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Introduction

The political rulers were never the standard-bearers of our society. They were never taken as the props of our national life. Saints and sages, who had risen above the mundane temptations of pelf and power and had dedicated themselves wholly for establishing a happy, virtuous and integrated state of society, were its constant torch-bearers. They represented the dharmasattā (the virtues of dharma). The king was only an ardent follower of that higher moral authority.

–M.S. Golwalker, *Bunch of Thoughts*

Forgotten Friendships¹

The Śrīṅgeri maṭha (monastery) is rarely mentioned in the histories of the Vijayanagara empire, a political formation that has held pride of place in South Asian historiography since the beginning of the twentieth century.² Standard histories of this pivotal kingdom attribute the fourteenth-century founding of the city to Harihara of the Sangama family, an upstart general formerly serving under the Hoysala king, Vira Ballala III. These histories pay scant attention to the gurus of the monastery (maṭha) at Śrīṅgeri. This is despite the fact that most histories of

¹ This title is an acknowledgement of Indrani Chatterjee's recent work on the lacuna in modern Indian historiography on the subject of monastic government in the pre-colonial and colonial periods. As Chatterjee has demonstrated in her work, monastic institutions across India evinced a very different logic to government than did kingship and conditioned the emergence of a variety of modes of human engagement and mobilization that have eluded the scrutiny of historians. In many instances, as in Chatterjee's archives, this forgetting was ushered in by the colonial administration's systematic dismantling of the sources of monastic governance; for instance, the right to tax-free land or the provision, in perpetuity, of stipends for the maintenance of religious leaders, or the provision of care and support to various segments of the population of adherents. Through the removal of the fiscal provisions, agreements, and conventions that enabled monastic governance, the colonial state aided the quiet dissolution of monastic power so that, for contemporary historians, its lineaments are difficult to discern. Indrani Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends: Monks, Marriages, and Memories of Northeast India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013).

² See Robert Sewell's *Vijayanagara: A Forgotten Empire, 1900*. The maṭha finds no mention in Stein's synthetic study of the importance of the maṭha in the emergence of Vijayanagara, neither under the heading Founding of Vijayanagara nor under Kings and Chiefs (91). There is a discussion of maṭhas and temples under the section headed Religion, Society, and Ideology.

Vijayanagara begin with an inscription from 1346, which records a pilgrimage made by the Sangama brothers, led by Harihara, the first king of Vijayanagara, to the Śṛṅgeri monastery, where they paid homage to its gurus and secured the friendship of these monastic leaders. Myth and memory, on the other hand, which have persisted in the narratives, poems and inscriptions from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries, tell a very different story of the fourteenth-century founding of the city of Vijayanagara.³ Inscriptions and narratives from the seventeenth century attribute the founding of the city to Vidyāraṇya, a fourteenth-century guru of Śṛṅgeri monastery.⁴ The seventeenth-century Telugu text *Rāyavācakamu* (*Tidings of the King*) recalls this foundational memory at its very outset. The story begins with Viranrisimharaya (1503 – 1509), the king of Vijayanagara who was succeeded by his famed half-brother Kṛṣṇadevarāya (1509 – 1529). The *Rāyavācakamu*, written after the fall of Vijayanagara in 1565, begins with Nrisimharaya questioning his his counsellors about the founding of the city (here referred to as Vidyanagara) he rules:

““Before the city of Vidyanagara was built, where was Vidyāraṇya Shripada? What was the cause of his coming here? And once he had come, how was the city built?””⁵

In his question, Vira Nrisimharaya suggests that it is common knowledge that the monastic guru Vidyāraṇya was instrumental to the founding of Vijayanagara. The

³ Around 1327, Vira Ballala III, the last Hoysala king had established a fortified city across the Tungabhadra river from Anegondi, the future site of the city of Victory, Vijayanagara of the Sangamas. Thus, I am using “founding” to refer to the beginning of the history of the city that served as the eponym for the Vijayanagara empire.

Burton Stein, *Vijayanagara*, New Cambridge History of India (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 19.
⁴ B. Lewis Rice, *Epigraphica Carnatica*, vol. 6, 12 vols., Mysore Archaeological Series (Bangalore: Mysore Government Central Press, 1901), 95. Phillip B. Wagoner, *Tidings of the King: A Translation and Ethnohistorical Analysis of the Rāyavācakamu* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993); Rice, *Epigraphica Carnatica*, 6:95.

⁵ Wagoner, *Tidings of the King: A Translation and Ethnohistorical Analysis of the Rāyavācakamu*.

Rāyavācakamu's narration of the founding of the city begins with the biography of the guru Vidyāraṇya, who rose from humble beginnings to serve as the spiritual teacher of the Saṅgama kings and as the inspiration for the founding of the city of Vijayanagara. In other words, for the author of the *Rāyavācakamu*, the story of the founding of Vijayanagara could not be told without telling the story of Vidyāraṇya, the spiritual force behind the city's founding. Setting aside the facticity of this tale, the narrative raises the question as to why, even after the fall of the city of Vijayanagara and the decline of the eponymous empire, memories of its founding ascribed a pivotal role to the guru of the Śṛṅgeri monastery. Indeed, how could an ascetic, supposedly severed from all manner of social action and engagement, be involved in the dirty business of founding cities and governing subjects?⁶

If the curious endurance of this figment of cultural memory in the centuries that followed the fall of Vijayanagara raises questions about the connection between myth, memory, and historical event, more curious still is the systematic erasure of the Śṛṅgeri monastery from the modern historiography of Vijayanagara. What could explain the forgetting of this monumental monastery in the disciplined memory of modern historiography? Even before Burton Stein's influential monograph on Vijayanagara launched a productive discussion of state-formation in the medieval Deccan, the maṭha at Śṛṅgeri was no more than a footnote in the history of the founding of the kingdom.⁷ Since Stein's intervention, Vijayanagara has re-emerged as a pivotal

⁶ Hermann Kulke, *Kings and Cults: State Formation and Legitimation in India and Southeast Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 208–40.

⁷ A representative work from the period that preceded Stein, even when it broaches the topic of the founding of the city or the "Religious Scene" in the early days of the kingdom, restricts its discussions to the biographical details of prominent figures such as Vidyātirtha, Vidyāraṇya, Sāyaṇa and Mādhava. There is virtually *no* discussion of the institutional role of the maṭha, nor is there any attempt to scrutinize the monumental corpus of texts produced in this early period as a unified whole representing the interests of the maṭha. Venkata Ramanayya N., *Vijayanagara: Origin of the City and the Empire*, *Bulletins of the Department of Indian History and Archaeology* 4 (Madras: University of Madras, 1933); G.S Dikshit, ed., *Early Vijayanagara: Studies in History and Culture* (Bangalore: B.M.S. Memorial Foundation Bangalore, 1988). Stein, *Vijayanagara*, 4.

site for the discussion of state-formation in precolonial India.⁸ Stein’s path-breaking scholarship on state-formation in precolonial south India has cast such a long shadow on this historical archive that it has obscured other possible paths of historical inquiry. The first inscription to mention the Saṅgama general Harihara, the future king of Vijayanagara, mentions that he was fortunate enough to secure the friendship of Vidyātirtha, the guru of Śṛṅgeri, whose friendship, once gained, would never be lost. Thus, despite the salience of the gurus and the monastery at Śṛṅgeri to the founding of Vijayanagara and the considerable power wielded by the institution to the present day, little scholarly attention has been paid to the long genealogy of monastic power in India. The historical forgetting of the friendship between the early kings of Vijayanagara and the gurus of Śṛṅgeri is emblematic of a far more pervasive and systematic amnesia of the enduring bond between monastic power and political power in India. The deafening scholarly silence on the genealogy of monastic power, by which I mean institutionalized ascetic power, deserves sustained scrutiny but, for the moment, it is important to note that the potency of monastic power was not lost on generations of Indian thinkers, activists, and politicians. One need look no further than Gandhi’s *brahmacharya*, Bankim’s *Anandamath*, or Golwalker’s R.S.S. to appreciate the influence of ascetic ethics and monastic power in Indian politics. The recent rise

⁸ A brief sampling would include, Stein, *Vijayanagara*; Alexandra Mack, “Power Relations as Seen through Vijayanagara-Era Temple Inscriptions,” in *South India Under Vijayanagara: Art and Archaeology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 153–63; Noboru Karashima, *A Concordance of Nāyakas: The Vijayanagara Inscriptions in South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India, 1500 - 1650.*, vol. 45, Cambridge South Asian Studies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Agreeing to Disagree: Burton Stein on Vijayanagara,” *South Asia Research* 17, no. 2 (October 1997): 127–39; Elizabeth Jane Bridges White, “Beyond Empire: Vijayanagara Imperialism and the Emergence of the Keladi-Ikkeri Nayaka State, 1499 - 1763 C.E.” (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan, 2015).

of monastic leaders like Yogi Adithyanath is nothing more than the most recent irruption in the public consciousness of a long tradition of monastic power.⁹

A Brief History of a Forgotten Archive

In this dissertation, I argue that the early period of the Vijayanagara empire (ca. 1346 – 1386) has bequeathed to us an incredibly important, and forgotten, archive. In the texts and inscriptions, composed, reproduced, and disseminated by the Śrīringeri monastery and its agents, we find articulated a theory of universal monastic power. Undergirded by the transcendent authority of the Vedas, monastic power flowed through the figure of the guru of the monastery to form and regulate a hierarchy of normative subjects. In other words, this corpus articulates a logic of power that derived from the monastery’s singular capacity to manage and govern worldly human affairs according to the transcendent ends and values specified by the Vedas. More importantly—and this forms the basis for my use of Foucault’s notion of governmentality—this corpus illuminates those processes by which the subject is empowered and enjoined to work on him or herself. In other words, the monastery provides the human beings the means to become an actor in a world of the monastery’s making. Thus, the monastery controls the operation of power insofar as it constructs the very field in which prescribed subjectivities may emerge. In short, it conditions the very possibility of what it could mean to lead a meaningful life.

⁹ As Gandhi himself noted, “It is my full conviction, that if only I had lived a life of unbroken *brahmacharya* all through, my energy and enthusiasm would have been a thousand fold greater and I should have been able to devote them all to the furtherance of my country’s cause as my own.” Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, “Self-Control and Political Potency: Gandhi’s Asceticism,” *The American Scholar* 35, no. 1 (1956): 83. Bankimacandra Caṭṭopādhyāya and Julius Lipner, *Ānandamāth, or, The Sacred Brotherhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 108. M.S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts* (Bangalore: Vikrama Prakashan, 1966), 65. Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s ; Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilisation (with Special Reference to Central India)* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1999), 11–79.

I argue that this monastic governmentality may be analysed into two constituent forces that worked in concert: pastoral care and disciplinary power. Pastoral care refers to the complex of practices, conduct, attitudes, and material effects that were directed by the monastery to support the emergence and flourishing of prescribed Vedic subjectivities. In simple terms, pastoral care refers to the monastery's interest in the welfare of its subjects' ethical formation. Thus, pastoral care encompasses the redistributive practices of the guru to monastic institutions—ranging from schools to hostels for pilgrims to irrigation projects—that were expressly designed to support the material and spiritual welfare of monastic subject. In my description of this dimension of monastic governmentality I use concept of the gift, *dāna*, as a metonym for the monastery's propensity for pastoral care.

Disciplinary power, which comprehends the category of prescription (*vidhi*), refers to the monastery's capacity to direct and regulate its subjects' self-formation, principally through the application of restrictive categories of normative practice drawn from the Vedic ritual system. Disciplinary power operated through the application of the categories of eligibility (*adhikāra*) and injunction (*vidhi*), which regulated the “who” and “what” of normative conduct. As the sole governor of an idealized Vedic order, the monastery regulated the institutions—education, marriage, ritual performance—that shaped its subjects into appropriate ethical agents. Thus, the monastery mapped out a hierarchic normative universe in which, at each station of life and at each rank of the social order, the monastic subject was defined by his or her eligibility and obligation to undertake prescribed life paths. Critical to the constitution of this hierarchic universe was the monastery's capacity to make sense of human affairs according to the transcendent ends dictated by the Vedas. In other words, the singular authority that the monastery wielded to interpret the Vedic corpus for the norms that would define and regulate

conduct. The monastery synthesized a Vedic hermeneutic that enabled it to assimilate a plurality of ethical agents by means of a process of synthesis-through-subordination. This interpretive lens allowed the monastery to govern a range of heterogeneous subjects who were nevertheless assimilated to a single, overarching Vedic order.

Kingship too was assimilated to this normative vision through a process of restrictive subordination. The sovereignty of the king was ultimately dependent upon the transcendent and untrammelled sovereignty of the guru of the monastery. The ideal king was distinguished as the agent *par excellence*, the corollary in the field of force (*kṣatra*) to the figure of the Vedic householder ritualist. As such, the monarch possessed the potential to advance the Vedic ends espoused by the monastery; however, he was also particularly susceptible, for all his trafficking in desire and power, to be pulled away from those transcendent Vedic ends.

Expelled from this totalizing ethical order were those religious orders and institutions that opposed or subverted Vedic normativity; in other words, religious institutions that rivalled the monastery's supreme and unimpeachable prerogative to interpret the Veda. The excluded included not only those, like the Buddhists and Jains, who repudiated the authority of the Veda outright, but, more critically, those rival religious orders that offered a different interpretation of the Vedas than that promulgated by the monastery. In this manner, the monastery articulated a coherent, albeit idealized, model of ethical government (which I refer to as monastic governmentality) aimed at forming its followers into subjects who properly equipped to traverse the path of the Vedas.

Before I move on to a thorough unpacking of the principal argument and its attendant limbs, I would do well to explain two clusters of emic terms I use consistently in the dissertation.

Śaṅkarācārya, the jagadguru of Śṛṅgeri maṭha

This dissertation examines a corpus of texts and inscriptions composed by the agents of the Śṛṅgeri monastery between 1346 and 1386. Named for the sage Ṛṣyaśringa, Śṛṅgeri is the site of one of the most important centers of Vedic—some would say orthodox—Hinduism in modern India. Located on the banks of the Tunga river among the Sahyadri hills of western Karnataka, Śṛṅgeri was referred to as a holy site or a site of pilgrimage (*tīrtha*) in the earliest extant records. Today, the maṭha complex at Śṛṅgeri comprises a number of important temples, monastic centers, libraries, residences and schools for the monks (*saṃnyāsins*), in addition to a host of administrative buildings, hostels for pilgrims, and living spaces for the variety of animals—cattle and elephants being the most prominent—that serve the maṭha. The complex sprawls across the Tunga river, which effectively separates the ritual and devotional centers of the maṭha from its more monastic side. On the western bank of the river are the centers of public devotion and administration: the temple of the goddess Śāradā, the principal deity of the complex, the Vidyāśaṅkara temple, the food halls where pilgrims are fed daily, accommodation for pilgrims, and a variety of smaller shrines and temples. This western segment forms the center of ritual and devotional life of the maṭha, where the Smārta Brahmin adherents of the maṭha engage priests to perform a variety of pujas and rituals, and where pilgrims and followers alike attend a number of daily religious services. Across a footbridge (the Vidyātīrtha Setu), on the eastern bank of the Tunga, lie the primary centers of monastic life at the complex. Nestled in the sylvan groves of the Narasimhavana are a number of important structures, among them the guru’s residence, the hall where he grants his followers daily audience and conducts the public business of his office, a Vedic school (*pāṭha-śālā*), and the library and archives. Śṛṅgeri’s reach, however, far exceeds the maṭha complex and the town. The maṭha operates a variety of Vedic

schools in southern India and asserts its spiritual authority over a number of regional temples and maṭhas. The guru of the maṭha periodically undertakes a *digvijaya*, a conquest of the quarters, during which he tours the various constituencies and interests of the maṭha through the South. The maṭha also has a number of diasporic interests and followings; a number of temples in the United States of America are spiritually and financially connected to the maṭha.

The institution of the maṭha has received shockingly little scholarly attention, an oversight that is all the more glaring in light of the decades of scrutiny lavished upon asceticism and ascetics in ancient and premodern India. Recent interventions notwithstanding, the ascetic has been presented as a single and solitary figure, completely severed from all institutional and social ties. This formative scholarly bias has made it difficult for generations of scholars to understand the institutional salience of the maṭha. Consequently, there still prevails a sense that ascetics—*saṃnyāsins*, *yatis*, *sadhus*, *munis*, *yogis*, *gosains*—have always and still remain beyond the bounds of social and political life. Recent reappraisals have shown that the maṭha, far from being marginal and isolated, was one of the central institutions of governance in premodern and colonial India. Rivaling the court and the temple, the maṭha often served as the central governing institution for a particular community or region.

A maṭha houses a single order of adherents and is governed by a guru, who initiates followers into the order through a variety of rituals and practices of initiation. For instance, the ritual of initiation may involve the initiate receiving a secret mantra from the guru, or it may simply be the ritual culmination of many years of training and study. Ascetic orders are sometimes, but not always, governed by restrictive criteria for admission; strict rules of celibacy and the renunciation of one's caste and social identity are among the criteria that have generally been overemphasized. Contrary to this theoretical bias, evidence from the Mughal and colonial

periods shows that ascetics hailed from a variety of social backgrounds and engaged in an astonishing variety of occupations, ranging from the martial to the financial. It is not surprising therefore that many modern-day maṭhas are as wealthy as they are politically powerful. Surveying the ethnographic and historical evidence, it is difficult to find a single criterion (gender, celibacy, caste) of generalization that would comprehend all maṭha orders. The centrality of the guru and the ritual of initiation may constitute the only delimiting characteristics of the institution. Indeed, recent scholarship has shown the immense heterogeneity of ascetics and maṭhas, a welcome corrective to the erstwhile construction of asceticism, which abstracted a theory of monasticism that bore little resemblance to this variegated reality.¹⁰

Little is known about the working of the medieval maṭha. Nevertheless, Sears' recent exploration of a number of medieval maṭhas, located in modern day Madhya Pradesh, has shed light upon the practical dimensions of life and spiritual practice among a group of Śaiva *saṃnyāsins*. Sears' study has shown that the medieval maṭha served a variety of ritual, political, and spiritual purposes. Thus, alongside cells that were designed for meditation practices were halls and receptions where the guru taught students, performed rituals (esoteric and public), held audiences, and adjudicated matters of public concern. The artistic and architectural details—from the expensive stone used in the construction of these structures to the inscriptions detailing

¹⁰ Matthew Clark provides a detailed genealogy of the study of asceticism in the Introduction to his work. Matthew Clark, *The Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs: The Integration of Ascetic Lineages into an Order*. (Leiden: Brill, 2006); William R. Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires*, Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society 12 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); George Weston Briggs, *Gorakhnāth and the Kānpḥaṭa Yogīs* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982); P.N. Bhalla, "The Gosain Brothers," *Journal of Indian History* XXIII, no. 2 (1944): 128–36; Bernard Cohn, "The Role of the Gosains in the Economy of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Upper India," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 1, no. 4 (1964): 175–82; Lynn Teskey Denton and Steven Collins, *Female Ascetics in Hinduism*, SUNY Series in Hindu Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004); G.S. Ghurye, *Indian Sadhus*, 2nd ed. (Bombay: Popular Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 1964); Meena Khandelwal, *Women in Ochre Robes: Gendering Hindu Renunciation*, SUNY Series in Hindu Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

donations to the maṭha—show how deeply embedded the maṭha was in the life of the larger community, and the considerable assets that the maṭha held.¹¹

The maṭha at Śṛṅgeri, which purports to have been founded by the eighth-century exponent of Advaita Vedānta, Śaṅkarācārya, is part of a larger network of pan-Indian monastic orders, called the *Daśanāmīs*, comprising orders of *saṃnyāsins* bearing one of the ten initiatory names. Śṛṅgeri claims to be the oldest of the four original maṭhas of this larger group, which were founded by Śaṅkara to mark the four cardinal directions during his universal conquest (*digvijaya*). Indeed, the importance of Śaṅkara is indicated by the fact that his connection to these maṭhas has been institutionalized; the gurus of each of these maṭhas is referred to as Śaṅkarācārya. When Śṛṅgeri is first mentioned in the inscriptional record, in 1346, it comprises an order of virtuosos (*paramahaṃsa*) *saṃnyāsins*, who directed on the Advaita Vedānta path to liberation (*mukti*) by the guru of the order. Though the initiated *paramahaṃsa saṃnyāsins* of Śṛṅgeri pursue a salvific program of study and meditative practice intended to result in liberation, the maṭha and guru are responsible for providing spiritual direction and religious services for a far broader constituency of followers. This wider sphere of religious and civic engagement is often referred to by the term Smārta or Vedic religion. In practice, this term, which is intended to comprehend a non-sectarian commitment to the religious values articulated in the Vedic and Dharmasāstra traditions, has come to encompass the religious practices of an extremely select Brahmanical elite.

The pivotal figure in the institutional armature of the premodern maṭha was the guru, the spiritual preceptor who was responsible for the salvific progress of initiate *saṃnyāsins*. As Chatterjee's work has shown, the maṭha replicated kinship and familial patterns in its practices of

¹¹ Tamara I. Sears, *Worldly Gurus and Spiritual Kings: Architecture and Asceticism in Medieval India* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2014).

governance. For instance, the Śrīngeri maṭha, which enforced strict rules of celibacy for its initiate *saṃnyāsin*, the guru served as a spiritual father, indeed the word “guru” itself could be used to refer to one’s preceptor, spiritual director, or father. Indeed, the *brahmacarya* phase during which a newly initiated boy was trained in the Vedic mode of life unfolded in the house of the initiate’s guru. In addition to being trained in ritual performance, the initiate was formed by his guru by means of an arsenal ascetic practices—fasting, begging for alms, attending to the ritual fires—that required the initiate’s complete submission to the authority of his ritual father. The maṭha archive is replete with representations of the guru as *the* sole paternal figure. In the inscriptional records and texts, the guru was represented as the progenitor of a lineage of *saṃnyāsins* who were his institutional and spiritual wards. Thus, the *saṃnyāsins* of Śrīngeri trace their lineage back to the *ur* spiritual father, Śaṅkarācārya, the purported progenitor of the order. The guru, like a good king or father, was responsible not merely for the salvific or spiritual welfare of his ascetic students, but moreover, ensured the spiritual and material welfare of all those who submitted to his spiritual dominion. The guru symbolized the institutionalization of the *saṃnyāsa* (renunciate) order, and his dual role as administrator and preceptor was emblematic of the singular spiritual authority that the maṭha commanded. As administrator, the guru oversaw, even if only in a ritual capacity, the generative redistribution of resources in the service of supporting and advancing the spiritual interests of the maṭha. He also served as the principal governor of the Vedic tradition, which the maṭha enlivened through its various scholastic and religious institutions. In building schools, training teachers, composing, replicating, and disseminating pedagogical texts, sponsoring ritual performance, and initiating

and training qualified brahmins into the order of *saṃnyāsin*, the maṭha served as the cornerstone of the revival of a Vedic religion.¹²

The Vedic Tradition at Śṛṅgeri

The principal argument I advance in this dissertation—that the textual corpus produced by Śṛṅgeri maṭha promulgated a vision of monastic governmentality—includes a subsidiary argument that demonstrates that the maṭha reimagined and reconstituted the Vedic canon to authorize their management of human conduct. The most important element of this reinvention of tradition was the institutionalization of several disparate strands of a diffuse Vedic past. In this effort of institutionalization, the maṭha produced the Vedic basis for the propagation of a variety of ethical subjectivities, to which end, the maṭha synthesized the hermeneutic and normative Vedic traditions. Specifically, the Vedic tradition and canon were re-construed to reflect two streams of its development, namely, the hermeneutic tradition consisting of the schools of Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta, and the *dharmaśāstric* tradition referred to as *varnāśramadharma* (the orders of caste and phase of life). The Vedic tradition thus comprised the root texts that formed a canon, which was then subject to different modes of interpretation to provide the ballast for the maṭha’s view of Vedic doctrine and conduct.

The Vedas refer to a collection of texts that form the basis for an orthodox Hindu tradition. There are four Saṃhitā texts, the Ṛgveda Saṃhitā, the Yajurveda Saṃhitā, the Sāmaveda Saṃhitā, and the Atharvaveda Saṃhitā, each with a number of recensions. The Ṛgveda, the oldest stratum of text, consists of hymns composed in an archaic form of Sanskrit.

¹² Chatterjee, “Monastic Governmentality, Colonial Misogyny, and Postcolonial Amnesia in South Asia,” *History of the Present* 3, no. 1 (2013): 57, <https://doi.org/10.5406/historypresent.3.1.0057>.

Although these hymns suggest that they were composed for ritual performances, the lineaments of this ancient ritual system are no longer discernible in the traces of either text or practice. In the classical Vedic ritual—the lineaments of which are systematized in the *Kalpasūtras* or ritual manuals—the hymns of the Ṛgveda are chanted by the Hotṛ priest. The Yajurveda comprises sections from the Ṛgveda, extracted from their poetic context, and rearranged to form the mantras that are used by the Adhvaryu priest in the classical Vedic ritual. The Sāmaveda is similarly composed largely out of verses taken from the Ṛgveda. These are reconstituted into *sāmans* or chants that are sung by the Udgātṛ priest in the classical Vedic ritual. Lastly, the Atharvaveda, often considered to be additional to the other three Vedas, consists of mantras that are employed for other, often domestic, rituals. Each vedic Saṃhitā is further connected to its own Brāhmaṇa text. Brāhmaṇas form the earliest interpretive stratum of the vedic tradition; not only do these texts make sense of the ritual application of the Saṃhitā texts themselves, but also provide narrative reasons for why the ritual must be performed precisely as it is prescribed. The final layer of the Vedic corpus consists of the Upaniṣads, which, much like the Brāhmaṇas to which they are connected, attempt to explain the root text. Rather than explicating the ritual application of the Saṃhitā texts, the Upaniṣads explain the secret cosmic connections that the Saṃhitā texts contain, claiming further that knowledge of these secret connections leads the individual knowledge of self, and liberation from the unceasing cycle of deaths.

There are, in addition to this corpus, a number of distinct disciplinary traditions, each of which aims to explicate some aspect of the Vedic corpus. For instance, treatises on etymology (*Nirukta*) tackle the etymology of abstruse Vedic words, whereas treatises on recitation (*śikṣā*) systematically teach the various modes of Vedic recitation. These ancillary disciplines broadly serve to explicate the Vedas and assist in ritual performance. Hermeneutics (*Mīmāṃsā*)

constitutes one of these systematic interventions in Vedic interpretation. There are two currents of Vedic hermeneutics, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, which place the Saṃhitā texts and the Upaniṣads at the root of their respective ethical projects. The two hermeneutic traditions produce two very different ethical systems, reflecting the differences between the Saṃhitās and the Upaniṣads, while nevertheless adopting a unitary Vedic framework. Thus, both systems adopt the arguments, initially promulgated by Mīmāṃsā, that the Veda is an eternal, authorless text that is the *only* source of knowledge regarding a set of transcendent causal relations that connect the performance of the Vedic ritual to desirable (paradigmatically, post-mortem) results for the human agent. The Mīmāṃsā system further explains the Veda is the only means for humans to know that were an eligible and properly consecrated performer to perform the Vedic ritual, the workings of which are detailed in the Vedic texts, he would invariably receive the results of the act, paradigmatically heaven. Indeed, according to Mīmāṃsā, the Vedas *obligate* properly qualified twice-born males to undertake a life of strict adherence to the ritual – the ritual is the cornerstone of his social and ethical identity.

The tradition of Advaita (non-dual) Vedānta, promulgated by the 8th century theologian Śaṅkara, draws upon the Upaniṣads—the latter section of the Vedic corpus which explicates the causal connection between the esoteric knowledge of the unitary nature of reality and the liberation of the ritual self—to advance a very different ethical system than the ritualism of Mīmāṃsā. In brief, the Advaita system of Vedic hermeneutics accepts the Mīmāṃsā interpretation of the Vedic ritual, but argues that the effects of the ritual, which leads men to post-mortem bliss, are ephemeral. Though humans attain to heaven by performing the ritual, they are nevertheless not liberated from the ceaseless cycle of rebirth. As soon as the transmigrating self has experienced the results of ritual performance—be it heaven or some other transcendent

felicity—it is dispatched, once again, to embodied existence. Since action always begets action, and since finitude must result in finitude, humans cannot escape the cycle of rebirth and re-death (*samsāra*) through the performance of the Vedic ritual. Advaita Vedānta presents this source of discontent to argue that, in addition to revealing the transcendent causality of the ritual, the Vedas also convey to humans the esoteric means to escape ceaseless suffering (*samsāra*). The perfect knowledge of the underlying unity of the universe—that the notions of the self and the other, the very conditions upon which action is predicated, constitute an erroneous view of reality—results in complete freedom and liberation for the self; once the veil of existential ignorance is lifted, the self endures in a state of perfect bliss. Advaita Vedānta produces a hermeneutic system to demonstrate that the Vedas convey this to be the ultimate, unparalleled, human end.

Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics provides the basis for the ritual mode of Vedic life. This is further elaborated in the Smṛti tradition and is reified by the elaboration of the *dharmasāstra* texts that make clear the divisions of society and the forms of life that Vedic ritualism implies. The *dharmasāstra* texts clarify those forms of conduct that support and are subordinated to the performance of the ritual. For instance, since the ritual may only be performed by married males who have been initiated (thus, twice-born) and trained in the Vedic texts, the *dharmasāstra* texts fill in the ritual details for the ceremonies implied but not explicated by the Vedas. Beginning with the birth rituals (*jāta-karman*) and extending through initiation (*upanayana*), Vedic studentship (*brahmacarya*) and marriage, the *dharmasāstra* texts direct the formation and conduct of a twice-born male so that he may undertake the life-long task of performing the Vedic ritual. This larger system of conduct, ritual and mundane, is referred to as the *varṇāśrama-dharma*, the system of *varṇa* (the caste assigned at birth) and *āśrama* (order or station of life).

According to the *dharma* texts, there are four principal *varṇas*: Brahmin, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, and Śūdra. The male members of the first three *varṇas* are entitled to initiation (which constitutes their second birth) and Vedic study with a guru (spanning several years that are spent in the guru's house). Thus, these "twice-born" males are eligible, upon completing their Vedic training and marrying, to undertake the Vedic ritual. Śūdras and women are not allowed to perform the ritual, although the sacrificer's (*yajamāna*'s) wife must assist her husband at key junctures of the performance. The members of the three *varṇas* are distinguished with regard to the rituals they are entitled to perform and the extra-ritual codes of conduct to which they are obligated to adhere. These distinctions are conceived to regulate all aspects of life and to ramify the ritual divisions between the *varṇas*. *Āśrama*, or station of life constitutes the other regulating institution of Vedic sociality. There are four *āśramas* or phases, which extend from initiation to death: *brahmacarya* (Vedic studentship), *garhasthya* (householder ritualist), *vānaprastha* (forest-dwelling), and *saṃnyāsa* (renunciation). The strictures of the *dharma* texts, which direct the social and ritual conduct of individuals, are mostly concerned with the first two stages, which are, insofar as they regulate the life of ritualists, critical to the Vedic order. Since the stages of studentship and ritualist householder form the basis for caste society, the *dharma* texts are most concerned to regulate their proper conduct.¹³

Saṃnyāsa or renunciation (of caste society), lying outside the ritual schema, constitutes a break with this ethical order. Indeed, the Vedic ritualist must die to his ritual self and the world of ritual to enter this final stage. He must renounce his ritual identity, the markers of his status in the social world, and he must take on the concerns of an entirely different ethical system; he must strive to free himself completely from the world of ritual and rebirth. It is here that the teachings

¹³ For a historical study of the *āśrama* system, see Patrick Olivelle, *The Āśrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

of Advaita Vedānta enter the frame. The act of renunciation, the ritual of dying to one's social identity, constitutes the initiation to this final stage of life, *saṃnyāsa*, which is itself concerned with transcending the limits of life and death. Dying to the world of action, the renunciant is initiated into the world of knowledge and liberation by his guru. Although the spiritual direction of the guru was critical in Śaṅkara's conceptualization of the initiate's progress, there is no historical evidence to show that, prior to the emergence of Śṛṅgeri maṭha in the fourteenth century, the *saṃnyāsa* order had an institutional home. We cannot ascribe this silence to the erasure of the historical record – the traditional Vedānta texts on renunciation are not merely silent on the possibility that there exists a separate and parallel social institution—the maṭha—under the auspices of which the *saṃnyāsa* mode of life is pursued and supported. Rather, they uniformly speak of the path followed by the *saṃnyāsin* as a solitary one; following a period of tutelage in the esoteric knowledge of the Upaniṣads, the *saṃnyāsin* committed to the Advaita Vedānta vision of liberation must strive *alone*. Not only did the maṭha at Śṛṅgeri radically transform this tradition, insofar as it forged an institutional locus for the *saṃnyāsa* order, but, moreover, it asserted its authority—as the sole interpreter and administrator of the ethical order envisioned by the Vedas—over caste society at large. It administered its rule through the governance of individual souls.¹⁴

Śṛṅgeri maṭha emerged as the first and most important institutional locus for virtuous Brahmin *saṃnyāsins*—they are called *paramahaṃsa saṃnyāsins*—to take up the pursuit of liberation, according to the Advaita Vedānta tradition. But Śṛṅgeri is distinguished not simply in this regard, as the first instance of the institutionalization of Advaita Vedānta. Aspiring to a far

¹⁴ Patrick Olivelle, *Rules and Regulations of Brahmanical Asceticism* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995); Patrick Olivelle, *Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣads* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

higher station, the maṭha asserted its ethical government over all Vedic subjects by formulating and implementing a theory of totalizing monastic government. By staking this claim on its special role in making sense of the Vedas, the maṭha also arrogated to itself the task of making sense of the lives of its subjects.

This dissertation argues first of all that the Śringeri maṭha promulgated a theory of monastic power that was differently theorized and practiced than royal power. Second, in support of this claim, I analyse monastic power using the Foucaultian language of governmentality. In short, I argue that monastic power was predicated upon a coherent theory of monastic governmentality – a particular operation of power that centered upon subject-formation.

Monastic governmentality, I argue, may be analysed further into pastoral care, which encompasses those material effects of the maṭha's interest in the ultimate welfare of its subjects. Thus, for instance, pastoral care would include the maṭha's donation of lands to settle Brahmin families, or the construction of irrigation infrastructure to support those communities, or the construction of schools, accommodations for pilgrims, and alms halls. Recognizing that pastoral care has a distinctly Christian history and valence, an emic category that would comprehend this particular dimension of monastic governmentality would be the gift, or *dāna*. The second dimension of monastic governmentality consists of disciplinary power, or the capacity of the maṭha to form subjects out of human beings, and to persuade these subjects to act upon themselves.

Disciplinary power, which I refer to using the emic category of the prescription or *vidhi*, operates upon humans by reconstituting them as subjects who are capable of pursuing different modes of self-formation. Monastic governmentality was realized through the maṭha's direction of the ethical subjectivities of all those who were included within its dominion. Supported by a variety

of interconnected economies, the maṭha's power operated through its capacity to mould and manage its subjects.¹⁵

My use of the term monastic governmentality is also intended to suggest that the operation of monastic power was different than the operation of royal power. In other words, neither was the maṭha, as a governmental entity, merely a simulacrum of kingship, nor did power operate in the same undifferentiated manner in all institutional contexts. Rather, the operation of monastic power was conditioned by monastic governmentality, the distinctive logic according to which the maṭha was positioned as an institution, over and against other institutions, and over its subjects. Its institutional position was determined both by its capacity to support certain types of human flourishing, and its imperative to shape those humans in its care into ethical subjects. The distinctive nature of monastic power thus derived from the maṭha's singular capacity to, first of all, discern and declare the norms of human conduct, and, second, to direct the conduct of human subjects in adherence with those norms. These norms were derived from the maṭha's interpretation of the Vedic canon, and the regulation of conduct was fashioned along the Vedic model and eligibility (*adhikāra*) and prescription (*vidhi*).¹⁶

¹⁵ In my use of pastoral power and pastoral care, I follow Indrani Chatterjee, who has argued that, "Foucault's 'pastoral power' can be usefully engaged by historians of the subcontinent by making the centrality of the oeconomia explicit in all political theorising, and secondly by making its reconstitution critical to the generation of dissent in a colonial context." Noting the importance of pastoral care to our understanding of anti-colonial resistance, Chatterjee locates the critical lacuna in the study of precolonial period. "Yet, very few scholars have attended to the genealogy of such governmentality in pastoral care-giving regimes of an earlier period. Nor have they particularised colonial-era shifts that transformed older care-givers and their flocks alike. This is where thinking with – and extending – Foucault's analysis of the transformation of pastorates of souls into a politics of men can be productive for historians."

Stephen Legg and Deana Heath, eds., *South Asian Governmentalities: Michel Foucault and the Question of Postcolonial Orderings*, South Asia in the Social Sciences 6 (Cambridge New York, NY Port Melbourne New Delhi Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 58–60.

¹⁶ For a study of the conduct of conduct in the courtly setting, see Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (New Delhi; Cambridge: Foundations Books Pvt. Ltd. ; Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Monastic Governmentality

In thinking about monastic governmentality in terms of power and subjectivity, I have made use of Michel Foucault's late work, which homed in on the genealogies of the subject in the history of the West. Reflecting on his project, Foucault wrote that he was interested in the modes by which "human beings are made into subjects."¹⁷ For Foucault subject-formation is critical to the operation of power; freedom, or at least the apprehension of freedom, is a necessary precondition for the operation of power. In this respect, the operation of power is helpfully distinguished from domination. Power acts not upon objects, but upon the actions of subjects. Thus, the person whose actions are subject to relations of power must be free.¹⁸ Foucault's notion of the operation of power, which bears some similarity to Bourdieu's notion of the field and *habitus*, depends heavily upon a subject who is authorized and persuaded to act freely, albeit constrained to various degrees by the material conditions of the field of operation. The operation of power consists in conditioning the field of possible actions, and forming subjects who chart their course in that field.¹⁹ In other words, such a theory of power privileges

¹⁷ "I would like to say, first of all, what has been the goal of my work during the last twenty years. It has not been to analyze the phenomena of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective instead has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects." Michel Foucault, James D. Faubion, and Michel Foucault, *Power*, Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Michel Foucault ; Vol. 3 (London: Penguin, 2002), 326.

¹⁸ "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are 'free.' by this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behavior are available. Where the determining factors are exhaustive, there is no relationship of power: slavery is not a power relationship when a man is in chains, only when he has some mobility, even a chance of escape." Foucault, Faubion, and Foucault, 342.

¹⁹ "Power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action, even though, of course, it is inscribed in a field of sparse available possibilities underpinned by permanent structures. It operates on the field of possibilities in which the behaviour of active subjects is able to inscribe itself. It is a set of actions on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constrains or forbids absolutely, but it always a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions." Foucault, Faubion, and Foucault, 341. For Bourdieu's examination of the dynamic dimensions of the operation of power, see Pierre Bourdieu and Richard Nice, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 2019,

the technologies, structures, and processes that are critical to the formation of the subject.

Foucault sums up his position in an oft-quoted passage: “Perhaps the equivocal nature of the term ‘conduct’ is one of the best aids for coming to terms with the specificity of power relations. To ‘conduct’ is at the same time to ‘lead’ others (according to mechanisms of coercion that are, to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities. The exercise of power is a ‘conduct of conducts’ and a management of possibilities. Basically, power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or their mutual engagement than a question of ‘government.’”²⁰

In Foucault’s elegant explication, the operation of power is most subtle, all-encompassing, and seamless when the distance between these two dimensions of conduct is effaced. That is, when it is difficult to distinguish actions in which the subject is being led from those actions where the subject acts freely within an open field of possibilities; instances where the intervention of institutions, techniques and practices are inseparable from the subject’s self-expression. To put it differently, there is a crucial element of subject-formation that consists of a human being “subjecting” himself or herself to a particular regime of truth, such that subject-formation is nothing other than the manifestation of a truth. Foucault explores this dimension of subject-formation, where the creation of subjectivity and agency is seen as an expression of truth, in his lectures titled, *On the Government of the Living*.

In his lecture on regimes of truth, Foucault emphasises that he is interested in the subjective or normative dimension of truth, that is, he is interested in the possibility that truth can

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511812507>. For a recent reappraisal of Bourdieu’s theory of fields, see Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam, *A Theory of Fields* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁰ Foucault, Faubion, and Foucault, *Power*, 341.

constrain individuals to act in certain ways.²¹ In this vein, he demonstrates the distinction between objective truth and the subjective dimension of regimes of truth. In order to show the difference between these two senses of truth, he considers a case involving a proposition that is self-evidently and objectively true, that is, a proposition that does not depend upon a subject's acknowledgement to be true. This allows Foucault to examine the normative or subjective dimension of truth.

Let us assume, Foucault says, that two logicians are arguing about the truth of a proposition. At the beginning of the discussion the truth of the proposition is disputed, but by the end of their discussion, the two logicians agree that the proposition in question is true. The moment that one of these two logicians accepts the truth of the proposition, the moment she submits to the truth of the proposition, we are aware that a regime of truth is operative. For the logician to state, "The proposition is true, *therefore*, I submit," she must be committed to the rules of the game in which the ascertainment of certain kinds of truth are binding. The crucial question here is, what is it that *causes* a person to accept something as true. What is the normative force of "therefore?" The truth of the proposition has an effect, indeed *the* desired effect precisely because the logician is committed to logic; her submission to the truth follows from her submission to certain practices and modes of arriving at the truth, all of which constitute her subjectivity as a logician. The fact that the proposition is objectively true is not probative. In a particular regime of truth, for the truth to constrain subjects in a predictable or disciplined manner, the subject must be trained to recognize the truth, she must be authorized to

²¹ "A regime of truth is then that which constrains individuals to these truth acts, that which defines, determines the form of these acts and establishes their conditions of effectuation and specific effects. Roughly speaking, a regime of truth is that which determines the obligations of individuals with regard to procedures of manifestation of truth." Michel Foucault et al., *On the Government of the Living: Lectures At the College de France, 1979 - 1980*. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 94.

articulate it, to bind herself to it; in other words, the rituals, institutions and practices that are constitutive of the subject are linked to a certain regime of truth. The formation of the subject is itself connected to the manifestation of truth.²²

Foucault's analysis of the mutually constitutive elements of truth and subjectivity enables him to bring into view a history of subjectivity in the West that withstands the seismic ruptures of modernity and the arrival of the scientific age. It allows him to consider how other, non-scientific and premodern regimes of truth operated to form subjects. One of the results of this mode of genealogical investigation, as evinced by his later lectures, was his advancement of Carl Schmitt's insight that the regnant theories and concepts of politics have a long theological genealogy. In his meditations on the modern state, Foucault traced back the rationalized structures and practices of governmentality to pastoral power, specifically—and this is important to my argument—as that conduct of conduct that was critical to the *institutionalization* of Christianity as a Church. Foucault explored the distinctive elements of pastoral power, particularly as these are juxtaposed with the informing principles, processes and techniques that coalesce in the constitution of modern governmentality. Eschewing these interesting points of divergence—how is the notion of nomination distinct from the notion of normalization, for instance—I am interested in Foucault's understanding of pastoral power, particularly insofar as it was linked to the institutionalization of Christianity. Though his discussion of the pastorate spans several lectures, I have synthesized his main arguments as they inform my interests.²³

²² “There has to be a subject who can say: when it is true, and evidently true, I will submit. There has to be a subject who can say: it is evident, therefore I submit.” “There are many other ways of binding the individual to the manifestation of truth, and of binding him to the manifestation of truth by other acts, with other forms of bond, according to other obligations and with other effects than those defined in science, for example, by the self-indexation of truth.” Foucault et al., 98–99.

²³ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, University of Chicago Press ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Pastoral power was distinct from other types of power in a number of important regards. Unlike royal power or the power of the state, it did not govern either a territory or a population. It was directed to the government of individuals or selves. Further, since it was not concerned with the governance of territory, it was unconcerned with the imperative of kingship, the acquisition of more territory. Rather, since pastoral power was ultimately concerned with the eternal state of the individual's soul, the soul itself became the site for the operation of that power. In other words, pastoral power, which was an ultimately beneficent form of power, was, insofar as it consisted in directing the individual soul, singularly focused on the regulation or governance of the everyday conduct of the individual.²⁴

The particular configurations of pastoral power follow from this fundamental imperative. First of all, pastoral power is concerned with the direction of the souls of its subjects; it must work teleologically. Thus, the governing institution must formulate a set of norms to guide the direction of its spiritual subjects. These norms form the basis for the direction of the individual adherent. They form the horizon with reference to which the technologies, processes, institutions and rituals cohere in forming a subject.

“In the Western world I think the real history of the pastorate as the source of a specific type of power over men, as a model and matrix of procedures for the government of men, really only begins with Christianity... We should no doubt say, if not with more precision, at least a bit more accurately, that the pastorate begins with a process that is absolutely unique in history and no other example of which is found in the history of any other civilization: the process by which a religion, a religious community, constitutes itself as a Church, that is to say, as an institution that claims to govern men in their daily life on the grounds of leading them to eternal life in the other world, and to do this not only on the scale of a definite group, of a city or a state, but of the whole of humanity. The Church is a religion that thus lays claim to the daily government of men in their real life on the grounds of their salvation and on the scale of humanity, and we have no other example of this in the history of societies.” Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-78*, Lectures at the Collège de France (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 148.

²⁴ The imperative of kingship is summed up by two different terms of art from the Indian theories of power. First, *jigīṣā*, or the insatiable urge or desire for conquest, and second, *yoga-kṣema*, the cultivation of that which has been acquired. These two terms, in a profound, albeit theoretical, sense, drive the engine of kingship. For more on these terms, see, Kauṭalya and Patrick Olivelle, *King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra: A New Annotated Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Second, the formation of the subject requires spiritual direction and a spiritual director. In Foucault's sweeping historical analysis of power, he notes that it is with the institutionalization of Christianity that a range of techniques—confession, penitence, submission, monastic discipline—emerged which tied the spiritual care of the self with the direction provided by institutional figures. In his analysis, subject-formation relied not simply on practices that enabled self-knowledge but also ones that revealed the self to others, principally, the spiritual director or teacher. In other words, the self, as the site for the inscription of a certain regime of truth had to be legible not simply to the subject herself but to the community and institution that provided pastoral care and direction. The details of Foucault's scholarly investigations—for instance, his focus on practices of penitence and baptism, or the development of confession—need not detain us. His sustained reflections show that pastoral power constitutes a distinct tradition and form of governmentality in the West. I hope that my analysis of monastic governmentality in medieval India, which borrows liberally from Foucault's seminal works, is less an exercise of mimicry and more a work of rhyme.

Monastic Governmentality in the Medieval Maṭha

Thus far, I have used a variety of nebulous terms to characterize the ends to which this monumental intellectual project was undertaken by the maṭha at Śrīṅgeri. In this dissertation, I argue that the textual and inscriptional evidence produced by the maṭha in the latter half of the fourteenth century provided a vision of monastic power based on a theory of monastic governmentality.

Monastic governmentality, as I use it, has very little to do with the particular contexts Foucault used the term “governmentality” to explain. For Foucault, governmentality is the

operation of power that takes as its target a population. A population, which is the object of governmentality is not a mere collection of juridical subjects. Rather, a population is an effect of a certain regime that combines a liberal tradition of naturalizing and sacrilizing individual impulses with the instruments of scientific analysis. It is “a set of elements in which we can note constants and regularities even in accidents, in which we identify the universal of desire regularly producing the benefit of all, and with regard to which we can identify a number of modifiable variables on which it depends.” Nevertheless, I find the term useful because it provides an analysis of power (a logic to governance) that, instead of focusing narrowly on the coercive force of domination, understands its operation to be in the hands of the subject herself. This is what Foucault refers to as the “conduct of conduct,” which I take to be the regulation of the conduct of individual selves. As my discussion of Foucault’s formulation of pastoral power has shown, the critical element of monastic power or governmentality lies in its concern for the ethical development of the subject.²⁵

The word “subject” here is particularly apposite in capturing the two dimensions of the operation of this type of power. First, in the sense of being subject to a series of rules, regulations, conventions, and practices of governance. Second, in the sense of being the subject of some reflexive action; that is, the capacity that the subject possesses to act upon herself. This

²⁵ My use of monastic governmentality also diverges considerably from Indrani Chatterjee’s use of the term. For Chatterjee, “monasticity” refers to the “form of governmentality in South Asia that took the labors of women-centered households as integral to the production of both skill and people.” Further, Chatterjee analyzes monastic governmentality into three constituent relational structures: the relationships of initiation and consecration that bound students and teachers, the submission to certain legal-moral and disciplinary codes under the direction of the guru, and the transformation of these codes of codependent conduct into productive labor and the creation of kinship-based economies. Chatterjee’s broad historical scope and her analysis of a multitude of traditions allow her to employ a wider lens—one that focuses on gender, family, and labor—in a way that my materials do not allow. Nevertheless, in thinking with Chatterjee’s conceptualization of monastic governmentality—particularly, her understanding of the distinction between *dāna* and *dakṣiṇā*—has helped me understand the considerable blind spots that limit this study.

then is precisely the respect in which objective power, the coercive force which acts upon the governed as an object, differs from subject-formation. In this second type of power relation, the governing entity controls the means to subject-formation; that is to say, it not only authorizes, trains, credentials, and enjoins the subject to conduct herself in a particular manner, but, at the same time, evinces care for the welfare and benefit of the subject.²⁶ But, how to locate a genealogy of monastic governmentality in South Asia, when the juxtaposition of these two terms would seem incoherent, at best, to most scholars of premodern India? It does not suffice to simply superimpose analyses of the pre-modern state upon the institution of the maṭha. The maṭha's adoption of a very different logic of power than the kingdom profoundly influenced the mechanisms and practices of governance it evinced.

To explain: Although the maṭha administered great swathes of land, revenue streams, and diverse groups of people, I am not arguing that monastic governmentality consisted simply in the

²⁶ Many scholars would deny the application of governmentality, which implies a set of rational instruments and regimes of governance, to the premodern world. Foucault uses the term to refer to that regime of governance that takes a population as its target.

Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 74.

Indeed, the undergirding concepts are predicated upon the marrying of knowledge (as constituted by certain rationalizing processes) and power is a unique feature of modernity. In other words, the emergence of scientism, forged to a great extent in the laboratory of empire, and the demands of colonial states to produce criteria for rational government of alien subjects produced a distinct kind of rationality of government. For two works on the topic of governmentality in colonial India, see U. Kalpagam, *Rule by Numbers: Governmentality in Colonial India* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014); Peter Gottschalk, *Religion, Science, and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

“I think that if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization, he has to take into account not only techniques of domination but also techniques of the self. Let's say: he has to take into account the interaction between those two techniques – techniques of domination and techniques of the self. He has to take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, he has to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion and domination. The contact point, where the individuals are driven by others is tied to they conduct themselves, is what we can call, I think government. Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word, governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself.” Michel Foucault, “About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth,” *Political Theory* 21, no. 2 (1993): 203–4.

organization and administration of these processes. Rather, I am arguing that the maṭha evinced a certain systematic logic in its approach to the government of its subjects, its overriding concern to which its various administrative functions were subordinated. The various economies it administered, its bureaucratic and diplomatic organs, the revenues it brought in and the investments it made, all these programmatic practices, which might seem to us to be state-like, were indeed governed by a radically different concern: to provide the guidance and care for its subjects according to the Vedic norms the maṭha promulgated. What was the logic of this form of government? In this brief explication of monastic governmentality, I focus on disciplinary power (*vidhi*) of maṭha in subject-formation. I explicate the workings of pastoral care, the other dimension of monastic governmentality, in Chapter 1.

Let us take a step back and, to clarify the matter, begin with the notion of the pre-institutional human being, who has not been initiated into the Vedic order, that is, a human being who has not yet been made into a subject. In the Vedic view of the world that the maṭha institutionalized, human beings are assigned a certain status (*varṇa*) by birth (*jāti*). Thus, a person may be born a śūdra, a vaiśya, a kṣatriya or a brahmin. Indeed, the very use of the word *jāti* (birth) to refer to a person's *varṇa* status is indicative of the determinative effects of birth in this normative vision. We may take the two determinants of status, birth (*jāti*) and gender, to constitute, in the normative Vedic vision of the maṭha, a way of separating the state of being initiated (born again, to use the language of the tradition) from those who are either denied initiation or have lost that status. Thus, by his or her very birth, each human is located in a category (even if these are considered innate) of birth-status. These facts of life (in addition to certain disabilities) are considered to be determinative of the range of subjectivities available to a

person. In other words, these pre-institutional attributes are nevertheless determinative of the institutional path that a person is entitled (and thus credentialed) to follow.

The life of a subject begins (since women are almost entirely excluded from the rituals of credentialing, I use the masculine pronoun) with his second birth, his initiation (*upanayana*) into Vedic study. This is the moment that he is subject to disciplining processes synthesized and implemented by the maṭha. But, what is the larger *normative* structure in which these processes of training and credentialing make sense? Another way of asking this question is, whither human conduct? What distinguishes appropriate human conduct from inappropriate action? There are, as the Vedic tradition synthesized by the maṭha dictates, two determinative factors – the objective, and the subject or agent of the action. According to this normative theory, humans are naturally driven—in a state of nature—to obtain what they desire (*iṣṭa-prāpti*) and avoid what is undesirable (*aniṣṭa-parihāra*). In the state of nature, anyone may use any means to obtain anything they desire. In the normative world that the maṭha constructs and governs, certain human subjects are authorized to pursue certain ends with the aid of certain prescribed means. This intervention into human conduct is the business of *sāstra* (teaching), technical treatises that aim to instruct humans in the best, most appropriate way to achieve the desirable and avoid the undesirable. The Veda is the *sāstra par excellence*, and the maṭha the institution *par excellence* for administering that teaching.

Let me give an example that is alien enough to us to illustrate the constructed nature of *sāstric* knowledge. One of the principal leisurely pursuits of the king is the hunt. For a king, the hunt is an object of desire (*kāma*). Already, we have a normative intervention. Anyone may wish to hunt, but only certain subjects—in the normative *dharmasāstric* or *nīti-sāstric* (*nīti-sāstra* is the science of governance) universe—are entitled to do so. The king's identity is constructed—partly,

at least—around the hunt. He is one of a select group of subjects who may properly desire the hunt. Thus, not everyone is equally entitled to hunt; the king has not only the means (*artha*) but the entitlement (*adhikāra*) to go hunting. Now, let us say our normative king is out hunting and he comes across an elephant. In the state of nature, there is nothing to stop the king, nor anyone else for that matter, from shooting and killing an elephant. But, in the normative tradition—which reflects the importance of the elephant as a military animal and a symbol of kingship—killing an elephant, for a subject of the realm, is strictly prohibited upon pain of death.²⁷ In fact, even the king ought not kill an elephant, a lesson from the *sāstras* that Raghu, the very model of kingship, remembers and abides by even in a moment of great personal peril, when he is confronted by a wild elephant charging at him.²⁸ This is an example of the transformation that the human subject experiences in the passage from nature to culture, a passage that every normative regime rehashes.

Thus far, I have shown that humans are naturally given to pursuing certain self-evident ends (pleasure and profit, *kāma* and *artha*, as the normative tradition tells us). To do so without regard for the normative conventions that guide human conduct (who can pursue what end, at what time, with what means) is to be without the *dharmaśāstra* tradition (which is ultimately derivative of the Vedic tradition). Thus, even with regard to those ends that are self-evident to humans, the normative regime claims the authority to regulate conduct. This is largely the domain of the *kāmaśāstra* and the *arthaśāstra* (the science of pleasure and the science of profit).

²⁷ In Āryaśūra's *Viśvantara-jātaka*, the first sign of Prince Viśvantara's supererogatory destiny and his disqualification from kingship was that he gave away the royal elephant to his enemies just because they asked him for it. Likewise, as we see in chapter four, the young Śaṅkara accrues considerable power from *refusing* to accept the king's choice elephant as a gift. Āryaśūra and Peter Khoroché, *Once the Buddha was a monkey: Ārya Śūra's Jātakamālā* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Thomas R. Trautmann, *Elephants and Kings: An Environmental History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 304.

²⁸ Kalidasa, *The Raghuvamśa*, trans. M.R. Kale (Bombay: Gopal Narayan & Co, 1922), 113–15.

These texts and traditions seek to regulate human conduct that naturally arises with regard to self-evident human ends. These *śāstras* are therefore directed to the regulation of conventional (*laukika*) human affairs.

There is a set of separate, *religious*, norms that also direct human conduct. The principal difference between these norms and those relating to pleasure and profit is their source – the only source for our knowledge regarding these norms is the Veda, which alone provides knowledge regarding a set of supersensible causal relations. In other words, humans can have no innate or empirical knowledge regarding the transcendent, religious, ends toward which they should strive and the means to attain those ends. These ends and their means are known through the Veda alone (and the derivative *dharmasāstra* texts). There are two such ends: *abhyudaya* (prosperity) and *mukti* (release from the cycle of rebirth or *saṃsāra*). The Veda is also the *only* source of information regarding the means to these two ends. Thus, the Veda alone informs us that *dharma* (the performance of the Vedic ritual) and knowledge (*jñāna*) of the nature of the self are the means to *abhyudaya* (prosperity, typically heaven) and *mukti* (liberation), respectively. Further, derivative of the narrow sense of Vedic *dharma* (which is the performance of the Vedic ritual) is the *dharma* of conventional life. This is the normative regime of truth according to which mundane activities (such as eating, bathing, sleeping, and so on) and non-Vedic rituals (ranging from offerings to the ancestors to life-cycle rites) are to be performed. These, then, are the two transcendent, religious (or Vedic), ends of man (*puruṣārthas*). They constitute and inform *all* religious conduct. But who is subject to this normative rule?

The Vedas, as interpreted by the maṭha, detail the specific qualifications (*adhikāra*) that an agent (*kartṛ*) must possess in order to pursue either of these two ends. One must be born a male and into one of the three higher *varṇas* (*brahmin*, *kṣatriya*, or *vaiśya*) to be eligible to take

up Vedic ritual. The male members of these three *varṇas* are entitled to the second, ritual, birth (initiation or *upanayana*), in virtue of which rite of passage they are referred to as the twice-born (*dvi-ja*). A twice-born male who has further completed a Vedic education (*adhyayana*) and married a woman of appropriate birth is then qualified to undertake the Vedic ritual. Indeed, not simply qualified, he is enjoined (*vi-dhā*) to perform the obligatory Vedic rituals as long as he lives. Failure to perform the ritual (and indeed failure to take up Vedic study, also enjoined) results in the irredeemable loss of rank for him and his family.²⁹ He is, along with his family, forever reduced to the rank of *śūdra*, that is, he loses the privilege of birth. In other words, the failure to perform the rituals results in complete exclusion from the normative domain and consignment to perpetual service.³⁰

Similarly, the Vedas also detail the specific qualifications for those twice-born who are entitled to renounce their social, ritual lives to pursue the path of liberation (*mukti*) from the

²⁹ The scholiasts cite numerous *Smṛti* authorities on this point. For instance, in the *Parāśaramādhavīya*, the commentator cites Manu: “Is it not the case that there is a *Smṛti* teaching to the effect that those who do not perform the gamut of enjoined actions, beginning with initiation and Vedic study, go to ruin: ‘The three types of people, described below, who are not consecrated at the appropriate time, they fall from Brahminhood and become outcastes, reviled by the nobility. The twice-born man who toils in other pursuits without studying the Veda is instantly reduced to being a *Śūdra*, along with his family. He who does not perform the prescribed rituals and condemns proper conduct, and since he does not exercise any restraint over his senses, that man goes to ruin.

nanūpanayanādhyayanādivihitānām akarāṇe pratyavāyaḥ smaryate –

ata ūrdhvaṃ trayo’py’ete yathākālam asaṃskṛtāḥ |

sāvitrīpatitā vrātyā bhavanty’āryavigarhitāḥ || (Manu 2.39)

yo’nadhītya dvijo vedam anyatra kurute śramam |

sa jīvan neva śūdratvam āśu gacchati sānvayaḥ || (Manu 2.16)

akurvan vihitam karma ninditam ca samācaran |

anigrahāc cendriyāṇām naraḥ patanam ṛcchati ||

Mādhava, *Parāśara Smṛti*, vol. 1.1, Bombay Sanskrit Series 48 (Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1893), 53.

³⁰ The *Śūdra*’s dharma is defined as service to the twice-born. A *Śūdra* may serve Vaiśyas or Kṣatriyas in order to earn a livelihood, but he is enjoined by the *dharmaśāstra* tradition to serve Brahmins.

“Thus, service to the twice-born alone is his highest duty (*dharma*). Service to Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas, on the other hand, that is meant to earn a living is *not* his highest duty.

tasmād dvija-śuśrūṣaiva tasya paramo dharmah | kṣatriya-vaiśya-śuśrūṣā tu kevala-vṛtty-arthatvād aparamo dharmah |

Mādhava, 1.1:483.

cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*). The tradition terms this form of life *saṃnyāsa* (renunciation), and those who subject themselves to its strictures *saṃnyāsins* (renunciants). As in the case of the ritual agent, these subjects are constituted and qualified through ritual and pedagogical training. Such a person is also condemned to grave ruin should he fail to adhere to the obligatory injunctions to which he is subject.

My contention is that the maṭha, in claiming to serve as the sole interpreter, administrator, and director of the Vedic tradition, appropriates the sole authority to govern the sphere of religious conduct of its human subjects. The intellectual project undertaken by the maṭha, besides asserting the maṭha's singular claim to govern the domain of religious conduct, also evinces the logic of monastic governance. The maṭha monopolized the means of producing religious subjects and religious subjectivities that conformed to the transcendent, religious, ends enjoined by the Veda.

There are two dimensions to monastic governmentality: pastoral care and disciplinary power. Pastoral care refers to the maṭha's interest in its subjects' religious conduct and their welfare. In the case of the *saṃnyāsins*, enjoined to pursue liberation, the guru himself directed the cultivation of the self. The guru himself, as the model teacher and a fully liberated being, shepherded his flock to follow the religious norms appropriate to their stations. In the main, pastoral care was reflected in the maṭha's actions to support and enable the flourishing of Vedic conduct. The inscriptional record is littered with examples of the maṭha endowing villages, cultivating lands, engaging in irrigation projects to ensure the perpetuation of Vedic modes of life, including supporting teachers of the Vedas, performers of the Vedic ritual, scholars and scribes, in addition to the maintenance of houses of charity, temples and the host of attendant practices. Thus, pastoral care was the productive dimension of monastic governmentality. Since

pastoral care operated according to the logic of the gift, I have termed this generative dimension of monastic governmental *dāna* or the gift.

The other dimension of monastic governmentality consists of a set of restrictive disciplining practices exercised by the maṭha in constituting the human being as a subject (*karṭr*) properly qualified (*adhi-kṛ*) to pursue the religious ends proper to his position. The paradigmatic technology of disciplinary power was the Vedic injunction (*vidhi*) which subjected the qualified agent to the governance of a Vedic norm, be it *dharma* or *mokṣa*. Thus, for instance, every initiated twice-born man was enjoined by the Veda to study his family recension of the Veda with a teacher. Upon graduating Vedic study, he was obligated—unless he took up *saṃnyāsa* (institutional asceticism)—to perform the obligatory Vedic rituals as long as he lived. As mentioned earlier, failure to adhere to such obligatory injunctions resulted in expulsion from the Vedic fold. Thus, insofar as it controlled the means of understanding and implementing the religious norms enjoined by the Veda, insofar as it trained and supported teachers, scholars and religious practitioners, the maṭha had effective control over the means of forming the subject through a network of intersecting disciplinary mechanisms.

Moreover, in maintaining a monopoly over the explication of the Veda, the maṭha synthesized a unified, single Vedic tradition and reconstituted its subjects according to a hierarchy of qualifications and goals. Thus, the ideal Vedic order, explicated and implemented by the scholars of Śṛṅgeri, was constituted by a hierarchy of subjects, ranked according to the religious norms, the regimes of truth, to which they were devoted, and constituted in each rank by a range of disciplinary and productive techniques.

The Sole Sovereign

This, in brief, is a picture of monastic governmentality as it is engendered by this corpus. There remains only one question to answer: Where or in whom, in this picture, does sovereignty reside? The obvious and intuitive answer is the guru; indeed, the inscriptions, as I show below, endow the figure of the guru with spiritual analogues of the marks and attributes of kingship. But the theorization of sovereignty is not uniform across these two distinct governmentalities. Royal power is objective and the will of the sovereign is capable of transcending normative constraints. Monastic power on the hand is subjective in nature and, consequently, all monastic subjects are subjects only insofar as they have submitted to the constitutive Vedic norms. The normative Vedic order is hierarchically arranged. Thus, the twice-born are higher in this normative order than the uninitiated, *saṃnyāsins* are more exalted than ritual performers. Each subject is accorded his or her proper place and task. The guru alone stands athwart the limits of the hierarchy, neither fully subject to its constraints, nor fully sovereign.

The guru's singular status is in virtue of the fact that he is a *jīvan-mukta*, a fully realized being who has transcended the constraints of subjectivity while still alive. In the Vedic order formulated by the maṭha, subjects, at each hierarchical rank, are constrained by their subjectivity. That is to say, each type of subject is enjoined to perform the duties of his rank. Thus, the twice-born ritualist is impelled by the Vedic injunction (*vidhi*) to perform the obligatory Vedic rituals (*nitya-karman*) as long as he lives. The *paramahaṃsa saṃnyāsin*, who has been initiated into the ascetic order of the maṭha, is similarly impelled by the Vedic injunction (*śravaṇa vidhi*, the injunction to learn) to study and realize the existential truth conveyed by the Vedānta corpus. The king, too, is constrained by Vedic injunctions and *dharmaśāstra* injunctions to govern his kingdom in conformity with dharmic norms. Thus, each subject is constituted by this constraint

to act normatively. The guru alone, in virtue of being liberated, transcends the duality of agent and object that animates the dharmic world of the Veda and makes possible religious action. In realizing the ultimate truth of the Advaita (non-dual) Vedānta—that the self alone is real—the guru transcends the conventional limits that condition the operation of the injunction (*vidhi*). He is neither subject to any obligation, nor is he impelled to act.

Nevertheless, out of compassion, the guru serves as an instrument in the operation of a Vedic sovereignty. As a teacher and as the conduit for the redistribution of gifted resources, he enables the propagation and reification of the Vedic norms of man. There is a form of displaced Vedic sovereignty operative in this case. The guru is an administrator of the Vedic religion while nevertheless remaining beyond the realm of agents and action.

Methodology and Materials

In the latter half of the fourteenth century, between 1346 and 1386, the Śringeri maṭha, at times in conjunction with the court, produced a staggering textual corpus, comprising a number of technical treatises and commentaries on a range of Vedic topics and texts. And yet, partly because contemporary scholarship has failed to appreciate, let alone comprehend, the implications of monastic power, there has been no acknowledgement—let alone a concerted effort to demonstrate—that this corpus was conceived of as a single, unified, whole that articulated and advanced the interests of the maṭha. Indeed, this dissertation addresses that exigency first of all; the most basic argument I make is that our failure to recognize the unity of this intellectual effort is but a symptom of our failure to investigate and understand the medieval maṭha as the site for the articulation of a governmentality that diverged sharply from kingship and attended to different ends. Second, I have attempted to demonstrate that the interpretive positions that these

texts *uniformly* and *synthetically* promulgate evince an ideological case for the supremacy of the maṭha as a governing institution.

An examination of parts of this vast textual corpus and the extant inscriptional evidence for this early period allows us to flesh out the rhetorical terms in which the maṭha represented its religious authority, in particular, the manner in which monastic sovereignty was shown to encompass and transcend the limited sovereignty of kingship. Notably, the maṭha's self-representation was reproduced and reaffirmed in royal inscriptions, lending credence to the claim that, at least in the early history of Vijayanagara, the kings benefitted from linking their claims to sovereignty to the paramount sovereignty of the maṭha. Analysing the logic of the gift, its donation and circulation, helps us understand the maṭha's capacity to expand its influence, to settle newly-acquired lands with leaders who were trained, as pedagogues, ritualists, and scribes, in the Vedic ideology of the maṭha. It demonstrates how this sovereignty, idealized in texts, was made concrete.

As I show, these texts advanced, in their interpretations and syntheses of disparate traditions and texts, an ideology of governance; a meta-discussion about the norms that undergird an ideal human society, the source of those norms, and the institution best suited not merely to oversee the administration of those norms but to support and condition the flourishing of that ideal human order. It is my contention that to understand this corpus, and appreciate its universalizing ambitions, we must first of all recognize its single source and its singular focus.

By far the largest portion of this corpus is taken up by the detailed and synthetic commentaries on Vedic texts, of which there are eighteen, and which are traditionally ascribed to Sāyaṇa. Further, also ascribed to the figure of Sāyaṇa are a number of anthologies that are either normative or didactic in nature. These are all titled *Sudhānidhis* (thus, the *Puruṣārtha-sudhā-*

nidhi, or the *Moon of the Ends of Man*, deals with the normative human goals whereas the *Yajñatantra-Sudhā-nidhi*, the *Moon of Ritual Mechanics*, is effectively a manual for the Vedic ritual), and are six in number.³¹ There are more than ten texts devoted to the explication of the particular brand of Advaita Vedānta propounded by the maṭha. Some of these texts comment on parts of the Upaniṣadic corpus of the Vedas; a majority are ascribed to Vidyāraṇya.³² Further, there are technical treatises on grammar, philosophy, and Mīmāṃsā as well as texts on *dharmasāstra*.³³ In other words, this brief period of intellectual activity in the latter half of the fourteenth century saw the composition of more than forty texts, most of them incredibly lengthy and detailed expositions of large swathes of the Vedic corpus. My thesis argues that we cannot possibly arrive at a clear sense of the purpose of this project of explication and synthesis unless we treat the corpus as a single whole, commissioned and composed by adherents of the maṭha to advance the ends of the maṭha.

With this view in mind, I apply a variety of reading methods and approaches to this archive. The methodological thread that runs through these variegated texts is somewhat difficult to pick out: I have striven to read texts differently than they typically are. I juxtapose texts that are traditionally separated by the dividing lines of genre, institutional locus, and media. Overall, I

³¹ The summary of the contents of the corpus is found in Dikshit, *Early Vijayanagara: Studies in History and Culture*, 112–29. Commentaries on the following Vedic texts: *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā*, *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, *Sāma Saṃhitā*, *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa*, *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa*, *Ṣaḍviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*, *Ārṣeya Brāhmaṇa*, *Devatādhyāya Brāhmaṇa*, *Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*, *Saṃhitopaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*, *Vaṃśa Brāhmaṇa*, *Śukla Yajurveda Kāṇva Saṃhitā*, *Atharvaveda*. The disciplinary anthologies are: *Subhāṣita-sudhānidhi*, *Puruṣārtha-sudhānidhi*, *Alaṅkāra-sudhānidhi*, *Āyurveda-sudhānidhi*, *Yajñatantra-sudhānidhi*, *Prāyaścitta-sudhānidhi*.

³² The *Vaiyāsakanyāyamālā*, often ascribed to Bhāratīrtha, is a summary of the *Brahmasūtras*. Other texts on Vedānta include *Anubhūti-prakāśa* (a metrical summary of the major Upaniṣads), the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka-bhāṣya-vārtikasāra*, the *Vivarāṇa-prameya-saṃgraha*, the *Pañcadaśī*, the *Aitareyopaniṣad-dīpikā*, *Nṛsimhottara-tāpaniyoṣad-dīpikā*, *Jīvan-mukti-viveka*.

³³ *Mādhavīya-dhātu-vṛtti* is the treatise on grammar. *Sarva-darśana-saṃgraha* is the philosophical primer, which I examine in Chapter 4. *Jaiminīya-nyāya-mālā* is a summary of the Mīmāṃsā sutras of Jaimini. The *Parāśara-mādhavīya* and the *Kālamādhava* deal with topics of *dharmasāstra*.

read technical, theoretical (*śāstric*) texts with an eye to the readers they constitute, the contexts in which they proliferate, the forms of subjectivity they privilege, and the order and meaning they impose upon the worlds that they create.

In the first chapter, for instance, I read eulogistic passages from royal inscriptions alongside the eulogistic verses that begin commentarial texts. I show that reading across divisions of genre, media and institutions, provides us a broader view of social networks of power that were constituted by and between the court and the maṭha. This heterodox approach resists privileging the court as the institutional locus where power was encoded and represented in the lofty registers of *śāstra* (theory) and *praśasti* (eulogy). Indeed, the juxtaposition of these two types of texts demonstrates that monastic power was not simply encoded in the technical register of *śāstric* composition employed by the agents of the maṭha, but was represented, in the very same idiom, in royal inscriptions. Further on, I examine a variety of technical treatises—Vedic commentaries, summaries (*saṅgraha*) of hermeneutic systems, and inscriptions—that have never before been examined as constituting a single, coherent project of meaning-making. Lastly, I present my analysis of two very disparate works, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, a philosophical primer, and *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, an artificial court poem, which I read alongside inscriptional evidence, as the first layer of reception of the theory of monastic power encoded in the earlier materials. In so doing, I am interested in examining what LaCapra has referred to as their worklike dimensions, in other words, the worlds that these works create and those they reflect, as well as the productive tensions between these. For instance, I show that these latter texts, particularly the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, live in the world created by the earlier stratum of texts on the one hand, even as they express dissatisfaction, unease, and a disquiet at the impossibility of that idealized world. In this recursive play of texts reading and reacting to other texts that are

themselves “readings” of other texts still, I locate a productive gap between power idealized and power realized. My readings home in on the performance of this constitutive engine of normative thought, the eternal distance between the ought and the is.

Current Research and Growing Scholarly Currents

A recent, and most welcome, development in the scholarship on premodern India has been the focus on religious institutions as a critical locus for the articulation and operation of power in premodern India. These scholarly approaches converge on the recognition that the second millennium witnessed the emergence of a number of powerful religious traditions, almost all of them with important regional and institutional connections, that refashioned the prevailing configurations of power. There are three such recent interventions to which I hope this work on monastic governmentality will contribute: the discussions surrounding the emergence of religious publics, the scholarship on sovereignty, kingship and religious power, and the recent interest in South Asian governmentalities.

The first stream builds upon and reacts to the seminal work of Jürgen Habermas, in particular his theorization of the emergence of a public square where the work of deliberative, procedural democracy may unfold. Critical to Habermas’ view of the public square and to the viability of a procedural and deliberative democracy is the concomitant removal of religious presuppositions and orientations from the public sphere. Scholars of South Asia in attempting to understand the emergence of a colonial modernity in India have employed, challenged, and revised various dimensions of Habermas’ work. Recent scholarship has turned to various

premodern contexts to trace the varieties of paths that regions, religious traditions, and institutions charted in constituting a colonial modernity.³⁴

A set of particularly strong arguments have been lodged against the uniquely European and secular picture of modernity that Habermas' conception of the public square implies. Noting the decentered and pluralistic nature of political and religious formations and institutions in early modern India, scholars have argued that rather than thinking of a single public square, corresponding to a European analogue, we should recognize the many vectors of pluralism that drove the constitution of premodern publics. Vernacularization, regional Bhakti traditions, local maṭhas and temples, regional sectarian communities and regional kingdoms were involved in very different conceptions of constituting and enlivening a multitude of publics. My work situates the maṭha as a key institutional driver of the formation and regulation of these publics. Liberated from the parochial European fetters by which the maṭha had been bound, inasmuch as it has been translated by the word "monastery," this dissertation argues that the maṭha intended its governmentality to comprehend entire social swathes comprised of heterogeneous subjects brought together under a capacious interpretation of Vedic norms.³⁵

Furthermore, my work engages with a welcome new direction in the study of Advaita Vedānta, which reconsiders the history of this theological-hermeneutic tradition within a much broader scope. This new object of study, which one scholar has dubbed "Greater Advaita

³⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, 10. print, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999).

³⁵ Elaine M. Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism: Religion and the Public Sphere in Early Modern South India*, South Asia across the Disciplines (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017); Valerie Stoker, *Polemics and Patronage in the City of Victory: Vyāsātīrtha, Hindu Sectarianism, and the Sixteenth-Century Vijayanagara Court* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016); Christian Lee Novetzke, *The Quotidian Revolution: Vernacularization, Religion, and the Premodern Public Sphere in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

Vedānta,” seeks to include those developments that were formerly dismissed for lacking some defining characteristic of the classical tradition, whatever that means. This new approach has opened up the vistas of scholarship to include not just works of Vedānta in vernacular languages and registers but, closer to my work, the development of a practical Vedānta. The synthesis of Advaita Vedānta’s hermeneutic and theological imperatives with the practical technologies of Yoga traditions or the broader devotional appeal of Bhakti movements produced a new range of possibilities for the constitution of religious publics. My dissertation demonstrates that the corpus of scholastic compositions produced by Śrīṅgeri, despite not producing any noteworthy innovations in the philosophical tradition, nevertheless produced a number of nodes of synthesis at which Advaita Vedānta was not merely brought into conversation and combination with Yoga, Mīmāṃsā, and Dharmasāstra, but, more importantly, were points at which these distinct traditions were elegantly synthesized in the reinvention of a single Vedic tradition.³⁶

A second stream of scholarship into which my work wades is a recent re-evaluation of religious authority and sovereignty in precolonial and colonial India. Following the path-breaking work of Appadurai and Dirks on ritual sovereignty and the colonial rupture, there has been a recent reappraisal of the shifting nature and construction of sovereignty in premodern and colonial India. Rather than assuming that the colonial regime dismantled the sovereign status of regional kingdoms—which further projects a largely stable and monolithic conception of sovereignty into the past—this new current of scholarship examines the multiple ways in which kings, religious leaders and deities were sovereign in the colonial and precolonial past. This

³⁶ Michael S. Allen and Anand Venkatkrishnan, “EDITORIAL: Introduction to Special Issue: New Directions in the Study of Advaita Vedānta,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 21, no. 3 (2017): 271–74; Michael S. Allen, “Greater Advaita Vedānta: The Case of Niścaldās,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 21, no. 3 (2017): 275–97; Elaine M. Fisher, “Remaking South Indian Śaivism: Greater Śaiva Advaita and the Legacy of the Śaktiviśiṣṭādvaita Vīraśaiva Tradition,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 21, no. 3 (2017): 319–44.

intervention has not only been successful in decentering the processes and practices by which sovereignty was established and renewed, but has also enlarged the institutional framework for locating sovereignty. Thus, institutions and figures—the temple priest, the deity, the guru, the family, women, the maṭha, guilds and merchant communities—that were ignored in earlier studies have received much-deserved scrutiny in this more capacious understanding of the construction and practice of sovereignty. These scholars have further expanded our understanding of the operation of sovereignty by considering the implication of literature, art, ritual, and scholasticism in the making of a sovereign.³⁷

My dissertation, following in these footsteps, attempts to theorize the slippery conception of monastic sovereignty formulated in the scholastic corpus in question. Rather than subordinate the maṭha's claims to power to royal sovereignty, I have argued that the maṭha articulated a view of the guru as universal sovereign, whose sovereignty transcended the immanent and limited sovereignty of the monarch. Indeed, as the corporeal incarnation of the eternal Vedas, the guru directed the ethical progress of the maṭha's subject. Thus, the guru and the maṭha represented a different model of sovereignty than that of kingship, one that was defined by pastoral care and possessed of disciplinary power.

Finally, my work addresses the recent turn to the history of governmentalities in South Asia, which has sought to expand the lens of historical analysis—which typically treated power,

³⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A South Indian Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Arjun Appadurai, "Kings, Sects and Temples in South India, 1350 - 1700 A.D.," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 14, no. 1 (1977): 47–73; Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, n.d.). For a reappraisal of this view, see, in particular, Aya Ikegame, *Princely India Re-Imagined: A Historical Anthropology of Mysore from 1799 to the Present*, Routledge/Edinburgh South Asian Studies Series (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2013); Caleb Simmons, *Devotional Sovereignty: Kingship and Religion in India*, Religion, Culture and History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Sarah Pierce Taylor, "Aesthetics of Sovereignty: The Poetic and Material Worlds of Medieval Jainism" (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 2016).

subjectivity, sovereignty, truth, and ethics as autonomous fields of human affairs and of inquiry—to comprehend the operation of power as it is variously—disciplinarily, technically, scientifically, procedurally, legally—constituted in a given social field. In other words, this intervention has sought to displace the analytic hegemony of categories such as the state and the liberal subject and turned our attention to other institutions and actors—monasteries and women are primary foci in the work of Chatterjee—that were instrumental to alternative governmentalities. In this context, I have argued that Śrīṅgeri maṭha’s textual production made a signal contribution to the articulation of monastic governmentality and ascetic power, two traditions of power that have a long, albeit unexamined, history in colonial and post-colonial India.³⁸

This dissertation attempts to shine light upon that area of scholarship that lies in the shadow of Max Müller’s monumental edition of the Ṛgveda Saṃhitā. In that foundational feat of orientalist philology, Müller introduced the world to the canonical commentator of the Veda: Sāyaṇa.³⁹ Since then, sub-disciplinary schisms have led to the entrenchment of this particular authorial figure, at the expense of the broader corpus of texts. To wit, ever since Müller’s introduction, Vedic scholars, relatively uninterested in the institutional history of Śrīṅgeri or in the full corpus of texts produced in this period, have homed in on Sāyaṇa, the individual commentator, and have evaluated his contributions to the indigenous history of Vedic philology. In the most scandalous philological excesses, scholars have been more than happy to strip Sāyaṇa’s commentary for parts in building their own edifice of comparative linguistics while

³⁸ Legg and Heath, *South Asian Governmentalities*.

³⁹ As W.D. Whitney wryly noted of Max Müller’s dependence on Sāyaṇa, “And now it is Aufrecht who is the true editor of the Veda, while Max Müller has to content himself with the secondary honor of being the editor of Sāyaṇa.” Herman W. Tull, “F. Max Müller and A.B. Keith: ‘Twaddle,’ the ‘Stupid’ Myth, and the Disease of Indology,” *Numen* 38, no. 1 (1991): 27–58. 37.

denigrating the scholar's naïve and wavering views.⁴⁰ In effect, these scholars often condemned the figure of Sāyaṇa for not living up to a standard that was of their, not his, making. Similarly, historians of Vedānta have marked other parts of this corpus, the *Jīvanmuktiviveka* for instance, as important developments in the history of Vedānta.⁴¹ Neither group has recognized, let alone reckoned with, the broader corpus and context in which their selected texts were composed. Galewicz's recent study, based on meticulous research aided by keen insight, limits itself to the figure of Sāyaṇa—even if the figure of Sāyaṇa is synecdoche for a broader community of scholars—and his Vedic commentaries.⁴² Despite this limitation, Galewicz is the first scholar of the materials to examine the manner in which scholastic practices—hermeneutics, philology, and philosophy—implicated a wider world of power.

⁴⁰ Hermann Oldenberg, the German philologist, represents the critical orientalist view, “The interpretations of Sāyaṇa which they have quoted as proofs can either be proved to be false in the light of a rigorous examination, or, if they happen to be correct, -- it would be unnatural if sometimes a man does not hit upon a correct interpretation, - they are liable to the suspicion that here Sāyaṇa or the authority from whom he quotes has had for once the good-luck of not having bypassed correct knowledge when it forced itself on him.” Oldenberg, 19. In plainer speech, even a stopped clock is right twice a day. Max Müller, who was criticized for this over-reliance on Sāyaṇa, evinced a more sympathetic view, “If now we can work without Sāyaṇa, we ought to remember in mind that five and twenty years ago we could not have made even our first steps, we could never at least have gained a firm footstep without his leading strings. If, therefore we can now see further than he could, let us not forget that we are standing on his shoulders.”

⁴¹ Robert Gooding, “The Treatise on Liberation-in-Life Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the *Jīvanmuktiviveka* of Vidyāraṇya” (PhD, Austin, University of Texas at Austin, 2002); Andrew O. Fort, *Jīvanmukti in Transformation* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998); Jacqueline Suthren Hirst, “When the Body Does Not Fall: Śaṅkara, Sureśvara and Ānandagiri on Living While Liberated,” *The Journal of Hindu Studies*, no. 9 (2016): 1–28. James Madaio, “The Instability of Non-Dual Knowing: Post-Gnosis Sādhana in Vidyāraṇya's Advaita Vedānta,” *Journal of Dharma Studies* 1, no. 1 (October 2018): 11–30, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42240-018-0005-5>; Ayon Maharaj, ed., *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Vedānta*, Bloomsbury Research Handbooks in Asian Philosophy (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

⁴² “Often do we hear that in Indian intellectual history we meet time and again the widely accepted practice of attributing commentaries actually written by disciples, followers or altogether different authors to earlier acknowledged masters of the field... Because of the probably composite authorship of a number of works attributed to Sāyaṇa, I take his name as referring to such a type of authorship and will speak of the authorship of Sāyaṇa in this sense throughout the study.” Cezary Galewicz, *A Commentator in Service of the Empire: Sāyaṇa and the Royal Project of Commenting on the Whole of the Veda*. (Wien: Sammlung de Nobili, n.d.). 43. Indeed, the existence of Sāyaṇa is not without doubt. See, Walter Slaje, “Sāyaṇa oder Mādhava? Verfasserschaft und Reihenfolge der Samhitā-Kommentare aus Vijayanagara,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 160 (2010): 383–414. Slaje argues that the authorship of many of the Vedic commentaries and treatises ought to be attributed to Mādhava (Sāyaṇa's brother).

This dissertation advances that work, shifting its court-centric gaze to the maṭha at Śrīgeri. In the process, I show that the logic of governmentality makes sense of the corpus in toto. It establishes the guru as the preeminent sovereign and the originator of this monumental display of hermeneutic and scholastic innovation and power. It is no mean expression of the guru's power to constitute the world through knowledge, a power that is attested to in the inscriptions from the period and in the memories that persisted long after this period of exceptional textual efflorescence.

The Keys to the City of Knowledge

I began this introduction with an origin myth concerning the founding of the city of Vijayanagara. I now conclude this section with another version of the same origin myth, which differs only in helpfully illustrating the lineaments of monastic governmentality as it was operative three hundred years after this mammoth project of synthesizing and explicating the Vedic canon.

The inscription is dated to 1652, and records the occasion on which Sivappa-Nāyaka, the ruler of Ikkeri, resolved a case where the maṭha was suing a group of subjects for being in arrears in paying taxes. The first paragraph details the many extraordinary attributes of the guru, Saccidānanda-Bhāratī-svāmī, in precisely the same way as an inscription would praise a king. It lists his numerous distinctive qualities and accomplishments, which acquire a formulaic nature in the inscriptional record. Among these, he is the “establisher of the pure *Vaidikādvaita-siddhānta*,” that is the conclusive position on the Advaita Vedānta system of soteriology. Like the kings described in the inscriptional record, he is distinguished by the lineage of gurus (beginning with Śaṅkarācārya, the purported founder of the maṭha) of which he is a part. Most

importantly for us, the inscription identifies him first of all as the chief teacher of the *paramahansa samnyāsins* (disciplinary power, *vidhi*) and then as the dispenser of tax-free villages (generative power, *dāna*).

At the time of the moon's eclipse, *the chief ācārya of the paramahansa samnyāsins*,⁴³ master of grammar and logic, absorbed in the eight-limbed yoga [of Patañjali] consisting of *yama, niyama*, etc., the establisher of the pure Vaidiakādvaita-siddhānta, the establisher of the six darśanas, disciple of the succession of gurus descended from the holy feet of Śaṅkarācārya – initiated by the lotus hands of Abhinava-Narasimha-Bhāratī-svāmī – Saccidānanda-Bhāratī-svāmī of Śṛṅgapura, *gave to all the learned Brahman of Vidyāraṇyapura, belonging to the gotras, sūtras and śākhās, a copper śāsana of a rent-free agrahāra [Brahmin settlement] as follows:*

Having thus established, according to the conventions of inscriptional composition, the credentials of the donor, the inscription provides us with a version of the origin myth of the city of Vijayanagara. As this recapitulation of the myth makes clear, Vidyāraṇya was the chief inspiration behind the founding of the city; it is he who conceived of its creation – Harihara, the king, was but an instrument. In this depiction, Vidyāraṇya accrued power through ascetic practice, which he expended, through the grace of god Śiva, to benefit cows, gods and Brahmans. Further, in initiating this virtuous cycle of gifting, Vidyāraṇya elicited a generous donation in return from Harihara. This gift is committed to the administration of pastoral care, through the endowment of tax-free villages and the sponsorship of a range of Vedic practices. The

⁴³ Note that his chief attribute is that he serves as teacher for a group of virtuosi monastics, the *paramahansa*, who form the subject of chapter two. The guru is the sole teacher for the superordinate category of subjects in a hierarchy of students.

inscription thus places the maṭha at the center of a vast and complex network of redistribution that drives the formation of a perfect Vedic order.

Formerly, the (original) guru of our line, author of the Veda-bhāshya, Vidyāraṇya-śrīpāda, out of charity to the world, through the boon obtained by virtue of his penance from (the god) Virūpāksha dwelling on the banks of the Pampā, having founded Vidyānagara, -- for the protection of cows, gods and Brahmans, performed the coronation anointing of Harihara-mahārāya to the throne. After which, at the time when the rājādhirāja rāja-parameśvara, a sun to the waterlilies the race of hostile kings, vīrapratāpa Harihara-mahārāya, was protecting the Karṇāṭaka kingdom in peace and wisdom, -- he made petition at the feet of Vidyāraṇya-śrīpāda, representing that in Śṛīngapura, in (connection with) the *dharmā-pīṭha* (or seat of *dharmā*) established by Śāṅkarācharyya, there must be a maṭha and agrahāra (Brahman settlement), -- for the worship of the gods Mallikārjuna, Vidyāśankarasvāmi and Śāradā-amma in the maṭha; and for the performance of the religious duties of the vedas and śāstras he set apart certain landed property, established the agrahāras of Śṛīngapura and Vidyāraṇyapura, and, forming 250 shares, made them over to the feet of Vidyāraṇya-Bharatī-svāmi.

In summary, these later myths and memories of the founding of the great empire were true on this score: they distinguished between the institutional power of the maṭha and that of kingship, and further, they gestured at the distinctive capacity of the maṭha, and its leaders, to assert its authority over kingship. The myths and memories may have erred in attributing the founding of the city to Vidyāraṇya, a guru of the maṭha, but they captured a more profound reality of the founding that contemporary scholars have ignored: the institutional presence and power of the maṭha were instrumental to the founding and success of the nascent kingdom.

Scope of the dissertation

The Vedas provided the ethical grounds for the emergence of these types of ideal subjects (or agents) and served as the sole (transcendent) source of knowledge of the means to shape those subjects. These means—ritual performance, yogic practice, ritual studentship, rigorous programs of Vedic and disciplinary training—were specifically designed to shape these agents to discharge the duties peculiar to their station of life.

The limits of this hierarchical superstructure were also normatively significant: at the apex, only the guru of the monastery escaped the expansive scope of the Vedic injunction. He alone was impervious to the prescriptive power of the Veda. Completely released from the world of action and no longer an agent (*kartr*), he could no longer be constrained by the injunction to act. At the bottom of the hierarchy, beyond the pale of Vedic order, were the usual suspects—the Buddhists, Jainas and Cārvākas—and a couple of curious additions: the followers of the two rival Vedānta orders, the Mādhyas and the Rāmānujīyas, who obscured the true meaning of the Vedas through their deceitful interpretations.

