

ŚAṄKARA'S AUTOGRAPH

A Philosophical Excavation*

I shall try to examine the problem concerning the concept of Adhyāsa and the Vedānta of Śaṅkara afresh in all modesty and fairness mainly confining my study to the paper of Prof. S. K. Chattopadhyaya in two parts published in the Quarterly¹ in which he labours very hard to refute the arguments of the modern exponents of Śaṅkara's Philosophy. "...this group of Indian writers", says Chattopadhyaya, "has not only voiced their emphatic denunciation but they have also attempted a revision and reappraisal of Śaṅkara's Philosophy in their newly discovered light"². Before taking up the re-examination as proposed by me, I shall devote to a discussion concerning the title and contents of the paper under review³ and attempt at formulating a question as to how far is 'Śabda Pramāṇa' or 'Sruti Pramāṇa' 'Scriptural authority' or/and 'logical analysis of linguistic forms and cognitive forms' and provide an answer through a philosophical excavation.

The title of Prof. Chattopadhyaya's paper — 'The Concept of Adhyāsa and the Vedānta of Śaṅkara' as it seems to me, is either a misnomer in relation to the contents or, in other words, the contents and title of the paper do not go together. This has happened due to a variety of reasons. These reasons can be summed up in a line. Chattopadhyaya is an adherent of an authoritative interpretation of Śaṅkara whereas Misra, a modern exponent (a revisionist) and Nayak, another modern critic (a reappraisalist) have come up with their analytic interpretations. For Nayak, "Śaṅkara's Philosophy has been interpreted both as a grand system of metaphysics and also as anti-metaphysical in character . . . some have read nihilism between the lines of Śaṅkara. His writings are no less open to an interpretation from the stand-point of value, or even from the existentialist point of view. Recently an interpretation from the linguistic stand point has also been attempted

* The title 'Śaṅkara's Autograph' — A philosophical excavation' — as I have chosen, is my reaction to "Poor Śaṅkara is not allowed to speak for himself" — Chattopadhyaya — 'The Concept of Adhyāsa and the Vedānta of Śaṅkara' — I. P. Q. — Vol. VI. No.1 Oct. 71 — p. 91.

on Śaṅkara".⁴ The title is indicative of discussion on the 'concept' of 'Adhyāsa' and the 'Vedānta' of 'Śaṅkara'. The contents, however, do not discuss these two title items but rather they have gone to an extent wider than the suggested facets viz : chiefly Adhyāsa. It is not, therefore, the purpose of this review to make any point regarding the title item 'adhyāsa' because of it not having been given primary and legitimate importance in Chattopadhyaya's papers; although casually some remarks may be worth mentioning. The main point of difference between the disputants⁵ lies in the answers they put forward to the question pin-pointed by me i. e. scriptural authority or logical analysis. Of course, his examination of Adhyāsa contained thinly in part I and thickly in Part II of his paper which can be reexamined separately, if not in the body of my present paper.

What did Śaṅkara mean by Sabda pramāna and Sruti pramāna? Chattopadhyaya explains the purpose of the Vedānta Sūtras with the help of 'Vedānta Vākya Kusuma grathanārthatvāt' Sūtrasnām' and Vedānta Vākyaṅi hi Sūtraudāhṛtya Vicārayante'. He observes that this disproves the contention of Misra that Śaṅkara had nothing to do with the Sruti texts as revealed authority, that his Sabda Pramāna does not mean Srutipramana as misunderstood by one and all before him but that Sabda Pramana means a critique of the structure and function of language.⁶ Chattopadhyaya cites Nayak's 'reappraisal' to be of the same interpretation as that of Misra.⁷ Here it may be pointed out that Misra and Nayak, although are both modern interpreters of Śaṅkara, do not have to maintain their analyses quite on similar lines. Analysts have the common name 'analysis' for their philosophical enterprise but from this it should not have been construed that the analysts are quite uniform. In fact, analyses and analysts of philosophy have much more in difference as to their techniques than in similarity. It would not therefore be proper to bracket Misra and Nayak so grossly as has been shown by Chattopadhyaya. This point needs amplification. It may, however, be pointed out that 'dismissal of traditional fads as 'revealed truth', 'intuition', 'mysticism' 'liberation' in 'spiritual realisation'⁸ is attributed to Misra and Nayak. "Liberation that Śaṅkara speaks of is emancipation from faulty linguistic habits and enjoying intellectual delight in the knowledge of the logic of language"⁹ is also commonly attributed

