if it results in his death. Dhanapati Sūri rejects this view on the ground that no answer of Śrīkṛṣṇa that is relevant to such an anticipated question is found in the *BhG*.

(iii) In course of explaining *BhG* 2.7, MS holds that, the word *śreyaḥ* that occurs in the second hemistich of this verse stands for the highest end of human life (*parama-puruṣārtha*), i.e. liberation (*mokṣa*). Dhanapati Sūri has pointed out that, in the first hemistich of this verse, Arjuna has described himself as extremely confused about his duty (*dharma-saṁmūḍha-cetāḥ*). Such a person is likely to enquire about *dharma*, and not about *mokṣa*. Accordingly, Dhanapati Sūri maintains that, here, the word *śreyaḥ* stands for what is beneficial (*hitāvaha*), and not *mokṣa*.

(iv) In view of the phrase ‘*nāyaṃ hanti na hanyate*’ that occurs in the second hemistich of *BhG* 2.19, MS introduces the next verse (i.e. *BhG* 2.20, which starts with the words ‘*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācit*’ etc.) with the remark that this verse explains why the self can be neither the agent (*kartā*) nor the object (*karma*) of the act of killing (*hanana-kriyā*). But strangely enough, while introducing *BhG* 2.21, MS says that, the self cannot be the agent of the act of killing, where in *BhG*
2.21, it has been shown why it cannot be the object of the act of killing. Dhanapati Sūri has pointed out this obvious case of inconsistency.

(v) While explaining the first hemistich of BhG 2.22 (i.e. ‘vāsāṃsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni grhṇāti naro’parāni’), MS maintains that, the word jīrṇa and nava occurring in this verse, which normally mean something old and something new respectively, should be understood here in the senses of inferior (nikṛṣṭa) and superior (utkṛṣṭa) respectively. Therefore, MS says that, since the Kurukṣetra war would help people like Bhīṣma in obtaining better bodies in heaven after leaving their present and inferior bodies that have become old, it should be considered something desirable and helpful (upakāraka). Dhanapati Sūri points out that such an interpretation is incongruous with the context, and also involves ellipsis of the qualificand (viśesyādhyāhāra). Moreover, even young people, whose bodies have not become old, are killed in a war. Hence, the interpretation offered by MS is not tenable.

(vi) While explaining the second hemistich of BhG 2.24 (i.e. ‘nityah sarvagataḥ sthāṇuracalo’yaṃ sanātanaḥ’), MS quoted the Śruti passages like ‘ākāśavat sarvagataśca nityah’ (CU 3.14.3), ‘vṛkṣa iva stabdho divi tiṣṭhatyekaḥ’ (ŚU 3.9) etc. for establishing that the self is eternal. Dhanapati Sūri points out that, MS himself has said in the introduction to the GD that the first six chapters explicate the nature of the individual self that is expressed by the word tvam, whereas the scriptural passages quoted by him describe the nature of brahman that is expressed by the word tat. That the present verse discusses the nature of the individual self that is embodied is evident from the earlier verses that contain
expressions like ‘gatāsūn agatāsūṃśca’, ‘dehino’śmin’, ‘antavanta ime dehāḥ’, ‘vāsāṃsi jīrṇāni’ etc. Hence, the interpretation of MS is not tenable. 801

The works of modern scholars also lead one to consider afresh to what extent MS’s GD can be considered a reliable commentary on the BhG, or a reliable commentary that properly evaluates Śaṅkara’s commentary on the BhG. However, it may be pointed out that, in addition to some of the above-mentioned commentaries on the BhG, MS has also made use of various relevant sources of Sanskrit literature (both philosophical and non-philosophical). As pointed out earlier, MS had before him, along with the rich legacy of his own Advaitic tradition, various philosophical doctrines that he had to refer to frequently, either for supporting his own position or for showing their invalidity. Some of the important philosophical schools that MS refers to in his GD on the BhG are the Mīmāṃsā (on BhG 1.38, 18.7, 18.12, 18.18 etc.), Sāṃkhya (on BhG 2.7, 7.4, 18.7 etc.), Cārvāka (on BhG 2.13, 13.6, 16.8, 16.11, 18.14, 18.22 etc.), Nyāya (on BhG 2.13 ff., 13.6 etc.), Vaiśeṣika (on BhG 2.14 etc.), Yoga (on BhG 2, 4, 5, 6 etc.), Jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vādins (on BhG 3.2, 4.18 etc.), Bauddha (on BhG 13.6, 16.24, 17.5 etc.), Jaina (on BhG 17.5, 18.22 etc.), Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta of Rāmānuja (on BhG 4.6 etc.), the Mādhva Vedānta (on BhG 18.21 etc.) etc.

As a vernacular translator has already listed in appendices of his work the sources made use of by MS in his GD,802 we refrain from repeating the same work.

In the concluding chapter which follows, we propose to make some evaluative statements about the text (i.e. the *GD*), its author (i.e. MS) and its place as a commentary on the *BhG* together with our key findings in the dissertation.
Conclusion

Devotion to a personal God, i.e. bhakti, has been a longstanding problem in Indian religious and philosophical thinking. Rudolf Otto’s *Mysticism: East and West* elucidates Śaṃkara’s attitude towards bhakti as follows:

Śaṅkara himself, in the lower level, is a thorough-going theist and that with ardor and holy zeal. His theology is here almost identical with that of later Rāmānuja (outlined above) and his opposition to those who deny God and to their rival systems which oppose theism, is as great as that of his successor (Rāmānuja). Therefore, he takes it for granted that the man who is redeemed of God does not turn back, but on the path of gradual redemption finds its last in Brahma-nirvāṇa (sic.).

However hyperbolic it may sound, Otto’s observation about Śaṃkara’s outlook on devotion would be applicable more directly to MS in general, and his GD in particular -- a point that is of central importance in our dissertation.

Keeping in mind the intellectual, institutional and literary contexts that we have tried to unearth in this dissertation, and the research questions that are stated in chapter 1.1; we put forward the following observations in bullet point and explain them subsequently:

- The GD is a work belonging to the adhikarana-prasthāna, and is an ideal example of proper exposition (vyākhyā). Moreover, MS, as compared with the earlier Advaitic commentators as well as with the general attitude of the Advaitic tradition, shows great distinctiveness in the GD in terms of interpretation and exposition of the BhG.
• MS never compromises Śaṅkara’s non-dual doctrinal standpoint, and he is faithful to the latter’s intent while differing in some level of detail.

• While the works of MS like the AdS, AdRR etc. were not criticised by the later adherents to the Advaita Vedānta school, his GD was sometimes criticised by the later commentators who subscribed to the Advaita Vedānta. That the GD was criticised by the later non-Advaitic commentators is hardly surprising.

• MS, as a great scholar of his time, held an independent approach while making use of source material in framing his own philosophical viewpoint. As a champion of both theism and non-dualism, MS was deeply influenced by contemporary philosophical and religious debates. An expert in the Navya-nyāya technique of logical argumentation, MS occupies a prime position in the history of the development of Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta philosophy.

• Modern scholarship\textsuperscript{803} presumes that devotion to \textit{saguṇa-brahman} [in this context, devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa (kṛṣṇa-bhakti)] is irreconcilable with an Advaitic viewpoint, but MS made it his central objective to reconcile the two.

Instead of putting emphasis on polemics (vāda), the GD aims at (i) stating the subject-matter (viṣaya) in an explicit manner; (ii) anticipating the doubts (saṃśaya-s) that may be raised by any opponent; (iii) discussing the \textit{prima facie} views, or the views to be refuted in the GD (pūrvapakṣa-s); (iv) establishing the views to be finally admitted (uttarapakṣa); (v) showing the purpose (prayojana) served by a

\textsuperscript{803} Sanjukta Gupta, Lance E. Nelson etc. may be named as representatives of modern scholarship.
particular topic, and (vi) pointing out the relevance (*saṅgati*) of the topic to the main theme of discussion. By so doing, the text meets all the criteria for being regarded as a topical text (*adhikarana-grantha*) and is, moreover, a perfect example of exposition (*vyākhya*).

The features contributing to the distinctiveness of the *GD* as a commentary on the *BhG* may be summed up as: (i) dividing the *BhG* into three parts that deal with *karma*, *bhakti* and *jñāna* respectively, and linking up these three sections with the constituent words of the Upaniṣadic sentence ‘That thou art’ (*tattvamasi*), which is regarded as a great sentence (*mahāvākyā*); (ii) hinting at the suggestive meaning (*vyaṅgyārtha*) of words, including even names or forms of address and the denotative meaning (*śakyārtha*) and implied meaning (*lakṣyārtha*) of words, which is quite consistent with the fact that the *BhG*, while being a text of great religious importance, is also a part of the *MBh* (i.e. the great epic of India), and thus also has a lot of poetic appeal (see chapter 1.7).

We have seen in this study that, while MS sometimes expresses deep doctrinal differences with commentators of other traditions, he remains faithful to Śaṃkara’s comments, especially when it comes to dealing with philosophical principles (see chapters 6.2-6.4). There are as many as twenty seven places where MS explicitly refers to Śaṃkara’s comments in support of his own position.

Even so, there are a few passages in which MS shows apparent disagreement with Śaṃkara in respect of the interpretation of the *BhG* text. For example, while dealing with the three means of attaining liberation (viz. *karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna*), MS, unlike Śaṃkara, has dealt extensively with Pātañjala Yoga (see chapters 3.1.5, 5.2.1). He draws on the *YV*, *YS*, *Yogabhāṣya* of Vyāsa and the *Gauḍapādākārikā* in
order to show that Yoga is an aid to the other three means (viz. karma, bhakti, and jñāna-yoga-s and that it is an important requirement to be fulfilled for practising jñāna-yoga/dhyāna-yoga/samādhi-yoga), though the ultimate means is considered to be jñāna. Despite holding that followers of Śaṃkara Vedānta do not find Pātañjala Yoga indispensable for obtaining self-realisation, he views yoga as a means of controlling the mind before self-realisation and of removing past vāsanās after the advent of tattva-jñāna, thereby indicating the important place of yogic practices for one who aspires for liberation.