In other words, this impressive scholastic achievement wove the loose strands of Vedic yarn into a broad tapestry that depicted the monastery’s near universal sovereignty. This intricate composition drew from a disordered Vedic canon an ordered and layered ethical foundation upon which to ground the varieties of religious experience. My dissertation seeks to unravel the threads of the constituent texts in order to reveal the warp and weft that held the fabric together. In this process, I ask: How was the technical discipline of explication (*vyākhyā*) employed to produce such a vivid picture of monastic supremacy?

In Chapter 1, titled, “The Gift and the Guru,” I elaborate upon the first constituent element of monastic governmentality, namely, pastoral care. Examining eulogistic passages from royal inscriptions and contemporaneous verses of benediction from the commentarial corpus, I

show that the logic of pastoral care, which was directed to the care for the spiritual welfare of the maṭha's subject, resulted in very distinct and different practices of redistribution. As one might expect, the maṭha's redistribution of resources and its provision of material and intellectual support to its subjects followed this overarching principle of monastic governmentality. Furthermore, far from expressing the universal power of the monarch, the inscriptional evidence unequivocally shows that the early kings of Vijayanagara submitted to and supported the maṭha's claim to universal ethical government. Finally, I explore the ethical subjectivities that were fostered and supported by these economies of monastic redistribution, and explicate the manner in which the maṭha's project of making sense of and disseminating the Vedas undergirded a project of ethical formation.

In Chapters 2 and 3, titled "Homo Vedicus: Man of Action," and "The Rite to Know," respectively, I examine the mechanics of monastic governmentality as they inform the formation of two classes of ideal subjects: the ritual performer (*anuṣṭhāyin*) and the renunciant (*saṃnyāsin*). The interpretation of the Vedas informs the formation of these religious subjectivities. These two subjects are constituted relative to the two areas of transcendent knowledge available solely through the Veda: the realm of (ritual) action and the realm of knowledge. Ritualists are impelled by the Vedic injunction to perform rituals (*dharma* refers to the composite ritual) as a means to attain heaven (*svarga*). *Saṃnyāsins* are impelled by the injunction to know (*jñāna*) as a means to attain liberation (*mokṣa*). Thus, the ritual section of the Veda informs us of the lower of the two supersensible human ends (heaven) that ought to govern normative action (ritual), whereas the knowledge section of the Veda informs us of the higher supersensible human end (liberation) that ought to govern the gnostic pursuit of the *saṃnyāsin* class.

In each of the chapters, I examine three elements of subject formation: the injunctions that govern religious conduct; the radical reconstitution or reinterpretation of the Vedic corpus to advance the transcendent ends: heaven and liberation; and the synthesis of distinct traditions of disciplinary thought and practice in forging these two classes of subjects. I demonstrate how the radical reorganization of the Vedic canon facilitated the synthesis of these two disparate traditions (the ritual tradition and the gnostic tradition) into a single hierarchy of religious progress. The lower subjectivity—tied to ritual—could be transcended through ritual itself to elevate the subject to the higher subjectivity that consisted in knowledge of the self. This path of spiritual progress culminated in liberation, not merely from *saṃsāra* but from the tyranny of hierarchy. Beyond agency, in the liminality of living-while-liberated (*jīvanmukti*), lay the fleeting possibility of sovereignty.

In Chapter 4, titled, “The Double Life of Doxography,” I undertake an analysis of the *Comprehensive Catalogue of Viewpoints (Sarvadarśanasamgraha)*, which hierarchically orders sixteen schools of philosophical thought. I argue that the text serves two of the monastery’s key purposes: the pedagogical and the ideological. This handbook, introducing candidates for a well-rounded scholastic (*śāstric*) education to the principal arguments of the sixteen philosophical schools, would have served as an invaluable primer for use in the curricular regime instituted by the monastery. At the same time, the hierarchy of viewpoints would have served the ideological function of naturalizing the monastery’s view of the validity of the various schools of thought, what we might refer to as a Vedic *episteme*. I demonstrate that, by virtue of the syntax of hierarchy, the text naturalizes three related positions: The division of the available universe of philosophical into the Vedic and non-Vedic; the *othering* of the two rival Vedānta schools by placing them in the non-Vedic sphere; and effecting a hierarchic, and progressive ranking of

Vedic schools. The text provides compelling evidence that pedagogy was one of the most powerful modes of disseminating the brand of Vedism that the monastery championed, and that, in addition to excluding from the Vedic pale the rival schools of Vedānta, this pedagogy constructed a hierarchical view of the Vedic commonwealth whereby each valid philosophical school was accorded its rightful place. The process of *othering*, in other words, was not distinct from the unifying practices of cultivating an understanding of belonging and identity.

Chapters 5 and 6, titled, “Founder’s Keepers” and “Śaṅkara Goes to Court,” are devoted to a close examination of a single 17th century text, *Śaṅkara’s Universal Conquest* (*Śaṅkaradigvijaya*), a court epic recounting the spiritual conquest undertaken by Śaṅkara, the purported founder of the monastery at Śṛṅgeri. I supplement a close reading of this origin myth of the maṭha with contemporaneous inscriptional evidence to demonstrate that this narrative poem serves as a reception history of the textual corpus produced three hundred years prior. It also serves as confirmation of the key element of my thesis, namely, that the monastery’s effort at synthesizing massive swathes of the Vedic tradition was intended to produce the hermeneutic ballast for the extraordinary assertion of monastic supremacy. The central episode, a debate between the partisan of ritual and the partisan of gnosis, reveals the central imperative in the interpretive effort – the hierarchic integration of the different varieties of proper Vedic subjectivity. The poem, linking the 8th century theologian Śaṅkara to the monastery, confects a powerful origin myth that recasts the 14th century corpus in narrative form. Thus, different scholastic views are enlivened by characters in this narrative of the guru’s universal conquest of the known moral universe. His progress reorders this morally askew world, and the different institutions and agents are put in their proper place.

In the second of the two chapters, I take up the poem's reflection on the vexed and paradoxical question of the renunciator guru as governor. I probe the text's exploration of the paradox of monastic governance and the ineluctable risk that the guru runs in consummating his claim to universal sovereignty. The guru must remain detached from the world he governs. Should he become too involved in the affairs of state and verge too far into the world of agency and action, he risks losing the knowledge of the self. I argue that the maṭha's ambivalence toward kingship was based on the fear that the tawdry business of trading in political power imperilled the moral mission of the maṭha. Thus, kingship was best assimilated in a subordinate position in the architecture of monastic governmentality, as the most effective instrument for securing the inalienable privileges and prerogatives of the maṭha and its sovereign, the guru.

In the Conclusion, I turn my attention to the maṭha and the guru in modern-day India. The biography of the guru, as it is portrayed in a recent maṭha publication, sums up perfectly the operation of monastic power. The biography describes in detail key episodes in the guru's formation as a subject, first as a student initiate, living in the residence for initiates at the maṭha, and then as a *saṃnyāsin*, engaging in the regime of *askesis* necessary to realize the ultimate truth of the Vedas. Thus, as the model subject, the guru's life instantiates the regime of Vedic truth, central to the maṭha's ethical power. Even as a liberated being, the guru nevertheless undertook the tasks of a ritual agent and devotee for the sake of his subjects, who were not adequately disciplined in their self-formation to realize the ultimate truth of the Vedānta.

Chapter 1

The Gift and the Guru

Materializing the Maṭha

In this brief chapter, I take up an analysis of pastoral care, the necessary precondition for the administration of monastic disciplinary power. I have argued that monastic power operated through the constitution of subjects; preparing, supporting, and enjoining them to undertake modes of life proper to their social and religious status. In order for power to operate in these complex and intrusive ways, the maṭha had to put in place the necessary economies and infrastructures of support. These complex configurations of resources, productive labor, intellectual capital and religious practice were part of the material effects of the maṭha's rule. The chief driver for the realization of these economies was the guru's redistribution of gifts. The monastic gift, which included the results of material and intellectual labor, functioned differently than royal endowments. The monastic gift improved the status of the donor not by subordinating the donee and making him dependent upon the grace of the donor, but rather by subordinating the donor, a king, for instance, to the superordinate status of the guru as the ideal administrator of resources to ensure human welfare. In other words, in the very act of donation, the king accepted the sovereignty of the guru, and his unparalleled discrimination in the appropriate allocation of the gift. That the kings of Vijayanagara understood this logic is eloquently attested to in the royal inscriptions, which wax eloquently of the unsurpassed and transcendent sovereignty of the guru.

Before taking up the early history of Vijayanagara and the practice of donation, it is helpful to clarify the aspects of the gift that are pertinent to this study, particularly since the gift was, even in medieval India, a potent and plastic mode of forging and modulating relations. To

put it simply, not all gifts were created equal. Rather than thinking of the gift in substantive terms (what was given), I focus our attention on the capacity of the gift to create and redefine relations between donor and donee. We might think of the gift in rather straightforward theoretical terms: a donation establishes the magnanimity and superiority of the donor and entails the subordination and dependence of the recipient. Gifting creates the expectation of reciprocity; Mauss' memorable *do ut des*.¹ Indeed, this was the way that the rulers of Vijayanagara used the gift to constrain the sovereignty of regional governors under their control. In other words, the ruler of Vijayanagara controlled the authority that a regional governor could exercise over local chiefs and landholders through the gifting of “‘limited sovereignty,’ including ‘titles, emblems and honours, rights to enjoy the usufruct of lands, and/or the privilege to rule on behalf of a superior over a particular area.’”² These gifts from the Vijayanagara ruler absorbed a local warlord into the imperium of Vijayanagara; in return, the warlord, now endowed with titles and honors, would be obligated to provide administrative and military service to the king. In this case, the gift structured a relation of dependence and obligation on the part of the recipient. Even when the regional governor gifted land or rights to a religious institution, he invariably expressed his limited sovereignty by donating in the name of his overlord, reifying in that act of giving his subordination to the Vijayanagara ruler whilst simultaneously building on his own claim to sovereignty.

Crucially, this was *not* the dynamic of the relationship of gifting that was forged between the first rulers of the Vijayanagara kingdom and the gurus of Śṛṅgeri maṭha. By contrast, the gurus of the maṭha exercised a paradoxical prerogative to receive gifts. On the one hand, as

¹ Marcel Mauss, *The gift: the form and reason for exchange in archaic societies* (New York: Norton, 1990), 17.

² Wagoner, *Tidings of the King: A Translation and Ethnohistorical Analysis of the Rāyavācakamu*.

ascetics (*saṃnyāsis*), these monastic governors were not entitled to private possessions.³ On the other hand, as *brahmins*, it was part of their dharmic identity to accept the gifts of the two other twice-born *varṇas* (the *kṣatriyas* and the *vaiśyas*).⁴ The obligation to receive gifts was the sole prerogative of the *brahmin varṇa*. Thus, a king's or warrior's gift to a monastic leader did not create an asymmetric relationship between a patron and attendant. On the contrary, the ruler's gift allowed him to participate in a spiritual economy that the maṭha's leaders controlled and governed.

Thus, when the Saṅgama brothers, then regional governors in the employ of the Hoysalas, came to Śṛṅgeri in 1346 to perform a victory celebration, they were seeking, through their donation of land, to participate in the spiritual economy that the maṭha administered. By gifting to the guru Bhāratīrtha lands which the guru subsequently settled with *brahmin* leaders, the eldest Saṅgama brother, Harihara, sought entry into the normative dominion that the maṭha governed. The gifting of land enabled Harihara and his successors to be absorbed into the maṭha's infrastructure of governance, albeit in a position subordinate to the chief distributor of resources – the guru of the maṭha. As the inscriptional evidence from the period (ca. 1346 –

³ Besides detailing the rituals that a brahmin who wishes to enter the ascetic mode of life (*saṃnyāsa*) must perform, the *Commentary on the Smṛti of Parāśara (Parāśarasmr̥tivyākhyā)* makes clear that ascetics cannot hold personal property (*niṣparigraha*). Madhava, *Parāśara Smṛti*, vol. 1.2 (Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1893), 166.

⁴ One of the texts composed by Mādhava, a stalwart adherent of the maṭha, cites a *Dharmaśāstra* text by Bṛhaspati on this topic: The six duties of the first-born (i.e. Brahmins): studying one's family recension of the Veda, teaching the Veda, performing the Vedic ritual, and helping others perform it, giving gifts, and accepting them too. The duties of the *kṣatriya*, on the other hand: performing the Vedic ritual, studying the Veda, and giving gifts, protecting one's subjects, bearing arms, and service. The duties of the *vaiśya* are seven: studying the Veda, performing the Vedic ritual, giving gifts, animal husbandry, usury, agriculture, and trade.

*svādhyāya' dhyāpanam cāpi yajanaṃ yājanam tathā | dānaṃ pratigrahaścāpi śaṭkarmānyagrajanmanah ||
ijyā'dhyayanadane ca prajānām paripālanam | śastrāstradhāraṇam sevā karmāṇi kṣatriyasya tu ||
svādhyāyo yajanaṃ dānaṃ paśūnām pālanam tathā | kusīdakṛṣivāṇijyam vaiśyakarmāṇi sapta vai ||* Mādhava, *Parāśara Smṛti*, 1.1:85.

1386) demonstrates, the early kings of Vijayanagara depicted their sovereignty as derived from and dependent upon the radical, and transcendent, sovereignty of the maṭha's guru.

A Friendship Gained: Śṛṅgeri and the First Kings of Vijayanagara

Our story begins with the victory festival (*vijayotsava*) of 1346, memorialized in an inscription, when the five Saṅgama brothers, headed by Harihara, then a regional governor (*mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*) of the Hoysalas, paid a visit to a sacred site (*tīrtha*) in Śṛṅgeri. The period between 1346 and 1386 marked a protracted interregnum between Hoysala and Saṅgama rule, during which time the Saṅgama rulers, even as they increasingly asserted their independence, nevertheless affirmed the sovereignty of the Hoysalas. An inscription from 1386 records the consummation of the interregnum in mentioning two firsts: Bukka is referred to for the first time as an autonomous ruler (the title he assumes is *mahārājādhirāja parameśvara*, or His Majesty, the Great Sovereign of Sovereigns) and, for the first time, the centre of his dominion is called the new City of Victory (*abhinava-vijayanagara*). In these very same intervening years when the Saṅgama brothers rose from relative obscurity to prominence, the Śṛṅgeri maṭha produced an enormous corpus of commentarial and technical treatises in what one scholar has called “a philological initiative without precedent in India for its ambition and scope.”⁵ In other words, during the very period when the Saṅgama kings linked their sovereignty to the power of the maṭha, the maṭha oversaw an incredible textual efflorescence that would codify, in the idiom of Vedic religion, the maṭha's claims to paramount sovereignty.

⁵ Sheldon Pollock, “What Was Philology in Sanskrit?,” in *World Philology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), 129.

The inscription of 1346 tells us that Harihara travelled with his brothers to Śṛṅgeri, where he endowed a land grant to the guru Bhāratīrtha in order to memorialize and celebrate an historic victory. The record also invokes the figure of Vidyāīrtha as the “foremost guru,” “whose friendship gained is never lost.” Bhāratīrtha, an ascetic (*saṃnyāsin*) guru, along with “his disciples and others, and the forty Brahmans residing in that sacred site (*tīrtha*) of Śṛṅgeri,” is the chief recipient of a grant of nine villages “for the performance of rites and service.”⁶

The endowment captures the dynamics of the gift. With this gift, the Saṅgama warriors, parvenus without a polity, were able to insinuate themselves into the apparatus of governance, albeit by proxy. Their return on investment was reputational: the gift solidified their friendship with an influential and powerful institution and its leadership. The maṭha, on the other hand, received nine villages, the economic output of which would now be diverted to supporting the ritual performances of the brahmins trained by the maṭha. The maṭha’s administration of pastoral care – the support “for the performances of rites and service” – was merely one element of monastic governmentality.

Through these brahmin settlers, the maṭha’s brand of Vedic religion (fully elaborated in the textual corpus produced in this period) would be spread to these newly-acquired villages. The material benefits of the gift would be diverted to moulding the subjects of the maṭha through disciplinary practices such as Vedic pedagogy, the performance of Vedic ritual, the training of scribes, teachers, reciters, and scholiasts-- in short, the realization of a Vedic society. This inscription lays bare the logic of the gift, but it does not capture the scope of its workings. Kings and warriors were not the only donors, nor were material assets, like land or trading rights, the only gifts that the maṭha received. For instance, let us turn to the last two verses of the *Summary*

⁶ B. Lewis Rice, *Epigraphica Carnatica*, vol. 6, 12 vols., Mysore Archaeological Series (Bangalore: Mysore Government Central Press, 1901).

of the Topics of the Vivaraṇa (*vivaraṇaprameyasamgraha*), a summary of the Advaita Vedāntin teacher Prakāśātman's (10th century?) text. The text was composed by Vidyāraṇya, the very same ascetic whom later legends credit with the founding of Vijayanagara, and with the last couple of verses of the text, he dedicates the work to his teacher and former guru of the maṭha, Vidyātīrtha (who is mentioned in the inscription of 1346). The verses read:

Though I am incapable of comprehending the thoughts of great men (such as Prakāśātman), I have, nevertheless composed this text with inordinate devotion; may Prakāśātman be pleased by it.

Since service of no other kind pleases the guru Vidyātīrtha, may this (summary) be an act of homage, imbued with devotion, laid at the feet of Śrī Vidyātīrtha.⁷

This is no less a gift, albeit from one monastic guru to another, than Harihara's donation of nine villages. After all, this text, a primer on Advaita (non-dual) Vedānta, was designed to be part of a scholastic curriculum that would be taught throughout the lands controlled by the maṭha. In other words, the text, in its composition, dissemination and teaching, encompassed the two dimensions of monastic governmentality: pastoral care and monastic discipline. Indeed, some of those very monastic disciples mentioned in the inscription of 1346 may well have been responsible for teaching this text as part of the Vedic curriculum that the maṭha produced during this period. The gift represented the productive capacity of the maṭha to expand its governance, not just by

⁷ *mahatām hṛdaye boddhum aśakto' py atibhaktitaḥ |
akāṛṣam grantham etena prakāśātmā prasīdatu ||
yadvidyātīrthagurave śuśrūṣā'nyā na rocate tasmāt |
astv' eṣā bhaktiyutā śrīvidyātīrthapādayoḥ sevā ||*

Vidyāraṇya, *Vivaraṇaprameyasamgraha*, Vizianagram Sanskrit Series 7 (Benares: E.J. Lazarus & Co., 1893), 266.

accruing assets, but by properly cultivating its subjects in the Vedic ideology that supported the maṭha's claim to supremacy.

The Guru's Two Bodies

It is not surprising that the maṭha should represent its claims to supremacy in such maximalist terms; nevertheless, it should come as a surprise that royal inscriptions would faithfully reproduce the maṭha's claims to sovereignty. A royal inscription from 1376, which chronicles the origins of Bukka and the Saṅgama dynasty, vividly describes the connection between the figure of the king, Bukka, and the figure of the guru, Vidyātirtha. The inscription reads in part:

Accordingly, he [Bukka] was born as Bukka-mahīpati to Saṅgama and his wife in the region of Pampā-puri. With the assistance of Vidyātirtha-muni, he became very great, the earth being as his wife, and the four oceans his treasury. Having freed from enemies a hundred royal cities counting from Dorasamudra, he ruled over an empire perfect in its seven parts.⁸

In addition to the historical detail this inscription provides – that Bukka shook off the Saṅgama vassalage to the Hoysalas of Dorasamudra – it also tells us that he “became very great...with the assistance of Vidyātirtha-muni.” With the phrase “with the assistance,” the translation occludes what the Sanskrit states quite clearly, namely, that Bukka was an incarnation of the sage Vidyātirtha. A more faithful translation would read, “Bukka appeared, a moon in the

⁸ B. Lewis Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 4, Mysore Archaeological Series (Bangalore: Mysore Government Press, 1898). Original translation.

ocean of compassion, as the enjoyer-incarnation of the sage Vidyātīrtha” (*vidyātīrthamuneḥ kṛpāmbudhiśaśī bhogāvatāro ’bhavat*). This is a particularly significant formulation. The king, the agent, is but an incarnation (*avatāra*) of the guru of the maṭha, the ascetic sage Vidyātīrtha, who, completely detached from all worldly forces, is the sovereign. The sage dispenses and the king enjoys.

Indeed, the description of Bukka in this inscription matches his description in one of the texts produced by the maṭha during his reign: the *Garland of Jaimini’s Rules* (*Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*), a summary of the foundational text of Vedic hermeneutics (Jaimini’s *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*). In a lengthy encomium to Bukka, the author, Mādhava, describes him as “a lord, insofar as he is the enjoyer-incarnation of the sage Vidyātīrtha, the lord of the universe” (*jagadīśvarasya vidyātīrthamuner bhogamūrtitvena⁹ ayam īśvaraḥ*).¹⁰ This formulation shows quite clearly that Bukka’s sovereignty depends upon Vidyātīrtha’s grace. His power is limited and conditional. Bukka’s lordship (*īśvaratva*) is dependent on the paramount and universal lordship of Vidyātīrtha. Thus, Bukka’s lordship is derivative; it does not stand on its own. To put it differently, the institution of kingship must draw its defining power (lordship or *īśvaratva*) from the *maṭha*. The similarity of the description in these two sources is all the more arresting owing to the difference in the commissioning institutions. The court commissioned the inscription, whereas the maṭha commissioned the text. The inscription was not commissioned by the maṭha to project its spiritual hegemony over kingship. On the contrary, it was a royal inscription, commissioned by the late Bukka’s son Harihara, that made clear that royal power was *ultimately* dependent upon the spiritual power of the head of the Śṛṅgeri *maṭha*.

⁹ This particular formulation (*bhogamūrtitvena*), the predicative instrumental, makes clear that Bukka’s sovereignty (*ayam īśvaraḥ*) is predicated on his being the enjoyer-form of the sage Vidyātīrtha, who is the *universal sovereign*.

¹⁰ Mādhava, *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*, Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series 24 (Poona: Ānandāśrama Press, 1892), 2.

The very same trope is echoed in the invocatory verses of almost every single text that makes up this Vedic corpus. Let me provide a single example from the invocatory verses to the

Commentary on the Taittirīya Saṃhitā of the Black Yajurveda

(*kr̥ṣṇayajurvedīyataittirīyasaṃhitā*). The author writes in homage to his guru, Vidyātirtha:

I praise him whose exhalation is the Veda, who fashioned
the universe out of the Vedas, Vidyātirtha, the great lord.

The monarch Bukka, assuming his form, through his side-long glance
commanded the teacher Mādhava to illuminate the meaning of Veda.¹¹

This verse, which functions as a seal, marking a great majority of the texts in this corpus with the imprimatur of Śrīṅgeri, makes clear that Vidyātirtha is the great lord, *maheśvara*, a term which also resonated with the maṭha's Śaiva commitments, as it is a common name for the god Śiva. Further, it is his side-long glance (*kaṭākṣa*) that inspired Bukka to assume his present regal form and order that a commentary on the Vedas be composed. The reference to “the monarch Bukka assuming that form” (*tadrūpaṃ dadhad bukkamahīpatiḥ*) reminds us of the “incarnation” (*avatāra*) that Bukka is said to have assumed in the passage excerpted above. It is quite clear, then, that, at least in the early years of the Saṅgama dynasty, the kings of Vijayanagara derived their claim to sovereignty from the universal, transcendent, sovereignty of the guru of the *maṭha*, Vidyātirtha.

¹¹ *yasya niḥśvasitaṃ vedā yo vedebhyo 'khilaṃ jagat |*
nirmame tam ahaṃ vande vidyātirtha-maheśvaram ||
tatkaṭākṣeṇa tadrūpaṃ dadhad bukka-mahīpatiḥ |
anvaśān mādhavācāryaṃ vedārthasya prakāśane ||
Taittirīya Saṃhitā (Poona: Vaidika Saṃśodhana Mandala, 1970), 1.

This trope is reiterated in a royal inscription from 1384, which records Harihara II's endowment of a village to two disciples of Vidyāraṇya. He is the mythic founder of Vijayanagara, the third in the trio of ascetics I mentioned above, likely a disciple of Vidyātīrtha, and succeeded Bhāratīrtha as guru of the maṭha. Harihara, the donor, is described as one “whose royal glory has been initiated in protecting the Vedas and the twice-born” (*vedadvijātiparirakṣaṇadīkṣitaśriḥ*). To put it plainly: the highest obligation of kingship, upon which Harihara's royal glory depends, is the protection of the Vedas and those that preserve it: the twice-born. Furthermore, like his father, he is said to have “obtained universal dominion of knowledge, which is beyond the reach of other kings, through the compassionate glance of Vidyāraṇya, lord of the sages.”¹²

These royal declarations regarding the crucial spiritual guidance of the gurus of Śrīgeri reach their apogee in a 1386 inscription marking Harihara's endowment of a settlement named Vidyāraṇyapura in the memory of the recently deceased guru, Vidyāraṇya.¹³ The inscription expresses, in the rarefied register of Sanskrit court poetry, the extraordinary influence of this trio of gurus on Bukka and Harihara. The confluence of the intellectual and spiritual power of this trio (Vidyātīrtha, Bhāratīrtha, and Vidyāraṇya) and the salutary effects of their influence on Bukka are exemplified in the following passage:

The swan Bukka sports happily near the lotus Bhāratīrtha, which, having sprung from Vidyātīrtha (literally, the sacred site of learning), possesses the fragrance of

¹² *vidyāraṇya-munīśasya kṛpā-pūrṇa-nirīkṣaṇāt yo labdha jñāna-sāmrājyaṃ duṣprāpam itarair nṛpaiḥ*. “Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department” (Bangalore: University of Mysore, 1933), 134.

¹³ “Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department,” 1933. 140 – 144.

joy from the nectar of the knowledge of non-dualism ever manifest and expands by the rays of the sun Vidyāraṇya.

From Bukka, who through his grace assumed his form, was born Harihara as the moon from the Milky Ocean. The valiant king Harihara has conquered all the enemies, is a traveller in the path of dharma and brahman, and converts Kaliyuga into Kṛtayuga by his pure conduct.¹⁴

This short inscriptional excerpt is an extraordinarily concise representation of the maṭha's claim to sovereignty in the realm of religion and exemplifies the modalities of the supremacy that I have detailed above. Vidyātīrtha, Bhāratīrtha, and Vidyāraṇya, the three gurus of the maṭha from this period, conspire to produce the spiritual environs in which Bukka, as king, can flourish in his incarnation as enjoyer. The gurus create the conditions for the king, and thus the kingdom, to prosper. The scene of paradisaal felicity is inflected in terms drawn from the discourse of Advaita (non-dual) Vedānta, the school of Vedic soteriology that the maṭha promoted. The lotus that is Bhāratīrtha (*bhāratīrthapadme*) is redolent with bliss (*ānanda*) and the nectar of the consciousness of non-duality (*advayacit*), which is eternally manifest (*nityavyakta*).

Furthermore, the inscription repeats, almost verbatim, the formulation of the side-long glance from Vidyātīrtha that inspired Bukka to take up his regal form. The translation above is not precise. It would better read: "From the king Bukka, who assumed that [regal] form because of his [Vidyāraṇya's] side-long glance (*tatkaṭākṣeṇa*), arose Harihara, just as the moon [arose]

¹⁴ The use of the term *haṃsa* (goose or swan) may also be significant; after all, the guru of the maṭha was referred to as the most exalted goose (*paramahaṃsa*).
"Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department," 142.

from the ocean of milk.”¹⁵ In other words, in this royal inscription we see the reproduction, in the very language of the texts, of a discourse of royal power and agency inspired by the grace of Vidyāīrtha. Of even greater interest, this is not the mere repetition of a formula. Rather, the formula has been enhanced, as the attributes of the father are here applied to the son. Just as Bukka was said to have assumed his regal form through the power of Vidyāīrtha’s side-long glance, so too his son Harihara has assumed his regal form through the power of Vidyāraṇya’s side-long glance. The lineage is symmetrical; as Harihara is Bukka’s son and rightful heir, so Vidyāraṇya is Vidyāīrtha’s disciple and rightful heir. In other words, the logic of monarchic succession is derived from the logic of monastic succession. This is not mere parity between the institutions. Rather it reproduces, in the mimetic succession of kings after the succession of gurus, the rightful supremacy of the guru and the maṭha. Kingship, when it represents its own power, does so in the discursive framework dictated by the maṭha.

The textual and inscriptional representations of the generative power of the maṭha and the guru is consummated in the opening verses of the commentary on the Atharvaveda, which, based on the historical figures mentioned and the evidence internal to the text, was taken up after the commentaries on the Ṛg and Yajur Vedas. The parallel lineages of kings and gurus are inextricably connected in the undertaking of the momentous *dharmic* project, and the institution of kingship is necessarily subordinated to the institution of the maṭha, inasmuch as it serves as an instrument for executing the vision of the transcendent good taught by the maṭha. The invocatory verses develop the trope of pastoral care described in the inscription quoted above. The gurus of the maṭha are lauded for providing the kings of Vijayanagara with the spiritual succor they need to succeed.

¹⁵ The inscription reads: *tatkaṭākṣeṇa tadrūpaṃ dadhatā bukka-bhūpateḥ āvirāsidd harihara kṣīrābdher iva candramāḥ*. I would emend *dadhatā* to *dadhato* to agree with *bukka-bhūpateḥ*.

Tormented by the sun of ignorance, I seek refuge in the forest of knowledge (Vidyāraṇya), who is the wilderness that ameliorates those who have been scorched by rays of the sun. From his majesty Bukka, who had assumed his form through his [Vidyāraṇya's] compassionate glance, there arose his majesty Harihara, like the moon arises from the milk ocean. His majesty, the glorious and valorous Harihara, who had subdued the hordes of foes, traveling the path of *dharma* and *brahman*, transformed the age of Kali into the Kṛta through his conduct. His lordship, the wise Harihara, having conquered the entire earth, enjoys the manifold pleasures, though he remains detached, like Rāma. The victorious king, his majesty Harihara, bearing the weight of the world, bestowing ceaselessly, to the satisfaction of all, the sixteen great gifts, has considered the Veda, named the Ātharvaṇa, which undergirds those gifts, and has engaged Sāyaṇācārya in illuminating its meaning.¹⁶

As a comparison of these invocatory verses with the inscription quoted above shows, these two modes of representing power – the inscription and the invocation – were part of the same discursive field. In other words, the act of endowing land in support of a variety of religious conduct was no different than the act of commissioning the composition of a

¹⁶ *avidyā-bhānu-saṃtāpto vidyāraṇyam ahaṃ bhaje |
yad arka-kara-taptānām aranyaṃ prīti-kāraṇam ||
tatkaṭākṣeṇa tadrūpaṃ dadhato bukka-bhūpateḥ |
abhūdd hariharo rājā kṣīrābdher iva candramāḥ ||
vijitārāti-vrāto vīra-śrī-harihara-kṣamādhīsa |
dharma-brahmādhvanyaḥ kaliṃ svacaritena kṛta-yugaṃ kurute ||
sādhayitvā mahīṃ sarvāṃ śrīmān harihareśvaraḥ |
bhūṅkte bahu-vidhān bhogān asahto rānavat sudhīḥ ||
vijayī harihara-bhūpaḥ samudvahan sakala-bhūbhāram |
ṣoḍaśa mahānti dānāny anīśaṃ sarvasya tuṣṭaye kurvan ||
tanmūlabhūtam ālocya vedam ātharvaṇābhīdham |
ādiśat sāyaṇācāryaṃ tadarthasya prakāśane ||*

Śaunaka, *Atharvaveda*, 1st ed., vol. 1, Vishveshvaranand Indological Series 13 (Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute, 1960), 1.

commentary or a treatise. Each was a way for the sovereign to engage in pastoral care. As these verses demonstrate, the king served as a subordinate instrument in the guru's administration of pastoral care. Through his personal conduct and through his liberality, the king sought to transform the conditions for the generation of spiritual progress. Thus, through righteous action, which no doubt included generous donations, the king made the present degenerate age seem as though it were the golden age of righteousness (the *kr̥ta-yuga*). In these matters, he drew authority and inspiration from the guru, the true sovereign, who provided the spiritual guidance the king needed to discharge his *dharmic* duties adequately. Finally, as we see in Chapter 6, in this earlier archive, the monarch is shown to exercise considerable restraint over his inclination to decadence. Though by nature and by right he is entitled to experience the pleasures that result from his drive to power, he nevertheless remains detached (*asakta*), like the ideal *dharmic* king, Rāma. This vision of the king as a quasi-spiritual sovereign was repudiated in the later materials, notably the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, where the two institutions, the monarchy and the maṭha, are pitted against each other on the field of *dharmic* battle. Nevertheless, in this earlier stratum of the archive, the king is a willing and ideal instrument for the administration of monastic governmentality, and the levers of royal power bend to the will of the true sovereign: the guru.

This body of inscriptional and textual evidence from the latter half of the fourteenth century reveals the basis for the later memories of the founding of Vijayanagara; myths that depicted one of the early gurus of the maṭha, Vidyāraṇya, as the founder of the once-great empire were invoking this narrative of maṭha supremacy. The reliance of the early rulers of the Saṅgama dynasty upon the guru's charisma explains the perdurance of these myths and memories. The fore-going section has also detailed, in the discussion of the gift, the material mechanics of monastic governmentality. I have shown how the redistribution of material, intellectual, and

human capital expanded the scope of maṭha rule. But, how did these monastic subjects internalize and reproduce monastic governmentality?

Chapter 2

Homo Vedicus: Man of Action

Introduction

Following the heuristic distinction between the productive (*dāna*) and restrictive (*vidhi*) dimensions of monastic governmentality, I demonstrated in the Introduction, through a comparative analysis of royal inscriptions and textual beginnings, that the maṭha and the guru as its sovereign presided over a vast network of productive capacities that worked to replicate and consolidate monastic power. The animating element of this engine of monastic power was the gift, which I understood, in its broadest implication, to include not merely the endowment of land, privileges, and prerogatives, but equally to comprehend the “gifting” of intellectual labor and its attendant products that constituted the substantive basis for the maṭha’s expansive ambitions. By substantive, I mean those elements that comprised the ideological content of the maṭha’s claims to supremacy and the means marshalled to shape its subjects to reproduce that vision. The means to secure the maṭha’s Vedic vision consisted of structural elements and individual actors. These structural elements ranged from the maṭha’s redistribution of gifted assets and privileges – tax-free land, revenue collection from administering trade routes, irrigation and infrastructure projects – to the institutions – schools, ritual arenas, learned assemblies – necessary for the propagation of the Vedic religion.

For instance, the maṭha settled gifted lands with rentier farmers who would be responsible for teaching the Vedic curriculum formulated by the maṭha, or to perform the Vedic rituals, or indeed to compose and teach commentaries on the Vedic canon. These agents of the maṭha were but one element of the complex apparatus marshalled by the maṭha to reify the vision

of monastic supremacy elaborated upon in the scholastic corpus and represented in the royal inscriptions from this period. I use the word “reify” to stress a crucial element of this structure of power. Terms such as “dissemination” may imply that the maṭha was but one of many institutions, in a crowded marketplace of ideas, offering its brand of religion to discerning and fully-formed subjects. I wish to argue that the maṭha controlled, or sought to control, the means of subject-production. I have already demonstrated the extent to which maṭha controlled the material means of production that supported the livelihood of its subjects. Further, it controlled – through education and ritual processes of credentialing – the means of authorizing its subjects to enter productive social and familial roles. In other words, through the ritual modes of educating, training and credentialing its subjects in taking up their dharmic roles, the maṭha realized its vision of a Vedic polity. The maṭha did not merely tell its subjects what to think; it taught them how to think and how to act.

Your vidhi is my command: The rebirth of Homo Vedicus

In this chapter, I take up the *vidhi*, the restrictive dimension of subject-formation, and show how the project of explicating the Vedas was directed to the cultivation of the ritual agent as the paradigm for all religious action. In thus universalizing the scope of the Vedas to guide and govern all religious conduct, the maṭha naturalized its preeminent position as sole governor of this Vedic order. As I have shown in the introduction, there were, broadly speaking, two spheres of religious action as schematized by the maṭha. These were, in the ascending order generated by the hermeneutic of hierarchy, the sphere of ritual action and the sphere of knowledge. On the expansive view advanced by the maṭha in the *Parāśaramādhavīya*, all religious action – that is to say, action that produced *dharma*, the means of securing temporal and

transcendent human ends – was governed by the injunction. In advancing this view, the maṭha expanded the scope of the Vedic injunction (*vidhi*) – traditionally theorized to govern the performance of Vedic rituals alone – to govern the performance of *all* religious action. Thus, the theory undergirding the government of the Vedic ritual agent came to encompass the government of all religious subjects. And so, expanding the scope of religious action the Vedic *vidhi* governed constituted the first means of universalizing the maṭha’s dominion.

The maṭha confronted yet a different impediment to formulating and realizing a monastic governmentality. In simple terms, the brand of Advaita Vedānta championed by the *saṃnyāsins* of Śṛṅgeri presumed, as a precondition to the assumption of the station of *saṃnyāsa*, that the prospective *saṃnyāsin* should renounce the dharmic order and all its attendant forms. In other words, for a person to enter the order of *saṃnyāsins* at the maṭha at Śṛṅgeri, he was required to renounce his ritual and social status. Having performed a ritual death, which forever excluded him from the dictates of *vidhis*, he embarked upon a life that was, in the idealized discourse of Vedānta, free of the subject-object divide that was presupposed by a ritual identity. He was no longer governed by the injunction to perform ritual, nor was he a part of the dharmic order that was signified by the Vedic *vidhi* (in its fullest elaboration through *dharmasāstra*). In this act of renunciation, the *saṃnyāsin* left behind the world of action to pursue the ends of knowledge. As an institution, therefore, the maṭha was – at least on the theoretical plane – radically severed from the dharmic realm that it claimed to govern. How could an institution thus severed from all action purport to govern the world it claimed to have left behind?

I argue that the commentaries on the Vedic corpus were intended to reunite these two spheres, action and knowledge, in a single hierarchically ordered Vedic unity. The maṭha engineered this hermeneutic harmonization by inflecting each of these two independent spheres

with elements of the other. Thus, the commentaries recast the knowledgeable performance of ritual as the highest form of ritual performance, in order to create a continuous spectrum of religious conduct that ascended from the ritual performer to the liberated *saṃnyāsin*. Similarly, *saṃnyāsa* was radically reconstituted, and made subject to its own Vedic *vidhi*. Action, in the form of yogic practices, was assimilated into the pursuit of knowledge and liberation. Thus, the maṭha, through the implementation of a hybrid Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta hermeneutics, succeeded in reconnecting the spheres of action and knowledge.

In this chapter, I focus on the interpretive innovations and strategies the maṭha used to transform Vedic ritualism. This examination focuses on the first half of the complex religious subject that I have referred to as Homo Vedicus. In order to speak for and of the ritual, the scholars of Śṛṅgeri needed to show that ritual and its ends were connected to the ends pursued by the members of its order: liberation through knowledge of Brahman. Consequently, in subjecting the ritual texts of the Veda to a novel Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta hybrid hermeneutics, the maṭha formulated a hierarchy of ritual forms. Beginning with the spiritually moribund rote performance, this hierarchy ascended to higher forms of ritual performance, distinguished by the extent to which these forms assimilated knowledge. At the apogee of this hierarchy of ritual forms was the model sacrificer, who performed the rituals without any regard for its fruits, motivated solely by the desire to know its meaning. The performance of the ritual in this manner engendered a transformation of his subjectivity. Remaining a man of (ritual) action, he would experience a strong desire to know (*vividiṣā*) the self. Repeated ritual performance would only intensify this desire to know and would dull his desire for the transient ends of the ritual. Thus, action itself would provide this model man with the possibility of transcending the unceasing

circle of action. The sacrificer's story ends with the assumption of a higher station of life, *saṃnyāsa*, oriented to the highest end (*niḥśreyasa*): liberation (*mukti*).

The exegetes of Śṛṅgeri radically transformed the reading and the meaning of the Veda in ways that few have noticed, let alone studied. They instituted a practical Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta hermeneutics, an interpretive and institutional innovation never before witnessed in the long history of Vedic hermeneutics. As part of this project, these exegetes took seriously the Mīmāṃsā position that the ritual was the sole telos of the Vedic Saṃhitās, and reconstituted the very text of the Veda to reflect this end. The radical reorganization of the Vedas, according to which to know the Veda would mean something completely novel, was not merely a signal achievement in the history of Sanskrit philology, though it certainly was that as well. This reorganization of the Veda – through a process of painstaking intellectual bricolage – was undertaken to form a more perfect ritual subject. The foremost condition for the formation of this ritual subjectivity – Homo Vedicus – was pedagogical. The commentaries retooled the *adhyayana vidhi* to bring Homo Vedicus into being.

The significance of the *adhyayana vidhi* (the injunction to study one's own family Veda) to the scholars of Śṛṅgeri may be gathered from the ubiquity of this topic of discussion: it appears, in some form or other, in every single text in the corpus. It is *the* pivotal textual means of establishing Vedic ritualism as *the preeminent* obligatory mode of ritual life. It is the single injunction that unifies two pivotal phases of a twice-born male's life: Vedic studentship (*brahmacarya*) and Vedic ritualism (*gārhasthya*). And, as we shall see in the final section of this chapter, it was also the means of connecting Vedic ritualism to Vedic renunciation, two distinct spheres of Vedic religion. In simple terms, the Śṛṅgeri exegetes used these discussions to demonstrate that initiated twice-born males are obligated to study and know the Veda. They

ought not merely memorize the text; rather, they ought to understand the meaning of the Veda. Knowledge is thus not simply constitutive of their studentship, but extends to their life as ritual householders, in informing the practice of the ritual. Understanding the meaning of the Veda takes on an enriched and profound sense in these discussions. As part of this ambitious program of implementing a practical Mīmāṃsā, a feat never before envisioned, to understand the Veda was to understand *that* and *how* it was the means to realizing dharma. To understand the Veda was to understand how the statements of which it was composed, construed together, produced the ritual. Finally, to understand the Veda was to subject oneself to the injunction to ever perform its obligatory rituals, failing which risked total social alienation and ruin.

As a discursive formation, these discussions proceeded along familiar tracks. They adjudicated who was entitled and enjoined (*adhikāra*), how their actions were to conform with the injunctive imperative, and the costs of the failure to comply. In these discussions we note the emergence of a paradigm for constituting religious subjectivity along these lines. As I show, the hermeneuts of Śṛṅgeri were successful in generalizing this paradigm to encompass all religious subjectivity.

In order to understand the transformation of the figure of the Vedic sacrificer, I focus my analysis on three elements of the restrictive mode of constituting subjectivity that this corpus evinces.

First, the texts define the ritual agent (*kartṛ*) by subjecting him to the logic of the Mīmāṃsā theory of Vedic ritual, which generates the normative structure within which his actions find meaning. The logic of ritual is implemented through circumscription; the agent is constituted by the criteria dictated by the injunction. The agent is defined by his eligibility (*adhikāra*) to perform the ritual using the appropriate instruments (*karāṇa*), orienting the ritual actions

(and therefore himself) toward the appropriate, transcendent, end (*sādhyā* or *bhāvya*). In so constituting the agent of religious action, the texts limit religious subjectivity to the parameters defined by the Vedic ritual. Concomitantly, in making concrete the totalizing Mīmāṃsā discourse of dharma, and extending its scope to include *all* religious action, the texts foreclose upon the possibility of religious subjectivities unsupported by the Veda. This is the first leg of Vedic supremacy, and it comes to encompass and govern *all* religious action.

Second, I show how the maṭha used the (purportedly derivative) form of the commentary to radically reconstitute the text of the Veda. My analysis demonstrates the inseparability of the pedagogical from the ideological. Indeed, in thinking of the commentary as merely illuminating the meaning of a text, we risk missing the potential of commentary to transform experience and understanding. The commentary reconstitutes the Vedic text, imbricating it with other texts, thereby producing a novel master-text. Then, the commentary explicates this new master-text, thereby solidifying the student's experience of the root text. In this manner, the commentary – purportedly a mere tool for clarifying doubts – reconstructs the text it purports to explain. I demonstrate that this textual technology was used to impose a ritual *telos* upon the text, which dictated all meaning-making. By thus reordering the text of the Vedas according to the logic of the ritual, the commentaries transformed the experience of “knowing” or “studying” the Veda. This reconstitution enabled the maṭha to hierarchically harmonize the two Vedic means (action and knowledge) to the transcendent (religious) ends of man (heaven and liberation).

This takes us to the third dimension of subject-formation that I wish to detail, namely, that the hierarchic logic of monastic power enabled the regnant institution, the maṭha, to absorb within its moral imperium a range of religious subjectivities, each accorded its own place, relative to the transcendent ends toward which it strove. Thus, while all varieties of Vedic ritual

performance were generally comparable, inasmuch as all Vedic ritual was performed for the sake of heaven, the logic of monastic supremacy dictated that certain forms of gnostic ritual achieved better results for its performer. In other words, the explication of the Vedic corpus did not merely create a variety of religious subjects; it ranked these subjects along a spectrum of values that ranged from the basest desire for worldly gain to the loftier desire for transcendent happiness (heaven) to the highest human good: the unceasing bliss of liberation from *samsāra*. Employing the hermeneutic of hierarchy, the maṭha sought to reinterpret *as religious* (indeed, as Vedic) all manner of social action.

In this section of the chapter, I examine the consequential manner in which the Advaita Vedānta hermeneutics were applied to the ritual. In the next chapter, I show how ritual hermeneutics were applied to the Advaita Vedānta pursuit of liberation. The fusing of the two hermeneutic systems (the Mīmāṃsā and the Vedānta) connected the performance of ritual to the highest sphere of Vedic religion, as dictated by Advaita Vedānta: the pursuit of liberation. In thus fusing the realms of ritual and the pursuit of liberation, the maṭha unified the two radically distinct, and structurally opposed, religious subjectivities: the ritualist and the renunciate. Through this synthesis, the maṭha sought to circumscribe and comprehend the range of religious subjectivities it governed.

The key to the synthesis of action and knowledge that these texts produced was the interpretation of the scope of the *adhyayana vidhi*. This injunction, addressed to all initiated twice-born males, prescribed the study of one's own family recension of the Veda. The Mīmāṃsā, a school of Vedic hermeneutics, contended that this injunction entailed that a student should embark upon the study of the Mīmāṃsā with his teacher, in order to fully understand the meaning of the Veda. Thus, this particular injunction was an ideal site for the elaboration of the

import of *knowing* the Veda. Using this opening, the scholars of Śṛṅgeri argued for a wider understanding of knowledge and its role in ritual performance. The *adhyayana vidhi*, the injunction to study the Veda, is discussed in a number of texts that make up this corpus. As I discuss in Chapter 3, the *adhyayana vidhi* provided the blueprint for the Advaita Vedāntins of Śṛṅgeri to theorize an analogous *śravaṇa-vidhi* (the injunction to hear) enjoining the appropriately qualified *saṃnyāsin* to take up the study of the Vedānta. Here, let me begin by explaining the Mīmāṃsā theory of ritual hermeneutics in brief so as to convey the importance of the *vidhi* (the injunction) and *adhikāra* (eligibility) in that context.

What the Veda Means to Mīmāṃsā

“It was probably literary theorist Gerard Genette who pushed a reductionist approach as far as possible when he suggested a summary of the entire *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* could consist of a single phrase “Marcel becomes a writer.” Vigilant readers were quick to object, including Professor Evelyn Birge Vitz who requested that Genette be more exact. Accordingly, he addressed himself once more to the question of precise Proustian precis in his book *Palimpsests* conceding that Professor B.V. had been “legitimately shocked by the hyper-reductive character of my summary. She proposes this correction: “Marcel eventually becomes a writer” before adding magnanimously, “This time, it seems to me, everything is there.””

–Pierre Bayard, *Le Hors-sujet – Proust et la digression*

The Mīmāṃsā school of Vedic hermeneutics served as the foundation upon which the exegetes of Śṛṅgeri built their edifice of Vedic religion. In synthesizing a single and singular Vedism that hierarchically encompassed not merely Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā, but similarly the normative guidance dispensed by the Smṛti (*dharmaśāstra*) tradition, these exegetes adapted and

altered several elements of the Mīmāṃsā hermeneutic infrastructure. Let us briefly recapitulate some of the pillars of the Mīmāṃsā school of hermeneutics so as to better comprehend these adaptations. My presentation of these topics favor the tradition of Mīmāṃsā that was most closely followed by the adherents of Śrīṅgeri, namely, the Bhāṭṭa school,¹ so named for advancing the positions formulated by the seventh-century philosopher Kumāṛila Bhāṭṭa.

Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics argues that the Veda is a *pramāṇa*, or a reliable means of knowing some object of knowledge (*prameya*). It adopts a commonsensical view of human action, accepting that humans are motivated in their pursuit of knowledge by the desire to obtain the desirable and avoid the undesirable (*iṣṭa-prāpti-anīṣṭa-parihāra*).² Mīmāṃsā does not dictate what humans should want, though it does represent a normative view on this matter as *objective*. Thus, as a matter of worldly affairs, humans just do seem to avoid such unpleasant outcomes as would obtain from eating poisoned meat,³ and they just do seem to desire such things as garlands, sandalwood, women and the like, or indeed medicine, though it be unpleasant, if it should mean keeping diseases in abeyance.⁴

Pramāṇas, reliable means of knowing objects, are thus helpful in this constitutively human purpose: securing goods and outcomes that constitute human happiness. In other words,

¹ It appears that the scholars of Śrīṅgeri were particularly fond of Parthasārathimiśra's interpretation of Kumāṛila Bhāṭṭa, reproducing many of the positions he elaborated upon in the *Śāstradīpikā* in their discussions of *bhāvanā*.

² *Kṛṣṇa-Yajurvedīya-Taittirīya-Saṃhitā*, vol. 1 (Pune: Ānandāśrama Press, 1940), 2. The reference is to the somewhat-opaque statement from Śabara's commentary on Jaimini 6.2.19: *na kalañjam bhakṣayitavyam, na laśunam na grñjanam ca*. There are questions regarding the meaning of these three things (*kalañjam*, *laśunam*, *grñjanam*) that one should not serve to others (*bhakṣayitavyam*, cause to be eaten). For more see, Franklin Edgerton, *The Mīmāṃsā Nyāya Prakāśa or Āpadevī: A Treatise on the Mīmāṃsā System by Āpadeva*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), 164.

³ *kalañja-bhakṣaṇa-varjana*. *Kṛṣṇa-Yajurvedīya-Taittirīya-Saṃhitā*, 1:2.

⁴ *srak-candana-vanitāder iṣṭa-prāpti-hetutvam auśadha-sevāder anīṣṭa-parihārahetutvam*. *Kṛṣṇa-Yajurvedīya-Taittirīya-Saṃhitā*, 1:2.

efficacy is integral to questions of epistemology; to put it crudely, epistemological debates help humans get garlands. Philosophical and theological traditions disagree on which *pramāṇas* are valid, but most schools accept the validity of direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*), while a smaller number accept testimony from a reliable authority (*āpta-vacana*) and other *pramāṇas*. Without delving into the niceties of these epistemic warrants, we should note that, according to this basic epistemological framework, humans have certain ends that they wish to secure and certain outcomes that they hope to avoid. Human agents (*pramātrī*) therefore use the reliable means of knowing (*pramāṇa*) to determine the existence of these ends (*prameya*), and act accordingly. In pursuing happiness and pleasure, humans prefer means of knowing that are reliable over those that are suspect. Thus, epistemological traditions and debates attempt to clarify which of these means of knowing is reliable, in an attempt to help humans in their pursuits.

Forming the basis for this epistemological structure and ordering human action is a discourse of human ends (*puruṣārthas* or the ends of man). A history of this discourse of *puruṣārthas* (the ends of man) has yet to be written; my presentation of the idea is intended merely to introduce the reader to its broadest lineaments. The textual corpus at hand presupposes a fourfold hierarchy of human ends: *kāma* (pleasure), *artha* (power), *dharma* (order) and *mokṣa* (liberation). (Most early sources speak only of a trinity – *kāma-artha-dharma* – but the integration of *mokṣa* into this hierarchy is a vital element of the project of Vedic reconstruction for the scholars of Śṛṅgeri).⁵ Any discussion of this tetrad must acknowledge the semantic and

⁵ Indeed, Yaśodhara, the 13th century commentator on Vātsyāyana’s *Kāmasūtra*, acknowledges and explains, in the opening to his commentary, the *Jayamaṅgala*, the conspicuous absence of *mokṣa* in Vātsyāyana’s three-fold (*trivarga*) *puruṣārthas* (human ends). “There are four *varṇas* (beginning with Brahmins), and four *āśramas*... with regard to these (that is, which *puruṣārtha* governs which *varṇāśrama*), since everyone accepts that *mokṣa* is not appropriate for householders, the human ends are a group of three.” *iha catvāro varṇā brāhmaṇādayaḥ catvāś cāśramā brahmacārī, grhastho, vaikhānaso, bhikṣur iti, tatra brāhmaṇādīnāṃ grhasthānām*

syntactic elasticity of these terms.⁶ For instance, in the context of the *Kāmasūtra*, *kāma* has the sense of “pleasure,” and the text (and the attendant tradition) produces a discourse of, and to, this end. In other contexts, however, *kāma* has the more general sense of desire, which is a necessary ingredient for all human action. Thus, whereas *kāma* in the *Kāmasūtra* is used in the sense of pleasure as a human end (indeed, Yaśodhara notes that some partisans of pleasure argue that it is the *preeminent* human end), *kāma* is also integral to the Mīmāṃsā discourses on *dharma*. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa’s interpretation of the ritual technology (*dharma*) explicated by the Veda depends upon the presupposition that human beings, unless impelled by their desire to attain attractive post-mortem ends, would never undertake to perform onerous and expensive Vedic rituals. Thus, the paradigmatic injunctive statement specifies that one who desires (*kāma*) heaven should perform the Jyotiṣṭoma ritual (*svarga-kāmo jyotiṣṭomena yajeta*). In this case, *kāma* has the general sense of a desire that impels human action.

Dharma has a similarly complicated history of usage, too long and complicated for me to summarize here; I merely note two important senses (for our study) of the concept: *dharma* as means and *dharma* as end. The exegetes of Śṛṅgeri exploited these two senses of the term to assimilate distinct textual traditions into a unified Vedism.

First, *dharma* is the term of art employed by Mīmāṃsā to designate the ritual as the means or the instrument for bringing about post-mortem felicity (heaven). In this sense, *dharma*

mokṣasyānabhimatatvāt trivargaḥ puruṣārthaḥ.” Vātsyāyana, *The Kāmasūtra*, The Kāshi Sanskrit Series 29 (Benares: Vidya Vilas Press, 1929), 1.

⁶ For a helpful discussion of this trinity (*kāma-artha-dharma*), see Vātsyāyana, Wendy Doniger, and Sudhir Kakar, *Kamasutra: A New, Complete English Translation of the Sanskrit Text ; with Excerpts from the Sanskrit Jayamangala Commentary of Yashodhara Indrapada, the Hindi Jaya Commentary of Devadatta Shastri*, reissued, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 22–26. For a structural analysis that also discusses the syntactic and semantic elasticity of the terms, see Charles Malamoud, “Semantics and Rhetoric in the Hindu Hierarchy of the ‘Aims of Man,’” in *Cooking the World: Ritual and Thought in Ancient India*, French Studies in South Asian Culture and Society (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 109–30.

refers to the ritual action as a collective process that engenders an invisible and novel result (*apūrva*), which itself results (with the passage of time) in the transcendent fruit (heaven, for instance). In this regard, *dharma* is very much like any other means to a human end, such as wealth. It is distinguished from all these other only insofar as it is a *peculiarly* Vedic means of securing a human end. Thus, in the context of the technical discourses treating the Vedic ritual, *dharma* is the primary ritual instrument to which all the other elements of the ritual are subordinated (more on this logic of assimilation through absorption below), and which, in its teleological capacity of organizing and ordering the procedural details of the ritual, symbolizes the end of the injunction.

Second, *dharma* is used in a wider sense as an end in itself. It is this sense of the word that most modern scholars intend when they translate *dharma* with the word “duty” or “religious obligation.” This sense too originates in the Mīmāṃsā ritual theory referred to above. In the technical sphere of ritual theory, *dharma* is the end that is defined by the injunction. Since *dharma* refers to the underlying unity of a ritual process, it refers, in that sense, to the end that is enjoined by the injunctive statements. This sense becomes clearer once we have a clearer picture of *bhāvanā*, one of the pillars of the Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics. Still, this sense, that *dharma* is an end (of the injunctive statements), which in turn functions as the means to the transcendent end, is made clear in the tradition’s discussion of Jaimini’s second sūtra.⁷

⁷ This is the second sūtra of Jaimini’s Mīmāṃsāsūtra: *codanālakṣaṇo’ rtho dharmah*. Mādhava’s commentary on this sūtra is as follows: “[This statement is made] because a thing is established through definition and *pramāṇa*. For this very reason, they say, “Establishing the object of knowledge [*meya*] depends upon the instrument of knowing [*māna*]; establishment of the instrument depends upon the defining characteristic.” “The defining characteristic” is a particular form that is conventionally known, which is present in the object that is to be defined, which excludes the dissimilar from the similar. And once the object is defined by that defining characteristic, there appearing the awareness of possibility, the one who is striving to know (or to measure) is able to understand [the object] by means of the instrument of knowing [*pramāṇena*]. This is how it works: Should a person, who has learned that a cow is “possessed of a dewlap etc.,” having searched, among quadrupeds, for an object so-defined, understands, by looking, that “this is a cow.” This being the case, because it is supersensible, *dharma* does not possess a defining characteristic; how could one strive to know such an object? Nor is it possible to suspect that an instrument of

This sense of *dharma* as an end is expanded in the *dharmaśāstra* discourse, where *dharma* comprehends the entire set of *arthas* (worthy ends) that motivate human action (of which, in most other contexts, *dharma* is simply one among three or four *arthas*). These come to include not simply the transcendent ends specified by the Vedas, but similarly the temporal and immanent ends that are described by the *dharmaśāstra* literature. Thus, *dharma* came to be used,

knowing [*pramāṇa*] it somehow appears in its employment. First of all, direct perception does not extend to it, because *dharma* lacks appearance. For that very reason, because it resists pervasion, neither does inference. Further, the acceptance of the connection of language is based on inference, which is rooted in direct perception. Thus, because of the lack of analysis, scripture too is of no use. Therefore [the *prima facie* position] is that *dharma* lacks both a defining characteristic and an instrument of knowing. To this, we say the following. Let us accept that it is not some conventional object that can be apprehended by our sense faculties. Still, it does possess a form, namely, that it is comprehended by means of the Vedic injunction and its defining characteristic is that it is the means to transcendent results, viz. heaven. In effect, its defining characteristic is, “given that it is an end, *dharma* is knowable through the Vedic injunction.” The definition, “*dharma* is an end,” is too wide, since it applies just as easily to Brahman, to the worship of Caityas (Buddhist Stūpas or holy trees), and pots and the like. It is to remove such an overextension that the sūtra specifies, “knowable from the Vedic injunction.” If only that much were stated, namely that it is something that is known through the injunction, such a definition is too wide insofar as including such evil rituals as the Śyena sacrifice, which is a ritual that results in evil [*anartha*]. It is to avoid such an overextension that the word “end” [*artha*] is used. Even though the Śyena results in the death of a rival and not in hell, still, since the assassination of a rival results in hell, Śyena is an unworthy end, by way of the killing. Don’t you worry that just because the violence towards the animal in the Agniṣomīya rite results in its death that consequently hell would obtain [for the ritual agent]. That violence does not result in anything other than the heaven that is the result of the rite overall, for that violence is a subsidiary element of the sacrifice. Since the defining characteristic of *dharma* is that it be some worthy end, and be knowable only through the Vedic injunction, *dharma* is an object of knowledge, and the injunctive statement is the instrument that produces knowledge of it. Though *dharma* is neither an object of direct perception nor of inference, still analysis is possible, because [the Veda] consists of the conglomeration [into statements] of conventionally intelligible words. Thus, *dharma* is endowed with a defining characteristic and an instrument of knowing.”

lakṣaṇa-pramāṇābhyām hi vastu-siddhiḥ. ata evāhuḥ mānādhīnā meya-siddhir māna-siddhiś ca lakṣaṇāt iti. sajatīyavijātīya-vyāvartako lakṣyagataḥ kaścil-loka-prasiddha ākāro lakṣaṇam. tena ca lakṣaṇena lakṣye vastuni sambhāvanā-buddhau jātāyām pramāṭum udyuktaḥ pramāṇena tad avagacchati. tadyathā sāsnaḍimatī gauḥ ity upaśrutya catuṣpāsu jīveṣu tallakṣaṇa-lakṣita-padārtham anviṣya iyaṃ gauḥ ity ity cakṣuṣā’ vagacchati. evaṃ ca saty alaukikatvād dharmasya nāsti lakṣaṇam. tatra kutah pramāṭum udyogaḥ. kathamcit tadupayoge’ pi na tatra pramāṇa-sadbhāvaḥ śaṅkitum api śakyaḥ. na tāvad atra pratyakṣaṃ kramate dharmasya rūpādirahitavāt. ata eva vyāpti-grahaṇābhāvān nānumānam. pratyakṣādy-anumāna-mūlaś ca śabdasya saṃgati-grahaḥ. tato vyutpatty-abhāvān nāgamo’ pi tatra pravartate. tasmād dharmo lakṣaṇa-pramāṇa-rahita ity prāpte brūmaḥ mā bhūc cakṣur-adi-gamyo laukika ākāraḥ. tathāpi codanā-gamyāḥ svarga-phala-sādhana-tvādi-lakṣaṇa ākāro’sti. tena arthatve sati codanā-gamyo *dharma* ity lakṣaṇam bhavati. artho *dharma* ity ukte brahmaṇi caitya-vandanādaḥ ghaṭādaḥ cātivyāptiḥ tadvyavacchedāya codanā-gamyā ity uktam. tāvaty evokte vidhi-gamyē’ nartha-phalatenānartha-rūpe śyenādy’ abhicāra-karmaṇy-ativyāptiḥ tad-vyavacchedāya artha ity uktam. yady api śyenasya śatru-vadhaḥ phalaṃ na tu narakāḥ. tathāpi tasya vadhasya narka-hetutvād-vadha-dvārā śyeno’ rthaḥ. na caivam agniṣomīya-pāśu-himsāyā api vadhatvena narka-hetutvāṃ syād iti śaṅkantiyam. tasyāḥ kratv-aṅgatvena kratu-phala-svarga-vyatirekeṇa phalāntarābhāvāt. yataś codanā-gamyatve sati arthatvaṃ *dharma*-lakṣaṇam ata eva gamye dharme gamakaṃ vidhi-vākyam pramāṇam. yady api pratyakṣānumānāyor anviṣayo dharmāḥ. tathāpi prasiddha-pada-samabhivyāhāreṇa vyutpattiḥ sambhavati. tasmāl lakṣaṇa-pramāṇābhyām upeto dharmāḥ.

Mādhava, *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*, 15.

on the one hand, as the particular means to the transcendent fruits described by the Vedas and, on the other, as a metonym signifying the entire range of religious or normative human actions that are directly or indirectly enjoined by the Veda. In the context of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics, however, *dharma* is only a means to an end. The end of *dharma*, the result of an appropriately performed ritual, is *abhyudaya* or prosperity. Post-mortem prosperity ran the gamut. The ritual agent aspired to a range of possible higher worlds (*para-loka-prāpti*); this entire set of post-mortem felicities was denoted by the term *abhyudaya*.

To return to the tetrad of *puruṣārthas* (pleasure-power-*dharma*-liberation), the *saṃnyāsin* scholars of Śrīngeri presumed that the two highest ends (*dharma* and liberation) resulted from actions that were specifically prescribed by the Vedic texts. Thus, all religious action was dictated by the Veda. There could be no other source for religious teaching. According to this view, human beings could learn about these two religious ends (*abhyudaya* and *mokṣa*) through the Veda alone, because the Veda was the only reliable means of knowing (*pramāṇa*) about supersensible matters, specifically, the causal mechanism (the ritual produced in a specific sequence and mode) that produces post-mortem bliss, and liberation.

As I have already noted, *pramāṇas* are instruments to acquire knowledge that humans need in order to pursue desired ends and avoid undesirable outcomes. The argument for the special epistemic status of the Veda begins with a Mīmāṃsā presupposition regarding the scope of conventional *pramāṇas*. The Mīmāṃsakas point out, first of all, that all our conventional *pramāṇas* operate with reference to objects that can be apprehended by our senses.⁸ This is precisely why direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) is the foundational *pramāṇa* for all other, derivative,

⁸ Francis X. Clooney, “The Interreligious Dimension of Reasoning about God’s Existence,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 46, no. 1 (1999): 1–16.

pramāṇas. In other words, all *pramāṇas*, other than *pratyakṣa*, are, somehow or other, derivative of some direct perception. For instance, direct perception is critical to the process by which one infers the presence of fire on the mountain from the appearance of smoke. For inference to work, one must perceive smoke, and one must also be aware of the invariable connection between fire and smoke, which is established by positive and negative correlation, constituent processes that depend upon several instances of direct perception. That is, by jogging her memory, the observer of smoke realizes that she has always seen fire producing smoke, as in the kitchen hearth, and that she has never witnessed a case where there has been fire but no smoke. Thus, the inference of fire depends upon many layers of reinforcing perception. Reliable testimony similarly implies, at its foundation, direct perception. Even if we were to admit that there are omniscient teachers (a position the Mīmāṃsakas reject), those omniscient teachers (for instance, the Jina) would nevertheless rely on their direct perception of supersensible states-of-affairs, about which they could teach their followers. Perception, however, and all the *pramāṇas* that are derived from it, operate in this immanent *loka* (world); they are *laukika* (that is, they operate in this conventional world to which we have access through our sense faculties and mental apparatuses). These instruments *cannot* be used to know about *a-laukika* (otherworldly, transcendent, supersensible) matters. The Veda, on the other hand, is the *only* means of knowing about *alaukika* matters.

But how is the Veda any different from the teachings of the Jina or Kṛṣṇa? How is the Veda any different from the testimony we receive from reliable authorities? Mīmāṃsā argues that, unlike the teachings of the Jina, the Vedas are eternal (*nitya*) and uncreated (*apauruṣeya*). Unlike the teachings of these other figures, human or divine, the Veda is more like an objective fact of nature, like the sky or some other such foundational element. The Mīmāṃsakas do not mount a very detailed defense of the eternity of the Veda; rather, they marshal their arguments

to show that language itself is eternal and uncreated. On this view, words and their referents are eternal, as is the connection between these two. Thus, the Veda, a sort of spontaneous and sempiternal combination of sound and sense, is in a way the well-spring of conventional creation. Insofar as it is ever-present and always discloses the relation between words and their referents, the Veda functions as a blue-print for phenomenal creation.⁹

Kumārila Bhaṭṭa bolsters this claim, which conflates the eternality of language with the eternality of the Veda, by recourse to a handful of arguments that privilege the status quo, weaponizing “the way things are” to wonder why we should think things were so different in the past. Against the validity of the omniscience of figures such as the Jina, he asks, why don’t we have omniscient persons now, in our time? What reason is there to think that the past was any different than the present?

Opponents of Mīmāṃsā attempt to link the Veda to figures named in the Vedic corpus in order to show that the Veda was indeed composed by a handful of human authors. In aid of their arguments against the uncreated nature (*apauruṣeyatva*) of the Veda, they point to the fact that different recensions of the Veda bear the names of their creator. Thus, the Taittirīya recension springs from Tittira, the Śaunaka recension was created by Śunaka, and so on. Confronted with these creators of the Veda, how could the Mīmāṃsakas maintain that the Veda is eternal and uncreated? The Mīmāṃsakas respond that these names refer to the *teacher* of a particular recension of the Veda, not to its creator. Thus, Tittira is honored for teaching the Taittirīya branch of the Yajur Veda *not* for composing it. Otherwise, presumably, we would continue to have sages composing Vedas.

⁹ This is not precisely the argument that the Mīmāṃsakas make, RV10 verse on this idea; From the *Uttararāmacarita*: laukikānām hi sādḥūnām arthaṃ vāg anuvartate, ṛṣīnām punar ādyānām vācaṃ artho’ nudhāvati. 1.10

Perhaps the most consequential of Kumāriḷa’s status-quo arguments is the argument for the intrinsic validity of epistemic events. On this view, which attempts to overturn the conventional procedure of arriving at knowledge, Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa argues that an awareness is intrinsically valid, that is, an initial awareness of an object ought to be accepted as valid *until* and *unless* that initial awareness is invalidated by a subsequent awareness.¹⁰ Thus, instead of searching for means of confirming (*saṃvādin*) the validity of an initial awareness, Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa shifts the epistemic onus, privileging the initial awareness as intrinsically valid, but leaving open the possibility that an initial awareness may be invalidated by a subsequent awareness. The implications of this argument for the validity of the Veda were profound.

One may wonder, given Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa’s arguments for intrinsic validity (*svataḥ prāmāṇya*), how one might challenge the validity of the Veda. Assailing the reliability of the author (claiming that such an author of the Veda might have been mistaken or deceitful in propagating this text) would not work, since the Veda has no author. Caviling with an eternal and uncreated Veda is akin to yelling at the sky. More to the point, given that *all* the *pramāṇas* available to humans operate in the *laukika* realm and that the Veda is the only *pramāṇa* for the *alaukika* realm, it is formally impossible to disprove the validity of any dimension of the Veda using a *pramāṇa* like direct perception. In simple terms, humans lack the epistemic instruments (*pramāṇa*) needed to challenge the validity of the Vedas. But could not a critic of this view argue

¹⁰ Notably, Kumāriḷa does not adopt this epistemically sympathetic view in tackling human speech (*pauruṣeya-vākya*). He does not think that the words of a speaker immediately present a view of the speaker’s awareness, rather this process is mediated by the speaker’s intention, which may misrepresent the speaker’s awareness. Thus, rather than accepting what someone says as true until and unless disconfirmed, in order to have epistemic certainty, we have to infer the speaker’s awareness. Ślokavārttika (*codanāsūtra*) vss. 160 – 164
anyathā saṃvidāno’ pi vivakṣaty anyathā yataḥ | tasmād ekāntato nāsti puṃ-vākyaṭ taddhiyāṃ gatiḥ ||
bhrāntasyānyavivakṣāyām anyad vākyaṃ ca drśyate | yathāvivakṣam apy etat tasmān naiva pravartate ||
vaktṛ-dhīr āpta-vākyaṣu gamyate anyatra viplutiḥ | tenotsargāpavādābhyāṃ vacasaḥ śaktir ucyate ||
padārtha-racanāyatto vākyaṛthapratyayodbhavaḥ | vivakṣā-pūrva-vijñāna-vaśāc ca racanākṛtiḥ ||
vivakṣāntara-yuktā hi kurvāṇā racanāntaram | āvāpodvāpa-bhedena drśyante’ rtheṣu mānavāḥ ||

that there are many statements in the Veda that are easily and clearly contradicted by perception, or indeed by any of the other derivative *pramāṇas*? For instance, using Kumārila’s own principle of privileging the present, could we not argue that the Vedic statement that “the grass-bundle is the sacrificer” (*yajamānaḥ prastaraḥ*) is contradicted by the fact that we know, from our present-day experience, that a grass-bundle (*prastara*) could not possibly be the sacrificer (*yajamāna*)?

To answer this question, we have to discuss the manner in which the Mīmāṃsakas circumscribe the validity or knowledge-hood (*prāmāṇya*) of the Veda. Simply put, what is the sphere of human action regarding which the Veda is a *pramāṇa*? One of the defining characteristics of any *pramāṇa* is that it should provide us with knowledge of a certain set of objects or states-of-affairs that are not apprehended by any other *pramāṇa*. Thus, to know that there is a blue Toyota Camry across the street from where I stand I need only look. I would not use inferential reasoning to know of the existence of the car. This is not merely due to my fondness for parsimony; it is because perception is best suited to the task at hand. This characteristic of being the only means to certain objects of knowledge is constitutive of *pramāṇas*. Thus, each *pramāṇa* has its own sphere of operation, in virtue of which it is a *pramāṇa*. Now, the question arises, what is the sphere in which the Veda operates as a *pramāṇa*? In other words, what is it about which the Veda alone can give us information? To return to the claim that the Vedic statement, “the grass-bundle is a sacrificer,” is contradicted by perception, the Mīmāṃsakas retort that the Veda is *not* a means of knowing (*pramāṇa*) things that already exist (*siddha*); rather, it is a means of knowing (*pramāṇa*) things that should be brought about (*sādhya*). It is *not* a means of knowing empirical reality (we already have *pramāṇas* suitable to that task); rather, it is the only means of knowing what we *ought* to do, in order to bring about

future (post-mortem) prosperity. This is a rather complicated position, and I attempt to lay out the case in the simplest possible terms, risking, in the process, the effacement of certain niceties.

The Mīmāṃsaka response to the grass-bundle question is not trivial. In effect, the Mīmāṃsakas argue that it would make no sense for the Veda to tell us things about empirical reality or indeed about the historical past, since we already have *laukika* pramāṇas that operate in the sphere of *laukika* knowledge. Thus, the Veda must be considered a *pramāṇa* only insofar as it tells us about matters that are beyond the ken of our senses, namely, the set of causal relations that obtain between the performance of the Vedic ritual and the transcendent ends such as heaven. The Veda tells us not only that the ritual brings about heaven but, further, how it does so, and that we (as long as we are properly credentialed) should perform the ritual in order to bring about heaven. To put this in the language used by Mīmāṃsā, the Veda is not a *pramāṇa* as regards the *siddha* (things that are already accomplished, i.e. empirical reality), but is a *pramāṇa* – indeed, the *only pramāṇa* – with regard to the *sādhya* (what ought to be accomplished; in this case heaven is the paradigmatic *sādhya*). Further, the Veda is the only means of knowing what instrument (*karana*) we should use and the procedure (*itikartavyatā*, i.e. the *modus operandi*) we ought to use to bring about this *sādhya*.

But, and this is a very consequential distinction that divides the Mīmāṃsakas from the Advaita Vedāntins, Mīmāṃsakas further claim that *not all parts of the Veda are independently (or equally) valid*. Mīmāṃsakas argue that the Vedas constitute a *pramāṇa only* as regards its capacity to instruct human beings in bringing about some desired end. Thus, they conclude that the injunctive statements of the Veda *alone* constitute its validity (*prāmāṇya*).¹¹ To be clear, Vedic injunctions alone are independently valid in providing us with knowledge of *dharma*, that

¹¹ The citation is from the Taittiriya introduction, see below.

is, the instrument (in the form of the coalescence of the ritual procedure) for securing transcendent goods, paradigmatically, heaven.¹² The Mīmāṃsakas considered all other statements of the Veda to be valid only insofar as they are subordinated to some independently valid injunction. This raises two related hermeneutic issues for the Mīmāṃsakas. First, how are these injunctions valid means of knowing dharma? That is, how do fragments of text spur some human agent to undertake take up a complicated and expensive ritual, and second, what on earth should we do with the vast swathes of the Vedic corpus consisting of sentences that are not injunctive in the least?

¹² This is captured in Kumāriḷa’s comment on Śabara’s explication of Jaimini’s second sūtra, “Dharma is an end, the defining characteristic of which is the injunction (codanā).”

codanālakṣaṇo’ rtho dharmah

On this, Śabara comments, “They define injunction (codanā iti) as an utterance that impels action, since we observe people say, “I do as my teacher commands.” The defining characteristic is that by which something is defined for, they say, “Smoke is defining characteristic of fire.” We aver that, “the end (artha), which is defined by it [the injunction], connects a man with the highest good [niḥśreyasena].” For the injunction alone is able to convey an end that is of the kind that past, present, future, subtle, obscured, or removed; no other sense faculty is capable of this.” codanā iti kriyāyāḥ pravartakaṃ vacanam āhuḥ. ācāryacoditaḥ karomi iti hi dṛśyate. lakṣyate yena, tallakṣaṇam. dhūmo lakṣaṇam agner iti hi vadanti. tayā yo lakṣyate, so ’rthaḥ puruṣaṃ niḥśreyasena saṃyunakti iti pratijānīmahe. codanā hi bhūtaṃ bhavantaṃ bhaviṣyantaṃ sūkṣmaṃ vyavahitaṃ viprakṛṣṭam ity evaṃjātīyakam arthaṃ śaknoty avagamayitum, nānyat kiṃcanendriyam. Note that Śabara considers heaven to be the highest good (*niḥśreyasa*). Other thinkers, possibly beginning with Manu, distinguished between *abhyudaya* (prosperity) and *niḥśreyasa* (liberation or cessation of some kind). By the time the texts that constitute this study were composed, this distinction was set in stone.

Addressing this passage of Śabara’s commentary, Kumāriḷa writes, ““The injunction alone is a pramāṇa,’ this [position] is ascertained with reference to dharma, and thinking this to be dependent, he has touched upon the reasoning on these two positions.”

codanaiva pramāṇam cety etad dharme’ vadhāritam | sākāṅkṣam iti manvāno yuktileṣaṃ dvaye’ sprṣat ||

Kumāriḷa’s position is not very easy to disentangle but, as his commentators make clear, there are two conclusions that Kumāriḷa draws here, upon which he elaborates in the following verses. These two positions are as follows: *codanā eva pramāṇam* and *codanā pramāṇam eva*. The first position, namely that injunction alone is valid [as regards dharma] makes clear that injunction – to the exclusion of other kinds of linguistic formations – is authoritative or valid with regard to dharma. This excludes statements of fact. For instance, were I to say, “It is raining,” such a statement, despite being *śabda* or language (in Śabara’s formulation) would not convey anything about dharma. Moreover, it would need confirmation by another pramāṇa, viz. perception, and would thus not be a pramāṇa at all. Vedic injunctions *alone*, among all linguistic formations, are a valid means of knowing (pramāṇa) dharma. The second position, *codanā pramāṇam eva*, makes clear, from a different angle, that Vedic injunction is a pramāṇa only as regards dharma. In other words, Vedic injunctions cannot tell us anything about the way the world is; though it, and it alone, can tell us the way we *ought* to be.

Let It Be: Speech to Act Theory

As I have noted above, Mīmāṃsā construed dharma as the means to some transcendent end, namely *abhyudaya* (prosperity, most typically heaven). Further, dharma constituted that complex of ritual actions that were enjoined by the injunctive statements of the Veda. Mīmāṃsakas homed in on the injunctive statements of the Veda as being uniquely (and independently) valid in conveying dharma to the entitled ritual performer. In order to do so, they formulated a mode of sentential analysis that formed the cornerstone of their hermeneutic program. Central to this hermeneutic method was the concept of *bhāvanā* (lit. “bringing into being,” explained as the causative of the verb to be, *bhū*), which located in the verb the linguistic capacity to bring something into being.¹³ Let me explain the method of sentential analysis by examining one concrete case: the paradigmatic injunctive statement: *svargakāmo yajeta*. The one who desires heaven (*svargakāmaḥ*) should sacrifice (*yajeta*). Before detailing the operation of *bhāvanā*, we should note that the first word of this injunction, *svargakāmaḥ*, addresses the challenge I have noted above, namely, why should any human undertake to perform an expensive and onerous ritual? The answer: heaven. For a prospective ritual performer, the pitch is simple. Do you seek heaven? If you perform the Vedic ritual you are sure to reach heaven. The Veda is the only source that can teach you how to perform the ritual correctly (dharma). Study the Veda, do the ritual, get heaven!

In order to demonstrate how we get from lifeless text to human action, Mīmāṃsakas developed the theory of *bhāvanā*, the capacity of certain linguistic formations to enjoin and

¹³ For the most comprehensive and lucid explication of the Bhāṭṭa view of *bhāvanā*, see Andrew Ollett, “What Is ‘Bhāvanā’?,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 41, no. 3 (June 2013): 221–62. I have, more or less, reproduced Ollett’s summary here, with the understanding engendered by the telegraphic presentation of *bhāvanā* in the introduction to the Atharvaveda commentary, and with a little assistance from Āpadeva’s *Mīmāṃsānyāyaprakāśa*.

engender action. Let us try to disentangle the knotty question of *bhāvanā*, which homed in on the capacity of the finite verb not merely to describe but to prescribe action. Mīmāṃsakas analyzed verbs into the *dhātu* (the verbal root) and the *ākhyātapratyaya* (the verbal suffix). For the sake of this illustration, let us examine the form of the verb from the injunction above, in the indicative mode (rather than in the optative mode): *yajati*, s/he sacrifices. The *dhātu* in this case, denoted by *yaj* (*yaji* in the parlance of Sanskrit grammarians), expresses the action of sacrifice (*yāga*: sacrificing). The *ti*, which is the verbal suffix (*ākhyāta-pratyaya*) expresses “doing” or “making” (the Mīmāṃsakas refer to this capacity as the *karoty-artha*, or the sense of “making”). This aspect, the *karoty-artha* is common to all verbs.¹⁴ In other words, *yajati*, which would be taken to express “s/he is sacrificing,” (*yajati*) can just as easily be understood, in order to show the distinction between the *dhātu* (verbal root) and the *ākhyātapratyaya* (verbal suffix), as “s/he does some sacrificing” (*yāgam karoti*).

In this way, each verb, regardless of the meaning of the verbal root, expresses some act of making or doing what is expressed by the verbal root. The commentator on the Atharvaveda explains that meaning of the verbal root has three distinct forms (*rūpa*):

“The meaning of the verbal root (*dhātv-arthānām eva*) has one form, which is unique to each verb, expressed by the verbal root, consisting of inaction, the nature of which is already existent, which belongs to the meaning of the verbal root alone, in the sense of ‘cooking,’ ‘sacrificing,’ ‘effort,’ ‘intention,’ ‘putting on the fire,’ ‘softening,’ ‘naming,’ ‘enjoining,’ etc. There is another form of the meaning of the verbal root that conforms to the meaning of all verbal roots, to be understood by the verbal suffix “*karoti*” or “to make,” consisting of action, the nature of which is that which is to be accomplished,

¹⁴ *siddhakartṛkriyāvāciny ākhyātapratyaye sati | sāmānādhikarānyena karoty-artho ’vagamyate ||*
 With the verbal suffix, which expresses the agent’s action with regard to the established thing [*dhātu*], through co-referentiality, the sense of “doing” is understood.
te sarve karotipratyayam anubhavanti: All these [verbs] partake of the “karoti” suffix.
 Śaunaka, *Atharvaveda*, 1:8.

which is amenable to producing something else, which can be understood from the verbal suffix. To explain: all these verbs -- ‘he trembles,’ ‘he sacrifices,’ ‘he moves,’ ‘he enjoins,’ -- partake of the suffix ‘to make.’ ‘He trembles’ or ‘he makes a-tremble,’ [this is admittedly awkward] ‘he sacrifices’ or ‘he does some sacrificing,’ and in this manner, in every single case the sense of ‘s/he makes’ follows.”¹⁵

Thus far, the meaning of a verb, in the indicative mode, is shown to have two forms. First, it has the meaning expressed by the verbal root (*dhātvabhidheya*), which is not of the nature of action (*akriyātmaka*), but is of the nature of some established entity (*siddhasvabhāva*); it is unique to each verbal root (yāga, sacrificing ≠/ pāka, cooking). Second, it has the meaning expressed by the verbal suffix (*ākhyātapratyaya*), which is common to all verbs, and is the part of the verb that consists in action, and expresses the sense of “making” (*karoty’artha*). This analysis shows us how it is that verbs describe actions – the verbal root specifies the action (cooking, sacrificing, trembling) and the verbal suffix expresses the doing of it.

The analysis thus far applies to verbs that describe some action; injunctions, on the other hand, prescribe action. Whence this prescriptive capacity of verbs? This is the capacity of verbs to cause some state-of-affairs to obtain. This is yet a third form (*aparaṃ rūpaṃ*) of the meaning of the verbal root, namely that which causes some other object to be brought about (*utpādyavastvantarakarmakam*). Since this is the activity of some employing agent with respect to something that is going to exist, some future entity (*bhavitur prayojakavyavahāratvāt*), it is called *bhāvanā*, that is, “bringing into being.” To clarify, this is the capacity of certain verbs to

¹⁵ *dhātvarthānām eva pāko yāgaḥ prayatnaḥ saṃkalpaḥ adhiśrayaṇaṃ vikledanaṃ abhidhānam codanam iti prāṭisvikaṃ dhātvabhidheyam akriyātmakaṃ siddhasvabhāvam ekaṃ rūpaṃ | sarvadhātvarthānugataṃ karotipratyayavedyaṃ kriyātmakaṃ sādhyasvabhāvam anyoutpādanānukūlātmakaṃ ākhyātapratyayavedyam aparaṃ rūpaṃ | tathā hi, yaḥ spandate, yo yajate, yaś carati, yo vidadhāti, te sarve karotipratyayam anubhavanti | spandate spandanaṃ karoti, yajate yāgam karotīty evaṃ sarvatra karotyarthasya anugatiḥ | Śaunaka, 1:8.*

cause an agent (*prayojaka*) to act (*vyavahāra*) in order to bring about some imminent entity (*bhavitur*). Now, the commentator makes clear that we get this sense that something is to be brought about from verbal forms such as *yajeta* (one should sacrifice) but not from *yāga* (sacrificing), from *pacet* (one should cook) but not from *pāka* (cooking). This means that this *bhāvanā* or the capacity of verbs to bring something into being is expressed by the verbal suffix (*ākhyātapratyaya*).¹⁶ To explain, the commentator shows that some verbs (the optative or the gerundive forms) have the capacity to spur the bringing about of something (the verb *pacet*, he should cook, means, on this analysis that he should bring about cooking), which the verbal root, by itself expressing the substantive act, is not capable of expressing. Thus, the crucial prescriptive element of the verb is expressed by the optative suffix (*liñ* in grammatical parlance, or, the suffix *ta* of *yaje-ta*).

In effect, the Mīmāṃsakas analyze the indicative form *yajati* (he is sacrificing) to mean *yāgam karoti* (he does sacrificing) in order to make clear that the verbal root expresses some established object (sacrificing) unique to each verb, and the indicative present suffix (*ti*) expresses the general capacity (common to all indicative verbs) of “making” (*karoty-ārtha*). This is further complicated in certain verbs where, instead of an indicative suffix, we have an optative or a similarly exhortative suffix (*liñ-ādi*), which now expresses the sense that something should be brought about, namely, the action that is expressed by the verbal root. Thus, the capacity of certain verbs to enjoin some agent to bring about some end is expressed by the optative (or similarly prescriptive) verbal suffix.

¹⁶ *bhinneṣu vividhadhātvartheṣu utpādyavastvantarakarmakam etad evāparaṃ rūpaṃ bhavituḥ prayojakavyāpāratvād bhāvaetyucyate | tac ca yajeta dadyāt juhuyāt ityākhyātaprayogeṣv eva avagamāt pākaḥ tyāgaḥ rāgaḥ ityādiṣu anavagamāc ca anvayavyatirekābhyām ākhyātapratyayābhidheya āṅgīkriyate |* Śaunaka, 1:8.

To return finally to our paradigmatic Vedic injunction, the Mīmāṃsakas reformulate *svargakāmo yajet* (one who desires heaven should sacrifice) as *svarga-kāmo yāgam bhāvayet* (one who desires heaven should bring about sacrificing). Nevertheless, there remain a few issues for the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas, who do not believe that humans can simply be enjoined by a text – however authoritative – to undertake rituals that are as expensive as they are onerous. As the reformulation of the Vedic injunction stands, it enjoins the agent to bring about sacrificing, not a terribly attractive proposition. To address this issue, Mīmāṃsakas devise a two-step process by which an injunctive statement engenders action. These are the two kinds of *bhāvanā*, the “bringing about with respect to language” (*śābdī bhāvanā*) and the “bringing about with respect to a person” (*ārthī bhāvanā*).

Before taking up the operation of these two types of *bhāvanā*, which are causally connected, let us note one other important element of the analysis of the verb in terms of the capacity of bringing something into being (*bhāvanā*). So far, we have seen how the Mīmāṃsakas construe the verbal form to express the sense of bringing something into being. This is the goal (*sādhya*) of some intended action. There are two other crucial elements to this operation, both of which are required (*apekṣita*) by the act of bringing something about (*bhāvanā*). The first is the instrument of that action, knowledge regarding which is elicited with the question, ‘By means of what (*karana*/instrument) should the goal (*sādhya*) be brought about?’ Thus, *bhāvanā* requires that we specify an instrument for accomplishing the end. Second, bringing something into being requires a procedure, to answer the question, ‘How is the thing to be brought about?’ The procedure is referred to by the term *itikartavyatā* (lit. the fact that it has to be done in this manner). Thus, both the *śābdī bhāvanā* and the *ārthī bhāvanā* require this triad: the goal or end (*sādhya*), the instrument (*karana* or *sādhana*) and the procedure (*itikartavyatā*).

Now, to return once again to the Vedic injunction, how might we characterize the operation of *śābdī bhāvanā* and *ārthī bhāvanā* as these pertain to the prospective ritual agent, whom the Vedic injunction is purported to stir to perform the ritual? Let us imagine that such a ritual agent hears the statement “*svargakāmo yajeta*” (one who desires heaven should sacrifice). According to Mīmāṃsakas, the manner in which this exhortation operates upon the agent is through *śābdī bhāvanā*, or a linguistic bringing into being. In this case, the ritual agent, upon hearing the optative suffix *ta* at the end of the verb *yajeta* (he should sacrifice), is – in a general and indeterminate sense – impelled. That is, he picks up on the *should*. This is the force of the optative suffix; it produces in the agent a sense that *something* ought to be done. But, what is this something that ought to be accomplished (*sādhyā*)? The *bhāvya* of the *śābdī bhāvanā*, the Mīmāṃsakas claim, is the *ārthī bhāvana*, that is the awareness that *he*, the human agent, should bring about something. That is to say he should perform some action to produce some material end. The *karaṇa* or instrument is the optative suffix (*linādi*), which is instrumental in bringing about the awareness that he (the ritual agent) is being enjoined to perform some act. The procedure (*itikartavyatā*) is the collection of non-injunctive Vedic statements that are interpreted to praise the performance of the sacrifice (*arthavāda*; more on this below).¹⁷

Thus, we move to the second phase of the statement’s operation, to the *ārthī bhāvanā*, which is productive of some material end. The ritual agent considers the injunction. The injunction informs him that the one who desires heaven should perform the ritual. In other words, the end (*sādhyā* or the *bhāvya*) should be heaven. The instrument (*karaṇa*) is – as our

¹⁷ The commentator of the Atharvaveda once again telegraphs this two-step process: *atra vidhy-aviruddhā bhāvanā pratīyate | sā ca dvi-vidhā | śabda-bhāvanā arthabhāvanā ceti | tad uktam ācāryaiḥ - iha hi linādi-yukteṣu vākyeṣu dve bhāvane pratīyete, śabda-bhāvanā artha-bhāvanā ceti | tatra śabda-bhāvanāyā artha-bhāvanā bhāvya | linādiḥ karaṇam | arthavāda-pratipāditā stutiḥ itikartavyatā | artha-bhāvanāyāḥ svargādi-bhāvyaḥ | dhātṷ-arthāḥ karaṇam | prayājādiḥ itikartavyatā |* Śaunaka, 1:7.

commentator says – the *dhātvartha*, the meaning of the verbal root. In other words, the injunction tells him that sacrificing (recall, *yāga* is the *dhātu* or verbal root) is the means (*karana* or *sādhana*) to bringing about the *sādhyā*, i.e. heaven. Finally, the Mīmāṃsakas specify that the procedure (*itikartavyatā*) for the *ārthī bhāvanā* is *prayājādi*. *Prayājas* are the fore-offerings that begin the sacrifice. *Prayājādi* is a short-hand for saying that the procedure of the ritual performance is precisely what Mīmāṃsā explicates. It is, further, extraordinarily complicated and deals with the nitty-gritty of ritual performance. Most of Mīmāṃsā deals with these complex questions of ritual performance.