to both Misra and Nayak. It is not only misinterpretation of Misra and Nayak's contentions which are never similar but an unfortunate misreading of the peculiarities of their characteristically dissimilar ways of analyses. This point requires immediate clarification here to prove Chattopadhyaya's impatience to group these two analysts together under one umbrella. Misra, although his analysis maintains that philosophy for Śaṅkara is the scrutiny of our language and liberation for Śaṅkara is an illumination and freedom from the wrong pictures created and fostered by language.¹⁰ But Nayak observes in his own characteristic way that liberation is enlightenment (Brahmāvagati). There is a specific reference to and discussion of the 'Significance of Vakyarthavicarana' in Nayak's reappraisal, which is not in any sense the same as Misra's comments on Sruti or Sabdapramana. Nayak aptly comments that "the aim of the philosopher here is to attain a knowledge which is self-complete and absolutely certain and the knowledge of advaita or the unity of all existence obtained through 'tat tvam asi' seems to fulfil these demands satisfactorily".¹¹ Elsewhere, Nayak puts up; "But Śaṅkara's Brahman, it should be borne in mind, is not at all an object, whether mundane or supramundane. . . . That Śaṅkara is here drawing our attention to the philosophical enlightenment which can only be obtained through an analysis of the function of language can easily be seen once we get rid of the deep-seated misconception of Śaṅkara as a mystic philosopher".¹² From a dispassionate study of the analytic expositions of Misra and Nayak, it becomes crystal clear that the modus operandi in both are different as are the references cited although the aim of analysis remains the same. Both of them attempt at a portrayal of Śaṅkara as a critical interpreter of the Indian philosophical tradition in their own peculiar ways. The aim of Indian philosophy is liberation. Since liberation has been termed variously, not only in the Vedānta but in all the ancient Indian philosophical systems, it is likely that the concept has become, among various other terms the source of confusion owing to varied uses, meanings and interpretations. Whereas the aim of philosophy is revelation of the eternal structure of language through conceptual scrutiny, discrimination and analysis according to Śaṅkara of the modern interpreters, Chattopadhyaya still wrestles hard to claim that the aim of philosophy is wisdom that consists not in knowing simply but in knowing how to live an ideal life.¹³ Further he comments

"in the face of this, it is idle to talk about an Indian philosopher's raising or indulging in, a purely formal and in that sense, a purely logical question as distinguished from a factual question."¹⁴ Chattopadhyaya argues again that "the Indian philosophical systems (some of them) besides admitting other pramāṇas accord a place of honour to testimony or authority."¹⁵

While for Misra, 'Āgama', 'Sruti', 'Sabda' and 'Sāstra' stand for logical analysis of the propositional symbolism,¹⁶ Nayak has to speak something in distinction to Misra on this interpretation. Nayak makes a definite point of departure. He claims that Śaṅkara uses 'Sruti' ununiformly and shows the two different senses in which the word is used. It is therefore inappropriate for Chattopadhyaya to bring him inside the arena of his criticisms especially in regard to the Sruti and Sabda Pramāṇas. Our present task is therefore to judge whether Sruti or Sabda pramāṇa is 'analysis' or 'authority'. Misra and Nayak, since they are analysts of the modernest vogue, come closer to assert that adherence to testimony or authority is definitely dogmatic and uncritical as 'according to Śaṅkara, authority or revealed texts can never be source of knowledge'.¹⁷ "In one sense," says Nayak, "of the word (Sruti) whatever is said in Sruti is evidently not acceptable to him (Śaṅkara) as such. This is the sense in which Sruti is taken as authority, a group of revealed texts coming down to us from time immemorial. In this sense of authority, whenever Sruti comes to clash with other means of valid knowledge, he suggests that it be taken in a secondary sense. Nayak adds, "But there is another sense in which Sruti alone can give us that enlightenment which is called Mokṣa or liberation. Sruti in this sense is a critical study of different forms and functions of language."¹⁸ Misra says, "Further according to Śaṅkara and his followers, logical analysis is the proper method of philosophic knowledge. This logical analysis proceeds on two lines, critical analysis of linguistic forms is one method, critical analysis of cognitive forms is the other. In other words, logical analysis of linguistic and cognitive forms constitutes the proper method of philosophy (srutyadaya Anubhava dayacha yathā Sambhava iha pramāṇa)".¹⁹ So it is evident from the analytical strands discussed so far, both from the stand-point of knowledge and liberation, the two corner concepts of Indian philosophy, 'Sruti' and 'Sabda', are accepted as conceptual scrutiny