We have also pointed out the views of commentators such as Nīlakaṇṭha and Dhanapati, as also those of modern scholars, who have either appreciated or criticized this position of MS. We have also shown, in support of MS’s stance, that there are ample occasions where Śaṃkara, too, both in his comments on the Upaniṣads and on the BS, has admitted the yogic path as conducive to liberation, albeit in a somewhat different tone. This demonstrates that the the fact that MS has described the yogic path in the course of mentioning the means of attaining liberation is not completely antagonistic to the views of Śaṃkara, but differs only in terms of emphasis. In this connection, the view of Fort (see chapter 2.4.3) that the GD of MS was influenced by the Yogic Advaita deserves careful consideration.

While Śaṃkara puts emphasis on two mārga-s (i.e. karma and jñāna) stated in the BhG, MS talks about three mārga-s (karma, bhakti, and jñāna) as explicitly mentioned in the BhG as the means of attaining liberation. Most importantly, he regards the path of bhakti as both the means and the end of the paths of karma and jñāna (the GD on BhG 18.66). Though this declaration may appear to mark him as a dualist, his final view is in agreement with Śaṃkara. That is to say that knowledge
finally leads to the attainment of liberation. His declaration that it is the devotion to the Lord that produces knowledge, which culminates in liberation (the GD on BhG 18.73 etc.) marks him as a pure non-dualist, to whom the path of devotion is as good as that of knowledge (see chapters 5.2.2.1-5.2.2.3, 5.3). The Advaita Vedāntins maintain, in consonance with the Upaniṣad dictum ‘Only when a man knows him does he pass beyond death; there is no other path for getting there’ (ŚU 6.15), that liberation is attained only through the knowledge of brahman, i.e. the ultimate reality, whereas the other Vedāntins, who do not subscribe to pure non-dualism, put more emphasis on devotion (bhakti), a means that has received much importance in the BhG. MS, however, while admitting the importance of devotion, maintains that devotion easily leads to the knowledge of reality, thus paving the path of liberation. This shows how he can admit the importance of devotion without compromising his belief in pure non-dualism.

The versified introduction to the GD, in conformity with the principles of Advaita Vedānta, delineates all the fourfold requisites (anubandha-catuṣṭaya) that are considered to be essential by any important text (of the Advaitic tradition). The basic philosophical stand of MS is reflected in these forty six introductory verses. MS fully supported the views of Śaṅkara regarding jagat, jīvātman, and paramātman, and also the view that the path of knowledge directly leads to liberation, thereby showing his unswerving affiliation to the fundamental doctrines of Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta (see chapters 3, 4, 5.2 etc.).

As has been noted, the interpretations of the BhG by MS came under severe criticism by even some members of his own school (see chapter 6.5 and the discussion on the preceding chapters). While this is seen as being due to the
emphasis he has put on bhakti, it must be remembered that internal commentarial differences within the Advaita tradition are quite normal, going back to the divergence in views between the Bhāmatī and the Vivaraṇa schools. As stated before, the critics of MS, who also belong to the same Advaita tradition, often claimed that Śaṃkara’s commentary on the BhG is more authentic, thereby expressing the opinion that as a commentary, the GD is not always reliable. It should be noted that other works of MS, such as the AdS and AdRR, were not criticised by the later Advaitins in this manner.

Contemporary scholars such as Sanjukta Gupta point out that MS belonged to the post-Caitanya period, when religious mysticism permeated Bengal, and brought a simplification in the process of the origin of cognition that ultimately leads to the attainment of liberation. In the process of cognition, three components, namely cognition (jñāna), cognizer (jñātā), and the cognized (jñeya), respectively represent ‘that’, ‘are’, and ‘thou’ in the statement ‘That thou art,’ ending in the realization that they are one. Similarly, in the awareness of devotion, the mind is melted by the abiding passion of love for the qualified brahman (i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa), the object of devotion. Gupta holds that MS thus implicitly accepts the qualified brahman (i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa), also admitted by Rāmānuja as the ultimate reality and therefore MS erred in the eyes of the later Advaita thinkers. However, this may not be the only reason for Nīlakaṇṭha, Veṅkaṭanātha, Dhanapati etc. criticizing MS, because they take issue with him even in cases where the issue of devotion is not at all involved. A more plausible explanation may be that, in his quest for providing novel interpretations, MS may have at times come up with

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interpretations that appear somewhat far-fetched, and this was not acceptable to the later Advaitins.

Besides those belonging to the same tradition as MS, some of the later commentators of the BhG belonging to other traditions, such as Vallabhaćārya, Puruṣottamajī, etc. of the Śuddhādvaita Vedānta school, found faults with MS’s exposition on the BhG (see chapters 5.2.2.1, 6.5). While Vallabhaćārya in his comments on BhG 7.16 expressed disagreement with MS following his own philosophical consideration (i.e. the Puṣṭimārga) that admits the grace of the Lord (puṣṭi) to be the sole factor for attaining liberation, Puruṣottamajī, in the introduction to his BhG commentary, rejected, without giving reasons, MS’s attempt at making a tripartite division of the BhG corresponding to the tripartite division of the Vedas and his attempt to explain this division in terms of the three words of the Upaniṣadic great sentence ‘tattvamasi’ (see chapters 3.1.4, 6.5).

MS was a champion of both theism and monism. As a monk belonging to the order of the Śaṃkara tradition, the authorities followed by MS are invariably the texts of his tradition. In order to defend a prominent place for bhakti in the Advaitic tradition, he had also to resort to sources such as the BP, which explicitly emphasise devotion, though such texts were not typically cited by the Advaitins to establish a doctrine. It is evident from a close scrutiny of his works that, though MS was willing to accommodate the views of various post-Śaṃkara schools of Advaita Vedānta, it is the Vivaraṇa school to which MS’s allegiance is evident. This view is substantiated by the fact that, out of the five definitions of falsity given by MS, three are based on the Vivaraṇa school, and that he accepts the principal doctrines of this school, such as that brahman is both the substratum and object of nescience,
verbal testimony leads to the immediate knowledge of brahman, reflection theory explains the relation between brahman and jīva etc. (see chapters 1.3-1.4).

As regards the influence of contemporary philosophical trends upon MS’s views, our conclusions are follows. MS was clearly influenced by Śrīdhara Svāmin (14th century CE, a celebrated commentator of the BP and the BhG, and an advocate of the Non-dualism of Śaṃkara) while writing the GD, as the latter is considered to be a proponent of nirguna-bhakti-mārga. However, he has not failed to differ from Śrīdhara (the GD on BhG 2.41, 13.12, 15.16)805 when the latter’s views appeared to be unconvincing [see chapter 6.4]. Besides the GD, MS’s HLV bears frequent references to Śrīdhara, and both the authors talk about nirguna-bhakti. Although Śrīdhara talks about the utility of devotion to the Lord as a means of liberation, he also distinguishes this from that of knowledge. In the concluding part of his commentary on the BhG, Śrīdhara, with the support of various Śruti and Smṛti texts, asserts that devotion to the Lord alone is the means of liberation, and that the knowledge of the self is an intermediate operation (avāntara-vyāpāra) of devotion to the Lord. That is, for him devotion to the Lord causes knowledge of the self that ultimately leads to liberation.806 This view is compatible with the spirit of Śaṃkara’s Advaita doctrine, and, of course, with that of MS.

In formulating his definition of bhakti, MS certainly followed the BP, but he might also have been influenced by Vopadeva, the author of the Muktāphala and its

805 MS frequently refers to Śrīdhara’s commentary on the BP as well in his Harilīlāviveka (i.e. commentary on the Harilīlāmṛtam by Vopadeva) [See Harilīlāmṛta 1933: Harilīlāmṛta, Daśamaskandhakathāsārāh, p. 32 etc.).

806 See Bhagavadgītā 1999: Śrīdharīvyākhyā, pp. 773-5.
commentator Hemādri, as he quotes the author of the *Muktāphala* in his *ĪPP* (see chapter 5.2.2.2).

Neither MS nor any of the early exponents of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism belonging to the same period as MS refer to each other in their works. It is therefore difficult to prove for certain, based on the literary evidence, that MS was influenced by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. However, as we have seen above, Sanjukta Gupta points out that it is possible that the environment of religious mysticism that permeated India in the post-Caitanya period has influenced MS. The reference to the *GD* of MS by Viśvanātha Cakravartin and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa (i.e. the two famous adherents to the Bengal Vaiṣṇavism of the 18th century CE), in support of their views in their respective commentaries on the *BhG*, indicates that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas found certain explanations given by MS, a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, as worthy of consideration, in spite of their basic doctrinal differences. In these cases, MS has described Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa as the brahman Himself, which is very close to the doctrine of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism (see chapters 4.1.3, 6.5, appendix II etc.). All this, however, proves MS’s influence on later Caitanya thought, rather than the other way round.

Evidence of MS’s strong mastery of both the old and new Nyāya schools is found in the frequent quotations from the *Nyāyakusumāñjali* of Udayana (a logician from Mithilā around 1050/1054 CE) and the *Tattvacintāmaṇi* of Gaṅgeśa (13th century CE) in the *AdS* and *AdRR*. His independent frame of mind is demonstrated by the fact that he often rejects the positions of these famous

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807 *Īśvarapratipātaprakāśa* 1921: p. 7.
predecessors in order to establish his own views, and utilises the methods of the new school of logic to defend Advaita views. In the AdS, by exhibiting an independent outlook, he even sheds new light in interpreting the BS and BhG texts.810

Regarding the exegesis of Advaita doctrine, MS was very much influenced by Maṇḍana Miśra, Sureśvarācārya,811 Prakāśātmayati,812 Vācaspati Miśra813 and Sarvajñātmamuni.814 While dealing with the dialectical tasks in the AdS and AdRR, which defended Advaita doctrine against the criticisms of the dualists, MS was also influenced by Śrīharṣa (12th century CE), Ānandabodha (12th century CE) and Citsukha (13th century CE).815

While harmonizing and making use of the views of his predecessors, MS adopts an independent stance in refuting the views of dualists such as the Naiyāyikas and Mādhva Vaiṣṇavites, who had put forward new arguments for rejecting the doctrine of Advaita Vedānta. In order to determine the role that MS plays in the history of the development of Advaita Vedānta philosophy, we have looked not only at his approach to devotion, but also his views on avidyā, on the basis of which, MS could respond to both the dualist Vaiṣṇavas and realist Naiyāyikas posing a grave threat to the foundation of Advaita Vedānta (see chapters

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1.2, 5.2.2.1-5.2.2.3, 5.3 etc.). To many Indian philosophers, Śaṃkara’s treatment of illusoriness or falsity, that is the hallmark of *avidyā*, appeared to be problematic. For the Advaitins, *avidyā/māyā/ajñāna* is without a beginning and is opposed to cognition of its object (i.e. it is destructible by cognition of its object), though positive in nature in the sense that it is not merely the absence of cognition (*jñānābhāva*) [anādi- bhavarūpatve sati jñānanivartyā],

while the world, also the product of *avidyā*, tends to be illusory. This is the foremost objection raised by the opponents against the followers of the Advaita Vedānta school. Although an elaborate discussion of this issue is not possible here, it should be noted that even though Advaita philosophers like Maṇḍana Miśra and SurevŚvarācārya, who were contemporaries of Śaṃkara, tried to defend the concepts of *mithyātva* and *avidyā* by refuting their opponents’ views, with the advent of Udayanācārya, the eminent Naiyāyika, a fresh attack against the Advaita Vedāntins was launched by applying logical arguments against the notions of *avidyā* and *mithyātva*. While the later Advaita writers like Śrīharṣa, Ānandabodha and Citsukha answered the objections of the Naiyāyikas by adopting the tools of logical argumentation developed by the Naiyāyikas themselves, the tenets of Advaita Vedānta could not be established beyond dispute (see chapters 1.2, 1.4 etc.).