To summarize: The ritual agent, who has studied the Mīmāṃsā, when confronted with the injunction *svargakāmo yajeta* is able to understand the injunction to mean: *svargakāmo yāgena svargaṃ bhāvayet*, “The one who desires heaven should bring heaven (*sādhyā*) into being by means of sacrifice (*yāgena*).” This is the core of the validity of the Veda, according to the Mīmāṃsakas. The Veda alone can tell us *that* one obtains heaven by performing the ritual and *how* one should perform the ritual. This, in a nutshell, is the validity (*prāmāṇya*) of the Veda. Insofar as the ritual complex (*dharma*) is the means to transcendent prosperity or *abhyudaya*, the Vedas are the *only* valid means of knowing dharma.

This brings us to the second issue I raised above. How should we understand the massive swathes of the Veda that do not consist of injunctive statements? If injunctions alone are valid means of knowing dharma, then should we – like Thomas Jefferson who studiously removed all reference to God from his Bible – simply excise all Vedic statements that are not injunctive? Heavens, no! respond the Mīmāṃsakas. After all, they say, we have merely averred that *only* Vedic injunctions are *independently* valid with regard to dharma. All the statements that remain are *dependently* valid with regard to dharma. What does this mean? The Mīmāṃsakas

constructed a sophisticated hierarchical means of ordering every single utterance of the Veda. The *telos* that drove this hierarchical ordering was the injunction (*vidhi*). The beauty of the system was that language mirrored action. In the same way that the principal ritual action ordered the various discrete ritual actions hierarchically and according to a prescribed procedure (*itikartavyatā*), so too did the principal *vidhi* order, in a hierarchic fashion, all the statements that related to it.

For example: The *darśamāsa* (new-moon rite) and *pūrṇamāsa* (full-moon rite) are the fortnightly rites that each Vedic ritualist must perform without fail. This rite consists of a number of discrete actions that, when performed in a particular order, produce the dharma that results in heaven. Thus, first of all, the ritualist must procure the milk that he will offer to the deities in the course of the ritual. In order to procure milk from his cows, he must first drive away the calves from the cows. In order to drive away the calves, he must procure the branch of a *palāśa* tree. Each of these discrete actions must be performed with the appropriate mantras. Thus, these discrete ritual actions are hierarchically ordered to serve the principal ritual (the full-moon or new-moon ritual). These individual actions are therefore assimilated to the principal ritual by means of subordination. The text mirrors this logic of assimilation through subordination. The *vidhi* that prescribes the performance of the full-moon ritual is constituted as principal (*pradhāna*). All the statements that pertain to that *vidhi* are subsidiary (*śeṣa* or *aṅga*) to it, and are assimilated to it through hierarchical subordination.

Lawrence McCrea describes this symmetry in his elegant synthesis of hierarchy in Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics: “Multiple actions may be seen as constituting a single, complex, ritual performance only insofar as they all, directly or indirectly, subserve a single ultimate purpose; likewise, multiple sentences may be seen as constituting a single, coherent text only insofar as

they all ultimately subserve a single ultimate purpose.”¹⁸ The Mīmāṃsakas accomplish this feat of concatenated hierarchization by positing the hermeneutic principle of sentential unity (*ekavākyatā*). Deploying the logic of purposeful unity – that each sentence, like each action, requires a unified purpose – the Mīmāṃsakas argue that once a statement – the *vidhi* – has been designated as primary, all other related sentences must be assimilated to it as subsidiary elements (*aṅga*) of it. Strung together in this way, through cascading relations of primary and subsidiary (*pradhāna-śeṣa* or *aṅga*), the discrete subsidiary sentences produce a single sentential unity with the primary injunctive statement. Mīmāṃsakas use this principle of sentential unity (*ekavākyatā*) to ascribe dependent validity to all non-injunctive Vedic statements.

One of the classes of statements that are assimilated to the injunction in this manner is the *arthavāda* (statement of praise). Typically found in the Brāhmaṇas, these statements appear to have no injunctive purpose. To the uninitiated, these statements seem to refer to obscure myths that explain the conduct of the sacrificer.

For instance, we are confronted with two Vedic statements.

1. *vāyavyaṃ śvetam ālabheta bhūti-kāmaḥ |*
2. *vāyur vai kṣepiṣṭhā devata vāyum eva svena bhāga-deyenopadhāvati sa evainam bhūtiṃ gamayati |*

The first states: “The one who desires power should sacrifice (*ālabheta*) a white (animal) suitable for Vāyu.” This is a proper *vidhi*. It enjoins the person seeking power (the *adhikārin*) to perform an animal sacrifice.

¹⁸ Lawrence McCrea, “The Hierarchical Organization of Language in Mīmāṃsā Interpretive Theory,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28, no. 5/6 (December 2000): 430–36.

The second statement is classified as an *arthavāda*: “Vāyu, as we all know, is the swiftest deity. The one who runs after that Vāyu with his own portion, him does Vāyu himself propel to power.”

This second statement is self-evidently *not* an injunctive statement; it contains no optative suffix (*lin-ādi*). Indeed, according to the Mīmāṃsaka’s opponent, this statement repeats some historical event (*kaścit vṛttāntaḥ*). (*Pramāṇas* cannot be reiterative, for to be reiterative means to repeat something that is already known through some other *pramāṇa*). How then could this *arthavāda* be considered valid? The author of the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā* explains that an *arthavāda* can be assimilated to the injunctive purpose (sacrificing an animal) by *praising* the act of sacrificing. The sacrificer would be more inclined to perform the ritual if he were spurred on by the praiseworthiness of the act. The *arthavāda* provides that enticement by praising the act of sacrificing the animal. The author helpfully synthesizes the two statements into one (thereby demonstrating sentential unity, *ekavākyatā*):

Thus, the two statements may be construed in the following manner (as a single sentence): ‘Since, on account of his natural swiftness, Vāyu, who is the deity of this animal, bestows results quickly, he (the sacrificer) should sacrifice this animal that has been praised as being suitable for Vāyu.’ In this way, *arthavādas* are a valid means of knowing dharma.¹⁹

¹⁹ *kāmya-kāṇḍe vidhy-arthavādau śruyete | vāyavyaṃ śvetam ālabheta bhūti-kāma iti vidhiḥ | vāyur vai kṣepiṣṭhā devatā vāyur eva svena bhāgadenopadhāvati sa evainaṃ bhūtiṃ gamayātīti arthavādaḥ | tatra vidhi-vākyagatā vāyavyādiśabdā arthavāda-śabdā arthavāda-śabda-nairapekṣyeṇaiva bhūtārtham anvācakṣate | kṣipragāmī vāyuh svocitena bhāgena toṣito bhāga-pradāyaiśvaryaṃ prayacchatīty ukte rāmāyaṇa-bhāratādau iva vṛttāntaḥ kaścit pratīyate na tvanuṣṭheyaṃ kiṃcit | ata ekavākyatvābhāvān nāsty arthavādasya dharme prāmāṇyam iti prāpte – brūmaḥ mā bhūt padaika-vākyatā | vākyaikavākyatā tu vidyate | vidhivākyam tāvat puruṣaṃ prerayitum vidheyārthasya prāśastyam apekṣate | arthavāda-vākyam ca phalavad-arthāvabodha-paryavasitādhyayana-vidhi-parigrhītavena puruṣārtham apekṣate | tatra puruṣārtha-paryavasita-vidhy-apekṣitam prāśastyam lakṣaṇā-vṛttyā samarpayad arthavāda-vākyam vidhi-vākyena sahaikavākyatām āpadyate | yataḥ kṣipra-gāmi-svabhāvatayā śīghra-phala-prado vāyur asya paśor devata tataḥ praśastam imaṃ vāyavyaṃ paśum ālabheteti vākyayor anvayaḥ | tasmād arthavāda dharme pramāṇam |*

In the section of the Veda that deals with the optional animal sacrifice, the following injunction and *arthavāda* are found. The *vidhi* (injunction): “The one who desires power should sacrifice a white (animal) suitable for Vāyu.” The

Thus, and this is a very consequential difference between Mīmāṃsakas and Advaita Vedāntins, Mīmāṃsakas consider all statements that are not injunctive (or *mantras* or proper names, *nāmadheya*) to be *arthavādas* or statements of praise. These statements, which, crucially for the Mīmāṃsakas, would include most of the Upaniṣads, are *not independently valid*. Their validity depends upon being related, through subordination, to a *vidhi* (the only independently valid part of the entire Vedic corpus).

Know Your Rites: The Adhyayana Vidhi Reconsidered

The purpose of trawling through the turbid waters of Mīmāṃsā is to demonstrate that the *vidhi* (the Vedic injunction) was the cornerstone of the edifice of monastic power that the maṭha constructed with its novel Vedic hermeneutics. In the following section, I show how the scholars of Śringeri radically expanded the scope of the Vedic *vidhi* to encompass and re-order entire modes-of-life. Their writings reveal the extension of the *vidhi* to subsume *all* religious action,

arthavāda: “Vāyu, as we all know, is the swiftest deity. The one who runs after that Vāyu with his own portion, him does Vāyu alone propel to power.”

With regard to these statements, words such as “vāyavya” (suitable for Vāyu), which are present in the injunctive statement, prescribe a specified object, independently of the words of the arthavāda. The words of the arthavāda repeat some historical fact completely independent of any other [statement]. When the text reads, “Swift Vāyu, satisfied by his proper share, bestows sovereignty upon the donor of his share,” we understand from it, just as with [statements from] the Rāmāyāṇa and Mahābhārata, some historical event, not that we should perform some action. Thus, because the two statements lack sentential unity (ekavākyatābhāvāt), arthavāda is not a valid means of knowing (pramāṇa) dharma.

This having been stated, we respond. Fine, we admit that the discrete words [of the two statements] do not constitute a single sentence. Nevertheless, the statements do in fact have sentential unity. First, in order to impel the man to act, the injunctive statement requires that the enjoined end be praised. And the arthavāda statement requires a human end (puruṣārtha) inasmuch as being absorbed by the injunction to study the Veda (adhyayana vidhi) which is determined to result in the comprehension of fruitful ends. With regard to these [mutually implicating conditions], the arthavāda statement provides, through figurative usage, the praiseworthiness that the injunction requires, inasmuch as its human end is resolved. In so doing, the arthavāda statement becomes part of the same sentence as the injunction (i.e. the two statements attain sentential unity). Thus, the two statements may be construed in the following manner (as a single sentence): “Since, Vāyu, who, insofar as being naturally swift bestows results quickly, is the deity of this animal, thus he should sacrifice this animal which is suitable for Vāyu, which has been praised.” In this way, *arthavādas* are valid with regard to dharma.

from the vocational activities of all members of caste society all the way to the conduct of *saṃnyāsins* who, according to the texts and traditions that predated this moment, were thought to be beyond the scope of the injunction. Key to this project of unification was the use of the hierarchic hermeneutic of assimilation through subordination, which was inspired by Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics. The maṭha's interpretive intervention drew out of the sprawling Vedic corpus a hierarchical vision of authority capable of governing the range of religious subjectivities it named. I explore the expansion of the scope of the *adhyayana vidhi* (the injunction to study one's family recension of the Veda), which was re-configured to govern the formation and the vocation of the ritual subject, Homo Vedicus.

The *adhyayana vidhi* states that “one ought to study one's own Veda” (*svādhyāyo 'dhyetavyaḥ*). In enjoining the study of the Veda, this injunction was identified as the injunctive basis for the project of explication undertaken by the hermeneuts of Śṛṅgeri. The first question raised by this injunction is who is entitled to undertake this study? Who is entitled to learn the Vedas? The introduction to the Taittirīya Saṃhitā addresses this question of *adhikāra* thus:

He who seeks to understand [the Veda] is entitled to it [*adhikārin*]. But, were this the case, *anybody*, including women and Śūdras, would be entitled to the Veda, since the wish, “May my dreams come true and may I avoid all undesirable outcomes,” is common to *everyone*. Not so. Even if women and Śūdras should seek to learn the Veda, their entitlement to the Veda is blocked by a different reason. The teaching, when it speaks of the initiated alone being entitled to the study (*adhyayana*), teaches us that were women and Śūdras, despite not being initiated, to study the Veda, they would end up

miserable... Thus the male initiates of the three varṇas (Brahmin-Kṣatriya-Vaiśya) alone are connected to the Veda.²⁰

The exclusion of women and śūdras from the study of the Veda was hardly a novel position, but the texts were much more strident in their condemnation of those who, despite being eligible, failed not merely to study the Veda but, more importantly, *to perform the obligatory Vedic rituals*. These reprobates were singled out for censure in a number of texts. The scholars of Śrīgeri were particularly fond of citing the *Smṛtis* on this matter. For instance, in the *Parāśaramādhaviya*, the commentator cites the *Manu Smṛti*: “Study [of the Veda] is obligatory, since Manu has taught that failure to study results in diminution (*pratyavāya*): ‘The twice-born who, instead of studying the Veda, toils in a different endeavor, even while living he, together with his lineage, is reduced straightaway to being a śūdra.’”²¹

The sentiment is reiterated in the introduction to the commentary on the Taittirīya Saṃhitā, where the commentator cites the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* to describe the ruin brought on when the ritual agent, though enjoined, does not perform the Vedic rituals: “Yājñavalkya has taught about diminution (*pratyavāya*): ‘A man suffers on account of [three faults], namely, not performing what has been enjoined, associating with the condemned, and not restraining his appetites.’”²² The penalty for not following the principal injunction, upon which rests the

²⁰ *tadbodhārthā cādrikārī | nanv evam sati strīśūdrasahitāḥ sarve’ pi vedādhikāriṇaḥ syuḥ | iṣṭam me syād aniṣṭam mā bhūd ity āśiṣaḥ sarvajanīnatvāt | maivam | strīśūdrayoḥ saty apy upāyabodhārthitve hetvantareṇa vedādhikārasya pratibaddhatvāt | upanītasyaivādhyayanādhikāraṃ bruvac chāstram anupanītayoḥ strīśūdrayor vedādhyayanam aniṣṭa-prāpti-hetur iti bodhayati |... tasmād upanītair eva traivarnīkair vedasya sambandhaḥ | Taittirīya Saṃhitā, 4–5.*

²¹ *adhyayanam tu nityam | akarāṇe pratyavayasya manunā smṛtatvāt – yo ’nadhītya dvijo vedān anyatra kurute śramam | sa jīvaṇṇ eva śūdratvam āśu gacchati sānvayaḥ | Mādhava, Parāśara Smṛti, 1.1:150.*

²² *sa ca pratyavāyo yājñavalkyena smaryate – vihitasyānanuṣṭhānān ninditasya ca sevānāt | anigrahāc cendriyāṇām naraḥ patanam ṛcchati | Taittirīya Saṃhitā, 6–7.*

possibility of performing the ritual, is the loss of one’s place in the social order. The phrase “*akarane pratyavāya*,” (negligence leads to ruin) in its fervent incantation, cultivates a certain scripturally-induced existential paranoia. It is the Vedic ritualist’s version of *what will the neighbors say?* Negligence results in one’s downfall in the hierarchy of subjectivities (one falls to *sūdra*-hood) as they are constituted in the *maṭha*’s Vedic world.

The *adhyayana vidhi*, thus, was the cornerstone of the monastic dream of reifying the Veda. But, what did the *adhyayana vidhi* actually enjoin? What did it mean to study or know the Veda? More apposite to our discussion, what did the *maṭha* take it to mean? The traditional Mīmāṃsā authorities were split on the interpretation of the *adhyayana vidhi*. The Bhāṭṭas (the followers of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa argued that it was a restrictive injunction (*niyamavidhi*)²³, which restricts the manner in which one should study the Veda. The Prābhākaras, on the other hand, argued that the principal injunction was not the injunction to study but rather a different

²³ The Mīmāṃsakas theorized that there were three kinds of injunction. The first type, the *apūrva-vidhi*, gives us novel knowledge that we could not hope to have otherwise. For instance, the injunction that stated “The one who desires heaven should perform the Jyotiṣṭoma sacrifice,” tells us about the causal relations that obtain between the performance of the ritual and heaven. Humans would have no access to knowledge regarding these transcendent causal relations without the Veda. The second type, the *niyama-vidhi*, enjoins a restriction upon some ritual action. In the course of the new- and full-moon ritual, there is an injunction to pound the rice (*vr̥hīn avahanti*, he pounds the rice). The Adhvaryu priest is enjoined to pound the rice in order to husk it. The husked rice is then used to make the rice-cake (*puroḍāśa*) which is then offered. The question here is, how should we understand this injunction. Presumably, if the point is to husk the rice grains, we may pursue any means of doing so. For instance, we could painstakingly separate the chaff from the grain with our fingernails. What is the end that is served by pounding the rice? The Mīmāṃsakas claim that when there are a number of options available to perform a certain action, a *niyamavidhi* might isolate a single one of those as the method to be used. In this way, the injunction “restricts” the scope of the ritual action by specifying one particular mode of performing it. There remains the issue of the end which this serves. This can’t possibly serve the end of producing threshed rice, for then one could use any of the means available to him. Thus, if there is no visible (*dṛṣṭa*) end to which this injunction is intended, then we should assume that there is some invisible (*adr̥ṣṭa*) end that this action will serve. Thus, in the case of the winnowing of the rice by pounding, the Mīmāṃsakas claim that the action produces an intermediary (*avāntara*) *apūrva* (*apūrva*, i.e. novel product, is the unseen result of a ritual that produces the remote result, viz. heaven). The last kind of injunction, known as the *parisaṃkhyā vidhi*, or the exclusionary injunction follows a logic inverse to the *niyama-vidhi*. Thus, the *parisaṃkhyā vidhi*, rather than prescribing one among a number of available options, prohibits one option. The clearest example of the *parisaṃkhyā vidhi* is from the Rāmāyaṇa, which states that one should eat five five-nailed animals. The point here is not to enjoin that people eat the five animals included in this list. It is rather to prohibit the eating of any five-nailed (*pañca-nakha*) animal *other than* the five listed. A person may choose never to eat a five-nailed animal. She would not thereby transgress this injunction. Transgression would only occur were she to eat a five-nailed animal *not* included in this list.

injunction enjoining the teacher to instruct an initiate in the study of the Veda. The injunction to study the Veda was to be subsumed (following the logic of assimilation through subordination) under this primary injunction to teach. The scholars of Śringeri privileged the Bhāṭṭa view but, in some cases, presented both opinions on the matter. Their explicit and reasoned preference for the rightness of the Bhāṭṭa position is found in the *Parāśaramādhavīya*. The Bhāṭṭa position responds to the Prābhākara argument that the *adhyayana vidhi* cannot bear the weight of the Bhāṭṭa view on *adhikāra*. As I have explained above, the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas posited that humans must be motivated by a result that is attractive to them to embark upon the performance of an expensive and complicated ritual. This is comprehended by the conception of entitlement or eligibility (*adhikāra*); in other words, what kind of person is credentialed and motivated by the fruit of the ritual to perform it? Thus, in the paradigmatic Vedic injunction, “One who desires heaven should sacrifice with the Jyotiṣṭoma ritual (*svarga-kāmo jyotiṣṭomena yajeta*),” desire for heaven impels human action.

The Prābhākaras, turning their logic back on the Bhāṭṭas, argue that a boy who has not yet studied the Veda cannot know the result of the act of studying the Veda, and cannot therefore be governed by this injunction. Or, if the boy has already studied the Veda, and thus knows the result of studying, then he does not stand to benefit from studying it. In other words, Bhāṭṭa position results in a vicious circle of mutual dependency. Therefore, argue the Prābhākaras, it must be the teacher who is obligated by a different injunction to teach the Veda (*adhyāpana-vidhi*).²⁴

²⁴ The injunction to teach states: “He should initiate a Brahmin boy of eight. Him he should teach.” *aṣṭavarṣam brāhmaṇam upanayīta | tam adhyāpayīta* | Mādhava, *Parāśara Smṛti*, 1.1:148.

On this matter, the Prābhākara view is as follows: Paṇini has stated (in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī*) that the form *upanayīta* is used in the sense of creating the office of the teacher, owing to the use of the *ātmanepada* suffix. Owing to the fact that the action of initiating and the act of teaching have the same agent, insofar as one is subordinated to the other, the one who desires the office of teacher is the *adhikārin* with regard to injunction to teach. It is for this very reason that Manu has taught: “The twice-born who would teach a student, having already initiated him; him they call

The commentator then presents the conclusive view on the matter. The answer shows the astounding facility with which these exegetes generalized Mīmāṃsā hermeneutic principles to retroactively reinforce social conventions. The issue boils down to which injunction is principal (*pradhāna*) and which is secondary (*upasarjana*). The commentator shows that an injunction that is optional cannot subordinate an injunction that is obligatory. According to the Smṛtis, teaching

“teacher,” possessed of the esoteric knowledge and knowledge of rituals. (Manu Smṛti 2.140). Thus, given that the injunction to teach is well-established, we ought not postulate the injunction to study separately. Learning is an established object, because the injunction to teach, which has already been enjoined, would not stand to reason without it.

Objection: Is it not the case that the injunction to teach (*adhyayana vidhi*) does not suffer from the fault of postulation (*kalpanā*), because even this postulated injunction does exist? Because the Veda states: “One should study one’s own Veda.”

Response: Not so. This injunction is not fit to produce its own performance, because it does not specify the *adhikārin* (the eligible agent).

Objection: But, it ought to be stated that one could postulate an *adhikārin* with recourse either to the rule regarding the Viśvajit sacrifice or the rule regard the Rātrisattra. In the injunctive statement, “He should perform the Viśvajit sacrifice,” the Veda does not specify who is enjoined by means of a statement of the kind “desiring such-and-such a thing.” In that case, since performance cannot obtain (in the absence of this specification), owing to the fact that *everybody* wants heaven, heaven itself is postulated as the specified end. Thus, in this case, a boy, who desires heaven, may be enjoined. In the case of the *arthavāda* (praise-statement) of the Rātrisattra, viz., “Those who perform these Rātris, they obtain stability,” because “stability”, which is explicitly mentioned, is extremely close to heaven, which is not mentioned at all, an *adhikārin* who desires stability is postulated. Similarly, in this case, the *adhikārin* may be one who desires rivers of milk, because the *arthavāda* states, “The one who studies the *Rg* hymns, rivers of milk flow as offerings to his ancestors. The one who studies the *Yajus* formulae, rivers of *ghee*. The one who studies the *Sāman* songs, soma purifies from them.”

Response: Not so, these *arthavāda* passages are subordinated to the injunction regarding the *brahmayajña*, and further, the desire for heaven cannot arise, because the student has not yet studied the texts. Even if it were somehow possible, the following fault of mutual dependency cannot be avoided. Only after one has studied the Veda does the comprehension of the injunction to study occur. And, only once comprehension has occurred can there be the study. Thus, because the injunction to teach employs the injunction to study, teaching alone is enjoined, not studying.”

‘aṣṭa-varṣaṃ brāhmaṇam upanayīta tam adhyāpayīta’ iti | atra prabhākaro manyate – ‘upanayīta’ – iti nayater ātmanepadasya ācāryakarane pāṇinīnā sūtritatvāt (Aṣṭādhyāyī 1.3.36) upanayanādhyāpanyoś cāṅgāṅgīrūpatvenaikakarṭṛkatvāt ācāryatva-kāmo’ dhyāpane’ dhikārī | ata eva manunā smaryate – upanīya tu yaḥ śiṣyaṃ vedam adhyāpayed dvijaḥ | sakalpaṃ sarahasyaṃ ca tam ācāryaṃ pracakṣate || iti evaṃ cādhyāpana-vidhau sushite saty apy adhyayanasya prthag vidhir na kalpanīyo bhaviṣyati | vihitasyādhyāpanasyādhyayanam antareṇānupapatter adhyayanasyārthe siddhatvāt | nanu nādhyayana-vidhau kalpanā-doṣo’ sti | klṛptasyaiva vidheḥ sattva | ‘svādhyāyo’ dhyetavyaḥ’ iti śruteḥ | maivam | adhikārya-āsravaṇesāsya vidher anuṣṭhāpakatvāyogāt | athocyeta – viśvajin-nyāyena rātri-sattra-nyāyena vādhikārī parikalpyatām | ‘viśvajitā yajeta’ ity atra ‘etat-kāmaḥ’ iti nīyojya-viśeṣaṇasyāśravanāt anuṣṭhānāprāptau svargasya sarvair iṣyamānatvāt sa eva tad-viśeṣaṇatvena parikalpitaḥ | evam atra svargakāmo mānavako nīyojyo’ stu | rātrisattra ‘pratiṣṭhanti ha vā ete ya etā rātrīr upayanti’ ity arthavāda śrutāyāḥ pratiṣṭhāyāḥ atyantam āsrutāt svargataḥ pratyāsannatayā pratiṣṭhā-kāmo’ dhikārī kalpitaḥ | evam atra payaḥ-kulyādi-kāmo’ dhikārī syāt | ‘yad-ṛco’ dhīte payasaḥ kulyā asya pītṛn svadhā abhivahanti | yad-yajūṃṣi ghṛtasya kulyāḥ | yat-sāmāni soma ebhyaḥ pavate’ ity arthavādāt iti | maivam | payahkulyader brahma-yajña-vidhi-śeṣatvāt mānavakasyāprabuddhatvena svargakāmatvāsambhavācca | kathañcit sambhave’ py anyonyāśrayatvaṃ durvāram | adhīte svādhyāya paścād adhyayana-vidhy-avagamah | tad-avagame cādhyayanam iti | tasmāt adhyayanasyādhyāpana-prayuktatvād adhyāpanam eva vidhīyate nādhyayanam iti |

is one of three possible livelihoods suitable for Brahmins (the other two are officiating at sacrifices and accepting donations). Thus, one may choose to be a teacher but, similarly, one may not. One may not similarly choose to study the Veda or not; as long as one is entitled to it, one must. The commentator avers:

Other scholars cannot stand Prabhākara's view because teaching, which is optional, cannot possibly require studying, which is obligatory. Teaching is optional, since someone who seeks an income is entitled to practice it. That is why Manu has stated: 'For this person [the Brahmin], of the six acts [which are permitted for him], three are sources of income: officiating at a sacrifice, teaching, and accepting donations from an unimpeachable donor.' *Adhyayana* (studying), on the other hand, is obligatory, because Manu has taught that failure to study results in diminution: 'The twice-born who, instead of studying the Veda, toils at a different endeavor, even while living he, together with his lineage, is reduced straightaway to being a śūdra.' Thus, the studying is required by its own injunction [i.e. it is not dependent upon the injunction to teach].²⁵

He goes on to refute the Prābhākara positions one by one, but the rhetorical point has been driven home, and in the process an important dimension of the project has come to light. Matters that are disputed by different schools of Mīmāṃsā may be adjudicated with recourse to the Smṛti tradition. Thus, the question of which of two Vedic injunctions is primary and which secondary can be resolved by appealing to the *dharmaśāstra* tradition and, by extension, to social convention. This shows that the hermeneuts of Śṛṅgeri considered these different spheres of

²⁵ *tad etad gurumatam anye vādino na kṣamante | anityenādhyāpanena nityasyādhyayanasya prayoktum aśakyatvāt | anityaṃ cādhyāpanam | jīvana-kāmasya tatrādhikārāt | tadāḥ manuḥ: ṣaṅṅām tu karmaṇām asya trīṇi karmāṇi jīvikā | yājanādhyāpane caiva viśuddhācca pratigrahaḥ iti adhyayanam tu nityam | akaraṇe pratyavayasya manunā smṛtatvāt – yo 'nadhīya dvijo vedān anyatra kurute śramam | sa jīvann eva śūdratvam āśu gacchati sāvayaḥ iti atah svavidhiprayuktam evādhyayanam |*
Mādhava, 1.1:150.

hermeneutics – the Vedic and the *dharmaśāstric* – to be part of one unitary, if hierarchically ordered, Vedic whole.

This discussion shows that the injunction to study is obligatory and that it governs the religious activities of all twice-born male initiates. But what did it mean to know the Veda, whither the obligation to study? Unsurprisingly, the exegetes of Śṛṅgeri interpreted the *adhyayana vidhi* to encompass the study and application of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics. This, as we shall see, served a variety of uses. For one, it aided the project of Mimamsification upward and downward²⁶ that the maṭha was engaged in. This consisted of the encompassment of the two other predominant normative discourses of the Vedic world -- Vedānta and Dharmaśāstra -- by the hermeneutic principles of Mīmāṃsā. This assertion demands a caveat: the Mīmāṃsā applied by the hermeneuts of Śṛṅgeri was not the pure Mīmāṃsā of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa. Indeed, as the final section of this chapter shows, the scholars of Śṛṅgeri developed a hybrid Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta hermeneutics. Nevertheless, the principles of interpretation were decidedly Mīmāṃsaka. Further, the instruction of students in Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics was critical to the project of “Applied Mīmāṃsā” which the scholars implemented. Though the drive to realize a practical Mīmāṃsā informed the composition of the entire commentarial corpus, it is in the commentaries on the ritual Vedas, the Taittirīya Saṃhitā in particular, that this practice finds its most sustained elaboration. The elevation of Mīmāṃsā also cohered with the forms of life that the maṭha valorized and promoted. The inscriptions that we have examined in the Introduction make

²⁶ The schematic of upward and downward follows emic conceptualizations of Smārta traditions on the one hand and Vedānta on the other. I think of Mīmāṃsā encompassing Smārta discourses as a movement downwards because Smṛti is characterized as being derived from the Vedas, but lacking the independent validity of Śruti. Indeed, the scholars of Śṛṅgeri themselves reflect a desire to further Vedicize Dharmaśāstra texts through the imposition of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutic categories. Vedānta is higher than Mīmāṃsā in the hierarchy. This is reflected in the other term for Vedānta (used by the scholars of Śṛṅgeri): the Uttara-Mīmāṃsā (the Higher or Later Mīmāṃsā). Further, and more to the point, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta are oriented toward two transcendent ends, of which the Vedānta end (liberation) is referred to as the highest (*niḥśreyasa*) human end (*puruṣārtha*).

mention of villages that were settled to support the composition and teaching of the Vedas, the commentaries, and the full range of technical treatises. Moreover, villages were granted to notable ritual performers whose titles alluded to the expensive and elaborate Vedic rituals they had performed.²⁷ Thus, at the root of these means of religious subject-formation was the *adhyayana vidhi*.

Knowledge in Action

The principal dispute regarding the *adhyayana vidhi* (“One should study one’s family Veda,” *svādhyāyo ’dhyetavyah*) centered on what it means to know the Veda. The *prima facie* position, indeed the intuitive view, which the maṭha rejected was that the injunction to study entailed simply the memorization of the text of the Veda. Since it did not matter whether one had memorized the text by reading from a book or by reciting after a teacher, the mode of undertaking what was enjoined (Vedic study) did not matter. The injunction certainly did not specify a certain mode of study. Further, even if one argued that one should memorize the text in a ritual fashion, that is, by reciting the text back to the teacher, still this need not result in the student understanding what he had memorized. Finally, even if he were required by the injunction to understand the meaning of the text, this would occur naturally, since his training in

²⁷ For instance, an inscription from 1386 records the gift of lands to three Brahmin scholars and ritualists, Nārāyaṇa-vājapeya-yāji, Naraharisomayāji and Paṇḍari-dīkṣita, who, besides undertaking elaborate and expensive Vedic rituals (as evinced by their names) were further celebrated for promoting the Vedic commentaries. The grant was made in the presence of the guru of the maṭha, Vidyāraṇya.

R Narasimhachar, “Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department” (Bangalore: University of Mysore, 1908), 14. The particulars of this grant are reiterated in a *kaḍita* from Śṛṅgeri’s archives: “The present record registers the grant of some lands under the orders of Harihara II, king of Vijayanagar to certain Brahmans named Nārāyaṇa-vājapeyi, Narahari-Somayāji and Pāṇḍuraṅgadīkṣita in the presence of Vidyāraṇya-śrīpada. The object of the grant has been stated to be to reward the above Brahmans for having brought out commentaries on the four Vedas in the name of the king.”

“Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department” (Bangalore: University of Mysore, 1934), 115.

the related disciplines (*vedāṅgas*), particularly grammar, would provide him with all the technical tools to understand the meaning of the text.

Against this multi-layered view, the maṭha argued, across a number of texts,²⁸ in two very significant variants, that knowledge of the ritual was the key to knowing the Veda. This was, simply put, because the ritual was the end of Vedic instruction; ritual was the action this instruction served. That is, the ritual was principal, and the *adhyayana vidhi* was subordinated to it. Taken together, these two variants on this single injunction reveal the hierarchy of values that construct the variety of subjectivities in this Vedic world. The first variant was a restatement of the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā view that demonstrated that the injunction to know the Veda included the study of the Mīmāṃsā because Vedic hermeneutics was indispensable to the proper performance of the ritual. The second view evinced key adaptations to Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics by the admixture of hermeneutic positions developed by the Advaita Vedāntin theologian – and purported founder of the maṭha, according to later tradition – Śaṅkarācārya.

The scholars of Śṛṅgeri, in an instance of startling hermeneutic innovation that has yet to be appreciated, applied to the ritual texts Śaṅkara's innovations in Vedic hermeneutics. To clarify, Śaṅkara, the founder of Advaita Vedānta, transformed certain key concepts of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics in advancing his novel theological program of interpreting the Upaniṣads. Śaṅkara's radical reinterpretation of ritual hermeneutics was key to the development of his Vedic program of gnostic soteriology. The exegetes of Śṛṅgeri, as part of the grand project of synthesizing a single Vedic tradition, re-applied Śaṅkara's hermeneutic framework to the ritual realm that Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta had ruptured. The scholars of Śṛṅgeri synthesized a new

²⁸ For instance, see, Śaunaka, *Atharvaveda*, 1:10; Cannibhaṭṭa, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* (Nirṇayasāgara Press, 1924), 262–67; *Taittirīya Samhitā*, 4; Mādhava, *Parāśara Smṛti*, 1.1:148–52; Mādhava, *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*, 11–13.

hermeneutic framework, combining the Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta traditions, that sought to put that sundered Vedic world back together again.

This second variant of interpretation of the injunction, an extension of the first, argued that a *single* injunction was capable of enjoining two different ends: action (the performance of the ritual enjoined) and the knowledge of what the ritual signified. Thus, a single injunction could enjoin a person to perform what it enjoined *and* to know, in an enriched sense, what that performance signified. These two ends produced different transcendent results, and the ritual performer who was able to combine these two in his performance – one who performed the ritual with the full knowledge of its implications – transcended the world of action through these ritual actions themselves. Ritual itself provided him the means to transcend the world of ritual. He was able to progress to the final and highest sphere of Vedic religion – the sphere of knowledge alone. Thus, the injunction to know the Veda encompassed within itself the distinct Vedic subjectivities that the maṭha governed.

The first of these two variants, elaborated upon, in almost identical fashion,²⁹ in the introduction to the Atharvaveda Samhitā, the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, and the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*,³⁰ asserted that the injunction to study the Veda had as its end the study of Mīmāṃsā. This position advanced the view that performance of the ritual (which was the ultimate and predominant end to which the study of the Veda tended) required that the injunction

²⁹ Indeed, the argument made in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* reproduces, verbatim, the argument in the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*.

³⁰ That the Mīmāṃsā view was favored in these three instances does not come as a surprise. Two of these texts – the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā* and the Mīmāṃsā section of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* – are primers on the Mīmāṃsā system. The introduction to the Atharvaveda similarly adopts a programmatic analysis of Mīmāṃsaka topics (*bhāvanā*, the *adhyayana vidhi*, and the uncreated and impersonal – *nityatva* and *apauruṣeyatva* – of the Veda. I have not been able to discern a satisfactory explanation for the interest in Mīmāṃsā topics. Still, the discussions on Mīmāṃsā included in the introduction draw on the same elements as those that occur elsewhere in this corpus.

to study the Veda necessarily entailed that one knew the Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics. This interpretive framework, after all, was the key to resolving doubts that arose regarding the performance of the ritual, doubts that no other knowledge system could address. Only Mīmāṃsā could help the ritual performer arrange the swathes of Vedic statements into the hierarchic order that the telos of ritual performance produced.³¹

Crucial to this view was the interpretation of the *adhyayana-vidhi* as a restrictive injunction (*niyama-vidhi*). According to this view, the injunction restricted the manner in which the Veda was to be studied. The restriction of the mode of study, which produced the visible and novel (*apūrva*) result of knowledge of the meaning of the ritual (as theorized by Mīmāṃsā) served the overarching purpose of successfully performing the rituals. In other words, even if in some parallel universe one could study the Veda as one wished, in the world governed by Mīmāṃsā, the injunction to study must result in studying the Veda to know the meaning of the ritual. After all, ritual performance was Homo Vedicus’ real *raison d’etre*.

This variant of the *adhyayana vidhi* hewed close to the Mīmāṃsā interpretation, which understood the “study of the Veda” to extend to and culminate in the knowledge of the Mīmāṃsā. The innovations of the hermeneutic project at Śṛṅgeri went much further than the simple reproduction of Mīmāṃsā analyses of the *adhyayana vidhi*. Thus far, I have shown that

³¹ The Jaiminīyanyāyamālā illustrates this position with the following example. The Veda enjoins the ritual performer to lay down gravel that has been sprinkled. Neither grammar nor etymology nor linguistic analysis (i.e. analyses at the level of words) can help the sacrificer know whether he should sprinkle the gravel with oil or with ghee. By understanding the Mīmāṃsā principle of subordination of a sentence to the primary injunctive statement, the ritual performers can determine, from the praise-statement “ghee is vital power,” that he should sprinkle the gravel with ghee.
‘aktāḥ śarkarā upadadhāti’ ity atra ‘ghṛtenaiva na tailādinā’ ity ayaṃ nirṇayo vyākaraṇena niruktena nigamena vā na siddhyati | vicāraśāstraṃ tu ‘tejo vai ghṛtam’ iti vākyaśeṣād arthaṃ nirṇesyati | ato vicāro vaidhaḥ | 13
 With regard to the injunction, “He places the sprinkled gravel,” the determination that “[the gravel is sprinkled] with ghee alone not with oil,” does not come about through grammar, etymology or syntax. The science of critical examination (*vicāra-śāstra*), on the other hand, will lead us to the meaning through the completion of the [injunctive statement] with “Ghee is the vital power.” Thus, critical examination is enjoined.”
 Mādḥava, *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*, 13.

the *adhyayana vidhi* constituted and controlled a distinct form-of-life: from the time a male candidate was born-again, initiated into the world of ritual, to the time he died. Through this injunction, the governors of the maṭha attempted to control who should take up such a life-long vocation and how they should honor the ends advanced by the injunction. The *adhyayana vidhi* was thus critical to fashioning a life. But, as I have stated above, the imperative to realize the meaning of the Vedas – to live the Vedas – through the performance of the ritual was implemented through the radical reconstitution of the text of the Veda itself. In other words, the scholars of Śṛṅgeri reimagined, by reconstituting the Vedic text, what it meant to study, know, and experience the Vedas.

The Veda, particularly in being referred to as *śruti* (hearing), was understood to provide humans an immediate awareness of supersensible or transcendent states-of-affairs (Mīmāṃsā, in particular, attempted to prove that the *śruti* provides us with immediate awareness of a transcendent causal system). Thus, Veda as *śruti* was analogized to *smṛti* in just the same way that direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) was analogized to inference (*anumāna*). Dividing up the realms of human experience into the worldly or immanent (*laukika*) and the supersensible or transcendent (*alaukika*), the Veda (*śruti*) provides the kind of awareness of the *alaukika* sphere that direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) provides for the *laukika*. Similarly, *smṛti* provides the same kind of mediated awareness of the *alaukika* sphere as inference does for the *laukika* sphere. *Smṛti* and inference are comparable; they are similarly derived from some real or purportedly original – and immediate – awareness (*śruti* or direct perception). In reconstituting the Vedas by imbricating the mantra text with Brāhmaṇa and Śrautasūtra texts, the exegetes of Śṛṅgeri were, in effect, producing their own reconstruction of the Vedas as direct awareness. By ramifying each utterance in its complete ritual context, the commentators were imaginatively reconstructing a

complete ritual text. By knowing this text – memorizing it, understanding its proximate ritual references as well as the hidden connections it revealed, being able to accord each utterance its full ritual value – the ritualist realized his potential to bring about the ritual (*bhāvanā*) fully.

This radical reconstruction of the Vedic text is not simply a commentarial conceit; indeed, it was an explicit end to which our commentators draw our attention. Besides the reiteration of the analysis of the *adhyayana vidhi* and the privileged status it is accorded in the corpus, the commentary on the Ṛgveda Saṃhitā directly acknowledges the supremacy of the ritual in understanding the meaning of the Veda. This discussion occurs in the context of a question regarding the sequence in which the Saṃhitās of the four Vedas (Yajurveda, Ṛgveda, Sāmaveda, Atharvaveda) are commented.

The commentator defends the decision to comment on the Yajurveda first, even though, in most lists and presentations of the Vedas, the Ṛgveda is given pride of place. The objection is raised by an imagined opponent: “On this point, some say: The *Ṛgveda* is always taught first and it is the first to be honored. Since it is honored according to this logic, it is only fitting that the *Ṛgveda* be explained first.”³² The commentator, while striking a conciliatory tone in admitting that there are numerous contexts in which the Ṛgveda *is* first among equals, defends the maṭha’s decision to explicate the Taittirīya Saṃhitā of the Yajurveda first:

We agree with you that when it comes to memorizing the *Vedas*, or going over the texts, or in the daily recitation of Vedic texts, the Ṛgveda alone has primacy. But, because the point of understanding the meaning [of the *Vedas*] is to be able to perform the Vedic

³² *atra kecidāhuh | rg-vedasya prāthamyena sarvatrāmnātatvād abhyarhitam pūrvam iti nyāyenābhyarhitatvāt tadvyākhyānam ādau yuktam|*

F. Max Müller, *Rig-Veda-Samhitā*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1890), 1.

sacrifice, and because the *Yajurveda* alone is primary in that regard, commenting on it [the *Yajurveda*] first is indeed proper.³³

The commentator uses this factitious exchange to announce that ritual is the driving telos of the commentarial project. Since the *Yajurveda*, which comprises the mantras that are used in the performance of the ritual, is central to the work performed by the primary ritual officiant, the *adhvaryu*, it deserves to be commented upon and, presumably, studied first.

Nevertheless, the strongest evidence of the primacy of ritual is the structure of the commentary on the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* itself. The *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* is one of the recensions of the Black (*kr̥ṣṇa*) *Yajurveda*. The Black *Yajurveda* is so called (in contrast to the White – *śukla* – *Yajurveda*) because the text mixes up the mantra and *Brāhmaṇa* sections of the text. To explain: the *Yajurveda* is often referred to with the Sanskrit adjective *ādhvaryava*, meaning “belonging to the *adhvaryu* officiant.” The *adhvaryu*, among his four colleagues, is entrusted with the actual performance of the ritual.³⁴ He milks the cows, he prepares the altar, he offers the oblations, and so on. Thus, *Yajurveda*, comprised of the mantras that the *adhvaryu* uses, is the most pertinent to the performance of the ritual. The “mixed” (black) nature of the *Taittirīya* means that the mantras

³³ *astv evam sarva-vedādhyayana-tatpārāyana-brahma-yajña-japādāv ṛg-vedasyaiva prāthāmyam | artha-jñānasya tu yajñānuṣṭhānārthatvāt tatra tu yajur-vedasyaiva pradhānatvāt tadvyākhyānam evātau yuktam |* Müller, 1:1.

³⁴ The simplest of Vedic rituals (with the exception of the *Agnihotra*) is officiated by team of four priests (excluding the *yajamāna* or sacrificer, the one on whose behalf the ritual is performed). More complicated and elaborate rituals have many more priests, but even the simplest of the rituals have four priests, each of whom has a distinct function (and is connected to one of the four Vedas). Thus, the *adhvaryu* priest is responsible for the action – he recites the mantras (from the *Yajurveda*) whilst completing the accompanying ritual actions. The *hotṛ* priest is responsible for reciting the ṛks from the *Ṛgveda* at the appropriate times. He is thus associated with the *Ṛgveda*. The *udgātṛ* sings the *sāmans*, and is associated with the *Sāmaveda*. Finally, the *brahman* priest oversees the ritual performs; he is rarely called upon to give permission to the other priests or command them. Generally, he is responsible for making sure that the ritual is performed without errors; in the event of a mistake, the *brahman* priest corrects the mistake or prescribes the appropriate expiation. The *brahman* priest is commonly associated with the *Atharvaveda* (indeed, the commentary on the *Atharvaveda* does so), but, historically, the *brahman* priest’s association with the *Atharvaveda* is a vexed matter.

are interspersed with the Brāhmaṇa sections; these two layers of text are not separately constituted.

In order to understand the radical re-structuring that the commentary produces, we should train our sights on the mantra. As I have stated above, the ritual dictates the textual ordering. Thus, each ritual action is accompanied by mantras (there are, of course, ritual actions that are *not* accompanied by mantras, but these are rare). To follow the mantras then is to follow the action of the ritual. (see figure below).³⁵ Let us take the paradigmatic ritual, the new- and full-moon rite (*darśapūrṇamāsa*). As with any complex ritual, the *darśapūrṇamāsa* comprises a number of discrete constituent actions. For instance, the “driving away of the calves,” followed by the “procurement of the sacred grass,” followed by the “washing of the ritual receptacles.” Each of these constituent elements is treated as a textual unit called the *anuvāka*. Each *anuvāka*, in turn, is comprised of a number of smaller actions.

Thus, for instance, the act of driving away the calves consists of

- a. cutting a branch of the *palāśa* tree
- b. dispatching the cows
- c. the *adhvaryu* looking at the sacrificer (*yajamāna*).

Each of these constituent elements is accompanied by mantras, and forms the textual unit for analysis.

Let us consider the first action – corresponding to the first *anuvāka* – which concerns the mantras that accompany the actions related to driving away the calves in order to milk the cow.

³⁵ The text begins with the paradigmatic rite, the *darśapūrṇamāsa* (the new- and full-moon rite). This forms the paradigm for the most basic type of ritual, and the other rituals of this type are only described insofar as they diverge from this model. The commentator defends, at length, the propriety of beginning with the *darśapūrṇamāsa* in the introduction to the Taittirīya Saṃhitā. *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, 8–9.

The first constituent action is the cutting of the branch (to use eventually to drive away the calves). The mantra (the *yajur*) that accompanies this action is introduced. Then, the commentator inserts the sections from the Baudhāyana and Āpastamba *kalpasūtras* that detail the precise actions of the *adhvaryu* and specify how and when the mantra that accompanies the action is to be recited. The *kalpasūtras* (the Baudhāyana and Āpastamba *sūtras* follow the Taittirīya recension) are ritual manuals that provide detailed descriptions of the actions that the officiant performs as he recites the mantra. Next, the commentator inserts the section from the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa that explicates the mantra in question. He may also take this opportunity to cite Brāhmaṇas from other Vedic recensions that either further explicate the mantra or indicate a different tradition of interpretation. Lastly, the commentator provides his comment on this newly-constituted and ramified Vedic text. At the end of each *anuvāka*, the commentator raises a few issues of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics and Pāṇinian grammar that the *anuvāka* has occasioned, and resolves these issues. Thus, we are presented with a layered Vedic text, hierarchically ordered by the ritual action that drives explanation. The commentator describes his methodology in the invocatory verses of the commentary:

brāhmaṇaṃ kalpasūtre dve mīmāṃsām vyākṛtiṃ tathā |
udāhṛtyātha taiḥ sarvair mantrārthaḥ spaṣṭam īryate ||

First the Brāhmaṇa, the two Kalpasūtras [Baudhāyana and Āpastamba], and similarly, Mīmāṃsā and Grammar, are adduced; then, with all these [means] the meaning of the mantras is clearly proclaimed.

This verse describes the task at hand using the logic of Mīmāṃsā. Recalling the *bhāvanā* analysis, the meaning of the mantras (*mantrārtha*) is the *sādhya* (the end that is to be brought about), and the Brāhmaṇas, kalpasūtras, Mīmāṃsā and Grammar are the *karāṇa* (the means to this end). This is “Applied Mīmāṃsā” in action; the resultant text is precisely the result of running the data through the Mīmāṃsā code. The ramified Veda is an effect of the *adhyayana vidhi*, which mobilizes this method of meaning-making.

Let us turn to the commentary on the Taittirīya Saṃhitā’s mantra section to examine the elements of this deep structure. My analysis of the commentarial structure shows that the reconstitution of the Vedic mantras resulted in the radical transformation of the subjectivity of the reader. That is, to read a Veda so reconstituted -- where the mantras were embedded in their larger ritual context with the relevant portions of the Brāhmaṇa and Śrautasūtras quoted in their entirety – would amount to a radical transformation in the experience of knowing the Veda. We may think of this as an effort to recreate the śruti, an unmediated awareness of the Veda. This mode of commentary brings the Mīmāṃsā doctrine to life. The organization of the commentary on the mantras serves to vivify the primary Mīmāṃsā hermeneutic principle – that the validity of the Vedas lies in its injunctive force, and that every section of the text must be hierarchically subordinated to this overarching ritual purpose.

In some cases, the commentator is quite straightforward in explaining the need to rearrange the text to facilitate the type of understanding that the *adhyayana vidhi* requires. Thus, for instance, noting that the mantras of the *vājapeya* sacrifice are far removed from the Brāhmaṇa sections explicating those mantras, the commentator defends his decision to interpose

the mantra texts with the appropriate section from the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa “so that it is easy for students to understand” (*śrotīṇām pratipattisaukaryāya*).³⁶

Similarly, again in the context of the *vājapeya* sacrifice, the commentator takes up the mantras that are governed by the *ujjiti*, the ritual act of running a chariot race. The injunction that enjoins this particular ritual act is in a remote section of the Brāhmaṇa text, removed from the mantra section. Thus, the commentator once again interposes the injunction at the beginning of the section of mantras that concern the running of the chariot race, reproducing the argument for the primacy of the ritual action in his explanation.³⁷ These examples of textual manipulation and reorganization show that the exegetes of Śrīṅgeri intended to refashion the Vedic texts to reify the structure of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics that was, until this moment, no more than an abstraction.

Lastly, the commentary demonstrates that the *adhyayana vidhi* was indeed thought to govern the future ritual conduct of the students of the Veda. I have contended that the injunction to know conditioned the formation of a ritual subject who continued, as long as he performed the ritual, to be governed by the injunction to know the Veda. Indeed, the ritual was one of the means of enriching and reifying his knowledge of its meaning. This presumption is explicitly affirmed in the commentary.

³⁶ The explanation of these *vājapeya* mantras is taught in the space of eight *anuvākas* in the Brāhmaṇa section, specifically, in the third *prapāṭhaka* in the first *kāṇḍa*, beginning with the second *anuvāka* and culminating in the ninth *anuvāka*. Since these two parts – the mantra and brāhmaṇa texts dealing with the Vājapeya sacrifice – are found in far-flung parts of the text, they are not understood as contiguous. Thus, in order to aid the students’ understanding, the mantras are explained together with the brāhmaṇa, just as in the sections dealing with the New and Full Moon and the soma sacrifice that have been attended to already.”

teṣāṃ vājapeya-mantrāṇāṃ vyākhyānaṃ brāhmaṇa-granthe prathama-kāṇḍe tṛtīya-prapāṭhake dvitīyam ārabhya navamānteṣv aṣṭasv anuvākeṣv āmnātam | anayor vājapeya-viśayayor mantra-brāhmaṇayor atyanta-viprakṛṣṭa-deśa-vartitvena buddhi-sāmnidhyābhāvāc chrotīṇām pratipatti-saukaryāya pūrvokta-dārśika-saumika-kāṇḍavad brāhmaṇena sahaiva mantrā vyākhyāyante |

³⁷ “Because the *ujjiti* mantras are to be recited during the running of the chariot race, this injunction [that prescribes the recitation of the *ujjiti*] should be dragged closer to the injunction to run”
ujjiti-mantrāṇāṃ ratha-dhāvana-kāle paṭhanīyatvād dhāvana-vidhi-samīpa evāyaṃ vidhir utkraṣṭavyaḥ |

At the conclusion of each *anuvāka*, the commentary takes up questions of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics that the ritual actions of the fore-going *anuvāka* raised. Thus, at the conclusion of an *anuvāka* concerning the *vājapeya* sacrifice, an injunction addressed to the *adhvaryu* priest raises doubts regarding the conduct of the sacrificer (*yajamāna*). The *anuvāka* contains the following injunction directed to the *adhvaryu* priest: “He [the *adhvaryu*] should make the sacrificer [*yajamāna*] recite the *klṛpti* mantras.” The dilemma occasioned by this injunction is, should the *adhvaryu* priest teach the sacrificer (*yajamāna*) the *klṛpti* mantras in that moment or should the sacrificer already know the mantras and their meaning? The commentary concludes that the sacrificer should already know the *klṛpti* mantras: “Owing to the prescriptive force of the *adhyayana* injunction, only one who has studied the Veda and knows the meaning of the Veda may be a sacrificer [*yajamāna*]. Thus, he [the *adhvaryu*] should make a learned [sacrificer] recite the *mantras*.”³⁸

I now take up a fragment of a short chapter [*anuvāka*] to limn the precise architecture of this reconstruction. The second chapter [*anuvāka*] of the Taittirīya Saṃhitā, which serves to illustrate the restructuring of the Vedic text, comprises the mantras used in the ritual retrieval of the sacred grass (which is why the *anuvāka* is referred to as *barhir-āharaṇam*, “retrieving the sacred grass”) that he spreads over the sacrificial altar. The *anuvāka* is introduced thus: “The

³⁸ The entire section reads thus: “It is stated in the Vājapeya: ‘he makes the *yajamāna* recite the *klṛptis*. The *klṛptis* are mantras beginning with ‘*ayuryajñena kalpatām*.’ In this case, he could make either the one who knows the *mantra* and its meaning or the one who is ignorant recite the *mantras*, since the injunction does not say something to effect, ‘he should make the one who knows recite.’ So, it is possible that having tutored the ignorant patron at that time, he should make him recite [the *mantras*]. If this is your position, we don’t agree, since, owing to the prescriptive force of the *adhyayana* injunction, only one who has studied the *Veda*, which is to say has learned the *Veda*, is patron [*yajamāna*]. Thus, he [the *adhvaryu*] should make a learned [patron] recite the *mantras*.”
vājapeye śrūyate klṛptīryajamānaṃ vācayātīti | āyuryajñena kalpatāmityādayo mantrāḥ klṛptayah | tatra mantratadarthābhijñam anabhijñam cobhāvapi vācayet vidvāṃsaṃ vācayedityevaṃ viśeṣasyāśravaṇāt | anibhijñam tadaiva śikṣayitvāpi vācayitum śakyatvāditi cenmaivam | adhyaynavidhibalādadhītavedasya viditavedārthasaiva yajamānatvāt | tasmādabhijñameva vācayet |

driving away of the calves (*vatsāpakaraṇa*) was stated in the first (previous) *anuvāka*. In the second (the present *anuvāka*) is stated the retrieval of the ritual grass.” As we noted earlier, the overarching hermeneutic principle remains the Vedic ritual, as the ritual action dictates the categorization of the text into *anuvākas*, which we may think of as ritemes. Thus, this *anuvāka* is the riteme of retrieving the grass for the altar. Having introduced the general topic of discussion, the commentary takes up the mantras in turn, beginning with “*yajñasya ghoṣad asi*.” The commentary is as follows:

Baudhāyana employs the first mantra in addressing the horse’s rib: “Having picked [it up], he [the *adhvaryu*] addresses it [with the mantra]: *yajñasya ghoṣad asi*.” Āpastamba on the other hand states: “[With these words] *yajñasya ghoṣad asi*, he [the *adhvaryu*] addresses the *gārhapatya* [fire].” *ghoṣad* is a term for wealth. “O horse’s rib, you are [*asi*] the means to accomplish the sacrifice [*yajñasya*].” Or else one may construe these words with “O *gārhapatya* fire.” On this point the Brāhmaṇa states: “*yajñasya ghoṣad asi* is stated. He [the *adhvaryu* priest] thus endows the sacrificer with wealth.” *rayim* [from the Brāhmaṇa] means wealth.

Even this rather short example of the commentary shows what I mean by the radical reconstitution of the Vedic text. Here the mantra text (*yajñasya ghoṣad asi*), which we may expect would have been memorized by any prospective reader of the commentary, is sliced up and reconstituted with the three principle sources of meaning: the *kalpasūtra* texts of Baudhāyana and Āpastamba, the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, and the commentator’s explication. The hermeneutic frame is the ritual. The mantras are made sense of by relating them to the ritual action. The Śrauta texts set the ritual context in which the mantras are to be uttered. Baudhāyana maintains that the *adhvaryu* priest, having picked up the horse’s rib, addresses it with this mantra. Āpastamba, on the other hand, states that the *adhvaryu* addresses the *gārhapatya* fire

with this mantra. With these sūtra texts the commentary has recontextualized the fragment of mantra, connecting it to the action of the ritual.

Next, the commentator provides his own explanation of the fragment. He explains that the word “*ghoṣad*” of the mantra means wealth and refers, in this case, to the horse’s rib, since it is the means of successfully performing the ritual. As before, the mantra is meaningfully imbricated with the ritual. Finally, the commentary cites the relevant portion of the Brāhmaṇa text that refers to this mantra. Brāhmaṇa texts usually connect the action to some advantage or gain, either physical or spiritual. In this case, because the word “*ghoṣad*” is interpreted to mean wealth, the Brāhmaṇa encourages the performance of the action by claiming that it results in the *adhvaryu* priest endowing the sacrificer (*yajamāna*) with wealth. In enmeshing the text of the mantra in the web of these three networks of meaning, the commentary creates a new experience of the mantra, the text of which is always already lodged in the memory of the reader.

At the Margins of the Mantras

At the end of each *anuvāka*, the commentary provides a versified summary of ritual application (*vinīyoga-saṃgraha*), which, as an aide-memoire to the reader, links a fragment of the mantra with the ritual action that accompanies its utterance. For example, at the end of the *anuvāka* regarding the retrieval of the ritual grass, the *vinīyoga-saṃgraha* is as follows:

Having addressed the fire with the words “*yajñasya*” etc., he heats the sword with the words “*pratyū*” etc. He mutters the words “*preyaṃ*” etc., and then with the words “*devānām*” etc., the boundary of the *darbha* is made of fistfuls. With the words “*deva*” etc., having bound up the sacred grass, and having placed the blade on the joint [of the grass], with the words “*ācchettā*” etc., he should cut the grass, and with the words “*deva*”

etc., he should touch the root, and then with the words “saha” etc., he should touch himself.³⁹

This verse recapitulates for the reader the relevant information from the fore-going *anuvāka*. It is a handy mnemonic that the sacrificer can rely on to trigger his memory of the mantras and the ritual actions that accompany them. The link between actions and words that has been forged in the commentary on individual verses is here cemented, as is the point that the overarching hermeneutic telos of the Vedic sentences is the ritual. The final element of “Applied Mīmāṃsā” is evident in the discussion of knotty ritual problems evinced in the fore-going *anuvāka*. The commentary applies, in a “teachable moment,” Mīmāṃsā principles of Vedic hermeneutics to a particular problem in performing the ritual. Let us, once again, consider an example of Mīmāṃsā analysis from the *anuvāka* that we have discussed above – the *anuvāka* concerning the driving away of the calves (*vatsāpakaraṇa*).

Now for the Mīmāṃsā: In the first section of the fifth book [of the Mīmāṃsāsūtra] the topic of critical discussion is the question of validity with regard to the sequence of reciting the Veda:

Prima facie view:

With regard to the fore-offerings (*prayāja*), is there any sequence or not? There is none, because of the absence of either *śruti* (i.e. a direct Vedic expression of the sequence) or *artha* (i.e. the sequence is understood by making sense of the words).

This is not the case, because the sequence is fixed by the order of the recitation (i.e. the order in which the ritual actions are read in the text).

³⁹ *yajñasyetyagnimāmantrya pratyū dātrasya tāpanam | preyaṃ japati devānāṃ darbhasīmā'tha muṣṭitaḥ || deveti darbhānsaṃyanya parva saṃsthāpya dātrakam | ācchecchindyāddeva mūlaṃ spr̥ṣetsvaṃ ca sahetyataḥ ||*

In the case of the statement ‘the *adhvaryu* priest, having initiated the householder (i.e. the *yajamāna*), afterwards initiates the *brahman* priest. Then the *udgātr* priest and then the *hotṛ* priest,’ we understand the sequence of actions through the direct expression (*śruti*) of the absolutive suffix (*ktvā*) or the fifth case (the ablative, as in the particle *tataḥ* meaning “consequently”). In the fore-offerings there is no such direct expression. The text states: ‘he offers the *samid*s,’ ‘he offers the *tanūnapāt*.’ With regard to these two offerings, of the *samid* and *tanūnapāt* verses, there is no word that expresses the sequence. Or, as in the case of the two utterances ‘he performs the *agnihotra* sacrifice’ and ‘he cooks the rice gruel.’ In this case, insofar as the rice gruel is a means to performing the offering, it makes sense (*artha*) that it (the cooking of the rice gruel) should precede the performance of the *agnihotra* (since it is a means to consummating the ritual). But, the offering of the *samid* is not a means of performing the other rite, in the way that the rice gruel is in fact a means. Now, you may argue that there is discernable sequence because there are no grounds for presumption. We disagree: we should accept the sequence that is understood through the recitation of the text, given that there is no obstacle to this understanding. It is on the basis of this rule alone that the sequence of the ritual actions of driving away the calves and procuring the sacred grass, which have been stated by the first and the second *anuvākas* respectively, is demonstrated.⁴⁰

In this section on Mīmāṃsā, the commentary addresses a hermeneutic issue occasioned by the ritual actions prescribed by the first and second *anuvākas*. The problem, which is discussed at length in Mīmāṃsā, is how to determine the sequence in which ritual actions are to be performed. Mīmāṃsā recommends six *pramāṇas* or proof when we are presented with an

⁴⁰ *atha mīmāṃsā | tatra pāṭhasyānukrame prāmāṇyam ity ayam arthaḥ pañcamādhyāyasya prathama-pāde vicāritaḥ | prayājeṣu kramo nāsti vidyate vā na vidyate | śruti-arthābhāvato maivaṃ kramaḥ pāṭhān niyamyate || yathā adhvaryur gr̥hapatim dikṣayitvā brahmāṇam dikṣayati | tata udgātāraṃ tato hotāram ity atra ktvā-śrutyā pañcamī-śrutyā ca kramaḥ pratīyate | na tathā prayājeṣu śrutir asti | samidho yajati tanū-ṇapātaṃ yajatīty atra samid-yāga-tanū-ṇapād-yāgayoḥ krama-vācinaḥ śabdasyādarśanāt | yathā vā agnihotraṃ juhōti yavāgūṃ pacatīty atra yavāgvā homa-sādhanaṭvena pūrva-bhāvitvam ārthikaṃ na tathā samid-yāgasyetara-yāga-sādhanaṭvam asti | ato r̥thāpatter apy abhāvān nāsti karma iti cet | maivam | vākya-pāṭhena pratītasya kramasya bādhakābhāvenābhuyapeyatvāt | anenaiva nyāyena prathama-dvīṭyābhyām anuvākābhyām uktayor vatsāpakaraṇa-barhiḥ-sampādanayoḥ kramo draṣṭavyaḥ | Taittirīya Saṃhitā, 47.*

injunction of application [*prayoga-vidhi*]. These are: *śruti* (explicit expression in the text), *artha* (the meaning), *pāṭha* (the recitation), *sthāna* (the location), *mukhya* (the principal), and *pravṛtti* (the procedure). Each of these *pramāṇas* is stronger than the following *pramāṇa*. Thus, *śruti* or direct expression is the most powerful or decisive whereas *pravṛtti* or procedure is the weakest.

The issue occasioned in this instance is that the text does not clearly indicate whether the *vatsāpakaraṇa* (driving away of the calves) or the *barhir-āharaṇa* (procuring of the ritual grass) should be performed first. Were the text to read: “having driven away the calves, the *adhvaryu* priest should collect the ritual grass,” we would know (through the *pramāṇa* of *śruti* or direct expression of the absolutive suffix, denoted in English with ‘having ___’) the sequence of actions. Or were the text to state that the action of driving away the calves should serve as a means of procuring the grass, then we would know (through the *pramāṇa* of *artha* or sense) the sequence. But in the absence of either of these two *pramāṇas* how should we determine the sequence in which these actions are to be completed? As the analysis of Mīmāṃsā helps determine, given the absence of these two more decisive *pramāṇas*, the ritual performer should resort to the third *pramāṇa*, namely, *pāṭha* or the sequence in which different actions are actually found in the text. In this case, since the chapter (*anuvāka*) dealing with the driving away of the calves (*vatsāpakaraṇa*) precedes the chapter detailing the collection of ritual grass (*barhir-āharaṇa*), the conclusive Mīmāṃsā position is that those two ritual acts be performed in the order that they appear in the text.

The battery of interpretive elements and their hierarchical organization demonstrates the organizational logic of the commentary: the knowledgeable performance of Vedic ritual. Nevertheless, these interpretive supports – the kalpasūtras, the Brāhmaṇas and the commentator’s own glosses -- can only make sense of the text of the Vedas. Mīmāṃsā remains

critical to resolving doubts at the sentential level that denotative or connotative analyses of words cannot. Mīmāṃsā, imposing the simple hermeneutic principle that the Veda is authoritative only insofar as it enjoins ritual action, games out an impressive battery of hierarchically organized interpretive principles. The commentary is, in effect, a science of making the Mīmāṃsā concrete. It takes us from Veda to *vedi*, from text to altar. In this passage from text to practice we find the modes of constituting the ideal agent of action: Homo Vedicus.

It's the Veda All the Way Up

I have contended that the commentarial corpus generated by the exegetes of Śṛṅgeri produced a totalizing vision of monastic authority that sought to subjugate (in the sense of constituting as subject) a range of religious actors. Thus far, I have shown the interpretive framework in which, and through which, the ideal religious agent – the Vedic ritualist – came to be formed. The process of formation spanned a range of modalities. In the Introduction, I surveyed the productive conditions that made possible the emergence and cultivation of certain modes of life, namely, the Vedic teacher, the Vedic ritualist, the intellectual, the student. I classified these generative capacities wielded by the maṭha under the paradigm of the gift (*dāna*). In the first part of this chapter, I have examined, in detail, the workings of the restrictive dimensions of subject-formation, a complex of factors that I have classified under the paradigm of the injunction (*vidhi*). In the next section, I demonstrate the expansion of this paradigm of subject-formation upwards and downwards, following the normative hierarchy of the *varṇāśrama* system. First, I show how the Vedic *vidhi* was expanded downwards, to encompass the *dharmaśāstra* texts and thus all normative action. Next, I show how the ritual itself was interpreted to provide the sacrificer with an escape from the cycle of liberation. The texts

transform the ritual and the ends to which it is performed by the application of a hybrid Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta hermeneutics. These alterations to Mīmāṃsā interpretive assumptions were derived from Śāṅkara's Upaniṣadic hermeneutics. Thus, by infusing the interpretation of ritual with knowledge, the maṭha establishes a hermeneutic link between the two idealized subjects it sought to govern, the man of ritual (the sacrificer) and the man of knowledge (the *saṃnyāsin*).

The epistemic and normative basis for the Veda to govern religious activity was limited by the Mīmāṃsakas to the sole subject of the Vedic injunction: the twice-born initiate who, having graduated from his Vedic studies, would embark, following marriage, upon a life of ritual performance. The *vidhi*'s operation did not extend beyond this singular ritual subject; *saṃnyāsins* were beyond its scope. Their pursuit of liberation through knowledge did not depend upon action. Thus, they were beyond the realm of dharma. On the other end of the hierarchy, the Mīmāṃsakas could not imbue the normative regime envisioned by the Smṛti texts with the same kind of iron-clad epistemic basis as they did the Vedas.

The Smṛti tradition enjoyed a conventional validity by virtue of its dependence upon the transcendent and intrinsic validity of the Veda. The exegetes of Śṛṅgeri transformed this fragmentary picture into a vision of total Vedic domination. Key to this enterprise was the imposition of a hierarchy of human ends (*puruṣārthas*) that would inform the cultivation of a range of religious subjectivities. With the imposition of such a hierarchy, it was possible to fashion a narrative of religious progress.

In this section of the chapter, I explore the textual strategies that the hermeneuts of Śṛṅgeri employed to bring into being this spectrum of religious experience, ascending from the dharmic acts of good people, which resulted in a variety of immediate and immanent results on to the mechanistic performance of the Vedic ritual, which produced lackluster post-mortem

results, to the knowledgeable performance of the ritual, which produced the conditions for the ritual performed to transcend the very realm of ritual. Further, I show how the scholars of Śṛṅgeri turned Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics on its head by bringing Śāṅkara's hermeneutics to bear upon the ritual. These hermeneutic innovations repaired the broken world of Vedic sacrifice, which had long been severed from the Upaniṣads. The hermeneuts of Śṛṅgeri unified the long-separated worlds of action and knowledge, by applying the logic of each to the other. In so unifying the Vedic world, the maṭha fashioned the religious domain that it alone could govern. Monastic power was thus hewn out of the undifferentiated mass of the Vedic corpus. The maṭha constructed the edifice of its power by bestowing form and function upon this sprawling mass of texts.

Let us first consider how the commentaries characterized the dominion governed by the Vedas. I have already shown that the *adhyayana vidhi* was deployed to define the life of the Vedic ritualist, but that is only part of the story. The commentaries took an expansive view of the scope of the Veda, and, in particular, the power of the *vidhi* to govern forms of life other than that of the Vedic ritualist. This approach is fleshed out in a discussion on the meaning of the term *dharma* in the *Parāśaramādhavīya*. Going against the Mīmāṃsā grain, the author takes an expansive view of the scope of the term. Let us examine this passage in some detail.

The word “beneficial” (*hitam*) indicates the purpose [of the root text, the *Parāśarasṃṛti*], for *dharma* is beneficial insofar as it is the means to the desired result. That result is two-fold: immanent (*aiḥikam*) and transcendent (*āmuṣmika*). Immanent results such as prosperity etc., are brought about by means of such (*smārta*) rites as the *aṣṭakā*. Transcendent results are two-fold: post-mortem prosperity (*abyudaya*) and the highest end (liberation, *niḥśreyasa*). With regard to these two, *dharma* is the direct means to post-

mortem prosperity (*abhyudaya*). Liberation (*niḥśreyasa*), on the other hand, occurs (mediately) by means of the arising of the awareness of reality.⁴¹

This is a significant expansion of the scope of dharma. In the Mīmāṃsā discourse, the Vedic injunction is the only means to know dharma, which is nothing other than the particular coalescence of Vedic ritual actions. The commentary on the Ṛgveda Saṃhitā explicitly invokes this sense of dharma:

With regard to the second of Jaimini's sūtra, those who are steeped in the tradition have stated a pair of restrictions, namely, that the Vedic injunction alone is a valid means of knowing dharma, and that the injunction is a means of knowing dharma alone."⁴²

How do we get from the narrow definition of the dharma of the Vedic commentaries to this expansive notion of the term that comprehends all manner of virtuous action? The

⁴¹ *hitam ity anena śabdena prayojanaṃ nirdiśyate | abhimata-phala-sādhanatvaṃ hi dharmasya hitatvam | tac ca phalaṃ dvedhā | aikhikam āmuṣmikaṃ ca iti | aṣṭakādi-sādhyam puṣṭy-ādikam aihikam | āmuṣmikaṃ dvedhā | abhyudayo niḥśreyasaṃ ca | tatrābhyudayasya sāksāt sādhanatvam | niḥśreyasasya tu tattva-jñānotpādanadvāreṇa* Mādḥava, *Parāśara Smṛti*, 1.1:52.

⁴² The commentator goes on to say, "In order to prove the first of these conditions (that the injunction alone is valid with regard to dharma), the view that dharma is an object of direct perception is refuted in the fourth sūtra. "Direct perception is not a means (as regards dharma) because it apprehends presently-occurring objects." Dharma, which will only arise after the ritual has been performed, is not fit for direct perception, insofar as it does not exist previously. Even in the future, insofar as it is not possessed of form and the like, it is not apprehended by the sense faculties. Therefore, everybody agrees that it [dharma] is invisible. Nor is it an object of inference since it lacks the inferential mark [liṅga]. If you should contend that the inferential marks of dharma and adharma are present in contentment and suffering, we whole-heartedly agree. But that very relation between the inferential mark and its bearer can be known through the Veda alone. Thus, the injunction alone is valid."

jaiminiye ca dvitīyasūtre codanaiva dharme pramāṇam | codanā pramāṇameveti niyamadvayaṃ sampradāyavidbhirabhihitam | codanaivetyamumarthamupapādayitum catūrthasūtre pratyakṣaviśayatvam dharmasya nirākṛtam | pratyakṣamanimittam vidyamānopalaṃbhanatvātīti | anuṣṭhānādūrdhvamutpatsyamānasya dharmasya pūrvamavidyamānatvānna pratyakṣayogyatāsti | uttarakāle 'pi rūpādirāhityānendriyairavagamyate | ata evādr̥ṣṭamiti sarvairabhidhīyate | liṅgarāhityānānumānaviśayatvamapyasti | sukhaduḥkhe dharmādharmaḥorliṅgamiti cet bādham | ayamapi liṅgalimṅgibhāvo vedenaiva gamyate | tataścodanaiva dharme pramāṇam |
Müller, *Rig-Veda-Samhitā*, 1:18.

Parāśarasmṛti quotes the following verses from a text named the *Ānuśāsanika*, which clarifies the many senses in which dharma operates:

For those who inquire into dharma, Śruti is the primary means of knowing (*pramāṇa*) it, the *dharmasāstra* is the second, but the experience of humans (*loka-saṃgraha*) counts as a third.

Thus, Śruti (the Veda), Smṛti and the behavior of virtuous and respected members of the community (*śiṣṭācāra*) are all considered sources of dharma. This requires the exegetes of Śṛṅgeri to comprehend the *vidhi* in a far more expanded sense. After all, the Mīmāṃsakas were mostly concerned to understand the special epistemic nature of the Vedic *vidhi*, which enjoined rituals that did not, for the most part, result in ordinary worldly profit. As the Mīmāṃsakas would argue, humans are by their very nature driven to profit and pleasure. Further they know the worldly means to such worldly ends. The Vedic *vidhi* cannot enjoin behavior that is already self-evident to humans; this would undermine the very special epistemic status and function accorded to the *vidhi*, which informs us of the workings of a transcendent causal structure, wherein the performance of a ritual – known to man from the Veda alone – produces some transcendent result, such as heaven. It is true that certain Vedic rituals could be performed to cause worldly results (a whole range of *kāmyeṣṭis* serve these ends, such as progeny, rain or cattle), but, nevertheless, even these rituals, which produce some immanent end, partake in an invisible and transcendent causal system. Humans do not need a *vidhi* to inform them of causal structures of which they are already aware. They do not, for instance, need a Vedic *vidhi* to know that by waging war upon an enemy they may acquire greater dominion.⁴³

⁴³ The Śruti has stated: “All these will share in a better world.” Through conduct proper to one’s station, which is enjoined [by the Veda], is there the acquisition of the desirable, transcendent end. The negation of that which is

The author of the *Parāśaramādhavīya* presents the maṭha's case in the familiar form of the dialectic.

The word “*dharma*” indicates the subject matter: *dharma* is that which supports (*dhārayati* from *dhṛ*) prosperity and the highest end (*abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa*), insofar as *dharma* is the means to these ends. The sutra regarding the injunction (*codanā-sūtra*; Mīmāṃsā Sūtra 1.1.2: *codanālakṣano 'rtho dharmah*) establishes *dharma* by means of its defining characteristic and by means of an instrument of knowing (*pramāṇa*).

But, is it not the case that something (*dharma*) that is known only through the injunction (*codanā*) cannot be the subject matter of the *Smṛti*, because we understand the subject matter (of a *pramāṇa*) to be something that cannot be known by any other means. Now, you may think that though *dharma* is known about through the injunction alone, still it is summarized [in the *Smṛti*], with the purpose of making clear the sequence of ritual performance. This is accomplished through the removal of praise-statements (*artha-vāda*) and by compiling the variants that are recorded in other recensions.

That's not so, because *dharma* is summarized in just that way in the *kalpasūtras* (the ritual manuals).

undesired, a constant hell, obtained through conduct that is prohibited, is called *prayaścitta* (expiation), and it has been clarified in the teaching. *Dharma*, which is predominantly concerned with the transcendent, has two modes: expiation and conduct, such is the view with regard to Vedic *dharma*. Vedic *dharma* consists of the *agnihotra* (ritual), conduct consists of their performance; when one performs these contrary to the prescriptions, he should perform the expiations that are clearly spelled out in the *Veda*. The authors of the *kalpasūtras* have detailed both Vedic practices – rituals and expiations, but they have not spoken of conventional action (*vyavahāra*). In just the same way, this teacher (*Parāśara*), wishing to declare the *smārta dharma*, which is primarily concerned with the transcendent, (*Parāśara*, the author of the text) has voiced those two sections.

Objection: Is it not the case that as regards conventional behavior, which is to be understood through the injunction, it is dharmic? Absolutely, but its dharmic nature remains employed in the conventional world. Just as the Vedic rituals such as the *kārīri* have a single visible end, so too conventional action results in profit, devotion and fame. Just as to the winner go the spoils and the conquered suffers the rod, so these two (profit and punishment) are heaven and hell, engendered by injunction and prohibition.”

dharmam jijñāsamānānām pramāṇam prathamam śrutih | dvitīyaṃ dharma-śāstraṃ tu tṛtīyaṃ lokasaṃgrahaṃ || iti ete sarve puṇya-lokā bhavanti śrutir jagau | vihitād āśramācārād iṣṭāptim pāralaukikīm || prasakto narako ' niṣṭo niṣiddhācaraṇena yaḥ | tannivṛtīḥ sphuṭā śāstre prāyaścittābhidhāyinī || paraloka-pradhānasya dharmasyaiṣā dvayī gatiḥ | prāyaścittam tathācārah śraute dharme tathekṣaṇāt || śratue dharme ' gnihotrādir ācāras tadanuṣṭhiḥ | ayathā-vidhy-anuṣṭhāne prāyaścittam śrutau śrutam || kalpasūtrakṛtaḥ śraute prāyaścittam anuṣṭhitim | asūtrayann ubhe eva vyavahāram tu nābruvan || tadvad evāyam ācāryaḥ paralokapradhānakam | smārtaṃ dharmam vivakṣuḥ san kāṇḍadvayam avocata || nanu codanayā gamye vyavahāre ' pi dharmatā | astīti ced astu sā tu loke ' sminn upayujyate || kāṛīry-ādi-śrauta-dharmo dṛṣṭaika-phalako yathā | lābha-pūjā-khyāti-mātra-phalā vyavahṛtis tathā || jetur lābhādikam tadvat parājetuś ca daṇḍanam | tāv eva svarga-narakau vihita-pratiṣiddhajau ||

Thus, fearing that the *Smṛti* texts do not deal with *dharmā*, he (the author, Parāśara) has said, “the [object picked out by the word *dharmā*] is the purification rite (*śaucācāra*).” The sense is as follows: *Dharma* is of two types, *śrauta* (Vedic) *dharmā* and *smārta dharmā* (*dharmā* proper to *Smṛti*). With regard to these two, the *dharmā* that consists in the *darśapūrṇamāsa* ritual, which is directly read in a Vedic passage that is available to us, and which is preceded by the ritual kindling of the Vedic fires, that is *śrauta* (Vedic) *dharmā*. *Smārta dharmā*, on the other hand, consists in rites such as the rite of purification (*śauca*) and sipping water (*ācamana*), which are based on a lost or unavailable Vedic recension, the contents of which must be inferred.⁴⁴

In this passage, the commentator expends considerable hermeneutic effort in trying to show that the *Smṛti* texts *also* teach *dharmā*, even though Mīmāṃsā puts all its exegetic eggs in a single basket, namely, that the Veda (the Vedic injunction, to be precise) is the *sole* means of knowing *dharmā*. The *smārta* proviso, invoked here, contends that there are a number of Vedic texts (or recensions) that have been lost; the *Smṛti* authors have based their *smārta dharmā* on those lost Vedas. Thus, where there is a *smārta* rule, we may reasonably infer the presence of a now-lost Vedic injunction.

The scholars of Śṛṅgeri, in extending the ambit of the Vedic *vidhi* to comprehend worldly conduct (*vyavahāra*), acknowledge that the operation of this type of *dharmā* is entirely confined to the immanent frame; the results of these actions are entirely conventional: profit, praise, fame. Still, in undertaking this consequential expansion of the scope of the *vidhi*, the hermeneuts of Śṛṅgeri are engaged in a familiar hermeneutic practice – they are merely making explicit and

⁴⁴ *dharmā-śabdena viśayo nirdeśyate | abhyudaya-niḥśreyase sādhanatvena dhārayatīti dharmāḥ | sa lakṣaṇa-pramāṇābhyāṃ codanā-sūtrair vyavasthāpitāḥ | nanu codanāvagamyasya na smṛtivyāyatvam | sarvatrānanyalabhyasyaiva viśayatvāvagamāt | atha manyase codanā-gamyo ’pi arthavāda-parihāreṇa śākhāntara-gata-viśeṣopasaṃhāreṇa ca anuṣṭhāna-krama-saukaryāya saṃgrhyata iti | tan na | kalpasūtreṣu tathā saṃgrhītavāt | ato na dharmasya viśayatvam ity āśaṅkyāha | śaucācāram iti | ayam bhāvaḥ | dvi-vidho dharmāḥ | śrautaḥ smārtaśca | tatra agny-ādhanādi-pūrvako’ dhīta-pratyakṣavedamūlo darśapūrṇamāsādiḥ śrautaḥ | anumita-parokṣaśākhāmūlaḥ śaucācamānādiḥ smārtaḥ |*

concrete something that Mīmāṃsakas have implicitly accepted. This is evident, in particular, in the Mīmāṃsification of the Smṛti text; the hermeneuts apply arguments developed by Kumārila Bhatta to prove the validity of the *Parāśarasṁṛti*.⁴⁵ They adduce a passage from the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka that attests to the fact that Parāśara was the father of Vyāsa: “Vyāsa, the son of Parāśara, has indeed said,” which proves that Parāśara is a Vedic authority. Without attending to the issues this position creates for the claim regarding the eternity of the Veda (which precludes therefore the mention, in the text, of historical persons), the hermeneuts show that this proves that Parāśara enjoys the same status as Manu.

As the *coup de grâce* to these arguments regarding the validity of the Smṛti text in enjoining humans to dharmic action, the commentator responds to the objection that there is no root injunction that proves the validity of the *smārta* canon:

And, as for the notion that we cannot find any root-injunction, that too is baseless. The Taittirīya Āraṇyaka states, “The great sacrifices are five in number; they are ever performed and they are ever established. They are: the sacrifice to the gods, to the ancestors, to beings, to humans, and to Brahman.” On the basis of statements such as this, we *are* aware of the Vedic injunctions that form the basis of the dharma that is known through the Smṛtis (*smārta-dharma*)... In cases where we cannot find a Vedic injunction governing, for instance, rituals of purification (*śaucādi*), such an injunction ought to be imagined. This is why Kumārila Bhaṭṭa has stated: “It is proper to think of the Smṛtis as a

⁴⁵ Kumārila, for instance, argues that the Vedas themselves prove the reliability of the Manusmṛti because the Veda makes mention of a Manu. Acutely aware that to admit that an historical person finds mention in the Veda would amount to an admission of the historicity and thus non-eternality of the Veda, Kumārila advances the same argument regarding Manu that Mīmāṃsakas make about the divinities. They argue that the gods mentioned in the Vedas are not individual beings who have some historic existence; rather, these are merely offices that are held by different manifestations in the different iterations of the universe. Thus, there is no individual Indra *per se*, there is merely the office of Indra, which is eternally manifest. Similarly, there is merely the office of Manu, which is occupied by different persons in different times. The scholars of Śṅgeri use this argument to defend the validity and eternity of the *Parāśarasṁṛti*. These hermeneuts point, specifically, to two different mentions of Manu in the Vedic corpus. First, from the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, “Moreover, that which Manu has stated, that is medicine,” (*yad vai kiṁca manur avadat tad bheṣajam*) and “He should create those two *dhāyā rks* that belong to Manu,” (*mānavī ṛcau dhāyē kuryāt*). Mādhava, *Parāśara Smṛti*, 1.1:7–8.

valid means of knowing (pramāṇa), because, first, they are taught by followers of the Veda, and further, owing to the certitude with which these teachers accept the Smṛti, and lastly, because an underlying Vedic text may be imagined.⁴⁶

As with the *adhyayana vidhi*, the scholars of Śringeri have found a Vedic injunction to govern the regulation of dharmic action that is not strictly Vedic in nature. As the commentator explains in the section dedicated to ascertaining entitlement (*adhikāra*):

Through reflection upon the question of the entitled agent, the distinction of the stated subjects is established on the basis of the use of the word *om* and the word *atha*. It is well known that the members of the three *varṇas* alone are entitled to the śruti (the Veda); the sacred syllable *om* is of that kind, because the Veda states: “They do not wish that the *sāvitrī* (mantra), the *pranava* (*omī*) and the good fortune of the *Yajus* be for women and *śūdras*.” Thus, since the word *atha* and all works of human origin are meant for the members of all the *varṇas*, this very work (the *Parāśarasmṛti*) is suitable for all people (to study).⁴⁷

To explain, the commentators interpret the fact that the *Parāśarasmṛti* begins with the word *atha* to mean that the text is open to being studied by all people, including women and śūdras, the social categories excluded from the study of the Veda. Thus, through the study of this *smārta* commentary, Vedic government, administered by the maṭha, is extended to every single member

⁴⁶ *yā ca mūla-bhūta-codanānupalabdhi-rūpa-nyastā sāpy asiddhā | ‘pañca vā ete mahāyajñāḥ satati pratāyante satati santiṣṭante – devayajñāḥ pitryajñā bhūtayajñā manuṣyayajñā brahmayajñāḥ’ | ityādīnāṃ smārta-dharma-mūla-bhūta-codanānām upalambhāt | yatrāpi śaucādau codanā nopalabhyate tatrāpi sā sambhāvyate | tathā coktaṃ bhaṭṭācāryaiḥ - ‘vaidhikāiḥ smaryamāṇatvāt tat-parigrāha-dārḍhyataḥ | sambhāvya-veda-mūlatvāt smṛtīnāṃ mānatocitā ||*
Mādhava, 1.1:11–12.

⁴⁷ *adhikāri-paryālocanēpi om-kārātha-śabdāyor ukta-viṣayavyavasthā siddhyati | traivarṇika-mātrādhikārā hi śrutiḥ prasiddhā | om-kāraśca tathāvidhaḥ | ‘sāvitrīm praṇavaṃ yajurlakṣmīm strī-śūdrāya necchanti’ iti śruteḥ | atha-śabdasya paruṣeya-granthānāṃ ca sarva-varṇa-viṣayatvāt sa eva teṣu योग्याḥ |*

of society. Dharma is universalized through these two hermeneutic interventions – the *vidhi* and *adhikāra* – to encompass all subjects as subject to dharma. Still, the logic of assimilation through subordination ensures that the inclusion of these formerly-excluded persons – women and *sūdras* – does not thereby result in equality before the *dharmā*. Women and *sūdras*, though admitted into the *dharmic* fold, are kept at its margins, as their principal role is to serve (*śuśrūṣā*) others.

In this section, I have shown how the maṭha mobilized the restrictive capacities of the two key interpretive categories, *vidhi* and *adhikāra*, in concert with the Mīmāṃsā hermeneutic of assimilation through subordination to effectively universalize the Vedic religion to members of all social groups. The Smṛti texts are subordinated to the independent and intrinsic validity of the Veda. The study of the Smṛti is authorized and enjoined upon all human beings by the Veda itself. The *vidhi* and *adhikāra*, together with the pervasive interpretive structure of assimilation through subordination, were the key interpretive technologies that constituted the monastic governmentality evinced in this commentarial corpus.

The Great Rupture

Thus far, I have told a story of Śṛṅgeri’s exposition of a Vedic religion firmly rooted in action. I have demonstrated how the exegetes of Śṛṅgeri mobilized the capacity of the Vedas to impel authorized ritual agents to argue for the Veda’s universal religious sovereignty.

At this juncture, I turn to the final movement of synthesis, which consists of unifying the ritual portion of the Vedas (*karma-kāṇḍa*) with its gnostic section (*jñāna-kāṇḍa*). As the standard-bearer of Śaṅkarācārya’s brand of Advaita (non-dual) Vedānta, the maṭha at Śṛṅgeri was particularly well positioned to repair the rupture that its purported founder had created – the rupture between the world of action and the world of knowledge. In order to comprehend the

complexity of this synthesis we return, briefly, to Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics, and to the transformations of the structure that Śāṅkara's Upaniṣadic hermeneutics wrought.

My intention in revisiting my description of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics is to highlight the profound fashion in which Śāṅkara reimagined and transformed certain interpretive techniques to produce a theory of Brahman, and further, to reveal the manner in which the scholars of Śṛṅgeri carried out this mission to its logical conclusion. Śāṅkara's theological project was aimed at investigating the nature of ultimate reality, and his systematic theology was grounded in interpreting the Upaniṣads. The scholars of Śṛṅgeri applied this system equally to the ritual, using Śāṅkara's Upaniṣadic interpretive techniques to comprehend the whole Veda. Their goal was different than Śāṅkara's: it was to demonstrate the unity of the Vedic system, and to subsume in this unity the hierarchy of subjectivities that this unified Veda governed. Thus, in this comparative analysis, I touch upon three dimensions of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics that Śāṅkara fashioned to serve his own theological project, and show how the exegetes of Śṛṅgeri, master bricoleurs, used these techniques to transform what it meant to know and follow the Veda.

First, I discuss the difference between the ends of Mīmāṃsā and the ends of Advaita Vedānta, an elaboration of the distinction between a *sādhyā* (the object of *bhāvanā*, or an end that must be brought about through action) and a *siddha* (an already-existent entity that is the object of knowledge). Second, I show how the maṭha employed Śāṅkara's innovations on Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics to create a novel form of ritual subjectivity -- the ritual performer who was motivated by the knowledge of the ultimate rather than by a desire for post-mortem results. This re-interpretation of the ritual using a Vedānta hermeneutics engendered a mode of ritual performance that combined the ends of knowledge with the technology of action. Lastly, I show how the scholars of Śṛṅgeri bridged the worlds of action and knowledge by articulating a

hierarchical range of subjectivities, ascending from action alone to knowledge alone. This hierarchy culminated in the subjectivity of the *saṃnyāsin*, the other Homo Vedicus in this story, and the subject of the next chapter.