(Samikshā) by Misra. Misra claims that Sruti-jñāna is the knowledge gained through the logical analysis of propositional form : (Vākya janitam vākyārtha jnanam Sruti).²⁰ Thus, elsewhere, he describes 'Āgama', 'Sruti', 'Sabda', and 'Sāstra' stand for logical analysis of the propositional symbolism.²¹ There are two senses according to Nayak, in which the word 'Sruti' has been used by Śaṅkara. When Sruti in the sense of authority comes to clash with other means of valid knowledge, Śaṅkara, according to Nayak, suggests that it be taken in a secondary sense.²² It is evident that there is absolutely no reference to this significant point made by Śaṅkara either in Misra's or Chattopadhyaya's writings. The Sruti texts, says Chattopadhyaya constitute an 'alukika pramāṇa' in so far as they deal with a subject matter not accessible to any ordinary means of knowledge.²³ On this pretext, Sruti pramāṇa becomes different from other pramāṇas viz : perception, inference etc. Not these pramāṇas, but being alaukika, the Sruti and Sabda pramāṇas render different kind of result, different from other laukika pramāṇas. Then the modern interpretations appear to be quite genuine that Śaṅkara delineates logic from psychology and other sciences or logical discourse from empirical discourse and fixed up their jurisdictions. In this sense, logical analysis of linguistic forms and cognitive forms becomes a pertinent necessity to discriminate between different discourses. If Śaṅkara is to be given any esteem as a philosopher, that is first due to his being himself the greatest discriminator on the Indian philosophical planes. Before furthering my examination of the controversy under review, I shall take to discriminating the two analysts, Misra and Nayak, to the advantage of my excavation.

Misra and Nayak are definitely analysts as already stated in the foregoing paragraph where I deliberately postponed my discrimination between their activities as analysts of Śaṅkara's philosophy. Misra's analysis accepts the logical analysis of linguistic forms and cognitive forms as the method of the Advaita. The aim of philosophy according to him is critical examination of the human conceptual system and that is human liberation. 'Parama Puruṣārtha'. While interpreting Śaṅkara, on these terms of analysis, the technique and references resorted by Misra are upto-date western standards in philosophical analysis. Mostly he is guided by Russell, Wittgenstein, Ayer and Strawson and adopts their models respectively as per his necessity.

Nayak's approach in his 'reappraisal' is an orientation in his analytic track supported by references to the exact utterances of Śaṅkara in the B. S. Bhāṣya etc. Throughout his analysis, massive references to the original texts and traditional interpretation with some of which he agrees and some others with which he disagrees enrich his analytic strength and opens a new, 'not necessarily arbitrary,' vista in the understanding of Śaṅkara to justify his reappraisal. There are references to western analysts like Ayer and Wittgenstein in his work but those are cited with a view to corroborating his analytic findings.

Unlike Misra and Nayak, Chattopadhyaya's emphasis on the authoritativeness of the traditional philosophies attracts the attention of any serious thinker in the line. He has been, rightly or wrongly, wrestling too strenuously to keep to the tradition against the two analytic approaches to Śaṅkara vedānta and has even gone to the extent of condemning the voice of the analysts in harsh terms out of his own psychologism behind the traditional interpretation of Śaṅkara and his philosophy. The major theses accepted by him, against Misra and Nayak, lies in his sticking to the Sruti and Sabdapramāṇa as the scriptural authority. The references he has brought into his help are confined to the texts, interpreters of traditional style in conspicuous exclusion of any of the standard critics and analysts to his support. Looking at the nature of his attack, his "dispassionate consideration to the modern thesis vis-a-vis the traditional interpretation of Śaṅkara and his philosophy"²⁴ once aimed and styled loses sight of some of the analytic trend in Śaṅkara himself and turns out to be unsympathetic not only to the analysts, Misra and Nayak, but also to the great Ācārya.

So far to what I have confined myself is a discussion on the Vedānta of Śaṅkara with particular reference to his interpretation of 'Sruti' and 'Sabda' pramāṇa and not Adhyāsa which, as proposed by me, required separate forum to be examined, in view of the length of the present paper.