With the advent of Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya, who revived the method of applying syllogistic reasoning and also the method of finding faults in defective reasoning with the help of technical terms for framing exact formulations of definition, a new era began in the history of the development of Nyāya philosophy, which is known as the era of neo-logic (Navya-nyāya). The Mādhva Vedāntins,

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817 See chapter 1.3 for the discussion of their chronology.
who were staunch supporters of dualism, and were thus arch-enemies of the Advaita Vedāntins, adopted the techniques of Navya-nyāya effectively, while not accepting all of Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya’s doctrines. Their arguments against Advaita doctrines became more technical with the adoption of such techniques, and works like the Nyāyasudhā of Jaya Tīrtha and the Nyāyāmṛta of Vyāsa Tīrtha became the biggest challenges for the Advaita Vedāntins.

To MS goes the credit for answering the subtle objections and arguments found in such works, by exhibiting equal or greater skill in dialectics in his AdS. Followers of Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya, such as Śaṃkara Miśra, had independently criticized the Advaita Vedānta in works like the Bhedaratna and MS responded to these in his AdRR. One of MS’s greatest achievements is that he was able to defend the Advaita Vedānta against the onslaught of such formidable opponents by utilising the techniques of refutations employed by those very opponents against the Advaitins.818

The brief description that we have given of each of MS’s available works and their references throughout the dissertation (see chapters 1.2, 5.2.2.1-5.2.2.3, 5.3 etc.) prove that all of his works highlight his leaning towards devotion, be it the AdS or AdRR or the SB, dealing with the fundamental tenets of Advaita Vedānta, or the BhR or MSṬ or BPPŚV or the HLV that primarily expound the nature of devotion. The same is the case with the GD. Thus, MS does not show any major shift in thinking in any of his works, excepting in one of his early works on devotion, called the BhR, where he regards bhakti as the supreme end of human life (parama-puruṣārtha).

818 For a detailed discussion of it, see Gupta 2006: pp. 2-3 and Bhattacharya 1986: Preface and the following chapters therein.
His definition of bhakti does not stem from the Pāñcarātra school either. In his ĪPP, MS refers to the names of Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva in the sense of virāṭa, hiranyagarbha, īśvara and sākṣī (sarva-sākṣī-paramānanda-ghanā) respectively. No Bhāgavata school refers to them using these appellations, while the Pāñcarātras name them ahamkara, manas, jīva and īśvara respectively. This indicates that MS, in spite of being a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, was not a follower of the Pāñcarātra school, which was subjected to severe criticism by Śaṅkara himself in his BSB. While the BP had influenced the philosophical outlook of MS on devotion, his definition of bhakti differs significantly from those given by the exponents of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, who also held the BP in high esteem.

To sum up, it can be said that for MS, Advaita Vedānta was the foundation on which he erected his philosophical and devotional edifice. While expressing his unconditional devotion to the Lord, he never adopted the manner in which other dualist Vedāntins view it, as is evident from his robust criticism of the followers of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta of Rāmānuja (GD on BhG 4.6 etc.) and those of Dvaita Vedānta of Madhva (GD on BhG 18.21 etc.), and also the criticism of other Indian philosophical schools whenever their positions were found to be incompatible with his own non-dualistic position. His treatment of bhakti is not similar to the treatment of bhakti by other dualist schools, though, as we have mentioned (see chapters 5.2.2.2-5.2.2.3), Rāmānuja’s treatment of bhakti in terms of bhakti-yoga or upāsanā may have had some influence on MS’s own scheme. While the BP exerted

819 Brahmasūtra 2000: BSB on BS 2.2.42-2.2.45, pp. 532-5.
821 As we have noted earlier, in his SB too, MS criticizes Mādhva Vaiṣṇavas (See Siddhāntabindu 1986: p. 145).
immense influence on the theological speculations of MS, he developed his Vaiṣṇava theology in consonance with his adherence to Śaṃkara’s non-dualistic philosophy, thereby adopting some of the Vaiṣṇava views that were contemporary with MS, i.e. the views of Caitanya prevalent in Bengal, where Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva is regarded as the supreme reality.

MS’s treatment of bhakti as the modification of the mind in which the Lord is reflected, and which accordingly assumes his form (bhagavadākāra), is merely theoretical. As both Śaṃkara and MS often characterise bhakti as knowledge (jñāna) or bliss (ānanda) in their respective commentaries on the BhG, they view it as the very nature of brahman. Our discussion in the chapters dealing with the philosophical doctrines of the BhG, as explained in the GD, has substantiated, with the help of the arguments and citations from relevant textual sources, that there is enough room for bhakti in the tenets of Advaita.

According to some scholars, the socio-cultural environment of the time of MS was suitable for devotional worship of saguṇa-brahman, and this view deserves serious consideration. While the situation during the time of Śaṃkara and his immediate followers, such as Padmapāda, Sureśvara etc., was perhaps conducive to intellectually dealing with nirguṇa brahman, Śaṃkara never denied the utility of devotion for ultimately attaining the realisation of nirguṇa brahman. Moreover, the criticism against Advaita that it cannot consistently talk about bhakti can be shown to be misplaced, if one remembers that for the Advaita Vedānta school, all these concepts of yoga, jñāna, mokṣa and bhakti, involving the notion of duality and differentiation, are to be viewed as fully operative in the realm of vyāvahārika. In

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822 Gupta 2006: pp. 4-5.
the pāramārthika realm, there does not exist any duality or differentiation, but this does not amount to a denial of the roles of bhakti, upāsanā and dhyāna in the path to liberation.

Thus, the views of modern scholars such as Gupta, Nelson and Marcaurelle, who have questioned the plausibility of the attempt by MS for bringing devotion and yoga within the parameters of Advaita Vedānta, needs to be reconsidered, and we have made a humble attempt at doing the same in this dissertation (see chapters 2.4.3, 5.2.1, 5.2.2.2-5.2.2.3). The possibility that MS was successful to a large extent in such an attempt has been examined afresh here. The general perception that, though MS could not accord to bhakti the importance that a dualist could do, his attempt in this regard outshines the attempt by any other Advaitin, as is also evident from his influence on the works of his own disciples and commentators like Brahmānanda Sarasvatī and Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha. Despite being an ardent follower of the Advaita Vedānta, the clear cut assertions of these two commentators that śuddha/prema/nirguṇa-bhakti is similar to jñānamiśra-bhakti, and that there is no inconsistency in accepting bhakti as the paramapurusārtha (as stated by Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha) and that nirguṇa-bhakti is the best means of attaining Lord Viṣṇu (as held Brahmānanda Sarasvatī), show their agreement with MS on such issues (see chapter 5.2.2.2). As a modern scholar points out, ‘The school of Madhusūdana can better be called that of a monistic theism.’ Herein lies the justification for Rudolf Otto’s observation quoted above.

Finally, we conclude this thesis with the statement that an inclination to the Advaita Vedānta school is compatible with devotion, though it may not be of the

823 Nair 1990: p. 223.
same flavour as that of the dualist schools. The attitude of MS in this regard is best supported by an ancient text, the *Avadhūtagītā*, which states that even in order to have some leaning towards non-dualism, one needs the grace of God (*īśvarānugrahādeva puṃsāmadvaitavāsanā*)\(^{824}\) -- a fact that finds sufficient support in the *BP* as well, where in its various places (e.g. *BP* 1.7.10, 3.29.13 etc.)\(^{825}\) it is said that devotion is spontaneous even after obtaining liberation and at times, it appears to be superior to obtaining liberation to the devotees (i.e. a view that is echoed by MS in his *BhR* in no uncertain terms).

We do hope that this study, which we have put together with due diligence and care, will engender some modifications in the general view that the Advaita Vedānta is totally antagonistic to devotion to a personal God. MS’s writings on *bhakti* and his acceptance of Lord Kṛṣṇa as nothing but the Advaitic *nirguṇa brahman* put a question mark not only on the position of MS as a staunch follower of Śaṅkara’s non-dual philosophy, but also on the entire Advaitic tradition. It is our sincere hope that a careful study of this dissertation and the works of MS in particular (along with the source material for understanding the principal tenets of Advaita school) will make the discerning readers accept the fact that the path of devotion has been an important component of the Advaita system of philosophy, which was forcefully stated and established by MS -- a fact that reinforces his influence upon the religio-philosophical views and the intellectual discourse and debates prevalent in India.