As I have shown above, the Mīmāṃsā advanced the view that Vedic injunctions were alone independently valid means of knowing (*pramāṇa*) dharma and realizing heaven. The theory of *bhāvanā* (the capacity of certain linguistic forms to bring things into being) analyzes injunctive statements into the respective elements required to bring about a desired end. Thus, the entitled agent (*adhi-kartṛ*) employs some instrument (*kaṛaṇa*) according to the procedure specified (*itikartavyatā*) to bring about some desired end (*sādhya*). This singular capacity of the Veda to enjoin a human agent to bring about a future state of affairs (*sādhya*) arises in virtue of the fact that the Veda neither has a personal author (*apauruṣeya*) nor is it created (*nitya*). The Veda is valid only insofar as it provides knowledge about this *sādhya*. Thus, the Mīmāṃsakas cannot consider as independently valid any Vedic statement that appears to describe empirical reality, for in order for the Veda to describe some existing entity (*siddha*), it would have to have been created. Thus, the Mīmāṃsakas insist upon interpreting all statements that seem to express some *siddha* entity as *arthavādas*, statements that have no independent validity (*svārthe prāmāṇya*) but are valid only insofar as they are subordinated as supplementing some injunctive statement (*vidhi*). Thus, all statements about the world as it is are meaningless in themselves; they are meaningful only insofar as – by being successfully assimilated to some injunctive statement – they promote the performance of the act enjoined by the primary statement.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ The theory of the *arthavāda*, in other words the claim that numerous Vedic statements are not independently valid, but may be dependently valid only insofar as they may be related, in a subordinate position, to an injunctive statement, renders great swathes of the Veda ultimately meaningless. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa recognized that a hermeneutic stance such as this required explanation. Indeed, in his view, the inexplicability of great numbers of Vedic statements (*arthavādas*) only strengthens the Mīmāṃsā interpretation of the Veda. After all, Kumārila argues, the very existence and frequency of these enigmatic statements, which are connected to injunctive statements through tortured explanations, is evidence of the non-human character of the Veda. For no human would ever compose a text

Śaṅkara, interested in demonstrating that the Upaniṣads are the only means of knowing Brahman, the ultimate and non-dual reality, employed Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics even as he rejected its cardinal premise. He was, after all, interested in proving that a *siddha* entity (Brahman), which always already exists, is the only and ultimately real entity. Thus, he could not accept the logic of the ritual hermeneutics which claimed that the Veda is valid only insofar as it enjoins a human agent to perform the ritual to gain heaven. Śaṅkara proposed the great divorce: he severed the Upaniṣads from the ritual portion (*karmakāṇḍa*) of the Veda, cleaving the sphere of knowledge, which alone results in liberation, from the ever-replicating world of ritual action. Śaṅkara accepted the Mīmāṃsā analysis of the Veda, he simply limited its scope. He argued that the Mīmāṃsā logic of ritual applies only to the Veda of injunctions, subjects, objects, and desire. Śaṅkara's program of liberation (*mukti*) affirmed the world of ritual, the world of agents and objects, even as it charted a course to freedom, which consisted in transcending the bonds of conventional reality. He therefore accepted that the Vedas were the only means of knowing *dharma*, and the means of attaining heaven. But, he argued, the Vedas (in the form of the Upaniṣads or the Vedānta) were also the only means of knowing Brahman, the ultimate (*siddha*) reality.

In other words, Śaṅkara's hermeneutics had to contend with the limited, injunctive, sense in which the Mīmāṃsakas considered the Vedas to be a valid means of knowing. According to this view, the Mīmāṃsakas interpreted the Upaniṣads, which Śaṅkara saw as an independently

as complicated and opaque in its purport as the Veda. In other texts, which are known to have human authors, we do not find such strange statements.

nityatva sati yeṣāṃ hi kleśena vidhi-yojanā | tān kṛtvādhyāpayan kartā susamatvaṃ vyajej jaḍaiḥ || na ca tādrśa-vākya-śeṣa-mudrāpi kalpasūtrādiḡrantheṣu kā cid asti yad-balenākṛtakatvam eṣāṃ avasīyate |

For, given that these texts (the *arthavādas*) are eternal, it is very difficult to construe them with the injunction. An agent who, having composed them (*arthavādas*), teaches them, he should drive away ease of comprehension, together with dunces. There is not even a whiff of such statements (*arthavādas*) in the Kalpasūtras, on the strength of which (absence) we may conclude that these texts (*arthavāda*) do not have human composers.

Tantravārtika, 176.

valid means of knowing Brahman, as *arthavāda*, which derived meaning only insofar as it encouraged humans to undertake the ritual.

Against, this view, Śāṅkara exploited a view implicit in the Mīmāṃsaka view regarding the validity of the injunctions, namely, that even for humans to act, they must first be made aware of the nature of things. Thus, the Veda cannot merely enjoin certain human agents to perform certain actions; rather, the Veda must, in the first instance, *inform* humans about certain transcendent realities; this may be the working of a transcendent causal system, as in the case of the ritual that produces heaven, or it may be a matter of fact, namely, that the self is Brahman.

Thus, argued Śāṅkara, there are two sections of the Veda, distinguished by the information that they provide humans about transcendent affairs. The first section, the *karmakāṇḍa*, informed initiated twice-born males of the causal efficacy of dharma in producing heaven; and, secondarily, it enjoined those agents to perform the ritual. The Upaniṣads, on the other hand, inform certain other credentialed humans that knowledge is the means to liberation (*mukti*) from the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra* or *punarāvṛtti*). This latter process was, in a very profound sense, incommensurable with the logic of the ritual, which required a subject, an object, and intentional action. The self is pure consciousness; it does not, indeed cannot, participate in the interplay of subject and object. Thus, Brahman, the ultimate reality, cannot be an object that the subject can be enjoined to bring about, since Brahman is *siddha*, it just *is* the nature of the self. The imposition of subject-object relations is possible only for an occluded self, one whose nature has been clouded by ignorance. In sum, Śāṅkara's theological project employs *and* jettisons the logic of the ritual.

Repairing the Broken World of Sacrifice

Given this brief excursus into Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, let us examine how the scholars of Śṛṅgeri attempted to synthesize Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta to produce a unified Veda. In order to do so we must return to the *adhyayana vidhi*, the injunction to study the Veda. As I have already explained, this injunction governed the ritual training and performance of initiated twice-born males. The injunction was indispensable for Mīmāṃsakas in contending that Vedic study should include, and culminate in, the study of the Mīmāṃsā, which alone provided a science of sentential analysis.

In my examination of the Vedic commentaries, I have shown that the hermeneuts of Śṛṅgeri privileged knowing the meaning of the ritual. In this they were not merely motivated to be good Mīmāṃsakas; rather, knowledge and action were the two areas of human interest in which the Veda provided knowledge of transcendent matters, unavailable to conventional epistemic instruments. The scholars of Śṛṅgeri were driven, above all, by a desire to unify the Vedic tradition. A unified Veda would unite the two radically distinct modes of Vedic religion that were theorized – the socially embedded ritualist and the anti-social *saṃnyāsin* – in a hierarchy of religious forms.

The hierarchic ordering of *abhyudaya* (prosperity) and *mukti* (liberation) informed the ordering of these religious subjects. But, crucially, the scholars of Śṛṅgeri would have to demonstrate that these two religious subjects – the ritualist and the *saṃnyāsin* – lay on the same graduated spectrum. Thus, they had to repair the rupture that Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta had caused, and unify these distinct modes of being under the dominion of a single Vedic tradition. This would provide the intellectual basis necessary for a *saṃnyāsin* institution – traditionally considered to lie beyond the bounds of dharmic society – to govern that dharmic commonwealth.

In a lengthy quotation above, I have shown that the commentator of the Ṛgveda understood the *vidhi* (injunction) to be the sole means of knowing dharma (*codanā eva dharme pramāṇam*).⁴⁹ This is the resolution of the Mīmāṃsā position. Indeed, in the introduction to the Ṛgveda Saṃhitā, whose overall purport was to serve a ritual purpose, the statement of the Mīmāṃsā position – concerned to interpret the entire Veda to convey and enjoin the ritual – should have sufficed. But the commentator goes on to say:

In the third *sūtra* of the second *varṇaka* of the Vedānta sūtras, an established entity (*siddha-vastu*), *brahman*, has been explained by the commentator (Śaṅkara) to also be the singular object of the Vedas.⁵⁰

The commentator, having already shown that dharma can be known (*prameya*) from the Veda alone, and that the injunction is the means of knowing it, now takes up the other supersensible entity that the Veda alone makes known to us – Brahman. Note the qualification

⁴⁹ To reproduce that section in full:

The commentator goes on to say, “In order to prove the first of these conditions (that the injunction alone is valid with regard to dharma), the view that dharma is an object of direct perception is refuted in the fourth sūtra. “Direct perception is not a means (as regards dharma) because it apprehends presently-occurring objects.” Dharma, which will only arise after the ritual has been performed, is not fit for direct perception, insofar as it does not exist previously. Even in the future, insofar as it is not possessed of form and the like, it is not apprehended by the sense faculties. Therefore, everybody agrees that it [dharma] is invisible. Nor is it an object of inference since it lacks the inferential mark [liṅga]. If you should contend that the inferential marks of dharma and adharma are present in contentment and suffering, we whole-heartedly agree. But that very relation between the inferential mark and its bearer can be known through the Veda alone. Thus, the injunction alone is valid.”

*jaiminīye ca dvitīyasūtre codanaiva dharme pramāṇam | codanā pramāṇameveti niyamadvayam
saṃpradāyavidbhirabhihitam | codanaivetyamumarthamupapādayitum catūrthasūtre pratyakṣaviśayatvam
dharmasya nirākṛtam | pratyakṣamanimittam vidyamānopalaṃbhanatvātiti | anuṣṭhānādūrdhvamutpatsyamānasya
dharmasya pūrvamavidyamānatvānna pratyakṣayogyatāsti | uttarakāle 'pi rūpādirāhityānnendriyairavagamyate |
ata evādr̥ṣtamiti sarvairabhidhīyate | liṅgarāhityānnānumānaviśayatvamapyasti | sukhaduḥkhe
dharmādharmayorliṅgamiti cet bādham | ayamapi liṅgalimṅgibhāvo vedenaiva gamyate | tataścodanaiva dharme
pramāṇam |*

Müller, *Rig-Veda-Samhitā*, 1:18.

⁵⁰ *vaiyāsikasya tṛtīya-sūtrasya dvitīyavarṇake brahmaṇaḥ siddha-vastuno ' pi śāstraika-viśayatvam bhāṣyakṛdbhir
vyākhyātam |*
Müller, 1:18.

that the commentator uses for Brahman (*siddha-vastu*), an already established entity. The modifier telegraphs the distinction between Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta hermeneutics. Mīmāṃsā contends that the Veda makes known some entity that is to be brought about through human action (*sādhyā*), whereas Vedānta argues that the Veda makes known some entity that is already established (*siddha*). The commentator goes on to provide the textual evidence that Brahman is to be known about from the Veda alone, showing that nature of the object of knowledge (*prameya*) precludes its apprehension by the conventional instruments of knowledge (direct perception, inference, etc):

The intended meaning is that Brahman is understood to be the cause of all phenomenal creation, from the teaching itself (the Vedānta sūtra), which is a pramāṇa. There are Vedic passages too (to this effect): ‘The one who does not know the Veda does not comprehend that one expanding (*br̥mh*).’ As regards these passages, the ancient teachers have made sense of them thus; insofar as it (Brahman) is devoid of form and other inferential marks, it is not suitable for other means of knowing (other than the Veda).⁵¹

The commentator then concludes that dharma and Brahman are the two transcendent entities for which the Veda alone is the source of knowledge:

Thus, because these (two) cannot be apprehended otherwise, dharma and Brahman *are* specifically Vedic entities. Further, the knowledge of these two is manifestly the purpose of the Veda.⁵²

⁵¹ *śāstrād eva pramāṇāj jagato janmādi-kāraṇaṃ brahmādhigamyata ity abhiprāya iti | śrutis ca bhavati | nāvedavin manute taṃ br̥hmaṃtaṃ iti | tatropapattiḥ pūrvācāryair evam udīritā | rūpa-liṅgādi-rāhityān na mānāntara-yogyateti | tasmād anyalabhyatvād asti dharma-brahmaṇorvedaviśayatvaṃ | tad-ubhaya-jñānaṃ vedasya sākṣāt prayojanaṃ |*
Müller, 1:18.

⁵² *tasmād anyalabhyatvād asti dharma-brahmaṇorvedaviśayatvaṃ | tad-ubhaya-jñānaṃ vedasya sākṣāt prayojanaṃ |*

In the *Parāśarasmr̥ti*, the commentator builds upon this conception of the dual ends of the Veda (prosperity and liberation) of the Veda, and connects the two through ritual performance:

Dharma is beneficial insofar as it results in immanent and transcendent fruits. The transcendent results are of two kinds: prosperity (*abhyudaya*) and the highest good or liberation (*niḥśreyasa*). As regards those two, dharma is the direct means to transcendent prosperity (*abhyudaya*). On the other hand (dharma) is indirectly the means to liberation (or the highest good), by means of the generation of knowledge of ultimate reality. In support, the Smṛti states: ‘Pleasure and knowledge obtain through dharma, and through knowledge is liberation comprehended.’⁵³

This is the precise point at which the scholars of Śṛṅgeri upend the Mīmāṃsā cart. The imposition of a second superordinate end (Brahman) and the acceptance of a means of attaining to it (knowledge, *jñāna*) other than ritual performance upsets the all-encompassing ritual hermeneutics Mīmāṃsā offers. In this deft synthesis of Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta, the scholars disclose the workings of the logic of assimilation through subordination. The lower end of the Veda is *abhyudaya* or prosperity (paradigmatically, heaven), which may be attained through ritual performance; however, there is a second, higher end, namely, knowledge of Brahman, to attain which ritual action is insufficient by itself, but helpful indirectly. The performance of ritual, by a ritualist imbued with the right disposition, awakens the desire in him to know the ultimate (Brahman).

Müller, 1:18.

⁵³ *abhimata-phala-sādhanatvam hi dharmasya hitatvam | tac ca phalaṃ dvedhā | aihikam āmuṣmikaṃ ceti | āmuṣmikaṃ dvedhā | abhyudayo niḥśreyasa ca | tatrābhyudayasya sākṣāt sādhanatvam | niḥśreyasasya tu tattva-jñānotpādanadvāreṇa | tathā ca smaryate – dharmāt sukhaṃ ca jñānaṃ ca jñānān mokṣo’ dhigamyate | Mādhava, Parāśara Smṛti, 1.1:53.*

The commentators of Śṛṅgeri transformed the Vedic ritual by applying Śaṅkara's Advaita hermeneutics to it. Indeed, in applying Śaṅkara's hermeneutics to the performance of ritual, the commentators were able to bridge the divide between action and knowledge. Śaṅkara, as I have noted above, expanded the epistemic capacity of the Veda by showing that – in addition to being a means to know dharma (a future state-of-affairs), the Veda could also provide knowledge about things that eluded conventional consciousness, namely, the real nature of the self (Brahman). His analysis touched off the possibility that the scholars of Śṛṅgeri worked out, namely, could the awareness of certain supersensible matters transform the performance of the ritual? Could it produce different, better, results, and further, could it transform the religious subjectivity of the ritual performer? The scholars of Śṛṅgeri made precisely such a claim, and in so doing, they were able to subordinate ritual fully to the pursuit of liberation (the sole preserve of *saṃnyāsins*).

This consequential innovation to Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics is introduced in the conclusion to the discussion on what the *adhyayana vidhi* entails. According to Mīmāṃsakas, the injunction to study the Veda included an imperative to learn Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics. The scholars of Śṛṅgeri take this conclusion further and argue that statements of praise (*arthavādas*) – the statements that Mīmāṃsakas understand to be *dependently* valid, meaningful only insofar as they encourage the performance of the ritual – convey knowledge about some transcendent truths, otherwise inaccessible to humans. In commenting on an excerpt from the *Nirukta* (an ancient text on Vedic etymology) of Yāska, the commentator makes the startling claim that *arthavādas* have an injunctive capacity:

In this way, insofar as Yāska has elaborated, with this illustration, the praise of knowledge and the condemnation of ignorance, and owing to the rule that that which is

praised is prescribed (*yac ca stūyate tad vidhīyate*), we should accept that there is an injunction to know the meaning, just as in the case of the *adhyayana vidhi*.⁵⁴

In other words, once the Mīmāṃsakas have thrown open the gates to admit that the injunction to know (*adhyayana vidhi*) obligates the student – and ritual performer – to know the meaning of the Veda, knowledge may enter the world of ritual as an equal partner to action.

The commentator now takes up the topic that upends Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics – understanding *arthavādas* to bear two functions simultaneously: to praise a ritual action *and* to inform the performer of some transcendent matter:

Moreover, in the section on the *nakṣatra* sacrifice, the Veda teaches that the statement of the fruit of the sacrifice is the very same for the ritual performance [of the sacrifice] as it is for knowing it [the sacrifice]. “Just as *agni* is the eater of the food of the gods, so he who sacrifices with this oblation and he who knows this becomes [the eater of the sacrifice] among humans.” Therefore, knowledge of the self is enjoined here for the sake of its fruit, just as the sacrifice is [enjoined]. By the application of this rule, we should find injunctions to know in every single Brāhmaṇa text.⁵⁵

This is an audacious and explicit application of Śāṅkara’s interpretive innovation to the ritual corpus. There is an obvious Mīmāṃsā objection, which the commentator anticipates, namely, that these statements – even in cases where they *appear* injunctive – are *arthavādas*. Thus, they

⁵⁴ *itthaṃ yāskena jñāna-stuty-ajñāna-nindodāharaṇasya prapañcitavād yac ca stūyate tad vidhīyate iti nyāyenādhyayanavad arthajñānasyāpi vidhir abyupagantavyaḥ ||*
Müller, *Rig-Veda-Samhitā*, 1:17.

⁵⁵ *kiṃ ca nakṣatreṣṭi-kāṇḍe pratīṣṭi-phala-vākyaṃ yāga-tadvedanayoḥ samānam evāṃnyāyate | yathā ha vā agnir devānām annāda evaṃ ha vā eṣa manuṣyāṇām bhavati ya etena haviṣā yajate ya u cainad evaṃ veda | iti | ato yāgavat phalāya svavedanam api vidhīyate | anena nyāyena sarveṣv api brāhmaṇeṣu vedana-vidhayo draṣṭavyāḥ |*
Müller, 1:17.

are independently meaningless, since the only independently meaningful Vedic utterance is one that enjoins some ritual action. The commentator responds to this Mīmāṃsā objection by arguing that *arthavādas* can be two things simultaneously – praise statements *and* independently meaningful. And insofar as an *arthavāda* (praise statement) is judged to be independently meaningful it may be ritually efficacious. This last move, deeming the *arthavādas* to be ritually efficacious, produced a seismic shift in Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics. The scholars of Śṛṅgeri were not merely reapplying to the ritual texts Śāṅkara’s innovations to Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics but, in so doing, were creating a unified Vedic corpus, amenable to a single mode of interpretation.

Is it not the case that in the Mīmāṃsā sūtra (1.2.14) [“This is praise of knowledge”], Jaimini has taught that the statements that speak of the fruits of knowing are mere statements of praise?

Sure, but it is entirely possible to praise an act of knowing by referring to a fruit that nevertheless *does* obtain, is it not? When there is a lapse in the performance of the new- and full-moon sacrifices, in order to prescribe the *vaiśvānara* sacrifice as an expiatory rite, a praise statement is fashioned out of a statement regarding the fruit that is heaven, which *does* in fact exist, [for witness the statement:] “One performs the new- and full-moon sacrifices for a heavenly world.” The teacher (Śāṅkara) has adduced this passage (from the Taittirīya Saṃhitā) to demonstrate that statements that result in the knowledge of Brahman are meaningful in their own sense (rather than being dependently meaningful). A statement that expresses the meaning “I want it,” is an *arthavāda* insofar as it is concerned with something else, but insofar as that statement relates some truth, it is not a false statement of praise.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ *nanu vidyā-praśamsā iti sūtre vedana-phalānām praśamsā-rūpatvaṃ jaimininā sūtritam iti cet astu nāma | vidyamānenāpi phalena praśamsitum śakyatvāt | darśa-yāgasya pūrṇa-māsa-yāgasya cātipāte sati prāyaścitta-rūpām vaiśvānareṣṭim vidhātum vidyamānenaiva svarga-phalena stutiḥ kriyate | suvargāya hi lokāya darśa-pūrṇa-māsāv ijjete | iti | etac cācāryair brahṃa-jñāna-phalavākyasya svārthe ’pi tātparyaṃ darśayitum udāhṛtam | icchāmy evārtha-vādatvaṃ vacaso’ nya-paratvataḥ | yathā-vastv-abhidāyitvān na tv abhūtārthavādatā | Müller, 1:17.*

This is an ingenious attempt at turning Mīmāṃsā principles of exegesis on their head. The Mīmāṃsakas argue that praise statements (*arthavāda*) are not independently meaningful; they are meaningful only insofar as they may be appended to some ritual injunction. They serve the purpose of that ritual injunction by encouraging the performer to undertake the ritual action. The commentator exploits this principle of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics to argue that certain praise statements (the statements of the Vedānta, for instance) may *simultaneously* be subordinated to some injunctive statement *and* be independently meaningful (and *ritually efficacious*) as a statement of fact. The Śrīngeri scholiasts distinguish between statements that refer to an action and statements that convey knowledge; in this instance they claim that a single sentence serves both ends simultaneously. For a praise statement to serve an injunctive or ritual purpose, it must be subordinated to an injunction. Nevertheless, it may, at the same time, serve a statement of fact (you *are* that, i.e. Brahman). In the excerpt above, the commentator shows that a statement can praise something else – a ritual action for example – *and* it may, at the same time, affect the results that ritual yields, insofar as it provides the ritual performer with some knowledge about the ritual that he could not know otherwise. Thus, an *arthavāda* statement may be doubly efficacious with respect to ritual. It may serve the purpose of encouraging the ritual agent to perform the ritual *and* it may convey to the agent some knowledge that then produces a different, more desirable, ritual result. This is precisely because ritual performance and knowledge have distinct and independent ritual results.⁵⁷ In virtue of this capacity to convey some novel

⁵⁷ Thus, because, in this way, knowledge [of the meaning of the Veda] is separately enjoined, the injunction to learn may be intended to result in memorization alone. Sure; this is precisely how the followers of Śaṅkara describe this matter. The injunctions to perform the ritual must themselves result in knowledge of the meaning of the Vedas, for, the performance of the ritual could not occur otherwise. Thus, the injunction to learn [adhyayana vidhi] need not enjoin knowledge of the meaning. But then the separate injunction of knowledge should produce some distinct, and independent, novel ritual result [*apūrva*], since the Veda does specify that ritual performance and knowledge yield distinct and independent results.”

evam tarhi jñānasya pṛthag vidhānād adhyayanam pāṭhamātram iti cet | astu nāma | varṇayanti caivam eva śāṅkara-darśanānusāriṇaḥ | kratu-vidhibhir evānuṣṭhānānyathānupapatyā vedārthajñānasya prāpitātvaṅ naitad

information that could not be known otherwise, *arthavādas* too may be valid means of knowing (*pramāṇa*).

Eager to have his cake and eat it too, the commentator allays all fears that this would somehow take away from the efficacy of ritual performance. Indeed, he cites a sūtra from the Mīmāṃsāsūtras to show that fruits may vary qualitatively and quantitatively. He takes this Mīmāṃsā sūtra to mean that the result of a ritual action may be improved upon by performing that ritual with the knowledge the Veda provides:

Nor should you worry that, because the ritual action will be accomplished by knowledge alone, ritual performance itself will be rendered futile. This fear is set aside by the abundance of fruits. On this point, a sūtra of Jaimini may be adduced: “Owing to the consummation of the result by means of ritual action, those [actions] may have differences in the result, just as in the case of the conventional world, that are qualitative or quantitative.” We have explained this [sūtra] by adducing the following statement from the Veda: “The one who performs the *āsvamedha* sacrifice and similarly the one who knows thus, both overcome the homicide of a Brahmin.” Further, the Chandogās teach that when one performs the ritual together with its knowledge, the result is superior than [the result that obtains] from performance alone.⁵⁸

The commentator concludes this section by extolling the virtues of knowledge with a rhetorical flourish. He dispenses with any pretension to maintaining the argumentative form, and levels

vidheyam it cet tarhi tadvidhibalāt vedana-mātreṇa svatantraṃ kiṃcid apūrvam astu | śrūyate hy anuṣṭhānājñānayoḥ svatantraṃ pṛthak phalaṃ |
Taittirīya Samhitā, 4.

⁵⁸ *na ca vedana-mātreṇa phalasiddhāv anuṣṭhāna-vaiyarthyaṃ iti śaṅkanīyaṃ | phalabhūyastvena pariḥṛtatvāt | udāhṛtaṃ cātra jaimini-sūtraṃ | phalasya karma-niṣpattes teṣāṃ lokavat parimāṇataḥ sārato vā phala-viśeṣaḥ syāt | iti | etac cāsmābhis tarati brahmahatyām yo 'śvamedhena yajate ya u cānam evaṃ vedety udāharaṇena vyākhyātam | chandogās ca kevalād anuṣṭhānād vidyāsahite 'anuṣṭhāne phalātiśayam āmananti |*
Müller, *Rig-Veda-Samhitā*, 1:17.

with his imagined interlocutor. His final appeal is to textual fidelity; in simple terms, he asks his haranguing objector – why can you not believe what the Veda tells you about knowledge?

Why are you so slavishly devoted to knowledge? If this be your criticism, well, whence your revulsion? We have shown that praise for knowledge abounds [in the Veda], whereas, we struggle to find a single instance of its censure. Just as the *apūrva* (the novel and unseen result produced by a ritual performance) travels with the individual self after death, so too goes the *apūrva* engendered by knowledge. This is precisely how the Vājasaneyins teach this matter: “Ritual action, knowledge and prior awareness hold on to him from behind.”⁵⁹ Thus, insofar as knowledge of the meaning too – like studying itself – has been enjoined, the Veda must be explained so that we may know its meaning.⁶⁰

The very same position is reiterated in the introduction to the Taittirīya Saṃhitā, where the commentator indeed entertains the view of an objector – contrary to Mīmāṃsā orthodoxy – that the *adhyayana vidhi* enjoins the *mere memorization* of the Vedic text. The commentator admits that there may be two separate injunctions prescribing study of the Veda: the first, the *adhyayana vidhi*, enjoins mere memorization whereas a second prescribes that one should know the meaning of the Veda:

“A Brahmin should study (*adhyeya*) the Veda, with its six limbs, and the causeless *dharma*; further one should know it (*jñeya*).” If, in this way, you argue that because knowledge is separately enjoined, and *adhyayana* means mere memorization, we will

⁵⁹ the verb here is *sam-anu-ā-rabh*, which is used with frequency in the ritual Brāhmaṇas to describe the action of holding someone (often the sacrificial animal) from behind during the performance of a ritual action. Müller, 1:17.

⁶⁰ *kutas tavaitāvātī vedane bhaktir iti cet | kuto vā tavaitāvān pradveṣaḥ | praśamsā tv asmābhir bhūyasī darsitā | nindāṃ na tu kvāpy upalabhāmahe | kintu karma-janyam apūrvaṃ yathā maraṇād ūrdhvaṃ jīvena saha gacchati tathā vidyā-janyam apy apūrvaṃ gacchati | tathā ca vājasaneyinaḥ āmananti | taṃ vidyākarmaṇī samanvārabhete pūrvaprajñā ca | iti | tasmād adhyayana-vad artha-jñānasyāpi vihitatvād artha-jñānāya vedo vyākhyātavyaḥ ||* Müller, 1:17.

allow it! Indeed, this is precisely how the followers of Śāṅkara explain the matter. If you contend that the knowledge of the meaning of the Veda is obtained by the individual ritual injunctions themselves, because otherwise ritual performance could not be possible, and that thus, in this case, knowledge need not be enjoined, then, by the force of that injunction, some entirely novel and independent result must obtain through knowledge alone.⁶¹

The imbrication of Vedānta hermeneutics in resolving questions of ritual efficacy had never been as systematically undertaken as in this commentarial corpus. So, if sacrificers were to perform rituals with knowledge of its meaning, how would this change the trajectory of their spiritual progress or their practice? What difference would knowledge make to the performance of the Vedic ritual? The *Parāśarasmr̥ti* takes up the question in a discussion about the fruits generated by obligatory rituals. The commentator argues that obligatory rituals, when performed sedulously, generate dharma directly, and contribute indirectly to the generation of the highest good (*niḥśreyasa*), that is, liberation (*mokṣa*). The interlocutor responds that there is ample evidence from the Smṛti to show that mokṣa does not result from the generation of prosperity (*abhyudaya*).

It is not possible that it [mokṣa] is caused by *abhyudaya*, because there is no evidence in support. On the contrary, the Śruti and Smṛti negate that [causal connection]: “Neither through ritual, nor through progeny, nor through wealth,” this from Śruti; “But liberation is caused by knowledge alone,” this from Smṛti.⁶²

⁶¹ *brāhmaṇena niṣkāraṇo dharmah ṣaḍaṅgo vedo’ dyeyo jñeyaś ca iti | evaṃ tarhi jñānasya pṛthag-vidhānād adhyayanam pāṭhamātram iti cet astu nāma varṇayanti caivam eva śāṅkaradarśanānusāriṇaḥ | kratu-vidhibhir evānuṣṭhānānyathānupapattiyā vedārtha-jñānasya prāpitatvān naitad vidheyam iti cet tarhi tadvidhibalāt vedanamātreṇa svatantram kiṁcid apūrvam astu | Taittirīya Saṃhitā, 4.*

⁶² *abhyudaya-hetutvaṃ tu na sambhavati pramāṇābhāvāt | pratyuta śruti-smṛtibhyāṃ tan-niṣiddhyate – na karmaṇā na prajāyā dhanena – iti śrutiḥ - jñānād eva tu kaivalyam | iti smṛtiḥ | Mādhava, Parāśara Smṛti, 1.1:58.*

The commentator responds by employing a familiar interpretive tactic, namely, to qualify the evidence presented as applying only in a narrow sense that does not affect his position:

Not so, because, in the section on the *highest self*, sacrifices and the like are enjoined as means to the desire for knowledge which results in the highest good. Because the Śruti states, “The Brahmins desire to know (*vividiṣanti*) this one (Brahman) through reciting the Veda, through sacrifice and donations.” The prohibition, on the other hand, will concern the direct means to the highest good. Thus, the liberated have no need for rituals such as kindling the sacrificial fires. That [desire] concerns the arising of knowledge.” These two positions have been resolved with the topics covered in Śaṅkara’s commentary on two sūtras (3.4.25 and 3.4.26). In this very way, rituals cause liberation indirectly.”⁶³

In other words, the textual sources that state that ritual action does not contribute to the liberation are correct, but they concern themselves solely with the *direct* causes of liberation, whereas ritual performance contributes to liberation indirectly. But, as the objector continues to probe, how would these different results obtain simultaneously?

Perhaps, the objector suggests, the same ritual would have to be performed numerous times to produce multiple results. So, should we not perform the same obligatory ritual three times a day, once, to avoid diminution (*pratyavāya-parihārāya*), once, to obtain a pleasant post-mortem life (*punya-loka-prāptaye*), and lastly, to engender the knowledge of Brahman (*brahma-vedanāya*)? Repetition is not required, the commentator responds, because a single ritual action

⁶³ *maivam | paramātma-prakaraṇe niḥśreyasa-hetu-vedanecchāsādhanatvena yajñādīnām vidhānāt | tam etaṃ vedānuvacanena brāhmaṇā vividiṣanti | yajñena dānena iti śruteḥ | niṣedhas tu sakṣān niḥśreyasa-sādhanatvaṃ gocarayiṣyati | tasmāt na muktānām agny-ādihānādi-karmāpekṣā’ sti | vedanotpattau sāvidyate | etac ca ubhayaṃ - ata eva cāgnīndhanādy-anapekṣā (BSB 3.4.25) sarvāpekṣā ca yajñādi-śruter aśvavat (BSB 3.4.26) ity ābhyām adhikaraṇābhyām nirṇūtam | tathā ca karmaṇām paramparayā mokṣa-hetutvaṃ | Mādhava, 1.1:58–59.*

can have different results. To bolster this point, the commentary invokes the Mīmāṃsā distinction between the *kratv-ārtha* (some action that serves the ritual end) and *puruṣārtha* (a ritual action that serves the end of the human agent), to argue that a sacrifice can employ the same action (here, hewing the sacrificial post out of the *khadira* tree) for two different purposes. He further quotes the Mīmāṃsā sūtra on this point (MS 4.4.31) in defense of this position.

Lastly, the commentator notes that optional rites (*kāmya*) do not have this capacity that obligatory rites have to engender knowledge, because these optional rites are produced by a predominance of attachment. In other words, one would perform optional rites that secure very specific results (progeny, cattle, rain) only if one were attached to gain and prosperity. Such a ritual action – performed out of an attachment to the subjective self – could not produce the type of purification of the self (*śuddhi*) that would create the conditions for the blossoming of knowledge of the self. The commentator now describes how the performance of ritual produces the desire to know the self.

The purification of the intellect (*buddhi-śuddhi*) is primary in an obligatory ritual (*pradhāna*); the fruit is secondary (*upasarjana*). For this very reason, the fruit, even while it is being experienced, does not impede that discrimination that consists of the view of the fault of obligatory rituals, in that they comprise an excellence that is not eternal... Obligatory ritual is of two kinds: that which purifies and that which produces the desire to know Brahman (*vividiṣā*). A ritual that is undertaken simply based on an awareness that it has been enjoined is a purifying ritual... whereas a ritual that is undertaken on the basis of the awareness of worshipping the lord is one that produces the desire to know... With regard to these two, purification produces nothing other than the capacity of the mind for knowing (Brahman). The desire to know (*vividiṣā*), on the other hand, insofar as it produces some action, invariably brings about knowing Brahman.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ *nitya-karmaṇi tu buddhi-śuddhiḥ pradhānam | phalaṃ upasarjanam | ata eva bhujyamānenāpi phalena tad-anityatva-sātiśayatva-doṣa-darśana-rūpo viveko na pratibadhyate | nityam ca karma dvididham | saṃskāraṃ vividiṣā-janakaṃ ca | vihitatva-mātra-buddhyā kriyamāṇam saṃskārakam | īśvarārpaṇa-buddhyā kriyamāṇam*

Evidence for this being the maṭha’s view on the relative transcendent value of action and knowledge abounds. Indeed, this very same argument is repeated in the introduction to the commentary on the Taittirīya Saṃhitā, although there the commentator does not distinguish between primary and secondary motivations in performing a ritual.⁶⁵ As my examination of the

vividiṣā-janakam | tatra saṃskareṇa cittasya vedana-yogyatā-mātram sampadyate | vividiṣā tu pravṛttim utpādyavaśyaṃ vedanam sampādayati |
Mādhava, 1.1:61–63.

⁶⁵ In this vein Āpastamba states, “Just as when the mango tree is created for the sake of fruit, shade and sweet fragrance follow, so too results follow *dharma*, when it is ritually generated.” The fact that the optional rite causes the attainment of the object of desire is made clear by the injunctive statement of that object. And the harmful, which is characterized as being harmful to one’s wishes, is, according to this logic, avoided. One falls to hell by doing what is prohibited, swayed by one’s passions. This fall is avoided by avoiding all that is prohibited. Further, it is not just that the performance of mandatory and special rites results in the attainment of heaven as its consequence, but, their performance also purifies one’s thoughts. These two types of rituals also cause the knowledge of *brahman* since they generate the desire to know. And thus, the followers of the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā* teach: “It is this very one [*brahman*] that Brahmins, by means of Vedic recitation, desire to know, through ritual, through donation, through spiritual exercises and through fasting.” If, reasoning in this way, you contend: since the prior section [*pūrvakāṇḍa*] alone realizes all human ends, the latter section [*uttarakāṇḍa*] is of no use, we disagree. Since it is there [in the *uttarakāṇḍa*] that the ultimate human end, characterized by the cessation of rebirth, is realized. Thus, the followers of the *Atharvaveda* teach that ritualists reach the moon by traveling along the southern path and then they are reborn: “Having experienced great power in the realm of Soma, he is reborn.” Therefore, we should examine the latter section, which realizes that end [i.e. liberation from rebirth]. Further, the realization of this ultimate human end is of two kinds: immediate/spontaneous liberation and gradual liberation. Immediate liberation occurs immediately after the demise of one’s present body [i.e. at death]. It is for this reason that the latter section [i.e. the *uttarakāṇḍa* or the *Vedānta*] teaches both the instruction on *brahman* and the worship of *brahman*. Connected to the topic of the worship of *brahman*, according to the view on *brahman*, [the *Vedānta*], addressing those who seek worldly results, teaches symbols as objects of worship [as opposed to the worship of *brahman* itself]. Although the devotee of *brahman* and the devotee of symbols travel along the northern path, since the devotee of symbols cannot travel to the realm of *brahman*, which is higher than the realm of lightning, and therefore attain gradual liberation, he is doomed to rebirth. This may be studied in the section [of the *Brahmasūtras*] that includes the *sūtra* “*apratīkālambanān-nayati*”.

tathā cāpastambah tad yathātre phalārthe nirmite chāyā gandha ity’ anūtpadyete evaṃ dharmam caryamānam arthā anūtpadyante iti | kāmyasya iṣṭa-prāpti-hetutvaṃ tad-vidhi-vākya eva spaṣṭam | icchāvaghāta-lakṣaṇam-anīṣṭam cārthāt parihriyate | niṣiddha-varjanena rāga-prāpta-niṣiddhānuṣṭhāna-janyo naraka-pātaḥ parihriyate | na kevalam nitya-naimittikābhyām-ānuṣāṅgika-svarga-prāptiḥ kiṃ tu dhī-śuddhyā vividiṣotpādanadvārā brahma-jñāna-hetutvam-api tayor-asti | tathā ca vājasaneyinah samāmananti tam-etam vedānuvacanena brāhmaṇā vividiṣanti yajñena dānena tapasā-nāsakena iti | evaṃ tarhi pūrvakāṇḍa evāśeṣapuruṣārtha-siddheḥ kṛtam-uttarakāṇḍeneti cet | na | apunarāvṛtti-lakṣaṇasyātyantika-puruṣārthasya tatrāsiddheḥ | ata evātharvaṇikāḥ karmaṇo dakṣiṇa-mārgeṇa candra-prāptim punarāvṛttim cāmananti sa soma-loke vibhūtim anubhūya punarāvartate iti | ata uttara-kāṇḍas-tadarthako draṣṭavyaḥ | ātyantika-puruṣārthasiddhiś ca dvividhā sadyomuktiḥ kramamuktiś ceti | vartamāna-deha-pātānantaram eva siddhyati sadyomuktiḥ | uttara-mārgeṇa gatvā brahmaloke ciraṃ bhogān anubhūya tattrotpanna-jñānasya brahma-lokāvāsāne siddhyati krama-muktiḥ | tasmād-uttarakāṇḍe brahmopadeśo brahmopāstīś ceti ubhayaṃ pratipādyate | brahmopāstiprasaṅgāt brahmadṛṣṭyā pratīkam upāsyatvena sāmśarika-phala-kāminam uddiṣya pratipādyate | brahmopāsaka-pratīkopāsakayoḥ samāne ’py’uttaramārge pratīkopāsakasya vidyul-lokād ūrdhvaṃ brahma-loka-gamaṇābhāvena kramamukter’apy’abhāvāt asti punarāvṛttiḥ | etac-ca apratīkālambanān nayatīty adhikaraṇe draṣṭavyam ||

different forms of *saṃnyāsa* shows, the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri endowed *vividiṣā* (the state characterized by a desire to know Brahman) with an institutional identity – it became the lower of two forms of superordinate *saṃnyāsa*. There was only one higher station that extraordinarily accomplished state of *saṃnyāsa*: that of the *vidvad-saṃnyāsin* (the renunciant who knows Brahman), and among these a vanishingly small number of fully-liberated *saṃnyāsins* – the gurus of Śṛṅgeri.

In this chapter, I have explored the pivotal role played by three interpretive formations: the principle of assimilation through subordination, and the two techniques – *vidhi* and *adhikāra* – that formed the hermeneutic arsenal from which the scholars of Śṛṅgeri drew to build a textual case for monastic supremacy. With the material bases of power in place and oriented to the proliferation of the ideology of monastic power, textual practices – pedagogical, performative, and replication – were the elements crucial to the proliferation and success of that ideology. Monastic power was constructed through a hermeneutic of the subjects who were to be shaped and constituted as subjects fit for Vedic governance. In other words, the processes and practices that formed and propagated certain modes of religious conduct were constitutive of this operation of power. As this chapter has demonstrated, ritual performance served as the fulcrum in this power structure: it gave shape to the processes and practices of credentialing proper subjects. Thus, the ritual gave shape to the formation of the sacrificer as a student, as a householder and as a pillar of Vedic society. From the vantage point of the monastery, the sacrificer was an essential conduit for the propagation of monastic power. Lastly, Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics, with its emphasis on knowledge, provided the fertile ground for the ritual to serve as a site for the cultivation (or bringing into being) of the highest form of religious being: the *saṃnyāsin*, as part of the same hierarchy of religious subjects. It is to this form that I turn in the

following chapter. While this chapter has examined the imposition of certain Advaita Vedānta interpretative innovations in the practical implementation of a ritual hermeneutics, the next examines the imposition of certain Mīmāṃsā interpretive categories in the elaboration of an Advaita Vedānta hermeneutics. There I take up the other Homo Vedicus of this study, the mirror image of the sacrificer, his most intimate other – the *saṃnyāsin*.

Chapter Three

The Rite to Know

Discipline and Power: Anatomy of Monastic Governmentality

There is no doubt that the administration of the economies that the gift created evinced a monastic governmentality. But this is neither theoretically nor historically interesting. It is entirely unremarkable after all that an institution that administered vast expanses of land and a diversity of subjects should evince a particular logic in its mode of governance. But the interesting question this set of circumstances raises is, how did the maṭha theorize the source and operation of its power? Further, if governmentality concerns the conduct of conduct, how did the textual corpus in question formulate this meta-discussion of conduct, and what connection did it have to the formation of monastic subjects (*saṃnyāsins*)? In circumscribing the conduct of *saṃnyāsins*, the texts presumed to answer the question, who is to be governed and how?

I have explicated the manner in which Vedic hermeneutics were employed to circumscribe the field of religious action and to define the players eligible to enter the sphere. In examining this meta-discourse, I have shown that the Veda was foundational to the formulation of the normative sphere, procedurally and substantively. That is, taking for granted that the Veda was the source of religious conduct, it was, further, the means to understand the nature and practice of this conduct. Simply put, Vedic hermeneutics were critical to the constitution of an ideal Vedic commonwealth. Monastic governmentality depended upon the unreserved embrace of Vedic hermeneutics, a view that the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri registered stridently in the following citation, in the *Parāśaramādhavīya*, of the *Manusmṛti*:

The sages witness the *Śruti* (the Veda) and, similarly, they recall the *Smṛti* (the *dharmaśāstra* texts). Thus, these two are instruments of knowing (pramāṇa) that have been established in this world, by means of the instruments of knowing (pramāṇa). If a twice-born reviles these two (*Śruti* and *Smṛti*), resorting to cheap dialectics, he should be excluded, branded a nay-sayer and Veda-denouncer.¹

In Chapter 1, I demonstrated that ritual, the first of two criteria for adjudicating Vedic rectitude, produced a hierarchy of subjectivities. This hierarchy was imposed, using hermeneutic resources drawn from the Vedic canon, to order and give meaning to an exhaustive range of subjects. These subjects ranged from those formally excluded from the practice of Vedic religion but able to participate, albeit in subaltern positions, in the wider Vedic order, to the credentialed performers of Vedic ritual. Key to my argument is the claim that the maṭha was placed at the top of this hierarchy as the institutional administrator of Vedic rule. The members of this institution, *saṃnyāsins*, were, albeit positioned higher in the normative hierarchy, nevertheless similarly constituted as subjects. They were subject to the same logic of governance that fashioned and governed ritual conduct and the ritual subject. Thus, the *saṃnyāsa* station of life too was governed by the restrictive mechanisms of the *vidhi* and *adhikāra*, and the range of *saṃnyāsin* subjectivities was hierarchically arranged, just like their ritual counterparts, in an order dictated by the single human end governing *all saṃnyāsin* conduct: liberation (*mukti*), the highest human end (*niḥśreyasa*).

The sole sovereign, the only figure that transcended the governing limits of this Vedic religion, was the guru, the ruler of the ruling institution, the maṭha. Through ascetic practices of the self, the guru alone transcended the bounds of subjectivity itself. He was, as a fully liberated

¹ *śrutim paśyanti munayaḥ smaranti ca tathā smṛtim | tasmāt pramānam ubhayaṃ pramāṇaiḥ prāpitaṃ bhuvī | yo ’vamanyeta te tūbhe hetu-śāstrāśrayād dvijaḥ | sa sādhubhir bahiḥkāryo nāstika veda-nindakāḥ |* Mādhava, *Parāśara Smṛti*, 1.1:12.

self, beyond the constraints of the injunction (*vidhi*) which undergirded the *dharmic* order. Thus, though he alone was sovereign, the guru was not impelled by any of the subjective motivations that held sway over typical sovereigns. Functionally, and indeed structurally, he was a paradox; despite being fully sovereign, he lacked the agency to rule. In effect, the guru was a conduit for the expression and administration of a fully elaborated Vedic sovereignty.

In the first section of this chapter, I show how the texts asserted the restrictive power of the *vidhi* and *adhikāra* to chasten and shape the subjectivity of the *saṃnyāsin*. The application of these two hermeneutic constraints aided the imposition of a *dharmicizing* hierarchy on *saṃnyāsa*, as a mode of life. The effect of this intervention was the transformation of that form of life into an institution similar to, and located on the same spectrum as, the institution of the Vedic householder. Analogizing the two forms of Vedic life in this way fully assimilated the station of *saṃnyāsa* and brought it within the *dharmic* fold. In other words, the institution of *saṃnyāsa* was subject to monastic governance in the same way that the other types of religious subjects were.

Bringing the *saṃnyāsa* institution within the fold of dharma was part of the endeavour to universalize maṭha control. Institutionalization of *saṃnyāsa* meant the loss of autonomy for members of this group. In the spiritual economy of the *dharmic* system idealized in texts, the *saṃnyāsin* was traditionally depicted as being beyond the ken of kingship, the guarantor of *dharmic* stability. He was unbound by prescription and proscription, driven solely by the desire for liberation. In one fell, hermeneutic, swoop, the maṭha institutionalized the *saṃnyāsin* and assimilated this figure to *varṇāśrama dharma*. The loss of individual autonomy was accompanied by the transformation of the maṭha into the sole source of transcendent power, as only the maṭha could channel the operation of Vedic power in the immanent domain, whether

through support for ritual, reading or textual reproduction and reinterpretation. In other words, the institutionalization of *saṃnyāsa* redounded to the power and prestige of the maṭha; the guardian of the Veda.

Government Without Agency

In the first part of this chapter, I argue that the maṭha oversaw the radical transformation of *saṃnyāsa* from an idealized mode-of-life into a powerful institutional force that produced a new theory of institutional power. Institutional asceticism or *saṃnyāsa* was thus transformed in order to support the theory of monastic governmentality that the maṭha advanced. At the heart of this transformation lay a theoretical conundrum, to which I alluded at the very outset of this dissertation. To govern is to act, and yet, according to the tradition of Advaita Vedānta which the maṭha promulgated, *saṃnyāsins* are defined by their transcendence of action. To become a *saṃnyāsin*, one must renounce one's ability to act in the world, one's social identity.² This is the innovation that Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta introduced through a reappraisal of Vedic hermeneutics, and it left the maṭha with the problem of governmentality.

Advaita Vedānta, the brand of non-dual Vedānta formulated by the 8th century thinker Śaṅkara, is premised upon a diagnosis of the existential ailment from which *dharmic* society

² This emic distinction between *gārhasthya* and *saṃnyāsa* was set in structuralist stone in the work of French anthropologist Louis Dumont who memorably referred to the *saṃnyāsin* as an “individual-outside-the-world” and opposed him to the “man-in-the-world.” Dumont's analysis forecloses on the possibility of *saṃnyāsa* being an institution that is “in-the-world.” He writes, “The renouncer leaves the world behind in order to devote himself to his own liberation... he depends upon no one but himself, he is alone.” Dumont's elevation of the ‘individualistic’ and extra-institutional nature of the ascetic leaves him with few ways to account for the influence of institutionalized monastic power in Indian history. He avers that the ascetic develops innovative and novel modes of thinking but, lacking any institutional framework to disseminate these ideas, Dumont has to argue that the Brahman, the man-in-the-world, “as a scholar, has mainly preserved, aggregated, and combined; he may well have created and developed special branches of knowledge. Not only the founding of sects and their maintenance, but the major ideas, the ‘inventions’ are due to the renouncer whose unique position gave him a sort of monopoly for putting everything in question.” Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 273 - 275.

suffers. This is the problem action, paradigmatically ritual, produces. The ultimate reality, which the Upaniṣads reveal, is that the self alone exists. Action is predicated upon the conviction that we are agents capable of acting upon objects in this world, but the constituent elements of a dharmic world are animated by our fundamental ignorance of the true state of affairs. That root ignorance (*a-vidya*), which obscures and alienates the self from knowledge of itself, is proliferated through action, which serves to ossify the ultimately unreal distinctions between subject and object, means and ends, actions and results. As long as one remains trapped in the realm of action, however dharmic, one is consigned to endless rebirth. Not that this is always unpleasant; as we have seen, ritual performance results in heaven, to which the ritual agent reaches upon death. Nonetheless, it is impossible to escape this cycle of rebirths (*saṃsāra*) through action alone. Action begets action.

Advaita Vedānta presents a Vedic hermeneutic that shows that knowledge alone results in *mukti* (release) from this endless cycle. The Upaniṣads (the corpus of texts that constitutes the Vedānta) teaches this non-dual knowledge, namely, that the self (*ātman*) is the ultimate reality (*Brahman*). Action, insofar as it is predicated upon dualities such as subject and object, is antithetical to the knowledge of radical non-duality the Upaniṣads teach as the ultimate truth. Thus, someone who is deeply entrenched in the world of dharma, that is, the world of action, is constitutively incapable of knowing this ultimate truth. To know Brahman, the ultimate reality, one must renounce the dharmic world.

In order for a male householder to take up *saṃnyāsa* so that he may achieve *mukti*, he must go forth (*pra-vraj*) from the world. Going forth, as a ritual matter, consists of performing the death rites for his social self. In other words, he must sever *all* connections to his former dharmic self, which was constituted by its social identity and obligations. He must renounce the

most potent symbol of social belonging: the ritual. From the moment he enters *saṃnyāsa*, he is no longer constrained by the chief instrument of dharma: the injunction (*codanā* or *vidhi*). As Olivelle remarks in his description of the special status of *saṃnyāsa* in Advaita Vedānta (with particular reference to the *Parāśaramādhavīya*, one of the texts in this corpus): “Such a renouncer [*saṃnyāsin*] is not subject to injunctions or prohibitions; he is beyond *dharma*.”³ In short, the transition from action to knowledge is radical and abrupt, and the shift is marked neither by gradient nor spectrum; the two spheres are governed by radically different logics. This is the precise root of the problem for the *saṃnyāsins* of Śrīṅgeri maṭha. *Saṃnyāsins* (renunciants), by virtue of having renounced dharmic society in pursuit of *mukti* (liberation), have foreclosed on their ability to enact dharma or to govern its generation. In other words, *saṃnyāsins* should be disqualified from governing human affairs by their very status as *saṃnyāsins*.

How then did the maṭha confront this intractable hermeneutic quandary? It did so by transforming the category of *saṃnyāsa*, assimilating it through a series of novel interpretive moves within the regime of *dharma* from which it was categorically, and necessarily, excluded. But this act of reinsertion is never consummated; the *saṃnyāsin* of the maṭha cannot be encompassed by *dharma* but remains beyond it inasmuch as he is impelled by liberation. That is, at the same time that he is constituted by the injunction, he is similarly defined by a desire to transcend the injunction. He encompasses in his conduct a series of oppositions. Knowledge, the means to liberation, is radically opposed to the workings of *dharma*, the means to *abhyudaya*, or prosperity. This uneasy assimilation is by design. In order for the institution of *saṃnyāsa*, i.e. the maṭha, to assert its sovereignty as governor of a Vedic society, it had to be part of dharmic society *and* beyond it. It had to be part of it in order to govern it but to transcend it insofar as it

³ Olivelle, *Renunciation in Hinduism: A Medieval Debate*, 18.

was impelled by *mukti* and not *dharma*. In effect, the maṭha could not be subject to governance by any other dharmic institution. This was because the regime of dharma, forever constrained by action, could neither comprehend nor govern an institution (the maṭha) that stood beyond its ambit.

At the Limits of Dharma

The textual corpus evinces two interpretive modes of forging a connection between the maṭha and the dharmic society it governed. Both of these interpretive interventions sought to overturn the notion that the institution of *saṃnyāsa* was radically severed from dharmic society. The first interpretive mode was to recast the two metonymic figures of ritual and knowledge – the ritual householder (*grhastha*) and the *saṃnyāsin* – as connected, not radically severed. That is, these two figures were shown to exist on a spectrum or a gradient. Thus, at the juncture of the two modes of life, one could be a ritualist externally but a *saṃnyāsin* at heart.⁴ Or, on the other hand, the knowledgeable performance of rituals could engender in the mind of the performer a desire for knowledge of the ultimate⁵ – a trigger to shift from the realm of *dharma* to the realm

⁴ As Vidyāraṇya, one of the gurus discussed above, writes in the *Treatise on Liberation-while-living* (*Jīvanmuktiviveka*), “When, for whatever reason, Vedic students, householders, and forest-dwellers are prevented from entering the renunciant order, there is nothing to prevent the mental abandonment of rites and the like for the purpose of knowledge, even while they remain performing the duties (*dharma*-s) of their own order, because we see many such knowers of truth in the Śruti, Smṛti, Itihāsa, and Purāṇas.” To put it plainly, the author is eking out space here for *saṃnyāsa* to be taken up by the members of the three other life-stations, a possibility that should be foreclosed upon by the sharp distinction between action and knowledge. Goodding Robert, “The Treatise on Liberation-in-Life Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the *Jīvanmuktiviveka* of Vidyāraṇya” (PhD, Austin, University of Texas at Austin, 2002) 73 - 74.

⁵ As Mādhava, in the introduction to his commentary on the Taittirīya Saṃhitā, explains that if one performs the ritual that one is enjoined to performed the result is more than just some transient gain (such as heaven). Ritual performance also purifies one’s thoughts and generates the desire to know *brahman*. In other words, ritual performance conditions the self to undertake the highest human pursuit, the knowledge of *brahman*. “One falls to hell by doing what is prohibited, swayed by one’s passions. This fall is avoided by setting aside all that is prohibited. Further, it is not just that the performance of mandatory and special rites results in the attainment of heaven as their result, but, their performance also purifies one’s thoughts. These two types of rituals also cause the knowledge of *brahman* since they generate the desire to know.”

of *mukti*. The synthesis of these two modes of life produced a spectrum of conduct, from action alone without knowledge to knowledge alone without action. It conditioned the possibility of thinking of the two modes of life as related and not totally distinct. The texts fostered a softening of the radical distinction between the two stages of life, the householder and the *saṃnyāsin*, in order to situate *saṃnyāsins* at the limits of dharmic society, whence they could govern but not be governed.

The second interpretive mode of assimilating *saṃnyāsa* to *varṇāśrama-dharma* was through the application of the Vedic injunction. Thus, the *saṃnyāsin* was defined and constrained by the *vidhi* just like his structural counterpart, the ritual agent. The *saṃnyāsin* was subject to the *śravaṇa vidhi*, the injunction to learn the Vedānta text, and he was charged with carrying out the subordinate elements of this injunction – critically examining (*manana*) and meditating (*nididhyāsana*) upon Brahman, the ultimate reality. This three-part program charted out the *saṃnyāsin*'s progress from the generation of a desire to know Brahman (*vividiṣā*) to attaining liberation.

What a Difference Indifference Makes!

The three parts of this program of spiritual exercise–learning, examining, and practicing–are elaborated upon in two texts in this corpus, the Treatise on Liberation-while-living (*Jīvan-mukti-viveka*) and the Treatise in Fifteen Chapters (*Pañcadaśī*). As my study of the *saṃnyāsa* form-of-life (*āśrama*) shows, the Advaita Vedānta orthodoxy that “a renouncer [*saṃnyāsin*] is not subject to injunctions or prohibitions; he is beyond *dharma*” certainly did not hold for the *saṃnyāsin* of Śṛṅgerī. Indeed, the very opposite was true. That is, the *saṃnyāsin* (particularly,

*niśiddhavarjanena rāgaprāptaniśiddhānuṣṭhānajanayo narakapātaḥ parihriyate | na kevalaṃ nityanaimittikābhyām-
ānuṣāngikasvargaprāptiḥ kiṃ tu dhīśuddhyā vividiṣotpādanadvārā brahmajñānaheturvam-*api* tayor-*asti* |*

the *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsin*) was constituted in virtue of being subject to the injunction to learn (*śravaṇa*) the Vedānta. As part of the transformation of the maṭha into a viable governing institution, the figure of the *saṃnyāsin* was subject to governance. This maṭha accomplished this transformation of the *saṃnyāsin* by subjecting the *saṃnyāsa-āśrama* to the hermeneutic force of Mīmāṃsā interpretive technology, most notably, the *vidhi*, *adhikāra* and the overarching logic of assimilation through subordination.

Let me begin with an examination of the construction of the *saṃnyāsin*. In an explication that spans two texts, the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri used their considerable powers of synthesis to formulate a single *saṃnyāsa āśrama* (mode-of-life), consisting of a hierarchy of forms. The *Parāśaramādhavīya*, true to its form as a *dharmasāstra* commentary, takes up the explication of this highest *āśrama*, the *saṃnyāsaśrama*, detailing the conduct proper to each rank of *saṃnyāsin*. The *Jīvanmuktiviveka*, a treatise on the singular state of liberation-while-living, treats only the *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsin*, who alone is institutionally authorized to pursue liberation-in-life (*jīvanan-mukti*). Together, the two texts present a comprehensive vision of *saṃnyāsa* as a mode-of-life or order (*āśrama*) with its attendant governing logic (*dharma*).

These two texts describe the *saṃnyāsa* order (*āśrama*), distinguishing between institutional and non-institutional forms, by explicating the logic of its hierarchic organization. Thus, *saṃnyāsa* is divided into a variety of forms according to differences in entitlement (*adhikāra-bheda*), differences in the ends to which *saṃnyāsa* was adopted, and differences in the means that were adopted to those distinct ends. In other words, the construction and differentiation of the *saṃnyāsaśrama* relied upon the ritual logic of Mīmāṃsā: identifying the agent (*adhikartā*), the means (*sādhana*), the ends (*sādhya*), and the procedures proper to each (*itikartavyatā*).

The *Parāśaramādhavīya* chapter on *saṁnyāsa* is, like many other topics covered in this text, synthesized from scratch by the commentator. That is, there is no root text here which the commentary explicates. Olivelle states of this chapter: “This section does not constitute a true commentary because the Parāśara-smṛti contains no discussion of renunciation. It contains Mādhava’s own exposition of the Advaita position, unconstrained by the need to comment upon and interpret a root text.”⁶ The chapter is cobbled together with quotations from Śruti and Smṛti texts, which the commentator weaves together through explication (*vyākhyā*). In other words, it is a perfect example of the intellectual bricolage that distinguished this commentarial corpus.

First of all, the text takes up the topic of *adhikāra*, that is, who is entitled to undertake *saṁnyāsa*. The text begins with expansive criteria for eligibility, which is winnowed down as the discussion homes in on the subtle distinctions in the forms of *saṁnyāsa*. The most general treatment of this question determines that almost any member of the three higher *varṇas* (that is, any twice-born male) is entitled to take up *saṁnyāsa*, as long as he feels an aversion (*vairāgya*) to the ends of *dharmic* life (ritual performance, procreation, marriage, and the like).⁷ There are, according to this most general paradigm, four types of mendicants, arranged hierarchically according to the intensity of the aversion that they feel for the world of *dharma*:

⁶ Patrick Olivelle, *Renunciation in Hinduism: A Medieval Debate*, vol. 8, Publications of the De Nobili Research Library (Vienna, 1986), 20.

⁷ “Those who are between stages-of-life (*āśramas*), such as Vedic graduates and widows, given that it is possible that their mental faculties have been purified by means that are independent of their mode-of-life (*āśrama*), for instance by means of such actions as recitation of mantras, fasting, pilgrimage, they are entitled to the mode-of-life undergirded by the desire for liberation (*mokṣāśrame*). This has been examined critically in the third book. Even in the case of loss of *dharma*, as long as one atones through expiation, *saṁnyāsa* is possible.

snātakavidhurādīnām antarālavartinām āśramanirapekṣair japopavāsatīrthayātrādikarmabhiś cittaśuddhisambhavana mokṣāśrame’ dhikāro’sūti tṛtīye’ dhyāye mīmāṃsitam | dharmalope’pyanutāpavatas tatprāyaścittatvena saṁnyāsaḥ sambhavati |
Madhava, *Parāśara Smṛti*, 1.2:151–52.

There are four types of mendicants, who share the same identifying marks. Among these, distinctions according to conduct and knowledge are reported in the Veda. *kuṭīcaka*, *bahūdaka*, and the *haṃsa* is the third; the fourth is the *parama-haṃsa*. Each succeeding one is better than the last.⁸

As this classification clarifies, the four-fold taxonomy of mendicants is arranged hierarchically, such that each succeeding type is more accomplished than the previous type. Further, the distinctions are based on conduct and the knowledge each type possesses. We shall see presently what these distinctions entail.

Next, the text draws out distinctions in the *adhikāra* (eligibility) that characterize these sub-types⁹:

Aversion is said to be of two types: sharp (*tīvra*) and sharper (*tīvratara*). When it [aversion] is sharp, the yogi should renounce into the state of *kuṭīcaka*, or, if he is capable, into *bahūdaka*; when it is sharper, [he should renounce] into the state called *haṃsa*. The one who desires liberation [should renounce] into the state of *parama-haṃsa*, which is a direct means to awareness [of Brahman].¹⁰

⁸ *catur-vidhā bhikṣavas tu proktāḥ sāmānya-liṅginah | teṣāṃ prthak prthak jñānaṃ vṛtti-bhedādikaṃ śrutam || kuṭīcako bahūdako haṃsaś caiva tṛtīyakaḥ | catūrthaḥ paramo haṃso yo yaḥ paścāt sa uttamaḥ ||*
Madhava, 1.2:160.

⁹ “With regard to this [four-fold classification] the Purāṇa demonstrates the distinctions of *adhikāra*.” *tatra adhikāravīśeṣaḥ purāṇe darśitaḥ*
Madhava, 1.2:161.

¹⁰ *viraktir dvividhā proktā tīvrā tīvratareti ca | satyāṃ eva tu tīvrāyāṃ nyased yogi kuṭīcakaḥ || śakto bahūdaka tīvratarāyāṃ haṃsasamjñite | mumukṣuḥ parame haṃse sākṣād vijñānasādhane ||*
Madhava, 1.2:161.

This very same classification is reiterated verbatim at the beginning of the *Jīvanmuktiviveka*.¹¹ It makes clear a few important distinctions between the types. First and foremost, not each of these sub-types is motivated by liberation. The *paramahaṃsa bhikṣu* (mendicant) is alone defined by the desire for release (*mumuṅṣu*) from the cycle of rebirths. The *Jīvanmuktiviveka* provides further clarity:

“Away with *saṃsāra*” is when a temporary thought occurs at the time of the loss of a son, wife, wealth, and so on; it is the dull state of detachment.

“In this world let me not have a son, wife, etc.,” that sort of firm mind is the sharp detachment.

“Let there not be a world subject to rebirth,” that is the sharper detachment. There is not any renunciation in the dull level of detachment.

In the sharp (*tīvra*) type, there may be two types of renunciation on the basis of the ability or inability to undertake pilgrimages, and so forth. The two types are the *kuṭīcaka* and the *bahūdaka*. Both are triple-staffed.

In the sharper type (*tīvratara*), there are two types of renunciation, according to the distinction of *Brahmaloka* and liberation. The *haṃsa* knows the truth in that world (*Brahmaloka*); the *paramahaṃsa* knows the truth in this world.¹²

This passage makes clear the relative differences in motivation that determine a *saṃnyāsin*'s status. The two lower types are not assured of liberation at all. These two types of *saṃnyāsa* do not ineluctably lead to an awareness of Brahman, the ultimate reality, for the motivating desire reifies the individual agent (“let *me* not have a son in this world, etc.”). The two higher types of *saṃnyāsa* (*haṃsa* and *paramahaṃsa*) are motivated by the desire to do away with the sort of existence that is predicated upon rebirth. Thus, there is a desire to transcend the

¹¹ Goodding, “The Treatise on Liberation-in-Life Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the *Jīvanmuktiviveka* of Vidyāranya,” 71.

¹² Goodding, 71–72.

realm of action and rebirth. Still, the two types are distinguished by their realization of the ultimate reality (Brahman). The *haṃsa saṃnyāsin*, the lower of the two, does not obtain liberation in this world; indeed he does not even do so upon death. Rather, he realizes the nature of Brahman in the world of Brahman, whereas the *paramahaṃsa saṃnyāsin* knows that reality in this very world.

The hierarchy further clarifies another dimension of this classification, namely, that it is the *paramahaṃsa* group alone that is subject to the *śravaṇa vidhi*, which enjoins the renunciant to study the Vedānta texts in order to have direct awareness of Brahman. *Saṃnyāsins* belonging to the three lower sub-types, therefore, must progress along this hierarchy in order to become eligible to be enjoined in the manner described below. This process, which extends over many lifetimes, culminates in two possible outcomes: either the *saṃnyāsin* attains *jīvan-mukti*, liberation-while-living, a very rare occurrence, or, more typically, he attains *videha-mukti*, liberation-in-death. Thus, the spiritual progress to liberation is constituted according to the familiar Vedic hermeneutic of assimilation through subordination.

The maṭha thus articulated a hierarchy of renunciate subjects, distinguished by their eligibility and motivations (*adhikāra-bheda*). Further, the texts detail the different modes of conduct that distinguish these four types of *saṃnyāsins*. In the remainder of the chapter, I focus our attention on the highest and final of these four sub-types, the *paramahaṃsa*, who is the subject of the injunction to know the Vedānta.

What's Good for the Goose?

Before we can move on to an examination of the *vidhi* that constrains the *paramahaṃsa saṃnyāsa*, we must explicate one final hierarchic division, for the category of *paramahaṃsa*

saṃnyāsa is itself divided into two sub-categories: *vividiṣā-saṃnyāsa* (the renunciation for knowledge) and *vidvat-saṃnyāsa* (the renunciation of the knower). As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, one of the hinges that connected the world of action and the world of knowledge was *vividiṣā*, the desire to know, which arose in the sacrificer who performed the Vedic ritual with full knowledge of its meaning. As the commentator on the Taittirīya Saṃhitā states in the introduction to his commentary:

The obligatory and occasional rites do not merely result ineluctably in the acquisition of heaven but, moreover, through the mediation of the generation of *vividiṣā* (the desire to know) because of the purity of one's awareness, these two types of Vedic rites, furthermore, cause knowledge of Brahman.¹³

As this passage makes clear, the performance of the Vedic ritual may bring about *vividiṣā*, but this desire may or may not be pursued in the institutional setting of a mode-of-life (*āśrama*). The *Jīvanmuktiviveka* characterizes this divide thus:

Because it has been brought about by the desire for knowledge that has arisen through Vedic recitations and so on, properly performed in this life here or in a former life, this is called *vividiṣā-saṃnyāsa*. And this renunciation, which is the cause of knowing, is twofold: the one consists only in the abandonment of rites and the like, which produces rebirth; the other constitutes an order in society (*āśrama*) that is connected with carrying a staff and the like, which are preceded by uttering the *praiṣa* ritual formula.¹⁴

¹³ *na kevalaṃ nitya-naimittikābhyāṃ ānuṣaṅgika-svarga-prāptiḥ kiṃ tu dhīśuddhyā vividiṣotpādanadvārā brahmajñānaḥeturvam api tayor asti | Taittirīya Saṃhitā, 7.*

¹⁴ Goodding, "The Treatise on Liberation-in-Life Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the *Jīvanmuktiviveka* of Vidyāranya," 73.

This bit of commentary connects the generation of *vividiṣā* to its institutional codification. When the desire to know (*vividiṣā*) arises in an agent – its precise cause, whether it is caused by the purifying practices from previous births or by the ritual performed knowledgeably, is not particularly important here – the agent may pursue that desire to know (*vividiṣā*) in one of two ways, with very different outcomes. According to the first of the two alternatives, the agent may simply give up ritual performance, and pursue non-institutionalized renunciation. This does not result in *mukti*, as the text avers, as it “consists only in the abandonment of rites and the like, which produces rebirth.” Nevertheless, as the text also confirms, this path is open to all those, including women, who are somehow blocked from taking up institutional *saṃnyāsa*.

Even women are qualified to undertake this abandonment...When, for whatever reason, Vedic students, householders, and forest-dwellers are prevented from entering the renunciant order [*saṃnyāsāśrama*], there is nothing to prevent the mental abandonment of rites and the like for the purpose of knowledge, even while they remain performing the duties of their own order, because we see many such knowers of truths in the Śrutis, Smṛtis, Itihāsas, and Purāṇas.¹⁵

In other words, when *vividiṣā* arises in the agent, s/he may pursue that desire by internally renouncing the external signs of this mode-of-life. Thus, s/he may continue performing the obligatory Vedic rituals though s/he is completely detached from the incentive structure (in which action begets an attractive result) that undergirds that normative system. S/he may be committed internally to transcending the limitations of subjectivity, and his or her progress towards immortality may continue apace. Still, this path remains the recourse of those who are

¹⁵ Goodding, 72–73.

barred from entry into the formal institution of *saṃnyāsa*, admission to which is governed by the logic of ritual, including, as we shall soon examine, an overarching injunctive purpose.

This is as clear an illustration as we may hope for of what I have referred to above as the maṭha's control over the means of subject-production. In this case, the *saṃnyāsin* is constituted as subject to a range of authorizing and credentialing process and practices. There are ritual, educational, and institutional barriers to entry to the order, all of which are controlled and administered by the maṭha. The first phase of subject-formation consisted of training with a teacher in the Vedānta. This process of training to learn about the self was governed by the injunction to learn about the Vedānta (*śravaṇa vidhi*). It was followed by the disciplined scrutiny of this scriptural information (*manana*) and a rigorous program of yogic practice (*nididhyāsana*) that intended to cement the awareness of ultimate reality (Brahman) in an unmediated fashion. Thus, the injunction that governed the *saṃnyāsāśrama* directed a program of perfection of the self that accompanied the *saṃnyāsin* from initiation to liberation.

This preceding section has demonstrated that the sub-category of *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsa* was set off as the sole institutional form of *saṃnyāsa*. Thus, the maṭha conceptualized renunciation as a general *and* specific mode-of-life. Defined in the most general and expansive terms, *saṃnyāsa* may be taken up by any twice-born who experiences sustained aversion to the ends of the *dharmic* ritual order. There is a disagreement among authoritative sources, which the maṭha does not attempt to resolve, as to whether *saṃnyāsa* is open to Brahmins alone or to members of the three higher *varṇas*.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the texts do restrict a very particular kind of

¹⁶ “According to the afore-mentioned procedure, *saṃnyāsa* is available to Brahmins (*vipras*) alone. Thus, in other Smṛtis, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas are prohibited from bearing the signs [of the order] such as the staff and the garment... Others, on the other hand, accept that the members of the three higher *varṇas* are entitled to *saṃnyāsa*, since numerous Smṛti texts enjoin the four orders (student, householder, forest-dweller and renunciant), optionally and cumulatively, for the twice-born who have completed their Vedic training.”

saṃnyāsa, the proper conduct of which is regulated by the maṭha to a single (and the highest) sub-type of *saṃnyāsins*: the *paramahaṃsa-saṃnyāsin*.

Indeed, the unique institutional status of the *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsin* finds mention in the introduction to the Ṛgveda, in a discussion on the scope of the *adhyayana vidhi* (the injunction to study one’s own Veda). The commentator uses an untraced *sūtra* text called the *Puruśārthānuśāsanam* (The Instruction on Human Ends) to structure his explication. The question that the commentator attempts to answer is the following: The injunction to study the Veda (*adhyayana vidhi*) is obligatory for all twice-born males. Given that knowledge of the meaning is required by that injunction, is it not the case that a critical inquiry (*vicāra*) of the matter would obtain thereby and not otherwise? This leads the interlocutor to ask our commentator the following:

Is the critical examination (*vicāra*) of the ritual or the critical examination of Brahman established obligatorily for the members of the three higher *varṇas*? With regard to these two positions, we agree on the first point. The text states: “Thus, the critical examination of the ritual is obligatory for the three higher *varṇas* alone.” Since the Veda states that negligence causes ruin, the members of the three higher *varṇas* are obligated to perform those rituals. The second position (namely, that the critical examination of Brahman is the sole preserve of the members of the three higher *varṇas*) we do not accept. The text states: “The critical examination of Brahman, on the other hand, is the sole preserve of the *parama-haṃsa*,” to which we would add, “it is obligatory [for the *parama-haṃsa* alone].”¹⁷

*saṃnyāsas tūktarītyā viprasyaiva | ata eva smṛty-antare kāśāya-daṇḍādi-liṅga-dhāraṇaṃ kṣatriya-vaiśyaḥ
niśiddham | apare punaḥ saṃnyāsaṃ traivarṇikādhikāram icchanti | adhīta-vedasya dvi-jāti-mātrasya samuccaya-
vikalpābhyaṃ āśrama-catustayasya bahusmṛtiṣu vidhānāt |*
Madhava, *Parāśara Smṛti*, 1.2:154. The text covers this topic over a few pages (152 – 156).

¹⁷ *kratu-vicārasya traivarṇika-mātre ’ pi nityatva-siddhiḥ kiṃ vā brahma-vicārasya | tatrādyo ’ sman-mate ’ pi sama
ity āha | ato nityaḥ kratu-vicāras traivarṇika-mātrasyeti || yato ’ karaṇe pratyaḥ śravaṇāt kratavas
traivarṇikānām nitya ata ity arthaḥ || dvitīyo ’ niṣṭa ityāha || brahmavīcāraḥ punaḥ parama-haṃsasyaiveti || nitya
ity anuśāṅga iti ||*

This brief interlude to the discussion regarding the scope of the *adhyayana vidhi* reveals the lineaments of the maṭha’s thinking on *saṃnyāsa*. To clarify, the twice-born are generally entitled to take up *saṃnyāsa*; thus, one may give up one’s *dharmic* identity and take up *kuṭīcaka saṃnyāsa* (or either of the other two sub-types), adhering, in one’s conduct, to the guidelines detailed in the commentary on the *Parāśarasṃṛti*. However, the obligation to undertake a critical examination (*vicāra*) into the nature of Brahman – predicated upon the careful study of the Upaniṣadic corpus – is the sole and obligatory duty of the *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsin*. Indeed, the *Vivaraṇa-prameya-saṃgraha* (Summary of the Topics of the *Vivaraṇa*, see below) spells out the implications of this injunction being obligatory: negligence results in ruin for the *parama-haṃsa (akaraṇe pratyavāya)*.¹⁸ That is to say, in order to set out on the path to *jīvan-mukti*, the extraordinary state of liberation-while-living, one must formally enter the order of *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsins*, and therefore one must be subject to the *śravaṇa vidhi* (the injunction to learn the Vedānta), which requires – as necessary aspects – the critical examination of Brahman, subjecting that awareness to disciplined reflection (*manana*) and developing an unmediated, and sustained, awareness of Brahman through a regimen of yogic practice (*nididhyāsana*).

Let us now turn to the *śravaṇa vidhi*, which governs the conduct of the *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsin* and generates the subjective experience of Brahman. The notion that there was a *vidhi* that governed the acquisition of knowledge of Brahman was first expounded by the 10th century Vedāntin Prakāśātman, in his *Pañcapādikāvivarāṇa*, an exposition of Padmapāda’s *Pañcapādikā*, a commentary on Śaṅkara’s *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*. The maṭha not only adopted

¹⁸ *parama-haṃsasyaiva śravaṇādy-akaraṇe pratyavāyāt* | Because ruin will result for *parama-haṃsas* alone should they neglect to do what is enjoined by the *śravaṇa vidhi*. Vidyāranya, *Vivaraṇaprameyasamgraha*, 156.

Prakāśātman’s core argument regarding the underlying *śravaṇa vidhi*, but built upon it in ways that are salient to our study. The *vidhi* assumed greater salience as a vehicle for the unification of the Vedic corpus. It constituted the institutional *saṃnyāsin*, the *parama-ḥaṃsa* (institutional *saṃnyāsa* does not appear in Prakāśātman’s work), as a figure parallel – as the second Homo Vedicus – to the Vedic ritualist. Both of these figures undertook institutional modes-of-life governed by a single, overarching injunction.

Further, the maṭha used the *śravaṇa vidhi* to structure the disciplining of the subject – the *saṃnyāsin*. Thus, the three limbs of the injunction – *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana* – were transformed into three distinct practices of the self. In this tripartite program of perfection of the self, *śravaṇa*, learning, referred to the formal training that an eligible candidate (*adhikartā*) received in the practice of critically examining (*vicāra*) Brahman in the Vedānta corpus. In this training, the guru of the maṭha, himself a fully liberated being (*jīvan-mukta*), served as the teacher. *Manana*, disciplined reasoning, referred to the process of subjecting the Vedānta teaching to scrutiny. We know least about this step of the process, although the *Pañcadaśī*, in particular, suggests that one would be trained to hold up the Vedānta to Sāṅkhya scrutiny.¹⁹ Lastly, *nididhyāsana*, or meditative practice, referred to the formal regime of yogic practice, detailed in the *Jīvan-mukti-viveka* (Treatise Discerning Liberation-while-living), which synthesized the yogic tradition of Patañjali with Advaita Vedānta soteriology.

Learn. Think. Meditate: Brahman, Three Ways

¹⁹ For those whose thoughts are no longer distracted, no longer obscured by the veil of pure delusion, the critical inquiry named Sāṅkhya ought to be primary; it provides success right away.
avyākuladhiyaṃ moha-mātreṇācchādītātmanām | sāṅkhya-nāmā vicāraḥ syān mukhyo jhaṭiti siddhidaḥ ||
Vidyāranya, *Pañcadaśī* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1967), 417.

In this section, I provide a brief overview of the manner in which the *Samgraha* (the Summary of Prakāśātman’s *Vivaraṇa*) defined the *paramahaṃsa saṃnyāsa* through the application of the *vidhi* (the injunction). I present the maṭha’s view, following Prakāśātman’s arguments, on the *śravaṇa vidhi* as the overarching injunctive statement guiding the conduct of *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsins*, and I show how the constituent elements of the injunction conditioned the synthesis of a Yogic-Vedāntin program of realizing the ultimate reality of the self.

The hermeneuts of Śṛṅgeri were quite aware that Śaṅkara²⁰ himself – the purported founder of the maṭha and the progenitor of the order of *saṃnyāsins* – had formulated the single most formidable argument against defining the *saṃnyāsa āśrama* by an overarching *vidhi*. Śaṅkara, in the *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* (1.1.4), had laid out the principal arguments against the possibility of an injunction impelling *saṃnyāsins* to know Brahman. Without rehearsing this multi-layered argument in detail, let me draw out some of its key elements. Śaṅkara objected, in his commentary on the fourth *sūtra* (*tattu samanvayāt*), that Brahman cannot be the object or end of an injunctive statement. He offered a number of ramifying arguments, but I address only those that concern the possibility that the Vedānta – like the ritual section of the Veda – comprises injunctive statements.

Recall that Śaṅkara had transformed Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics by arguing that the Veda’s validity as a *pramāṇa* was not restricted solely to its injunctive statements, which, on the Mīmāṃsaka view, impelled the agent to realize (bring about, *bhāvanā*) a future state of affairs (*sādhya*). According to Śaṅkara, the Veda *also* provides knowledge regarding existent

²⁰ My understanding of Śaṅkara’s hermeneutic project and the great innovation he wrought in Vedic interpretation is indebted to Aleksandar Uskokov, “Deciphering the Hidden Meaning: Scripture and the Hermeneutics of Liberation in Early Advaita Vedānta” (Chicago, University of Chicago, 2018).

transcendent entities, which we could not know about otherwise. In other words, there is a profound difference between injunctive speech as a valid means of knowing something, in the sense that its validity depends upon the agent's action, and the knowledge regarding an already existent entity which exists independent of any action.

Is it not the case that knowledge is nothing but a mental action? No, because of a difference in essential characteristics. For, we call action that which is entirely independent of the nature of an entity and dependent upon the mental operation of a person... Even though thinking and meditating are mental activities, nevertheless a person may do it [thinking or meditating], not do it, or do it otherwise; this is because these are entirely dependent upon the person. *Knowledge*, on the other hand, is produced by a reliable means of knowing [*pramāṇa*], and *pramāṇa* takes as its object some really existent entity. So, knowledge may not be done, or not done, or done otherwise, because it is entirely dependent upon the object. Knowledge is neither dependent upon an injunction; nor is it dependent upon a person.²¹

Śaṅkara's argument is intended against the Mīmāṃsā insistence that the Veda is valid *only* insofar as it impels certain humans to perform the ritual actions to bring about some future goal (*sādhya*). This is certainly the case as regards the realization of heaven through the performance of rituals. But, as Śaṅkara insists, the Veda *also* informs us about transcendent entities, about which we would have no knowledge were it not for the Veda telling us so. To this extent, the Veda *is* a valid means of knowing existent entities (*siddha*, as opposed to *sādhya*). Moreover, knowledge of these transcendent states-of-affairs, unlike knowledge of rituals and

²¹ *nanu jñānaṃ nāma mānasī kriya | na, vailakṣaṇyāt | kriya hi nāma sā, yatra vastu-svarūpa-nirapekṣair eva codyate | puruṣa-citta-vyāpārādhīnā ca | dhyānaṃ cintanaṃ yady api mānasam, tathāpi puruṣeṇa kartum akartum anyathā vā kartum śakyam, puruṣa-tantratvāt | jñānaṃ tu pramāṇa-janyam | pramāṇam ca yathabhūta-vastu-
viśayam, ato jñānaṃ kartum akartum anyathā va kartum aśakyam, kevalam vastu-tantram eva tat | na codanā-
tantram | nāpi puruṣatantram |*
Śaṅkara, *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, 3rd ed. (Bombay: Nirṇayasāgara Press, 1948), 18.

their results, exists independent of whether humans know it or whether they act upon this knowledge. To explain, injunctions give humans actionable intelligence, but for that knowledge to be realized, humans must act upon it, to bring about the goal (*sādhya*). Thus, the *sādhya* depends upon humans acting; but knowledge of *siddha* entities obtains independent of human action. The Veda makes us aware of the identity of the self and Brahman, regardless of how humans react to this knowledge. The implication of this line of argument is that Brahman cannot be enjoined, since neither it, nor knowledge regarding it, can be brought about by human action.

Closely connected to this argument is the argument that Brahman, which is the nature of the self, is not the kind of entity which could be the object of knowledge, as an action. In other words, Brahman *is* just the nature of the self; it is not an object of knowing.

The teaching (Veda) does not seek to explain Brahman as an object as being “this.” What then? Teaching that it is *not* an object, because it is the inner self (*pratyag-ātman*), [the teaching, i.e., the Veda] removes the tripartite distinctions of object of knowledge-knower-knowledge, which are imputed by ignorance.²²

In other words, the self is not an agent. Thus, knowledge of Brahman is not some object which the self can know. It just is the nature of the self. Nevertheless, there *are* a number of Vedānta passages that appear to be injunctive. The best-known of these is a statement from the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (BU 2.4.5), from Yājñavalkya’s instruction to his wife, Maitreyī. Upon being asked by his wife to tell her the means to immortality, Yājñavalkya launches into a disquisition on the nature of the self. He ends his speech by admonishing his wife,

²² *na hi śāstram idaṃtayaḥ viṣayabhūtaṃ brahma pratipipādayiṣati | kiṃ tarhi? pratyag-ātmatvenāviṣayatayā pratipādayad avidyākālpitaṃ vedyā-veditr-vedanādi-bhedam apanayati |*
Śaṅkara, 16.

ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsītavyo maitreyi.

It is the self, my dear Maitreyi, which one should know and learn, and on which one should reflect and concentrate.

The four gerundives (in bold) give the statement an injunctive sense. Śaṅkara must explain how it is that the Vedānta contains statements regarding the self that are clearly injunctive. He addresses the matter in his commentary on the very same *sūtra*.

What is the purport, then, of statements such as, “*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo...*” which appear to be injunctions (*vidhi-cchāyāni*)? We aver that the point of these statements is to turn humans from their natural disposition to intentional action.²³

In other words, Śaṅkara accepts that there are a number of texts that have the appearance of injunctions, but they do not have the force of injunctive statements; rather, these statements tend to turn humans away from their natural inclination to act, an instinct that only further entrenches the mistaken notion of the self as an agent and experiencer.

In the face of such a clear and unequivocal repudiation of the injunction, how could the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri possibly maintain that the Vedānta texts comprise a central injunction that governs the conduct of the *parama-ḥaṃsa samnyāsini*? Let us see how these scholars of Śṛṅgeri, following Prakāśātman’s lead, explain the process by which the injunction comes to govern this

²³ *kim-arthāni tarhi ‘ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ ity-ādīni vidhi-cchāyāni vacanāni? svābhāvika-pravṛtti-
viśaya-vimukhī-karaṇārthānīti brūmah |*
Śaṅkara, 19.

particular class of *saṃnyāsins*. The explanation begins with the *adhyayana vidhi*, which, like the *śravaṇa vidhi* – soon to be introduced – is characterized as an obligatory injunction.

Thus, owing to the force of the obligatory injunction [to study], everyone studies the Veda along with the six related disciplines (*vedāṅgas*), and comes to know its meaning. When, through the force of the maturation of a collection of merits, there arises for a certain person a desire to obtain the highest human end (*niratisāya-puruṣārtha*, i.e. liberation), he, having searched in the Veda for the means to it (the highest human end), understands this: “It is out of love for the self that everything becomes dear.” Everything is said to be dear only insofar as everything is subordinated to the self; thus, he who is detached from everything that is other than the self is eligible (*adhikārī*).²⁴

This passage describes the journey of a twice-born male from Vedic study to becoming eligible to pursue the knowledge of the self. First of all, he must have studied the Veda for its meaning (*artham jānāti*). Then with the passage of an unspecified period of time—it could take him numerous births to accumulate the requisite merit—owing to the ripening of the merit he has accrued, he will have cultivated a desire to realize the ultimate human end – liberation. In order to be eligible to embark upon this path, he must become detached from everything that is not the self. The next sentence of the text introduces the injunction to which he is subject in this new phase of life:

With the following excerpt of the text, beginning with, “You see, when the self is seen, heard about, reflected and known, then all this is known,”²⁵ and ending with, “To this

²⁴ *ataḥ sarvo’ pi nitya-vidhi-balād eva ṣaḍ-aṅga-sahitaṃ vedam adhīyārthaṃ jānāti | kaścit puṇya-puñja-paripāka-vaśān niratisāya-puruṣārtha-prepsāyāṃ tad-upāyaṃ vede’ nviśyedam avagacchati | ātmanas tu kāmāya sarvaṃ priyaṃ bhavatīti ātma-śeṣatayaivānyasya sarvasya priyatvokter ātmavyatiriktāt sarvasmād virakto’dhikārī | Vidyāranya, Vivaraṇaprameyasamgraha, 1.*

²⁵ From Śaṅkara’s commentary on BU 2.4.5

extent indeed is immortality....”²⁶ he [Śaṅkara] has taught that immortality, which is the ultimate human end, has as its means the knowledge of the self, and further that knowledge, which is not dependent upon the human, is thus not the object of the injunction. Further, having reiterated the knowledge of the self with the statement, “the self, my dear, ought to be known...” and “it is to be heard about, reflected and meditated upon,” as the means to it, he has enjoined “hearing” (*śravaṇam*) as primary, together with reflecting (*mananam*) and meditating (*nididhyāsanam*) as subsidiary elements that assist the result.²⁷

There is a crucial re-interpretation of Śaṅkara’s commentary in this analysis. The commentator exploits a key element of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics to re-interpret the injunction in question. The injunction reads:

ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyo maitreyi.

It is the self, my dear Maitreyi, which one should know and learn, and on which one should reflect and concentrate.

As the bold type indicates, there are four possible candidates – in the gerundive – for the action²⁸ that this injunction prescribes. Thus, knowing the self (*draṣṭavya*), learning about the self (*śrotavya*), reflecting upon the self (*mantavya*), or meditating upon the self

²⁶ From Śaṅkara’s commentary on BU 2.1.15

²⁷ *ātmani khalv are dṛṣṭe śrute mate vijñāte idaṃ sarvaṃ vijñātam ity upakramyaitāvad are khalv amṛtatvam ity upasaṃhārāt parama-puruṣārtha-bhūtasyaṃṛtatvasyātma-darśanopāyatvaṃ pratipādya darśanasya cāpuruṣatantrasyāvidheyatvād ātmā vā are draṣṭavya ity ātmadarśanam anūdya tadupāyatvena śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavya iti manana-nididhyāsanābhyāṃ phalopakāry-aṅgābhyāṃ saha śravaṇaṃ nāmāṅgi vidhīyata iti | Vidyāraṇya, Vivaraṇaprameyasamgraha, 1.*

²⁸ According to Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics, the statement cannot enjoin all four actions as equally important, since such an interpretation would vitiate the hermeneutic principle of sentential unity (*eka-vākyatā*). According to this principle, an injunctive statement may enjoin a single action as primary. The statement may, further, enjoin other subsidiary actions, but it may not enjoin more than one primary ritual action (unless multiple possible actions are enjoined as alternatives).

(*nididhyāsītavya*). In his explication of this statement as an injunction, the commentator attempts to maintain two positions simultaneously. He demonstrates fidelity to Śaṅkara's position by maintaining that this is *not* an injunction to know the self. At the same time, he tries to demonstrate that this *is* an injunction to learn about, reflect and meditate upon the self, all of which produces knowledge of the self.

First, the commentator shows that the section of Śaṅkara's commentary that he has cited conveys two facts. First, the means to immortality is knowledge of the self (*ātma-darśana*), and second, since knowing (*darśana*) does not depend upon a human (i.e. knowledge is dependent upon the object not the subject), it cannot therefore be the object of an injunction. This is a restatement of Śaṅkara's position (see above) that knowledge does not depend upon the knower for its existence. The commentator has already shown that *darśana* (knowing) cannot be the object of the injunction.

Now, he takes up the injunction at hand, "*ātmā vā are draṣṭavya....*" This is clearly an injunction (given the profusion of prescriptive gerundives), but the act of knowing (*draṣṭavya*), cannot be the object of the injunction, for the reasons he has already provided. Thus, having *reiterated* the *darśana* (which has no injunctive purpose in this injunction, since it has already been ruled out as being unsuitable for injunctive purpose), he reads the statement as *enjoining* the next candidate, *śravaṇa* or learning (the *srotavyo* in the text, "it must be learned about"), as the object of the injunction. Reiteration or repetition (*anu-vad*) has a special hermeneutic salience for Mīmāṃsakas; repetition makes a statement unworthy of being enjoined. In this statement, knowing (*darśana*) is simply reiterated in order to enjoin the act of learning (*śravaṇa*) Thus, the principal object that is enjoined is learning about the self (*ātmā śrotavyaḥ*). Further, as

subordinate elements, reflecting and meditating upon the self (*ātmā mantavyo nididhyāsītavyo*) are enjoined in assisting the primary injunctive purpose: *śravaṇa* or learning.