Coming back upon the controversy, I shall lay bare my ideas open on Sāstra, Sruti and Sabda. On this pretext it may be pointed out that "there can be no doubt", as Potter remarks, "about the tremendous weight that the classical philosophers of India have placed on such authoritative scriptures. But when one examines the use made of appeal to the texts, one comes to the conclusion

that the argument from authority is not as dogmatic as westerners are frequently prone to believe. In effect what happens is that philosophers regularly appeal to authorities who say what they wish to say in more elegant language than they can muster. And when it appears that a sacred text runs counter to one's thesis, it is necessary to reconstrue the passage; one is not allowed just to ignore it".²⁵ Śaṅkara repeatedly denounced acceptance of the scripture and anything for that matter without scrutiny, excavation and criticism. So Śaṅkara could never have any chance to be dogmatic, an authoritarian and a traditionalist. My point is that the master mind of Indian philosophy has cautioned very often in repeated sermons of his own original composition not to be guided by any source without analysis, howsoever, venerable the sources be. This contention of mine, as important it is, can be relied upon with reference to Śaṅkara's Viveka-Cūḍāmaṇi in its various slokas.

Regarding Sastra, how is this secondary to philosophical pursuit, liberation from dogma, a reference may be cited to Sloka 5 and 58 of Viveka-Cūḍāmaṇi. As to the āptavākayas (known popularly as revealed texts), a reference is invited to Śaṅkara's cautionary reservation to sloka 55. About Sruti, let a reference, as a matter of instant instantiation be quoted in favour of his sloka 336. 'Sabda' has been the most exaggerated Sabda used by the Ācārya and of the several citations, only a few as that in sloka 60, 62, 65 would suffice for the present. And the most interesting and conspicuous is sloka 474 of the same treatise which combines his voice on almost all the key concepts of his 'system.'²⁶ In this sloka, Śaṅkara explains intelligently that knowledge is obtained through liberation from one's own Avidyā or error and this knowledge is Ānand or bliss. Further "A certain interpretation of Scripture is to be rejected because it would render certain other vedic utterances purposeless (anarthaka)"²⁷. Of course, matter still depends on our disposition to a method of philosophy and a preference of one or the other vogue of philosophising. Now it may be quite possible to revert to the psychologism which as any human being, a philosopher must have. Freedom from such psychologism is perhaps the goal of philosophy which he has been striving for. There is no liberation without realisation of one's identity with Ātman, not even in the life time of a hundred of

Brahmās. Liberation is not attainable through loud speech making consisting of a shower of words, the skill of or erudition in expounding the scriptures (*sāstras*). These merely bring on a little personal enjoyment of the Scholar but one never conducive to liberation. Extraction of treasure (illumination) hidden underground requires competent excavation and removal of stones. Such illumination does not crop up merely by words. This is to come as a result of serious pursuance, meditative and reflective efforts etc. under the instruction of a seer. Liberation is never attainable through perverted arguments.

Śaṅkara clearly asserts that the learned man, capable of discrimination of having faith in Sruti or the scriptural authority, of knowing the proper meaning thereof, does not behave like a child clinging to the unreal as the real thing and seek for liberation. Śaṅkara's mind is more clearly readable through his words which depicts the scriptures as nothing but 'Sabdajālam' or a net work of words where Chitta-bhramaṇa occurs or the mind rambles. Hence he says, men of wisdom should earnestly set about knowing the true nature of self even beyond the words of the *sāstras* for which sufficient excavation is a prerequisite. For realization or liberation, Śaṅkara accounts for *Sāstra* (*Scriptures*), reflection, (through argument and reasoning), words and instructions, accords them their legitimate importance but claims *svānūbhāva* or one's own immediate realisation, understanding or apprehension to be the ultimate for otherwise realization is not possible. So it goes without doubt that he in acknowledgement of the Vedic authority, advocates in favour of *Khananam*; excavational devices for obtaining philosophical knowledge. The *Sāstra* is a *pramāṇa* not in the sense of scriptural authority only or not in the same of logical analysis of linguistic and cognitive forms only but in the ultimate sense of *pramāṇa* which is 'Svānubhuti'. Ultimately or finally, knowledge is to culminate in such immediate apprehension. *Sāstra* or *Sruti-sidha-jnāna* has to be in the long run, *anūbhuti-sidha* for acceptance as knowledge in the sense of enlightenment (*brahmāvagati*). Radhakrishnan seems to have rightly commented that "Śaṅkara recognises the need of reason for testing scriptural views. Wherever he has an opportunity, he tries to confirm scriptural statements by rational argument. Reasoning, as he puts up, works as an auxilliary of intuition (*anūbhava*) against untested