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\(^{825}\) *Bhāgavata* (2064 Vikrama Saṃvad): pp. 31, 137.
List of Abbreviations

**Texts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AdRR</td>
<td>Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AdS</td>
<td>Advaitasiddhi of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</td>
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<tr>
<td>ĀM</td>
<td>Ānandamandākinī of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>Aitareya Upaniṣad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BhG</td>
<td>Bhagavadgītā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP</td>
<td>Bhāgavata Purāṇa</td>
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<td>Bhāgavatapurāṇādyaślokatrayavyākhyā of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</td>
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<td>Bhāgavatapurāṇaprathamaślokatavyākhyā of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</td>
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<td>BS</td>
<td>Brahmaṣūtra of Bādarāyaṇa</td>
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<td>BU</td>
<td>Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</td>
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<tr>
<td>BrVā</td>
<td>Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya Vārtika of Sureśvara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BrVāSB</td>
<td>Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya Vārtika, Sambandha Bhāṣya</td>
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<td>CU</td>
<td>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</td>
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<td>GTL</td>
<td>Gūḍhārthatattvāloka of Baccā Jhā</td>
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<td>Īśvarapratipattiprakāśa of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</td>
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<td>MAUK</td>
<td>Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad KĀrikā</td>
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<td>MBh</td>
<td>Mahābhārata</td>
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<td>MU</td>
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<td>Nāradabhaktisūtra</td>
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<td>Saṃkṣepaśārīrakasārasaṃgraha of Madhusūdana Saravatī</td>
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<td>Taittirīya Upaniṣad</td>
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<td>TS</td>
<td>Tarkaśāmgraha with the Dīpikā of Annapūrṇa</td>
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<td>Upadeśasāhasrī of Śaṃkara</td>
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<td>Vivaraṇaprameyasaṃgraha of Vidyāraṇya</td>
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<td>Viṣṇusahasranāma</td>
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<td>VuP</td>
<td>Viṣṇu Purāṇa</td>
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<td>Yogavāsiṣṭhayāmaṇyaṇa of Vālmiki</td>
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<tr>
<td>YS</td>
<td>Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali</td>
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‘B’ added to the abbreviation of any text (as BS for Brahmasūtra) indicates the commentary of Śaṃkara on that text. Thus, BSB stands for the commentary of Śaṃkara on the Brahmasūtra.
### Journals

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<tr>
<td>NIA</td>
<td>New Indian Antiquary (IA series 1938 ff.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PB    Prabuddha Bharata
PEW   Philosophy East and West
PG    Pathway to God
PO    Poona Orientalist
PTOC  Proceedings and Transactions of Oriental Conference
PTAIOC Proceedings and Transactions of All India Oriental Conference
QJMS  Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society
RT    Religious Traditions (MacGill University and University of Sydney)
SAHC  South Asian History and Culture
VK    Vedanta Kesari
VŚ    Voice of Śaṅkara
WZKSO Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Südostasiens
ZDMG  Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft
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Appendices

Appendix-I

A brief note on the historical background, formation, and teaching of the

Bhagavadgītā

The Vedānta philosophy is basically based on three canonical texts (prasthāṇa-trayī). ‘prasthitā’ means to get established in the knowledge of reality, and that by which it is accomplished is called prasthāṇa. These three prasthāṇa-s are (i) the Brahmāsūtra-s by Bādarāyaṇa, a secondary text based on the Vedas, which is called nyāya-prasthāṇa or tarka-prasthāṇa, as it conveys the teaching of Vedānta in an argumentative way, (ii) the Upaniṣads, which are called the śruticprasthāṇa, since they are part of the Vedas, which are śruti (heard and revealed), and (iii) the Bhagavadgītā, which is regarded as the smṛticprasthāṇa (the text which is remembered), because it is a part of the Mahābhārata (400 BCE - 400 CE), which is a remembered text (smṛti).

The full name of the Gītā is ‘Śrīmadbhagavadgītā’ or ‘Bhagavadgītā’. The etymological derivation of ‘Bhagavadgītā’ is ‘bhagavat’ (divine or venerated) + ‘gītā’ (a name given to certain sacred compositions, often in a dialogical manner in versified form for the exposition of a particular philosophical or theosophical doctrine; e.g. Śivagītā, Rāmagītā etc.). On the other hand, ‘gītā’ is a feminine form of ‘gītam’ (song-neutral)

826 Apte 1965: p. 405.
In the course of his discussion about the Gītā literature in relation to its goal ‘brahmavidyā’, Umesh Chandra Bhattacharjee finds several texts both in the Mahābhārata and the Purānic literature, which like the Bhagavadgītā, bear the general suffix ‘gītā’, have similarity in dialogical structure, and are select portions of sacred texts either propagating worship of sectarian deities or intending to impart ‘brahmavidyā’, make use of the Upaniṣads directly or indirectly, and are also modelled upon the text Gītā in terms of their literary composition. Bhattacharjee mentions of the following as consisting of the Mahābhārata such as the Udyogītā, Vāmadevagītā, Ṩṣabhaṣagītā, Śampākaṣagītā, Mankigītā, Bodhyagītā, Vicakhnugītā, Hārītagītā, Vṛtragītā, Parāśaragītā, Haṃsagītā, Anugītā, and Brāhmaṇagītā. Another set of Gītās, according to him, is found in different Purānic literature. These are the Īśvaragītā (the Kūrmapurāṇa), Vyāṣagītā (the Kūrmapurāṇa), Rāmagītā, Ganeśagītā (the Ganesapurāṇa), Śivagītā, Devigītā (the Devīhāgavata), Kapilagītā (the Bhāgavatapūrāṇa), Āstāvakragītā, Avadhūtaṣagītā* (said to
equivalent to ‘giti’ (song-feminine) and means something that is sung,\textsuperscript{827} or more precisely, recited or taught. It qualifies the term ‘upaniṣad’ which is feminine in gender.

So, it is called the Bhagavadgītā Upaniṣad.\textsuperscript{828} And, thus it means ‘the song sung by the divine’, i.e. in the present context ‘the song sung by Lord Kṛṣṇa, the highest God or an incarnation of the highest God’. It is to be noted that apart from Lord Kṛṣṇa, there are three other speakers in the text, viz. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Sañjaya and Arjuna, it is considered to be the speech of the Lord, as the major part of it is uttered by him only.\textsuperscript{829}

It appears as a dialogue (\textit{saṁvāda}) between Arjuna and Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Bhīṣmaparva of the Mahābhārata covering eighteen chapters\textsuperscript{830} (twenty three to forty)

have been authored by Dattātreya, Avadhūtagītā (the Bhāgavata-purāṇa), Śūryagītā, Yamagītā (the Viṣṇupurāṇa), Yama-gītā (the Nṛsīṁhapurāṇa), Yama-gītā (the Agni-purāṇa), Hamsagītā (the Bhāgavatapurāṇa), Pāṇḍavagītā, Brahma-gītā (the Skandapurāṇa), Bhrahmagītā (the Yogavāsiṣṭha), Śiddhāntagītā (the Yogavāsiṣṭha); and Pīṭhagītā, Āgastya-gītā, Rūdragītā (all three in the Varāhāpurāṇa) [Bhattacharjee 1926: pp. 537-46, 761-71]. *Considered to be anterior to the BhG (cf. Sitaramiah 1965: p. 241).

Besides the Gītā-s given by Bhattacharjee, V. Raghavan in his search for greater Gītā literature finds more of them in different purānic and philosophical literature. These are: the Arjunagītā, Aśmakagītā, Ātmadarśanagītā, Uttaragītā (the Mahābhārata), Uddhavagītā (the Bhāgavata), R̄hugītā, Aila-gītā (the Bhāgavata), Omkāragītā, Kapilagītā (the Padmapurāṇa), Drṣṭūntasārakapilagītā, Śīdhāntasārakapilagītā (the Padmapurāṇa), Karmagītā, Kāvaśeyagītā (the Brahma-purāṇa ?), Kаśīgītā (the Brahma-vaiwartapurāṇa), Kaulagītā, Garbhagītā (the Viṣṇupūrāṇa), Garugītā (the Viśvasāraṇa, Garugītā (the Skandapurāṇa), Goraṇḍaṅgītā, Dattagoraṅgītā, Janaṅgītā, Jīvaṅgītā,* (ascrbed to Dattātreya), Jhāṇagītā, Tattvagītā, Tattvasāragītā, Tulasīgītā, Devi-gītā (the Kārmāpurāṇa), Dhiṣagītā, Nāradagītā, Pīṭhagītā (the Padmapurāṇa?), Prthivigītā, Pramāvagītā or Prapannagītā, Bodhānandagītā, the Bhavānīśamkaraṅgītā (the Brahma-vaiwartapurāṇa), Bhikṣugītā (the Bhāgavata), Bhṛgugītā, Mṛtyuṅjaya-gītā, Yamagītā (the Skandapurāṇa), the Yājñavalkyagītā, Yogagītā, Rāgigītā, Rāga-gītā, Rudragītā (the Bhāgavata), Rudragītā (the Bṛhtrahmasamhitā), Laghugītā, Vasiṣṭhasāgītā (the Yogavāsiṣṭha), Viratagītā, Vedāntagītā, Vaiśṇavagītā, Śaṁkaraṅgītā (the Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa), Śaṁtigītā, Śivarāmaṅgītā, Śiva śamkaraṅgītā, Śivottaragītā (the Harivammapurāṇa), Śivavargītā, Śiṣṭagītā, Śrutigītā (the Bhāgavata), Sadāṅgītā, Sadāśivagītā, Sanatkumāragītā, Śiddhāntagītā (the Laghumārāyaṇaparipāna), Sudarṣanagītā (the Bṛhatrāmasamhitā), Śūkṣmagnītā, Śāṅgagītā (the Sūtāsamhitā), Śrīvyagītā, Śaṅyagītā (the Padmapurāṇa), Hamsagītā (the Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa); and Veṇugītā, Gopiṣputragītā, Gopiṅkagītā, Bhāmarshaṅgītā (all four in the Bhāgavata) [Raghavan 1938: pp. 86-122]. *Considered to be anterior to the BhG (cf. Sitaramiah 1965: p. 241).

\textsuperscript{827} In the strictest sense of the term the book is not meant for singing only. It also suggests to be read as is found in BhG 18.70.

\textsuperscript{828} Belvakkark 1925: p. 109.

The Gītā bears ample influence of the Upaniṣads. Even some of its verses are similar to those of the Upaniṣads (For detailed references, see Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II, p. 551, Sastrigal 1990).

\textsuperscript{829} Apte 1983: p. 1.