But, what of Śāṅkara's explicit repudiation of the position that there could be an injunction governing the conduct of *saṃnyāsins* pursuing knowledge of the self? The commentator confronts this criticism head-on.

Even if knowledge were to be produced by some unseen entity (*adr̥ṣṭa*), still this injunction would run afoul of the commentary [of Śāṅkara], since [he] has, with inordinate effort, rejected the *vidhi* in his explication of the *samanvaya sūtra* (i.e. the fourth sūtra of the *Brahmasūtra*). For otherwise, the Vedānta would serve the injunction and Brahman, which would entail a sentential split.²⁹

As this passage argues, the commentator entertains two possible objections to conferring the status of *vidhi* upon the statement in question. First, it would contradict the position advanced by Śāṅkara in his commentary on the fourth *sūtra* of the *Brahmasūtras* (which I have reviewed above), and second, it would entail a sentential split, greatly feared by Mīmāṃsakas. According to the Mīmāṃsakas, a single statement should be unified in its expressive purpose; this is referred to as the principle of sentential unity (*ekavākyatā*). Should a sentence express more than one matter, where it is not possible to subordinate one of those to the other, it may suffer from sentential fracture (*vākya-bheda*).

The commentator addresses the argument using the rather complicated language of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics. There are two steps to the argument; first, the commentator rejects the

²⁹ *jñānasya katham cid adr̥ṣṭa-janyatve 'py ayam vidhir bhāṣya-viruddhaḥ | samanvaya-sūtra-vyākhyāne mahatā prayatnena vidhi-nirākaraṇāt | anyathā vedāntānām vidhi-paratvaṃ brahma-paratvaṃ ceti vākya-bheda-prasaṅgaḥ*
Vidyāranya, *Vivaraṇaprameyasamgraha*, 3.

claim that the injunction in question (*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nīdīdhyāsītavyo*) could bring about or establish Brahman. Second, he argues that the injunction enjoins learning (*śravaṇa*) which should result in knowledge.

Nor is this position [that there is an injunction to learn the Vedānta] contradicted by [Śāṅkara's] commentary. For, in that case [i.e. in the commentary], the injunction to know (*draṣṭavya*) alone is rejected. Since, were “knowing” enjoined, then the verbal root and the verbal affix [*drś* and *tavya*, the gerundive ending] together articulate the meaning of the verbal affix [i.e. *tavya* or “should be done”], as being primary. According to this rule [regarding the articulation of what is primary], the meaning of the verbal affix alone, that is, the sense of the obligation [“one should”], is primary. Thus, ‘knowing,’ insofar as it is the meaning of the verbal root, would be secondary, and Brahman, which modifies “knowing” [as the object of the act of knowing], would be all the more secondary. Consequently, the statements of the Vedānta could not establish Brahman. But, as regards an injunction to learn (*śravaṇa*), designating the “knowing of Brahman” as primary insofar as it is the result, there would be no defect.³⁰

The commentator uses a familiar interpretive technique in deftly side-stepping the substance of Śāṅkara's objection. This technique consists of accepting the objection but in such a restrictive sense as to render it ineffectual. In this case, the commentator grants that Śāṅkara does in fact object to this statement (*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ...*) being construed as an injunction, but, claims the commentator, Śāṅkara does not, in principle, object to the statements of the Vedānta being understood to have injunctive force. This effectively limits the scope of Śāṅkara's objection to just the injunction of knowledge, which therefore avoids the larger question of

³⁰ *na ca bhāṣya-virodhaḥ | darśana-vidher eva tatra nirākaraṇāt | darśana-vidhāne hi prakṛti-pratyayau pratyayārthaṃ saha brūtaḥ prādhānyeneti nyāyena pratyayārthasya niyogasaiva prādhānyād darśanasya prakṛty-arthatayā guṇa-bhūtatvena tad-viśeṣaṇasya brahmaṇo' pi sutarāṃ guṇa-bhāvaḥ syāt tato na vedāntair brahma sidhyet | phalātvena pradhānaṃ brahma-darśanam uddiśya śravaṇa-vidhāne tu na ko' pi doṣaḥ | Vidyāraṇya, 4.*

whether the Vedānta statements enjoin the seeker of Brahman to undertaking the tripartite program that the maṭha has synthesized.

The construal of this statement as an injunction to learn the Vedānta further cements the formulation of the *saṃnyāsin* as a figure parallel to the ritual performer. In other words, the ritual performer is qualified by the rite of initiation (*upanayana*) to undertake the study of the Veda (enjoined by the *adhyayana vidhi*). Further, the study of the Veda qualifies him to undertake the task of performing rituals as an obligatory aspect of his social identity. Indeed, his social identity is fashioned through the restrictive effects of the *nitya* (obligatory) *vidhi*. He is obliged always to perform the ritual or risk ruin. The *saṃnyāsin* is similarly constrained by the obligatory injunction to learn the Vedānta. This injunction, like the injunction to study the Veda, launches a program of action to realize Brahman, and failure to adhere to it results in ruin for the *saṃnyāsin*:

“The twice-born male who, without studying the Veda, focuses his efforts elsewhere, he, even while alive, is reduced straightaway to a *śūdra*, along with his lineage.” As regards the ruin that results from negligence, in the present case, too, upon accepting the *vidhi*, the same [ruin] would obtain: “On the other hand, the *saṃnyāsin* who renounces the obligatory ritual without learning the Vedānta, he too falls, as to this there is no doubt.” Thus, ruin results from not learning.³¹

The *parama-ḥaṃsa saṃnyāsin* is thus subject to an overarching injunction in much the same manner as the ritual agent. Only, in this case, study of the Vedānta does not commence a life of ritual performance, but nevertheless entails action – in the form of a rigorous program of

³¹ *yo ' nadhīya dvijo vedam anyatra kurute śramam | sa jīvaṇṇ eva śūdratvam āśu gacchati sāvayah || ity akaraṇe pratyavāyam apekṣya vidhy-aṅgikāre prakṛte ' pi tathāstu | nityaṃ karma parityajya vedānta-śravaṇam vinā | vartamānas tu saṃnyāsī pataty eva na saṃśayah || iti pratyavāya-smaraṇāt |*

yogic practice. This the commentator describes in discussing the overarching purport of the injunction to learn (*śruti-tātparya*) and how the injunction brings about knowledge:

He should learn (*srotavya*) from the statements of the Veda and should reflect upon them (*mantavya*) with the aid of reason. Having learned these [statements], he should meditate upon them (*dhyeya*) in a sustained manner. These are the causes of knowing [Brahman] (*darśana*). O best of sages! learning (*śravaṇa*) itself is the name for the ascertainment of the overarching meaning of the capacity of the Vedānta statement, and ascertainment occurs through such practices as “upakrama” etc. After learning the statements of the Vedānta from affectionate teachers, one should reflect (*manana*), employing reason in corroborating those statements. Intensive meditation (*nididhyāsana*), which is the practice of single-mindedness, occurs once learning and reflection have already occurred. O learned ones, reflecting (*manana*) and meditating (*nididhyāsana*) are subsidiary elements, which assist the result, and through these wrong cultivation and lack of cultivation are extirpated entirely. Nevertheless, learning (*śravaṇa*) has priority over reflection (*manana*) and meditation (*nididhyāsana*) because it is essential to the arising of knowledge (*jñāna*).³²

Here, the commentary has summarized the entire program of spiritual progress that the injunction to learn (*śravaṇa vidhi*) entails. Indeed, this short passage encompasses the entire *āśrama* of the *saṃnyāsīn*. This very same program is described in the *Pañcadaśī*, which, over the

³² *śrotavyaḥ śruti-vākyebhyo mantavyaś copapattibhiḥ |*
jñātvā ca satataṃ dhyeya ete darśana-hetavaḥ ||
tatra tāvan muni-śreṣṭhāḥ śravaṇaṃ nāma kevalaṃ |
upakramādibhir liṅgaiḥ śakti-tātparya-nirṇayaḥ ||
sarva-vedānta-vākyānāṃ ācārya-mukhataḥ priyāt |
vākyānugrāhaka-nyāya-śīlanaṃ mananaṃ bhavet ||
nididhyāsana-saṃjñāṃ syāt tenāsambhāvanā tathā |
viparītā ca nirmūlaṃ pravinaśyati sattamāḥ ||
prādhānyaṃ mananād asmin nididhyāsanato' pi ca |
utpattāv antaraṅgaṃ hi jñānasya śravaṇaṃ budhāḥ |
Vidyāraṇya, *Pañcadaśī*, 27.

course of fifteen chapters, outlines the metaphysics undergirding the soteriology of Advaita Vedānta.

In this manner, learning (*śravaṇa*), which is an inquiry into meaning, ought to occur with the aid of these Vedānta statements. Reflecting (*manana*), on the other hand, which is the inquiry into how it is made sense of, is connected to reasoning. Once the mind has settled on the meaning, which is free from doubt, its single-pointed focus is called meditation (*nididhyāsana*).

From this account, we have further clarity that there are two stages to this process of knowing Brahman. The first combines learning (*śravaṇa*) and reflecting (*manana*) on the Vedānta statements, with a view not only to understanding the meaning of the text, but to rid that understanding of any doubt. Reflecting, which consists of applying reasoning (*yukti*) to received wisdom, ensures the removal of all doubts. One cannot gain awareness of ultimate reality through instruction alone, no matter how adept and affectionate the teacher; study must be assisted by discerning inquiry (*vicāra*).³³ This process of learning via investigation (*vicāra*) is fundamental to acquiring *direct* knowledge of Brahman. Indeed, a *saṃnyāsīn* may undertake a lifetime of *vicāra* without direct knowledge of Brahman, but this practice will not have been in vain, for the fruits of this discriminative inquiry may yet accrue in a future birth. Summarizing the result of an entitled *saṃnyāsīn*, one who is endowed with the four means,³⁴ who has been subject to the injunction to learn (*śravaṇa vidhi*), the *Pañcadaśī* states:

³³ It is categorically impossible for humans to have a direct awareness of Brahman simply through instruction by a reliable teacher without inquiry (*vicāra*).
brahma-sākṣātkṛtis tv evaṃ vicāreṇa vinā nṛṇāṃ | āptopadeśa-mātreṇa na saṃbhavati kutracit ||
Vidyāranya, 386.

³⁴ Chapter 3 of the *Vivaraṇa-prameya-saṃgraha* addresses the topic of eligibility (*adhikāra*) for the *śravaṇa vidhi*. Once the *Vivaraṇa* had asserted that statement in question from the Upaniṣad (*ātmā vā are draṣṭavya...*) was indeed an injunction, the text (following Prakāśātman) had to specify *who* was subject to this injunction. In other words,

When the obstacles have been led to annihilation through the means appropriate to each case, including the practice of the virtues beginning with equanimity (*śamādyaiḥ*) and through learning the Vedānta (*śravaṇādyaiḥ*), then one realizes that the Self is Brahman.³⁵

Once a *saṃnyāsin* has arrived at the incontrovertible knowledge of Brahman, he should undertake a yogic program to rid himself of the mental processes that impede the knowledge of Brahman from taking root. This is further outlined in another passage of the *Pañcadaśī*, which systematizes and defends this three-pronged program that results in knowledge of Brahman. First

who was the *adhikārī*? In Chapter 3, the text specifies that one must possess the *sādhana-catustaya*, the four means (to know Brahman). In the first chapter, the author touches upon the subject of the *adhikārin* (the eligible agent):

“Insofar as the arising of the knowledge of Brahman does not make sense otherwise, it obtains that critical scrutiny takes as its object the statements of the Vedānta. For, we do not see the examiners of subjects other (than the Vedānta) attain knowledge of Brahman. Further, insofar as a result does not make sense otherwise, this proves that the knowledge of Brahman is the means to liberation (*mokṣa*). For, eligible agents seek a result. Further, in this case, eligible agents, possessed of the four-fold means do not accept anything other than the obtainment of the highest bliss and the total extirpation of discontent, and the means to it. Since the knowledge of reality itself is not of the nature of the extirpation of discontent and the acquisition of bliss, consequently, it is a means to these two ends. In this manner therefore, since one who is possessed of the four means is not able to attain liberation through ritual action, one should undertake the critical examination of the statements of the Vedānta in order to obtain knowledge of Brahman, which is the means to liberation. This is the point of the Vedic statement, which, in its totality, has been summarized in this sūtra.”

*brahma-jñāna-janakatvānyathānupapatyā vicārasya vedānta-vākya-viśayatvaṃ labhyate | na hy anya-vicārakāṅgāṃ
brahma-jñānam upalabhāmahe | phalatvānyathānupapatyā brahma-jñānasya mokṣa-sāadhanatva-siddhiḥ |
adhikāribhir iṣyamāṇaṃ hi phalaṃ | atra hi sādhana-catustaya-saṃpannā adhikāriṇo niḥśeṣa-duḥkhochitti-
niratiṣayānandāvāpti tatsādhanaṃ ca viḥāya nānyad icchanti | tattva-jñānasya duḥkhocchedānandāvāpti-
rūpatvāsambhavena | tadevam sādhana-catustaya-saṃpannasya karmabhir mokṣāsiddher mokṣa-sādhana-
brahmajñānāya vedānta-vākya-vicārah kartavya iti śrutyarthaḥ samagro’ pi sūtre saṃgrhītaḥ |*

Vidyāraṇya, *Vivaraṇaprameyasamgraha*, 6.

The position is clarified in the third chapter:

“And the four-fold qualifications of the eligible agent are established in the teaching: ‘the capacity to discern between eternal and ephemeral objects, disaffected with experiencing the fruits of immanent and transcendent objects, the attainment of the means such as equanimity and restraint, and the desire for liberation.’”

*tac cādhikāriṇiṣeṣaṇaṃ caturdhā śāstre prasiddhaṃ nityānitya-vastu-viveka ihāmutrārtha-phala-bhoga-virāgaḥ
śama-damādi-sādhana-saṃpad mumukṣatvaṃ ceti |*

Vidyāraṇya, 166.

³⁵ *śamādyaiḥ śravaṇādyaiḥ ca tatra tatrocitaiḥ kṣayaṃ | nīte ’smin pratibandhe’ taḥ svasya brahmatvam aśnute ||*
Vidyāraṇya, *Pañcadaśī*, 390.

of all, the text acknowledges that the mere mental processing of a statement regarding the identity of Brahman and the individual self does not spontaneously produce the type of sustained awareness of Brahman which is the nature of liberation:

Though immediate knowledge may obtain in this case from the “great utterances” (*mahāvākya*),³⁶ still, it is not firm; because of which, the teacher has stated that learning and the rest [must occur] repeatedly. Until the knowledge of the meaning of statement, “I am Brahman” becomes unshakable, he should repeatedly practice learning and the rest, with equanimity and other virtues.³⁷

The hermeneuts of Śrīngeri address this fear of backsliding by formulating a two-step program, a synthesis of Advaita Vedānta soteriology and the Pātañjala system of yoga. The second step, the undertaking of yogic practices, is intended to address the worry that even after one is aware of the nature of the self, this awareness of ultimate reality may be fleeting. This is because one’s natural and social dispositions continue to reify the mistaken notions of subjectivity, and the awareness of an ultimate and radical non-duality fails to take hold. Thus, argue the scholiasts of Śrīngeri, in order to firmly entrench the unmediated awareness of reality that one learns from the Vedānta texts, a *saṃnyāsin* must strive to rid himself of the source of erroneous notions: the mind (*mano-nāśa*). This analytical distinction between the intellectual and practical elements of knowing Brahman is systematized in the two distinct types of *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsa* detailed in the *Jīvanmuktiviveka*. Thus, the intellectual dimension of the

³⁶ By this time, the *mahāvākya* referred to certain Upaniṣadic statements that provided direct knowledge of Brahman, like a flash of immediate awareness.

³⁷ *astu bodho’ parokṣo’ tra mahāvākyaṭ tathāpy asau | na dṛḍhaḥ śravaṇādīnām ācāryaiḥ punar īraṇāt || ahaṃ brahmeti vākyaṛtha-bodho yāvad dṛḍhī-bhavet | śamādi-sahitas tāvad abhyasec chravaṇādīkam ||* Vidyāraṇya, *Pañcadaśī*, 276.

process of knowing Brahman is covered under the category of *vividiṣā saṁnyāsa*, that is, the *saṁnyāsa* of the one who wishes to know, whereas the practical, yogic, dimension is covered under the category of *vidvat-saṁnyāsa*, the *saṁnyāsa* of the knower.

Liberation Now, Liberation Forever!

As the author of the *Jīvan-mukti-viveka* explains, the two distinct phases of the *parama-haṁsa saṁnyāsa* – the renunciation of the seeker of knowledge (*vividiṣāsaṁnyāsa*) and the renunciation of the knower (*vidvatsaṁnyāsa*) – are hierarchically and causally connected.³⁸ These two phases, each with its attendant practices, are hierarchically ordered relative to the overarching aim of the *parama-haṁsa saṁnyāsa*: liberation-in-life (*jīvan-mukti*). Following the hermeneutic logic of Mīmāṃsā, liberation-in-life is constituted as the *sādhya* or goal that these two classes of *saṁnyāsins* seek to bring about, using three principal means (*sādhana*). The three means are the knowledge of reality (*vijñāna*), the elimination of the mind (*mano-nāśa*), and the eradication of latent tendencies (*vāsanā-kṣaya*). But these three factors are given different weight and prominence depending upon the end to which the *saṁnyāsin* strives. There are two variants of liberation available in this particular formulation: the traditional *videha-mukti* (liberation upon death) and *jīvan-mukti* (liberation in life). Depending upon which of these two types of liberation the *saṁnyāsin* pursues, he should weigh the three factors accordingly. The text uses the

³⁸ “Just as the renouncer seeking knowledge (*vividiṣā-saṁnyāsin*) should carry out Vedic study and so on for the purpose of knowing the truth, so also should the renouncer who is a knower (*vidvat-saṁnyāsin*) carry out elimination of the mind (*manonāśa*) and eradication of latent tendencies for the purpose of liberation-in-life (*jīvan-mukti*).”

“No, because of the fact that renunciation-of-the-knower is the cause of liberation-in-life. Therefore, just as renunciation-for-knowledge is to be carried out for the purpose of acquiring knowledge, so also the renunciation-of-the-knower is to be carried out for liberation-in-life.”

Gooding, “The Treatise on Liberation-in-Life Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the *Jīvanmuktiviveka* of Vidyāraṇya,” 76–77.

Mīmāṃsā hermeneutic of primary and secondary (*pradhāna* and *upasarjana*) to theorize differential prominence. Thus, in the pursuit of *videha-mukti* (bodiless liberation), knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna*) is primary (*pradhāna*), whereas the other two, destruction of the mind (*manonāśa*) and eradication of latent tendencies (*vāsanā-kṣaya*), are secondary (*upasarjana*).³⁹ In the pursuit of *jīvan-mukti*, the opposite holds. Destruction of the mind (*mano-nāśa*) and the eradication of latent tendencies (*vāsanā-kṣaya*) are primary (*pradhāna*), whereas knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna*) is secondary (*upasarjana*).⁴⁰

Thus, for the *vividīṣā-saṃnyāsin*, who is impelled, primarily, by a desire for the knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna*), studying (*śravaṇa*) and reflecting upon (*manana*) the Vedānta texts are primary, whereas yogic practice, which results in the annihilation of the mind (*manonāśa*) and the eradication of latent tendencies (*vasanā-kṣaya*), is secondary. Once he attains an immediate awareness of Brahman, he becomes a *vidvat-saṃnyāsin* (one possessed of knowledge). According to Śaṅkara, this in itself is liberation, the awareness of the non-dual nature of ultimate reality. For the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri, however, the knowledge of reality, in and of itself, is necessary but not sufficient for one to be liberated while living.

The scholiasts readily admit that the awareness of reality is sufficient for a lower form of liberation, namely, bodiless liberation (*videha-mukti*), wherein the one who has attained knowledge in his life is nevertheless prevented from being immediately liberated because the store of *karma* that he has already accrued that must bear fruit (*prārabdha karma*). Upon the

³⁹ “Just as in the case of liberation-in-life, elimination of the mind and eradication of latent tendencies are principal, so also in the case of bodiless-liberation, knowledge is principal because it is the immediate cause of bodiless-liberation.” Goodding, 127.

⁴⁰ “In this way then, because the elimination of the mind and eradication of latent tendencies are the direct means of liberation-in-life, (they are) principal. Whereas, knowledge of truth, because it is farther removed (from liberation-in-life) by production of the other two, is therefore subsidiary.” Goodding, 126.

working out of this “operative karma,” the body falls, the person dies and is liberated. But, as the text details, there is another, higher form of liberation (*jīvan-mukti*). This is the path pursued by the knower and is thus referred to as the *saṃnyāsa* proper to the knower (*vidvat-saṃnyāsa*). The formulation of this higher form of renunciation depends upon the understanding that the knowledge of Brahman, once achieved, is tenuous and liable to be lost. This is so because that knowledge is unstable (*asthita*).

In order to cement that knowledge of Brahman, one must embark upon a rigorous process of discipline and practice intended to remove the obstacles to the sustained (*sthita*) awareness of Brahman. The text prescribes a regimen of yogic practices, based on a synthesis of the Pātañjala yogic system,⁴¹ that ensures the removal of the mind, the source of error regarding the nature of ultimate reality. The mind is the generator of conceptions of subjectivity and agency that are inimical to the awareness of an ultimate, non-dual reality. The annihilation of this source of error, through sustained yogic practice, is thus a necessary precondition for liberation-in-life. Similarly, one must stem the tide of the traces or latent tendencies. These are the inclinations, conditioned by countless previous births, that dispose humans toward certain modes of action that, though they may have been virtuous in a previous mode of life, are antithetical to the transcendence of normative, social values that liberation entails. For instance, lifetimes of ritual action, generative of dharma, may have inclined a person to think of the self as an agent, constituted by action. This inclination, productive of virtue for a ritualist, is inimical to the pursuit of liberation. The inclination, entrenched by lifetimes of action, to think of the self as an

⁴¹ The prominence of Pātañjala eight-limbed (*aṣṭāṅga*) yoga in the ascetic program of the *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsins* finds proof in the inscriptional record. The guru is hailed as the teacher (*ācārya*) of the *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsins* who is absorbed in the eight-limbed yoga. Rice, *Epigraphica Carnatica*, 6:46.

actor must be overcome by the *saṃnyāsin*. Thus, the *vidvat-saṃnyāsin* is advised to adopt the yogic practices that ultimately discipline these dispositional traces of previous lifetimes.

This three-pronged program, which extends from the blossoming of a desire to know (*vividiṣā*) to liberation-while-living, is similarly schematized in the *Pañcadaśī*, which does not, however, employ the distinction between *vividiṣā-saṃnyāsa* and *vidvat-saṃnyāsa*. First, the text emphasizes the role of *śravaṇa*, the principal and first element of the injunction to learn:

“Learning” (*śravaṇa*) should be the awareness of the identity of Brahman and the self alone; this is the overarching purport of the entire Vedānta, in its beginning, middle, and conclusion. The cultivation of this meaning by means of logic has been stated in the second chapter by those (i.e. by Bādarāyaṇa and Śaṅkara) who strengthen this initial awareness [of Brahman]; it is well-stated in the section on “*samanvaya*” (i.e. the fourth *sūtra* of the *Brahmasūtras*, discussed above). The awareness of the self as the body and so on arises repeatedly and momentarily, owing to the ossified practice over many births; similarly, the awareness that the world is real. This supposition is erroneous, and it is removed through one-pointed meditation. This (one-pointedness) arises even before instruction regarding reality, through devotional practice (*upāsana*). These devotions have been reflected upon even in the *Brahmsūtras*. Those who have not previously practiced these [devotional practices] should do so afterwards, through repeated meditation upon Brahman. Reflecting upon it (Brahman), talking about it, teaching it, the wise know that practicing Brahman is to be concerned with it (Brahman) alone. With this steadfast awareness of it (Brahman) alone, the Brahmin should produce this insight; he should not consider too much discussion [on it], for that tires out speech.⁴²

⁴² *vedāntānām aśeṣāṇām ādimadhyāvāsānataḥ | brahmātmany eva tātparyam iti dhīḥ śravaṇam bhavet || samanvayādhyāya etat sūktam dhī-svāsthya-kāribhiḥ | tarkaiḥ sambhāvanārthasya dvitīyādhyāya tṛitā || bahu-janma-dṛḍhābhyāsād dehādiṣv ātmadhīḥ kṣaṇāt | punaḥ punar udety evaṃ jagat-satyatva-dhīr api || viparītā bhāvaneyam aikāgryāt sā nīvarate | tattvopadeśāt prāg eva bhavati etad upāsanaḥ || upāstayo 'ta evātra brahmasāstre 'pi cintitāḥ | prāg anabhyāsinaḥ paścād brahmābhyāsena tad bhavet || taccintanam tatkathanam anyonyam tatprabodhanam | etad ekaparatvam ca brahmābhyāsam vidur budhāḥ || tam eva dhīro vijñāya prajñāṃ kurvīta brāhmaṇaḥ | nānudhyāyād bahūñ cchabdān vāco viglāpanam hi tat ||*

In this passage, the *Pañcadaśī* elegantly synthesizes the three aspects of the injunction – learning, reflecting, and meditating upon Brahman – with the principal other form of meditation that is prominently discussed in the Upaniṣadic corpus, namely, devotional practice (*upāsana*). It also systematizes the three distinct dimensions of the practice of Brahman. Lastly, it intimates the assimilation of Yogic practice into the Vedāntin program of liberation, which the *Jīvanmuktiviveka* elaborates upon and systematizes in great detail.

The nexus of Yoga and Advaita Vedānta has attracted some scholarly scrutiny,⁴³ and although an investigation into the synthesis of the two disciplines that the scholars of Śṛṅgeri accomplished lies beyond the scope of this study, it is abundantly clear that the Pātañjala system of Yoga appeared particularly attractive to the Advaitins of Śṛṅgeri as a *sādhana* (a practice or means) to achieve liberation. Indeed, the treatment of Yoga in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* (the subject of Chapter 4 of this dissertation) only confirms this suspicion. Further, the salience accorded to the figure of Vyāsa across the texts comprising this corpus symbolizes the synthesis of the Vedas, the Vedānta and Yoga. As the redactor of the Vedas, the composer of the Vedānta sūtras, and the commentator on the Yoga sūtras, Vyāsa stands at the nexus of the traditions that are synthesized by the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri. It is not surprising, therefore, that the *Parāśaramādhavīya* synthesizes portions of the commentary on the root text (the *Parāśarasmṛiti*) with long excerpts from the *Yoga-bhāṣya* of Vyāsa. After all, Vyāsa is the son of Parāśara, and

⁴³ Madaio, “The Instability of Non-Dual Knowing”; Jason Schwartz, “Parabrahman Among the Yogins,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 21 (2017): 345–89; Maharaj, *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Vedānta*; Fort, *Jīvanmukti in Transformation*; Andrew O. Fort, *The Self and Its States: A States of Consciousness Doctrine in Advaita Vedānta*, 1st ed (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1990); Goodding, “The Treatise on Liberation-in-Life Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the *Jīvanmuktiviveka* of Vidyāraṇya.”

the contextual conceit for the composition of the Smṛti is that a group of sages have congregated at Vyāsa's Himalayan hermitage to ask the sage, absorbed in yogic meditation, about *dharmā*.⁴⁴

Without therefore wading too far into the waters of the *Jīvan-mukti-viveka*, it suffices to note that this two-stage process of attaining liberation-in-life, and the attendant forms of *saṃnyāsa* (*vividiṣā*- and *vidvat*-), are conditioned by the reading of an overarching injunction governing the conduct of a certain type of subject, the *paramahaṃsa saṃnyāsin*. In other words, the elaboration of this entire program of *askesis*, beginning with studying the Vedānta with a guru, was set in motion by the *śravaṇa vidhi*, the injunction to learn the Upaniṣadic texts in order to attain knowledge of Brahman – in other words, liberation.

You Only Liberate Once

“The teacher of the *parama-haṃsa* renunciants” who is “absorbed in the eight-limbed yoga [of Patañjali] that consists in restraint (*yama*, *niyama*) etc.”⁴⁵ This is how a copy of an inscription, purporting to date to 1395,⁴⁶ describes Vidyāraṇya, the guru of Śṛṅgeri with whom this dissertation begins.⁴⁷ Later inscriptions – from the Nāyaka period – further refer to the guru

⁴⁴ “Then, consequently, long ago, the sages asked Vyāsa, who was seated, single-mindedly, in his hermitage in the *devadāru* groves at the summit of the snow-mountain, “Tell us properly, o son of Satyavati, the *dharmā* and the rites of purification that are salutary to humans in this present Kali age.” Mādhava, *Parāśara Smṛti*, 1.1:37.

⁴⁵ “Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department,” 1934, 116.

⁴⁶ This is from a *kaḍita* record of an inscription that records the gift of lands to three Brahmins purportedly made by Harihara II (son of Bukka) in 1395 in the presence of Vidyāraṇya, the guru of Śṛṅgeri. *Kaḍitas*, of which Śṛṅgeri retains a large collection, are composed of cloth covered with a paste made of charcoal and gum and inscribed with a piece of pot-stone. They were used, along with palm-leaf manuscripts and paper to record inscriptions. The date, 1395, throws the veracity of the record into doubt, since Vidyāraṇya is thought – from other inscriptional evidence – to have died in 1386; still, the use of these terms (*parama-haṃsa-parivrājākācārya* and *yama-niyamādy-aṣṭaṅga-yoga-nirata*) are attested in the later inscriptional record. Thus, it is entirely possible that the guru's designation as a master of yoga was in vogue much later; nevertheless, the connection was based upon the synthesis of the Advaita Vedānta soteriological theology with the yogic disciplinary practice advanced in Patañjali's *Yogasūtras*.

⁴⁷ The other epithet used to describe the guru is “a master of grammar, Mīmāṃsā, and epistemology” (*pada-vākya-pramāṇa-pārāvāra-pārīṇa*).

of Śringeri as “ruling the yoga empire” (*yoga-sāmrājya*) or “ruling his own yoga throne.”⁴⁸ These honorifics draw attention to the most important dimensions of the guru’s identity. In a sense, the guru embodies the two elements of monastic authority that I have elaborated upon in this study. As the recipient and redistributor of donations, he drives the generative and productive capacities of monastic authority. And as the final conduit for the *dharmic* redistribution of assets, the guru inspires the expansion of the yoga empire over which he presides; he clears the ground for the Vedic path to be fashioned by the kings of Vijayanagara.

On the other hand, in his capacity as a teacher and as a master of yoga, he instantiates the restrictive qualities of disciplinary life. He embodies, in his practice and pedagogy, the restrictive power of the injunction (*vidhi*) and the disciplinary power of yogic practice (*yama-niyamādi*). Thus, he alone dispenses the rights and rules that constitute this Vedic empire. As the inscriptions and benedictory verses aver, the guru’s exhalation produces the Veda and all of phenomenal creation.

The question that remains to be answered, however, and the one with which I conclude this chapter, is, how can the guru, who has transcended the world of action and agency, continue to intervene in the world of *dharma*? How can the guru, who lives with the exceptional awareness of the non-dual nature of the self, continue to engage in the actions that perpetuate monastic power? The phenomenology of the fully realized self, the *jīvan-mukta*, is described in the *Pañcadaśī* and the *Jīvanmuktiviveka*. These descriptions grapple with this very confounding question of the actions of a fully liberated being.

The first step in resolving this conundrum is to acknowledge that, even for a liberated being, who is no longer generating *karma*, there is already a store of *karma* (*prārabdha-karma*,

⁴⁸ Rice, *Epigraphica Carnatica*, 6:93.

operative *karma*) that must be worked out, which must bear fruit, before he can attain bodiless liberation. His actions are likened to roasted grain, which, despite being similar in appearance to un-roasted grain, neither germinates nor fructifies like un-roasted grain.⁴⁹ Rather, just like parched grain, which, though incapable of germination, can nevertheless provide satiety in being eaten, the enlightened person's *karma* is experienced as it is produced. It does not result in further *karma*, precisely because the enlightened person knows that *karma* is part of the illusion of conventional reality. Indeed, the liberated self's phenomenal experience is conditioned by this very discrimination (*viveka*) of the real from the unreal. Still, even in the state of liberation, the self may be assailed by the imposition of the unreal.

Thus, experience of that operative *karma* ends slowly, not all at once; at times, during this phase of experience, the thought does occur, "I am mortal." The knowledge of reality does not disappear as a result of such a transgression. Living liberation (*jīvan-mukti*), after all, is not a vow, but is rather the entrenchment [of the self] in reality.⁵⁰

Thus, one may suffer some backsliding in achieving living-liberation (*jīvan-mukti*) but, once achieved and cemented through yogic practice, this state is permanent – as it is for the guru of the maṭha:

⁴⁹ "But, grains that have been roasted do not produce effects (cannot germinate); similarly, the desire of knowers (*vidvat*) does not produce any effect, because of the awareness of the unreality of things.
bharjitāni tu bijāni santy akāryakarāṇi ca | vidvad-icchā tathesṭavyāsattva-bodhān na kāryakṛt ||
 Vidyāraṇya, *Pañcadaśī*, 298.

⁵⁰ *evam ārabdha-bhogo' pi śanaiḥ śamyati no haṭhāt | bhoga-kāle kadācit tu martyo'ham iti bhāsate ||*
naitāvātāparādhenā tattva-jñānaṃ vinaśyati | jīvan-mukti-vrataṃ nedaṃ kintu vastu-stithiḥ khalu ||
 Vidyāraṇya, 324.

All the many things that he was previously to do, for instance, to accomplish the multitude of tasks regarding the immanent and transcendent ends, and similarly accomplish liberation -- all those are now done; nothing remains for him to do.⁵¹

With this in mind, the text now recreates the phenomenology of liberation, imaging how a liberated self might think of its own condition. As expected, the *jīvan-mukta* feels completely alienated from the inanity of conventional life, motivated as this is by the transient and ultimately unreal ends of heaven and other such pleasures.

With the determination of the fact that he has nothing left to do, which was not always the case, just so this one remains ever content: “Let the miserable ignorant folks churn through births as they please, depending upon sons and the rest. I am sated with the highest bliss. Why on earth should I do the same?”⁵²

Even the study of the Veda and the performance of rituals, in other words, the very religious actions that were enjoined upon the ritualist, no longer hold any value for the *jīvan-mukta*. Note that, in his disavowal of ritual, the *jīvan-mukta* very pointedly rejects the three analytic components of the Vedic ritual -- the goal, the instrument, and the procedure (*sādhya*, *sādhana*, *itikartavyatā*). He does so by asking to what end (*sādhya* or the goal), what (the ritual itself, the *karaṇa*) and how (the procedure, *itikartavyatā*) he would perform the ritual. In transcending the world of dharma completely, he is no longer bound even by the injunctions that constrain the religious conduct of ritualists and *saṃnyāsins*. Thus, he just as easily disavows studying and

⁵¹ *aiḥikāmuṣmika-vrāta-siddhyai mukteś ca siddhaye | bahu kṛtyaṃ purāsyābhūt tat sarvaṃ adhunā kṛtaṃ||*

⁵² *tad etat kṛta-kṛtyatvaṃ pratiyogi-puraḥsaram | anusamdadhad evāyam tṛpyati nityaśaḥ ||
duḥkhino' jñāḥ saṃsaranu kāmam putrādyapekṣayā | paramānanda-pūrṇo' ham saṃsarāmi kim icchayā ||*
Vidyāraṇya, *Pañcadaśī*, 329–30.

meditating upon Brahman as he does study of the Veda and performing the ritual. Note that he disavows *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* explicitly in rejecting the use of the Vedānta texts for one who, like him, is liberated. In these verses, the text elaborates on what it means to transcend the sphere of normative conduct. Liberation, ultimately, means no longer being subject to governance by the Veda. It is to be beyond the scope of the *vidhi*.

Let those who wish for a better world perform rituals. I comprise all worlds in my being; what ritual should I perform, to what end, and how? Let those who are eligible explain the disciplinary texts or teach the Vedas; I have no such entitlement, for there are no actions for me to perform... Let those who lack the knowledge of reality learn [the Vedānta]; knowing this reality, why should I learn (*śṛṇomi*)? Let those who have doubts reflect (*manyatām*); I have no doubts, I do not reflect. He who is mistaken should meditate (*nididhyāset*); free from error, why should I? I do not ever commit the error of mistaking the body for the self.⁵³

Thus, the conventional conduct of such a liberated self does not stick to the self; the self abides, while past actions and entailments work themselves out.

Let my conduct, whether it is conventional, disciplinary or otherwise, proceed accordingly; I am no longer an agent; no stain sticks to me.⁵⁴

⁵³ *anutiṣṭhantu karmāṇi paraloka-yiyāsavaḥ | sarva-lokātmakeḥ kasmād anutiṣṭhāmi kiṃ katham ||
vyācakṣatām te śāstrāṇi vedān adhyāpayantu vā | ye ' trādhikāriṇo me tu nādhikāro ' kriyatvataḥ ||
śṛṇvantv ajñāta-tattvās te jñān kasmāc chrṇomy aham | manyantām saṃśayāpannāḥ ne manye 'ham asaṃśayaḥ ||
viparyasto nididhyāset kiṃ dhyānam aviparyayāt | dehātmatva-viparyāsaṃ na kadācid bhajāmy aham ||*
Vidyāranya, 330–32.

⁵⁴ *vyavahāro laukiko vā śāstrīyo vānyathāpi vā | mamākartur alepasya yathārabdham pravartatām ||*

Upon this unequivocal disavowal of interested action, the text entertains the limitless possibility of acting – disinterestedly – in the interest of the general welfare. Indeed, once one comprehends one’s radical sovereignty and freedom, the decision to abide by social convention and to subject oneself to normative injunctions is similarly an expression of untrammelled freedom. Indeed, freed from the concern for the judgement of others, the enlightened being may take up the task for which he is uniquely qualified – teaching the ignorant the truth:

Or else, though I have done all that needed to be done, wishing the common weal, I follow the scriptural path – what harm is there to me? Praised or reviled by the ignorant, the wise man neither praises nor condemns them in return, but he should act to hasten their comprehension. He should behave so that it [Brahman] is known in this instance. The knower of reality has no other duty than to teach the ignorant.⁵⁵

The *Jīvanmuktiviveka* similarly exhorts the liberated being, who is beyond-caste-and-orders (*atī-varṇāsrāmī*), to instruct in the knowledge of the self others, who are mired in the orders and injunctions of conventional life:

It is declared that the one beyond-caste-and-orders is the guru of all those qualified to study (*adhikārin*). Just like me, o best of men, he can never be a pupil of anyone. The one beyond-caste-and-orders is said to be the teacher of teachers in reality. There is no doubt that no one in this world is equal or superior to him... Thus, he is indeed the most exalted guru (*uttama guruḥ*) and is declared to be beyond castes and orders who knows with certainty, through the Vedānta

⁵⁵ *athavā kṛtakṛtyo’ pi lokānugraha-kāmyayā | sāstrīyeṇaiva mārgēna varte’ haṃ kā mama kṣatiḥ || nindītaḥ stūyamāno vā vidvān ajñair na nindati | na stauti kintu teṣāṃ syād yathā bodhas tathācaret || yenāyaṃ naṭanenātra budhyate kāryam eva tat | ajñaprabodhān naivānyat kāryam asty atra tadvidah ||* Vidyāranya, *Pañcadaśī*, 341–42.

and by his own experience, the Self that is without pairs of opposites, which is formless, spotless, always pure, without false appearance, which is being and pure consciousness, and the highest immortal.⁵⁶

The gurus of Śṛṅgeri -- Vidyātīrtha, Bhāratīrtha, and Vidyāraṇya -- are accorded the utmost prominence in the inscriptional record and in the dedications of the texts that comprise this corpus, higher even than that of the king. The guru is the administrator and witness of the gifts made to the maṭha and to its agents. Most of these early inscriptions (1346 – ca. 1400), which record the Sangamas' gifts of land and other privileges to the maṭha and its agents, record that the guru serves either as the administrator of the grant or as a witness in whose presence the gift is made. For example, in the inscription cited above, Harihara II is said to have donated land to three Śṛṅgeri scholars; crucially however, the grant is made in the presence of Vidyāraṇya, the guru of the maṭha. Further, Vidyātīrtha, to whom the vast majority of the texts in this corpus are dedicated, is also described, in precisely the same terms as in the dedicatory verses.⁵⁷ In this manner, the guru is enshrined as the administrator of monastic power. As regards his role as legislator or originator of maṭha rule, the picture is slightly more complicated. After all, from the formulation current in these texts, the Vedas produce the legislative superstructure that undergirds monastic governmentality. Thus, in a straightforward sense, the Vedas are ultimately sovereign – the gurus of the maṭha are mere instruments of Vedic rules. But, as the dedicatory verses reiterate, Vidyātīrtha fashioned the Vedas, which were created through his exhalation, and indeed he fashioned all of phenomenal creation. In this sense, he is the supreme self (Brahman) made flesh. Rather than him serving as a conduit for the expression of Vedic authority, it is, in

⁵⁶ Goodding, “The Treatise on Liberation-in-Life Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Jīvanmuktiviveka of Vidyāraṇya,” 111–12.

⁵⁷ “Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department,” 1934, 115.

fact the other way around: the Vedas enunciate the authority of the single supreme self, who is manifest, on earth, as the guru of the maṭha.

If, as the temporal creator of the eternal Veda, the guru is ultimately sovereign as it pertains to Vedic rule, as the greatest of teachers (*uttama guru*), the teacher of teachers (*gurūnām guru*), he is also the foremost administrator and disseminator of Vedic rule. The guru is situated at the very apex of the hierarchy of subjects that the monastery governs, as the sole sovereign. Beyond instantiating in his mode of living the very pinnacle of human accomplishment, the guru, out of compassion for his deluded followers, who are mired in the morass of unceasing *saṃsāra*, must teach them the way to liberation. In so doing, the guru stands at the head of an elaborate and diffuse hierarchy of teachers, scholars, and Vedic leaders, who, by explicating the meaning of the Vedas, provided to their followers the means to attain the human ends suitable to their rank and status.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the technologies of knowledge production that constituted the subjectivity and religious conduct of the second subject of our study: the *saṃnyāsin*. The analysis of the figure of the *saṃnyāsin* has shown it to be roughly analogous to the figure of the ritualist. The Vedic ritualist, the one who has been initiated into Vedic scholarship and has graduated to performing the ritual, presides over the realm of ritual and *dharma*. There are other, lower, forms of dharmic life, which encompasses the conduct of women and *sūdras*, the subalterns of the dharmic order, and others besides, all of which are subordinated by the imperatives and objectives dictated by Vedic *dharma*. Thus, the conduct of ordinary folks, who do not perform the Vedic ritual, is nevertheless governed by the Smṛti texts,

which derive their authority from the Vedic texts. The principles of the *dharma* of ordinary (*laukika*) life are derived from the superordinate *dharma* of the Vedic ritual.

The conduct of the Vedic ritualist, on the other hand, is governed by the *adhyayana vidhi*, the injunction to study and, by extension, to *know* the Veda. It is his government by the injunction that sets the Vedic ritualist apart; he thus occupies the highest position in this hierarchy of dharmic forms. The station of the Vedic ritualist, however, is further subject to internal hierarchy, depending upon the extent to which knowledge informs and inflects the performance of Vedic ritual. The highest form of the ritual, therefore, is that in which the desire for material ends (heaven, typically) is subordinated to the desire for knowledge (*vividiṣā*). It is this highest form of ritual practice that awakens in the ritual performer the desire for the ultimate, the knowledge of the self.

The realm of knowledge is similarly hierarchized in the analysis codified by the Śrīngeri scholiasts. There are many paths of renunciation, informal and formal, but the one that is singled out, by its government by the *vidhi*, is that of the highest of these renunciant forms, the *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsin*. Just as in the *dharmic* realm, the realm of knowledge is governed by the Vedānta, the conduct of the range of subjects is ranked according to their progress toward liberation, the overarching end of this form of life. The *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsin* is singled out as the only renunciant form governed by the *śravaṇa vidhi*, the injunction to learn the Vedānta. This injunction, in turn, entails a fully-elaborated program of intellectual and physical discipline that results in the highest possible form of human life: liberation-in-life (*jīvan-mukti*).

The station of the *saṃnyāsin* is pulled in opposite directions. The structure and purpose to which the disciplining power of the injunction subjects the station draws it within the dharmic fold, situating the *saṃnyāsin* at the apex of a hierarchy of Vedic subjects. On the other hand, the

saṃnyāsin is drawn along by the promise of liberation. His religious practice, disciplinary practice, and *askesis* are focused upon transcending the limits of *dharma*, of leaving behind, forever, the constraints of the injunction and of birth. The guru stands as teacher and as practitioner of complete sovereignty, and through the guru, the maṭha was able to occupy a space that impinged upon and transcended the immanent limits of dharmic society. The *saṃnyāsin* directed toward *mokṣa*, and yet constrained by injunctions, stood on the threshold between worlds directing the governed from on high.

Chapter Four

The Double Life of Doxography

In chapters two and three, I have shown how pedagogical practices were integral to, and inseparable from, the formation of the subjects of a monastic governmentality. In scrutinizing the mechanics of disciplinary power, I have demonstrated the salience of the injunction to comprehend and shape distinctive subjectivities. In this chapter, I explore yet another dimension of disciplinary power, namely, the manner in which pedagogical texts that appeared to have no clear normative purpose nevertheless naturalized the normative vision of Vedic supremacy that the maṭha promulgated. To put it in starker terms: In previous chapters, I examined texts that explicitly foregrounded the normative task of constituting ideal subjects for the maṭha. The texts evinced an injunctive force, they obligated the subject to adopt a mode of living in conformity with the normative ends of the maṭha. In this chapter, I examine a different type of text: a simple primer intended to introduce students to the philosophical and theological tenets of all the philosophical and theological systems -- in other words, a pedagogical text with no overt normative purpose. I demonstrate that this text, even as it purported to report just the facts about these different schools of thought, nevertheless naturalized a normative hierarchy of views that corresponded to the normative Vedic vision held by the maṭha.

The *Comprehensive Catalogue of Doctrines (Sarvadarśanasamgraha)*, hereafter the *Catalogue*, is considered a doxography, although, as I argue below, the ascription of this category tends to obscure the historical particularities of the text even as it opens up the text to comparative and cross-cultural scrutiny. Without diminishing the obvious interest for philosophers and intellectual historians in the text at hand, I analyze the text in a different

context: I resituate the text in a network of sources and texts drawn from its immediate context in order to draw out the rhetorical valence of the work. I use the *Catalogue* to add another dimension to my thesis. I argue that the text can be read two ways.

First, it can be read as a textbook introducing its reader to a few of the philosophical issues animating the canonical works of the philosophical or theological schools in question. Thus, the *Catalogue* was a part of the pedagogical curriculum to which I have alluded in chapter one. I adduce evidence to show that one of the noteworthy credentials of prominent Brahmins from this period was the mastery of the *darśanas* (doctrines); familiarity with the doctrines of other schools was an important facet of Brahmanical self-fashioning. Thus, the *Catalogue* would have been considered an instrument of instruction (*śāstra*) and an essential part of a curriculum of Brahmanical study. We might think of this as the explicit import of the text.

Second, the text can be read as myth,¹ insofar as it naturalizes a certain hierarchy of the philosophical schools, and thereby asserts, but never demonstrates, a certain order of things as *self-evident* and *natural*. This “natural” order has two effects. First, it establishes the primacy of the Advaita Vedānta school (of Śrīringeri monastery) as the pinnacle of a group of Vedic schools. Second, it marginalizes the two rival schools of Vedānta (Madhva or Dualist Vedānta and Rāmānujīya or Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta) as not only beyond the Vedic pale, but suspiciously similar – in their doctrinal positions – to the self-evidently anti-Vedic schools of the Jainas, Buddhists and the Cārvāka materialists. Thus, the pedagogical act is at the same time one of acculturation; it naturalizes a hierarchical view of the world as just the way things are.

¹ As I elaborate below, I am using “myth” in the sense used by Roland Barthes in Roland Barthes and Annette Lavers, *Mythologies*, 10th printing (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1979).

In an important article titled “The Sanskrit Doxographies and the Structure of Hindu Traditionalism,” the philosopher and intellectual historian Wilhelm Halbfass made the following observation on the genre of doxography: “One of the first things which strikes us is that the Indian doxographic literature is largely the work of two religious-philosophical groups – the Jains and the Advaita Vedāntins.”² Though he presented a comprehensive survey of the genre, Halbfass’ ultimate concern in the article, intimated by the title of the edited volume, *India and Europe: An Essay in Philosophical Understanding*, was to account for the ahistoricism (one may even call it anti-historicism) that seemed to him to pervade traditional philosophical writing in India.³ Ultimately, Halbfass concluded that, innovations and reorientations in philosophical writing notwithstanding, “an explicit interest in the historical actuality and genesis of philosophical ideas has not arisen... the Indian tradition has not brought forth historical accounts or inventories of developments, changes, and chronological sequences of ideas.”⁴

Even amidst this unsuccessful attempt to find historical awareness in Indian philosophical discourse, Halbfass hinted at another important, and contingent, element of the genre: “The doxographic models and concepts of tradition which we have considered... have ambiguous social and xenological implications. The hierarchical arrangement of the systems implies a

² Wilhelm. Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988), 351.

³ “Like the absence of a developed historiography in general, the Indian tradition’s lack of any historiography of philosophy has been commented upon frequently and been the object of some speculation. The Indian tradition has not brought forth any independent historical presentations of philosophy, not even chronologically arranged surveys of philosophical doctrines and the lives and works of philosophers such as have been passed on by the Greek tradition. With the exception of the genealogies of teachers and disciplines (which usually begin in the mythical past) and the legendary hagiographies of individual shapers of Indian thought, in particular Śaṅkara, the literature of India offers nothing apart from entirely nonhistorical and as a rule completely impersonal doxographic surveys of the various philosophical traditions.” Halbfass, 249.

⁴ Halbfass, 367.

soteriological gradation which assigns the followers of the lower (i.e. heterodox) doctrines an ethically and socially inferior status.”⁵ Unfortunately, the abstract scope of his article would not admit of the contextual and historicized treatment of doxographic writing that this line of inquiry demands. After all, the history of categories such as “tradition,” “heterodox” and “orthodox” is a history of contingent contestation and confrontation. Thus, rather than asking “What is tradition?” or “Who is heterodox?”, we must ask “What is tradition in any given period, and for whom?” or “Who is heterodox at any given time, and for whom?”

Nevertheless, Halbfass helpfully flagged two issues that we consider in this chapter, first, in showing that the genre was used, principally, by Vedāntins and Jainas, and second, in adumbrating the sociological valence of the genre. To the first observation, Halbfass provided a philosophical explanation; the second, he left unexplained. We attempt to explain both issues with recourse to the historical contexts surrounding the composition of these texts. Rather than acknowledge the “ambiguous social and xenological implications” of the genre writ large, we home in on the precise social and xenological implications of one such work of doxography: *The Comprehensive Catalogue of Doctrines (Sarvadarśanasamgraha)* of Cannibhaṭṭa.

Andrew Nicholson has contributed greatly to our understanding of the genre of doxography by training our sights more precisely on the socio-political dimensions of doxographic writing hinted at by Halbfass. In *Unifying Hinduism*, Nicholson uses the works of 16th century Bhedābeda Vedāntin Vijñānabhikṣu to argue “that between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries CE, certain thinkers began to treat as a single whole the diverse philosophical teachings of the Upaniṣads, epics, Purāṇas, and the schools known retrospectively as the ‘six systems’

⁵ Halbfass, 368.

(*ṣaḍḍarśana*) of mainstream Hindu philosophy.”⁶ In Nicholson’s analysis, the very hermeneutic practice of treating as a coherent whole a collection of texts, doctrines, and traditions, many of which were previously disparate or even mutually opposed, constitutes evidence of a nascent Hindu identity. Further, the emergence of this Hindu identity in scholastic discourse coincided with similar crystallizations of Hindu identity in other discursive spheres, such as popular religion and a variety of literary genres.⁷ In other words, the genre of doxography, particularly in the hands of medieval Vedāntin philosophers, made legible a certain consciousness of a proto-Hindu identity, predicated on the conception of a canon of “Hindu” or traditional texts and discursive forms.

I have demonstrated above that the unification of a Vedic tradition was foundational to the model of monastic governmentality that was developed and deployed by the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri. And while I argue that this particular effort of unifying a Vedic canon was in the service of articulating and implementing a monastic governmentality, I agree with Nicholson that similar efforts at unification were often linked to identity-formation. Nevertheless—and this is a minor point of disagreement—I argue that the defense of a Vedic identity and the need for a Vedic normativity were deemed to be of utmost importance because of a fear of the corrosive effects of dubious, purportedly Vedic traditions that attempted to dismantle Vedism from *within*. Advaita Vedāntins composed doxographic texts to protect Vedism from other Vedāntins, there is no evidence to suggest that they were threatened by forces from without the Vedic tradition. Thus, the Advaita Vedāntins of Śṛṅgeri sought to use the *Catalogue* to engender not merely a strong

⁶ Andrew J. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History*, South Asia across the Disciplines (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 2.

⁷ Nicholson, 198–201.

affinity for Vedic traditions as being part of the family but, further, a strong, visceral rejection of those other schools of Vedānta that were corroding the integrity of the Vedic faith.

Organizing Principles

In this chapter, I explore yet a different dimension of the doxographic genre, though I restrict my analysis to two texts produced in the same institutional context: *The Comprehensive Catalogue of Doctrines (Sarvadarśanasamgraha)* and *Śaṅkara's Universal Conquest (Śaṅkaradigvijaya)*. I present two principal arguments in support of my thesis that the Advaita Vedāntins of the Śṛṅgeri monastery used the doxographic genre to realize an Advaita Vedānta supremacy.

First, I show that the hierarchical arrangement of the doxographic *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* has two primary, and complementary, rhetorical effects. The text cleaves a group of Vedic doctrines, culminating in the Advaita Vedānta championed by Śṛṅgeri monastery, from a lower group of non-Vedic views. The logic of hierarchic arrangement (I can discern no philosophical or theological logic to the constitution of this hierarchy) considered a certain constellation of views—comprising the Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, Grammatical, Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Advaita Vedānta schools—to be consistent with the Vedic canon. The scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri marked off this group of Vedic schools from a lower group comprising two sub-groups of schools. The first group—comprising the Lokāyatās (or Cārvākas), Buddhists and Jainas—were rejected for their *explicit* opposition to the Vedas. The second group, comprising a number of Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva sects, were to be rejected for their *implicit* subversion of the true import of the Vedas. This second group included the two schools of Vedānta, the Mādhva and Rāmānujīya orders, that rivalled Śṛṅgeri for regional institutional hegemony.

The second, complementary, aim of this particular mode of hierarchical arrangement, in my analysis, was to *other* the principal rival schools to the Advaita Vedānta of Śṛṅgeri monastery, namely the Mādhva and Rāmānujīya schools of Vedānta. This *othering* works in two ways. First, the refutation of these two rival schools of Vedānta characterized them as Vaiṣṇava sects, *not* as rival Vedānta views. On the Advaita Vedānta view, in privileging the worship of a deity (Viṣṇu or Śīva) over the assertion of the radical sovereignty of the liberated self, these two schools denigrate the Vedas, and are thus closer to the manifestly non-Vedic schools of Jainism, Buddhism, and the materialists. Second, the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri placed the two Vedānta schools immediately after the three self-evidently non-Vedic schools (the Lokāyatas, the Buddhists and the Jainas). Thus, through proximity to the schools that the scholars of Śṛṅgeri considered universally condemned as anti-Vedic, the text characterizes its principal institutional rivals—the Mādhva and Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedāntins—as being suspiciously close to decidedly verboten views. In other words, the assertion of the supremacy of the Advaita Vedānta view depends not only on it heading a series of lesser Vedic schools, but also on the denigration of its principal rivals. And the basis for this particular rhetorical end is classificatory, not substantive. That is, the text shows the two rival schools of Vedānta to be beyond the Vedic pale, not on the basis of theological arguments, but by *categorizing* them as closely affined to the Jaina school *and* by *classifying* them as sectarian schools that eschew adherence to the Veda. Indeed, as I show, the substantive treatment of these two schools engages their Vedānta arguments and interpretations.

A second set of arguments demonstrate that the particular formulation of Advaita Vedānta supremacy that is evinced by the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* was reiterated, albeit in a notably different form, in a text composed at least two hundred and fifty years later: the artificial court epic (*mahākāvya*) *Śaṅkara's Universal Conquest* (*Śaṅkaradigvijaya*). This poem celebrates

the miraculous feats of Śaṅkara -- the purported founder of the Advaita Vedānta lineage that still flourishes at the Śṛṅgeri monastery -- in re-establishing a Vedic hegemony. Written in the style of a martial court poem in the high *kāvya* register, the poem chronicles Śiva's intervention in the world, in the form of Śaṅkara, in order to extirpate those schools that denigrate the Vedas, and to bring the partially true doctrines back within the Vedic fold. In the poem, in his pursuit of universal dominion for the only true Vedic viewpoint (Advaita Vedānta), Śaṅkara subdues the chief proponents of the rival theological systems, much as a universal sovereign (*cakravartin*) brings his rivals into vassalage, and either expels them (if they are beyond the Vedic pale) or assimilates them within the Vedāntin hegemony. A narrative of inevitable triumph, the poem (the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*) reproduces the very same hierarchic organization of philosophical schools formulated in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, but with the conspicuous absence of the sectarian schools, namely, the Vaiṣṇava Rāmānujīya and Mādhva schools of Vedānta.

Composed in a different political environment, where the center of power had moved from Vijayanagara to the Nāyaka court at Ikkeri, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*'s repurposed use of the hierarchy of viewpoints illustrates two different elements of interest. First, it attests to the rhetorical valence of this type of categorization: naturalizing a normative vision of a variegated theological landscape. Second, it shows the two dimensions to the assertion of Advaita supremacy, namely, the elevation of Advaita to the apex of a hierarchy of views and the marginalization of the views of rival schools. In the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, Advaita supremacy is asserted despite the elision of the views of the rivals of yore. This shows that the rhetorical point of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, albeit unacknowledged in the substance of the philosophical positions elaborated upon, had rather a long afterlife in the politics that implicated the religious institutions that had emerged in medieval Karnataka. Further, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* vindicates

the argument, sustained through this dissertation, that the Advaita Śrīṅgeri matha advanced a very clear vision of its supreme authority, predicated upon its fidelity to the Vedas.

The Elusive Logic of Classification

In this section I detail my interpretation of the structure of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*. Owing to the very nature of this analysis, I offer an analysis of the work not as a work of philosophy but, rather, as a work of myth. Indeed, the text does *not*, as far as I can discern, develop philosophical or theological arguments either for the constitution of the hierarchy or for the relative placement, along that hierarchy, of the different schools of thought. On the other hand, the text does evince a *classificatory* logic of arrangement (without bolstering this *classificatory* logic with substantive arguments or indeed in making that logic explicit), which I refer to as one of the rhetorical dimensions of the work. Further, I argue that the naturalization of this hierarchy is informed by the contentious jostling for religious authority, in which the three principal strains of Vedānta of this period were implicated: the Mādhvas, the Rāmānujīyas, and the Advaita Vedāntins.⁸ Hewing to this framework, I argue that the hierarchic presentation of philosophical schools maps on to the vision of Vedic supremacy that I have detailed in the foregoing chapters and that is evinced in the other texts belonging to this corpus produced by the intellectual leaders of the Śrīṅgeri monastery.

The *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* has long been attributed to the Vedic commentator Mādhava (or the more enigmatic complex personality Sāyaṇa-Mādhava), the author (purported or actual)

⁸ For a summary of the contentious relations between the Advaita Vedāntins of Śrīṅgeri and the Rāmānujīyas, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation. For further reading on the sectarian discord between the Mādhvas and Advaita Vedāntins of Śrīṅgeri, see Stoker, *Polemics and Patronage in the City of Victory: Vyāsātīrtha, Hindu Sectarianism, and the Sixteenth-Century Vijayanagara Court*. See, in particular, Chapters 4 and 5.

of many of the texts that constitute the archive for this dissertation. Although scholarly consensus on the question of the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* has remained elusive, two principal theories have emerged. The first, advanced by R. Narasimhachar, argues that the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* was Mādhava, the son of Sāyaṇa, who was named after Sāyaṇa’s brother, Mādhava.⁹ The theory rests on two verses (verses 3 and 4) from the introduction to the work. Of these verses, the first presents the stronger case in stating explicitly that “*The Sarvadarśanasamgraha has been composed by the revered Mādhava.*” The metaphor that follows, identifying this Mādhava with the Kaustubha jewel and Sāyaṇa with the milk-ocean whence the Kaustubha jewel was extracted, comports with the theory that this Mādhava, author of *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, was the son of Sāyaṇa, and not the same Mādhava as the author of the commentary on the *Parāśarasmṛti* (which forms the basis of Chapter 2 of this dissertation).

The *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* has been composed by the honorable Mādhava, of prodigious ability, the Kaustubha jewel in the ocean of milk that is the glorious Sāyaṇa.¹⁰

The theory that this author was Mādhava, Sāyaṇa’s son, also attempts to account for the last of these introductory verses (translated below), which ascribes the work to Sāyaṇa-Mādhava. To explain this complex appellation, Narasimhachar resorts to the south Indian custom of one’s given name being preceded by the name of one’s father. Thus, the “Sāyaṇa-Mādhava” in the verse refers, so the theory goes, to Mādhava, son of Sāyaṇa.

⁹ Rao Bahadur Narasimhachar, “Madhavacharya His Younger Brothers,” *The Indian Antiquary* XLV (1916): 1–6, 17–24.

¹⁰ *śrīmat-sāyaṇa-dugdhābdhi-kaustubhena mahaujasā *
kriyate mādhavāryeṇa sarva-darśana-samgrahaḥ ||
 Cannibhaṭṭa, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, 1.

Vigorously churning the impenetrable discourses of the ancients, the venerable master Sāyaṇa-Mādhava has explained them [those impenetrable discourses] to the delight of the good. The good folk should listen to [this treatise] with minds entirely free of prejudice, for who does not enjoy a garland, threaded together with exotic flowers?¹¹

Narasimhachar's theory, though it is commendable for construing two of the four introductory verses, falls down at the second verse:

I take refuge, day after day, in my guru (father) Sarvajñaviṣṇu, who is learned in all the traditional teachings (*āgama*), the son of Śrī Śārṅgapāṇi; sought after by the whole world because his conduct is concerned with the self. He has reached the farther shore of the ocean that consists of all the philosophical schools (*sakaladarśana*).¹²

This verse suggests that the author is the son of one Sarvajñaviṣṇu. On the basis of this verse, Anantalal Thakur advanced the theory that the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* was

¹¹ *pūrveṣāṃ atidustarāṇi sutarām āloḍya śāstrāṇy'asau
śrīmat-sāyaṇa-mādhavaḥ prabhur upanyāsyat satām prītaye |
dūrotsārīta-matsareṇa manasā śṛṇvantu tat-saj-janā
mālyam kasya vicitra-puṣpa-racitaṃ prītyai na saṃjāyate ||*
Cannibhaṭṭa, 1.

¹² *pāraṃ gataṃ sakala-darśana-sāgarāṇām
ātmocitārtha-caritārthita-sarva-lokam |
śrī-śārṅgapāṇi-tanayaṃ nikhilāgama-jñam
sarvajña-viṣṇu-gurum anvaham āśraye 'ham ||*
Cannibhaṭṭa, 1.

Cannibhaṭṭa,¹³ a logician and protégé of Mādhava.¹⁴ Still, this leaves Thakur to account for verses 3 and 4 (translated above), which refer to a Mādhava and a Sāyaṇa-Mādhava. Thakur argues that the work was inspired by Mādhava, but composed by Cannibhaṭṭa. This forces a rather tortured interpretation of the phrase “The noble Mādhava has created the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*” (*kriyate mādhavāryeṇa sarvadarśanasamgrahaḥ*). This, at any rate, is where the scholarly debate has stood for a few years. Nevertheless, for our purposes, verses 3 and 4 illustrate the prominence of the brand of Mādhava and Sāyaṇa already in the mid-fourteenth century. These two figures, Mādhava in particular, cast shadows long enough to reach beyond the seventeenth century, the *terminus post quem* of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, the second text we consider here. Thus, already by the latter half of the 14th century, an archive was taking shape, ascribed to and drawing prestige from Sāyaṇa, Mādhava and the Śṛṅgeri maṭha. As we can discern from the verse cited above, the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* was part of that very archive. Therefore – even apart from the evidence that the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* announces its Advaita Vedānta *bona fides* in accordance with the interests of the Śṛṅgeri monastery – the invocation of Sāyaṇa and Mādhava strengthens the case that we can expect the text to evince general support for the ideological aims advanced by the monastery.

The Text, Two Ways

The primary, or overt, purpose of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* was to introduce students to the impenetrable doctrines of the principal schools of thought. As the verse, quoted below,

¹³ Other sources, such as the *Catalogus Catalogorum* refer to the author of the *Tarkabhāṣaparakāśikā* (presumed to be the same as the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* on the basis of *maṅgala* verses) as Cinnambhaṭṭa.

¹⁴ Anantalal Thakur, “Cannibhaṭṭa and the Authorship of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*,” *Bulletin of the Adyar Library* 25 (1961): 524–38.

stresses, the good (*satām, saj-jana*) should delight in this opportunity to understand the “impenetrable discourses of the ancients,” (*pūrveṣām ati-dustarāṇi śāstrāṇi*).

Vigorously churning the impenetrable discourses of the ancients, the venerable master Sāyaṇa-Mādhava has explained them [those impenetrable discourses] to the delight of the good. The good folk should listen to [this treatise] with minds entirely free of prejudice, for who does not enjoy a garland, threaded together with exotic flowers?¹⁵

In the verse quoted above, the author intimates that this remains the legacy of Sāyaṇa-Mādhava, and that the good should study these discourses without prejudice. In this regard too, the text evinces a pedagogical purpose that it has in common with the other texts that comprise this corpus, as part of a greater pedagogical project, undertaken by intellectuals affiliated with the Śṛṅgeri monastery. As I have shown in Chapters 1 and 2, the Vedic commentaries and the commentaries on other canonical texts comprised a pedagogical project aimed at the formation of a normative religious subjectivity. I have argued that those commentaries sought to ground the ideal religious subject in a certain intellectual tradition and trajectory. The *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* was a part of the same project of religious subject-formation. Indeed, a cursory study of inscriptions from the environs surrounding Śṛṅgeri demonstrates the salience that mastery of the various *darśanas* had for Brahmanical identity. For instance, take an 11th century inscription from the surrounding area (Shikarpur district), memorializing the performance of an expensive Vedic ritual by a brahmin named Chāttagosi, which lists among his

¹⁵ *pūrveṣām atidustarāṇi sutarām āloḍya śāstrāṇy’asau
śrīmatsāyaṇamādhavaḥ prabhur upanyāsyat satām prītaye |
dūrotsāritamatsarena manasā śṛṅvantu tatsajjanā
mālyam kasya vicitrapuṣparacitaṃ prītyai na samjāyate ||*
Cannibhaṭṭa, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, 1.

myriad credentials that he was trained in the various darśanas. Chaṭṭagosi, the inscription states, was “characterized by self-control, subjection, repetition of the Vedas, meditation, abstraction, silence, propriety, prayer, religious vows, and so forth; *skilled in the Mīmāṃsaka, Lokāyata, Bauddha, Sāmkhya, Vaiśeṣika, and other śāstras and āgamas* [emphasis added]...”¹⁶ Clearly, knowledge of the views even of non-Vedic schools, such as the Lokāyata materialists and Buddhists, was an important part of Brahmin identity in this milieu. The guru of Śṛṅgeri was similarly feted in seventeenth-century inscriptions as “the establisher of the six *darśanas*.”¹⁷

The *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* consists of brief introductions to 16 theological schools or philosophical viewpoints [fig. 1]. Each section follows the same logic: the author introduces the theological school by explaining, albeit in the dialectical mode of Sanskrit theoretical discourse, the first few topics discussed in the canonical text of that school. The discussion is interspersed with references to other canonical works and authorities, but in general, the *modus operandi* is to introduce each school’s canonical text(s). Thus, the author closes several chapters with an expression of his hope to avoid the cardinal sin of theoretical discourse: long-windedness. We may find a fairly typical expression of this sentiment at the end of the chapter on *Pratyabhijñā*, the Doctrine of Recognition in Kashmiri Śaivism:

We have not expatiated upon the ends [of this school] out of fear of prolixity,
since we have here undertaken a summary [of all the schools]. The ends [of this

¹⁶ Mysore (India: State). and B. Lewis Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 7, Mysore Archaeological Series (Bangalore: Mysore Government Central Press, 1886). 41. Similar instances abound in the epigraphic sources. For instance, see Mysore (India: State). and Rice. Pg. 42. Further, an inscription from 1010 speaks of the thousand Brahmans of the agrahāra Jambūr, and Kēśavōjhar of the Ātreya-gōtra, who “made all clean by (study of) the well known veda, vedānta, āgama, *the six schools of logic*, the five grammars, and so forth; their heads purified by the final ablutions of the agnishṭoma, atyagnishṭōma, ukthya, shōḍaśi, vājapēya, Atirātra, uptoryyāma, and saptasōmasamstha...” Mysore (India: State). and Rice. Pg 55.

¹⁷ Rice, *Epigraphica Carnatica*, 6:95.

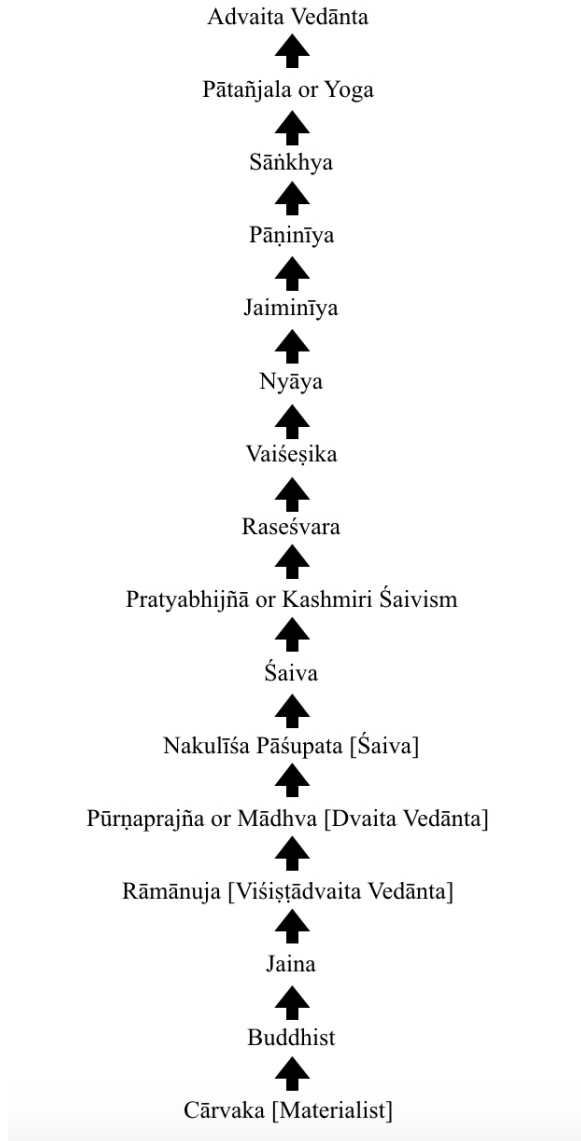
school] have already been elaborated upon by teachers such as Abhinavagupta, so, all is well.¹⁸

Thus, each chapter provided the student with a brief introduction to the philosophical or theological system. But, concomitantly, the text naturalized a very idiosyncratic hierarchy of viewpoints. This was designed, as I argue, not only to naturalize the supremacy of Advaita Vedānta but simultaneously to marginalize its two principal rivals – the Rāmānujīya and Mādhva schools of Vedānta – as sectarian schools suspiciously close to manifestly non-Vedic schools such as the Jainas and the Buddhists. So, while the text is relatively neutral in its substantive treatment of each school, taking up for explication and interrogation a handful of each school’s most important positions, its structure adumbrates Advaita supremacy. I argue that the text’s rhetorical positions can be discerned through an analysis of the organizational, not *substantive*, logic of the work. In other words, this analysis depends upon the *syntactic* import of the work, not its *semantic* import. Thus, I focus on the manner in which the schools are arranged, how the

¹⁸ *abhinavaguptādibhir ācāryair vihitā-pratāno ’py ayam arthaḥ saṃgraham upakrama-māñair asmābhir vistara-bhiyā na pratānita iti sarvaṃ śivam ||*
Cannibhaṭṭa, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, 201.

Fig. 1

Hierarchy of Viewpoints in *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*
(*The Comprehensive Compendium of Viewpoints*)



text moves from one school to the next, and how the logic of classifying multiple schools operates independently of, indeed often in opposition to, the theological framework within which a particular school's doctrines are discussed. These structural dimensions reveal a clear, albeit unarticulated, normative ordering of this multitudinous theological world.

The first question that any reader of the text will ask of the schema I have presented here in Fig. 1 (which, after all is a *representation* of the contents of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* and not the text *itself*) is, what makes us think that the presentation of views is hierarchical and not merely seriatim? Vāsudevaśāstri Abhyankar, the editor of, and commentator on, the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, in his introduction to the 1924 edition of the text, provided a philosophical

logic to the hierarchical arrangement of the schools [Fig. 2].

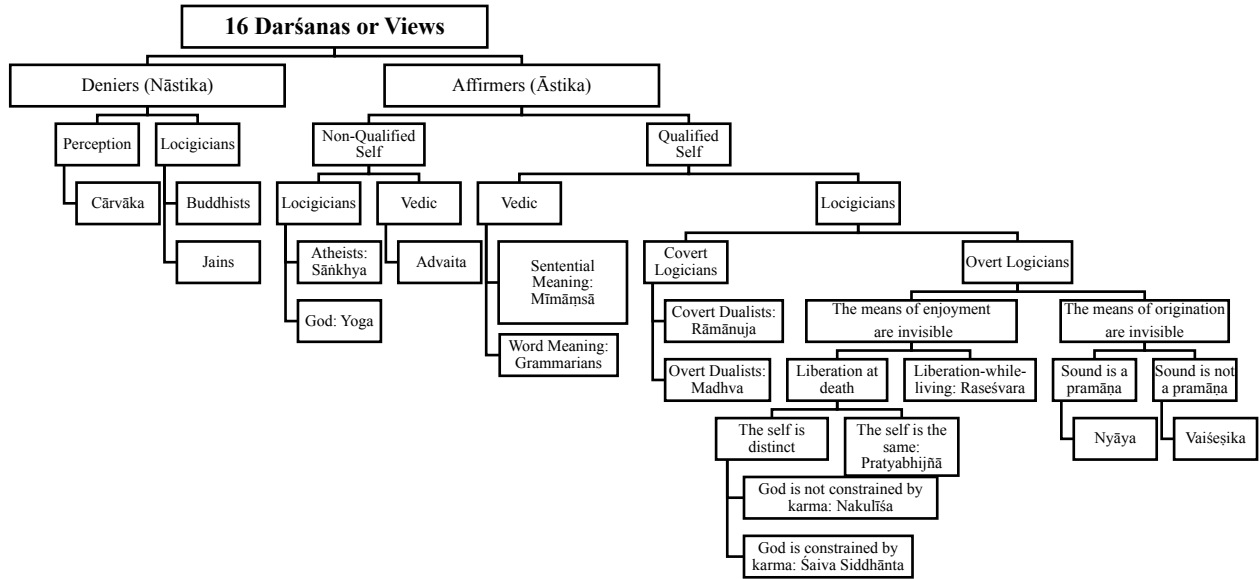


Fig. 2: Abhyankar’s Interpretive Schema

Having detailed a byzantine logic to explain the hierarchical order of the schools, Abhyankar wrote, “In the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* the venerable teacher Sāyaṇa-Mādhava has threaded together a garland of the schools using this very sequence [presented in Fig. 2]. We imagine their intention to be thus: because the gradually ascending scale of the subtlety of thought of the various philosophical schools is apparent, the views of those of increasingly refined points of view have been arranged successively higher in this text.”¹⁹ Abhyankar used the word *tāratamya* to designate a hierarchical arrangement or gradually ascending scale. The abstract noun, meaning “graduated spectrum” or, simpler, “hierarchy,” designates a series in which each succeeding member is distinguished from each prior member in instantiating, to a

¹⁹ *anenaiva krameṇa prāyo darśanānām srag eṣā gumphitā sarva-darśana-samgraha śrīmat-sāyaṇa-mādhavācāryaiḥ | itthaṃ hi teṣāṃ abhiprāyaṃ sambhāvayāmaḥ | tatva-darśinām buddhi-saukṣmya-tāratamya-darśanād uttarottaraṃ sūkṣma-dṛṣṭinām darśanāny atra grahitāni |* Cannibhaṭṭa, 119.

greater degree, some criterion. Abhyankar takes the criterion to be “subtlety of thought,” (*buddhi-saukṣmya*) which makes for a slippery and subjective mode of analysis. And indeed, some of Abhyankar’s classificatory conclusions seem subjective and suspect. For instance, he distinguishes the Rāmānuja and Madhva schools of Vedānta from the Advaita Vedānta school on the basis of their reliance on different epistemic instruments (*pramāṇa*). He classifies the Rāmānujīyas and Mādhvas as logicians since they take inference (*anumāna*) to be the only epistemic instrument in ascertaining ultimate reality, whereas the Advaita Vedāntins are Vedic (*Śrauta*) since they accept the Veda to be an epistemic instrument in knowing transcendent ends.²⁰ But even a cursory familiarity with the Rāmānujīya and Mādhva schools of Vedānta makes this characterization untenable, for the adherents of these schools, as the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* himself demonstrates in his discussion of these two views, take the Upaniṣads to be an epistemic instrument, and use the Vedic corpus in their arguments against the Advaita Vedāntins. For instance, in his brief recapitulation of Rāmānuja’s explication of the 3rd aphorism (*sūtra*) of the *Brahmasūtra* (the canonical aphoristic text for Vedāntins of all stripes), the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* presents Rāmānuja’s position thus:

The *sūtra* “Because its source is the Veda (*śāstrayonitvāt*)” states -- in response to the question, “What is the epistemic instrument to know such a *brahman* (ultimate reality)?” – that the Veda alone is the epistemic instrument. *Śāstrayoni* here refers to that [*brahman*] whose epistemic instrument (*pramāṇa*) is the cause, i.e. the

²⁰ Now then, we should explain those affirmer viewpoints that are superior to the denier viewpoints. The affirmer viewpoints are of two types: Vedic and logic-based. The Vedic schools investigate fundamental reality with the Veda as their epistemic instrument. The logicians investigate fundamental reality with inference, which is constituted through logic, as their epistemic instrument. And the logician schools are inferior to the Vedic schools.” *athedānīm nāstika-darśanāpekṣayā jyāyāmsy āstika-darśanāni pradarśanīyāni | āstikā dvivīdhāḥ śrautās tārīkās ca | śruti-pramāṇena mūla-tattvānveṣiṇaḥ śrautāḥ | tarkopaskṛtenānumāna-pramāṇena mūla-tattvānveṣiṇas tārīkāḥ | tārīkās ca śrautāpekṣayā jaghanyā bhavanti |* Cannibhaṭṭa, 121.

source (*yoni*), which is the Veda (*śāstra*). Because its nature is reality. And the Veda is said to be the source of *brahman* because the Veda brings about knowledge of *brahman*. Further, one should not entertain the doubt that *brahman* may be known through a different epistemic instrument [than the Veda]. Insofar as [*brahman*] is beyond the ken of the sense faculties, perception cannot operate with regard to it. Nor can inference of the sort: “The great ocean [and other facets of creation] must have a creator because they are effects, just like a pot.” For such an inference is [rejected] as if it were a rotten pumpkin. For it is resolved that Vedic statements such as “Whence indeed such entities...” demonstrate that *brahman* is their referent.²¹

First, the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* acknowledges, *pace* Abhyankar’s schematic characterization,²² that the Rāmānujīya school argues that the Vedas constitute the *only* epistemic instrument to know Brahman. Indeed, neither perception *nor* inference can apprehend a transcendent reality such as Brahman. Second, the author shows us the type of Vedic statement that might be considered evidence for *brahman*. This flies in the face of the

²¹ *ittham-bhūte brahmaṇi kiṃ pramāṇam iti jijñāsāyām śāstram eva pramāṇam ity uktam śāstra-yonitvāt iti | śāstram yoniḥ kāraṇam pramāṇam yasya tac chāstrayoni | tasya bhāvas tattvaṃ tasmāt | brahma-jñāna-kāraṇatvāc chāstrasya tadyonitvaṃ brahmaṇa ityarthah | na ca brahmaṇah pramāṇāntara-gamyatvaṃ śaṅkitum śakyam | atīndriyatvena pratyakṣasya tatra pravṛtī-anupapatteḥ | nāpi mahārṇavādikaṃ sakartṛkaṃ kāryatvād ghaṭavad ity anumānam | tasya pūti-kūṣmāṇḍāyamānatvāt | tallakṣaṇam brahma yato vā imāni bhūtāni ityādi-vākyam pratipādayatīti sthitam | Cannibhaṭṭa, 126.*

²² Indeed, Abhyankar hedges against his rigid classification by admitting that while the Rāmānujīya and Mādhva Vedāntins *did* rely on the Veda, they were, for the most part, logicians. It is not entirely clear exactly the nature of the distinction he intends to draw, when he writes the following: “Thus, primarily with regard to transcendent matters, the Vedas alone show the way. Therefore, the venerable teachers Sāyaṇa and Mādhava, toiling to detail the schools according to a sequence of ever greater unimpeachability, have seen fit to list the views of the logicians immediately after the Nāstika views, and then the Vedic views. Nevertheless, the Rāmānujīyas and Mādhvas, though thought to be Vedic, are logicians who are devoted to the Vedas. Thus, though they are Vedic, they are as good as logicians. *evaṃ ca paroṣārtha-viśaye mukhyataḥ śruter eva mārgadarśitvam | tathā cottarottarajyāyastvānusāriṇā krameṇa darśanāni pradarśayituṃ pravṛtīḥ śrīmatsāyaṇamādhvavācāryair nāstikadarśanottaram prathamatas tārkkikāṇāṃ darśanāni pradarśanīyāni tataḥ śrautānām | paraṃ tu rāmānujīyā mādhvāśca śrautaṃmanyā api śrutivādaratapracchannatārkkikā ityataḥ śrautā api te tārkkikapṛyā eva |*

substantive distinctions that Abhyankar has presented to account for the hierarchical arrangement of schools.

A slightly different view is presented by E.B. Cowell in the introduction to his translation of the text: “The systems are arranged from the Vedānta point of view... The systems form a gradually ascending scale,²³ -- the first, the Chárváka and Bauddha, being the lowest as the furthest removed from the Vedānta, and the last, the Sáñkhya and Yoga, being the highest as approaching most nearly to it.”²⁴ Cowell acknowledges that the order of schools is based upon a Vedāntin view, but he does not explain why the classification “Vedānta” should not also apply to the Rāmānujīya and Mādhva views. It is possible that he considered Advaita Vedānta to be the only true Vedānta. This is certainly the position adopted by the text, but Cowell does not defend this position, nor does he explain its substantive coherence.

And yet, that the text posits a hierarchy of views is self-evident to most readers. After all, the text begins with the non-Vedic materialist Lokāyata view and culminates in the Advaita view. The syntactic valence is thus that one should expect each succeeding view to be closer to the Advaita ideal and further from the materialist nadir. As figure 1 makes clear, I take the hierarchy to be constituted in the following manner: first, the self-professedly non-Vedic schools (Lokāyata, Bauddha, and Jaina); second, the sectarian schools (the first of this group comprising the Vaiṣṇava schools and the second group the Śaiva schools); and lastly, the Vedic schools, culminating in the Advaita school.

This is at odds, in some important ways, with Abhyankar’s schematization, the most fundamental distinction of which is the *āstika-nāstika* divide. There are two principal issues with

²³ a translation of *tāratamya*?

²⁴ Āchārya Mādhava, *The Sarva-Darśana-Saṃgraha*, trans. E.B. Cowell and A.E. Gough, Trübner’s Oriental Series (London: Trübner and Co, 1882), vii.

Abhyankar’s use of the *āstika-nāstika* divide. The first is that the text does not itself use this dyad to distinguish between the affirmer and denier viewpoints. The second is that this historically overdetermined mode of categorization yields little in the way of meaning, and that imposing the analytic upon this text effaces some of the subtler distinctions drawn between the schools.

As regards the first issue, the text does not use the terms *āstika* (affirmer) and *nāstika* (denier) in any systematic fashion. Indeed, the only time the word *nāstika* is used, it refers to the Cārvāka or Lokāyata school.²⁵ The text neither defines the dyad, nor indicates the precise referents of the terms. This is not fatal to Abhyankar’s use of the dyad, since the application of this analytic pair might reveal contours *implied*, and yet never stated, by the text. But let me first provide a very brief explanation of the dyad (*āstika-nāstika*; affirmer-denier)²⁶ and then show why it may not be the most suitable analytic tool in this instance. Since neither term has any meaning save in relation to the other, *āstika-nāstika* ought to be considered a pair or a dyad. In other words, the terms have relational meaning but no substantive meaning. This is clear from the fact that the labels “affirmer” and “denier” do not readily indicate precisely what is being affirmed or denied. Further, even a cursory history of the use of the terms reveals that there has not been a single referent for this object of affirmation or denial. For instance, according to his

²⁵ But, how could they admit that the highest lord bestows the *summum bonum*? Since that is out of the question for the Cārvāka, *the crest-jewel of deniers*, the follower of Bṛhaspati’s views.

atha kathaṃ parameśvarasya niḥśreyasapradatvam abhidhīyate | bṛhaspatimatānusāriṇā nāstikaśiromaṇinā cārvākeṇa tasya dūrotsāritatvāt |

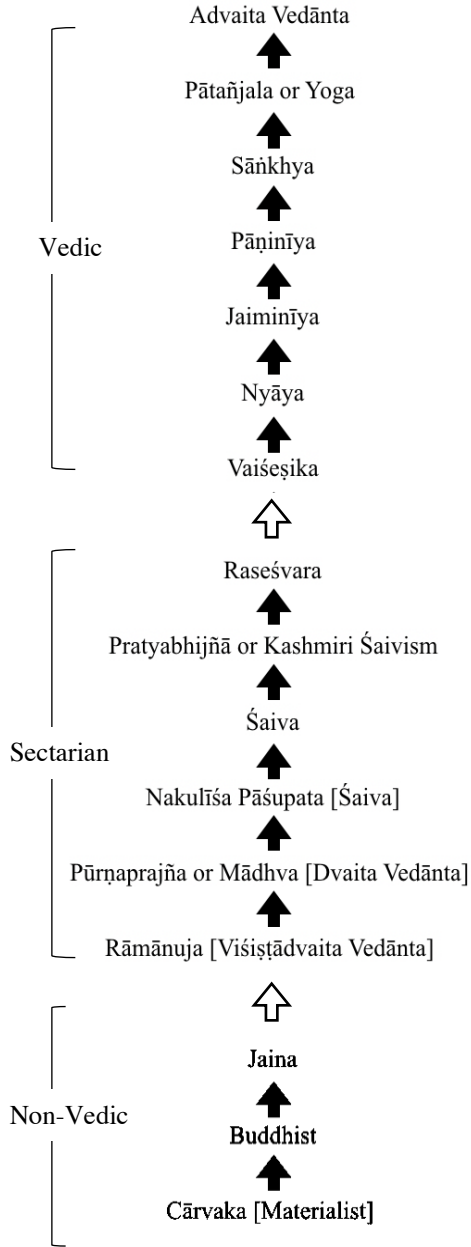
Cannibhaṭṭa, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, 2.

First, shut your eyes, o crest-jewel of deniers (o Cārvākas), since they are bloodshot with envy, and consider: *nāstikaśiromaṇe tāvadīrṣyākaṣāyite cakṣuṣī nimīlya paribhāvayatu bhavān |* Cannibhaṭṭa, 255.

²⁶ For a deep history of the pair, see J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Ritual, Kinship and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 70–80. For an elaboration of the explanation I have provided here see chapter 9 “Affirmers (Āstikas) and Deniers (Nāstikas) in Indian History in Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 166–84.

Fig. 3

Hierarchy of Viewpoints in *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*
(*The Comprehensive Compendium of Viewpoints*)



commentator, Haribhadra, the 9th century Jaina philosopher, defines *āstika* as those who affirm the existence of “another world (*paraloka*), transmigration (*gati*), virtue (*puṇya*) and vice (*pāpa*).”²⁷ On this view, only Lokāyata materialists are termed deniers (*nāstika*). Other philosophers have used the dyad to distinguish between those who accept the Veda, transmigration, some set of epistemic instruments, or the nature of the self.²⁸ Thus, though valences of this dyad have varied greatly, the implication in using the pair has remained stable: to distinguish between insiders and outsiders. The absence of any stable set of regulatory doctrines is expressed in Wendy Doniger’s memorable, and oft-quoted, observation: “Heresy, in ancient India, was in the eye of the beholder.”²⁹

²⁷ Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 155.

²⁸ As Nicholson puts it, “The central question, then, is what precisely is being affirmed or denied. Historically, commentators have given a number of different answers to this question.” Nicholson, 168.

²⁹ Wendy Doniger, “The Concept of Heresy in Hinduism,” in *On Hinduism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 44.

This does not mean that doctrines and groups were not often condemned as beyond the pale. It is just to say that the lines of demarcation were always shifting. This is partly the reason that Abhyankar’s invocation of the dyad is analytically dubious. Whose conception of *āstika-nāstika* should we apply to this case? The Buddhist, Jaina, or Vedānta? Since the text does not work within a well-defined framework of the *āstika-nāstika* dyad, it is my contention that the introduction of this analytic ultimately obscures our view of the *primary* rhetorical point of the hierarchical configuration, namely the marginalization of the Rāmānuja and Madhva schools of Vedānta. For, the acceptance of Abhyankar’s binary distinction of the schools into *āstika* and *nāstika* confounds the text’s hierarchic logic of arrangement. As Nicholson puts it, “Hierarchically arranged texts like the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* and *Sarvasiddhāntasamgraha* have a fundamental tension to deal with, since the binary *āstika/nāstika* classification is implicitly at odds with a gradual, hierarchical progression of truths.”³⁰ The primary import of including the *nāstika* schools (the Lokāyatas, Buddhists, and Jainas), in my view, is not to condemn them as *nāstika* (surely, they would already be regarded as such by any Brahmin student of the text). Rather, it is to raise suspicions, albeit implicitly, about those *nāstika*-adjacent Vedānta views, namely, the Rāmānujīya and Mādhva schools – a strategy of guilt by association. In other words, we would be mistaken to think that the work distinguishes “Hindu” *āstika* schools from the patently non-Hindu *nāstika* schools. In fact, the text groups the schools into three categories (see Fig. 3):

1. Self-evidently non-Vedic because they deny the validity of the Vedas (Lokāyata, Buddhist, and Jaina)

³⁰ Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 167.

2. Sectarian and therefore non-Vedic (Rāmānuja, Madhva, and the four Śaiva schools)
3. Vedic schools (Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, Pāṇinīya, Sāṅkhya, Pātañjala, Advaita Vedānta)

Caught in the Middle

In this section I adduce further evidence to substantiate this reading of the hierarchical arrangement of the text. The first order of evidence concerns the transition from one school of thought to the next, whereas the second concerns the re-classification of the two Vedānta schools in question (Rāmānuja and Madhva) as Vaiṣṇava schools. The prevailing theory of the mechanics of the hierarchy of views is the one that Nicholson presents in his short summary of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*.