assumptions and a creative principle which selects and emphasises the facts of truth. Without the background of the experience, the statement of the Sruti is mere sound without sense. Vācaspati says, "A thousand scriptures cannot make a jar into a cloth."²³ But it is not possible for me to agree with Radhakrishnan's or any others' interpretation of anūbhava as 'intuition'. Intuition has engendered quite a number of perplexing problems and raised confusions. Anubhava or Svānubhava does not mean one's experience or personal experience. If it be so, it would give rise to solipsism on the one hand and mysticism on the other. Radhakrishnan's 'intuition' is disposed of by Nayak who remarks that Śāṅkara's Brahman is not at all an object whether mundane or supramundane. It is avisayāntahapati. Nayak has further referred to Viveka Cudāmaṇi to bring in Śāṅkara's distinction between Vidvān as Brahmajñani and Vidvān as Vedānta nayāntadarsin in this context.²⁹ It would therefore be proper to distinguish between mere understanding or book-learning and the full comprehension of their import culminating in an immediate apprehension of the truth. In this sense, Śāṅkara seems to have been advocating in favour of philosophical excavation before acceptance by argumentation or rejection through refutation of a stand. He has been, among other things, providing philosophy with the scope for scrutiny, re-examination and reinterpretation as against mere acceptance of a stand in the name of authority or the like and that is the uniqueness of Śāṅkara's philosophical genius. It has been rightly remarked that "Excessive defence to the past, however, sympathetic, may often be cramping and harmful..."³⁰ In any circumstance, we have to take into account the simple and serious fact that words often due to rampant indiscriminateness in their use lose their significance, get revised at the risk of being hackneyed³¹ and outmoded by the previously prevalent usages. It is, therefore, very much desirable that they be looked afresh in their changing perspectives, lest a standing iron bar gets rusted soon !

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NOTES

1. Indian Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. VI, No. 1 Oct.'78 and Vol. VI, No. 4, July 79.
2. *Ibid*, Part I, p. 62.
3. Paper of Prof. S. K. Chattopadhyaya.
4. Dr. G. C. Nayak, *Essays in Analytical Philosophy*, 1978—"The Philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya—A Reappraisal", Indian Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. No. 1., 1973.
5. Chattopadhyaya, S. K., Misra, G., Nayak, G. C.
6. Chattopadhyaya, *Op. Cit.* Part I, Notes 1, P. 94.
7. *Ibid*, Notes 2, p. 94.
8. *Ibid*, pp. 94 - 95.
9. *Ibid*, p. 95.
10. Monograph—Dr. G. Misra, *The Advaita Conception of Philosophy ; Its method, Scope and limits*, 1976.
11. Nayak, *Op. Cit.*, p. 106.
12. *Ibid*, p. 95.
13. Chattopadhyaya, *Op. Cit.* Part I, p. 84.
14. *Ibid*, p. 86.
15. *Ibid*, p. 86.
16. Misra, *Op. Cit.* p. 9.
17. Misra, *Ibid*, p. 10.
18. Nayak, *Op. Cit.* pp. 101 - 102.
19. Misra, *Op. Cit.*, p. 13.
20. *Ibid*, p. 8.
21. *Ibid*, p. 9.
22. B. S. Bhāṣya, 2.1.13.
23. Chattopadhyaya, *Op Cit.*, Part I, p.88.
24. *Ibid*, p.82.
25. Carl H. Potter, *Presuppositions of Indian Philosophies*, 163, p. 85.
26. NOTE: Slokas of Vivekacūṭamaṇi, Swami Hadhavanda, Advaita Ashrama, Cal. 9th Fon. July, 1974
(I do not of course endorse the translation or rendering in English which are defective, and therefore have my own used here).
27. F.N. 19 Cf. Prakasananda, P.47 Chapter 5, P.92, *Ibid* Potter.
28. Radhakrishnan, S. - *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, pp.517-518
29. Cf. Vivekacūṭamaṇi, 162.
30. Warnock, G.J., *Revolution in Phil.* Article, Analysis and imagination, (Reprint 1960) p.126.
31. I owe this idea to an illuminating discussion of Dr.G.C. Nayak, Prof. of Philosophy, Utkal University, in another context.