\textsuperscript{830} Though we find the commentators often naming the chapters differently in colophons, we are mentioning them according to Sripad Krishna Belvarkar; 1. arjunaviśādayoga (‘yoga’ added, 47 verses), 2.
and running to seven hundred verses both in anuṣṭubh831 (generally of thirty two syllables) and trṣṭubh (of forty four syllables usually) metre of that section (parvan). The


Despite the fact that we are not sure whether the authors always write these colophons, or they are written by the scribes of manuscripts or by the editors, we are mentioning below some variations in the naming of the chapters by three major earlier commentators, viz. Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, and our author Madhusūdana.

Śaṁkara- BhG 2 ‘śaṁkhyayoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 2000); BhG 3 ‘karmapaśramsāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999); BhG 4 ‘jñānavījñānayoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999), ‘brahmayajñapaśramsāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 2000); BhG 5 ‘saṁnyāsāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999), ‘prakṛtigarbha’ (Bhagavadgītā 2000); BhG 6 ‘ātmasamnyāsāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999), BhG 7 ‘jñānavījñānayoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999); BhG 8 ‘brahmākṣarānirdeśa’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999); BhG 11 ‘viśvarūpadarśanam’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999); BhG 12 ‘bhaktiyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999); BhG 13 ‘prakṛtigarbha’ (Bhagavadgītā 2000); BhG 14 ‘guṇatrayavicīhārāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999); BhG 17 ‘śraddhātrayavicīhārāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 2000); BhG 18 ‘mokṣasamnyāsāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999).

Rāmānuja- BhG 2 ‘śaṁkhyayoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 2000); BhG 3 ‘karmayoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 2000); BhG 5 ‘saṁnyāsāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 2000).

Madhva- no special name is found.

Madhusūdana- BhG 2 ‘arṣavālīrthaśūtitanam’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999); BhG 3 ‘karmayoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1912), ‘jñānavījñānayoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999); BhG 4 ‘jñānavījñānayoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999), ‘brahmākṣarānirdeśa’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001); BhG 5 ‘prakṛtigarbha’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001); BhG 12 ‘ātmasamnyāsāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999), ‘bhaktiyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001); BhG 7 ‘adhiyāmāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001); BhG 8 ‘adyānayoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1912), ‘ātmasamnyāsāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999), ‘adhikāribhedaśaṁkhyayapratipādyatattvabrahmanirupanam’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999), ‘adhikāribhedaśaṁkhyayapratipādyatattvabrahmanirupanam’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001); BhG 10 ‘ātmasamnyāsāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001), ‘bhaktiyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999), ‘adhikāribhedaśaṁkhyayapratipādyatattvabrahmanirupanam’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001); BhG 9 ‘adhikāribhedaśaṁkhyayapratipādyatattvabrahmanirupanam’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001); BhG 12 ‘ātmasamnyāsāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999), ‘adhikāribhedaśaṁkhyayapratipādyatattvabrahmanirupanam’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001); BhG 11 ‘ātmasamnyāsāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001), ‘bhaktiyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999), ‘adhikāribhedaśaṁkhyayapratipādyatattvabrahmanirupanam’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001); BhG 13 ‘prakṛtigarbha’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001); BhG 14 ‘guṇatrayavicīhārāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 1999), ‘prakṛtigarbha’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001); BhG 17 ‘śraddhātrayavicīhārāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001); BhG 18 ‘mokṣasamnyāsāyoga’ (Bhagavadgītā 2001).

831 Arvind Sharma, in the course of a detailed discussion as to why the Mahābhārata is basically written in anuṣṭubh metre, finds that in spite of its common usage in the post-Vedic literature, this metre is hardly characterised in the entire Vedas. In order to account for it, Sharma offers both the possible modern-critical and traditional justifications. Modern scholars think that the śūta-s (bards— a special caste having affinity with the warrior class) found this metre comfortable for recitation and oral composition. The traditional scriptural references substantiate that anuṣṭubh metre had a close association with the śūdra-s

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text starts there with the straightforward announcement by the bard Sañjaya that Bhīṣma, the supreme commander of the Kauravas, has fallen at the battle being fought between two rival family groups --- the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas (MBh 6.14.3). But the usual form of the available Gītā begins with a dialogue between Sañjaya and Dhr̥tarāṣṭra, where the latter enquired of the former about the happenings of the war. In fact, the entire Gītā is the narration of Sañjaya to Dhr̥tarāṣṭra (MBh 6.23.1).832 Before the great warriors of both sides were about to engage in war, they were making their presence felt by blowing conch-shells and showing their vigour and expertise. After seeing the relatives and friends on the opposite side, Arjuna (the hero of the Pāṇḍavas) became engulfed in sorrow and delusion and expressed his unwillingness to engage in war.833 Kṛṣṇa, the supreme Lord, who played the role of charioteer of Arjuna, advised him to discharge his own social duty (svadharma), i.e. to engage in the battle, the duty of the warrior class Arjuna was born in. Having imparted to him the true knowledge of the self in a manner of conversation, the Lord provoked him to fight in view of winning over the injustice the opponent (i.e. the Kauravas) symbolised.834

One of the principal teachings of the Bhagavadgītā is that it does not ask the seekers to abstain from action, but to perform it towards good for all without having a desire for its fruit (niskāma-karma). It considers Lord Kṛṣṇa as the supreme puruṣa835 to whom the seekers are asked to surrender completely with utmost devotion. Thus,

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832 Mahābhārata 1947.
833 T. M. P. Mahadevan rightly observed that the crisis Arjuna found is a common human state of affairs. It is the Lord who can rescue the human kind from it (Mahadevan 1976: p. 25).
834 Some scholars like Heinrich Zimmer etc. find the background of the Gītā as a war between two rival groups a paradox of its teaching. Zimmer thinks that a combination of thought held by the aboriginal Indians and the Aryan Vedic invaders materialised in the text (Zimmer 1951: p. 378).
throughout the text, the Lord taught Arjuna the means of attaining liberation (mokṣa), the supreme goal of human kind, among whom the means of devotion is pre-eminent.

However, though the Gītā is held in high esteem among the academics and religious followers, there is a lot of controversy regarding its date, authorship, textual formation, philosophy, relation to the Mahābhārata, and the ultimate message it conveys. Several volumes have been written on these points both by the occidental and oriental scholars for the last couple of centuries, and we will just mention them in order to get a general outlook of the text.

There are divergent views regarding the period when the text was originally composed. Among those who tried to date the text in an authentic manner, K. T. Telang deserves special mention. After a prolonged argumentation, Telang places it before the Āpastamba’s Dharmasūtra and in the third century BCE. As Bühler mentions Āpastamba’s Dharmasūtra falling between the fourth and fifth centuries BCE, we can conclude that the Gītā must belong at least to the fifth century BCE. On the basis of internal evidences in the text, W. Douglas P. Hill places it in the 2nd century BCE. Modern interpreters like Bal Gangadhar Tilak place it the 3rd century BCE. S. N. Dasgupta holds that some of the established views that the Gītā did not know the accepted doctrines of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the conception to identify Vāsudeva with Nārāyaṇa did not rise at the time of its composition, and the non-mention of the doctrine of personified forms (vyūha-s) in the text substantiate its origin in the pre-Buddhistic time. S. K. Belvalkar, in agreement with Telang, thinks that the Gītā was composed in

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837 Telang 1908: pp. 30 and 34.
839 Hill 1928: p. 18.
840 See Patil 1959: p. 66.
the interval between the end of the Upaniṣadic period and the commencement of Buddhism. Thus it does not have the slightest allusion to Buddhism. On the other hand, K. N. Upadhyaya, though not finding any explicit mention of Buddhism in the Gītā, concludes with the support of early Buddhist texts such as the Dhammapada and the Nikāya-s that the Gītā bears ample indications of the influence of Buddhism, and that it also made use of Buddhist elements which suit its scheme. Going farther than Upadhyaya, T. G. Mainkar thinks that both the Brahmaśūtra-s and the Bhagavadgītā are the product of post-Buddhist period, and the Gītā represents an age, when the concept of saṃnyāsa was being mistaken by the then Upaniṣadic, Sāṃkhya and Buddhist schools. Thus Mainkar holds that the Gītā borrowed clue from the rebellious Buddhism to modify the orthodox Hinduism. B. G. Tilak, a famous modern commentator on the Gītā, also finds parallelism between the Bhagavadgītā and the Pāli Buddhist works. Having found the influence of early Upaniṣads with the probable exception of the Maitrī and the early Buddhism in the Gītā, R. C. Zaehner dates it between the fifth and second centuries BCE. Dasgupta admits its high antiquity, keeping the view that the language of the text largely bears un-Pāṇinean (ca. 400 BCE) style. Richard Garbe holds that the genuine Gītā was composed at the beginning of the second century BCE and its revision took place later in the second century CE. The main argument he furnishes in support of his view is that Patañjali, the author of the Yogasūtra-s, who, according to him, also composed the Mahābhāṣya, seems to have been influenced by the technical original

842 Belvalkar also mentions the term ‘nirvāṇa’ as referred to in the Gītā to be a pre-Buddhistic technical term of ‘kāla’ philosophy (Belvalkar 1962: p. 156).
sense of ‘yoga’ in the Gītā as ‘self-surrender’, ‘devotion’ etc. S. N. Dasgupta, having noticed the use of ‘yoga’ in the Gītā in multiple senses, also concludes that the author of the Gītā was not aware of the intent of ‘yoga’, i.e. the cessation of mental modifications (cittavṛtticnirodha), as held by Patañjali. However, more recent attempts tend to bring its chronology down in time. J. L. Brockington has made a strong argument to place the text in the first century CE. Thus, no unanimous view can be found with respect to its time.

Like the controversial nature of its date, the authorship of the text is also debatable. Though the traditional notion to ascribe authorship to Vyāsa is well known, discrepancies in textual formation give rise to theories about its multiple authorships. On the basis of previous authoritative references like the Vedas, Sāmkhya-Yogas etc. to the text, P. C. Divanji concludes that, it is Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana Vedavyāsa who composed the Gītā. On the other hand, Gajanan Shripat Khair, after an extensive search for the conflicting factors in the text, assigns triple authorship to it, which was again questioned by Robert N. Minor. Minor thinks that like his predecessors such as Garbe, Otto etc., Khair also lacks objectivity.