Mādhava presents each philosophical school as a corrective to the one that came before it. So, for instance, the Cārvāka school presents the view in chapter 1 that there is only one valid means of knowledge, perception. Immediately at the beginning of chapter 2, the Buddhists challenge this view, offering arguments in support of an additional means of knowledge, rational inference.³¹

Nevertheless, Nicholson acknowledges that this dialectic mode of moving up through the schools, where the discussion of each succeeding school of thought begins with a repudiation of some central tenet of the previous school of thought, does not apply to the entire text. Still, he is loath to jettison the dialectic model in toto:

³¹ Nicholson, 159.

Mādhava continues with this conceit for approximately the first eight chapters of his work, but he uses it less and less as its artificiality becomes increasingly apparent. How does Vaiśeṣika atomism function as the logical corrective to the Raseśvara Śaiva sect, for instance? Nonetheless, the *overall impression* of his text is that the *schools function together in a dialectical process* [emphasis added] – although most of the central doctrines of the Buddhists are unacceptable to Advaita Vedānta, the Buddhists’ refutation of Cārvāka views can be accepted without reservation.³²

Nicholson’s observation that “Mādhava presents *each* [emphasis added] philosophical school as a corrective to the one that came before” holds true for the first eight of the sixteen schools, as he himself acknowledges in the sentence quoted above. Nicholson wishes to maintain that the dialectical conceit of the work can be attributed to this practice, that each new school is taken up in order to correct a view held by the prior school. But, were this the *sine qua non* for thinking that the text evinces a dialectical movement up the chain of schools to Advaita Vedānta, why should Mādhava (or Cannibhaṭṭa) use “it less and less”? According to Nicholson, the dialectical method does not work as organically as we ascend the hierarchy. But, as I show below, there is no single criterion that informs the dialectic movement (for instance, the nature of the self). Rather, the grounds on which any particular school’s views are repudiated vary. Thus, it is not the case that the criteria that were used to distinguish the lower schools from each other can no longer serve the same function for the Vedic schools. Rather, as I show below, the arrangement of the Vedic schools belies yet a different logic: the schools are arranged into complementary pairs. There is still a kind of “dialectical process,” but only in the movement

³² Nicholson, 159–60.

from the final pair of schools (Sāṅkhya-Yoga) to the regnant Advaita Vedānta. Nevertheless, this is not uniformly the case with these Vedic schools. Consequently, I do not share Nicholson’s “overall impression” of the text that “the schools function together in a dialectical process.”

To the contrary, I argue that such a “dialectic” is implemented for the first nine schools, and then once again at the culmination of the hierarchy (with Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Advaita Vedānta) and is yet another mechanism that the author uses to group together the non-Vedic schools and to distinguish them from the schools that are within the Vedic fold. For, the dialectic process is employed markedly differently among the first nine schools and among the last three Vedic schools. The fact that these nine schools are so concatenated by a cascade of corrections implies, albeit only rhetorically, that they are part of a single group. This is one of the ways of linking the two Vedāntin schools (the Rāmānuja and Madhva) to the three self-evidently non-Vedic Lokāyata, Buddhist, and Jaina schools. It is to suggest that though the two Vedāntin schools improve upon some of the deficiencies of the non-Vedic views, they are ultimately cut from the same cloth, and therefore to be consigned to the same waste-bin.

First, I show precisely how the author employs a “dialectical process” for the non-Vedic schools, expatiating on, in particular, the two Vaiṣṇava Vedāntin (Rāmānuja and Madhva) schools by illustrating the difference in the mode of introducing each school (with a repudiation of the prior school) and the substantive discussion of each school’s canonical texts, and demonstrating how they are conflated and how each is distinguished from the other. The second chapter of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, which details the relative positions of the four schools of Buddhism,³³ begins with a refutation of the principal Cārvāka/Lokāyata (Materialist) position,

³³ The Buddhists are shown to have four internal schools, arranged in a hierarchical fashion, but in a fashion inverse to the arrangement favored by the Madhyamaka doxographers. For a concise review of the *siddhānta* schema used by Tibetan Buddhists, see José Ignacio Cabezón, “The Canonization of Philosophy and the Rhetoric of Siddhānta in

namely, that the inseparable connection that is the basis for inferential reasoning is imperceptible:

On this point, the Buddhists assert that the position that has been averred (by the Cārvākas), that the inseparable connection [which is the basis for inference] is beyond the ken of knowledge, is shocking. For the inseparable connection is extraordinarily easy to know through identity and causality.³⁴

This refutation launches a discussion of the Buddhist theory of inference (*anumāna*) as an epistemic instrument. This is just as Nicholson has characterized the movement in the quotation above. The next chapter begins with a Jaina refutation of the Buddhist theory of momentariness:³⁵

Tibetan Buddhism,” in *Buddha Nature: A Festschrift in Honor of Minoru Kiyota* (Tokyo: Buddhist Books International, n.d.).

³⁴ *atra bauddhair abhidhīyate | yad abhyadhāyi avinābhāvo durbodha iti tad asādhiyaḥ | tādātmyatadutpattibhyām avinābhāvasya sujñānatvāt |*
Cannibhaṭṭa, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, 16.

³⁵ This demonstrates that the definition of doxography which Nicholson and others borrow from Richard Rorty does not apply to this text. Rorty defines doxography as “the attempt to impose a problematic on a canon drawn up without reference to that problematic, or, conversely, to impose a canon on a problematic constructed without reference to that canon.” At first sight, one might think that the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* is a doxography of the first kind, where a problematic (let us say *mokṣa* or liberation) is imposed upon a canon (the 16 viewpoints) drawn up without reference to that problematic. As the array of refutations shows, however, each succeeding school did not use the same problematic or criterion to repudiate or synthesize the views of the previous school. For, in the case of the Cārvāka materialists, the author uses the Buddhist theory of inference to reject the conclusions of the Cārvāka philosophers, whereas in the case of the Buddhists, the author uses the Jaina argument regarding the incoherence of radical momentariness to refute the Buddhist position. This only confirms the claim that there can be no single criterion to inform the configuration of the hierarchy of views.
Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 10.

On that matter, the Jainas, accepting stability to some extent, find the Buddhist³⁶ position untenable, and reject their position on momentariness. Were one not to depend on any kind of stable self then accomplishing means and ends in this and other worlds would be futile. For it is not possible that one [person or entity] should enjoy what another³⁷ creates.³⁸

In this transition, the discussion of the principal points of Jaina doctrine begins with a classically Jaina repudiation of the Buddhist theory of radical momentariness.³⁹ The next chapter, which takes up the views of the Rāmānuja school, begins with a refutation of the Jaina view of the doctrine of many-sidedness.

This Jaina view deserves the condemnation of those who accept the validity of epistemic instruments. For, it is not possible that an ultimately existent entity should simultaneously possess qualities such as existence and non-existence that are also ultimately real. And, confronted with the fact that the co-occurrence of mutually contradictory qualities – such as existence and non-existence – is not possible, one should not retort that these [contradictory qualities] could be

³⁶ As a glance at the Sanskrit shows, the references to the Jainas and Buddhists are sartorial: the Buddhists are those who have dropped the hems of their garments (*mukta-kaccha*), whereas the Jainas are simply the “naked ones” (*vivasana*).

³⁷ which would be the entailment of a theory of a radically momentary self.

³⁸ *tad itthaṃ muktakacchānāṃ matam asahamānā vivasanāḥ kathaṃcit sthāyitvam āsthāya kṣaṇikatvapakṣaṃ pratikṣipanti | yady ātmā kaścīn nāsthīyeta sthāyī tadaihalaukikapāralaukikaphalasādhanaśampādanam viphalam bhavet | na hy etat sambhavaty anyah karoty anyo bhuṅkta iti |*
Cannibhaṭṭa, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, 48.

³⁹ For a similar and longer Jaina engagement with this issue, see Chapter 6 of HaribhadraSūri, *Anekāntajayapatākā*, vol. 2, 2 vols., Gaekwad’s Oriental Series (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1947). For instance, in refuting the Buddhist position on the radical momentariness of the self, Haribhadra writes: “To wit: one is tormented by existential discontent, another is repulsed by it [this discontent], and yet another is liberated [from it] through detachment, thus, this position is infelicitous, because of its incoherence.” *tathā hi anya eva duḥkhaiḥ sāmsārikaiḥ pīḍyate ’nyas ca nirvidyate ’nyasya ca virāgamuktīy’ato ’śobhanam etat atiprasaṅgāt |*

alternatives. Since there is a rule that, while actions may be optional, entities may not.⁴⁰

These three excerpts illustrate the manner in which a hierarchical view is constituted. In commencing each chapter with the rectification of a mistaken view advanced by the previous school, we are shown that each succeeding view corrects the defects (or at least a single defect) of the previous school. Implicit in this conception of improvement is the view that the views are all linked to each other, so that a succeeding view *can* improve upon a prior view. This is not the case with the Vedic views beginning with the Vaiśeṣika school. For instance, the chapter on the Vaiśeṣika school, which follows on the Raseśvara (Alchemist) school – the last of four Śaiva schools – does not begin with a refutation of a central Raseśvara tenet. It begins thus:

Those who possess insight into all things desire to be rid of the discontent that is affirmed by the awareness of all beings, insofar as it is experienced as contrary to nature. Desiring to know the means to extirpating that discontent, they contrive the means that is but the realization of the highest lord. [They know this] on the basis of the validity of such statements as the following from the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*:

Only when people are able to roll up the sky like a piece of leather will suffering come to an end, without first knowing Śiva.

Further, the realization of the highest lord is to be instantiated through learning, thought and meditation. Since it states:

⁴⁰ *tadetad ārhatamatam prāmāṇikagarhaṇam arhati | na hy ekasmin vastuni paramārthe sati paramārthasatām yugapatsadasattvādidharmāṇām samāveśaḥ sambhavati | na ca sadasattvayoḥ parasparaviruddhayoḥ samuccayāsambhava vikalpaḥ kiṃ na syāditi vaditavyam | kriya hi vikalpyate na vastviti nyāyāt | Cannibhaṭṭa, Sarvadarśanasamgraha, 89.*

Through scripture, inference and the power of habitual meditation,⁴¹ having devised wisdom in these three ways, he obtains the highest Yoga.⁴²

Departing from his method in introducing to each of the eight preceding schools, the author begins the chapter on the Vaiśeṣika school not with a refutation of preceding Śaiva school of Alchemy (Raseśvara), but with a re-orientation of the fundamental line of inquiry inaugurated by the work: how do humans extirpate discontent and ensure contentment? The author adduces a passage from the Upaniṣads to demonstrate that the inferential reasoning that impels the epistemic inquiries of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools is endorsed by the Vedic corpus as one of the means to liberation. For, as the author explains immediately after this opening, “In this case, thought (*manana*) depends upon inference (*anumāna*). And inference depends upon the awareness of pervasion. And, awareness of pervasion depends upon the discrimination of entities.” Thus, *manana*,⁴³ one of the prerequisites for the realization of Brahman, is shown to implicate the system of logic that Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika promulgate. Further, even though the realist Vaiśeṣika school is not based on a hermeneutic of the Vedas, nor do its ends conform to the Upaniṣadic ends of liberation, still the author begins with a quotation from the Śvetāśvatara

⁴¹ Note that the triad mentioned here maps on to the three means to achieve awareness of Brahman: studying the Vedānta scripture (*śravaṇa* = *āgama*), subjecting that study to careful examination (*manana* = *anumāna*), and meditating upon Brahman (*nididhyāsana* = *dhyāna*).

⁴² *iha khalu nikhilaprekṣāvān nisargapratikūlavedanīyatayā nikhilātmasaṃvedanasiddhaṃ duḥkhaṃ jihāsuh parameśvarasākṣātkāram upāyam ākalayati | yadā carmavadākāśaṃ veṣṭayiṣyanti mānavāḥ | tadā śivam avijñāya duḥkhasyānto bhaviṣyati || ityādivacananicayaprāmāṇyāt | parameśvarasākṣātkāraśca śravaṇamananabhāvanābhir bhāvanīyaḥ | yadāha āgamenānumānena dhyānābhyāsabalena ca | tridhā prakalpayan prajñāṃ yogam uttamam || iti |*
Cannibhaṭṭa, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, 210.

⁴³ *Śravaṇa* (hearing/learning), *manana* (reflection), and *nididhyāsana* (meditation) are the three steps to realizing *brahman*, as explicated in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (2.4.5 and 4.5.6 for instance). These three orientations to the Upaniṣads become a point of some hermeneutic controversy, particularly for Śāṅkara. See Chapter 2.

Upaniṣads, signaling thereby that the schools beginning with the Vaiśeṣika, unlike those that came before, are ultimately faithful to the Vedas and are committed to explicating Vedic ends.⁴⁴ This is to distinguish the Vedic schools that follow from those prior sectarian Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava schools -- which at first glance may appear “Hindu” -- that have their own scriptures (*āgamas*), which they privilege over or against the Vedas.

Dual Allegiances

The logic of classification appears to be defined by sources of authority. In effect, the first group, comprising three schools, is self-evidently non-Vedic since they deny the validity of the Vedas. The second group, comprising the two “Vaiṣṇava” schools and the four Śaiva schools, are also ultimately non-Vedic. Even if they acknowledge the validity of the Vedas, their metaphysics and thus their doctrines of liberation are undergirded by the authority of their scriptures, which they consider to surpass the authority of the Vedas. The final group, beginning with the Vaiśeṣika school, is set off in two ways. First, they are safely within the Vedic fold. Second, there is no longer any dialectical process that moves up the chain of these schools. The only school that remains apart is the regnant Advaita Vedānta.

Now that we have an outline of the syntactic logic of the text, let us turn to those two schools of Vedānta that the text re-classifies as Vaiṣṇava schools to clarify this logic of hierarchical classification.

⁴⁴ For more on the Vaiśeṣika system, see Wilhelm. Halbfass, *On Being and What There Is* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992), 70. Halbfass concludes on the putative instigation for the school: “Regardless of all specific historical and philological questions, and whatever the ‘original beginning’ of the Vaiśeṣikasūtra may have been, it is safe to say that, in its own way and in accordance with its own self-understanding, classical Vaiśeṣika deals with the fundamental ontological question *What is There?*” As regards the connection of this ontological enterprise to the soteriological concerns at the heart of most interpretations of the Upaniṣads (and certainly for the Advaita author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*), Halbfass notes that “Even the allied Nyāya system has raised the charge of soteriological irrelevance against the Vaiśeṣika project of exhaustive enumeration.”

In my analysis of the treatment of Rāmānuja and Madhva schools of Vedānta, I attempt to clarify two additional dimensions in order to demonstrate that the hierarchical arrangement serves to *other* these two rival schools of Advaita Vedānta. The first dimension is that these two schools are re-classified strategically to draw out the similarities between the two schools, and to link them to the Jaina school that precedes them. Thus, in these opening sections of the chapters, the Rāmānuja and Madhva schools are conflated with each other, conflated with the Jaina school, and reduced to the Vaiṣṇava dimension of their identity. The second dimension of this analysis is to show the disjuncture in the manner of introducing and refuting these schools and the substantive discussions of their canonical text. Thus, even though the Rāmānuja school is conflated with the Jaina and Madhva schools, the substantive discussion of its canonical texts treats Vedānta topics. This demonstrates that the substantive treatment of each school may be separable from its classification and placement along the hierarchy of views. Consequently, the hierarchical arrangement (at least of the non-Vedic schools) naturalizes the marginal position of the Rāmānujīya and Madhva schools of Vedānta on the fringes of what we might think of as a non-Vedic but Hindu penumbra.

First, let us consider the Madhva repudiation of the preceding Rāmānuja school. The repudiation is unlike any other in the text in two respects. First, before identifying the point of divergence between the two schools, the author produces a litany of striking *similarities* between the two schools. That is, instead of immediately announcing the fatal weakness in the Rāmānuja position (as is the invariable *modus operandi* for the remainder of the schools), the Madhva interlocutor first details the doctrinal alignment of the two schools and then refutes it on a single point of divergence. Nevertheless, even this point of divergence is a point of convergence between the Rāmānuja and Jaina views. Thus, in the very first sentence of the Madhva chapter,

the Rāmānuja school is aligned both with the school that follows it (Madhva) and the school that precedes it (Jaina).

Granted that they [Rāmānujīyas and Mādhdvas] are indistinguishable on the following points of doctrine: the atomic dimensions of the self; the servitude of the self; that the Veda has no personal author; the fact that the Veda teaches us the nature of reality; that the Veda is intrinsically valid; that there are three valid epistemic instruments; the dependence upon Pañcarātra; the reality of the multiplicity of creation. Nevertheless, Ānandatīrtha (Madhva) has dismissed this Rāmānuja doctrine, since it is inclined to the Jain position in accepting the trio of positions beginning with the distinctions that are mutually contradictory. Consequently, showing, by an alternative method, that Vedānta statements such as “*sa ātmā tat tvam asi*” mean something entirely different (than they do),⁴⁵ Ānandatīrtha has charted a new course under the guise of an interpretation of the *Brahmasūtra*.⁴⁶

As I noted in introducing the quotation; there are three aspects that are of interest to our present discussion:

- a. The points of doctrinal agreement between Rāmānuja and Madhva are listed first. This list, which draws on elements of Vedānta and Vaiṣṇava doctrine, emphasizes that the two schools are very closely aligned on the most important theological matters. This serves to

⁴⁵ This is a reference to Madhva’s controversial parsing of the Upaniṣadic phrase as *sa ātmā atat tvam asi* (“You are not that self” as opposed to the standard interpretation: “The self, that is what you are”) to yield a dualist basis for his theological project.

⁴⁶ *tad etad rāmānujamataṃ jīvānutva-dāsatva-vedāpauruṣeyatva-siddhārtha-bodhakatva-svataḥ-pramāṇatva-pramāṇa-tritva-pañcarātropajīvyatva-prapañca-bheda-satyatvādi-sāmye’ pi paraspara-viruddha-bhedādi-pakṣatraya-kakṣikāreṇa kṣapaṇaka-pakṣa-nikṣiptam ity’upekṣamānaḥ sa ātmā tat tvam asi ityādi-vedānta-vākya-jātasya bhaṅgy-antareṇārthāntara-paratvam upapādya brahma-mīmāṃsā-vivaraṇa-vyājenānandatīrthaḥ prasthānāntaram āsthiṣat |*
Cannibhaṭṭa, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, 128.

soften the blow of rejection that follows on the heels of this assertion of ideological agreement. As I have stated above, this is the only instance in which two schools are so closely identified (or indeed identified at all) in matters of doctrine.

- b. Even in the dismissal of the Rāmānujīya school, the school is faulted not for one of its signature positions but for being too close to the Jaina view on one issue, thus illustrating the precise mode of *othering* that is implicit in the hierarchical arrangement of the views. The logic, albeit unstated, is: The Rāmānujīyas and Mādhvas remain in agreement on most theological matters, while the Jainas are clearly beyond the pale. But, insofar as the Rāmānujīyas take up certain Jaina positions, they must be dismissed on those points.
- c. Lastly, Ānandatīrtha (an alias for Madhva) is credited with fabricating an entirely different system (*prasthānāntara*) on the pretext of providing an explanation (*vivarāṇa*) of the *Brahmasūtra* (*brahmanīmāmsā*). In effect, the system that the text take up is dismissed, out of hand, as a fraud. It is not the school of Vedānta it pretends to be. The text presents as evidence Madhva's (Ānandatīrtha's) decidedly anti-Vedāntin (from the Advaita Vedānta point of view) parsing of the Upaniṣadic declaration *sa ātmā tat tvam asi* as *sa ātmā atat tvam asi* to undergird his dualist and realist interpretation of the Vedānta.

This raises the question; if the Madhva school is not the school of Vedānta that it pretends to be, then what is it? The answer is provided in the introduction to the next chapter, where the views of the Śaiva Pāśupatas are taken up for discussion.

This very Vaiṣṇava view is one of dependence upon another -- expressed by words such as “servitude” (or the fact of being a servant) -- because it brings

discontent, insofar as it [i.e. servitude] is not a condition that strives for an end to suffering. The Māheśvaras [Pāśupatas] do not care for this view because they seek ultimate sovereignty [supremacy]. They think that those who are thought to be liberated by the others [i.e. by the Madhvas] are not so, because they are dependent, which is to say because they do not possess ultimate sovereignty as we do. They are liberated, who, while human, are imbued with the qualities of the sovereign, because they are free from the source of all suffering, just like the sovereign. Certain Māheśvaras (i.e. Śaivas), propounding this inference as proof, adhere to the Pāśupata doctrines, which, concerned as they are with the elaboration of the five ends, are the means to the ultimate human ends.⁴⁷

The Pāśupata refutation of the Madhva school discloses two salient characteristics on the basis of which the Madhva (and Rāmānuja) schools are regarded as deficient. The first is that the Madhva school is not what it purports to be, namely, a school of Vedānta, for it is a Vaiṣṇava sect. In this, it is conflated also with the Rāmānuja school, since one of the points of agreement between the two, as stated in the quote above, is the acceptance of the Pañcarātra Vaiṣṇava scripture. Thus, the two schools are re-classified as Vaiṣṇava sectarian schools, rather than rival schools of Vedānta. The implicit condemnation is that these two schools privilege the Vaiṣṇava Pañcarātra scriptures (*āgamas*) over the Vedas, and are thus to be excluded from the Vedic fold.

Second, the Madhva school's theory of liberation is refuted here as incompatible with any coherent conception of liberation. Let me recapitulate some of the fundamental tenets of the Madhva school in order to appreciate the broadsides launched against the Mādhyas on the

⁴⁷ *tadetad vaiṣṇava-mataṃ dāsatvādi-pada-vedanīyaṃ para-tantratvaṃ duḥkhāvahatvān na duḥkhāntād īpsitāspadam ity arocayamānāḥ pāramaiśvaryaṃ kāmayaṃmānāḥ parābhimatā muktā na bhavanti paratantratvāt pāramaiśvaryaḥ hitatvād asmadādivat muktātmānaś ca parameśvaraguṇasambandhinaḥ puruṣatve sati samastaduḥkhabijavidhuratvāt parameśvaravat ityādyanumānaṃ pramāṇaṃ pratipadyamānāḥ kecana māheśvarāḥ parampuruṣārthasādhanam pañcārthaprapañcanaparam pāśupataśāstram āśrayante |*
Cannibhaṭṭa, 161.

question of sovereignty in a state of liberation. The school is often classified as a dualist school, which can be misleading, since the label does not reflect the school's ontological commitments. On that score, they posit that creation is characterized by a five-fold difference.⁴⁸ This five-fold difference is explicated as:

The distinction between the lord (Viṣṇu) and the self (*jīva*), the distinction between the lord and insentient things, similarly, the mutual difference between distinct selves, and the distinction between the self and insentient things, and the mutual distinction between insentient things. Such is the universe, characterized by a five-fold distinction.⁴⁹

The “dualist” label derives from the central theological tenet of the school, which the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* characterizes thus:

On this view, reality is of two kinds, according to the distinction between independent reality and dependent reality. This is stated in the *Tattvaviveka*: Reality is taken to be of two kinds: independent and dependent. Lord Viṣṇu is independent, without faults and imbued with all the virtues.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *tasmād anādir evāyam prakṛṣṭaḥ pañcavidho bhedaprapañcaḥ* | Cannibhaṭṭa, 140.

⁴⁹ *jīveśvarabhidā caiva jaḍeśvarabhidā tathā |*
jīvabhedo mīthaścaiva jaḍajīvabhido tathā ||
mīthaścca jaḍabhedo yaḥ prapañco bhedapāñcakaḥ | Cannibhaṭṭa, 142.

⁵⁰ *tanmate hi dvididhaṃ tattvaṃ svatantraparatanrabhedāt | taduktaṃ tattvaviveke svatantraṃ paratantraṃ ca dvididhaṃ tattvaṃ iṣyate | svatantra bhagavān viṣṇur nirdoṣo 'śeṣasadguṇaḥ ||* Cannibhaṭṭa, 128.

It is precisely on this front that the Pāśupata interlocutor dismisses the school's vision of liberation. The Mādhvas maintain that there are distinct selves, each striving for liberation, which they may gain through the grace of Lord Viṣṇu. Further, the Mādhvas accept that different selves have differing capacities for liberation, and thus liberation is differently experienced by fundamentally distinct selves. According to the Pāśupatas, the sort of liberation whereby the self is still entirely dependent upon another (the lord), and which therefore does not consist of sovereignty, is not worthy of the name. Thus, recourse to the standard of sovereignty calls into question devotional surrender to the lord, one of the principal aspects of the theology of the Rāmānuja and Mādhva Vedāntins.

If it is quite clear from this analysis that the two schools of Vedānta were re-classified as Vaiṣṇava sects, then surely one would expect the discussions of their principal tenets also to be concerned with this dimension of their identity. But this is not so. In other words, the re-description and re-orientation of these schools was largely relegated to the rhetorical register and did not vitiate, entirely, the discussion of the core tenets of the systems. For instance, the substantive discussion of the tenets of these two schools, the Rāmānujīya and the Mādhva, treats them as schools of Vedānta and, accordingly, details each school's interpretation of the first four aphorisms (*sūtras*) of the *Brahmasūtras*. And yet, in introducing the Rāmānuja school, there is no acknowledgement that it is a school of Vedānta. In the case of the Mādhva school, the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* introduces it as a Vaiṣṇava view, which is, though not entirely wrong, obscurantist.

Dubious Dialectics

So far, I have shown that the “dialectical process,” whereby each succeeding school begins with the correction of a central tenet of the prior school, operates only with regard to the non-Vedic schools. This creates the effect that these schools lie on a continuum within a set, where the difference between the schools is one of degree and not type. By contrast, this logic of *othering* shows that certain (certainly the Vaiṣṇava) schools are just as radical as the Buddhist or Cārvāka school. I have also stated that this pattern of refutation is suspended as soon as we move over to the so-called Vedic schools. Among the Vedic schools, the only exception to this pattern occurs in the discussion on the Sāṅkhya school, which begins with a repudiation of *vivarta-vāda*, “the doctrine of illusion”:

Now, when the Sāṅkhyas have, with alacrity, declared the opposing doctrine of transformation, how could the doctrine of illusion continue to be privileged? This is their [the Sāṅkhyas’] boastful cry.⁵¹

The interpretation I have offered for the pattern among the non-Vedic schools does not apply in this case, for a number of reasons. Most important and obvious of all, the Sāṅkhya refutation does not identify the school that holds the view (of the doctrine of illusion, i.e. *vivartavāda*) in question. Presumably, given the logic of the pattern as it has functioned among the non-Vedic schools, we should expect that this is a charge levelled against the preceding school: the Pāṇinīya school of Grammar. But the case is not as straightforward as we would like, since the previous chapter does not take up – at least *explicitly* – the doctrine of error or illusion (*vivartavāda*) against which the partisans of Sāṅkhya advance the theory of transformation (*pariṇā mavāda*). The doctrine of illusion (namely, that the phenomenal world of difference and

⁵¹ *atha sāṅkhyair ākhyāte pariṇā mavāde paripanthini jāgarūke kathamkāraṃ vivartavāda ādaraṇīyo bhavet | eṣa hi teṣāṃ āghoṣaḥ* | Cannibhaṭṭa, 311.

plurality is but an illusion superimposed upon the ultimate monist reality of *brahman*) is the ontological cornerstone of Advaita Vedānta. Thus, it is possible that this repudiation is proleptic; the chapter on Sāṅkhya raises as its antithesis a view that is elaborated upon in a future chapter in order to make the case against it. As my argument shows, this Sāṅkhya interruption is addressed backward – to the Pāṇinīya school of Grammar – and forward – to the Advaita Vedānta school. The point of the refutation is to cleave the Vedic schools into pairs (thus, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā-Pāṇinīya, Sāṅkhya-Yoga), with the regnant school of Advaita Vedānta set apart.

To return to the refutation quoted above, the Sāṅkhya repudiation of the doctrine of illusion (*vivartavāda*) simultaneously addresses the non-dual implications of Bhartṛhari’s doctrine of *sphoṭa* (the eternal unitary word) as it is represented in the chapter on the Pāṇinīya school and the doctrine as it is formulated by the Advaita Vedāntins. The two chapters that precede the chapter on Sāṅkhya—the chapter on Mīmāṃsā and the chapter on Grammar—are connected – substantively – on one point: the eternality of sound. Although the chapter on Mīmāṃsā addresses a number of topics,⁵² one of these consists of the arguments in support of the eternality of sound.⁵³ In contrast to the Nyāya account that preceded it, the Mīmāṃsakas argue that individual phonemes (*vyakti*) are eternal, that they are merely articulated in different places and times by individual articulators. Thus, the differences (of quality, of location, of time)

⁵² The Mīmāṃsā chapter begins with a table of contents of the canonical text of the school: The Aphorisms of Jaimini (*Jaiminisūtras* or *Mīmāṃsāsūtras*). Then, following the custom set for most of the other schools, the first *sūtra* (“Now then, an inquiry into dharma;” *athāto dharmajijñāsā*) is taken up for discussion. This leads into a longer disquisition into the injunction to study the Veda (*svādhyāyo ’dhyetavyaḥ*), which, in turn, occasions a discussion of the nature and status of different types of Vedic injunctions. On the question of the injunction to study the Veda, the author first presents the arguments according to the Kumārila school and then the Prabhākara school of Mīmāṃsā. The next discussion to follow addresses the authorlessness of the Veda, a discussion that turns to the question of the eternality of sound [phonemes]. The last topic that is taken up is the intrinsic validity (*svataḥprāmāṇya*) of the Veda, and the arguments in favor follow those marshalled by Kumārila in the *Ślokavārttika*.

⁵³ The word “sound” is a translation of the word *śabda* which is opposed to the word *nāda* or articulated sound, and in this discussion, is exemplified with the phoneme *ga*.

that appear to constitute sounds in their articulation are set aside as accidental to the sound (or phoneme) itself. In other words, there is an elaboration of the eternality and, relatedly, of the non-dual nature of the most fundamental units of speech: phonemes.⁵⁴ This discussion of the eternality of sound is embedded within a larger discussion regarding the eternality and authorless-ness of the Veda – arguments that are fundamental to the Mīmāṃsā claims regarding the intrinsic validity of the Veda. Thus, though this argument regarding the eternality of sound is only one among many arguments dealt with in the Mīmāṃsā chapter, it nevertheless connects the chapter to the Pāṇinīya (Grammar) chapter which follows in two important ways. First, insofar as it addresses the eternality of sound it connects the Mīmāṃsā chapter to the much longer, and detailed, discussion in the Pāṇinīya chapter on the non-dual nature of sound. Second, this argument mimics the Advaita Vedānta position – also reinforced by the *sphoṭa* arguments advanced in the Pāṇinīya chapter – that phenomenal reality is but an illusory, or adventitious,

⁵⁴ The discussion is concluded with a conclusive answer to the dilemma: “On that point, is the superimposition of contradictory qualities (of sound) [such as the sound being long or short] thought to be intrinsic, or are these, insofar as they establish distinction, entirely subjective? There is no evidence for the first position, [namely, that these contradictory qualities are intrinsic to sound]. Otherwise, were we to accept these distinctions to be intrinsic, there would occur the knowledge, “Caitra has uttered ten *ga* sounds” but not that [he has uttered] the *ga* sound ten times. As for the second [horn of the dilemma] the intrinsic distinctions are not established; since, distinctions that are contingent upon other things do not vitiate the identity [of sound], which is intrinsic to it. Even space ought not be intrinsically differentiated owing to the distinction of adjuncts such as pots. [The example illustrates that space, even when it is enclosed in a pot – or some other adventitious enclosure – is still space; there is no intrinsic difference no matter how it is manifest]. In this case [of sound] the cause of uttered sound is some conventional action that is set aside. Thus, the teachers have said:

“The purpose of the universal is found to be served by the phoneme alone; [what is required] is to be gained from the individual from sounds. Thus, the conceptualization of such universals as *ga*-ness is entirely pointless.” And similarly, “When recognition arises independently from sound, that very recognition blocks all inferences of sound being non-eternal.”

tatra kiṃ svābhāviko viruddhadharādhyāso bhedasādhakatvenābhimataḥ prātītiko vā | prathame'siddhiḥ | aparathā svābhāvikaḥ bhedaḥ byupagame daśa gākārān udacārayac caitra iti pratipattiḥ syānna tu daśakṛtvo gākāra iti | dvitīye tu na svābhāvikaḥ bhedaḥ siddhiḥ | na hi paropādhibhedena svābhāvikaḥ aikyaṃ viḥanyate | mā bhūn nabhaso 'pi kumbhādyupādhibhedātsvābhāviko bhedaḥ | tatra vyāvṛttavyavahāro nādanidānaḥ | taduktamācāryaiḥ prayojanaṃ tu yaj jātes tadvarṇādeva lapsyate | vyaktīlabhyaṃ tu nādebhya iti gatvādidhīr vṛthā || thathā ca

pratya bhijñā yadā śabde jāgarti niravagrahā | anityatvānumānāni saiva sarvāṇi bādhathe || Cannibhaṭṭa, Sarvadarśanasamgraha, 277.

differentiation of some prior, and ultimate, unity. This argument, which is developed in far greater detail in the Pāṇinīya chapter, in terms that explicitly signal its connection to an Advaita Vedānta cosmology, constitutes the doctrine of illusion (*vivartavāda*) that the initial lines of the Sāṅkhya chapter repudiate.

Sound Arguments?

If the Mīmāṃsā arguments for the eternity of sounds comprises an implicit endorsement of the Advaita Vedānta doctrine of illusion (*vivartavāda*), the Pāṇinīya chapter makes that link more legible. The chapter begins, typically, with an analysis of the opening to a canonical text of the tradition. In this case, the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* chooses the more formulaic opening line (“Now, the teaching of words,” *atha śabdānuśāsanam*) of Patañjali’s *Mahābhāṣya* instead of Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (*vṛddhirādaic*) since Patañjali’s statement (*atha śabdānuśāsanam*) readily prompts a discussion of the four *anubandhas* (the four introductory topics, viz: a. the subject matter or *viśaya*, b. the eligible reader or *adhikārin*, c. the purpose or *prayojana*, and d. the connection or *sambandha*) that are crucial to constituting a certain discourse as a theory (*śāstra*). The first topic of discussion, namely this opening line from Patañjali, is followed by an appraisal of grammar as an ancillary (*vedāṅga*) to knowing the Veda. The author argues that grammar ought to be considered the principal *vedāṅga*. The next section of the chapter marks a departure in two ways: first, the author dispenses with the technical topics of grammar, drawing upon the works of the traditional teachers (Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali being primary; the author also refers to Kaiyaṭa frequently), and shifts to a discussion that draws upon the philosophical issues raised by Bhartṛhari in his *Vākyapadīya*.

I do not rehearse here the use the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* makes of the *Vākyapadīya* and *sphoṭa* theory to advance an argument in support of the transcendent unity of the *word*, and the concomitant theory of illusion, to explain the phenomenal world of multiplicity. Rather, I have tailored my analysis to answer two questions that I have already raised. First, should we characterize the Mīmāṃsaka and Pāṇinīya discussions of the ultimate linguistic unit as dialectical in their movement? Second, does the account of *sphoṭa* formulated in the Pāṇinīya chapter amount to an endorsement of the theory of illusion (*vivartavāda*), which forms the object of the Sāṅkhya repudiation that follows? The author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* begins the discussion of *sphoṭa* (the word) with a citation of the opening verse of the *Vākyapadīya*:

Hari [i.e. Bhartṛhari] has stated in the “Brahmakāṇḍa” (The Section on *brahman*) [of the *Vākyapadīya*] that *brahman* is the eternal indivisible sound called *sphoṭa* and is the ultimate cause of the universe:

Eternal *brahman*, which is imperishable, is the nature of sound.

It appears in the form of objects whence the creation of the universe.⁵⁵

This verse, which describes the metaphysical primacy of *sphoṭa*, sheds light on both of the questions I have raised above. First, it identifies *sphoṭa* with *brahman*, and second, it asserts *sphoṭa*’s metaphysical priority. Third, the verse uses the verb *vivartate* (*vi-vṛt*) to describe the transformation of *sphoṭa* into the diversity of the phenomenal world. This verb (*vṛt*, with the preverb *vi*) gives us the word for illusion or error (*vivarta*) that forms the basis of the Sāṅkhya

⁵⁵ *jagadnidānaṃ sphoṭākhyo niravayavo nityaḥ śabdo brahmaiveti hariṇābhāṇi brahmakāṇḍe anādinidhanaṃ brahma śabdatattvaṃ tadakṣaram | vivartate ’rthabhāvena prakriyā jagato yataḥ || Cannibhaṭṭa, 298.*

refutation to follow. Lastly, the arguments for the word, rather than the phoneme, being the fundamental unit of meaning, ultimately unitary, connect this discussion to the Mīmāṃsā arguments regarding the eternality of sound. Indeed, the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, supplies an excerpt from Kaiyaṭa to emphasize that the school of Grammar takes as the fundamental unity of meaning the word rather than the phoneme.

And Kaiyaṭa has explained this in the section that begins: “The Grammarians accept that the word – as distinct from the phonemes – expresses meaning; since, were the phonemes expressive then it would be entailed that the second and following phonemes [in a word] would be meaningless,” and ends: “Thus, the *Vākyapadīya* has established, at length, that the *sphoṭa*, which is distinct from them [the phonemes] and which is manifest by sound (*nāda*), is expressive.⁵⁶

In this movement from the phoneme to the word as the fundamental – and eternal, unchanging, non-dual – unit of meaning, perhaps we can discern a dialectical movement, though such an observation must be tempered by the acknowledgement that the Mīmāṃsā discussion of the eternality of sound comprises a very small portion of the preceding chapter. There is, nevertheless, more evidence to support the argument for a dialectical movement, namely, that the primary interlocutor that the author selects to argue against the *sphoṭa* position is the Mīmāṃsaka Kumārilabhaṭṭa. Two objections are adduced from Kumārilabhaṭṭa’s *Ślokavārttika* to argue against the position that *sphoṭa* is the unit of meaning. The first objection poses an unresolvable dilemma for the Grammarian in asking, Does the *sphoṭa* express meaning only when it is manifest or does it do so even when it is not manifest? Were we to accept the

⁵⁶ *vivṛtaṃ ca kaiyaṭena – vaiyākaraṇā varṇavyatiriktasya padasya vācakatvam icchanti | varṇānāṃ vācakatve dviṭīyādīvarṇoccāranānarthakyaprasaṅgād ityādinā tadvyatiriktaḥ sphoṭo nādābhivyāṅgyo vācako vistareṇa vākyapadīye vyavasthāpita ityantena prabandhena | Cannibhaṭṭa, 300.*

Grammarians' position that *sphoṭa* is eternal, then it should always already be expressive. If, on the other hand, *sphoṭa* must be manifest in order to express meaning, then, do the phonemes manifest *sphoṭa* individually or collectively?

Thus, Bhaṭṭācārya [i.e. Kumārilabhaṭṭa] has stated in the *Mīmāṃsāślokaṅkārikā*:
The one who thinks that an indivisible *sphoṭa* is manifest by cognitions of phonemes is not freed from even a single reproach.⁵⁷

The second objection sourced from the *Ślokaṅkārikā* of Kumārilabhaṭṭa makes the point that the cognition of a word depends upon the order in which the constituent phonemes are expressed, because those phonemes leave a trace which aids the cognition of the word. Thus, Kumārilabhaṭṭa is once more invoked to show that the sequence of phonemes is critical to the meaning expressed by the word; indeed, on this view, there is no warrant to impute a separate entity "word" distinct from a collection of phonemes in a definite sequence. Therefore, the Mīmāṃsaka interlocutor sums up his position that, since phonemes are just as efficacious in conveying meaning, stipulating an extraneous category of *sphoṭa* violates the rules of parsimony. It is not necessary to see out the argument to conclude that this portion of the Pāṇinīya chapter attempts to connect itself to the previous school, and to improve upon a view settled by it. Here, we may argue, are the lineaments, if not the rigid structure, of a dialectical movement, wherein the Grammarians engage the prior school, Mīmāṃsā, on a key philosophical question to advance a new position. The coupling of schools is consistent among the Vedic schools; I show below that the Sāṅkhya school is similarly paired with the Yoga school.

⁵⁷ *taduktam bhaṭṭācāryair mīmāṃsāślokaṅkārikā
yasyānavayavaḥ sphoṭo vyajyate varnabuddhibhiḥ |
so 'pi paryanuyogena naikenāpi vimucyate || Cannibhaṭṭa, Sarvadarśanasamgraha.*

I have already pointed out that the use of Bhartṛhari foregrounds a non-dual strain of the Grammatical tradition, one that is, in many critical respects, indistinguishable from the non-dualism of Advaita Vedānta. I have also shown that the use of *vi-vṛt* may provide the basis – however flimsy – to connect this chapter to the refutation that begins the chapter on Sāṅkhya. On the other hand, the substantive espousal of a non-dual ontology in the Pāṇinīya chapter, and the concomitant endorsement of a theory of illusion to explain the phenomenal world makes for firmer ground on which the refutation, in the form of the Sāṅkhya theory of transformation (*pariṇāma*), may comfortably rest. I provide only a summary of the arguments that the author ascribes to the Grammarians in order to show that it may have been this non-dual formulation of the word (*sphoṭa*) to which the Sāṅkhya refutation referred. I point out three elements of the argument for a non-dual conceptualization of the metaphysical *word*. First, the author of the text works through the argument that all words have a single ultimate referent, namely “being” (*sattā*). Second, the author connects being to *brahman*. Third, the author considers the soteriological capacity of Grammar, thereby showing that the ends of Grammar are the same as the ends of Advaita Vedānta: liberation, which consists of the knowledge of the monist principle *brahman*.

Let us take up the first of these elements: the contention that “being” (*sattā*) is the referent of all words. It is this great undifferentiated being that is differentiated – albeit illusorily – in the objects that constitute the phenomenal world. Thus:

Being (*sattā*) alone is the great commonality that is called the universal or class property (*jāti*). It inheres among cows and horses and other things whose distinctions are imagined, insofar as being distinguished by those factors

connected to them, which are their locus. *Cow-ness* for instance is a lower universal, but, ultimately, it is not different than it [Being].⁵⁸

The author advances a similar analysis of verbs:

On the view that the verb expresses *bhāva*: *bhāva* is nothing but Being (*sattā*); thus, the referent of the verb is Being (*sattā*). On the view that the verb expresses action:

others say that action is a class property, which occurs in many individual [instances].

Thus, because, in the “Exposition of Action” [section of the *Vākyapadīya*], there is a demonstration that action is of the nature of a class property, Being *is* the referent of the verb. Further, because of the prescription of *tva*, *tal* and the like in the sense of being, according to the Pāṇinīya sūtra “*tasya bhāvastvatalau*” it is logical that they express Being. And that Being, because it is free from origination and extinction, is eternal. Insofar as the entire phenomenal world is but an illusory form of it (*tadvivartatayā*) and because it is free from distinction substantively, temporally, and spatially, that Being is designated the “Great Self” (*mahān ātmā*) – this is point of the pair of verses [of Bhartṛhari] that follow...⁵⁹

Drawing upon the *Vākyapadīya*, and bolstering these citations with quotations and paraphrases of Pāṇini, Patañjali and Kaiyaṭa, the author advances a representation of the

⁵⁸ *āśrayabhūtaiḥ saṃbandhibhir bhidyamānā kalpitabhedā gavāśvādiṣu sattaiva mahāsāmānyam eva jātiḥ | gotvādikam aparaṃ sāmānyam paramārthatas tato bhinnaṃ na bhavati | Cannibhaṭṭa, 305.*

⁵⁹ *bhāvavacano dhāturiti pakṣe bhāvāḥ sattaiveti dhātvarthaḥ sattā bhavatyeva | kriyāvachano dhāturiti pakṣepi jātim anye kriyām āhur anekavyaktivartinīm | iti kriyāsamuddeṣe kriyāyā jātirūpatvapatipādanāddhātvarthaḥ sattā bhavatyeva | tasya bhāvas tvatalau iti bhāvārthe tvatalādīnāṃ vidhānātsattāvācitraṃ yuktaṃ | sā ca sattodayavyayavaidhuryānityā | sarvasya prapañcasya tadvivartatayā deśataḥ kālato vastutaśca paricchedarāhityāt sā sattā mahān ātmeti vyapadiśyata iti kārikādvayārthaḥ | Cannibhaṭṭa, 305.*

Grammatical tradition that is unified and that appears, in its metaphysical – and indeed soteriological – commitments, to toe the Advaita Vedānta line. These two passages illustrate the author’s use of Bhartṛhari’s metaphysical non-dualism to absorb not only a multifarious phenomenal world but the comprehensive discipline of grammar fashioned by Pāṇini to account for that multiplicity. The characterization of the phenomenal world as but an illusory form of ultimate *brahman* (*tadvivartatayā*) is bolstered by the subsequent quotation from Bhartṛhari which opposes the real object (*satyaṃ vastu*) to the unreal adjuncts (*asatya-upādhi*). Words, in common parlance, are but unreal adjuncts (*asatyopādhibhiḥ śabdaiḥ*) that nevertheless can point us towards the real, ultimate, *brahman*. The use of “adjunct” (*upādhi*) draws our attention to Śāṅkara’s use of the term, for instance, in the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, for instance, to explain the persistence of the illusion most deleterious illusion to the realization of the self: agency (*karṭṛtva*).⁶⁰ Just as the multiplicity of words leads us to believe – erroneously, for Bhartṛhari – that the world itself is shot through with duality, so the experience of agency – so palpably felt – required Śāṅkara to similarly deploy the term *upādhi* to account for this irresistible error.

This implicit affinity is made explicit in the final section of the chapter, not only in adducing quotations from the *Vākyapadīya* that make clear its commitments to Vedānta, but further in drawing out the soteriological implications of such a view of language.

In the “Exposition of Connection” [section of the *Vākyapadīya*], Bhartṛhari has further stated the nature of reality:

The Vedāntins say that only that meaning is real to which neither seer nor seen nor the act of seeing is imputed.

⁶⁰ For instance, in BSB 2.3.40, Śāṅkara poses the dilemma in the following manner: “In this way, first of all, it has been demonstrated through reasons, such as “*sāstrārthavatva...*”, that the embodied self is an agent. Now, is that [agency] intrinsic [to the self] or is it caused by adjuncts [*upādhi*]; we must consider this...” *evaṃ tāvacchāstrārthatvādibhir hetubhiḥ karṭṛtvaṃ śārīrasya pradarśitaṃ tatpunaḥ svābhāvikaṃ vā syāt upādhinimittam veti cintyate* | Śāṅkara, *Brahmasūtrabhāṣyam* (Śṛṅgēri: Jagadguru Śāṅkarācārya Mahāsamsthānam, 2016), 291.

Further, in the “Exposition of Substance”:

Just as when all the modifications that make an earring are removed, gold alone remains; so, that, which has been exorcised of all modification, they call the highest source.

In order to establish non-duality, which has already been accepted, [Bhartṛhari] demonstrates the identity of the signifier and signified:

It [the highest source; *parā prakṛti*] is signified by all words [the signifier]; it is not distinct from the word. Despite [the fact that these two are] indistinct, the relation between the two [signifier and signified] is like [the relation] between the individual self and the Self [*jīva-ātmanor iva*].⁶¹

In this section, the author explicitly links the duality that informs the commonsensical operation of grammar – the distinction between signifier and signified – to the duality that dictates *samsāric* existence: the distinction between the individual self and the ultimate reality. Thus, the ground shifts from the world of words to the world of humans, where the analysis of language yields the same diagnosis as Śaṅkara’s diagnosis of human subjectivity. If the problem is thus reframed in the existential terms familiar to Advaita Vedāntins, the author can provide a familiar answer. The solution is stated in familiar Vedāntin terms, and then, with recourse to Bhartṛhari, Grammar is accorded its proper place, within the hierarchy of human ends. Grammar’s worth as a theory (*śāstra*) is measured – as is quite typical for most theoretical texts – by its capacity to impel human action. Further, the normative value of the human action it

⁶¹ *satyasvarūpam api hariṇoktaṃ sambandhasamuddeśe
yatra draṣṭā ca dṛśyaṃ ca darśanam cāvikalpitam |
tasyaivārthasya satyatvam āhus trayyantavedinah ||
dravyasamuddeśe’pi –
vikārāpagame satyaṃ suvarṇam kuṇḍale yathā |
vikārāpagamo yatra tāmāhuḥ prakṛtiṃ parāṃ ||iti |
abhyupagatādvitīyatvanirvāhāya vācyavācakayor avibhāgaḥ pradarśitaḥ :--
vācyā sā sarvaśabdānāṃ śabdācca na pṛthaktataḥ |
apṛthaktve’pi sambandhas tayor jīvātmanor iva || iti
Cannibhaṭṭa, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, 309.*

impels is adjudicated – as I have previously demonstrated – by its relation to the human end it serves. In this case, Grammar, insofar as it impels humans to liberation, the highest of the human ends (*puruṣārthas*), is elevated to the highest status imaginable, as the handmaiden to Advaita Vedānta.

Thus, when, in this manner, the unchanging, highest *brahman*, of the nature of reality, consciousness and bliss, is understood to be identical with the individual self, then, there occurring the cessation of beginning-less ignorance, the highest good, characterized by establishment in the form of such a *brahman*, will be accomplished.

“The one who is well-versed in *brahman-as-word* understands the highest *brahman*.” Owing to this declaration of the wise, it follows that we have established that this theoretical instruction of language is the means to the highest good... Similarly:

“This is the first step on the staircase to success. This is the direct, royal road for those who seek liberation.”

Thus, we have established that the theory of Grammar should be studied, because it is the means to the highest human end.⁶²

It is possible that it is this, albeit implicit, attribution of the theory of illusion (*vivartavāda*) to the school of Grammar that forms the basis of the Sāṅkhya refutation at the beginning of the next chapter, which I have quoted above and reproduce here:

⁶² *taditthaṃ kūṭasthe parasmin brahmaṇi saccidānandarūpe pratyagabhinne 'vagate 'nādyavidyānivṛttau tādr̥gbrahmātmanāvasthānalakṣaṇaṃ niḥśreyasaṃ setsyati | śabdabrahmaṇi niṣṇātaḥ paraṃ brahmādhigacchati | ityabhiyuktokteḥ | tathā ca śabdānuśāsanaśāstrasya niḥśreyasaśādhanaṭvaṃ siddham | tathā idamādyam padasthānaṃ siddhisopānaparvaṇām | iyaṃ sā mokṣamāṇānām ajihmā rājapaddhatiḥ | iti| Cannibhaṭṭa, 310.*

tasmād vyākaraṇaśāstraṃ paramapuruṣārthasādhanaṭayādhyetavyam iti siddham ||

Now, when the Sāṅkhyas have, with alacrity, declared the opposing doctrine of transformation (*pariṇā mavāda*), how could the doctrine of illusion (*vivartavāda*) continue to be privileged? This is their [the Sāṅkhyas'] boastful cry.⁶³

This is the extent to which I can recuperate any semblance of a “dialectical” logic to the text. As I have demonstrated, there is very little in the Mīmāṃsā chapter to support the thesis that a “dialectical movement” informs the ascension up the schools. One has to be zealously committed to this thesis to be persuaded that there is any such dynamic between the chapters on Grammar and Sāṅkhya. Further, there is very little connection, substantively between the chapters on Sāṅkhya and Yoga (which follows the chapter on Sāṅkhya). Nevertheless, the schools of Sāṅkhya and Yoga are considered to be part of a single school of Sāṅkhya. Yoga is referred to as a theistic school of Sāṅkhya⁶⁴ (*seśvara-sāṅkhya*), and the classification “Science of Yoga” (*yoga-śāstra*) is considered a synonym for the doctrines of Sāṅkhya (*sāṅkhyapravacanāparanāmadheya*).⁶⁵ Once again, the traditional pairing of the two schools is neither examined nor defended, it is merely stated at the outset that they form a single school.

The final chapter on Advaita Vedānta does begin with a clear refutation of the Sāṅkhya theory of transformation (*pariṇā mavāda*), asserting instead the logical and scriptural bases for

⁶³ *atha sāṅkhyair ākhyāte pariṇā mavāde pariṇāthini jāgarūke kathamkhāraṃ vivartavāda ādaraṇīyo bhavet | eṣa hi teṣāṃ āghoṣaḥ |*
Cannibhaṭṭa, 311.

⁶⁴ For the question of Yoga belonging under the Sāṅkhya umbrella, see Johannes Bronkhorst, “Yoga and Seśvara Sāṅkhya,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 9 (n.d.): 309–20.

⁶⁵ The Chapter on Yoga begins: “Now the views – the views of the sage Patañjali and his successors who promulgated the theistic Sāṅkhya – of those who follow are introduced. With regard to it [Sāṅkhya], the “Science of Yoga” is but another synonym for the doctrines of Sāṅkhya, promulgated by Patañjali, which consists of four sections [pāda].”
sāṃpratam seśvarasāṅkhyapravartakapatañjaliprabhrtimunitam anuvartamānānām matam upanyasyate | tatra sāṅkhyapravacanāparanāmadheyam yogaśāstram patañjaliprañītam pādacatuṣṭayātmakam |
Cannibhaṭṭa, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, 331.

the Advaita Vedānta doctrine of illusion (*vivartavāda*).⁶⁶ This step-by-step repudiation of the cardinal tenets of the Sāṅkhya (those that are actually detailed in the Sāṅkhya chapter) constitutes the longest opening repudiation of the text, but we should be wary of basing the dialectic nature of the text on this chapter. As Johannes Bronkhorst has shown, there is very little evidence to support the inclusion of this chapter as the final chapter of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, since the decision to include this last chapter in Abhyankar’s edition was based on a single manuscript. It is just as likely that this last chapter was originally written as an independent treatise (possibly by an author other than the author of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*) and only later appended to the fifteen-chapter work.⁶⁷ However we adjudicate that matter – and I have taken the text as it was edited by Abhyankar – the fact that the Advaita Vedānta refutation of Sāṅkhya claims is interrupted by the chapter on Yoga undermines the arguments in support of the dialectic structure of the work.

In the preceding section, I have demonstrated the following:

- a. Although the hierarchical arrangement of the views discussed in this text is self-evident, there is no adequate theory for such an arrangement on strictly substantive grounds. In other words, I can discern no criterion that is adequately defined and defended in the text and can be used to order the views in the order that they have been.
- b. I have contended that the hierarchical order has a rhetorical, rather than substantive, valence, namely to show the supremacy of the Advaita view.
- c. The rhetorical valence is predicated upon the syntactic and classificatory logics of the hierarchy. In other words, value is ascribed to each viewpoint by virtue of where each is

⁶⁶ Mādhava, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha Ascribed to Mādhavācārya; Chapter 16: Śāṅkaradarśanam* (Chennai: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1999), 5–7.

⁶⁷ Bronkhorst, forthcoming “The *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*: One text or two? One author or two?”

placed in the hierarchy and how each is classified. Thus, the two rivals to the Advaita Vedānta viewpoint, as promulgated by the Śrīṅgeri monastery, are marginalized *syntactically* and *by classification*. In the first case, they are *othered* by their proximity to the Jaina, Buddhist, and Cārvāka points of view. In the second, they are *othered* by their classification as sects of Vaiṣṇava schools rather than as schools of Vedānta. In the substantive discussion of these two schools, on the other hand, their Vedānta positions are introduced and discussed.

- d. I have also accounted for the singular instance, among the “Vedic schools” of a refutation, which occurs at the beginning of the Sāṅkhya school. Though I can discern no logic to explain why the Sāṅkhya school alone should begin with the refutation of a school to follow (the Advaita Vedānta), I have attempted to present the case for a dialectic logic in the strongest terms the evidence allows. As is plain from the accounting above, there is no firm basis to argue that “the schools function together in a dialectical process.”

The Sarvadarśanasamgraha as Myth?

To bring this analysis of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* to a conclusion, it might help to recast my arguments using Roland Barthes’ theory of mythic speech. Barthes’ analysis of myth is helpful precisely because it takes as its object some already-formed and functional discursive unit.⁶⁸ That is to say, Barthes provides a schema with which to analyze second-order significations of speech, and also accounts for the ambiguity of the *message* imparted by the speech in question. A brief overview of Barthes’ analytical schema is in order. Using Saussure’s tripartite schema of signifier-signified-sign, Barthes argues that myth is a second-order

⁶⁸ Or, as Barthes puts it, “But myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a *second-order semiological system*.” Barthes and Lavers, *Mythologies*, 114.

discursive system. To begin with, we might take as our example a statement familiar to most students of classical Indian philosophy: *svargakāmo yajeta*. At the level of semiological linguistic analysis, the sentence (i.e. the set of words in that particular syntactic relation) is the *signifier* of the of the concept (i.e. *signified*) “The one who seeks heaven should sacrifice.” The words [*signifier*] *svargakāmo yajeta* make concrete the thought [*signified*] that one who desires heaven should sacrifice. But, as Barthes has shown, that linguistic *sign* – the associative totality of the *signifier* and the *signified* and a meaningful linguistic statement itself – can in turn be constituted as the *SIGNIFIER II* (Barthes prefers the term *form*) of a determined *SIGNIFIED II* (Barthes’ term is *concept*) giving us a meta-linguistic SIGNIFICATION, namely, “this is a statement about Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics” (a system in which *svargakāmo yajeta* is the paradigmatic Vedic injunction, and the basis for a hermeneutics). To replicate Barthes’ schema:

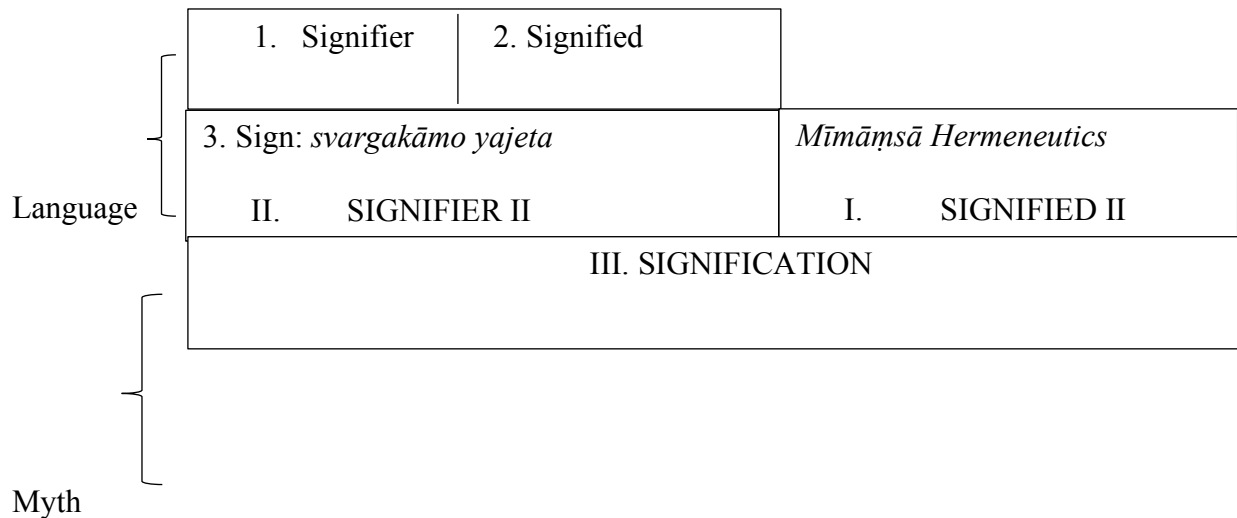


Fig. 4 Barthes’ Hierarchic Schema

Barthes provides a more striking example in the form of the cover illustration from an issue of *Paris-Match*, a French news magazine. In Barthes’ words:

On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a tricolour. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: *that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors* [emphasis added].⁶⁹

In other words, the content of the picture, namely that of a Black, French soldier saluting [one assumes] the French flag itself becomes the *signifier* for a contextualized meaning to a very particular audience [which is why Barthes conditions the mythic meaning with the words “I see very well what it signifies to *me*”], namely that France is a great and benign empire. This second-order or metalinguistic meaning is an instance of the operation of myth as a type of speech.

At the beginning of this chapter, I asserted that I am not principally concerned with the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* as a philosophical text, which I consider its primary, and express, meaning. *Prima facie*, as the author of the text himself avers, the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* is a summary of all the current philosophical and theological schools. It is possible that the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* is more meaningful, philosophically, than a mere summary of views. That has not been my concern in this chapter. Rather, I have taken the text as such to signify and naturalize:

- a. the supremacy of the Advaita Vedānta school
- b. the distinction of all viewpoints into two primary groups: Vedic and non-Vedic

⁶⁹ Barthes and Lavers, 116.

- c. the dubious character of the two rival schools of Vedānta and their suspicious affinities with the self-evidently non-Vedic Jaina and Bauddha schools.

Barthes notes that “*myth hides nothing*: its function is to distort, not to make disappear.”⁷⁰ This observation is all the more powerful when we consider that the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* was part of a pedagogical program of traditional Vedic instruction. As part of this program of subject formation, the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* appears to be a rather neutral primer on the theological and philosophical systems that a competent student of *śāstra* is expected to master. In the course of this reportage on the principal tenets of the various schools, the text also presents as self-evident and natural a progression of views from most objectionable to ideal, and signals the low status of the two schools of Vedānta that were contesting the Advaita Vedānta supremacy of the Śrīṅgeri monastery. These are the kinds of judgements that students trained by Śrīṅgeri monastery might consider self-evidently so; they are the kinds of truths that require no explanation. As I have noted, the second-order signifiers are *semantic* as well as *syntactic*. For instance, the insistent reference to the Rāmānujīyas and Mādhvas as Vaiṣṇava sects signifies that they are not properly Vedic, their objections notwithstanding. Similarly, the placement of the two schools immediately after the last of the explicitly non-Vedic schools signifies their exclusion from the Vedic fold.

Still, some readers may contend that the imputation of a hierarchical structure to the text is unwarranted in the first place. It is true that there is no evidence internal to the text that is conclusive in this respect, and it is for this reason that I turn to a text that sheds some light on the after-life of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*.

⁷⁰ Barthes and Lavers, 121.

Redeeming the Self

In the following section, I examine the use of this very hierarchy of views in a different text, separated from the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* by, at least, two centuries: the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. In this section, I demonstrate that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* also uses the hierarchic schema formulated in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, rendered in a poetic register, in that effort to assert the dominance of the Śṛṅgeri monastery's brand of Advaita Vedānta. I then try to account for the most glaring discrepancy between the two, namely, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* makes very little mention of the rival Vaiṣṇava Vedānta schools, even though it regards dualist views as the principal threat to Śaṅkara's theology.

In the sixth chapter of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, amidst panegyrics to Śaṅkara, three verses present a "biography" of the immortal and eternal self. These biographies rehearse the hierarchical arrangement that originated in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, with a few, important, differences.

First of all, and most importantly, unlike the hierarchy of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, the hierarchies presented here are informed by a single criterion of adjudication: the sovereignty of the self in the state of liberation. The non-Vedāntin traditions are regarded as deficient to the extent that they do not accord the self the capacity to realize itself as truly sovereign. Some traditions fall well short of the mark. For instance, the Buddhists do not even admit that the self exists, whereas the materialists (Cārvākas) deny the possibility of liberation, since they do not accept the reality of a self that is distinct from the body. Other traditions simply do not ascribe complete sovereignty to the self.

As I have shown in previous chapters, Advaita Vedānta ascetics of the highest order (*paramahansa*) alone were capable of attaining liberation-while-living (*jīvanmukti*), which meant that, as far as living human beings were concerned, they alone were truly sovereign. Thus, it is only natural that the criterion adopted in adjudicating the condition of the self should be the radical sovereignty entailed by Advaita accounts of liberation that the scholars of Śrīṅgeri promulgated. The narrative of the self’s liberation enacts the hierarchical arrangement found in the theoretical treatise by, among other things, vivifying that abstract schema with *dramatis personae* and providing the sense of an ending. Formal differences aside, the narratives of the self (adduced below) present a very clear criterion by which the state of the self ought to be judged, whereas we can discern no such criterion in the case of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*.

Second, the hierarchies presented in these “biographies of the eternal self” omit a number of schools that are present in the comprehensive accounting of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*. I argue that there is a logic to the lacunae, which reaffirms our proposed groupings of schools, namely: non-Vedic schools, sectarian (implicitly non-Vedic) Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva schools, and Vedic schools. Schools from the first and last groups are present, though not all of them in each instance. But not a single sectarian school finds a place in the hierarchies presented in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. This curious elision may be explained by a number of factors, among them the changed politics of Śrīṅgeri during the time in which the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is thought to have been composed, and the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*’s avowedly Śaiva commitments.

Let us turn to the first instance in which the hierarchies of schools are mentioned in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*: the biographies of the eternal self. Three verses from canto 6 vividly depict the invidious soteriological depredations visited upon the *self*, by the various theological schools – in the order recorded in Figure 3 – in a “biography” of the eternal *self*:

6.87 The Buddhists ran after the [*Self*] to strike it down. Then, somehow, from the *Naiyāyikas*, originated the idea of oneself; then the followers of Kumāriḷa revealed only that part of the path their travels covered; the Sāṅkhyas revealed that the highest good was comprised of the removal of suffering; others still [the Pātañjalas, followers of Yoga] professed the virtues of restraining the vital airs. It was Śaṅkara who elevated that degraded individual *Self* to the position of the highest lord.⁷¹

6.88 Some did not see the *Self* as a lord, entirely consumed, as it was, by the fundamental elements; some, though they saw it, remained confounded [Yogācāra Buddhism*]; others [logicians and Mīmāṃsakas] stipulated that it was connected to the elements; some [Sāṅkhyas] posited its existence apart from all of its qualifications but nevertheless did not reject the existence of these [adventitious qualities]; thus the *Self* did not lose fear. Then Śaṅkara, the partial incarnation of Śiva, having extirpated the existence of those [adventitious qualities], freed that *Self* from fear.⁷²

6.89 Long ago suppressed by the Cārvākas (the materialists), then guarded by the mighty Vaiśeṣikas who wrongly attributed to it form; then, alas, sundered [from that form] by the forceful followers of Kumāriḷa, it was contrived as ritual agent. Then the Sāṅkhyas, seized it close, though it was impure. Śaṅkara, the incarnation

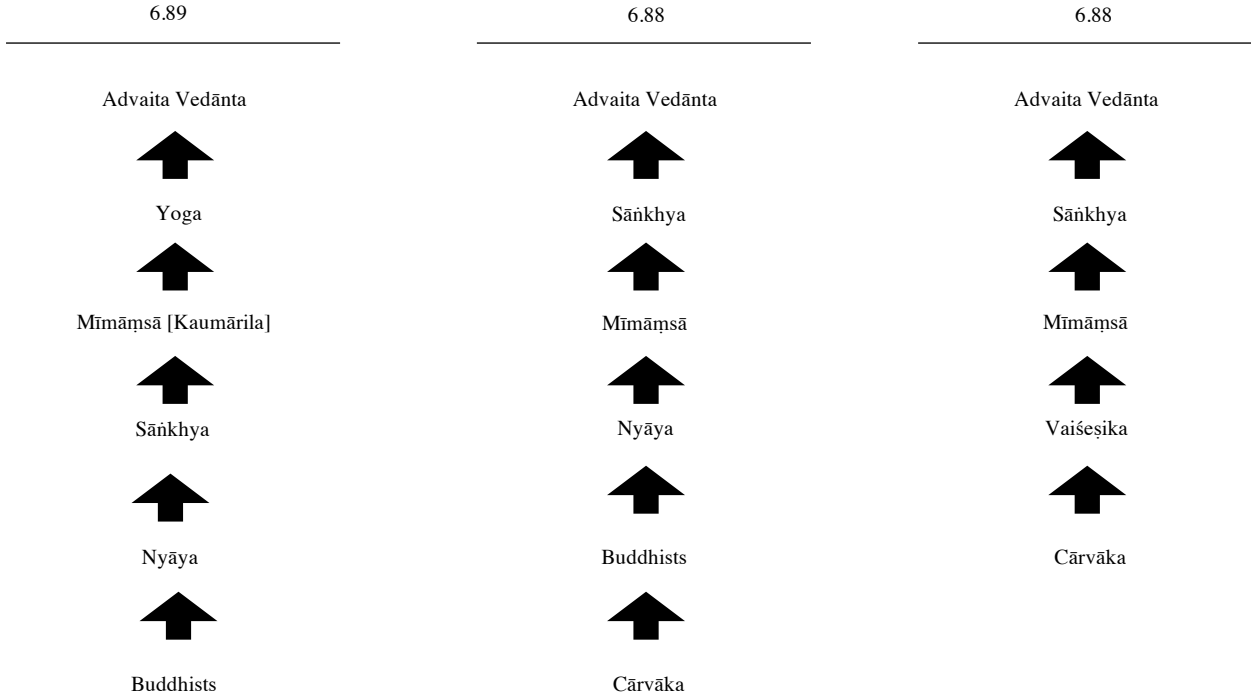
⁷¹ *hantum bauddho 'nvadhāvat tadanu katham api svātma-lābhaḥ kaṇādāj
jātaḥ kaumāriḷāryair nija-pada-gamane darśitaṃ mārga-mātram ||
sāṅkhyair duḥkhaṃ vinītaṃ paramatha racitā prāṇa-dhṛty-arhatānyair
itthaṃ khinnaṃ pumāṃsaṃ vyadhīta karuṇayā śaṅkarāryaḥ pareśaṃ ||*

* The parenthetical identifications are informed by the commentator's remarks. Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* (Pune: Anandāśrama Press, 1891), 248.

⁷² *grastaṃ bhūtair na devaṃ katicana dadṛśuḥ ke ca dṛṣtvāpy adhīrāḥ
kecid bhūtair viyuktaṃ vyadhur atha kṛtinaḥ ke 'pi sarvair vimuktaṃ ||
kiṃtv eteṣāṃ asattvaṃ na vidadhur ajahan naiva bhītiṃ tato 'sau
teṣāṃ ucchīdyā sattāṃ abhayam akṛta taṃ śaṅkaraḥ śaṅkarāṃśaḥ ||*
Vidyāraṇya, 248.

Fig. 5

Hierarchy of Viewpoints



of Śiva, having drawn away that *Self*, contrived [by the Sāṅkhyas] as dependent upon nature alone [pradhāna], rendered it as the supreme lord.⁷³

As a comparison with Figure 1 shows, these three dramatizations of the hierarchy of views retain the basic order while omitting a number of schools from the schema. That is to say, as regards the schools the verses do mention, the order in which they are arranged is *the same* as in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*. Thus, the general normative framework that is intimated by the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* is replicated and vivified in these accounts. The verses apply the criterion of sovereignty to rank the various schools' understanding of the *self*. On this view, the sovereignty of the *self*, which only Advaita Vedānta admits in its totality, is denied by the

⁷³ *cārvākair nihnutaḥ prāg balibhir atha mṛṣā rūpam āpādyā guptaḥ
kāṇādair hā niyojyo vyaraci balavatā ākr̥ṣya kaumārileṇa ||
sāṅkhyair ākr̥ṣya hṛtvā malam api racito yaḥ pradhānaika-tantraḥ
kr̥ṣṭvā sarveśvaraṃ taṃ vyatanuta puruṣaṃ śaṅkaraḥ śaṅkarāṃśaḥ ||*
Vidyāranya, 249.

Buddhists, who take up the position of *anātman* (a negation of the self), and by the Cārvākas, who admit no *self* that is distinct from the body. Liberation entails the realization of the *self* as lord. The effect of this dramatization of the implicit hierarchical framework in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* is striking.

In the space of three verses, we are given three variations on a triumphalist narrative arc. The Vedānta soteriological program is distilled into a story about the self's arduous struggle for sovereignty. In this existential drama, the other theological traditions are transformed into antagonists intent upon hindering the soul's progress. Śaṅkara, the hero of the tale, is the redeemer of the self, who elevates it to its rightful place. The verses use the words *īśvara* and *īśa* to describe the liberated self, words that, besides connoting the power associated with radical independence or sovereignty, also refer to Śiva. Further, these words emphasize the contrast drawn, in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, between the vision of liberation espoused by the Rāmānujīyas and Madhvas on the one hand and by the Advaita Vedāntins on the other. On that view, a liberated self is nevertheless in a state of perpetual subordination to the ultimate lord (*bhagavān*) Viṣṇu. The use of the words *īśa* and *īśvara* intimates a state of liberation in which the unitary self is completely independent and sovereign. This accords perfectly with the idiom of authority that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* adopts, as I show in the next chapter.

Nevertheless, as a comparison with the catalogue of schools detailed in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* (Figure 1) shows, these verses leave out a number of schools mentioned in the doxography. These elisions are of two kinds. The first kind, entirely incidental, is the elision of a single school from the Vedic schools (see Figure 3) - the school of Grammar [Pāṇinīya]. I can discern no logic to this elision, and thus consider the lacuna incidental. The second class of elision is salient – the elision of the sectarian Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva schools (the

two Vaiṣṇava Vedānta schools of Rāmānuja and Madhva, and the four Śaiva schools). The explanation for this lacuna lies in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*'s different formulation of the Śaiva dimensions of the Advaita Vedānta that was being promulgated by the followers of Śṛṅgeri. As I have shown with regard to the texts that constitute the earlier stratum of the corpus I have taken up in this dissertation (i.e., those texts that were composed in the fourteenth century), there is little discussion of the nature of Śaiva worship that was most certainly current at the monastery, or indeed of the monastery's connections to the Virūpākṣa (a form of Śiva) temple at Hampi. Vidyātirtha muni, the monastic who is referred to as the guru of Bhāratitīrtha and Vidyāraṇya, is given the epithet *maheśvara* (an epithet of Śiva). Further, in the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālāvistara* of Mādhava, the introductory verses and the auto-commentary thereon, refer to the Vijayanagara monarch Bukka as the joint incarnation of Śiva and *brahman* (the ultimate principle of the Veda, as explicated by Advaita Vedānta). The connections to the primacy of Śiva are certainly present, but they are never fully elaborated upon. Nor, for that matter, are the Vedic commentaries, the Advaita Vedānta treatises, or indeed the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* interested in promulgating a view of the Vedas that is inflected by the Śaiva scriptures.

Speaking for Śiva

The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, written at least three hundred years after the texts of the earlier stratum, reflects a very different set of political and religious realities. For one, the seat of power had shifted from Vijayanagara to the Nāyakas of Ikkeri, who represented themselves, in inscriptions, in terms strikingly similar to the descriptions of the gurus of Śṛṅgeri. In the seventeenth century, both the gurus of Śṛṅgeri and the Nāyaka rulers refer to themselves, in inscriptions, as the “establisher of the pure and Vedic view of Advaita (*vaidikādvaita-*

siddhānta.)” Further, in a 1652 inscription, the guru of the monastery is venerated as the establisher of the Advaita Vedānta view and the six *darśanas*. I take this to refer to the six *darśanas* from the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* that I have categorized as Vedic (Vaiśeṣika-Nyāya; Mīmāṃsā-Pātañjala; Sāṅkhya-Yoga), and the *siddhānta* or the conclusive view presiding over this series of six is the Advaita Vedānta view. Lastly, the guru is described as being descended in a lineage of students from Śaṅkara, the purported founder – according to the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* – of the Śṛṅgeri monastery. The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*’s portrayal of Śaṅkara as an incarnation of Śiva explains the manner in which the poem deals with various Śaiva groups (differently than the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*). The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* divides the various Śaiva groups into two – the schools that are fit to be brought into the Advaita Vedānta imperium and the extreme sects, the Kāpālika and Śākta groups, of which the Śaiva fold must be purged. Neither type is considered Vedic – following the classificatory logic of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* – but this more nuanced treatment of these groups makes a simplistic in-or-out formulation difficult.

Śaṅkara encounters Śaivas of different stripes three times in the course of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. Twice he is confronted by Kāpālikas, members of a sect of Tantrika Śaivism, who are so called because they carry a human skull (*kapāla*) and worship Bhairava, a fearsome form of Śiva. Despite the relative paucity of historical material from medieval South India regarding this group,⁷⁴ it is quite clear that the Kāpālikas play the role of extreme *other* in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, and that, by virtue of practices and views that flouted the strictures and conventions of the *dharmasāstras*, they could not be assimilated into the Vedic fold. In the first instance, a single Kāpālika attempts to convince Śaṅkara to sacrifice himself so that the Kāpālika

⁷⁴ For more on the available evidence for this group, see David Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991). Lorenzen details these two episodes I have mentioned separately, pp 32 – 34 and pp 39 – 46.

can attain powers (*siddhi*). In the second, Śaṅkara, his disciples, and his devotee, King Sudhanvan, are confronted by an army of Kāpālikas, led by Krakaca. In this second confrontation, the Kāpālika Krakaca calls on Śiva himself to destroy Śaṅkara.

Śiva, who had been invoked by the Kapālin [skull-bearer] with the words, ‘My lord! Destroy your devotees’ enemy [Śaṅkara] with your gaze,’⁷⁵ was enraged. Retorting, ‘How dare you offend against my own self [i.e. Śaṅkara, who, as a partial incarnation, is none other than Śiva]?’ he severed Krakaca’s head instead.⁷⁶

There is little prevarication in the text on the status of this group of Śaivas. There is no room for them in Śaṅkara’s Vedic empire. Indeed, these confrontations are singular insofar as they are not resolved through theological debate. In such unambiguous cases, *actual* war – not the rhetoric of war that pervades the poem – is the only recourse. Such encounters with the absolute *other* must be resolved not through assimilation but through extirpation.

The text is ambivalent in dealing with other Śaivas. For instance, at the beginning of canto 15, which details Śaṅkara’s triumphant march spanning his dominion, he comes across a different group of Śaiva adherents:

They say that there occurred a debate between him and Śāktas, who were fond of their liquor, which they justified through the pretense of devotion to the goddess [Śiva’s wife Pārvatī]. The debate was full of sharp turns of logic that appeared out

⁷⁵ Recalling, perhaps, the episode, recounted in Kalidāsa’s *Kumārasambhava*, where Kāmadeva, the god of love, is incinerated by the blaze that rushed forth from Śiva’s third eye.

⁷⁶ *tava bhakta-jana-druhaṃ drśā samjahi deveti kapālinā niyuktaḥ |
katham ātmani me ’parādhyasīti krakacasyaiva śiro jahāra ruṣtaḥ ||15.27*
Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 553.

of nowhere and brought great pleasure to his entourage. Having reduced the Śāktas to silence with his barrage of logic, he made those ignoble men, who had been expelled by the twice-born, a bridge of rituals [to return to caste society] for the good of the world.⁷⁷

The Śāktas are characterized, in this excerpt, as a group of Śaivas who, owing to heterodox practices such as drinking, have been expelled from caste society. They pretend to be proper Śaivas – the text never makes clear precisely how they pretend – even though they are worshippers of the goddess. This brief description of the Śāktas reveals a strict normative construal of the category of Śaiva, which diverges from the hierarchy of the four Śaiva views in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*. The Kāpālikas, who share many characteristics with the Pāśupatas,⁷⁸ even if they are not identified with them, are the first of the four Śaiva schools listed in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* and are summarily expelled from the normative Śaiva fold, the membership of which Śāṅkara, as the governor of Śringeri, adjudicates. The treatment of the Śāktas is slightly different: they are re-assimilated to a Śaiva normativity promulgated, but never clearly defined, by the text, and they must adhere to the normative practices of caste society. Thus, they must be rehabilitated both internally and externally to reenter the fold.⁷⁹ Nīlakaṅṭha,

⁷⁷ *abhavat kila tasya tatra śāktair girijārcā-kapaṭān madhu-prasaktaiḥ |*
nikaṣastha-vitūrṇa-bhūri-moda-sphuṭa-rinḥat-paṭu-yuktimān vivādaḥ || 15.2
sa hi yukti-bharair vidhāya śāktān prati vāg-vyāharane 'pi tān aśāktān |
dvija-jāti-bahiṣkrtān anāryān akarol lokahitāya karma-setum || 15.3
Vidyāraṇya, 529–32.

⁷⁸ See Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*, 1–12.

⁷⁹ This is not the only encounter with Śāktas. Cantos 15 and 16 tell the story of Abhinavagupta, a Śākta commentator, whom Śāṅkara defeats in debate. Abhinavagupta then attempts to kill Śāṅkara with a spell, but his plan is discovered and the spell is used against him, from which Abhinavagupta, in due course, dies. The practice of black magic (denoted by the noun *abhicara* or the verb root *abi-√car*) is discussed in the Vedas, and is practiced among Vedic ritualists to this day. David Knipe recounts the rivalry between two families of Vedic ritualists: “It is claimed that *abhi-cara* was employed against both Yajnesvara and Lanka, the latter having sided with Yajnesvara in the dispute. Lanka became seriously ill according to the Kapilavayis, employed countermeasures, probably mantras

a Śaiva Vedāntin, is treated in much the same way: he is re-educated in the secret of the Vedānta corpus. Like the other interlocutors Śaṅkara defeats in debate, Nīlakaṅṭha becomes a disciple of his victor, and Śaṅkara thereby extends the scope of his theological domain.

The treatment of Vaiṣṇavas is another matter. The text does not acknowledge Vaiṣṇava Vedānta groups, such as the Mādhvas and the Rāmānujīyas, nor does it narrate Śaṅkara's encounters with representatives of these two schools. There is a brief reference, in canto fifteen, to the removal of Vaiṣṇavas in a manner similar to that of the Kāpālikas.

The lord (Śaṅkara) garnered the praise of the wise while promulgating his commentary in the various kingdoms, beginning with Saurāṣṭra. Finally, he reached the city of Dvāravatī (Kṛṣṇa's capital). There the adherents of the Pañcarātra scriptures (Vaiṣṇavas) congregated by the hundreds, proclaiming that those who know the five-fold nature of reality are immortal. Their earrings were tulasī (basil) leaves; their sectarian mark on the forehead resembled a reed-stalk; and they were marked with stigmata of the conch and the discus, branded on their arms with hot irons. They were torn to pieces by the best and bravest students of Śaṅkara, just as elephants are by the king of beasts.⁸⁰

As is clear from this very brief aside, the Vaiṣṇavas identified here are the Mādhvas, their marks of identification being doctrinal as well as physical. The Mādhvas were easily identified,

from the Atharva Veda, and survived. Yaṅesvara also fell ill but despite last-minute awareness of the source of his affliction, *abhi-cara*, he was defenseless and died at the age of seventy-four in November 1983.” David M. Knipe, *Vedic Voices* (New York: Oxford University Press, n.d.), 128.

⁸⁰ *viṣayeṣu vitatya naija-bhāṣyāny'atha saurāṣṭra-mukheṣu tatra tatra |
bahudhā vibudhaiḥ praśasyamāno bhagavān dvāra-vatīm purīm viveśa || 15.73
bhujayor atitapta-śaṅkha-cakrākṛti-lohāhata-sambhṛta-vraṇāṅkāḥ |
śara-daṇḍa-sahodarordhva-puṅdrās tulasī-parṇa-sanātha-karṇa-deśāḥ || 15.74
śataśaḥ samavetya pāñcarātrās tv amṛtaṃ pañcabhidāvidāṃ vadantaḥ |
muni-śiṣya-varair ati-pragalbhair mrga-rājair iva kuñjarāḥ prabhagnāḥ || 15.75*
Vidyāranya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 577–78.

externally, by the Vaiṣṇava insignia branded on their arms -- the discus on the right and the conch on the left – and doctrinally by their acceptance of the five-fold nature of reality. In this excerpt, just as in the case of the Kāpālikas, there is no room to engage with the Vaiṣṇava Mādhvas in theological debate, for, being irreducibly *other*, they cannot remain in Śaṅkara's nascent Vedic dominion. They must be expelled.

To return to the question of lacunae, it appears that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* treats Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sects very differently from their treatment in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*. As regards the Vaiṣṇava sects, there is little rhetorical divergence. The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* does not entertain the possibility that there are Vaiṣṇava schools of Vedānta. Rather, the rhetorical position adumbrated by the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* holds, insofar as these Vaiṣṇava sects reject the ultimate primacy of the Vedas (although, in reality, they never did), they are irremediably *other*, and there is no discursive means to rehabilitate them. The picture is far more complicated with regard to the different Śaiva groups. Some, such as the Kāpālikas, are regarded as too extreme to debate. Others, such as the ambiguously-termed Śāktas, can be persuaded to return to the path of probity, but those who remain intransigent, such as Abhinavagupta, must be dealt with extreme prejudice. Other Śaiva Vedāntins, such as Nīlakaṇṭha, need only be shown the error of their ways to embrace Śaṅkara's tutelage.

The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*'s signification of the same hierarchy of views in the narrative of the self's redemption – with the salient lacunae discussed above – attests to the success and endurance of the myth. But the narrative also made that mythic meaning explicit, it proudly asserting, instead of intimating, the primacy of Śṛṅgeri and Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta in the self's search for liberation. This is hardly surprising. Whereas the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, written in the fourteenth century was a part of a pedagogical program, ostensibly a primer of

philosophical viewpoints, the seventeenth century *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* tells the origin myth of the Śringeri monastery, which is to say the story of its inevitable triumph and universal dominion.

Provincializing Doxography

Any analysis of the genre of doxography in the Indian context must acknowledge the (at first glance) curious use of the genre by Madhyamika Buddhists, Jainas and Advaita Vedāntins.⁸¹ For intellectual historians, such as Halbfass and Nicholson, the task is to chronicle the history of the genre, and to formulate a logic governing the use of the form. The implications of such a project are rarely discussed. First, it would establish that there is a *single* genre of doxography; the same used by Jainas and Advaita Vedāntins. Second, that the employment of this genre must be reconciled with the peculiar theological or philosophical projects that motivated these two groups. In other words, that there must be something essential to the Advaita Vedānta and Jaina traditions that explains why these groups, and not some other, employed the genre. In the article I have referred to above, Halbfass attempted to explain the curious historical fact that doxographies were produced – for the most part -- by Jainas and Vedāntins.

The recapitulation of philosophical doctrines within doxographies is more than a merely extrinsic addition to these doctrines; rather, it reflects their own style of presentation; it supplements and illustrates them. For this reason, it is no accident that the doxographic literature developed within Jainism and Advaita Vedānta. Here, the references to other systems and their synopsis, comprehension, and

⁸¹ Olle Qvarnström, “Haribhadra and the Beginnings of Doxography in India,” in *Approaches to Jaina Studies: Philosophy, Logic, Rituals and Symbols*, South Asian Studies Papers 11 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999), 174.

neutralization had particular importance for the philosophical self-representation. The two traditions claim to include and fulfill other doctrines – as a perspectivistic or a hierarchically subsuming inclusivism.⁸²

Halbfass' observation presumes, in the first place, that it is possible to write a unified history of a stable genre of doxography, which, aside from the contingent ends to which Jaina and Vedāntin writers sought to employ the form, is informed by its own logic. "For this reason, it is *no accident that the doxographic literature developed within Jainism and Advaita Vedānta* [emphasis added]." In other words, Halbfass has contended that doxography, despite being available to philosophers or theologians of every variety, was favored by Jainas and Advaita Vedāntins because the form was particularly suited to their specific philosophical projects. For Jainas, the doxographic mode fit the cumulative philosophical style of *anekāntavāda* or *syādvāda*. The thought is that since the Jainas employed an *anekāntavāda* [many-sided] mode of reasoning and argumentation (wherein the points of view belonging to other schools are admitted as being provisional correct), the structure of doxographic accounting of the variety of empirically available, and, from the Jaina perspective, limited philosophical positions, was considered a congenial mode of philosophizing.

For the Vedāntins, on the other hand, the doxographic mode fit the "hierarchically subsuming inclusivism." The thought here is (and Halbfass draws on Śāṅkara's use of *samanvaya* or "synthetic construal," a hermeneutic tool used to harmonize a number of *seemingly* contradictory Vedic passages) that the Advaita Vedāntins found the doxographic mode congenial to their theological ends, although they tweaked the model so that the multitude

⁸² Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 356.

of views could be arranged hierarchically, culminating in the Advaita Vedānta view. This variation on the form-fitting-function argument is not very compelling. After all, the Mādhva Vedāntins had a very robust theory of hierarchy, denoted by the term *tāratamya*, which informed their metaphysics and epistemology.⁸³ Nevertheless, the Mādhva Vedāntins do not appear to have employed doxographies to their theological ends.

How else to account for the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, arguably the first instance of a Vedānta doxography? Given the long history of Jaina lineages and monasteries in Karnataka,⁸⁴ it is reasonable to suppose that the Advaita Vedāntins of Śrīringeri were influenced by Jaina doxographies. And in this regard, since the connections between Jaina and Vedānta doxographies have been discussed by a number of scholars,⁸⁵ I consider the implications of a different kind of Jaina *darśana* text: the tenth century *Darśanasāra* ascribed to the Digambara Devasana.⁸⁶

This short Prākṛt text considers in turn different lineages⁸⁷ within the Jaina fold (with the exception of the Buddhists, who are dealt with first), drawing the criteria of censure from doctrinal standards and normative praxis. Thus, it condemns or exalts lineages with reference to the views promulgated by their leaders or by the practices – monastic or universal – that they enjoined. Thus, for instance, Vajranandi’s lineage, the Drāviḍa Saṃgha, is deemed to have

⁸³ See, for instance, Robert J. Zydenbos, “On the Jaina Background of Dvaita Vedānta,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 19, no. 3 (September 1991): 249–71.

⁸⁴ For the landscape of Jaina monasteries in the Deccan from the 7th to the 11th centuries, see R.N. Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults in the Deccan* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973).

⁸⁵ As noted earlier, see Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*; Qvarnström, “Haribhadra and the Beginnings of Doxography in India”; Halbfass, *India and Europe*.

⁸⁶ Heleen De Jonckheere, “The Darśanasāra by Devasana: On the Perception of the Other” (M.A. Thesis, Gent, Universiteit Gent, 2014).

⁸⁷ There are many terms that I refer to with the word “lineage,” including “family tree (*gaccha*), branch (*śākhā*), and community (*saṃgha*).

shown the wrong path partly because of their dietary practices.⁸⁸ On the other hand, the Śvetāmbara teacher, Śānti Ācārya is condemned for preaching that it is possible for women to be liberated.⁸⁹ There is no clear progression or hierarchy here, although, just as in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, the particularly objectionable groups (the Buddhists and Śvetāmbara Jainas) are listed at the beginning. That the criteria for judgement are neither strictly doctrinal nor ritual (though, indeed, that binary has little coherence in such a text) might persuade us to think more critically of the purely doctrinal valence that our preferred translation for *darśana*, “doxography,” bears.

This text, and indeed the numerous Jaina inscriptions that were proliferated in medieval Karnataka,⁹⁰ which studiously recapitulate the distinguished lineage of teachers associated with each site, must force us to reconsider the social valence of these theoretical texts. As I have shown, it is not enough to acknowledge that the Advaita Vedānta doxographies made legible a certain proto-Hindu awareness, for such an assertion leaves us to fill in the blank space to be occupied by the out-groups: Were these texts proclaiming a unified Hindu identity over and against the mythical Cārvākas, the Buddhists, the Jainas, or perhaps even Muslims? In the case of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, the text makes self-evident and incontrovertible the marginal and suspicious status of the two Vedāntin schools – the Madhva and Rāmānujīya schools -- that offered competing soteriological and sociological visions. In doing so, it proclaims the primacy of an ethical subject informed by the account of transcendent truth proclaimed by the school of Advaita Vedānta. In other words, it is possible to contend that the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*,

⁸⁸ De Jonckheere, “The Darśanasāra by Devasena: On the Perception of the Other.” Pg 8.

⁸⁹ De Jonckheere, 7.

⁹⁰ R. Narasimhachar, *Inscriptions at Sravana Belgola*, vol. 2, Epigraphia Caranatica (Bangalore: Mysore Government Central Press, 1923).

perhaps inspired by the diverse Jaina doxographic tradition, inaugurated a Vedānta mode of doxography, which consisted of theoretic and rhetorical registers – texts that functioned as manuals *and* myth.

Chapter Five

Founder's Keepers: How Śaṅkara came to found Śṛṅgeri

Searching for Śaṅkara at Śṛṅgeri

An inscription from 1652—recording the endowment of rent-free villages to “all the learned Brahmans of Vidyāraṇyapura” by the maṭha’s guru at the time, Saccidānanda-Bhāratī-svāmī—provides the guru’s hallowed lineage. Imitating the practice in royal inscriptions of detailing the storied lineage to which the king belongs, the inscription describes the guru as a “disciple of the succession of gurus descended from the holy feet of Śaṅkarācārya,” the 8th century theologian and founder of the brand of Advaita Vedānta that the maṭha followed and expounded.¹ This constitutes what is—to my knowledge—one of the earliest instances in which the maṭha explicitly recognizes Śaṅkara as the founder of the order of gurus at Śṛṅgeri. Indeed, as I have already detailed in my examination of the inscriptional record from the fourteenth century, the maṭha considered Vidyātīrtha to be the foremost guru of the order. Yet, even by the mid-seventeenth-century, the imputation of the founding of the maṭha to Śaṅkara is not set in stone. An inscription from 1662, ten years after the inscription above, refers to the very same guru, Saccidānanda-Bhāratī-svāmī, as a “disciple in regular succession from Vidyāraṇya-svāmī,” the purported founder of the city of Vijayanagara. In other words, there does not appear to have been uniform consensus in the acceptance of the figure of Śaṅkara as the founder of the order. The first of these inscriptions, from 1652, marks the *terminus post quem*, in the scholarly consensus, for the composition of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* (*Śaṅkara’s Universal Conquest*), an artificial court

¹ Perhaps a more literal translation would be the “upholder of the virtuous lineage of gurus from Śaṅkarācārya” *Śaṅkarācārya-guru-sat-sampradāya-pravartaka*. Rice, *Epigraphica Carnatica*, 6:95.

epic² or *mahākāvya*³ which tells the story of Śaṅkara's spiritual conquest, a marvelous feat that culminates with, *inter alia*, the founding of the Śrīṅgeri maṭha.

By 1652, then, there was an explicit identification of the theologian Śaṅkara as the founder of the order of *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsins* (recall, from chapter two, that *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsins* alone were initiated into the order of the maṭha) and as the *ur-ācārya* of the Śrīṅgeri scholiasts. This date, an important marker in the current debates on the origin of Śaṅkara's association with the maṭha—more specifically, the ascription of the founding to him—is not terribly important to us. It is noteworthy that stories describing Śaṅkara's founding of the maṭha did not gain currency until almost three hundred years after the initial explosion of intellectual fervor at the maṭha. Still, there is not enough evidence for us to assert that, prior to the 1600's, Śaṅkara was *not* thought to have founded the maṭha. Despite this indeterminacy, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is an immensely important and interesting literary creation – not just for us, but for the history of Advaita Vedānta in modern India. Written at least three hundred years after the texts that constitute the archive for this dissertation, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* synthesizes the key hermeneutic elements of the corpus into a narrative of the ineluctable triumph of Advaita Vedānta. In thus forming the first layer of reception history that highlights the very elements of monastic governmentality that I have underscored above, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* constitutes, in the first instance, powerful evidence for my argument. More specifically, in drawing our attention to

² Were we to describe the pedigree of this type of *mahākāvya*, the obvious inspiration would be Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhacarita*. “In his [Aśvaghōṣa's] *Buddhacarita* he offers what amounts to a co-optation of the traditional military epic: the spiritual struggle between Siddhārtha and Māra, god of love and death, replaces the usual battle, and suggests that the Buddha's spiritual victory was superior to any military conquest... it is safe to say that speaking of the Buddha's spiritual career as parallel to a kingly one, through the double meanings assigned to ideas such as that of the cakravartin, has a long history. What was new in Aśvaghōṣa's work was his appropriation of the *mahākāvya* – apparently already a vehicle of some status in Brahmin circles – as the tool for such presentation.” Yīgal Bronner, David Dean Shulman, and Gary A. Tubb, eds., *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature*, First edition, South Asia Research (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2014), 76.

³ Daṇḍī, *Kāvyaḍarśa* (Madras: V. Ramaswamy Sastrulu & Sons, 1964). 1.14 – 1.22.

the unification of the Vedic tradition, by the assimilation of Mīmāṃsā (and Vedic ritual) through subordination to Advaita Vedānta and *saṃnyāsa*, monastic governmentality is given a narrative arc. The maṭha at Śṛṅgeri finds its place in the history of the age of Kali, a glimmer of hope in a fallen and degenerate time.

The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, comprising sixteen cantos, chronicles the miraculous life and deeds of the ascetic teacher Śaṅkara, an incarnation of the god Śiva, who restores the Vedas to supremacy and thus arrests the ineluctable religious decline of the land. Although the *digvijaya*'s Śaṅkara subdues and subordinates rival religious orders, his foremost accomplishment is to unify and thereby revive the atrophying Vedic tradition and establish institutional centers for its control and expansion. The narrative thus provides a myth of origin for the maṭha at Śṛṅgeri, which, as the story goes, Śaṅkara himself establishes as the epicenter for the Vedic renewal that his hermeneutic and theological movement has inaugurated. His conquest of the cardinal directions is followed by the establishment of maṭhas at the four corners of the land. It also serves as an origin myth of the project of Vedic synthesis and unification that the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri undertook in the fourteenth century. In other words, the work gives narrative form to a story that I have already told in the fore-going chapters. The poem synthesizes all the salient elements of my thesis: the unification of the Vedic tradition into a single hierarchically ordered whole, the establishment of the maṭha as the governing institution, the institutional transformation of the guru of the maṭha as the office of Śaṅkarācārya (in a retrospective Weberian rationalization of charismatic power), the imposition of order through the hermeneutic principle of assimilation through subordination, and the encompassment of the traditional organs of power into the new Vedic imperium. In my study of the poem here, these are the elements that I take up for analysis.

In the first section, I examine the framing that the poem invokes in telling the story of Śaṅkara's birth. The tale is structured using the familiar *purāṇic* frame, in which the gods must cooperate to solve an intractable problem. Invoking the *mahākāvya*s of Kālidāsa -- *Kumārasambhava* and *Raghuvamśa* are clear influences – the poem opens with a challenge that is particularly keenly felt by the gods: a decline in the religiosity among the denizens of earth. The decline of religiosity is defined narrowly as the unavoidable decline in the performance of the Vedic ritual, entailing a concomitant drying up offerings on which the gods subsist – and a troubling increase in the popularity of non-Vedic religious traditions, including Buddhism, Śāktism and Jainism. Śiva's task is cut out for him: he must take birth, as Śaṅkara, and oversee the revival of the Vedic religion. This revival is distinguished in two respects, which we appreciate with the progression of the tale. First, the assimilation of ritual action and soteriological knowledge, which are the distinct, and traditionally opposed spheres of the ritual householder and the unbound *saṃnyāsin*. The poem addresses this re-conciliation of the two opposed factions of the Vedic tradition in the climactic episode of the work, the debate between Maṇḍana Mīśra the arch-ritualist and Śaṅkara the emperor of *saṃnyāsin*. As I argue throughout, Śaṅkara's conquest, which establishes the hegemonic status of the maṭha as a governing institution, is depicted in the martial topoi of court poetry. Thus, the assimilation through the subordination of ritual to soteriological knowledge is depicted in the idiom of subjugation; Maṇḍana enters Śaṅkara's ascetic order upon his defeat, and Maṇḍana's wife is led away by Śaṅkara and installed at Śṛṅgeri as its ruling deity. The second respect in which the ship of Vedic religion is righted is in the subjugation of the diversity of other traditions and orders. Those that conform to the Vedas and can be made to submit to the supremacy of the Vedic governmentality of the maṭha are accorded an appropriate rank in the maṭha's hierarchy of rule. Other traditions,

being beyond the Vedic pale, must be extirpated entirely, either through expulsion or through dissolution.

A Complicated Coda to a Canon

There remains one glaring issue with my reading of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, namely, why should we take this text, composed three hundred years after the corpus of texts I have examined in the first three chapters, to share in that fourteenth-century project of Vedic revival? There is a longer answer to this question: that the poem advances the very same case for a monastic governmentality as we have encountered in the other texts of this corpus. I have adumbrated this argument in my introduction to the poem, and I detail it over the course of this chapter. But the shorter answer is that the author of the poem intentionally links the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* to the corpus of texts that I have examined in the course of this study. Indeed, he uses the very first verse of the poem to do so. And he does so by implying that this text is part of that famed corpus of Vedic commentaries and independent treatises.⁴ The author's means of signaling that this work is to be included in the corpus of the fourteenth century constitutes evidence for my position – elaborated upon in the introduction – that the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri were working with a different conception of authorial intention and integrity than we might assume. In effect, the use of formulaic invocatory (*maṅgala*) verses was intended to signal the unity of the project. The author of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* very consciously exploits this conception of unity of composition in composing the very first verse of his work.

⁴ There can be no more definitive proof of his success than the universal acknowledgement even by scholars – only recently challenged – that *the* Mādhava to whom we may sensibly ascribe the Vedic commentaries also authored this much later *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*.

Bowing to the highest self, bearing the form of Śrī Vidyātirtha, I have summarized the pith of the ancient Śaṅkaravijaya (The Conquest of Śaṅkara) with clarity.⁵

Compare this to the invocation that forms the beginning of a commentary on the Jaimini Sūtras—*Jaiminīyanyāyamālāvistara (The Elaboration of the Garland of the Aphorisms of Jaimini)*—a text that forms an integral part of the original fourteenth-century corpus:

Bowing to the highest self, bearing the form of Śrī Vidyātirtha, I have summarized The Garland of the Aphorisms of Jaimini in verse, with clarity.⁶

Further, compare the invocation at the beginning of a very similar summary and commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras – *Vaiyāsakanyāyamālā (The Garland of the Aphorisms of Vyāsa)* – also included in the fourteenth-century corpus:

Bowing to the highest self, bearing the form of Śrī Vidyātirtha, I have summarized The Garland of the Rules of Vyāsa’s School (Vedānta) in verse, with clarity.⁷

As the syntactic and semantic parallelism (in ***bold italics***) of these three verses demonstrates, it is undeniable that the opening verse of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* signals its

⁵ *praṇamya paramātmānaṃ śrīvidyātirtharūpiṇam | prācīnaśaṅkarajaye sārah saṃgrhyate sphuṭam ||* Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 1.

⁶ *praṇamya paramātmānaṃ śrīvidyātirtharūpiṇam | jaiminīyanyāyamālā ślokaḥ saṃgrhyate sphuṭam ||* Mādhava, *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*, 1.

⁷ *praṇamya paramātmānaṃ śrīvidyātirtharūpiṇam | vaiyāsakanyāyamālā ślokaḥ saṃgrhyate sphuṭam ||* Bhāratitīrthamuni, *Vaiyāsikanyāyamālā*, ed. Sivadatta Pandit (Poona: Ānandāśrama Press, 1891), 3.

affiliation with this older corpus of texts—composed at least three hundred years earlier—that has formed the subject of our study hitherto.⁸ The opening verse insists that the work to follow is the creation of the same person as the commentaries on the Veda and the miscellany of other texts listed above.

For instance, with the mention of Vidyātirtha, the guru to whom most of the fourteenth-century works are dedicated, this text stakes its claim to the archaic corpus. Further, in classifying the project at hand, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, as a *saṃgraha* (summary), a genre that finds robust representation among the texts of the older corpus, the claim to archaic status is only strengthened.⁹

Still, this leaves us with the larger question of how, precisely, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* relates to this older corpus of texts. The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* helps clarify some of the arguments that I have developed on the basis of the Vedic commentaries. I have argued that the salience of the Vedic commentaries lies in their synthesis of a normative framework. The commentaries present a carefully hierarchized normative framework that ranks the ideal ethical or religious human subjects. I have shown how the commentaries rank and link the human ends, particularly *dharma* and *mokṣa*, in order to construct these ideal religious subjects, who, embodying and instantiating those values in their proper order, ensure the naturalization and replication of this vision of the good. In the foregoing chapters, I have shown how the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri

⁸ In fact, as I have discussed above, Mādhava himself refers to the opening verse (*ślokaṃ*) of the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā* (*The Garland of the Aphorisms of Jaimini*) as a signature verse (*svamudrārūpaṃ*), which has been used at the beginning of the *Garland of Aphorisms* (*nyāyamālāyā ādau*) in order to bring to light the fact that this is his own book (*svakīyagranthatvadyotanāya*). This is evidence, at the very least, that authors in this tradition considered certain verses to be signatures, and indicative of authorship. Mādhava, *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*, 2.

⁹ Besides being used in the *maṅgala* verses for the works mentioned above, there are a number of texts from the original corpus that take on a summarizing function. For instance, the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, the *Vivaraṇaprameyasamgraha* are two works that prominently announce their purpose to summarize a canonical text in the tradition.

developed and deployed a hybrid hermeneutics to constitute a graduate spectrum of ethical subjectivities. Primary among these idealized forms was the Vedic ritualist (*gr̥hastha*) and the *parama-hamṣa samnyāsin*. These two figures as metonyms for their respective Vedic spheres (ritual and gnosis) were situated on a hierarchical continuum of subjectivities. That highly technical hermeneutic discourse of the commentarial corpus is enlivened by the narrative drama of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. The debate between Śaṅkara (the *samnyāsin*) and Maṇḍana Miśra (the ritualist householder) enacts the novel hermeneutic intervention that I have discussed: the assimilation of values in a single hierarchy through subordination. The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* constitutes this hierarchy of Vedic values through the story of Śaṅkara's heroic progress and conquest. Śaṅkara's universal conquest serves as the foundational myth of the maṭha: it tells us how the maṭha came to rule the known religious universe.

As regards this foregoing discussion, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is instructive as a point of convergence and departure. In certain respects, this text carries forward the same vision of the good enunciated by the Vedic commentaries, but in other respects, reflecting the changes wrought in the operation of religious power in the intervening period, it diverges somewhat in the constitution of that power, and the ends to which it ought to be exercised. I have argued that the Vedic commentaries synthesized two historically distinct traditions of Vedic hermeneutics, the ritual and the soteriological, in linking the corresponding traditions, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, in a hierarchic arrangement, corresponding to the human ends of duty (*dharma*) and liberation (*mukti*). The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* expands this vision of assimilation through subordination to include all the theological traditions, within and without the Vedic pale, in a new hierarchy presided over by the Advaita (non-dual) Vedānta brand of theology espoused by the monastery at Śṛṅgeri. In this regard, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* lives up to its name: it enacts the universal

subjugation of all the religious doctrines by Advaita Vedānta, it provides a narrative of monastic governmentality.

Nevertheless, the subjugation of the ritual householder (Mīmāṃsā) by the king of ascetics, Śaṅkara (Advaita Vedānta) remains the climactic episode in this drama of universal conquest. It is the hermeneutic blueprint for enacting the assimilative dominance that is replicated across the other religious viewpoints. It is the source code for hermeneutic of assimilation through subordination. In this way, by expanding the scope of dominion beyond Mīmāṃsā to encompass the universe of doctrines, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* carries forward the movement of assimilation through subordination evident in the Vedic commentaries.

I have argued that the Vedic commentaries were part of a broader pedagogical project aimed at formulating an ethical Vedic subjectivity. In that programmatic vision, the Vedic commentaries are described as the culmination of a pedagogic curriculum, implying therefore a project of ethical subject formation.¹⁰ This ethical subjectivity presupposes a normative framework formulating a vision of, and indeed a path to, the highest good. The introductions to the Vedic commentaries promulgate precisely such a normative universe constituted through the

¹⁰ Although the Vedic commentaries vary in their description of the scope of this pedagogic project, they are uniform in describing some greater undertaking of which the commentary on that particular Veda is a part. For instance, the introductory verses of the commentary on the *Rgveda* states: “His royal highness Bukka, bearing this form through his benevolent glance, directed the teacher Mādhava to elucidate the meaning of the Vedas. The compassionate teacher Mādhava, *having explained the Prior and Latter Examinations* (Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta) *concisely*, undertook to express the meaning of the Vedas.” Here, the verses make clear that the commentary on the *Rgveda* followed the commentaries on the *Pūrva* and *Uttara Mīmāṃsā*, which lay out the hermeneutic key to the Vedas. [*yatkaṭākṣeṇa tadrūpaṃ dadhadbukkamahīpatiḥ | ādiśanmādhavācāryaṃ vedārthasya prakāśane || ye pūrvottaramīmāṃse te vyākhyāyātisaṃgrahāt | kṛpālurmādhavācāryo vedārthaṃ vaktumudyataḥ ||*]
The introductory verses of the commentary on the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* delineate the ambit of the commentary: Adducing the *Brāhmaṇa*, the two *Kalpasūtras* [i.e. the *Āpastamba Kalpasūtra* and the *Baudhāyana Kalpasūtra*], the *Mīmāṃsā*, the *Grammar* [of Pāṇini]; all of these make clear the meaning of the Vedas. [*brāhmaṇaṃ kalpasūtre dve mīmāṃsāṃ vyākṛtiṃ tathā | udāhṛtyātha taiḥ sarvairvedārthaḥ spaṣṭamīryate ||* Müller, *Rig-Veda-Samhitā*, 1:1. *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, 1.

hierarchical synthesis of, in particular, the two highest, transcendent human ends (*dharma*: duty, *mokṣa*: liberation), in light of which the commentary could, and indeed should, be read.

I have argued that the underlying schema, the deep structure informing the construction of this normative framework, derives from a Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics, according to which, just as meaningful injunctive statements are capable of absorbing other statements in a subordinate position, whereby all the parts of the ‘text’ can be inter-related through intricate relations of subordination to the overarching *telos* of ritual performance, all human actions too can be hierarchically arranged and assimilated into a normative framework regulated by the *teloi* of the four human ends. The hermeneutics of the subject is embedded within the overarching framework of values, and insofar as these commentaries promulgate a vision of the highest good(s), they simultaneously assert their authority to regulate the normative universe implicated by this discourse. Thus far, I have sought to locate the nature and operation of power in the commission and composition of these commentarial texts.

But whereas the commentary’s power is parasitic and *sub rosa*, its hermeneutic ends encoded structurally as much as they are voiced explicitly, the text at hand offers a more vivid and open discussion of the singular capacity of monastic governmentality to absorb other institutions and operations of power. The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* uses a markedly different register to assert the very same authority to which the commentaries lay claim. Cast in a familiar *Purāṇic* mold, the narrative poem dramatizes the triumph of the Advaita Vedānta school over rival theological traditions. As the title suggests, the story of this triumph is told in the fashion of the *digvijaya*, the epic narrative of a king who ascends to universal sovereignty by conquering the directions, which is to say through universal conquest. Like many a trope in Sanskrit literature, the origin of the *digvijaya* can be traced to the *Mahābhārata* and even further back to Vedic

ritual. As has been already, and more adroitly, observed,¹¹ although the *Mahābhārata* draws much of its material, structure and tropes from the warp and woof of the ritual, it is hardly a patchwork of ritual fabric. Rather, the different threads of the ritual are unraveled and spun into a different tapestry, where the older patterns, though recognizable in patches, are no longer the same. This is certainly the case for the *digvijaya*,¹² which may be traced back to the *rājasūya* sacrifice, the Vedic ritual of royal consecration, and which takes center stage in the second book of the *Mahābhārata* as the ritual Yudhiṣṭhira performs to win universal sovereignty, its nature informed by the logic of the epic and the not the strictures of ritual.

The Digvijaya: Hoary Origins

In the history of religions of India, the use of the martial tropes to characterize the deeds of religious figures is familiar. The nexus between Buddhism, wherein the Buddha is often described using the language of universal sovereign (*cakravartin*), and imperial formations—particularly in South East Asia—has been subjected to serious scholarly scrutiny.¹³

¹¹ For an excellent reflection on the significance of Vedic ritual to the literary form and content of the *Mahābhārata*, see Christopher Minkowski, “Janamejaya’s Sattrā and Ritual Structure,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no. 3 (1989): 401–20; Tamar Reich, “Sacrificial Violence and Textual Battles: Inner Textual Interpretation in the Sanskrit Mahābhārata,” *History of Religions* 41, no. 2 (2001): 142–69.

¹² J.A.B. van Buitenen explains, at some length, that the *Mahābhārata*’s second book (*Sabhā Parvan*), where sovereignty is stipulated as the result of the *rājasūya* (Royal Consecration) ritual, structures its narrative using the ritual as a mode or technique of plotment: “The traditional term for world conquest in Sanskrit is *digvijaya*, the ‘conquest of the quarters,’ where we once more meet *diś*... in its plural sense of ‘all of space,’ met with in the Vedic ritual of the *rājasūya*, where it is called *digvijayasthāpana*, the ‘separate establishment of the quarters,’ which takes place when the king-to-be sets foot in each of the ‘five’ quarters, i.e. the regular four and the one above.” J. A. B. van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata*, Phoenix edition. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 18, <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/11239271>.

¹³ See, for instance, Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*, vol. 15, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology; (Cambridge [Eng.]: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

The trope of *digvijaya*, a slight variation on the *cakravartin* model, realizes its dramatic potential in the *Mahābhārata*. The *digvijaya* is characterized, in the *Sabhā Parvan* (*The Book of the Great Hall*) of the *Mahābhārata*, as a crucial preparatory element of the *rājasūya* ritual, which Yudhiṣṭhira is moved to perform in order to win universal sovereignty. Nārada, the messenger of the gods, while visiting Yudhiṣṭhira’s newly-constructed grand hall, conveys a message to the parvenu king from his dead father, Pāṇḍu. In describing Indra’s divine hall, Nārada tells Yudhiṣṭhira that the only mortal king to be admitted to the hall is the famed Hariścandra. The king’s father, Pāṇḍu – according to Nārada’s tale -- has taken up his post-mortem residence in the world of the fathers, and desires to join Hariścandra in the great honor of being admitted to Indra’s hall. Nārada tells Yudhiṣṭhira, “Your father, Pāṇḍu, was lost in wonder at the sight of King Hariścandra’s glory, son of Kunti. Realizing that I was soon to depart to the world of men, he bowed before me and said, ‘Tell Yudhiṣṭhira that he is capable of conquering the world, for his brothers obey him; and to perform the great Consecration Sacrifice (*rājasūya*). He is my son, and if he performs such a sacrifice, I, like Hariścandra, may quickly ascend to Śakra’s home and there pass countless years of joy.’”¹⁴ The message to Yudhiṣṭhira is clear: be like Hariścandra, who conquered the whole world by performing the *rājasūya* ritual, and thus secure for your father a place in Indra’s hall.¹⁵

¹⁴ Paul. Wilmot, *Mahabharata. Book Two, The Great Hall*, 1st ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 115.

¹⁵ “When the majestic Hariścandra had concluded the great ceremony and received the rites of consecration, king of men, the splendor of his universal sovereignty shone across the world. Those rulers who perform the Consecration Sacrifice [*rājasūya*] rejoice with Indra.” Wilmot, 115.

The perspicacious student of Vedic ritual may have noted that the *rājasūya* ritual, *qua* Vedic ritual, does not result in universal sovereignty for the patron.¹⁶ This is more properly the province of the *aśvamedha*. The *rājasūya*¹⁷ is essentially unconcerned with what appears to be one of its central ritual acts: the royal consecration. According to Heesterman, “The *rājasūya* seems to be an abridgement of what originally must have been an unremitting series of yearly ceremonies with the object of regenerating the universe. The king took a central place in it. The universe had yearly to be recreated and so had the king who, like the common Śrauta sacrificer, incorporated the cosmos.” Why then, the question arises, does the *Mahābhārata* maintain that the *rājasūya* is the means to universal sovereignty?

As J.A.B van Buitenen argues, the *rājasūya* was chosen precisely because of the discrete ritual elements that the authors of the *Mahābhārata* thought most elegantly suited to advance the plot.¹⁸ Since the Vedic *rājasūya* ritual is not meant to accomplish universal sovereignty it comprises no part that enacts the subjugation of one’s rivals, as, for instance, the *aśvamedha* does.¹⁹ It does, nevertheless, contain the *digvyavasthāpana* (the Mounting of the Quarters), wherein the sacrificer, mentally, mounts the five directions of the compass (north, south, east, west, and the zenith).²⁰ From this seed of ritual, the *Mahabharata* cultivates a full-fledged *digvijaya*, no longer either ritual or conceptual. Rather, Yudhiṣṭhira dispatches his four brothers

¹⁶ “Here we should recall that on strictly Vedic terms the *rājasūya* does not really bestow universal sovereignty, or *sāmrājya*; this claim is reserved for another ritual.” Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata*. 11.

¹⁷ J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration: The Rājasūya Described According to the Yajus Texts and Annotated* (’s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1957). 10 – 11.

¹⁸ Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata*, 11.

¹⁹ Paul-Emile Dumont, “The Horse-Sacrifice in the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa: The Eighth and Ninth Prapāthakas of the Third Kāṇḍa of the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa with Translation,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 92, no. 6 (December 27, 1948): 447–503, page 449.

²⁰ Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, 103.

to the four cardinal directions: Arjuna to the North, Bhīma to the East, Sahadeva to the South, and Nakula to the West, while Yudhiṣṭhira remains in the Khāṇḍava tract, which van Buitenen interprets to mean that he takes the fifth step, upward to the zenith that is Brahma's realm.²¹

The brothers subjugate the kings in all the directions, and these subjugated, feudatory kings are then obligated, in the *Mahābhārata*'s rendition of the *rājasūya*, to attend the consecration ritual where they must consent to the sovereign's authority over them. The ritual performance of consent has its own analogue in the Vedic *rājasūya*: one of the first ritual actions in the Vedic *rājasūya* consists of an offering of a rice cake (*puroḍāṣa*) to the goddess *Anumati* (literally, assent).²² In the *Mahābhārata*, this element of the *rājasūya*, the offering of a rice cake to the goddess *Anumati*, is interpreted as the consent provided by the newly-subjugated kings to their emperor, who is therefore, through this ritualized consent, consecrated as the sovereign. This relation is further formalized, in the *Mahābhārata*, with the presentation of the guest gift to the principal feudatory, as *primus inter pares*, which van Buitenen interprets as the formalization of the status of the heir-apparent.²³ It is true that the gift designates its recipient as the foremost feudatory, and indeed Śiśupāla's objection to Kṛṣṇa being the recipient is that he lacks the status required to be the donee. Nevertheless, beyond the narrative constraints of the *Mahābhārata*, as this reconfigured *rājasūya* is seized upon as a literary trope of universal sovereignty, the gift-giving bears a more general valence: it is yet another expression of the subordinated status of the feudatory king, as the one who depends upon the sovereign for the distribution of resources.

²¹ "The entire world is conquered, quarter by quarter, by the king's four brothers, 'while Yudhiṣṭhira the King Dharma resided in the Khāṇḍava Tract.' If we put this statement in ritual terms we could say that by remaining in the center Yudhiṣṭhira takes the step to the zenith, the 'world of Brahmā.'" Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata*, 16.

²² Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, 15–17.

²³ Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata*, 22.

Indeed, as I discuss below, the circulation (or redistribution) of resources (ritualized in gift-giving) is the most important way that a sovereign makes and remakes political relations; it is a potent means of ritually formalizing consensual subordination. The donation of land and resources to specific groups, guilds, institutions, or notable persons was one of the cornerstones of political control that emanated from the center of an imperial formation to its peripheries. The centrifugal exercise of control, wherein each tributary king re-established the universal sovereign's power, albeit arrogating to himself a fraction of that power in being the instrument of donation, mirrored the centripetal exercise of control, in the collection of revenue.

This provides us with a rudimentary sense of the transformation of the *rājasūya* into the literary trope of *digvijaya*, which gained currency in court poetry and inscriptional encomia as the expression of a king's dominance. There has been little theorization, particularly in light of the importance of this trope in the literary constitution of political power, of the theme of *digvijaya*.²⁴ Ronald Inden has provided a pithy summary of the figure of the *cakravartin*, with the medieval Rashtrakuta polity as the object of his analysis, highlighting some of the elements of this idealization of power that is critical to our investigation:

The annual holding of court, preceded by a 'ceremonial bath' (*abhisheka*) [what the Mahābhārata's translator renders 'consecration'] and following a royal progress (which might turn into an extended military campaign) was the act that reconstituted the ruling class of a polity as a self-ruling society... The agent that remade all of India, the 'entire earth', as an imperial formation was the king of kings who, together with his court, succeeded, in the eyes of those who constituted the polities of an imperial formation, in exercising his supremacy over

²⁴ One of the few attempts to grapple with the transposition of the *digvijaya* to describe religious movements is undertaken by William S. Sax, "Conquering the Quarters: Religion and Politics in Hinduism," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 4, no. 1 (2000): 39–60.

would-be claimants. He was the king called a Chakravartin, a ‘universal monarch’ or ‘lord of the entire earth’ (*sarvabhauma*)...All of the major religious orders incorporated into their soteriologies the idea of a universal monarch or paramount king of India, a ‘great man’ (*mahāpurusha*) who, endowed with special powers, was able to complete a ‘conquest of the quarters’ in the name of a still greater agent, the one taken as overlord of the cosmos. The names given to this compound activity, the ‘conquest of the quarters’ (*dig-vijaya*) and ‘conquest in accord with cosmomoral order’ (*dharma-vijaya*), referred to a royal progress that was supposed to display the performer of it as the overlord of the four directional regions, together with a middle region, taken to comprise the whole of the earth. Kings who recognized him as universal king offered submission or worked out some sort of accommodation in the form of an ‘agreement’ (*sandhi*).²⁵

This analysis of the constitution of idealized political power is inadequate to our analysis of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, which marks a rupture in the consensus that “all of the major religious orders incorporated into their soteriologies the idea of a universal monarch.” ‘Incorporation’ connotes the inability of religious orders to claim or seize political power, a natural consequence of lacking access to force. That is why, in Inden’s formulation, *the agent* is always a political figure with military force at his disposal. The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is remarkable in expropriating this prerogative to universal conquest for a great man of a different order, an ascetic order. In so doing, the text marks a rupture in the complementary affinities between the institutions of the maṭha and kingship that had obtained in earlier texts of the same corpus.²⁶

²⁵ Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 229.

²⁶ Indeed, human agency is of paramount importance in his analysis. As he writes: “When I use the expression ‘human agency’, I mean the realized capacity of people to act effectively upon their world and not only to know about or give personal or intersubjective significance to it. That capacity is the power of people to act purposively and reflectively, in more or less complex interrelationships to one another, to *reiterate and remake* the world in which they live, in circumstances, where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable...” Inden, 23.

Visions of Disorder

Let us now turn to the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, where we can examine, in greater detail, the uses of this trope and other rhetorical devices, in the expression of the supreme authority of Śaṅkara and, by extension, the maṭha at Śṛṅgeri, over the *maṇḍalas* of religious rivals. The story of Śaṅkara's campaign to claim the throne of omniscience and radical sovereignty limns the monastery's conceptualization of political and religious power: their disparate sources, their asymmetric relation, and their ultimate import to the fashioning of an idealized religious subjectivity. This section thus forms the first part of a tripartite analysis of the salience of *digvijaya* to Śṛṅgeri monastery's claims to religious authority, conducted over two chapters.

The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is a story of triumph: the (re)ascension of the Vedic tradition to its rightful throne, reigning supreme over its feudatory (formerly feuding) rivals, whose flawed religious doctrines precipitated the Vedic decline of the past. The poem chronicles the heroic efforts of the savior of the Vedic tradition as he dispels, through theological argumentation, the darkness of various dualist views. There are three elements of the plot that I analyze here: the cosmological crisis that precipitates Śaṅkara's appearance, his subjugation of Mīmāṃsā, and his dominance over the diversity of theological schools, culminating in a Vedāntin imperium. The analysis of these three episodes demonstrates the use of the recognizable device of *digvijaya* to dramatize the aspired universal domination of the entire religious and normative universe by the partisans of the Śṛṅgeri maṭha.

The poem begins, as many episodes of *Purāṇic* lore do,²⁷ with a crisis that requires divine intervention.²⁸ At the beginning of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, the gods approach Śiva seeking his intervention in a crisis that they are incapable of solving. Once upon a time, the gods tell Śiva, Viṣṇu assumed the body of the Buddha to teach the Sugatas (Buddhists) the Buddhist doctrine for the benefit of the gods.²⁹ Those erroneous doctrines, once disseminated, have become dominant, and the Buddhists continue to traduce the Vedas as but a livelihood for priests. In this degenerate age of darkness,³⁰ the gods complain, men neither perform Vedic rituals nor practice renunciation. They censure the norms of the order of caste (*varṇāśramadharmā*), and since they are opposed to Vedic sacrifice, they deprive the gods of their subsistence (ritual offerings). The

²⁷ The *Rāmāyaṇa* is the most celebrated example of an epic poem with such a conceit, namely, that the depredations of a demon, Rāvaṇa, require the incarnation of a god to restore the proper balance of power, that is, one that continues to favor the gods. The more apposite analogue here, though, is Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, insofar as it not only adopts the same conceit but is a *mahākāvya*, that uses many of the poetic devices and tropes that the author of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* employs.

²⁸ This set-piece is also used in the *Sumadhvajaya*, the mid-14th century poem that celebrates the miraculous life and deeds of Madhva, the founder of the dualist Mādhva school of Vedānta (also known as the Pūrṇaprajña school). “When the sun of insight had been obscured by the corruption of the age, and people, blinded by the perpetuation of the darkness of reproachable doctrine, stumbled from the path of the virtuous, the gods, with heavy hearts, headed by Brahma, sought out Mukunda, who was a refuge.”

vijñānabhānumati kālabalena line
durbhāṣyasantamasasantito jane 'ndhe |
mārgāt satām skhalati khinnahrdo mukundaṃ
devāścaturmukhamukhāḥ saraṇaṃ prajagmuḥ || [2.1]

²⁹ The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* contains this myth, as Wendy Doniger has shown: “The demons had stolen the sacrificial portion of the gods, but they were so full of *svadharmā*, Veda worship, and *tapas* that they could not be conquered. Viṣṇu created a man of delusion to lead the *daityas* from the path of the Vedas... and he made them all *ārhatas*, discouraging them from *tapas* and teaching them contradictory tenets about dharma... Then the demons became Buddhists, and they caused others to become heretics, abandoning the Vedas and reviling the gods and Brahmins, discarding their armor of *svadharmā*. The gods attacked them and killed them.” For a section devoted to Viṣṇu's role in promulgating non-Vedic views, see Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, “The Origins of Heresy in Hindu Mythology,” *History of Religions* 10, no. 4 (1971): 271–333.

³⁰ The invocation of the darkness of erroneous views is an enduring metaphor with a long history in the environs in which the poem was composed, namely, Karnataka. Here, the collocation is of the earth [*dhārṭrī*] being depicted engulfed in a long night [*rātriḥ*], enveloped [*vyāptā*] as it is by great delusion [*saṃtamasa*]. Compare this to an inscription [*Epigraphica Carnatica, Vol 2.258*] from Śravaṇa Belgoḷa dated to 1432, which, among other matters, addresses the virtues of the Jaina sage Cārukīrti-muni: “When that blessed sun had set, if the moon Paṇḍita-yati [learned ascetic] had not then risen, everything would have been covered by the dense darkness of the false (doctrine): thus was it proclaimed by eminent speakers.”

gods extend their complaint to include the Śaivas and the Vaiṣṇavas who prefer to worship sectarian symbols, such as the *liṅga* associated with Śiva or the *cakra* (discus) associated with Viṣṇu, rather than the Vedas.³¹

Let us take a moment to examine how the gods diagnose the crisis, so that we may have a better sense of the predicate for Śiva's incarnation. The poem uses an old story from the *Purāṇas* to spur the action: that the Buddha was none other than an incarnation of Viṣṇu, solely interested in keeping the immensely powerful technology of the Vedic ritual from falling into the wrong hands. With this aim, Viṣṇu, as Buddha, taught the Buddhist teachings to those who were most likely to misuse the Vedic ritual. But, as it turns out, the gods were hoist by their own petard – their deception backfired and led to the wild proliferation of Buddhist teachings and the concomitant decline of the Vedic sacrifice and the dharmic system that undergirded it. In this accounting of the past, the Buddhists undermined the very basis of normative society, upheld by

³¹ Once upon a time, the gods approached Śiva, the god of gods, with great reverence, while he sat on the charming mountain, like a ray of the moon, as it glances off the eastern peak.

ekadā devatā rūpyācala-stham upatasthire || deva-devaṃ tuṣārāṃśum iva pūrvācala-sthitam ||

The gods bowed before him, who, in his grace, understood that their concerns had to be addressed. Then they informed him, their lotus hands folded in respect, of the following:

prasādānumita-svārtha-siddhayaḥ praṇipatyā taṃ || mukulīkṛta-hastābjā vinayena vyajijñapan

O lord, you know that Viṣṇu, assuming Buddha's form, led the Sugatas [Buddhists] astray about existence for our benefit. The earth, like the night by darkness, is now beset, o lord, with these Buddhists, defilers of the darśanas [theological schools], who depend on the teachings Buddha advanced.

vijñātam eva bhagavan vidyate yadd hitāya naḥ || vañcayan sugatān buddha-vapur-dhārī janārdanaḥ ||

taṭprañītāgamāmbair bauddhair darśana-dūṣakaiḥ | vyāptedānīm prabho dhātrī rātriḥ saṃtamasair iva ||

O lord, the enemies of Brahmans slander the practices of the caste system; they say that the words of the Veda amount to nothing more than a vocation.

varṇāśrama-samācārān dviṣanti brahma-vidviṣaḥ || bruvanty āmnāya-vacasām jīvikā-mātratām prabho ||

Neither the rituals, such as the daily sun salutations, nor ascetic practice does any man ever perform anymore, they are all heretics.

na saṃdhyādīni karmāṇi nyāsaṃ vā na kadācana || karoti manujaḥ kaścit sarve pākhaṇḍatām gatāḥ ||

When the pair of syllables, kra-tu [ritual] are heard, they shut up their ears, how one earth could they perform rituals, and how should we partake of the sacrifice?

śrute pidadhāti śrotre kratuḥ ity akṣaradvaye || kriyāḥ katham pravarteran katham kratu-bhujo vayaṃ ||

Those heretics, identified by the discus or the *liṅga*, are devoted to the teachings of Śiva and Viṣṇu, have dispensed [saṃnyas] with the Vedic ritual, much like vile men dispense with compassion.

śiva-viṣṇv-āgama-parair liṅga-cakrādi-cihnitaḥ || pākhaṇḍaiḥ karma saṃnyastam kāruṇyam iva durjanaiḥ ||

Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 16–17.

the *dharmic* conduct of the Brahmins, and opened the door to the flourishing of sects, to the grave detriment of the Vedas and of the performance of Vedic ritual, the latter more important for the grasping gods.

We should note that in addition to the numerous social maladies laid at the feet of the Buddhists, the gods denounce them as revilers of the other philosophical or theological schools (*darśana-dūṣaka*). The Buddhists, the charge seems to follow, were unable to create a social order predicated on transcendent values. They thus paved the way for the degradation of the Vedic order and the proliferation of aberrant sects. The gods adjure Śiva to establish a Vedic path [*śrautaṃ vartma*] and to lead the world to happiness along this path.³² The rhetoric of instituting a path [*vartman*] in a world beset by darkness like the night [*dhātrī vyāptā saṃtamasair, rātrir iva*] is strikingly similar to the encomium [*praśasti*] of Vidyāraṇya, in an inscriptional record from 1437, wherein the guru is praised as “the establisher of the path of the Vedas.”³³ The kings of Vijayanagara, moreover, were described as travelling the path of dharma. For instance, a 1386 inscription describes Harihara as a valiant king who “has conquered all the enemies, is a traveler in the path of dharma and Brahma and converts Kaliyuga into Kṛtayuga by his pure conduct.”

If the gods have put their finger on the provenance of the problem, Śiva’s answer points to its present manifestation. Śiva promises to take human form as Śaṅkara in order to compose a commentary (*bhāṣya*) that will resolve the overarching meaning (*tātparya*) of the *Brahmasūtras* (the aphoristic text taken as foundational by Vedāntins of all stripes, not just the monist

³² Once you have destroyed these frauds so that existence may be protected, establish a Vedic path upon which this entire universe may attain happiness.
tad bhavāṃl loka-rakṣārtham utsādyā nikhilān khalān || vartma sthāpayatu śrautaṃ jagad yena sukhaṃ vrajet |
Vidyāraṇya, 17.

³³ Rice, *Epigraphica Carnatica*, 6:78.

Advaitins). As Śiva says to the gods: “I will fulfill your wishes by becoming human. I intend to compose a commentary, a definitive interpretation of the overarching meaning of the *sūtras*, in order to extirpate these evil practices and to establish dharma. I will appear on earth as the king of ascetics, Śaṅkara; like Hari with his four arms, [I will appear] with my four astute disciples, who are the midday sun to the night of duality, the essence of delusion.”³⁴

On the face of it, there appears to be a disconnect between the problem as the gods have characterized it and as Śaṅkara has proposed to solve it. There are at least two points of disjuncture. First, the gods despair at the desuetude into which the performance of Vedic ritual has fallen, not least because they are the primary beneficiaries of ritual offerings. And, apropos of our discussion of the constitutive social and political power of the redistribution of resources, the Vedic ritual, in which offerings are made to deities and gifts are given to humans, is the ideological linchpin of the cosmological wheel of sociality. Gods, deprived of their offerings, are cut off from the human world, which is itself thrown off kilter because the center (ritual) no longer holds. Śaṅkara’s solution to this seems, at first blush, misplaced. He resolves to write a commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa (or Vyāsa, as this text prefers to identify him), the aphoristic text that explains the Upaniṣadic portion of the Vedic corpus, that is, precisely the portion of the Veda *not* concerned with ritual but rather with the liberation (*mukti*) of the self. How then is a commentary on the nature and liberation of the self to “extirpate these evil practices and to establish dharma”?

³⁴*mano-rathaṃ pūrayiṣye mānuṣyam avalaṃbya vah ||
 duṣṭācāra-vināśāya dharmā-samsthāpanāya ca ||
 bhāṣyaṃ kurvan brahma-sūtra-tātparyārtha-vinirṇayaṃ ||
 mohana-prakṛti-dvaita-dhvānta-madhyāhna-bhānubhiḥ |
 caturbhiḥ sahitāḥ śiṣyais-caturair-harivad-bhujaiḥ ||
 yatīndraḥ śaṅkaro nāmnā bhaviṣyāmi mahītale |*
 Vidyāranya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 18.

The answer is anticipated in our earlier analysis of the Vedic commentaries that envision a hierarchical relationship between the ritual sections and the gnostic sections of the Veda. The ritual section (*karmakāṇḍa*) and its end (*dharmā/abhyudaya*) are assimilated in a subordinate relation to the higher gnostic section (*jñānakāṇḍa*) and its end (*mukti*). This assimilation through subordination is dramatized in the climactic encounter of the poem: the debate between the arch-ritualist and householder Maṇḍana Miśra and the king of ascetics Śaṅkara, an episode that I analyze in great detail below. Once Śaṅkara establishes the hegemony of gnosis to ritual, of the Vedic *saṃnyāsin* (ascetic) to the Vedic *grhastha* (householder), he may preside over a unified Vedic tradition, in which the seemingly discordant ritual and gnostic elements remain in harmony. Thus, Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* (which is to say, his interpretation of the essential meaning of the Upaniṣads) represents the culmination of the Vedic corpus. On this view, the Upaniṣads constitute a stratum of the corpus that is higher than the ritual corpus, inasmuch as it is concerned with the individual self's liberation from the endless cycle of death and rebirth. In other words, it contemplates a radical sovereignty of the self, totally independent of the limiting, albeit meaningful, bonds of sociality.

The other point of disjuncture relates to the laying of blame. There is agreement about the topsy-turvy state of the world, but who is to blame? The gods blame the Buddhists, who opened the door to Vedic decline, but Śiva assures them that he will eradicate *the darkness of duality, which is the essence of delusion*. Just as, in the face of the degradation of Vedic ritual, Śiva focuses our attention to the ultimate task at hand, namely the definitive understanding of the nature of the self and liberation, so too, in this case, in the face of the destruction wrought by the Buddhists, Śiva re-trains our attention to the present threat of duality, which causes humans to be deluded. *Duality (dvaita)* here refers to all those schools of Vedānta that are not Advaita (*non-*

dual), the principal threat, in the eyes of Śiva, to the propagation of the correct interpretation of the Vedas (the *advaita* interpretation of the Vedānta) that his commentary will secure. Thus, the Buddhists are pushed to the background (indeed, one would be hard-pressed to find Buddhists in medieval Karnataka) and the *real* threat is foregrounded: those rival schools of Vedānta (the dread *dualists* here include the Mādhvas, the Bhedābhedins, and the Rāmānujīyas) that undermine the hegemony of the Advaita (non-dual) Vedānta advanced by the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri monastery. Indeed, this is borne out in the course of the poem, since the Buddhists are dispatched before Śāṅkara arrives on the scene; they are driven out by the famed Mīmāṃsā philosopher Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, played in this cosmic drama by Śiva’s son Skanda. In this way, Mīmāṃsā neutralizes the threat of the Buddhists, preparing the stage for the more important task of the hierarchical absorption of the various viewpoints into the Vedic superstructure of Advaita Vedānta theology.³⁵

Thus, Śiva turns to his son Skanda, who will himself take birth as the celebrated Mīmāṃsaka (Vedic ritualist) theologian Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, and tells him, “My dear boy, listen to these most excellent words which will rescue the world: when the Veda, consisting of three parts,³⁶ has been rescued, all twice-born may then be saved. In protecting them, the whole world

³⁵ As the text sums up Śāṅkara’s incarnation: “When the first creation of the universe was tending towards its end [i.e. with the advent of the age of Kali], and the path had become difficult to traverse; when heaven had become inaccessible, and liberation even more so; when the human race was afflicted by degeneration, their natures degraded, then through the creator’s efforts, Śiva was incarnated with his [Śāṅkara’s] body.” The consequences of veering from the Vedic path are the disappearance of the fruits of *dharma* and *mokṣa* respectively, namely heaven and liberation. The Veda is thus theorized as offering two ends: heaven for its ritual practitioners and liberation for its renunciants adherents.

*sarge prāthamike prayāti virati mārge sthite daurgate
 sarge durgamatām upeyuṣi bhṛṣam durge pavarge sati
 varge deha-bhṛtām nisarga-maline jātopasarge khile
 sarge viśva-sṛjas-tadīya-vapuṣā bhargo vatīrṇo bhuvi*
 Vidyāranya, 62.

³⁶ The commentator elaborates that the three constituent parts are the ritual, devotional and gnostic sections:
kāṇḍatrayātmake karmopāsanājñānabhedena vṛndatrayātmake vede prakarṣeṇoddhṛte sati dvijānāmuddhṛtiḥ syāt ||

may be protected, because the whole caste system depends upon them [the twice-born].”³⁷ In this very brief description of the solution we may glimpse the vision of religious authority that the peripatetic Śāṅkara will establish. Indeed, the hierarchy of the Vedic order envisioned here corresponds perfectly with the hierarchy articulated in the texts that I have analyzed in the first two chapters, particularly, the *Parāśaramādhavīya*, which argues for the expansion of the scope of the Vedic injunction (*vidhi*) to encompass *all* religious conduct. In this instance, the Vedic order is envisioned in concentric circles, much like the *maṇḍalas* of what Inden calls an imperial formation;³⁸ the inner and most sacred center is the Veda, which itself comprises three parts; the meso-circle: the most important social group, the twice-born; and finally, the outer circle, the caste system, which encompasses and supports the remainder of society. The other aspect of this vision that demands our attention, and that are worked out in the seventh and eighth cantos of the poem, is the re-constitution of a single Vedic tradition, forged by Śāṅkara through the fusing together of the ritual and gnostic schools of Vedic hermeneutics, the Mīmāṃsā and the Vedānta. This foreshadows what is indubitably the climactic moment of the poem, the dispute that is dramatized over two cantos, the central and by far the longest episode of the poem: Śāṅkara’s debate against the arch-ritualist Maṇḍana Miśra (the incarnation of Brahmā), who, upon losing the theological debate, must renounce his social identity, his status as a householder, and take up *saṃnyāsa*, as Śāṅkara’s student.

³⁷ *śṛṇu saumya vacaḥ śreyo jagad-uddhāra-gocaram || kāṇḍa-trayātmake vede proddhṛte syād dvijoddhṛtiḥ|| tadraḥṣaṇe rakṣitaṃ syāt sakalam jagatī-talam || tad-adhīnatvato varṇāśrama-dharma-tates tataḥ ||* Vidyāranya, *Śāṅkaradigvijaya*, 19.

³⁸ Inden, *Imagining India*, 229.

Domestic Strife and a Beggar's Bliss

The hierarchy concealed in the appellation “tripartite Veda” (*kāṇḍatrāyātmaka veda*) is revealed in Śaṅkara’s encounter with Maṇḍana Mīśra. Śaṅkara’s triumph in debate is the metonymic dramatization of the subordination of Mīmāṃsā by Advaita Vedānta, ritual by knowledge, *dharma* by *mokṣa*, in other words, the very same absorption the Vedic commentaries accomplish. Let us therefore turn to this pivotal episode of the poem. I dwell on three dimensions of this encounter to illustrate the three dimensions of my argument. First, that the episode recapitulates, in yet a different register, the very same structural opposition of the two ultimate (and religious) human ends, *dharma* and *mokṣa*, that forms the subject of the Vedic commentaries. As my analysis in previous chapters has shown, this structural opposition is expressed in a variety of pairs: the institutions of the householder (*grhastha*) and the ascetic (*saṃnyāsin*); ritual and liberation; the efficacy of action and knowledge. Second, I show how this particular dramatization *resolves* this structural opposition in the very same way that the Vedic commentaries do, which is to say through the subordination of ritual to knowledge, of Mīmāṃsā to Advaita Vedānta, of the householder to the ascetic, of *dharma* to *mokṣa*. Critical to this harmonization of the two opposed constituent parts of the Vedic canon is a synthetic hybrid Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta hermeneutics, which I have detailed in the first two chapters. Resolution is consummated by a concomitant synthesis or assimilation into the hierarchic order. Lastly, I show precisely how the rhetoric of *digvijaya*, and more generally the concept of monastic governmentality (the pair of pastoral care and disciplinary power) is used to great effect in precipitating and resolving this structural opposition.

Śaṅkara’s encounter with Maṇḍana Mīśra takes up two cantos of the sixteen-canto poem, cantos eight and nine, by far the longest single episode dramatized in the poem. By this point in

the poem Śaṅkara, having completed his commentary on Vyāsa's *Brahmasūtras*, and having received Vyāsa's approbation for his efforts, learns from Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, the philosopher of Mīmāṃsā, that the most significant impediment on his path to Vedānta dominance is the famed scholar and practitioner of Vedic ritual, Maṇḍana Miśra.³⁹ Thus, Kumārila tells Śaṅkara,

If you wish to show the way then you must defeat the lord of insight, Maṇḍana
Miśraśarmā, whose fame extends to the ends of the earth. Should you defeat him,
all may be won.

³⁹ The depiction of Maṇḍana Miśra as Śaṅkara's Mīmāṃsā opponent and subsequently his prized pupil is no accident. Rather, Maṇḍana Miśra's intellectual biography warrants his selection to this particular role. There are three aspects of his intellectual biography that are of interest. First of all, Maṇḍana is acknowledged, even by scholars critical of Vedānta histories, to be a near contemporary of Śaṅkara. "Thrasher is inclined to accept Advaita tradition, which makes Maṇḍana and Śaṅkara contemporaries, Maṇḍana perhaps the older of the two... Thrasher indicates several passages in the *Brahmasiddhi* that he believes provide evidence that Maṇḍana knew of Śaṅkara's views when he wrote his Advaita work. Karl Potter, *Advaita Vedānta up to Śaṅkara and His Pupils*, vol. 3 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998). pp 346 - 347. Second, Maṇḍana Miśra's writings show that he wrote on Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, indeed his writings are amenable to the interpretation that he underwent an intellectual transformation or conversion from a full-throated commitment to Mīmāṃsā to devoting the hermeneutic arsenal of Mīmāṃsā to defend the supremacy of Advaita Vedānta. As Potter puts it, "The only clear Advaita work by Maṇḍana is the *Brahmasiddhi*. All of his other known works are either Mīmāṃsā or grammatical works..." *ibid*, 347. As Johannes Bronkhorst characterizes the consensus, "If this understanding of Maṇḍana's role in the history of Vedāntic thought is correct, we must conclude that this thinker made a determined effort to join two kinds of Vedānta that existed in his time: Vedānta as speculative philosophy and Vedānta as Mīmāṃsā. His *Brahmasiddhi* shows that in the end he opted for Vedānta as Mīmāṃsā, without however doing away with all the ideas that more philosophically oriented Vedāntins before him had developed." For more on this view, see Johannes Bronkhorst, "Vedānta as Mīmāṃsā," in *Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta: Interaction and Continuity*, vol. 10.3, Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007), pp 56 - 57. Thus, the poem lends a narrative arc to Maṇḍana Miśra's oeuvre, dramatizing the turn from Mīmāṃsā to Vedānta as the result of defeat at Śaṅkara's hands. Lastly, Maṇḍana Miśra's defeat results in his conversion to Advaita Vedānta and taking up the life of a renouncer, a transformation that entails the loss of his householder identity and the assumption of a post-initiation name. Despite the lack of historical evidence that Maṇḍana Miśra ever took up *saṃnyāsa* or that he was Śaṅkara's pupil, the poem uses the fact that Maṇḍana Miśra advanced Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta positions in his writings to ascribe to him the works of another Advaita Vedāntin thinker Sureśvara, who was in fact Śaṅkara's student. Thus, the poem uses a corpus of texts, ascribed to Maṇḍana Miśra and Sureśvara, to craft the narrative of Maṇḍana Miśra's conversion from Mīmāṃsaka to Vedāntin, from Maṇḍana Miśra the householder to Sureśvara the *saṃnyāsin*. "Advaita tradition goes further still, in that it identifies Maṇḍana with Śaṅkara's pupil Sureśvara. This has given rise to lengthy scholarly debate, which still goes on. There is plenty of reason to conclude that Sureśvara knows of Maṇḍana's work. The tradition is recorded in, if not original with, Mādhava's *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, where it is said that Maṇḍana, Sureśvara, and Viśvarūpa are the same person." Potter, 347.

He is famed on earth as Viśvarūpa, forever preaching what is proper and the path of [karma]* Yoga; he is the great householder, devoted to the Vedic rituals, committed to the theory of action and unsurpassed in performing those rituals.⁴⁰

Śaṅkara thus hastens, uninvited, to Maṇḍana Miśra's house, where, unsurprisingly, he is given a hostile reception by Maṇḍana. At first, the two argue about the relative merits of the two institutions (*āśramas*) they represent: Maṇḍana, the householder (*grhastha*), and Śaṅkara, the ascetic (*saṃnyāsa*). This initial exchange is structurally opposed to the substantive dialogue they later engage in regarding the soteriological ends of their respective schools of theology (Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta). The initial exchange, marked by intense hostility and bad-faith argumentation, is poetically rendered through the rhetorical device of mutual mis-construal by willful distortion known as *vakrokti* (crooked speech).⁴¹

Typically, *vakrokti* is used by poets as a strategy available to male protagonists (paradigmatically, not coincidentally, Śiva), particularly those accused of infidelity by the heroine, to distract from those allegations by willfully misconstruing the words of the heroine.⁴²

* The commentator interprets *yogapada* as the path of ritual yoga.

⁴⁰ *ayaṃ ca panthā yadi te prakāśyaḥ*
sudhīśvaro maṇḍana-miśra-śarmā ||
dig-anta-viśrānta-yaśā vijeyo
yasmiñ jite sarvaṃ idaṃ jitaṃ syāt ||
sadā vadan yoga-padaṃ ca sāmpratam
sa viśva-rūpaḥ prathito mahī-tale ||
mahā-grhī vaidika-karma-tatparaḥ
pravṛtti-śāstre nirataḥ sukarmaṭhaḥ ||
Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 292.

⁴¹ For a concise introduction to and analysis of *vakrokti*, see, Yigal Bronner and Lawrence McCrea, “The Poetics of Distortive Talk: Plot and Character in Ratnākara’s ‘Fifty Verbal Perversions’ (Vakroktipañcāśikā),” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 29, no. 4 (August 2001): 435–64.

⁴² A famous example of the use of this rhetorical device occurs in the *maṅgala* verse of Viśākhadatta’s *Mudrārākṣasa*. The *maṅgala* verse celebrates Śiva’s deception of his wife, Pārvaṭī. The scene exploits an old literary trope. Pārvaṭī, Śiva’s wife, is suspicious of Śiva paying more attention to Gaṅgā, the divine river who, in falling to earth was received by Śiva on his head. Pārvaṭī is disconcerted that another woman occupies a higher place on her

It is a form of eroticized teasing which ultimately results in the heroine giving in to her lover's deceit. Śaṅkara uses the device to great effect in this poem to parry the barbs Maṇḍana directs toward him and to enrage Maṇḍana. In my analysis of this first encounter, I call our attention to two important elements. The first is that the use of the rhetorical device, *vakrokti* (distortive speech), marks this exchange as the structural inverse of the substantive theological dialogue to follow. As we shall see, *vakrokti* depends upon a pair of hostile interlocutors, each motivated to willful and perverse misinterpretation of any polyvalence or ambiguity in the other's words in order to frustrate productive discussion. Sometimes, as is the case here, one of the interlocutors possesses a strategic advantage since he is interested in frustrating the efforts of the other. This is the structural inverse of the good-faith, truth-directed discussion the two interlocutors engage in later regarding the nature of the self as outlined by Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. Second, the aim of each of these august figures is to denigrate the institution the other represents: householder and ascetic. In doing so, this exchange recreates the historic polemic, which I have detailed in

husband's body than does she (Pārvatī occupies left side, whereas Gaṅgā is perched on his head). She asks him about Gaṅgā and Śiva deflects her questions, misconstruing her words to concern the moon, who is also perched on his head.

Pārvatī: "Who is this fortunate woman on your head?" (meaning Gaṅgā)

Śiva (meaning the moon): Śaśikalā (moonlight)

Pārvatī: But, what is *her* name? (meaning Gaṅgā)

Śiva: That is her name, why do you forget despite being acquainted with it?

Pārvatī: I am asking about the lady, not the moon.

Śiva: Then Vijayā (Pārvatī's confidant, a lady) should speak if the moon is not to be trusted. (Śiva misconstrues her to say, "I am asking the lady [i.e. her confidant Vijayā], not the moon").

May the deceit of the lord, striving to conceal the Divine River (Gaṅgā) from his lady, protect you!

dhanyā keyaṃ sthitā te śirasi śaśi-kalā kiṃ nu nāmaitad asyā

nāmaivāsyās tad etat paricitam api te vismṛtaṃ kasya hetoḥ |

nārīṃ pṛcchāmi nendum kathayatu vijaya na pramāṇam yadīndur

devyā nihnotum icchor iti sura-saritam sāthyam avyād vibhor vaḥ ||

A contemporary gloss on the phenomenon of psychological manipulation and subterfuge (though not the rhetorical or poetic device) is "gas-lighting," a term that derives from the 1944 film *Gaslight*.

Viśākhadatta and Michael Coulson, *Rākṣasa's Ring*, 1st ed, The Clay Sanskrit Library (New York: New York University Press : JJC Foundation, 2005), 42.

Chapter 2, between the Vaiṣṇava Rāmānujīya and Advaita Vedāntin communities.⁴³ As I have discussed there, the Rāmānujīyas held that householders need not renounce their domestic – ritual – identity in order to strive for liberation. Advaita Vedāntins of the Śrīngeri maṭha, on the other hand, required a Brahmin man to take up *saṃnyāsa* (institutional asceticism), resulting in a complete renunciation of his social and ritual identities, in order to embark upon the path to liberation. In effect, this difference of opinion called into question the very existence of the Advaita Vedānta maṭhas, which supported, on the Rāmānujīya view, an entirely undeserving class of religious subjects, the *saṃnyāsins*. In restaging this conflict in this dramatic setting and in highlighting the ease and equanimity with which Śaṅkara is able to fend off Maṇḍana’s unwarranted attacks, the maṭha not only is able to respond to the scurrilous arguments lodged against institutionalized monastics but further can show its ability to rise above the fray of these squalid, conventional concerns. Maṇḍana’s condemnation of Śaṅkara (that he does not bear the marks of his social station, that he does not abide by the rules of *varṇa*) is shown to be inordinately petty and strident, unbecoming of Maṇḍana’s own lofty status.

The scene begins with Maṇḍana noticing a *saṃnyāsīn* (Śaṅkara), who has appeared out of the blue, without the signifying marks of a Brahmin (the top knot and the sacrificial string), and is chatting to the two revered sages, Jaimini and Vyāsa (just as in a good mystery, there are no coincidences here; these are the authors of the foundational texts of Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta respectively).⁴⁴ Maṇḍana approaches the stranger and accosts him:

⁴³ As Olivelle notes, “We have seen how the Vaiṣṇava ascetic tradition differed substantially from the Advaita ascetic tradition of Śaṅkara... The Vaiṣṇavas espoused a much less radical form of ascetic life than the Advaita and retained *many of the rules and customs of Brahmanical householders* [emphasis mine]. For more see, Olivelle, *Rules and Regulations of Brahmanical Asceticism*.

⁴⁴ Then, noticing the *saṃnyāsīn*, descended from the skies, whose top knot and sacred thread were knowledge [that is, he had discarded both markers of his caste identity], standing in the company of the two sages, [Maṇḍana], though he was dedicated to the science of ritual [which prohibits anger], became enraged.
atha dyumārgād avatīrṇam antike

Maṇḍana: Whence the shaven one? [i.e. where have you come from?]

Śaṅkara: From the neck up. [i.e. answering how far he is clean-shaven]

Maṇḍana: I asked about your route [lit. your path was asked by me]

Śaṅkara: And what did the path say in reply?

Maṇḍana: It said your mother is a widow.

Śaṅkara: Just so Maṇḍana! You asked the road and the road replied, “Your mother is a widow.” Its words could not address me, since I did not ask the question.⁴⁵

Maṇḍana: My word, are you drunk? [The ambiguity comes from the word *pīta*, which may be construed as an adjective (yellow) or as a passive participle (is drunk); thus: Has liquor been drunk (by you), i.e. Are you drunk? Or, is liquor yellow?]

Śaṅkara: Not at all, don’t you know it’s clear. [misconstruing the question to be: “Is liquor yellow?]

Maṇḍana: You know its color, do you? [implying that Śaṅkara drinks.]

Śaṅkara: I know its color, and you its taste.⁴⁶

Maṇḍana: Clearly, you have lost your mind from eating poisoned meat, and are given to distortion.

Śaṅkara: You tell the truth: like father, like son, your son eats poisoned meat, like you.⁴⁷ [construing *matto jātaḥ kalañjāśī* to mean, the one who is born (*mat-taḥ jātaḥ*) from me eats poisoned meat]

Maṇḍana: You fool! Piled with rags unfit even for a donkey; would it kill you to sport a top knot and sacrificial string?⁴⁸

*munyoḥ sthitam jñāna-sīkhopavītinam
saṁnyāsy asāv ity avagatya so’bhavat
pravṛtti-śāstraika-rato’pi kopanaḥ ||
Vidyāranya, Śaṅkaradigvijaya, 299.*

⁴⁵ *kuto muṇḍy āgalān muṇḍī panthās te pṛcchate mayā
kim āha panthās tvan-mātā muṇḍety āha tathaiva hi ||
panthānam tvam aprcchas tvāṁ panthāḥ pratyāha maṇḍana
tvān-mātetyatra śabdo yaṁ na māṁ brūyād aprcchakam ||*

⁴⁶ *aho pītā kim u surā naiva śvetā yataḥ smara |
kiṁ tvam jānāsi tad-varṇam ahaṁ varṇam bhavān rasam ||*

⁴⁷ *matto jātaḥ kalañjāśī viparītāni bhāṣate |
satyaṁ bravīti pitṛvat tvatto jātaḥ kalañjaka-bhuk ||*

⁴⁸ *kanthāṁ vahasi durbuddhe gardabhenāpi durvahām |
sikhā-yajñopavītābhyāṁ kas te bhāro bhaviṣyati ||*

Śaṅkara: The rags I wear are indeed unbearable, fool, for your father; for you the burden of the Vedas is simply the top-knot and sacrificial string.⁴⁹ (You think the Veda is about appearances, you do not know – or care to know – its meaning).

Maṇḍana: Unable to protect your wife, you have deserted her, and tout devotion to Brahman as the reason for maintaining an entourage and library.⁵⁰

Śaṅkara: Since you were too lazy to learn from your guru, you returned from your guru's home, and tout devotion to ritual as the reason for obedience to your wife.⁵¹

Maṇḍana: You were conceived by a woman, raised by women. Alack! Such is your ingratitude, fool, that you would abuse them.⁵²

Śaṅkara: O fool among fools, you emerged from a woman's womb; you were nourished by a woman's breast milk; how then could you lie with a woman, like a beast?⁵³

Maṇḍana: Since you have willfully extinguished the ritual fires, you have committed filicide.

Śaṅkara: And you, in your ignorance of the ultimate good, have committed suicide [lit. killed the self by not realizing it].⁵⁴

Maṇḍana: Haven't you arrived like a thief, eluding the doorkeepers?

Śaṅkara: Aren't you eating like a thief, without giving alms to mendicants?⁵⁵

Maṇḍana: At present, during ritual performances, I should not be addressed by an idiot.

⁴⁹ *kanthāṃ vahāmi durbuddhe tava pitrā 'pi durbharām |*
śikhā-yajñopavitābhyāṃ śruter bhāro bhaviṣyati ||

⁵⁰ *tyaktvā pāṇi-grhīṭiṃ svām aśaktyā parirakṣaṇe |*
śiṣya-pustaka-bhārecchor vyākhyātā brahma-niṣṭhatā ||

⁵¹ *guru-śuśrūṣaṇālasyaṭ samāvartya guroḥ kulāt |*
striyaḥ śuśruṣamāṇasya vyākhyātā karma-niṣṭhatā ||

⁵² *sthito 'si yoṣitāṃ garbhe tābhir eva vivardhitaḥ |*
aho kṛta-ghnatā mūrkhā kathaṃ tā eva nindasi ||

⁵³ *yāsāṃ stanyaṃ tvayā pūtaṃ yāsāṃ jato 'si yonitaḥ |*
tāsu mūrkhataṃ strīṣu paśuvad ramase kathaṃ ||

⁵⁴ *vīra-hatyāṃ avāpto 'si vahnīn udvāsya yatnataḥ |*
ātma-hatyāṃ avāptas tvam aviditvā paraṃ padam ||

⁵⁵ *dauvārikān vañcayitvā kathaṃ stenavad āgataḥ |*
bhikṣubhyo 'nnam adattvā tvaṃ stenavad bhokṣyase kathaṃ ||

Śaṅkara: Hah! You have made clear your erudition with your misplaced caesura.⁵⁶ [the compound *yati-bhaṅga*, will next be mis-construed by Maṅḍana, who is finally hip to the game, as the refutation of an ascetic (*yati*)].

Maṅḍana: When engaged in refuting an ascetic [*yati-bhaṅga*], no fault accrues from a misplaced caesura [*yati-bhaṅga*].

Śaṅkara: When engaged in censure from an ascetic, the compound should be made in the fifth case ending.⁵⁷ [Śaṅkara misconstrues the compound ascetic-refutation to be connected by the fifth case, i.e. the ablative, rather than the sixth case, the genitive. Thus, he renders the compound censure *from* an ascetic rather than as an objective genitive, i.e. the censure *of* an ascetic].

Maṅḍana: How great the difference between Brahman and a dull-witted person such as yourself! So great is the divide between asceticism and the present age [Kali]. The yogis have assumed their garb driven by their appetite for toothsome food.⁵⁸

Śaṅkara: How great the divide between heaven and your misconduct! So great is the divide between the Agnihotra and the present age. I'm of the opinion that householders assume their appearance driven by sexual desire.⁵⁹

While the enraged, arrogant Viśvarūpa [i.e. Maṅḍana] spewed this invective, Śaṅkara's piquant responses to his abuse were charming.⁶⁰

The altercation ends without any resolution, although, as the concluding verse states, the ever-detached Śaṅkara, having succeeded in driving Maṅḍana to apoplexy with his cunning

⁵⁶ *karmakāle na saṁbhāṣya ahaṁ mūrkhēṇa saṁprati |*
aho prakaṭitam jñānam yati-bhaṅgena bhāṣiṇā ||

⁵⁷ *yati-bhaṅge pravṛttasya yati-bhaṅgo na doṣabhāk |*
yati-bhaṅge pravṛttasya pañcamy-antam samasyatām ||

⁵⁸ *kva brahma kva ca durmedhāḥ kva saṁnyāsaḥ kva vā kaliḥ |*
svādv-anna-bhakṣa-kāmena veṣo 'yam yoginām dhṛtaḥ ||

⁵⁹ *kva svargaḥ kva durācāraḥ kvāgnihotraṁ kva vā kaliḥ |*
manye maithuna-kāmena veṣo 'yam karminām dhṛtaḥ ||

⁶⁰ *iṭy-ādi-durvākya-gaṇam bruvāne roṣeṇa sāhamkṛti viśvarūpe |*
śrīśaṅkare yaktari tasya tasyottaram ca kautūhalataś ca cāru ||
Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 300–304.

obduracy, has scored a tactical win. Nevertheless, the exchange illustrates the key points of contention dividing the institutions and intellectuals representing householders and ascetics. As opposed to the substantive theological debate that follows, this exchange focuses on the householder and the ascetic as social categories. The arguments raised by each side may be reduced to the following essential characterization: each of these two types, the householder and the ascetic, his claims to their motivations notwithstanding, claims that the other is, *in reality*, motivated by wealth, status and sex. In other words, each interlocutor engages the other in bad faith, hoping to expose his opponent as driven by the base human ends of *kāma* and *artha*. Thus, Maṇḍana does not think ascetics ought to be revered for their renunciation of marital domesticity; they are merely shirking their social obligations in order to pursue an easy life at the expense of pious householders. Śaṅkara's view, on the other hand, is that householders ought not be respected for their devotion to the ritual; they are driven by lust for their wives. This core criticism is ramified in the particular points of contention. Ultimately, there is a single underlying question that is refracted in these myriad discussions: can householders, while performing their rituals dispassionately and remaining enmeshed in their social milieu, strive for liberation? Or must they renounce their social identities, including their caste signifiers, before they take up this final journey? To take a single example: Advaita Vedāntin *saṃnyāsins* disavow all caste marks, including, as mentioned in this passage, the top knot and the sacrificial string.⁶¹ This, as is evident in the treatises on renunciation that emerged in this region during this period, was one

⁶¹ “In the Advaita tradition, an ascetic is expected to discard the sacrificial string and to shave the topknot, a practice condemned by the Vaiṣṇavas. The Vaiṣṇava tradition also expected all types of ascetics to carry triple staffs (that is, three bamboo sticks tied together), whereas in the Advaita tradition the triple staff was limited to the lowest types of ascetics, while the highest type, Paramahansa, carried a single bamboo staff.” Olivelle, *Rules and Regulations of Brahmanical Asceticism*, 11.

salient point of contention between the ritualists and the ascetics.⁶² Note that Śaṅkara is described as one whose top knot and sacrificial string are knowledge, that is, one who has replaced these external insignia with internal exertions after knowledge. To underscore that point Śaṅkara responds to Maṇḍana's gibe about his appearance with the observation that ritualist Brahmins like Maṇḍana mistake the external signs of their status for the Veda, whereas *saṃnyāsins*, being stripped of these external markers of status, engage with the true import of the Vedas: *Brahman*.

To return to the poem, Maṇḍana, finally pacified by the intervention of the two sages, Jaimini and Vyāsa, offers alms to Śaṅkara, who then reveals the purpose of his visit:

And he [Śaṅkara] said, “My dear boy, I have come to you seeking only the alms of debate. So, give us the gift of debate, with the stakes that the loser should become the other's student. I have no interest in begging for the usual fare.⁶³ The only subsistence I seek is the perpetuation of the path of the Vedānta [the chief part of the Vedas]. That path, which is a moon to the torments of existence, you, consumed with ritual sacrifice, have disregarded.⁶⁴ I am preaching that path in this world by overcoming all disputants; so, either accept this supreme position of mine, or else debate me only to admit: "I have been bested."⁶⁵

⁶² See the discussion on the *Parāśaramādhavīya*, in Chapters 1 and 2, regarding the internal hierarchy of the *saṃnyāsins* order (*āśrama*) and the markers that each of the constituent groups are expected – by the Advaita Vedānta tradition – to uphold.

⁶³ *sa cābravīt saumya vivāda-bhikṣām icchan bhavat-saṃnidhim āgato 'smi |*
sā'nyonya-śiṣyatva-panā pradeyā nāsty' ādaraḥ prākṛta-bhakta-bhāikṣye ||

⁶⁴ *mama na kiṃcid api dhruvam īpsitam śruti-śiraḥ-patha-viṣṭim antarā |*
avahitena makheṣv avadhīritaḥ sa bhava-tāpa-hima-dyutiḥ ||

⁶⁵ *jagati saṃprati taṃ prathayāmy ahaṃ tam abhibhūya samasta-vivādinam |*
tvam api saṃśraya me mataṃ uttamaṃ vigada vā vāda vā 'smi jitas tv iti ||
Vidyāranya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 306.

I do not rehearse here the arguments that the two interlocutors make in their substantive theological debate,⁶⁶ since they follow the general trajectory of the arguments that I have identified and discussed in chapters one and two. In the main, Śāṅkara, the proponent of Advaita Vedānta, refutes the arguments that Maṇḍana Miśra formulates, which are of two kinds. The first are boilerplate Mīmāṃsā arguments. The second type may be characterized best as arguments likely to be made by a dualist or realist school of Vedānta:

- a. The Mīmāṃsā view that only injunctive statements of the Veda (that is to say, statements that command a ritual performer to perform some ritual action) are meaningful. *All* other statements, including most of the text of the Upaniṣads, are meaningful only insofar as relating, in some subsidiary capacity, to an injunctive statement.
- b. The identity of the self and *brahman*.
- c. The intrinsic validity of the Veda.
- d. The fundamental difference between god and individual selves.

On each of these points, Śāṅkara secures Maṇḍana Miśra’s submission, but Maṇḍana’s definitive defeat is announced by his wife Ubhayabhārātī. She implies his defeat by serving him the midday alms, just as she does Śāṅkara, thereby signifying that Maṇḍana has lost the debate, the terms of which required that he take up *saṃnyāsa* in defeat.⁶⁷ Since Maṇḍana Miśra has lost

⁶⁶ For a different, more philosophically informed perspective on this debate, see Maharaj, *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Vedānta*.

⁶⁷ “Thus, approving of Śāṅkara’s [the king of ascetics’] argument, and noticing that garland on Maṇḍana’s neck had withered, she said to the two men, “Now stir! It is time for alms.” Then, the lady addressed the lord of ascetics...
itthaṃ yati-kṣiti-pater anumodya yuktīm mālāṃ ca maṇḍana-gale malinām avekṣya |
bhikṣārtham uccalatam adya yuvām itīmāv ācaṣṭa taṃ punar uvāca yatīndram ambā ||

the debate and is consequently obligated to renounce his marital status and become an ascetic, his wife Ubhayabhārati is left without a husband, which might portend widowhood for any other woman. But Ubhayabhārati reveals to Śāṅkara that she is in fact Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning, who was cursed by the sage Durvāsas to be born a human, a curse that was predicted to end with Śāṅkara’s victory. Released from the curse, the goddess informs Śāṅkara that she intends to return to her heavenly home.⁶⁸ But Śāṅkara bars her from leaving, saying, “Mother! When I, preeminent among your devotees, give you permission to go, then, you may go home.”⁶⁹ I argue, below, that Śāṅkara’s astonishing assertion of power over the goddess is part of a larger narrative which, congruent with the treatment of a vanquished foe’s queen in *digvijaya* narratives, serves to cement Śāṅkara’s claim to universal dominance, and which culminates in his ascension to the throne of omniscience, with Sarasvatī at his side.⁷⁰

Peace and Rehabilitation

For the moment, let us consider how Śāṅkara extends the olive branch of conciliation to the distraught and defeated Maṇḍana Miśra.⁷¹ (The discourse of power – *nītiśāstra* – terms this

⁶⁸ Long ago, because he was incensed, Durvāsas cursed me, and your victory was prescribed as the conclusion of the curse. “O lord of ascetics [lit. best of the pacified ones], I will now return just as I arrived.” Having said these words with respect, she was heading home...

kopātireka-vaśa-taḥ śapatā purā māṃ durvāsasā tad-avadhir vihito jayas te |
sāhaṃ yathāgatam upaimi śamipravīrety uktvā sasaṃbhramam amuṃ nija-dhāma yāntīm ||
 Vidyāraṇya, *Śāṅkaradigvijaya*, 341.

⁶⁹ *vraja janani tadā tvam bhakta-cūḍā-maṇis te nija-padam anudāsyāmy’ abhyanujñāṃ yadaitum |*
 Vidyāraṇya, 342.

⁷⁰ Minoru Hara, “The King as a Husband of the Earth (Mahī-Pati),” *Asiatische Studien Études Asiatiques* 27, no. 2 (1973): 97–114.

⁷¹ Then the sage, delighted [at Ubhayabhārati’s agreement to stay], desired to know what was in Maṇḍana Miśra’s heart.

munir atha mudito ’bhūn māṇḍanaṃ hṛdbubhutsuḥ |
 Vidyāraṇya, *Śāṅkaradigvijaya*, 342.

instrument of dominion *sāman*: kind or gentle words to persuade an adversary to assent to submission). Conciliation is only the first of a bipartite process of integrating a former foe into the hierarchy of authority. The second part is *sandhi* or agreement, which is characterized by the subjugated vassal's assent [*anumati*, to invoke the terminology of the *rājasūya*] to being governed.⁷² In this case, Śaṅkara must first convince Maṇḍana Mīśra that the views of Mīmāṃsā conform with Advaita Vedānta; he must explain why Maṇḍana Mīśra is *wrong* to think that the sage Jaimini, the progenitor of Mīmāṃsā, was mistaken in his views. Just as an aspiring *cakravartin* uses conciliation to bring about agreement [*sandhi*] with the subjugated foe, thus absorbing him into the *cakravartin*'s ever-expanding imperium, Śaṅkara's exchange with Maṇḍana Mīśra consists of these two parts, *sāman* and *sandhi*. Let us consider each in turn.

Then, even though his obduracy had been snuffed out by Śaṅkara's rational disquisition, which brought resolution to the meaning of the Vedas, he [Maṇḍana], made inflexible through ritual performance, spoke out again, incredulous.⁷³

Maṇḍana: O lord of ascetics! Though I am depressed, it is not because of this unprecedented defeat. Alas! I am greatly hurt that Jaimini's pronouncements are unfounded.⁷⁴

For though he knows the past as well as the future, an ocean of austerities, though a benefactor who oversaw the creation of those injunctions to direct the universe to the Vedas, how could he have composed those *sūtras* in vain?⁷⁵

⁷² In Inden's characterization (quoted at length above): "Kings who recognized him as universal king offered submission or worked out some sort of accommodation in the form of an 'agreement' (*sandhi*)."

⁷³ *atha saṃyami-kṣiti-pater vacanair nigamārtha-nirṇaya-karaiḥ sanayaiḥ |
śamitāgraho 'pi punar apy'avadat kṛta-saṃśayaḥ sapadi karma-jadaḥ ||*

⁷⁴ *yatirāja saṃprati mamābhinavān na viśādito'smy'apajayād api tu |
api jaiminiya-vacanāny ahahonmathitāni hīti bhṛśam asmī kṛśaḥ ||*

⁷⁵ *sa hi vetty anāgatam atītam api priyakṛt-samasta-jagato'dhikṛtaḥ |
nigama-pravartana-vidhau sa kathaṃ tapasām nidhir vitatha-sūtra-padaḥ ||*

So, Śāṅkara said to him, for he was incredulous: There is not a scintilla of error in Jaimini. We certainly cannot prove what is in the sage's heart, for we are ignorant.⁷⁶

Maṇḍana: If you know the sage's thoughts, though the wise do not, do tell us! If what you tell us is reasonable, we will take it to heart, pride be damned!⁷⁷

Śāṅkara: Though he [Jaimini] possessed complete comprehension of ultimate reality [*brahman*], he bestowed his grace on those whose minds were swept away by the tide of sensoria. Thus, he taught those very ritual actions that are the *means* of apprehending ultimate reality, as ultimate.⁷⁸ [The implication is that, owing to the disposition of those Jaimini wished to help, who are mired in *samsāra*, he taught the means, i.e. ritual action, to *brahman* as though they were the end. Thus, the ignorant may think that Jaimini held ritual performance to be the highest human end, but this view is mistaken].

The words, ‘This very one...[the brahmins desire to know⁷⁹ by reciting the Vedas, sacrifice, gifts, austerities, and fasting]⁸⁰’ prescribe the totality of *dharma* because these words engender understanding [i.e. knowing *brahman*].⁸¹ And so he, for whom *mokṣa* is the highest good, ascertained the totality of *dharma* in relation to these words alone, not otherwise; so I think.⁸²

⁷⁶ *iti samdihānam avadat tam asau na hi jaimināv apanayo 'sti manāk |
pramimīhe na vayam eva muner hrdayaṃ yathāvad anabhijñatayā ||*

⁷⁷ *yadi vidyate kavi-janāviditāṃ hrdayaṃ munes tad iha varṇaya bhoh |
yadi yuktam atrabhavatā kathitāṃ hr̥di kurmahe dalad-ahamkrtayah ||*

⁷⁸ *abhisamdhimān api pare viṣaya-prasaran matīn anujighṛkṣur asau |
tad-avāpti-sādhanatayā sakalaṃ sukṛtaṃ nyarūpayad iti sma param ||*
Vidyāraṇya, *Śāṅkaradigvijaya*, 343–44.

⁷⁹ recall from Chapters 1 and 2, the importance of this quotation from the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* to synthesizing Advaita Vedānta to Mīmāṃsā. The desiderative root from the verb to know [*vid*] was used to suggest that the performance of ritual produces, in the mind of an experienced ritualist, this *desire to know brahman*. This desire impels the ritualist to give up ritual and to pursue after the knowledge of *brahman*, which leads him to the ultimate human end: liberation.

⁸⁰ This is a quotation from *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (IV, 4, 22): *tam etam vedānuvacanena brāhmaṇā vividiṣanti yajñena dānena tapasā-nāśakena* that is “The Brahmins desire to know this very one through reciting the Vedas, sacrifice, donation, austerities, and fasting.”

⁸¹ Śāṅkara's explanation is a recapitulation of the point made in Chapters 1 and 2, which I have intimated in the above footnote. The whole point of ritual, on this view – which Śāṅkara ascribes to Jaimini – is to engender such a desire to know *brahman*. Since *brahman* is the ultimate the point of ritual, albeit in an oblique manner, Jaimini can no longer be disparaged for misleading his followers by claiming the primacy of ritual, rather, he must be reinterpreted and rehabilitated as claiming ritual to be primary because this was the only way he could lead his followers, hopelessly mired in *samsāra*, to the realization of *brahman*.

⁸² *vacanaṃ tam etam iti dharma-cayaṃ vidadhati bodha-jani-hetutayā |*

Maṇḍana: The Vedas are successful only insofar as resulting in ritual action, but words [in the Veda] that do not result in ritual are useless.⁸³ Given that he [Jaimini] composed this aphorism [sūtra], how could the lord of sages [Jaimini] think that the point of the Veda was something always already known [i.e. brahman⁸⁴]?⁸⁵

Śaṅkara: Though the Vedic corpus is, indirectly, non-dual in its ultimate purport, it fixes its direct gaze on ritual action, which results in the awareness of the self. Thus, the statements on the topic of ritual are shown to be ultimately concerned with their effect [the effect of the ritual actions being the realization of the self]⁸⁶.⁸⁷

tad-apekṣayaiva sa ca mokṣa-paro niradhārayan na paratheti vayam ||

⁸³ This is a paraphrase of the first sūtra of the second pāda [chapter] of the first adhyāya [book] of Jaimini's *Mīmāṃsāsūtras: āmnāyasya kriyārthatvād ānarthakyam atadarthānām tasmād anityam ucyate |*

⁸⁴ The Mīmāṃsakas contend that the object of the Vedas is to convey knowledge regarding dharma – a future state of affairs – which is to be brought about by ritual action. This is why they think that Vedic injunctions are the fundamental unit of meaning, and that the remainder of the Vedas is meaningful only to the extent that it is related to injunctive statements. Vedānta, on the other hand, contends that the Vedas merely communicate knowledge about brahman, an already existing state of affairs. *Brahman* is eternal and all-pervasive, so it is in fact the only ultimate reality. All phenomenal reality, on this view, is illusory. Thus, liberation consists of *knowing* that *brahman* is in fact the only ultimate reality. Since the awareness of brahman is indeed pure awareness, it is not the result of an action, for if it were the result of an action, it would be an effect, and therefore not necessary but contingent upon the agent. This is anathema to Advaita Vedānta, and therefore they argue that the Veda must convey knowledge (that is information about something that already exists) in addition to enjoining ritual actions, upon which dharma, a future state of affairs, is dependent. Recall the summary of this view in chapter one.

⁸⁵ *śrutayaḥ kriyārthatatayā saphalā atadarthakāni tu vacāṃsi vṛthā |
iti sūtrayan nanu katham munirād api siddha-vastu-paratām manute ||*
Vidyāranya, *Śaṅkaradīpīyaya*, 345.

⁸⁶ This is rather a tortured defense of Jaimini's focus on ritual. Śaṅkara has first of all claimed that Jaimini focused on ritual because most people are deluded in their view of the phenomenal world, which consists of agents and objects. Thus, to cater to these deluded souls, Jaimini speaks of ritual (or action) as though it were an end in itself. But, really, he does so because he knows that the performance of ritual will prepare the performer to contemplate *real* ultimate reality, namely, *brahman*. To this overdetermined explanation, Śaṅkara adds that most of the Veda is concerned with ritual directly, whereas discourses on *brahman* are more esoteric. This is why, to provide yet another reason for Jaimini's sūtras dwelling on action, ritual is prioritized – and *brahman* ignored – in Jaimini's treatise. This position is echoed in the *Parāśaramādhavīya*. In that text, the commentator argues that obligatory rituals, despite not being direct means to liberation (*mokṣa*), are nevertheless indirect (*pāraṃparayā*) means to the mokṣa. Note that in this case, Śaṅkara uses the word used in the *Parāśaramādhavīya*, *paraṃparayā* (and indeed used by the historical Śaṅkara), to characterize the indirect relation that ritual has to bringing about liberation. Mādhava, *Parāśara Smṛti*, 1.1:58–59.

⁸⁷ *śrutir āśir advaya-paro 'api paraṃparayātma-bodha-phala-karmaṇi ca |
prasarat-kaṭākṣa iti kārya-paratvam asūci tatprakaraṇa-stha-girām ||*

Maṇḍana: But were the sage [Jaimini] to believe that the entire Vedic corpus is concerned with the *self* as pure consciousness, then why, even as he avers that an *authorless* Veda produces the results of ritual, would he nevertheless reject the ultimate lord [*brahman*]?⁸⁸

Śaṅkara: Is it not true that the Vaiśeṣikas [realists] proclaim that the highest lord exists based on the inference, without resorting to the testimony of the Veda, that the universe must have a creator. Do they not claim that the Vedas merely reiterate this conclusion?⁸⁹

The one who has not studied the Veda cannot know this great person [*brahman*], who is known solely through the Upaniṣads.⁹⁰ The words of the Veda state that which is beyond his [the one ignorant of the Veda] ken. How could the [Vaiśeṣika] inference teach him about that [great person, i.e. *brahman*]⁹¹?⁹²

The sage [Jaimini], having committed to this conclusion in his heart, rejected, with a hundred incisive arguments, the [Vaiśeṣika] *inference*, showing that the lord is the origin and the dissolution, and further that [*brahman*] is the source of the results [of ritual].⁹³

Thus, there is not a whit in the words of the sage that is contradicted by the Upaniṣads, as I have explained them here. Unaware of this secret sense [in which Jaimini accepted the scriptural

⁸⁸ *nanu sac-cid-ātma-paratā'bhimatā yadi kṛtsna-veda-nicayasya muneh |
phala-dātrtām apuruṣasya vadan sa katham nirāha parameśam api ||*

⁸⁹ *nanu kartr-pūrvakam idam jagad ity'anumānam āgama-vacāmsi vinā |
parameśvaram prathayati śrutayas tv anuvāda-mātram iti kāṇabhujāh ||*
Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 345–46.

⁹⁰ This is a reference to the Upaniṣadic exchange between Yājñavalkya and Śākalya, recounted in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.9.27, which Olivelle translates, “I ask you about that person providing the hidden connection (*upaniṣad*). Patrick Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). 100 – 101.

⁹¹ This is a bit difficult to follow, but Śaṅkara is countering Maṇḍana Miśra's criticism that Jaimini asserts that the Vedas have no creator, whereas the Upaniṣads are interpreted, by the Advaita Vedāntins, to mean that *brahman* is the creator of the universe, including the Vedas. Śaṅkara interprets Jaimini to mean that the existence of *brahman* cannot be demonstrated through inference, as the Vaiśeṣikas seek to do. Thus, Jaimini's position must be understood as provisional, meant only to reject the Vaiśeṣika approach to establishing *brahman*. This is all the more so since an inferential understanding of *brahman* cannot lead to the *mokṣa* that the Upaniṣads promulgate. Liberation can only occur when there is an understanding of *brahman* as taught by the Upaniṣads.

⁹² *na kathamcid aupaniṣadam puruṣam manute bhantam iti veda-vacah |
kathayaty avedavid agocaratām gamayet katham tam anumānam idam ||*

⁹³ *iti bhāvam ātmani nidhāya muniḥ sa nirākaron niṣṭa-yukti-śataih |
anumānam īśvara-param jagataḥ prabhavaṃ layaṃ phalaṃ apīśvarataḥ ||*

testimony regarding the great lord], the learned say about Jaimini: “He maintains that there is no great lord (*brahman*).⁹⁴

In this intervention Śāṅkara embodies what I have referred to as pastoral care; the dimension of monastic governmentality that concerns itself with the proper cultivation of the individual agent, in order to equip such an agent to pursue the highest human ends. There are three aspects of this dialogue I address in my analysis. The first is to note that the objective of Śāṅkara’s re-interpretation of Jaimini’s pronouncements is the very same as that advanced by the Vedic commentaries: to show that Mīmāṃsā is perfectly consonant with Vedānta, that together they provide a hierarchized access to the Vedic corpus. According to this schema, Mīmāṃsā, as promulgated by Jaimini, addresses people who are still submerged in the tide of *saṃsāra* (the endless cycle of rebirth, characterized by action, as contrasted with liberation, characterized by pure consciousness) and thus prescribes a program of ritual performance. It is understood, on the Advaita Vedānta harmonizing thesis, that a particularly gnostic ritual performance should engender in the ritual performer the desire to know (*vividiṣā*) Brahman. Thus, as I have shown above, these Vedāntins consider the ritual to lead to Brahman, albeit *indirectly* (*paramparayā*). Advaita Vedānta, promulgated by Śāṅkara, is intended for the world-weary few who yearn for liberation from the endless chain of being, and who have already severed their connections with the social world. These two programs serve the same larger religious purpose, as explicated in the Vedas: to impel men to embark upon the journey to the highest goods: *dharma* and *mokṣa*.