The textual formulation of the Gītā is also a matter of controversy. That it is not a part of the original Mahābhārata, and is rather an interpolation is held by many scholars like W. von Humboldt, E. W. Hopkins, Richard Garbe etc. Among different

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847 Utgikar 1918: p. 33.
849 Brockington 1998.
850 Divanji1946: 299-309.
851 Khair 1969.
852 Khair 1969.
853 R. Motor Smith, however, not being satisfied with Khair’s approach, applies an elaborate statistical analysis of the text to find out its multiple authorships (Smith 1968: pp. 39-46).
854 Khair 1982: pp. 29-42.
855 ‘The interpolations and additions can with great probability be conjectured even if one be not in the position to single them out’ (Gareett 1846: p. 53).
recensions of the *Mahābhārata*, of which the *Bhagavadgītā* is a part, the Kashmiri recension deserves special mention. F. Otto Schrader in his *The Kashmir Recension of the Bhagavadgītā*\(^{856}\) claims that there are extra stanzas unknown to the common vulgate text of the *Gītā*.\(^{857}\) S. K. Belvalkar, however, after a thorough study of Schrader with reference to the vulgate text, proclaims all these variations to be of secondary nature, for they only justify some grammatical inaccuracies in the text. Belvalkar concludes that Schrader’s contention is based on nothing but the variations of individual manuscripts, and the Kashmiri recension can no way be prior to the known vulgate text of Śaṃkara, which is still the oldest and most reliable version of the *Gītā*.\(^{858}\) As a review of Schrader’s Kashmiri version of the *Gītā*, Franklin Edgerton declares it a sheer failure in formulating the authentic version of the *Gītā*. The vulgate text of the *Gītā*, according to Edgerton, carries more originality due to its satisfactory approach, as compared to the Kashmiri version of the *Mahābhārata*.\(^{859}\) Next to the Kashmiri recension, another old witness which could probably challenge the authenticity of vulgate text is the old Javanese version of the *Mahābhārata*, which cites only eighty and three/four stanzas of the *Gītā* (fifty six in the old Javanese paraphrase), and some extra verses as belonging to

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854 ‘Now this epic has had inserted into it a little poem which in origin is evidently a late Upaniṣad. It is nevertheless one of the earliest of the poems set in the frame of the epic. But it is by no means a poem in its original form. Both the beginning and the end are later additions’ (Hopkins 1901: p. 145).

855 ‘This Divine Song (or Song of the Blessed One) is at present a Krishnaite version of an older Vishnuit e poem, and this in turn was at first an unsectarian work, perhaps a late Upanishad’ (Hopkins 1895: p. 389).

856 Schrader 1930.

857 ‘F. Otto Schrader…puts forth the view that these Kashmirian sources, with their “fourteen additional stanzas and four half-stanzas unknown to the Vulgate, as well as the 282 exclusively Kashmirian *varietae lectiones*”, preserve a more authentic, and even an intrinsically superior text of the BG, which, he claims, was pre-Śaṃkara’ (quoted in *Bhagavadgītā* 1968: Editorial note, p. XVI).

858 Belvalkar 1939: pp. 211-51.

859 Edgerton 1932: p. 75.

In reply to Edgerton’s criticism Schrader shows that the vulgate text of the *Gītā* cannot be an authentic version of the Kashmirian *Mahabharata*. In support of his view, Schrader quotes the *Bhāratamañjarī*, a metrical paraphrase of the *Mahābhārata* by Kṣemarāja, which differs from the known vulgate version. Thus Schrader concludes that Kṣemarāja, while explaining the essence of the *Mahābhārata*, followed the Kashmirian version of the *Gītā*, and not the vulgate text (Schrader 1935: p. 147).
the text. However, Belvalkar, after critically examining this version, opines that it is not of much help in formulating the current text of the Gītā.\textsuperscript{860}

However, Dasgupta entertains the possibility that the text, being a work of the Bhāgavata school, was composed before the Mahābhārata in accordance with the Bhārata tale, on which the present Mahabhārata is said to be based, and during one of its later revision, the text of the Gītā was inserted therein.\textsuperscript{861} K. T. Telang too does not reject the possibility of such an insertion.\textsuperscript{862} On the other hand, scholars like G. A. Feuerstein etc. are of the opinion that to view the text of the Gītā as independent to the Mahabhārata is a fallacious approach.\textsuperscript{863} Feuerstein argues that ample references of the text are scattered throughout the epic. Moreover, its usage of language, expressions and thought are similar to those of the Epic Mahābhārata.

The attempt at maintaining the textual purity of the Gītā against all interpolations\textsuperscript{864} can be evidenced in the epic text Mahābhārata itself. In the forty third chapter of the Bhīṣmaparva, it has been said that there are seven hundred forty five verses in the Gītā of which Keśava or Lord Kṛṣṇa uttered six hundred and twenty verses, Arjuna fifty seven, Sañjaya sixty seven, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra one respectively.\textsuperscript{865} As the Gītā containing of seven hundred verses (Dhṛtarāṣṭra one, Sañjaya forty one, Arjuna eighty four, Lord Kṛṣṇa five hundred and seventy four) is written both in anuṣṭubh and triṣṭubh metre, Pandit R. M. Shastri holds that the evaluation of triṣṭubh verses in terms of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[862] Telang 1908: pp. 5-6.
\item[863] ‘… to isolate the Gītā and treat it as a distinct textual entity, independent of the main body of the epic, is a fallacious undertaking’ (Feuerstein 1974: p. 57).
\item[864] J. A. B. van Buitenen of course finds the Kashmiri transmission closer to the original version of the Mahābhārata, though it is difficult to find out the authentic version of the revised epic (Buitenen 1965: p. 109).
\end{footnotes}
**anuṣṭubh** verses leads us nearer to seven hundred and forty five verses and thus resolves the controversy.\(^{866}\) Recently, Sunil Kumar Bhattacharya has shed a new light on this age-old problem concerning the formation and historical background of the *Bhagavadgītā*, and finds it appropriate that the original *Bhagavadgītā* has extra stanzas, that is, it has seven hundred forty five verses in eighteen chapters compared to the commonly available version of the *Bhagavadgītā* that has seven hundred verses in eighteen chapters.\(^{867}\)

Though the *Bhagavadgītā* is considered to be one of the foundational sources of Hindu philosophy, it can not be treated as a system of philosophy proper due to its lack of tidy structure. It is more an ethico-religious text than a philosophical one.\(^{868}\) In order to show its popularity as a religio-philosophical poem, William von Humboldt says; ‘the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue’.\(^{869}\) However, the content of the text gives the fullest expression of the

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\(^{866}\) Shastri 1936: pp. 67-82.

As a review of Shastri’s stand regarding the computation of the *Gītā* text, S. N. Tadpatrikar finds him misleading and expresses his acceptance of the extra verses (Tadpatrikar 1937: pp. 357-60).

Though the Poona critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*, thinking them as later insertions, does not place these five and half verses which indicate seven hundred and forty five verses of the text at the beginning of chapter forty three of the *Bhīṣmaparva* (*Bhagavadgītā* 1968: p. 77), we find them mentioned by Nilakaṇṭha, the famous commentator of the *Mahābhārata*, that these verses are not cited in the *gauḍa* version (cited by Pandit R. M. Shastri, Shastri 1936: p. 67). However, they are available in many other editions like Dutt etc. (Dutt 2006: p. 115).

\(^{867}\) Bhattacharya 2014.


\(^{869}\) Quoted in Radhakrishnan 1999: p. 519.

V. K. Rajwade, arguing against the point that it is one of the best philosophical poems of the world, quotes the authorities of poetics from both Sanskrit tradition and the European writers, and shows as to how the *Gītā* does not follow either of them violating grammatical norms and lacking poetical style (Rajwade 1917: pp. 325-38). P. K. Gode having shown the comparisons or similes in the verses of the text opines that those comparisons are far from giving any literary creative pleasure but the introspection of the eternal problems the human kind faces (Gode 1920-21: pp. 135-42). On the other hand, as a review of Rajwade’s contention B. N. Krishnamurti Sarma rejects him outright with the support of old *Gītā* commentators who have dealt the verses in minute detail. He says that the *Bhagavadgītā*, being a part of the great epic *Mahābhārata*, precedes all known grammatical rules, and possesses epical qualities of its own. Sarma also holds that no comparison with European poetics can be made with it as both of them are rooted in different backgrounds (Sarma 1930: pp. 284-99).
monotheistic idea of the *Ṛgveda* and the Upaniṣads, which is found in its different verses.\(^{870}\) Despite different views regarding the central teaching of the *Gītā*, Ratna Shivaram holds that there are two basic principles -- metaphysical and ethical, dealing with what God is, and what man should do respectively, run throughout the text.\(^{871}\) C. Kunhan Raja, having found out the implication of *karma* held by the Mīmāṃsākas in the *Gītā* view of *karma*, thinks that the latter reflects the former in doctrinal aspects.\(^{872}\) Following Raja, Arvind Sharma holds that there is no natural basis to consider the *Gītā* to be a Vedāntic text only, as there are ample room for a Mīmāṃsic approach to this text.\(^{873}\)

Against the views of Indian scholars who believe that the teaching of the *Gītā* is a means to liberation; and western scholars who think the text of having undergone at least two revisions -- thus resulting in inconsistencies and interpolations, rather than any particular philosophical system, P. M. Modi maintains that no single philosophical system was aimed at either in the whole text or in a particular chapter of it. The principal philosophical thesis of the *Gītā*, according to him, is the doctrine of ‘*yoga*’ or ‘disinterested action’ (*niṣkāmaka,karma*). In the *Gītā*, some established philosophical views are represented as long as they support its purpose.\(^{874}\) S. N. Tadpatrikar concludes that the main teaching of the *Gītā* is to impart the truth of human life and all other approaches are subsidiary to this objective.\(^{875}\) Though the *Bhagavadgītā* does not refer to the Pāñcarātra tradition by name, scholars like Prabakar Apte, T. G. Mainkar etc. hold that some of the points like acceptance of Lord Vāsudeva as the supreme divinity and

\(^{870}\) Yamunacharya 1945: pp. 119-24.
\(^{871}\) Shivaram 1946: p. 23.
\(^{872}\) Kunhan Raja 1946: pp. 9-22.
\(^{875}\) Tadpatrikar 1946: p. 36.
devotion to him as the means to liberation etc. show adherence to the latter by the former. M. K. Deshpande thinks, in spite of the presence of lofty philosophical thought in the Upaniṣads, they are not of much help to the common people in meeting the difficulties they face in everyday life, and so they need an optimistic philosophy of life which suits them and helps them to approach a personal God. Deshpande maintains that the Gītā helps people fulfil these needs in a greater way. On finding the implicit presence of Sāṃkhya metaphysics throughout and its allegiance to the transcendental-immanent theistic notion rather than to a pantheistic view with the declaration of Lord Kṛṣṇa as the last resort, David White concludes that the text Gītā tries to synthesise proto-Sāṃkhya and the Upaniṣadic aspect of non-duality. However, S. N. Dasgupta thinks that the text belongs to the Bhāgavata-Pāñcarātra school, and the inner analysis of it shows that the Gītā accepts neither the established Sāṃkhya nor the Vedānta, but characterises a combination of an earlier school of Sāṃkhya and the Vedāntic ideas dissimilar to those of Śaṅkara. P. K. Gode in a detailed study of parallelism between the Gītā and the Bhaktisūtra-s of Nārada shows as to how the latter is influenced by the former in terms of doctrinal considerations, and concludes that the Gītā precedes the Śāṇḍilyasūtra-s, which again precede the Bhaktisūtra-s of Nārada.

Following Jadunath Sinha, we can sum up its teaching by saying that ‘it advocates dualistic monism, preaches the cult of Vāsudeva or Kṛṣṇa, and enjoins works (karma-yoga), devotion (bhakti-yoga) and knowledge (jñāna-yoga) for the attainment of

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880 Gode 1923: pp. 63-95.
God’. Nonetheless, in spite of all these controversies regarding the Gītā, we find its universal appeal to be pre- eminent. In the words of S. K. De: ‘While philosophers of diverse schools interpret it in accordance with their own conceptions, and critical scholars quarrel over the question of its consistency, its deep ethical and religious fervour lifts it above sectarian and scholastic considerations and supply nourishment to devout minds as a gospel of deliverance’. So, the divergent attitudes to the text give rise to its different interpretations.

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882 De 1942-3: p. 21.
Appendix II

A brief note on the probable place of origin of Madhusūdana and the influence of Caitanyite movement on him

In order to evaluate the view of a philosopher, it is helpful to know the socio cultural background in which that particular thinker was born and developed his speculations. Since making a detailed study on this point is out of the purview of this dissertation, we have just referred to MS’s time and place of birth based on the views of the majority of scholars. However, with the acceptance of a common view on his period of advent, as we have pointed out (in chapter 1.2), we must speculate on his place of origin, as scholars are not unanimous about this point too. It is commonly believed that MS hails from Bengal and was a junior contemporary of Śrīcaitanya (1486-1533 CE) as is evident both in numerous legends and the supports of the exponents of Gauḍīya or Bengal Vaiṣṇavism in later period. In support of this view, the following points have been considered by scholars such as i) the family lineage, ii) hagiographical details, iii) MS’s own reference to a disciple, viz. Baladeva Bhaṭṭācārya, [the surname, i.e. Bhaṭṭācārya, which this disciple carries, is a common surname in Bengal], iv) other factors like reference to the Lord of Blue Mountain (i.e. Nīlācala-nāyaka or Nīlācala-nātha ) etc. who is treated as Lord Jagannātha (a tutelary deity for many inhabitants of Bengal that time) of Puri, the place that belongs to the eastern part of India of which the then Bengal or Gauḍa was a part, v) support of intellectual or rather socio-religious (such as finding similarity with Caitanya tradition’s way of treating ecstatic devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa) and institutional (such as efforts to preserve relics and memorials in MS’s birth place) milieu of his time,

We have discussed earlier that references to nos. iii and iv are cited in the SB of MS.
If his Bengali origin is accepted, then it should be probable that MS was influenced by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and that the socio-cultural movement initiated by the mystic saint Śrīcaitanya and later continued by his followers might have influenced MS’s thought. But while some of the later exponents of Gauḍīya or Bengal Vaiṣṇavism have made use of the comments of Madhusūdana’s Gītā in support of their respective positions in their comments on the Gītā, none of the earlier proponents of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is referred to by MS in his work and vice versa. Besides, MS does not explicitly discuss the philosophical views of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas in any of his works.

In one of the legends it goes that MS perplexed the famous logicians of Navadvīpa in Bengal, namely Mathurānātha Tarkāvāgīśa (1550 CE) and Gadādhara Bhaṭṭācārya (1604-1708 CE) during his visit there: ‘When Madhusūdana Vākpati (Sarasvatī) visited Navadvīpa, Tarkavāgīśa was trembling in fear and Gadādhara got confused’. Thus, despite their dissimilarities in principles with those of MS, the fact that the GD of MS is referred to by Viśvanātha Cakravartin and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, the two eminent advocates of the Bengal Vaiṣṇavism (in the 18th century CE), in their respective commentaries on the BhG, is noteworthy. On BhG 3.1, Viśvanātha, like MS,

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884 navadvīpe samāyāte madhusūdanavākpatau / cakame tarkavāgīsāh kātaro’bhūd gadādharah // This incident relates to the fact that MS, having left home (i.e. Unasiyā village in Kotālipāḍā, a suburb of Faridpur district in East Bengal or present Bangladesh) in childhood, proceeded to Navadvīpa to study Nyāya and then to Benares to study Vedānta. It is during his visit to Navadvīpa much later from Banaras that the scholars of Nyāya in Navadvīpa got frightened of MS’s scholarship. To highlight this point with more subtlety, we could mention that Phaṇibhūṣaṇa Tarkavāgīśa (a famous Naiyāyika from Bengal in 20th century CE) used to hold: ‘When Madhusūdana Pandita visited (Navadvīpa) from Mathura Jagadīśa Tarkālāṅkāra (1500-1600 CE) became bashful and Gadādhara left his conceit’ (mathurāyāḥ samāyāte madhusūdananapāṇḍite / anīśo jagadiśo’bhūt na jagarjja gadādharah //). However, D. C. Bhattacharya in his treatise on the history of learning neo-logic (Navya-nyāya) in Bengal, refers to one logician Madhusūdana Vācaspatri, who, according to him, visited Navadvīpa from Mithilā and perplexed Govinda Nyāyavāgīśa and Gadādhara. The verse quoted by him reads as mithilātah samāyate madhusudanagīspatau / cakame nyāyavāgīsāh kātaro’bhūd’gadādharah //, its source being an old manuscript in Bangīya Sāhitya Pariṣad. Bhattacharya also holds that our author MS precedes Gadādhara by one hundred years or so and that there is no proof that MS studied either in Navadvīpa or Mithilā, thereby professing that MS is different from Madhusūdana Vācaspatri. All this account thus does not lead one to gaining any conclusive evidence of the place of origin of MS (Ghoṣa 1931: Advaitasiddhibhūmikā, pp. 92-96; Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 2; Bhattacharya 1952: p. 144).
explains the term ‘keśava’ as meaning ‘ka’ as ‘Brahmā’, ‘īśa’ as ‘Śiva’, and ‘va’ as ‘controller of both of them’. Śrīcāitanya’s monastic teacher (dīkṣā-guru) Īśvara Purī too seems to belong to the order of daśanāmī-sampradāya initiated by Śaṃkara, as the title ‘purī’ is one of the ten titles used for the saints belonging to this order. Some hagiographical sources claim that MS was a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava first and accepted Advaitic monastic orders later, in order to preach bhakti to the followers of the latter tradition. Further, we find that the concept of jīvanmukti, a prominent component of Advaita doctrines, is also accepted by Baladeva in his commentary on BhG 2.69-71, in almost a similar manner. Baladeva maintains that, although controlling the senses appears to be hard while undergoing spiritual discipline, it becomes natural for a sthitac- prajñā once he reaches his goal. Baladeva characterizes this person as one who is content with the bliss of his own self and unaffected by the results of prārabdha-karma-s, just as rivers cannot change the course of action of the ocean, though they mingle with it during the rainy season. The sthita-prajñā maintains his body just for its bare necessity, without having any sense of possessiveness and egoism. Viśvanātha also quotes Gauḍapāda in his comments on BhG 6.20-23, while his comments on BhG 15.18 note MS’s explanation that eulogizes Lord Kṛṣṇa, with approbation. This is an admission that Viśvanātha has no objection to the non-dualistic interpretation of these verses equating Lord Kṛṣṇa as the supreme brahman. These points show that the exponents of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism are not always antithetical to the interpretations provided by MS, though they disagree with the basic principles of Advaita Vedānta. Again, though due to paucity of place we do not have enough scope to deal with them, we find that the commentaries on the BP by

885 Bhagavadgītā (date not known): Gītābhūṣaṇa, pp. 81-3.
886 Bhagavadgītā (date not known): Sārārthavarsīṇī, pp. 175 and 404.
Viśvanātha and Jīva Gosvāmin (16th century CE) are sometimes compatible with the teaching of Advaita Vedānta.

There is a minor body of opinion that MS belonged to the south rather than Bengal. In the case of authors who belong to any of the monastic orders in India, it is almost impossible to find definite data about their genealogy and place of birth because once they enter such a monastic order, they virtually obliterate all data pertaining to their pre-monastic life. While it is not possible to arrive at any definite conclusion regarding the place of origin of MS with the currently available data, the view that MS hails from Bengal gets precedence while we take into consideration the nitty-gritty of his various works in the light of socio-religious scenario of Bengal and the observations of modern scholars in this regard. If his Bengali origin is proved convincingly, it will lead to better understanding of his philosophy, if one agrees with the scholars who describe him as belonging to the post-Caitanya period.

887 The reasons for this view are that i) ‘Sarasvatī’ which is one of the ten titles for monks of the Śaṃkara school, known as daśanāmī-sampradāya, is generally assigned to the Śrīgerī Mutt in south India (Vāsudevānanda 2006: pp. 1198-9) and that some Śrīgerī records talk about one Madhusūdana Bhāratī Śvāmī as occupying the place of pontiff there around the 13th century CE (Telang 1886: pp. 368, 373-4 and Siddhāntabindu 1989: Introduction, p. 8), ii) MS was mainly preoccupied with rebutting the views of the Mādhva and Rāmānuja schools that flourished in south India, where the former was the bitterest critic of Advaita Vedānta, and against whose works MS composed his magnum opus AdS, iii) Lord Kṛṣṇa, especially Lord Gopāla (i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa as a child), for whom MS has great fascination, is worshipped mainly in Udupi Mutt in Karnataka established by the Mādhva school and in Guruvayur temple in Kerala, iv) there has been a tradition that there are a number of Brahmin families settled near Kaladi in Kerala, who are known as Gauḍa Sārasvata Brahmins and are believed to have been migrated to Kerala from Gauḍa-deśa (i.e. the then Bengal) many generations ago, and that Gauḍa Brahōmānanda Sarasvatī, a fellow commentator of MS might have belonged to this Sārasvata Brahmin community (Rajagopalan 2003: pp. 255-7), and v) the origin of the BP and Vaiṣṇava devotional movement, to which MS had great attachment, is generally held to have been rooted in south India.
Appendix III

A list of different readings of the Bhagavadgītā mentioned by Madhusūdana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bhagavadgītā</th>
<th>Madhusūdana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.8, ‘saumadattistathaiva ca’</td>
<td>‘sindhurājastathaiva ca’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.46, ‘kṣemataram’</td>
<td>‘priyataram’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9, ‘samabuddhirviśyate’</td>
<td>‘samabuddhirvimucyte’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.16, ‘ābrahmabhāvanāllokaḥ’</td>
<td>‘ābrahmabhavanāllokaḥ’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.21, ‘traidharma’</td>
<td>‘trayidharmam’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.8, ‘śakyase’</td>
<td>‘śakhyase’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.21, ‘amī hi tvām surasaṅgā viśanti’</td>
<td>‘amī hi tvāo surasaṅgā viśanti’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.17, ‘durnirīkṣam’</td>
<td>‘durnirikṣyam’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.28, ‘vatrānyabhitojvalanti’</td>
<td>‘vaktrānyabhivijvalanti’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.37, ‘sadasattatparaṃ yat’</td>
<td>‘sadasattatparaṃ ca yat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.40, ‘namah purastāt’</td>
<td>‘namah puraḥ stāt’</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.41, ‘tavedam’</td>
<td>‘tavemam’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.20, ‘kāryakaranakarṭṛtvē’</td>
<td>‘kāryakāranakartrtvē’ (Śaṃkara too)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.23, ‘yo’vatiṣṭhati’</td>
<td>‘yo’vatiṣṭhate’ or ‘yonutiṣṭhati’ (Śaṃkara too)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.25, ‘mānāpamāṇayostulyastulya’</td>
<td>‘mānāvamāṇayostulyastulya’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.5, ‘sukhaduḥkhasaṃjīnaiḥ’</td>
<td>‘sukhaduḥkhasaṅgaiḥ’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix IV

Index of *Bhagavadgītā* verses where the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* refers to other commentators of the *Bhagavadgītā*

Śaṃkara (commentary on the *BhG*): Introductory verse 1 of the *GD*; *BhG* 2.25, 2.27, 2.41, 2.48, 2.56, 3.2, 3.20, 3.34, 4.6, 4.18, 4.21, 4.24, 6.14, 6.29, 6.34, 13.2, 13.12, 17.10, 17.16, 17.28, 18.6, 18.12, 18.14, 18.37, 18.66, 18.67, 18.75; concluding verse 3 of the *GD*.

Śaṃkara (commentary on the *BS* and the Upaniṣads): *BhG* 2.17, 2.18, 3.34, 4.34, 4.37, 8.24, 18.12.

Ānandagiri: *BhG* 4.6, 18.75.

Śrīdhara Svāmin: *BhG* 2.41, 5.7, 6.27 (only place where Śrīdhara is referred to by name by Madhusūdana), 13.12, 15.16, 17.10, 18.12.

Rāmānuja: *BhG* 4.6, 5.7, 13.12.

Madhva: *BhG* 18.21.

Jaya Tīrtha: *BhG* 13.12.
Appendix V

Index of Bhagavadgītā verses where other commentators of the Bhagavadgītā refer to the Gūḍhārthadīpikā

Brahmānandagiri of Veṅkaṭanātha: BhG 1.27, 2.8, 2.11, 2.13, 2.16, 2.18, 2.31, 3.28, 4.10, 5.8, 8.1.

Śrīmadbhavadgītārthaprakāśa of Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri: Introductory verses 2, 3, 5; BhG 2.20, 3.28 (only place where MS is referred to by name by Nīlakaṇṭha), 4.18, 6.29, 10.6, 10.21, 17.6, 18.10, 18.25

Tattvadīpikā of Vallabhācārya (fifth grand son of Vallabhācārya, the proponent of Śuddhādvaita school): BhG 7.16.

Amṛtataraṅginī of Puruṣottamaśānti: Introduction.


Gītābhūṣaṇa of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa: BhG 1.1, 4.6, 7.14, 7.16.

Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā of Dhanapati Sūri: BhG 1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.12, 1.15, 1.16, 1.18, 1.21, 1.24, 1.25, 1.31, 1.32, 1.35, 1.36, 1.40, 1.41, 1.45, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.13, 2.14, 2.15, 2.16, 2.17, 2.19, 2.20, 2.21, 2.22, 2.24, 2.27, 2.29, 2.31, 2.39, 2.44, 2.54, 2.55, 2.56, 2.67, 2.70, 2.71, 2.72, 3.3, 3.9, 3.13, 3.18, 3.20, 3.24, 3.28, 3.30, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.10, 4.13, 4.18, 4.20, 4.24, 4.26, 4.28, 4.33, 4.34, 4.41, 5.3, 5.7, 5.9, 5.13, 5.15, 5.23, 6.5, 6.7, 6.19, 6.23, 6.29, 6.30, 7.2, 7.4, 7.7, 7.20, 7.21, 7.29, 8.5, 8.6, 8.20, 8.24, 9.14, 9.15, 9.18, 9.21, 9.28, 9.32, 10.7, 10.12, 10.21, 11.40, 12.1, 12.13, 13.3, 13.4, 13.8, 13.17, 13.18, 14.8, 14.9, 14.27, 15.1, 15.6, 15.7, 16.1, 16.3, 17.6, 17.16, 17.20, 18.9, 18.17, 18.19, 18.21, 18.30, 18.34, 18.36, 18.55 (implicit indication).
### Appendix VI

A list of variants in different editions of the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, ‘pratyaksaram’</td>
<td>‘pratipadam’</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2, ‘tadrūpaśṭādaśādhyāyairgīta’</td>
<td>‘tadrūpaśṭādaśādhyāyīgīta’</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4, ‘natvāgaṁini’</td>
<td>‘nacā’ oogāṁini’</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7, ‘anādibhavasantānanirūḍham’</td>
<td>‘anādibhavasantānani (rū) gūḍham’</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103, ‘kṛtāni jñānopayoginīm’</td>
<td>‘kṛtāni jñānopayoginīm’</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130, ‘natu taccittaṃ vikartuṃ śaknuvanti’</td>
<td>‘natu taccittaṃ vikartuṃ śaknuvanti’</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132, ‘sūcayunnupasamharatī’</td>
<td>‘stuvannupasamharatī’</td>
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<tr>
<td>147, ‘śrutyeha vihito’</td>
<td>‘śrutyā’ bhi-dhiyate’</td>
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<tr>
<td>176, ‘tathāpyātatahsukhaheitvādupādeyaḥ’</td>
<td>‘tathā’ pyātatahsukhaheitvādupādeyaḥ’</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>178, ‘vijñānamaparakōsaṃ’</td>
<td>‘vijñānamaparokṣam tatphalam’</td>
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<tr>
<td>225, ‘tatrāśeṣasaṃsāranidānam’</td>
<td>‘tasyā viśeṣaḥ samsāranidānam’</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>275, ‘kalpitabhāvasyādhiṣṭhānātmakatvāḥ’</td>
<td>‘kalpitabhāvasyādhiṣṭhānātmakatvāḥ’</td>
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<tr>
<td>303, ‘nacātinidrāśīlasyātijāgrataśca’</td>
<td>‘tathā’ otiṇidrāśīlasyātijāgrataśca’</td>
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<tr>
<td>304, ‘sarvasūnyatāmāpāditam’</td>
<td>‘sarvasūnyatāmāpāditam’</td>
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<tr>
<td>305, ‘anātmānaparakte’</td>
<td>‘anātmānaparakte’</td>
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<tr>
<td>313, ‘śraddhāvitto, sarvakṛtarūpadvam’</td>
<td>‘śraddhānvito, sarvasukṛtarūpadvam’</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>322, ‘atastattvajñānamanōnāśāvāsanākṣayānāṃ’</td>
<td>‘atastattvajñānamanōnāśāvāsanākṣayānāṃ’</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>323, ‘karmāni sarvakāmatvaṃ’</td>
<td>‘karmānyasaroṣvāmatavaṃ’</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>325, ‘svasvadeśācāraṇakulakharatam’</td>
<td>‘svasvadeśācāraṇakulakharatam’</td>
<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>327, ‘vāsānoparāryagārtham ca’</td>
<td>‘vāsānoparāryagārtham ca’</td>
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<tr>
<td>330, ‘kṛtakaravatsaravāni’</td>
<td>‘kṛtakaravatsaravāni’</td>
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<tr>
<td>333, ‘śraddhāvītto, sarvākraturūpatvam’</td>
<td>‘śraddhāvītto, sarvasukṛtarūpatvam’</td>
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<tr>
<td>346, ‘bhāvyate svato’</td>
<td>‘dhāryate svato’</td>
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<tr>
<td>349, ‘māyāyāhamevopādanam’</td>
<td>‘māyāyāhamevopādanam’</td>
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<tr>
<td>351, ‘madiva, mayā yat kalpate’</td>
<td>‘madiva, mayāmayāya kalpate’</td>
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<tr>
<td>354, ‘tadākāraṇarajastamoṅvirāhitam’</td>
<td>‘tadākāraṇaḥ rajastamoṅvirāhitam’</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>363, ‘rādhanaṁ pūjanamihate’</td>
<td>‘rādhanaṁ rādhanaṁ pūjanamihate’</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>369, ‘māmanisvaretvānābhimaṇaṁ’</td>
<td>‘māmanisvaretvānābhimaṇaṁ’</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Besides the above variants, there are number of typographical errors and minor different readings in the above-mentioned editions.