The second aspect of this exchange is the rehabilitation of Jaimini himself, which depends upon some fairly impressive interpretive prestidigitation from Śāṅkara. For it is one

⁹⁴ *tad ihāsmad-ukta-vidhayā niṣadā na viruddham aṅv api muner vacasi |
iti gūḍha-bhāvam anavekṣya budhās tam anīśavādy ayam iti bruvate ||*
Vidyāranya, *Śāṅkaradigvijaya*, 346.

thing to show, as the Vedic commentaries do, that a ritual interpretation of the Vedas may, and should, serve a gnostic interpretation. It is quite another to insist, in the face of quotations to the contrary, that Jaimini really did, in his heart of hearts, adhere to a Vedāntin view of the Vedas, and to further insist that the only reason he heralded the primacy of ritual was because of his concern for the many who cannot see beyond objects, agents, and actions to the ultimate unity of *brahman*.

The final aspect is to note that conciliation is only the first of two movements in the expansion of the Vedānta *maṇḍala*; the second is the expression of Maṇḍana Miśra's fealty, whereby the Mīmāṃsā school of Vedic hermeneutics is conclusively subordinated to the Vedānta school. According to the logic of universal conquest, it is not enough that each rival be subdued for the newly constituted dominion to hold; the conqueror must absorb the conquered into the logic of the empire. In the transposition of this logic to the ascent to supremacy of Advaita Vedānta, absorption consists in bringing the defeated opponent into ideological alignment with the hegemonic view. Thus, Śaṅkara's exchange with Maṇḍana has a rhetorically salient emotional arc: Maṇḍana, at first dejected at the devastation of the ideological structure [Mīmāṃsā or Vedic ritualism] undergirding his life, is persuaded of Mīmāṃsā's irrefutable alignment with Advaita Vedānta in serving the ultimate human ends. Thus persuaded, Maṇḍana's spirits are lifted in realizing that what he has heretofore valued and practiced is part of the same single Vedic tradition as Advaita Vedānta. There is no contradiction between the two systems; with this happy realization, Maṇḍana is ready to renounce his former identity of Vedic ritualist and take up *saṃnyāsa*. At the impersonal level of doctrine, the discussion follows the arc of arguments presented in chapter one and two, which is to say that it provides an answer to the question, who ultimately speaks for the Veda: Mīmāṃsā or Vedānta?

In chapters one and two, where I analyzed the introductions to the Vedic commentaries, I showed that the scholars of Śrīngeri were able to harmonize the seemingly disparate ends that Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta ascribe to the Vedas by arranging them hierarchically, with ritual ultimately superseded by knowledge. In this case, that very same discussion is brought to life by the *dramatis personae*: Maṇḍana Miśra, Śaṅkara, and Jaimini. Although Maṇḍana has acknowledged the resolution of the discord between Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, and has accepted the supremacy of the Vedānta *telos*, he is nevertheless perturbed by what his assent entails: that Jaimini, the promulgator of the Mīmāṃsā system of Vedic hermeneutics, must have been either a fraud or ignorant. Śaṅkara takes this opportunity to show Maṇḍana that Jaimini was neither a fraud nor ignorant, but that his attention to ritual – as the end of the Veda – can be explained by the same hierarchical arrangement of ritual and knowledge (Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta) that I have detailed above. Thus, Jaimini’s statements, seemingly contradicted by the conclusions of Vedānta, are *provisionally* efficacious, even if *ultimately* false. Ritual, which on Jaimini’s interpretation of the Vedas is the highest human end, is *useful* to the larger normative framework that the Advaita Vedāntins of Śrīngeri monastery promulgate, since it is an important step – for the typical householder – toward reaching the highest end of the Vedas: liberation.

Although Śaṅkara’s synthesis of Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta follows the synthesis of the two systems proposed in the Vedic commentaries, his interpretation of Jaimini’s positions is strikingly different than prior interpretations. Indeed, as I show, his rehabilitation of Jaimini as a Vedāntin requires an impressive interpretive sleight of hand, a normative, contextual reading of Jaimini that leaves behind his words and seizes upon his spirit. There are two issues that Jaimini’s *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* raises for Maṇḍana; first, that ritual is the ultimate meaning of the Veda, and second, that the Veda has no creator.

Reading Beyond the Lines

To quell Maṇḍana's doubts and rehabilitate Jaimini, Śāṅkara purports to tell him what was in Jaimini's heart (*hrdayam muneh*), the words of his aphorisms (*sūtras*) notwithstanding. Although from the *Jaiminisūtras* we may reasonably infer that Jaimini intended ritual to be the *telos* of the Vedic corpus, *in reality* (according to Śāṅkara), the sage affirmed this view only because of the limitations of his audience. In this respect, Śāṅkara evinces pastoral care, the interest that a model teacher takes in understanding the nature of an adherent's errors and the pedagogical techniques that the teacher (or the institution of the maṭha) adopts to guide the student toward the right path. There are two interpretive techniques that Śāṅkara, albeit without explicitly referring to them, has invoked in this explanation of Jaimini's *real* views:

- a. Skill-in-Means (*upāyakaśalya*). Typically ascribed to the Buddha, this is the skill that religious leaders (in this example, Jaimini) possess to modify their message to comport with the dispositions or abilities of their audiences. According to this hermeneutic principle, every single pronouncement of a teacher ought not be evaluated according to a single criterion of truth. Rather, different utterances have different goals, depending upon their audience. In our example, Jaimini, though he *knew in his heart* that the ultimate import of the Veda is *brahman*, nevertheless taught that ritual action is the ultimate import of the Veda because he was aware of the spiritual deficiencies of his audience. He thus conceived of an indirect means -- ritual -- of directing his followers to this ultimate goal.
- b. Ultimate truth vs. Conventional truth (*paramārthasat* and *saṃvrtisat* or *vyavahārasat*). A principle used to great effect by Śāṅkara in his commentary on the

Brahmasūtras, this hermeneutic principle, closely related to the principle of *upāyakūśalya*, postulates that there are two levels of truth, the conventionally true and the ultimately true. Thus, disparate – often contradictory – statements belonging to a single source can be harmonized by claiming that they relate to the two distinct levels of truth. Here, Śāṅkara is suggesting that Jaimini’s teachings are conventionally true, and therefore effective, even if – from the perspective of ultimate truth – they are judged to be erroneous.

Śāṅkara seizes upon the very same hinge that the author of Vedic commentaries uses to link ritual to gnosis: the performance of ritual generates a desire to know (*vividiṣā*) *brahman* in the heart of a ritualist householder. Indeed, he quotes the same Vedic statement that forms the basis for this interpretive move in the Vedic commentaries: “The Brahmins desire to know this very one [*brahman*] through reciting the Vedas, sacrifice, donation, austerities, and fasting (*tam etam vedānuvacanena brāhmaṇā vividiṣanti yajñena dānena tapasā-nāśakena*).” This desire to know (*vividiṣā*) *brahman* matures into a disenchantment with being trapped in the cycle of rebirth (*samsāra*) and makes one yearn for liberation (*mumukṣu*). Thus, Jaimini’s statements regarding ritual and *dharma* must be construed in this larger soteriological framework.

Maṇḍana, unconvinced, raises his doubts by paraphrasing an aphorism (*sūtra*) from the *Jaiminisūtras* that states, unequivocally, that only the injunctive statements (those that enjoin a ritual agent to perform some Vedic rite) of the Veda are independently meaningful and valid.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ For a full explication of this position, see chapter one of this dissertation. The following is a summary. This is a paraphrase of the first *sūtra* of the second *pāda* [chapter] of the first *adhyāya* [book] of Jaimini’s *Mīmāṃsāsūtras*. This chapter deals with those statements of the Vedas that do not directly enjoin ritual action (an example of an injunctive statement being, “The one who desires heaven should perform the *jyotiṣṭoma* rite”). The question that these non-injunctive statements (for instance, the Vedic statement “The grass-bundle is the sacrificer” is an example of a non-injunctive Vedic statement) raise for *Mīmāṃsā* is: if the Veda is a valid instrument of knowledge, and if *Mīmāṃsā* stipulates that only injunctive statements of the Veda are meaningful, are we to suppose that a very large majority of the Vedic corpus is meaningless? As one would imagine, the answer is no. Rather, the way that these seemingly meaningless statements are rendered meaningful is by appending them to some clearly injunctive

Yet the *mahāvākyas* of Vedānta are declarative statements that are not injunctive in nature. For instance, *tat tvam asi*, “You are that [Brahman].” Working within the Mīmāṃsā hermeneutic frame, we should thus consider these statements to be meaningful only if they can be appended to some injunctive statement. But this is unimaginable, as Maṇḍana objects next, for Brahman is the eternally existent reality that cannot be brought into being or realized by performing some ritual action (for, if it were capable of being brought into existence, it would cease to be eternal). Therefore, Śaṅkara must maintain that the *Jaiminisūtras* conceal Jaimini’s *actual* position regarding the ultimate import of the Veda.

This is rather a striking interpretive choice, but it has precedents. Indeed, we have evidence that this line of argumentation had some currency in sixteenth-century South India. In his short essay, *Pūrvottara-mīmāṃsā-vāda-nakṣatramālā* (*The Milky Way of Discourses on Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta*), the sixteenth-century polymath, Appayya Dīkṣita, presented and rejected the argument that Jaimini hid his understanding of Brahman in the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*. While it is difficult to pin down Appayya Dīkṣita’s personal theological commitments,⁹⁶ I am interested merely to adduce the argument below to show that it circulated in the period during which the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* was composed. It suffices, for the purposes of this chapter, to show that the notion that Jaimini concealed his true intentions enjoyed wider circulation than just the

statement. For instance, Śabara’s commentary considers the Brāhmaṇa statement: “Prajāpati removed the stomach-fat from himself.” How should we understand this statement of [mythic] fact? It is quite clear that this statement does not enjoin any ritual action. Nor could we possibly think that these statements enjoin one to imitate Prajāpati’s actions! Rather, according to Mīmāṃsā, this statement is meaningful only when it is appended to an injunctive statement [in this case: The one who desires progeny or cattle, should offer a hornless he-goat to Prajāpati]. Once it has been appended to an injunctive statement, such a statement can be construed as an arthavāda, a statement that encourages a ritualist to perform the ritual enjoined by the injunctive statements. But, such a division of the Vedic corpus presents problems for the Advaita Vedāntin, since many of the most salient statements – from the Upaniṣads – that provide knowledge of brahman are not injunctive (for instance, the paradigmatic Vedāntin statement, *tat tvam asi* or “You are that [brahman]”).

⁹⁶ For more on this topic, see Yigal Bronner, “A Renaissance Man in Memory: Appayya Dīkṣita Through the Ages,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 44, no. 1 (March 2016).

Śaṅkaradigvijaya. Appayya Dīkṣita's essay is a refutation of the proposition that Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta constitute a single hermeneutic system, unified in its interpretive *telos*. Typical of the genre of theoretical writing, there is a **proponent of unity** of the two schools (the *prima facie* view or the *pūrvapakṣin*) and a **proponent of discontinuity** between the two schools (the conclusive view or the *siddhāntin*). The **proponent of discontinuity** broaches the subject:

Were *brahman* the object of Jaimini's proposed examination of *dharma*, one would have expected the examination of *brahman* to occur at the beginning of his work, but we do not find that to be the case. Nor is it possible to suppose that the great sage wanted to undertake an examination of *brahman* but was somehow impeded from doing so, or simply forgot. This is a sage who analyzed the whole field of ritual action – its true nature, the sources of knowledge about it, the means of attaining it, and the end-results of doing so – in the *Treatise of Twelve Chapters* [i.e., the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*], and who, noticing that certain interpretive principles used in that text were not explicitly given in *sūtra* form, produced the *Samkarṣaṇakāṇḍa* as a supplement to the *Treatise* in order to gather these principles together. How then are we to suppose that he either was impeded from examining, or just plain forgot to examine *brahman*?⁹⁷

The **proponent of discontinuity** between Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta has raised an objection that is closely related to Maṇḍana's concerns, namely, were one to hold that Jaimini's *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* advances a hermeneutic system that teaches Brahman, then one must explain Jaimini's silence on the matter, especially since Jaimini is punctilious in dealing with all matters of ritual and dharma, no matter how marginal they may appear to us. Thus, the **proponent of**

⁹⁷ Sheldon Pollock, "The Meaning of Dharma and the the Relationship of the Two Mīmāṃsās: Appayya Dīkṣita's 'Discourse on the Refutation of a Unified Knowledge System of Pūrvamīmāṃsā and Uttaramīmāṃsā,'" *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32 (2004): 769–811. Pg. 774.

discontinuity suggests, as Maṇḍana at first contemplates, that the Mīmāṃsā analysis of narrative or praise statements of the Vedas (*arthavāda*, i.e. statements that are not independently meaningful, but must be appended to some injunctive statement to be dependently meaningful) must apply equally to the Vedānta statements from the Upaniṣads, since these statements that tell us about the nature of *brahman* are no different in form than those narrative or praise statements that are found in the Brāhmaṇa texts.

To this, the *proponent of unity* of Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta responds with the following:

“It is true that the premises of validity and the doubt about the lack of validity of non-action passages (on the grounds that they would be purposeless) would seem to apply equally to discourses concerning *brahman*. But whereas Jaimini enunciated an argument for validity with respect to narrative portions that are supplementary to commandments of ritual action – namely, that they have their purposefulness precisely through such supplementation -- he hid his intention with regard to the discourses on *brahman*, and did not openly broach the argument for validity [that he really did believe, namely] that these have intrinsic (*svata eva*) validity, irrespective of their supplementing commandments of ritual action, because their object is *brahman*, which in itself is the supreme human goal.”⁹⁸

To clarify the *proponent of unity*'s argument: he concedes that it is true that Jaimini has devised a robust hermeneutic arsenal to deal with narrative statements that are *not* injunctive and therefore, according to the cardinal hermeneutic rule of Mīmāṃsā, are independently meaningless. They are accorded their meaning (“purposefulness” or “validity”) by being appended to injunctive statements (or as “supplementary to commandments of ritual action”).

⁹⁸ Pollock, 782.

Now, as the *proponent of discontinuity* has pointed out, those narrative statements appear no different, *prima facie*, from those statements, singled out by Vedāntins, that convey the nature of *brahman*. So why shouldn't the rule regarding the narrative statements apply to these Vedānta statements? Because, claims the *proponent of unity*, Jaimini “hid his intention with regard to the discourses on *brahman*, and did not openly broach the argument for validity [that he did believe, namely] that these have intrinsic (*svata eva*) validity, irrespective of ritual action because their object is *brahman*, which in itself is the supreme human goal.” In other words, though Jaimini did not articulate a different hermeneutic to interpret the “discourses on *brahman*,” we should nevertheless presume that he *intended* that there be a distinct set of principles to deal with those statements of fact other than those applied by Mīmāṃsā to narrative and praise statements. This is the essence of the argument Śaṅkara offers, as an olive branch, to Maṇḍana. Appayya Dīkṣita's *proponent of discontinuity* between Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta is less charitable to this specious argument from silence:

“It is ridiculous to assume that Jaimini, after having resolved doubts about the authoritativeness of some discourses not concerned with action, should have ‘hidden his intention’ with respect to other similar discourses [i.e. those of the Upaniṣads] ... Now, how are we to believe that the same man proposed an analysis of the means of knowing *dharma*, in common with [in your view] an analysis of the means of knowing *brahman*, and raised certain doubts about the authoritativeness [of some discourses on *dharma*] because of their apparent purposelessness – something common also to those narrative portions of the Vedānta section that are concerned with *brahman* – but only resolved the doubts about the narrative portions that are supplementary to action, and not those related to the narrative portions of the Vedānta that are concerned with *brahman*? Why

would anyone who understands the principles of interpretation (*nyāyavid*) place trust in such empty speculation?”⁹⁹

Appayya Dīkṣita, a scholar with a penchant for sniffing out cases of intellectual fraud,¹⁰⁰ has, in this exchange, captured what must have circulated as a plausible basis for claiming that the two systems of Vedic hermeneutics – Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, also known as Pūrvamīmāṃsā and Uttaramīmāṃsā respectively– constituted a single hermeneutic system, wherein the human end aspired to by Vedānta (*brahman*) occupied a higher position in the hierarchy than the ends commended by Mīmāṃsā (dharma). The fact that Appayya considers this to be an argument that required dismantling rather than dismissal is an indication that the solution to Jaimini’s intransigence that Śaṅkara proffers gained wider currency than just this text.

To return to the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, Śaṅkara has, with his claims to Jaimini’s hidden intentions, contrived to rescue Jaimini from the ignominy to which his explicitly stated views condemn him (on the Vedānta interpretation of the Veda). And lest Śaṅkara’s arguments not be cause enough for Maṇḍana to be mollified, his conversion to Advaita Vedānta is eased considerably by Jaimini appearing to him in his thoughts.¹⁰¹ Jaimini reassures Maṇḍana by corroborating Śaṅkara’s version of events, “saying, ‘Wise one! Listen to the commentator [Śaṅkara] and abandon this doubt! Whatever this king of ascetics has stated as the essence of my

⁹⁹ Pollock, 783.

¹⁰⁰ See, for instance, his broadsides against the canonicity of many of Madhva’s claims, as recorded in Valerie Stoker, “Conceiving the Canon in Dvaita Vedānta: Madhva’s Doctrine of ‘All Sacred Lore.’” *Numen* 51, no. 1 (2004): 47–77. Pg. 71

¹⁰¹ Though he [Maṇḍana] understood [Jaimini’s] intention, still, nagged by the traces of doubt, he [Maṇḍana] reached Jaimini in his heart in order to understand him [Jaimini] through his words, and the one who was remembered [Jaimini] appeared in the scholar’s thoughts.

viditāśayo ’pi parivarti-manāg-viśayaḥ sa jaiminim avāpa hṛdā |
avagantum asya vacasāpi punaḥ sa ca saṃsmṛtaḥ savidham āpa kaveḥ ||
Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 347.

sūtra corpus is indeed true; it is not otherwise. He knows not just the essence of my corpus, but similarly [the essence] of all revelation and science. He alone knows the past, the present and the future; there is no other like him.”¹⁰²

Reassured by Jaimini’s testimony and the revelation that Śaṅkara is an incarnation of Śiva, Maṇḍana submits to Vedānta supremacy unreservedly, pledging his allegiance to the cause of reviving Vedic authority by propagating Śaṅkara’s commentary. He disavows the limited wisdom of other teachers, seeks forgiveness for past errors, and offers fealty.¹⁰³ And, salient to our discussion, he praises Śaṅkara’s teachings in the language of royal praise [*praśasti*]:

Your captivating [teachings] are garlanded by a flow of flowers that are your pearls of wisdom, strung together by the strands of your thought, removing, at once, with its growing radiance, the darkness of ignorance. The wise are contented, for what finer ornament is there for the erudite, o best of ascetics? The beautiful goddess of learning [Vidyā] herself prefers them, shunning the gods led by Indra.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² *avadac ca śrṅv iti sa bhāṣya-kṛti prajāhāhi saṁśayam imaṁ sumate |
yad avocato eṣa mama sūtra-tater hṛdayaṁ tad eva mama nāparathā ||
na mamaiva veda hṛdayaṁ yami-rāḍ api tu śruteḥ sakala-śāstra-tateḥ |
yad abhūd bhaviṣyati bhavat tad api hy’ayam eva veda na tathā tv itaraḥ ||*

There is some irony in Jaimini, a Mīmāṃsaka, accepting omniscience, a position railed against by Kumārila Bhaṭṭa. Vidyāranya, 348.

¹⁰³ O remover of the world’s distress, ocean of compassion! Please forgive me my past errors, which I stated out of ignorance of your unimaginable majesty. And although Kapila (the founder of Sāṅkhya), Akṣapāda (the founder of Nyāya) and Kaṇabhuj (the founder of Vaiśeṣika) are among the foremost of men of unlimited intellect they were deceived; how could anyone but Śaṅkara (a partial incarnation of the highest Śiva) be capable of articulating the principles of resolving the status of the Veda?

*jagad-ārti-hann anavagamyā purā mahimānam īdṛśam acintyaṁ aham |
tava yatpuro’ bruvam asāṁpratam apy akhilaṁ kṣamasva karuṇā-jala-dhe ||
kapilākṣapāda-kaṇabhuk-pramukhā api moham t̥yur amīta-pratibhāḥ |
śruti-bhāva-nirṇaya-vidhāv itaraḥ prabhavet katham para-śivāṁśam ṛte ||*
Vidyāranya, 351.

¹⁰⁴ *cintā-saṁtāna-tantu-grathita-nava-bhavat-sūkti-muktā-phalalughair
udyad-vaiśadya-sadyah-parihṛta-timirair hāriṇo hāriṇo’ mī |
santaḥ santosaṁto yati-vara kim ato maṇḍanaṁ paṇḍitānāṁ
vidyā hṛdyā svayaṁ tāñ śata-makha-mukharān vārayantī vṛṇīte ||*

May the wise gain ever more contentment through your fame, burnished by your teachings, and through it may all the scoundrels retreat into delusion, like owls [driven away] by the luster of the sun. [May]¹⁰⁵ we, our doomed internal [gloom] falling away, transformed by submitting to the noble and steadfast Śrī Śaṅkara, be submerged in the boundless ocean of everlasting bliss.¹⁰⁶

These verses invoke the standard tropes of court poetry, but they transpose those tropes to praise Śaṅkara’s teachings and their salutary soteriological effect upon the universe of lost souls. Composed in the ornate *sragdharā* meter, the verses characterize Śaṅkara’s teachings much as a court poet would characterize the virtues of a monarch. His teachings are likened to a garland of fresh flowers, an adornment that dispels the gloom of ignorance and renders its wearers, the followers of Śaṅkara, more desirable to the beautiful lady, the goddess of learning, than the gods themselves. Similarly, the second verse invokes a trope much beloved of poets: imperishable, blazing fame, which likewise extirpates the ignoble and pleases the virtuous, who are able to bask in the blazing glory of Śaṅkara’s fame. This is not mere praise of Śaṅkara, but praise of the pastoral care that he, and the maṭha as an extension, evinces for their adherents. It is a paean to the guru who tirelessly toils to save his flock from drowning in the deep waters of *saṃsāric* existence.

¹⁰⁵ On the commentator’s recommendation: *nimagnā bhavāma iti yojana* | “The construction is ‘May we be submerged’.”

¹⁰⁶ *santaḥ saṃtoṣa-poṣaṃ dadhatu tava kṛtāmnāya-śobhair yaśobhiḥ
saurālokair ulūkā iva nikhila-khalā moham āho vahantu |
dhīra-śrī-śaṅkarārya-praṇati-parīnati-bhraśyad-antar-duranta
dhvāntāḥ saṅto vyaṃ tu pracura-nijānanda-sindhau nimagnāḥ ||*
Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 355.

With this effusive praise for Śaṅkara's ambitions for universal dominion, Maṇḍana Miśra renounces his home, his possessions and his marriage, and enters the order of ascetics as Śaṅkara's foremost pupil.

With the Victor Goes Śrī

The foregoing analysis illustrates the form of *digvijaya* that poet employs to depict Śaṅkara's progress; Vedānta's steady march to universal dominion begins with winning at home against the other representative of the Veda, Mīmāṃsā. With this triumph, Śaṅkara establishes the hegemony of Advaita Vedānta in this unified Vedic order, and simultaneously finds a place for Mīmāṃsā and Vedic ritual in the overarching normative framework that this brand of Advaita Vedānta imposes. This episode further illustrates the manner in which the *digvijaya* is employed to structure the narrative arc of the poem. The confrontation between Śaṅkara and Maṇḍana bears all the hallmarks of an idealized encounter between an imperial ruler and a rival. First, the discrete stages of the encounter – hostile exchange, substantive conflict, conciliation, and consensual ascent – mimic the idealized stages of an imperial ruler's progress. Second, as in narratives of martial *digvijayas*, defeat entails the loss of one's sovereignty: the subjugated is obligated, even if symbolically, to relinquish autonomy. Their material possessions are ceded to the sovereign, as instruments to extend the sovereign's dominion. In the case of martial *digvijayas*, this would encompass the collection of revenue from, or having control over the armed forces maintained by, the vassal. In our case, on the other hand, Maṇḍana renounces his social self. Ironically, despite Śaṅkara's claim that remaining a householder amounts to suicide, renunciation, especially as it is described in the normative texts, entails the ritual death of one's

social self. In renouncing his domestic identity, Maṇḍana takes up his new identity as an instrument for the advancement of Śaṅkara's teachings.

As the *coup de grâce*, Maṇḍana's social death entails widowhood for his wife Ubhayabhārātī, but here too the poem deftly transposes the most potent symbolic trope of the *digvijaya* in which the monarch takes with him, as a spoil of war, the tutelary deity of the subjugated, or indeed takes as his own wife the wife or daughter of the chastened rival. The icon and the wife symbolize the power and majesty (*śrī*) of the subjugated, and in acquiring it the monarch accrues to himself and his dominion the political power that lies in that subjugated region (*maṇḍala*).

Richard Davis, following Inden's lead, has explored this trope which came to inform the practice of stealing images and icons of tutelary deities from the temples of vanquished enemies and installing these in one's own country. He writes: "Over and over, Indian inscriptions refer to a repertoire of symbolic objects as primary targets of royal appropriation...suggesting their metonymic participation in the king's sovereignty."¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the expropriation of the symbol of a rival's sovereignty implied the absorption of that rival into the victor's sphere of power.¹⁰⁸ "In medieval India, appropriating the signs of imperial sovereignty was a crucial part of what Ronald Inden calls an 'imperial formation.'¹⁰⁹ Indeed, institutions like the maṭha, which were in

¹⁰⁷ Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 62 – 63

¹⁰⁸ For a temporally and spatially proximate example of this, consider the following inscription from Mysore dated to 1513: "While the mahā-rājādhirāja, rāja-paramēśvara, lord of the four oceans, *Vira-māhārāya* was ruling the kingdom of the world...Viśvamūrti-Guru-Rāya having brought the Viśveśvara-liṅga, which came from Kāśī, to the Kāverī and set it up in Śīraṅgapura, which is in Mālaṅge, in the Hadināḍa-veṅṭhe on the south side of the Kāveri, which is the Southern Vāraṅāsī, in the Hoysaṅa country – made a grant of lands to provide for all worship and ceremonies of that Viśveśvara-liṅga. B. Lewis Rice, *Inscriptions in the Mysore District*, vol. 3 (Bangalore: Mysore Government Central Press, n.d.). Pg. 75

¹⁰⁹ Davis, 74

receipt of gifts from a variety of different patrons (some of whom may have been in conflict with each other), recognized the symbolic power of these gifts and attempted to preempt their destruction. Thus, an inscription from 1432 condemns the destruction of a gift made by a predecessor or rival: “Even an enemy’s gift is to be protected with care. The enemy alone is hostile; his gift is not hostile to anybody.”¹¹⁰ In the Maṇḍana-Śaṅkara confrontation, Ubhayabhārati is the most potent symbol of Maṇḍana’s status as householder. Śaṅkara’s assertion of his control over her fate is therefore as definitive, and royal, a proclamation of his subjugation of Maṇḍana-the-householder as one could imagine.

As for conciliation and agreement through marriage, Kalhaṇa’s *Rājatarāṅginī* characterizes the princess given in marriage to conclude the Kashmiri king Jayāpīḍa’s *digvijaya* as royal fortune [*śrī*] personified. Jayanta, the king of Paundravardhana, a vassal kingdom to the five kings of Gauḍa [Bengal], “made that prince [Jayāpīḍa] who was bound to enjoy prosperity [*kalyāṇa*], accept the hand of Kalyāṇadevī [the princess], as if it were the royal fortune [*śrī*], which he had previously abandoned. He (Jayāpīḍa) showed there his valour by defeating, even without preparation, the five *Gauḍa* chiefs, and by making his father-in-law sovereign... Then at the request of this minister [Devaśarman], he set out thence towards his own country, leading in front the Goddess of Royal Victory [*jayaśrī*], and behind those two beautiful-eyed ones.”¹¹¹

In this rather concise narrative excerpt, a number of important facets of the logic of imperial formation are disclosed. First, upon hearing of the presence of the itinerant Kashmiri king Jayāpīḍa in his city, Jayanta, the chieftain of Paundravardhana, resolves to marry his daughter, Kalyāṇadevī to the king. This seemingly innocuous alliance is in fact a rather daring

¹¹⁰ *śatruṇāpi kṛtodharmah pālanīyah prayatnatah śatru eva hi śatruḥ syād dharmah śatru na kasyacit* | “Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department,” 1933, 171.

¹¹¹ Aurel Stein, *Kalhaṇa’s Rājatarāṅginī*, vol. 1 (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1900). Pg. 163

gambit that Jayanta hopes will elevate his status from a petty chieftain, under the control of the five chiefs, to the ruler of Gauḍa (Bengal). Jayanta knows that in striking this alliance, he is relinquishing his sovereign power to Jayāpīḍa, but he hopes that in ceding his sovereignty to the king of Kashmir he himself will become king of Gauḍa. Jayanta, unprovoked by Jayāpīḍa, submits to his authority, spurred on by the elevation in status that such submission will bring. Further, the alliance upends, even if implicitly, the feudal authority of the five chiefs of Gauḍa and places Jayanta within the expanding imperium of Kashmir.

Indeed, Jayāpīḍa obliges his father-in-law by promptly defeating the five Gauḍa chiefs and making Jayanta sovereign. Then Jayāpīḍa, his *digvijaya* concluded, heads to Kashmir with his royal retinue led by the goddess of Victory, with his two wives (one of them being the princess Kalyāṇadevī) bringing up the rear. We are never told if the goddess Victory's presence at the head of his entourage is figurative or if she is materially instantiated in an icon, but as I have noted above, the expropriation of a subordinated ruler's tutelary deity was a potent symbol of victory.¹¹²

The fate of Maṇḍana Miśra's wife Ubhayabhārātī (Sarasvatī) conforms to this particular *digvijaya* trope of the victor expropriating the most potent symbol of his vassal's power. Upon Maṇḍana Miśra's defeat in a debate with Śaṅkara, Ubhayabhārātī revealed her divine identity and resolved to return to her heavenly home. But Śaṅkara stopped her, saying, "Mother! When I, preeminent among your devotees, give you permission to go, then, you may go home."¹¹³

¹¹² For, instance, in the *Rājatarāṅginī*, Jayāpīḍa's grandfather, Lalitāditya had assassins kill the king of Gauḍa, to whom Lalitāditya had been granted surety of safe passage to Kashmir with the icon of Viṣṇu called the Parihāsakeśava. When the Gauḍa king's servants learned of Lalitāditya's perfidy, they travelled covertly to Kashmir where they sought to destroy the Parihāsakeśava icon. They failed to do so, mistaking a statue of Rāmasvāmin for the tutelary deity, but they nevertheless ground that icon to dust. Ibid, 153. Cf. Richard Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). Pp 83 – 84.

¹¹³ *vraja janani tadā tvam bhaktacūdāmaṇis te nijapadam anudāsyaṃy' abhyanujñāṃ yadaitum |*

Ubhayabhāratī, seeking a way to delay Śaṅkara’s victory, then herself challenged him to a debate. Reasoning that, as a life-long celibate ascetic, Śaṅkara would be ignorant of the art and science of the erotic,¹¹⁴ Ubhayabhāratī challenges him to a debate on that very topic.

This occasions a narrative digression. Śaṅkara asks for a month to prepare himself. He uses his yogic powers to inhabit the body of a recently deceased king, Amaruka, who awakens from his post-mortem state and resumes his rule. The assumption of Amaruka’s body by an enlightened soul, such as Śaṅkara, transforms the kingdom, overnight, into a Land of Cockaigne. In the meantime, Śaṅkara, ensconced in the harem, learns the ins and outs of the science of sex. He returns after a month to finally take up Ubhayabhāratī’s challenge. She greets him by acknowledging his true identity – a partial incarnation of the god Śiva – and once more declares her intention to return to heaven: “‘I will assuredly return to my original home. Therefore, o worthy one! you should permit me to do so.’ Seeing that the goddess, who had addressed him thus, had disappeared using her yogic powers, the commentator (Śaṅkara) said to her,¹¹⁵ “My lady, I know that you are Brahmā’s beloved wife, and Śiva’s sister; the foremost deity of speech; though pure consciousness, you have assumed many forms, such as Lakṣmī, to protect the universe.¹¹⁶ You attract the good; therefore, you must remain, bearing the name Śāradā, in those sacred spaces that I have designated – such as the hermitage of Rṣyaśṛṅga [Śṛṅgeri] – teaching the ends that are sought.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ The text refers to the topic as madanāgama (the teaching of passion) [9.67]; the essence of the science taught by the wielder of flower-weapons (kusumāstraśāstrahṛdaya) and the arts of the flower-bowman (puṣpadhanvanaḥ kalāḥ) [9.68]

¹¹⁵ *ādāvātmyaṃ dhāma kāmaṃ prayāsyāmy’ arhasy’ acchaṃ mām anujñātum arhan |*
ity’ āmantryā’ ntarhitāṃ yogaśaktyā paśyandevīm bhāṣyakartā babhāṣe ||

¹¹⁶ *jānāmi tvāṃ devi devasya dhātur bhāryām iṣṭām aṣṭamūrteḥ sagarbhyām |*
vācām ādyām devatām viśvaguptyai cinmātrām apy’ āttalakṣmyādirūpām ||

¹¹⁷ *tasmād asmatkalpīteṣy’ arcyamānā sthāneṣu tvāṃ śāradākhyā diśantī |*

The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* combines these two symbolic roles – icon and consort – in its depiction of Ubhayabhāratī’s fate. On the one hand, Śaṅkara’s command that Ubhayabhāratī preside over his monastery at Śṛṅgeri in the form of Śāradā points to the presence of a popular temple to and an elaborate ritual worship of the goddess at the monastery. In his ethnographic study of the followers of Śṛṅgeri, Sawai gives us a taste of the official line on the absorption of the worship of the goddess Śāradā into a Vedāntin monastery, a position that is similar to the absorption of Vedic ritual into the broader theological architecture of Advaita Vedānta. Sawai recorded the *jagadguru*’s (abbot’s) views on Śāradā: “May Śrī Śāradā shower Her choicest Blessings on one and all who are overpowered by Her invincible *Maya* and are compelled to live a worldly life. By worshipping Her with intense devotion may all conquer *moha* [delusion] and attain the supreme enlightenment or *Divya Jñāna* [divine knowledge] which is the summum bonum of all existence.”¹¹⁸ Even in this modern-day articulation of Śāradā’s role in the Vedānta ideology of the monastery, the guru of the maṭha emphasizes that the ritual worship of the goddess, in her embodied form, is meant only for those who, “overpowered by Her invincible *Maya*” [illusion] “are compelled to live a worldly life.” Thus, Śāradā takes on a role that is similar to Jaimini’s in guiding those who are consigned to *samsāra* to find their way to the path of liberation (*mokṣa*).

On the other hand, in the poem, Ubhayabhāratī is not an icon; she is Maṇḍana Mīśra’s wife. And, following his defeat at the hands of Śaṅkara, Ubhayabhāratī, despite being a goddess, is not free to do as she pleases. As Śaṅkara reminds her, “When, I, preeminent among your devotees, give you permission to go, then, you may go home.” Indeed, when the time comes, and

iṣṭān arthān ṛṣyaśṛṅgādikeṣu kṣetreṣv’ āssva prāptasatsamnidhānā ||

¹¹⁸ Yoshitsugu Sawai, *The Faith of Ascetics and Lay Smārtas: A Study of the Śaṅkaran Tradition of Śṛṅgeri* (Vienna: De Nobili, 1992). Pg. 79.

she pleads with him to let her leave the earthly realm, he presses her to serve as the symbol of the supremacy of his theology over Mīmāṃsā. In this regard, she is comparable to the two ladies at either end of Jayāpīḍa’s homeward-bound royal train: Jayā, the glory of victory [*jayaśrī*], leading the retinue, and Kalyāṇadevī, the royal glory [*śrī*] of the vassal king Jayanta. As the goddess of learning, Ubhayabhāratī is the symbol of Śaṅkara’s progress, which culminates in his ascension, at the end of the poem, to the throne of omniscience. And, as a symbol of his theological dominion, she takes center stage in the space that is analogous to the royal court, in the temple, where she is accorded the privileges of her position as the queen. Indeed, an inscription from Mysore district in Karnataka from 1129 uses the very same trope to praise the famed erudition of the Jaina teacher Vādirāja. Framed as a plea for benefaction (*maṅgala*), the inscription states: “May these loud shouts for help of the ancient sage (i.e. Brahmā) protect you:- ‘The sage, Vādirāja, now, with eagerness, takes Sarasvatī away from my side, though she is firmly attached to me through long association. Ah! Ah! Look! Look! Is this the way of ascetics?’”¹¹⁹ As the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* makes clear, stealing Brahmā’s wife Sarasvatī is the way of Śaṅkara, the emperor of ascetics.

Raising the Banner of the One True Vedānta

The foregoing analysis has provided a structural analysis of the pivotal episode of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, in order to compare it to the traditional structure of a *digvijaya* narrative. In the next section, I adduce verses from the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* that employ the martial language and tropes of the traditional *digvijaya*. I compare these verses with excerpts from inscriptions drawn from the immediate temporal and geographic context, but predating the text. In adducing

¹¹⁹ Mysore (India: State). and Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, 7:30.

those experts, I intend to show that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* did not innovate in applying to a religious leader the martial trope of the *digvijaya*. Rather, Jain inscriptions, memorializing the religious exploits of Jain teachers, ought to be recognized as the root of this powerful means of representing religious authority. Through this brief comparative engagement, I wish merely to suggest and demonstrate that the trope of monastic governmentality that I have identified and analyzed in this corpus predates these particular materials.

The following verses from the fifteenth canto of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* illustrate that aspect of the *digvijaya* wherein the martial accomplishments of a triumphant conquering king are rendered in the ornate language of *kāvya*. As I show in detail, these verses render Śaṅkara's encounter with the partisans of rival schools of thought in the martial rhetoric of *digvijaya* literature. To examine these verses in their context, I provide comparable excerpts from two sources: Jain inscriptions from Mysore district in Karnataka predating (in most cases) our text, celebrating the religious exploits of Jain teachers; and inscriptions of royal encomia from Karnataka from around the same period as the text.

Let us begin with a citation from the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*:

15.167: When commencement [of the strife] was signaled by the beating of the Kāhalā drum, the Materialists [*lokāyata*] fled, and the atom-eaters [the Vaiśeṣikas] were blinded by the dust kicked up by the army. The Sāṅkhyas were not inclined to fight,¹²⁰ and after fighting, when those others had fled, the

¹²⁰ The reading here, as acknowledged by the commentator, is rather problematic. The translation reflects the commentator's preferred reading 'dhr̥tā asāṅkhyadhīḥ where *asāṅkhyadhīḥ* is understood as a thought [*dhī*] which was free of conflict [either *saṅkhyābhāvasya dhīḥ* or *dhīḥ yasyāṃ saṅkhyā na vartate*]. Nevertheless, according to the commentator, *asāṅkhyadhīḥ* with *ā* instead of *a* is an infelicitous reading that should be disregarded.

followers of Yoga, all at once, ran off with them. What crafty word-warrior remains on earth to face the sage [Śaṅkara]?¹²¹

15.168: Previously a clamor of drums had arisen when Śaṅkara, the great emperor of ascetics [restrainers of speech] had defeated Maṇḍana -- a defeat that was fierce and made dearer by the striking of a wager. From that clamor arose a resounding echo that at present blazes like a forest fire among the forests that are the ears of the speakers of perverse doctrines.¹²²

A sentiment very similar to that expressed in praise of Śaṅkara is attributed to the famed Jaina teacher Samantabhadra, as recorded in an inscription from Mysore district in Karnataka from 1129. This part of the inscription recounts Samantabhadra's to king Chandraprabha:

“At first I beat the drum within the city of Pāṭaliputra, afterwards in the country of Mālava, Sindhu and Ṭhakka, at Kānchīpūra, and at Vaidīśa. I have now arrived at Karahāṭaka, which is full of soldiers, rich in learning and crowded (with people). Desirous of disputation, your majesty, I exhibit the sporting of a tiger. When the disputant Samantabhadra stands in thy court, your majesty, even the tongue of Dhūrjaṭi (Śiva), who talks clearly and skillfully, turns back quickly toward the nape of his neck. What hope can there be for others?”¹²³

¹²¹ *yatrārambhaja-kāhalā-kala-kalair lokāyato vidrutah kāṇāḥ kāṇabhujās tu sainyair ajasā sāmḥyair dhṛtāsāmḥhya-dhīḥ | yuddhvā teṣu palāyiteṣu sahasā yogāḥ sahaivādravan ko vā vādi-bhaṭaḥ paṭur bhuvī bhaved vastuṃ purastān muneḥ ||*

¹²² *uccaṇḍe paṇa-bandha-bandhuratare vācamyama-kṣmā-pateḥ pūrvam maṇḍana-khaṇḍane samudabhūd yo diṇḍimāḍambarah || jātāḥ śabda-paramparās tata imāḥ pākhaṇḍa-durvādinām adya śrotra-taṭṭavīṣu dadhate dāvānala-jvālatām ||*
Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 597–98.

¹²³ Mysore (India: State). and Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica*. Pg. 25

In this inscription, that predated the *Śāṅkaradigvijaya* by more than four hundred years, the drums of war sounds doom for the opponents of the correct view, a trope that the *Śāṅkaradigvijaya* appropriates and uses to great effect.

The next verse recounting Śāṅkara's battle with his rivals describes their capitulation, either through flight or submission:

15.169 Some say that the Buddhists were roused to battled, but then, standing at the ready momentarily, they ran. The Vaiśeṣikas, on the other hand, promptly hid in a corner, the Naiyāyikas covered themselves in darkness. The Sāṅkhyas, utterly defeated, fled, and the followers of Yoga folded their arms in supplication. Who could possibly match the lord of ascetics [Śāṅkara] in dexterity [of argument].¹²⁴

Compare that verse to an inscription from around 1100, praising the triumph of the Jaina teacher Gôṇandi:

O Sāṅkhya, do not oppose but be silent; O Bhautika, do not become inflated with pride; O wise Buddha, do not show your head, be off, be off; O Vaishṇava, conceal yourself, conceal yourself; O sweet-tongued Chārvāka, give up the pride of the power of your speech; will the intoxicated elephant Gôṇandi, the chief of sages, tolerate your arrogance? Ah! the scent elephant Gôṇandi, resplendent like the elephants of the regions, chased away (opponents) in the paths of the six schools of logic, so that Jaimini was stunned, the Vaiśeṣhika tripped and fled,

¹²⁴ *buddho yuddha-samudyataḥ kila punaḥ sthitvā kṣaṇād vidrutaḥ
koṇe drāk kaṇabhug vyalīyata tamaḥ-stomāvṛto gautamaḥ ||
bhagno'sau kapilaḥ palāyata tataḥ pātañjalās cāñjalim
cakrus tasya yatīśituś caturatā kenopamīyeta sā ||
Vidyāranya, Śāṅkaradigvijaya, 598.*

Sugata [the Buddhists] stopped and stamped the seal, Akshapāda [Naiyāyika] eagerly put on the bangles, the Lōkāyata lost his ? pride, and the Sānkhya took refuge. The clear sharp sound of the ? drum of the eloquent Gôpaṇandi spread to the regions, proclaiming.¹²⁵

And lest we forget the ubiquity of this rhetorical device in royal encomia of the time, let us consider the following excerpt from an inscription dated to 1397, which proclaims the exploits of the first ruler of the Vijayanagara empire, Bukka, who, we may recall, was present at the victory festival (*vijayotsava*) at Śṛṅgeri monastery, commemorated in the inscription of 1346:

As Bukka danced round the field of battle, the ill-fated Turushkas shrunk up, the Koṅkaṇa (king) Śaṅkapārya was filled with fear, the Āndhras ran into holes, the Gurjaras, trembling in every limb took refuge in high hills, the Kāmbhōjas lost their valour, the Kaliṅgas suffered defeat.¹²⁶

The next verse from the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* employs a trope that finds wide circulation in martial *digvijayas*: a conquering monarch presses his fallen foes into service, specifically as bards. This (likely symbolic) consequence connotes a subtle form of domination; it symbolizes the humiliation of recounting one's own defeat in praising one's new master. The other noteworthy facet of this verse is that it distinguishes between those rivals who, being beyond the Vedic pale, deserve to be extirpated, and those others, the Vaiśeṣikas for example, who, by virtue of affirming the Vedas, deserve, much like Jaimini and Mīmāṃsā, to be accorded a respectable

¹²⁵ Mysore (India: State). and Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica*. Pg 34

¹²⁶ Rice, *Inscriptions in the Mysore District*. Pg. 93

position within the hierarchy of Vedāntin power. These two types of rivals are deserving recipients of Śaṅkara's valor and compassion respectively.

15.170 Some of the word-warriors, such as the Vaiśeṣikas, in virtue of being Vedic, were extended the hand in battle, while others, such as the Materialists, were, thankfully! forcefully struck down. They (the Vedic warriors) were either firmly pressed into service [to Śaṅkara] as bards [in his retinue] or were appointed to his service in their own kingdoms. How wondrous the compassion or indeed the heroism of the emperor of ascetics!¹²⁷

The next verse from the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* invokes the common trope of using concatenated metaphors to characterize Śaṅkara's relation to his rival disputants and adherents. The metaphors involve the elements, playing on the palliative and generative capacities of natural phenomena.

15.171 The lord of the staff-bearers¹²⁸ [Śaṅkara] sundered the imposters' ring of lies. Their lies were like a submarine fire to the sea of equanimity, a gale to the clouds of truth, a new moon night to the moonlight of compassion, the luster of a full moon night to the lotus of tranquility, a blazing forest fire to the tree of affirmation [āstikya], rain to the goose of inerrant speech.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ *hasta-grāhaṃ grhītāḥ katicana samare vaidikā vādi-yodhāḥ
kāṇādādyāḥ pare tu prasabham abhihatā hanta lokāyatādyāḥ ||
gāḍhaṃ bandikṛtās te suciram atha punaḥ sva-sva-rājye niyuktāḥ
sevante taṃ vicitrā yati-dharaṇi-pateḥ śūratā vā dayā vā ||*

¹²⁸ The ascetics of the Śaiva orders carried a single staff (and were thus called *ekadaṇḍins*) as opposed to the Vaiṣṇava ascetics who bore a triple-staff (thus, *tridaṇḍin*). More importantly, while the scholiasts of Śṛṅgeri did admit that some ascetics – to be precise, those belonging to the lower orders – were entitled and obligated to carry the triple-staff, the *paramahansa samnyāsins* were distinguished in carrying a single staff.

¹²⁹ *śāntyādy-arṇava-vāḍavānala-śikhā satyābhra-vātyā dayā
jyotsnā-darśa-niśā'tha śānti-nalinī-rākā-saśāṅkaka-dyutih |
āstikya-druma-dāva-pāvaka-nava-jvālāvalī satkathā
haṃsī-prāvṛḍ akhaṇḍi daṇḍi-patinā pākhaṇḍa-vāṅ-maṇḍalī ||
Vidyāraṇya, Śaṅkaradigvijaya, 598.*

Comparable inscriptions of encomia from this particular period and place are legion. I adduce below two examples, one in praise of a petty ruler and the other in praise of a Jaina teacher. The first is temporally proximate to the composition of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, excerpted from an inscription from 1641 recording the exploits of the Keladi Nāyaka Veṅkaṭa.

...The estimable great Veṅkaṭa-bhūpati, a head-jewel of all kings; a moon to the lotuses of the faces of hostile kings, his valour an adamantine armour to the Karṇāṭa country, his two lotus-feet illuminated with the crowns of prostrate kings, in truth a Hariścandra. A full moon to the line of the famous king Keladi-Sadāśiva, a lion to the elephants of opposing kings, an ocean of treasure to the good, in wealth a Kubêra, an abode of learning and intelligence, to the company of good poets a Bhôja, of excellent qualities, was the king Veṅkaṭa. A diamond elephant-goad to the lusty elephants of the group of the bounding Taulava rājas, a sun to disperse the thick darkness of the numberless Kirātas, a boundary mountain to stop the great ocean of the Mlêchchas ever seeking to overflow the south in victorious expeditions, his arm of unequalled valour, was the king Veṅkaṭa.¹³⁰

The rhetoric of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is much more similar to the encomia praising the exploits of Jaina ascetics than to the encomia composed in praise of kings. This is attested by the following inscriptional excerpt from an 1176 inscription, in which Dāmanandi-munipa is praised:

“A sun to the lotus-plant/the Jaina religion, a gale to the clouds/the Naiyāyikas, a terrible thunderbolt to the mountain/the Chārvākas, an Agastya to the ocean the

¹³⁰ Mysore (India: State). and Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica*. Vol. 7, 3.

Bauddhas, a lion in breaking open the head of the scent-elephant/the Mīmāṃsakas, Dāmanandi-munipa, chief of the *traividya*s, was resplendent on the earth.”

The verse from the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is an inversion of this last verse. Śaṅkara is depicted as capable of putting right the world ravaged by the depredations of his rivals, whereas the Jaina ascetic is praised, using the same metaphors, for protecting the world from the deleterious effects of the rival schools of thought.

The following verse from the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is directed against the Digambara Jains, the sect of Jainism that flourished in Karnataka (and more generally, the western Deccan) since roughly the 7th century. All the Jaina inscriptions adduced in this chapter come from orders belonging to the Digambara sect. It is therefore unsurprising that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* should single out the Digambara for humiliation, and ultimately annihilation, not just at the hands of the Vedāntin Śaṅkara, but similarly at the hands of the Pātañjalas, the Kāpālikas, the Vaiśeṣikas and the Cārvākas. In other words, it is important for the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* to portray the Digambara Jains as universal losers, serving as vassal kings to a range of overlords. Nevertheless, the offices designated for the Digambara, though appearing to be menial, in reality marked prestigious positions in the royal retinue. Thus, the office of the spittoon-holder or door-keeper was often reserved for the closest kinsmen or feudatory of the monarch, and such offices were often accorded in return for an annual tribute.

15.173 The Digambara [Jaina] vassals, who were employed as mercenaries by the Pātañjalas [the followers of Yoga], as spittoon-holders by the Kapālikas, as door-keepers by the Vaiśeṣikas, as bards to the king of the Jainas, as well as certain

other parvenus, blossoming buds on the branch of Cārvāka materialism, were, by the words of lord of sages [Śaṅkara], reduced to history.¹³¹

A designation such as “spittoon-holder” is meant, contrary to what we may intuit, to signify the importance of the vassals and their propinquity to their overlord. As, for instance, a Dutch visitor to the Vijayanagara court in 1629 (then located in Velur) observed:

In this part of Carnatica one finds the three most powerful lords (*mogeste heeren*) Neicqs [Nāyakas] of the Carnatica kingdom, who must yearly give as homage to the Velour crown 1,200,000 *pagodas*, to wit: Vyrepanaicq [Vīrappa Nāyaka] of Madril [Madurai] the King’s spittoon-bearer 600,000 *pagodas*. Rachunatanicq of Tanjouwer [Tanjavur], the King’s fan-bearer, under whom the trading town Nagapatan [Nāgapaṭṭana] lies, 400,000 *pagodas* and Christoponaicq [Kṛṣṇappa Nāyaka] of Chingier [Śrīraṅga], the King’s betel-giver 200,000 dittos...it remains agreed that their above-mentioned tasks will be always performed by three substantial nobles (*treffelijk edeleden*), but that for the coronation of a legitimate successor, they must on the first day personally perform these duties.¹³²

¹³¹ *śāntānām subhaṭāḥ kapālika-patad-grāha-graha-vyāpṛtāḥ
kāṇāda-pratihāriṇaḥ kṣapaṇaka-kṣoṇīśa-vaitālikāḥ
sāmāntās’ca digambarānvaya-bhuvaś cārvāka-vaṃśāṅkurā
navyāḥ kecid alaṃ munīśvara-girā nītāḥ kathā-śeṣatām.*
I thank Professor Tubb for his explication of this verse.
Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 599.

¹³² Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Dean Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nāyaka Period Tamilnadu* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992). 105 – 106. For a recent inquiry into the position of the Betel-bag bearer, see Daud Ali “The Betel-Bag Bearer in Medieval South Indian History,” in Manu Devadevan, *Clio and Her Descendants: Essays for Kesavan Veluthat* (Primus, 2018).

Before Śaṅkara's arrival on the scene, when the world was beset with the evils of dualist thought, the Jains were critical functionaries in a variety of regnant religious regimes. The myth of Advaita's ascension dispatches the Jains to the footnotes of the glorious history of the revival of religion that had yet to be written. The poem closes with dawning of a new age of Vedic revival, ushered in by the *ur-saṃnyāsin* Śaṅkara and continued to this day by the maṭha at Śṛṅgeri. The fifteenth, and penultimate, canto of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* ends with the following verse, completing the natural metaphor and comparing Śaṅkara to the sun, cleansing the world of the delusions of dualist doctrine.

15.174 Thus, with the cessation of dualist doctrines in all directions, he then extended his own path of non-dualism by exorcising, daily, all doubts, just as the sun, once the flood of darkness has receded, spreads its own great luster.¹³³

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* constitutes the first moment in the formal reception history of the signal hermeneutic achievement of the fourteenth century corpus commissioned and composed at Śṛṅgeri. The work enlivens and consummates some of the key elements of hermeneutic innovation (what I have characterized as a monastic governmentality) that were articulated in the earlier stratum of text. The project of Vedic unification, through the application of a hermeneutic of assimilation through subordination, is

¹³³ *iti sakala-diśāsu dvaita-vārtā-nivṛttau
svayam atha paritas tārāyam advaita-vartma ||
pratidinam api kurvan sarva-saṃdeha-mokṣaṃ
ravir iva timiraughe saṃpraśānte mahah svam ||*
Vidyāranya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 599.

completed with the dramatic subjugation of the Vedic ritual by the Vedānta. The climactic battle of Vedic ideologies between the emperor of *saṃnyāsins*, Śaṅkara, and the arch-ritualist, Maṇḍana, results in Maṇḍana's subjugation. Consequently, Maṇḍana assumes *saṃnyāsa* as Sureśvara and becomes Śaṅkara's most illustrious pupil. In the very same manner, the poem enacts Śaṅkara's conquest of the religious landscape. It shows how he subjugates and assimilates those traditions that are, essentially, congenial to the Vedas and expels those that are beyond the pale. In thus re-making the religious landscape and ensuring the stability of the Vedic order by founding the maṭha at Śṛṅgeri, Śaṅkara rescues the world from the darkness of duality that the Kali age has ushered in. This crisis was perhaps more keenly felt in the contentious historical context of sixteenth- and seventeenth century Vijayanagara, where different Vedānta orders proliferated. The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* served as an intervention in the dispute regarding which order of Vedāntins (Rāmānujīyas, Mādhvas, and Bhedābhedins finding most prominent expression) ought to be considered the true representatives of the meaning of the Vedas. In that contest, we may consider the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* to be the tip of the rhetorical spear.

Chapter 6

Śaṅkara goes to Court

In the previous chapter I have shown how the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* employs the martial trope of the *digvijaya* to bring religious order and hierarchy to a disordered religious landscape. But the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is not merely a *digvijaya* translated into a religious register, since it also applies the same normative framework, contrived to subordinate and regulate truculent religious traditions, to regulate and subordinate kingship, even if the text articulates the domination of kingship *sotto voce*. In other words, the domination of the monarchy is dramatized in a different register than the domination of rival religious orders; the poem subverts the standing of royal authority by suggesting that a king, entangled in the web of pleasure (*kāma*), lacks the sovereignty of the ascetic who, himself fully liberated from sociality, can discharge his duties (*dharma*) dispassionately. The possibility of domination along this axis hinges on the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*'s strategic enactment of the hierarchy of human ends (*puruṣārthas*: *kāma* > *artha* > *dharma* > *mokṣa*). Liberation (*mokṣa*) remains the prerogative of Śaṅkara, who is a metonym for the institution of the maṭha, whereas kingship must aspire to its sacred duty (*dharma*) through the proper circulation of *artha* (power or material goods), all the while susceptible to the temptation of pleasure (*kāma*). This marks a modulation in the ideological articulation of kingship in an earlier text of the same corpus: the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*.

In the introduction to the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*, a summary of the aphorisms of Jaimini, reliably ascribed, *pace* the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, to the fourteenth century, the king is considered an incarnation of ultimate reality, *brahman*, imbued with the qualities of sovereignty and omniscience typically ascribed to the ascetic leader of Śrṅgeri (with whom the king is identified).

The *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*'s exaltation of the king as sovereign (*īśvara*), as the embodiment of rule (*bhogamūrti*),¹ the political counterpart to the spiritual incarnation of *brahman* in the form of the great ascetic leader of Śringeri, Vidyātirtha, is cast aside in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*'s denigration of kings. In the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, kings are diminished in stature, incapable as they are of discharging their kingly *dharma*, and require the reins of power to be taken up by the true sovereign, Śaṅkara, the king of ascetics. But the guru's expropriation of royal power brings no great resolution, for, though the kingdom prospers under the dharmic tutelage and guidance of the guru, he himself must lose his grasp on truth to enter the fray of power. In Foucaultian terms, in order to become a subject capable of ruling a kingdom, the guru must withdraw from the regime of truth through which he has been transformed into the liberated guru. Thus, the guru must lose sight of himself. The poem draws upon the paradoxical status of the guru in its exploration of the guru's capacity to rule the immanent domain of the kingdom. In Śaṅkara's adventures as a king, the text shows the dangers that threaten gurus who intervene too directly in matters of administration. In embracing agency, these gurus risk losing knowledge of the self and thus squandering the existential progress to which they have directed their efforts. In other words, the guru's intervention into matters of state ensures that *dharma* will take root, but it comes at the cost of the guru losing sight of himself. Monastic governmentality requires, in the final analysis, *dharmic* kingship to flourish. Thus, the text moralizes that the king must serve as a

¹ *bhoga*, literally enjoyment, refers to governance, insofar as a king is said to enjoy the earth. I address the implications of this polysemy, particularly in light of the shifting role of the king, in the Nāyaka period, as a *bhoga*, in the sense of a consumer of liquid assets, rather than as a governor. For a detailed examination of this shift, see Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Dean Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nāyaka Period Tamilnadu* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp 68 - 82. The passage in the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālāvistara* reads: *jaḡadīśvarasya vidyātīrthamunerbhogamūrtitvenāyamīśvaraḥ*. "He [Bukka] is the lord insofar as being the form of enjoyment of the lord of the universe, the sage Vidyātirtha." Note further this division of labor attested in the epigraph from 1451 [EC 6.44 Koppa Taluq, 83]: "At the time when the mahārājādhirāja... vīra-pratāpa Deva-Rāyamahārāya was in Vijayanagari in the presence of the god Virūpāksha, upholding the religious duties of the various castes: -- And, by the favor of that Rāya, Purushottama-Bhārati-śrīpāda was in Singeri, maintaining the... of the god Vidyāśankara..."

faithful and energetic executor of maṭha rule. In the last section of the chapter, I examine one possible explanation for this ambivalence toward kingship. In the confusion of recursive frames folding in upon themselves, one might even be led to think that Vidyāranya, the legendary founder of Vijayanagara, had forgotten Śaṅkara's painful lesson.

The set of arguments I advance in this chapter seeks to explain this rhetorical shift in the maṭha's appraisal of kingship. Mining the inscriptional record, I argue that the change in the political environment, precipitated by the fall of Vijayanagara at the Battle of Talikota in 1565, imperiled the security of assets and revenue streams upon which the maṭha depended. The shifting centers of power from Vijayanagara to the successor Nāyaka states entailed a period of uncertainty and instability, marked by a few calamitous episodes of dispossession and danger for the monastery at Śṛṅgeri. Eschewing monocausal explanations (since, after all, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is but a single text that claims to speak for the maṭha of Śṛṅgeri and for followers of Advaita Vedānta), I nevertheless detail the considerable evidence that explains the noticeable shift, from the earlier texts associated with the maṭha, in attitudes toward the institution of kingship. At the same time, I show that, at least in inscriptional representation, the gurus of the monastery at Śṛṅgeri always considered themselves rulers in their own right, advancing a vision of monastic governmentality that was, at least in the rarefied heights of normative discourse, set apart from political governance. Thus, in this chapter, I outline the second axis of dominance: the manner in which the text envisions the hegemonic status of the monastic order over kingship. This vision, as the text itself evinces, is jaundiced by the awareness that no matter how securely the maṭha asserts and regulates its claims to transcendent authority, the impossibility of the use of force necessarily limits its sovereignty. Lastly, I attempt to read this text, in these two crucial dimensions, as a response to the changing regimes of

political power that obtained in the 17th century, when the center of political power at Vijayanagara was fractured and reconstituted in the Nāyaka state of Ikkeri.

The Erotic Play's the Thing

In the following section, I track the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*'s vision of moral order as it leaves behind the religious landscape and enters the royal court. This analysis depends upon a synthesis of what the poem presents and what it presumes. I contend that the poem has a very clear, albeit implicit, vision of authority. By authority I mean a conception of legitimate power as opposed to power as such; in other words, authority demands that power be wielded by an appropriately virtuous agent. In this Vedāntin conception of authority, the virtuous character of an agent is not judged, as it typically is in Sanskrit court poetry, by an accounting of the sovereign's dispositions, qualities, and vices, but rather is linked to a theory of sovereignty. The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* presumes that sovereignty is conditioned by knowledge of the self. Once again, we are to apply the rubric of the four human ends (*puruṣārthas*) in ascertaining the condition of the self. According to this logic, a self that is attached to and driven by the lowest of the human ends, desire (*kāma*), is considered least sovereign, since true autonomy is hindered by one's attachment to enjoyment (*bhoga*). Conversely, the only true sovereign is the self that has realized liberation (*mokṣa*), since a liberated self is not dependent upon any other entity.

The ascendant theory of royal power in this, the Nāyaka, period under consideration, was a theory of experience or *bhoga*. Considering "the specific conceptual context for Nāyaka-period kingship in its mature forms, as expressed in contemporary sources, literary and other," Rao et

alia* argue, “that a major shift has taken place in the articulation of traditional political roles: the classical dharma ideology... has significantly atrophied, to be replaced by a new, self-confident model of Śūdra kingship. Inevitably, the new model *embodies a telos with existential features, that is, ‘enjoyment’* [emphasis added] (*bhoga*) – not the investment of the suddenly abundant cash resources in shoring up the refashioned political centre, or in establishing its symbolic and organizational autonomy, but their exhaustion in various playful and sensuous modes.”²

The authors capture the transvaluation of the values of kingship with their formulation that “the new model embodies a telos with existential features, that is, ‘enjoyment’ (*bhoga*).” In other words, kingship, formerly configured and constrained by the human end (*puruṣārtha*) *dharma* (duty), is now reoriented toward the maximization of enjoyment or experience (*bhoga*), an elevation, to use our rubric of values, of desire (*kāma*). This is not to say that the older *dharmic* model of kingship did not rely upon *bhoga*.³ Rather, it depended upon normative *bhoga*, wherein consumption followed the logic of productive redistribution. In other words, consumption and enjoyment were appropriate productive endeavors of kingship that redounded to the benefit of the kingdom. This is intimated by an inscription from Maḷavaḷḷi Taluq in 1474, which describes the origin of Bukka in the Saṅgama lineage: “In it [the lineage of the Yadus] arose Saṅgama, from whom sprung emperor Bukka, to whom the Karnāṭa Lakṣmī was greatly attached, and through whom the earth became wealth-bearing.”⁴ Note here that the king is

* I should note that the study of the Nāyaka polities that I have cited here, and depend upon for my analysis, does not deal, with any specificity, with the Nāyaka state of Ikkeri, which is the polity that I examine in the context of Śrīgeri. Nevertheless, the study is meant to reflect on general aspects of Nāyaka rule, and therefore hold.

² Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 57–58.

³ Indeed, Rao et al are explicit on this point: “But even this is hardly new: *bhoga* as royal prerogative, even obsession, goes back to the early medieval period in the South. In Pallava and Cōḷa times, however, as at Hampi, it was balanced by a formal identification of kingship with the ideology of dharmic norms...” *ibid*, 67.

⁴ Rice, *Inscriptions in the Mysore District*. Pg. 68.

defined by his capacity to productively enjoy the bounties of the dominion that he rules in order to generate ever more bountiful results for his subjects (referred to as *prajā*: his political progeny). He takes the land, Karnāṭa Lakṣmī (the Bountiful Goddess of Karnāṭa country), as his wife. His connubial association to the land is critical to his kingship in both of its crucial regards: it is an association that is no less pleasurable (*kāma*) than it is productive (*artha*). Whereas the king and queen’s love-making (*sambhoga*) produces heirs, the king’s enjoyment and governance (*bhoga*) of the earth produces wealth.⁵

Contrast this with the new conception of kingship that Rao et al describe, where the king is depicted, in court poetry, not as assiduously engaged in reproducing and redistributing resources, a frame in which we might find the full arsenal of erotic play dedicated to the procreative play between the king and his queen or the king and the earth. Rather, as an idealized day in the life of Raghunātha Nāyaka (r. 1612 – 1634) shows,⁶ where each day culminates in the king seducing a new courtesan, the erotic play’s the thing wherein we catch the content of kingship.

The Nāyaka royal presence is fashioned precisely through such images of sensual immediacy and exuberance; of ritualized abandon; of the literalizing application of classical norms and models; of the cultivated delicacy of the effete master-connoisseur. *The aesthetic presentation of self dominates all others* [emphasis added] in Nāyaka Tanjavur...⁷ Moreover, the teleology of enjoyment has now spread beyond the palace into the wider institutional spheres of these little states, which articulate their need for self-transcendence – a dependable component in

⁵ This topos of power has been examined in Hara, “The King as a Husband of the Earth (Mahī-Pati).”

⁶ Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*. Pp 58 – 64

⁷ *Ibid*, pp 64 – 65.

the dynamics of all south Indian politics – in terms of bhoga rather than, say, Brahminical values and Brahmin support. Bhoga comes to constitute a new, remarkably autonomous arena for transcendence...⁸

This is the key to understanding kingship as it is represented in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. In the normative framework advanced by the texts associated with Śringeri monastery, only the two highest ends – *dharma* and *mokṣa* – are, in my theorization, religious and transcendental. They are transcendental insofar as being beyond the ken of ordinary human knowledge and experience. That is, these two ends, unlike desire (*kāma*) and power (*artha*), cannot be known through human experience or rationality, but may be known from the *Veda alone*. They are also transcendental in connecting humans to a transcendental plane of experience. As regards *dharma*, not only is the paradigmatic result of ritual performance transcendental (heaven), but the performance of ritual is enjoined upon *all* suitably qualified agents to ensure cosmological renewal and maintenance. *Mokṣa* is the condition of transcending the human, and, according to the Advaita Vedāntin conception, it consists in the only *true* realization of one's self -- sovereignty. The transvaluation of kingship in the Nāyaka period consisted of disregarding the dictates of the hierarchy of values (*puruṣārthas*). As Rao et al observe, aesthetic enjoyment is recast as an end unto itself, promising transcendence for the agent, the deified sovereign. These two elements – *mokṣa* and *bhoga*, the latter being cast as an end unto itself – were essential to the undermining of the Vedic framework of norms. The re-configuration of ultimate ends, or *bhoga* as telos, entailed a new discourse of normative subjectivity: the king's aesthetic enjoyment was a process of becoming a deified self that could transcend the limitations of the office. This is precisely the model of kingship that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is interested to undermine.

⁸ Ibid, 67

In my analysis of kingship and sovereignty in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* I take up two narrative episodes to illustrate the following positions:

- a. The king, Sudhanvan, is depicted as an aesthete, incapable of, and uninterested in, the business of governance.
- b. The business of governance is symbolized by the capacity of a sovereign to judiciously redistribute resources. The king is incapable of fulfilling this role.
- c. Śaṅkara, the true sovereign, because of his complete detachment from all social ties and his indifference to *kāma* and *artha*, is able to redistribute resources disinterestedly.
- d. Ultimately, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* does not envision a theocracy; rather it seeks an idealized world where it is only natural that the conception of the good should be the determined by the true sovereign, i.e. the guru of the maṭha, and the king ought to serve as an instrument for the execution of that vision of the good. In other words, monastic governmentality preserves kingship as an able instrument, executing monastic imperatives.

Confronting King and Court

The first illustrative episode from the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* comes from Canto five, which relates Śaṅkara's miraculous childhood feats. Sudhanvan⁹, the king of Kerala, hearing of

⁹ The king's name itself may be a subtle hint at his mixed-caste status. The name Sudhanvan is a synonym for Rathākāra, as Āpadeva explains in the *Mīmāṃsānyāyaparakāśa*: “‘A carpenter [rathakāra] shall lay the (sacred) fires in the rainy-season,’ the word ‘carpenter’ [rathakāra] is used as a synonym for *saudhanvana* [i.e. related to Sudhanvan] a particular (non-Aryan) caste, because conventional meaning prevails, and not in the etymological meaning of an Aryan who makes wagons (*ratha-kāra*, carpenter, means literally wagon-maker’.” Edgerton, *The Mīmāṃsā Nyāya Prakāśa or Āpadevī: A Treatise on the Mīmāṃsā System by Āpadeva*. Pg 78. The point here is that Sudhanvan is a synonym for Rathākāra, a term for a mixed-caste person whose ritual status has long been questioned by the canonical sources. For a brief history of that controversy – namely, is the Rathākāra, i.e. Sudhanvan, entitled to perform any Vedic sacrifices – see Christopher Minkowski, “The Rathākāra’s Eligibility to

Śaṅkara's prodigious powers, sends a minister to ask the boy to come to court.¹⁰ The minister goes, with a store of gifts, including choice rutting elephants, to invite the young Śaṅkara to court.¹¹

Minister: [I have come] because the king – an enlightened being and warrior whose equal is found neither on earth nor at the head of the battle – has respectfully commanded, ‘You are granted audience’.¹² In his court are revered scholars-in-residence, resplendent in their brilliant gold-inlaid robes, who refute the speeches of their opponents with inerrant, choice words.¹³ He is the glory of his clan, a universal sovereign who has won all battles, whose feet are worthy of

Sacrifice,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 32, no. 3 (1989): 177–94. Minkowski summarizes the Mīmāṃsā position thus: “A *śruti* passage (TB 1.1.4.8) allows the Rathakāra to establish the sacred fires. Is the Rathakāra a *traivarnika*, a member of the three twice-born classes, or not? The *pūrvapakṣin* suggests that the term *rathakāra* be understood in its etymological (*yoga*) sense. This would make it refer to a *traivarnika* whose profession is chariot-making. Such a view is refuted by the Siddhāntin: the Rathakāra is mentioned separately from the three *varṇas*, and furthermore, has a conventional (*rūḍha*) sense, and refers to a specific group known as the Sudhanvanas, who are slightly inferior (*hīnāḥ... kiṃ cit*) to the three *varṇas*, but are not as low as Śūdras.” Pg. 179. The upshot is that by naming the king Sudhanvan, the text implies that he is descended from the Saudhanvanas, who, though they are not śūdras, do not belong to the three upper castes.

¹⁰ The king of Kerala wanted to see this boy of extraordinary deeds, the annihilator of the wretchedness of his devotees. So, he, who was revered by mendicants, dispatched a minister.

*evam enam atimartya-caritraṃ
sevamāna-jana-dāinya-lavitram |
kerala-kṣiti-patir hi didrkṣuḥ
prāhiṇot sacivam ādrta-bhikṣuḥ ||*

¹¹ And that minister, without lassitude, fearless, having gone to him [Śaṅkara], along with gifts and elephants, immediately after informed him, who was equal to Śiva, with words that were choice and charming.

*so 'py'atandritam ābhīr upadābhiḥ
prāpya tam tad anu sadviradābhiḥ |
uktibhiḥ sarasa-mañjupadābhiḥ
śakti-bhṛtsamam ajijñāpad ābhiḥ ||*

¹² *yasya naiva saddrśo bhuvī boddhā
drśyate raṇa-śiraḥsu ca yoddhā |
tasya kerala-nṛpasya niyogād
drśyase mama ca satkṛti-yogāt ||*

¹³ *rājītābhra-vasanair vilasantah
pūjītāḥ sadasi yasya vasantah |
paṇḍītāḥ sarasa-vāda-kathābhiḥ
khaṇḍītāpara-giro `vitathābhiḥ ||*

worship, may the protector of all beings obtain the dust from your feet with affection.¹⁴ Please accept this foremost elephant, in rut, free of the trace of any defect, that his majesty has gifted, so that his palace, though unsullied, may be truly purified by the dust of your feet.”¹⁵

Before taking up Śaṅkara’s reply, it is important to appropriately situate the minister’s words in the architecture of power that the royal court envisioned. We have observed, principally, two modes of power available to the court; the first, the force of conquest, and the second, the power of patronage. This episode, involving the king Sudhanvan and Śaṅkara, is informed by the dynamics of that second mode. The minister has been sent to initiate Śaṅkara’s entrée into the hierarchy of power at court, by presenting him with gifts and inviting him to court. The relationship of donor-donee, which was critical to the representation of royal power, as we see evinced by the vast inscriptional record of the period, is at work in this case. The gift, once accepted, would obligate Śaṅkara to present himself in court and accept his place in the scales of power arrayed there. The court conditions the possibility for success of an intellectual such as Śaṅkara, for it is there that the “scholars-in-residence, resplendent in their brilliant gold-inlaid robes, refute the speeches of their opponents with inerrant, choice words.”¹⁶ In other

¹⁴ *so ’yam āji-jita-sarva-mahīpaḥ
stūyamāna-caraṇaḥ kula-dīpaḥ |
pāda-reṇum avanaṃ bhava-bhājām
ādareṇa tava vindatu rājā ||*

¹⁵ *eṣa sindhura-paro mada-pūrṇo
doṣa-gandha-rahitaḥ pravīrṇaḥ |
astu te ’dya rajasā paripūtam
vastuto nṛpa-grhaṃ śuci-bhūtam ||*
Vidyāranya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 141–44.

¹⁶ *rājītābhravaṇair vilasantaḥ
pūjītāḥ sadasi yasa vasantaḥ |
paṇḍitāḥ sarasavādakathābhīḥ
khaṇḍitāparagiro ’vitathābhīḥ ||*

words, the king makes possible the contestation of theological viewpoints, but in doing so, he encompasses all theological activity by his patronage. No matter who should emerge victorious in these debates at court, he always remains beholden to the king. The minister also mentions that the king is a universal monarch (*sarvamaḥīpa*), who has respectfully commanded his presence at court. This is a subtle intimation of the location of real power. With the peerless gifts, the minister has made an offer Śaṅkara can hardly refuse. And yet, Śaṅkara does refuse, and thereby upends the conventional operation of royal power.

Śaṅkara: O best of benefactors, alms sustain me, the antelope hide clothes me; injunction to ritual action, hardened by restrictions, is the foremost teacher of Vedic students, who are skilled in absorbing the Veda, which alone gives bliss.¹⁷ Dismissing my ritual duties, what on earth should I do with the finest of elephants, with inappropriate pleasures, and what happiness can my desire yield? Therefore, return, minister, as you came, and repeat this to your master.¹⁸ [This is not the duty of a king]; on the contrary, because the sovereign bestows wealth on all the classes [*varṇas*], they are able to dispatch the debts they owe. Those who are dedicated to the path of dharma must be cultivated; they must not be told: “Desist from your duty!”¹⁹

¹⁷ *bhaiḥṣyam annam ajinaṃ paridhānaṃ
rukṣam eva niyamena vidhānaṃ |
karma dāṭṭy-vara śāsti baṭūnāṃ
śarma-dāyī-nigamāpti-paṭūnām ||*

¹⁸ *karma naijam apahāya kubhogaiḥ
kurmahe 'ha kim u kumbhi-purogaiḥ |
icchayā sukham amātya yathetaṃ
gaccha nātham asakṛt kathayetham ||*

¹⁹ *pratyuta kṣiti-bhṛtā 'khilavarṇā
vṛty-upāharaṇato vigatarnāḥ |
dharma-vartma-niratā racanīyāḥ
karma varjyam iti no vacanīyāḥ ||*
Vidyāranya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 146–47.

Śaṅkara's response to the minister highlights the critiques of royal power that I have explicated above. First of all, in refusing the king's gifts he refuses to be implicated in the network of royal power. Free from the debts of obligation, Śaṅkara instead makes clear that the only authority he accepts is the transcendental authority of the Veda, which alone can lead him to true sovereignty, characterized as liberation of the self from the cycle of *saṃsāra*. To accept the king's gifts would be to violate his *dharma* as a celibate Vedic student (*brahmacārin*). Indeed, Śaṅkara refuses even to present himself at court, the locus of royal power. Furthermore, he extends this view to articulate a full-throated critique of the king's activities. First, he asserts that, like himself, the king too is constrained by a transcendental set of strictures, his *dharma* or duty. The duty of a king is to redistribute resources in such a way that all his subjects are able to discharge their debts.²⁰ When the king offers wealth and status to religious leaders, he not only violates his own *dharma*, by misappropriating resources, but induces those religious leaders to stray from the path of *dharma* themselves. Moreover, to ramify his own power and privilege, he diverts resources that would be, *dharmically*, better spent by other subjects. Kingship should ensure that religious virtuosi such as Śaṅkara are encouraged and supported to adhere to the path of the Veda and not to stray to the path of power. In thus falling down at this critical imperative, the deficient kingship of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* demonstrates the need for a monastic governmentality. In fostering pastoral care in conformity with Vedic values, the maṭha alone ensures that its subjects may advance in their own station. The maṭha's care for the souls of these subjects. This is Śaṅkara's initial indictment of the nature of royal power; it is precisely because

²⁰ For more on the theology of debts, see Olivelle, *The Āśrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution*. Specifically, see pp 46 – 53.

royal power serves itself and has no transcendental basis that it remains power and not authority; it is, in Śaṅkara's view, illegitimate.

The faultless chief minister Mṛgāṅka returned on Śaṅkara's instruction, and having heard his report, the king himself visited that most virtuous one²¹ who was encircled by the best brahmin boys, and whose sacrificial string was like a ray of the brilliant moon, whose brilliance was like the Himālayas, glistening with the pellucid Ganga and covered with trees.²² Having prostrated himself in front of the child, the king, who was greeted in turn, offered Śaṅkara a great quantity of gold and recited three new plays he had written himself.²³ Śaṅkara, after listening to these three plays said to the king, "Choose a boon."²⁴ Hearing those words, which, like a stream of nectar, in essence, went to the heart of the matter, the king, who made good on his promises, his hands brought together in supplication, sought a son like himself. Then, Śaṅkara said, "This gold is of no benefit to me, Give it to my kinfolk. What you desire will come to pass soon, so hurry home

²¹ *ity amuṣya vacanād akalaṅkaḥ
pratyagāt punar amātya-mṛgāṅkaḥ |
vṛttam asya sa niśamya dharāpaḥ
sattamasya savidhaṃ svayam āpa ||*

²² *bhūsurārbhaka-varaiḥ parivītaṃ
bhāsureḍupa-gabhasty-upavītaṃ |
accha-jahnu-sutayā vilasantaṃ
succhaviṃ nagām iva druma-vantaṃ ||*
Vidyāranya, Śaṅkaradigvijaya, 147.

²³ That king, the doom of his enemies, having been asked after his health by him [Śaṅkara], then recited three novel, original plays, after offering [Śaṅkara] a great deal of gold.

*tena pṛṣṭa-kuśalaḥ kṣiti-pālaḥ
svena sṛṣṭam atha śātrava-kālaḥ |
hātakāyuta-samarpaṇa-pūrvam
nāṭaka-trayam avocad apūrvam ||*

²⁴ Having heard these three [plays], distinguished by their mode, qualities and full of sentiment, honored by good poets, [Śaṅkara] uttered, concisely, those delightful words, "Choose a boon!"

*tad rasārdra-guṇa-rīti-viśiṣṭam
bhadra-saṃdhi-ruciraṃ sukavīṣṭam |
saṃgrahaṇa sa niśamya suvācaṃ
taṃ gṛhāṇa varam ity'amum ūce ||*
Vidyāranya, Śaṅkaradigvijaya, 149.

satisfied.” Then, he [Śaṅkara], learned in the Veda, told the king, in private, the ritual that causes the increase of the family of the best of kings. And with this ritual [the ritual for a son, *putreṣṭi*] dedicated to Brahmā, who secures all the king’s desires, the king was satisfied.²⁵

Śaṅkara’s rebuff upsets the balance of power. Rather than being compelled, by the king’s largesse, to present himself at court, Śaṅkara’s resistance forces the king to come to the child. In thus inverting the calculus of power, the child has transformed himself into the patron, and has reduced the king to the status of supplicant. Indeed, even the king’s offer of a gift is revised to resemble an offer made by a supplicant to a patron, or a devotee to a deity. And, like a court poet, the king offers Śaṅkara the fruits of his intellectual labor: three original plays that the king has himself composed. This is the first adumbration that the king is an aesthete, that he devotes his energies to composing original (*apūrva*) plays and seeks the approval of the best poets (*sukavīṣṭa*). The offer of the three plays, which delights Śaṅkara, is contrasted with the king’s offer of a mass of gold, which provokes Śaṅkara’s ire. This may indicate that, in this poem, this particular king is more fit to be an aesthete poet than a *dharmic* king. Once again, the offer of gold draws the same criticism from Śaṅkara, namely, that the king has failed in his *dharmic* duty to circulate wealth properly for the benefit of his subjects. Thus, Śaṅkara recommends the appropriate distribution of wealth, and, in so doing, arrogates to himself the duties of the king, inasmuch as the distribution of resources makes a sovereign.

²⁵ *rāja-varya-kula-vṛddhi-nimittāṃ*
vyājahāra rahasi śruti-vit tām |
iṣṭim asya sakaleṣṭa-vidhātus
tuṣṭim āpa hi tayā kṣiti-netā ||
Vidyāranya, 153.

There is, in fact, a historical controversy that signifies the importance of the source of a donation and is apposite to this case insofar as it involves a king, Kṛṣṇadevarāya – the most famous king of the Vijayanagara empire – and an ascetic, the Madhva guru Vyāsaṭīrtha. In Valerie Stoker’s retelling of this historical episode, the prerogative of a king (Kṛṣṇadevarāya) to distribute resources was subtly subverted by a monk and monastic leader (Vyāsaṭīrtha), which resulted in the king reasserting his prerogative. Vijayanagara rulers made great use of the “two-stage gift,”²⁶ particularly to secure the peripheries of their expanding imperium. With the edges of dominion being pushed out after successful military campaigns, the rulers of Vijayanagara had to contend with the ubiquitous threat of powerful generals or feudal kings rising up to challenge the center. One of the ways of avoiding this eventuality was to use monastic institutions to secure the frontiers. The two stage-gift become one of the means of extending the peripheries of the empire without jeopardizing the center. According to the logic of the two-stage gift, the ruler gave a large donation of land, rights or cash to a feudatory figure, or a general, or, as in this case, a religious leader. The military or religious leader would then re-distribute those resources and thus shore up his own authority, simultaneously re-inscribing the authority of the sovereign.

The case I wish to adduce here illustrates Kṛṣṇadevarāya’s reaction to Vyāsaṭīrtha’s claims to be sole benefactor, thereby erasing the traces of the distributor of wealth:

Kṛṣṇadevarāya. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, Vyāsaṭīrtha, the leader of the Madhva order of Vedāntins, had commissioned the construction of large tanks to provide irrigation for a region surrounding Tirupati. Consequently, the fruits of this irrigation project were offered to the deities at Tirupati. The area in which the tanks were built was popularly

²⁶ Stoker, *Polemics and Patronage in the City of Victory: Vyāsaṭīrtha, Hindu Sectarianism, and the Sixteenth-Century Vijayanagara Court*, 88–90.

known as “Vyāśasamudra” or “Vyāsa(tīrtha’s) ocean,” in reference to the irrigation system. The name bore the mark of Vyāsatīrtha’s status as benefactor of the area, by virtue of building the irrigation system that rendered a region fecund and sustained not only the its people but also its deities. As Stoker notes, the *Kamalapur Plates of Krishnadevaraya* show that, in 1526, Kṛṣṇadevarāya donated to Vyāsatīrtha the land on which this impressive irrigation construction was created, comprising Bettakonda and surrounding hamlets, and the village was renamed Kṛṣṇarāyapura. Thus, Kṛṣṇadevarāya sought to assert his inalienable and supreme prerogative to redistribute resources by reminding the readers of the inscription that it was ultimately he, and he alone, who would determine the appropriate dispensation of wealth. In this case, he affirmed Vyāsatīrtha’s irrigation system, but added a marker, with his name, of his supremacy in the matter. As Stoker concludes, “The tank of Vyāśasamudra would not exist were it not for the king’s patronage, and, therefore, the village popularly known as Vyāsa’s Ocean should also be called King Kṛṣṇa’s Town.”²⁷

This historic episode shows us that the crucial element in the formulation of sovereignty was the gift. It illustrates the other dimension of sovereignty as we find it formulated and deployed in this period: according to the operation of power, sovereignty is constituted in the very act of giving, or in the very process of distributing resources, both in the extraction of taxes and in the dispersal of land, rights and cash. Thus, as Kṛṣṇadevarāya’s actions disclose, the sovereign is the one who is able to assert his prerogative to these two operations. On the other

²⁷ Further: “Thus, the inscriptional record suggests that kings relied on sectarian leaders to manage gifts intended to develop strategic locations of the empire economically but that kings also felt somewhat anxious about this reliance. This anxiety was due to the fact that the sectarian leaders who managed these gifts could become quite prominent locally, potentially increasing their autonomy and eclipsing the fame of the king. The Kamalapur copper plate inscription suggests that the king could be uneasy about the extent to which *mathas* functioned as alternative institutions of power. He was therefore willing to exert his influence over sectarian religious activity, if the circumstances warranted it.”
Stoker, 39–40.

hand, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* contests this ideology of sovereignty on the only grounds it can: not on the field of power but on the field of norms. Thus, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* asks: who *ought* to distribute resources? Should it be someone like king Sudhanvan, whose self is captured and consumed by the forces of *kāma*, or should it be someone like Śaṅkara, who has realized his self, unencumbered by any of those base human drives, completely detached from the ties that bind and blind? We should acknowledge that this very difference, between the historical resolution of the contest between Kṛṣṇadevarāya and Vyāsatīrtha and the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*'s portrayal of the contest between Sudhanvan and Śaṅkara, amounts to the difference between the *ought* of the text and the *is* of political realities of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Karnataka. This is already a far cry from the logic of donation that predominated between the first kings of Vijayanagara and the guru of Śṛṅgeri, which I have detailed in the introduction. In that framework, the guru was uniquely positioned to receive the gift of land and labor from monastics and monarchs alike. He was the recipient and redistributor of intellectual labor (*śuśrūṣā* or service) in the form of commentaries and treatises and land and rights. We should understand the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* to be reflective of a certain tension that had developed between the monarchy and monastery in the intervening centuries, and prescriptive in the vision of authority it presents.

Finally, to conclude my analysis of this narrative episode, let us consider Sudhanvan's request for a son. Although a fairly common *topos* of the epic genre, this particular instance is anomalous for a number of reasons. First, in the epic and literary use of this *topos*, the request for a son – to a deity or to an ascetic sage – is invariably preceded by depictions of the parents yearning for a child, performing rituals, *askesis*, prayers, or subjecting themselves to all manner of ordeals. In other words, typically, the supplicants must have distinguished themselves by their virtues or their practice in deserving the intervention by a spiritual guide or guru. Indeed, in the

Śaṅkaradigvijaya itself, Śaṅkara's parents, forlorn at the prospect of never having a child, perform austerities and rituals to the god Śiva.

In this case, there is no indication that king Sudhanvan has sought a child, and in fact, when he sends his minister Mrgāṅka to Śaṅkara it is to invite the boy to court, not to ask him for an heir. Only when Śaṅkara offers him a boon does the king mention his desire to have a son. Śaṅkara's response is also remarkable, since he does not perform a miracle to give the king a son, though he performs numerous miracles in the course of the poem. Rather, his secret (*rahasi*) response to the king is to enjoin him to perform a Vedic rite (*iṣṭi*) to secure the birth of a son, a solution Śaṅkara knows because he is learned in the Veda (*śrutivid*). This is rather puzzling, for this bit of Vedic knowledge is not esoteric in the least (as opposed to the esoteric knowledge of Brahman imparted by the Upaniṣads). The ritual for the birth of a son (*putreṣṭi*) is a Vedic ritual that Sudhanvan's royal priest (*purohita*) would be expected to know, were he to have one. Indeed, the king, were he properly trained in the Veda, as he would be expected to have been, should have known about this ritual. That the king was never advised by his priest to perform the *putreṣṭi* requires one of two explanations. It is possible that the royal priest was ignorant of the most basic Vedic rituals. It is also possible, if Sudhanvan was in fact a member of the Saudhanvana community, that since he was not a member of any of the three upper castes, he was entitled neither to have a Vedic education nor to sponsor all Vedic sacrifices. No matter the case, the conclusion is damning: Sudhanvan rules over a kingdom whence Vedic learning has all but disappeared; certainly, it has no place at court. In other words, the nature of the king's request and Śaṅkara's response demonstrates that the king has all but relinquished *dharmic* claim to governance. In this very first encounter between the king and Śaṅkara, we are shown that the king -- beset by *bhoga* -- is not a sovereign self, capable of ruling others.

The Song of the Self

The second episode from the text that illustrates the deleterious effects of kingship upon sovereignty comes from the tenth canto, where Śaṅkara, in order to learn about the erotic arts, inhabits the body of the recently deceased king Amaruka, and spends a month governing the dead king's dominion, when he is not ensconced in the harem trying his hand at love-making. Amaruka's apparent revival and return occasions great celebration, but soon, the king's ministers suspect that something is amiss. The poem relates the episode thus:

Then the king [Amaruka/Śaṅkara], astride his foremost elephant, properly propitiated by his priest and counselors, who had performed the apotropaic rites, proceeded to the capital city.²⁸ Having arrived at his capital, he consoled his beloved subjects [who thought him dead]. He ruled the earth as Indra the heavens, his authority honored by feudatory vassals and respected by his counselors.²⁹

Note that he assumes the position of a universal monarch, one whose authority is assented to by his feudatory vassals. Thus Śaṅkara, who is on a similar path to spiritual hegemony has, for a brief period, acquired political dominance. This symmetry is referred to in the following verse, where Śaṅkara is called the emperor (lit. earth-bearer) of ascetics (*saṃyaminām bhūbhṛt*). The ministers, cleaving to a paradigm of sovereignty based on the

²⁸ *atha purohita-mantri-puraḥsarair narapatih kṛta-śāntika-karmabhiḥ |
vihita-māṅgalikaḥ sa yathocitaṃ nagaram āsthitam bhadra-gajo yayau ||*

²⁹ *samadhigamya puram parisāntvita-priya-janaḥ sacivaiḥ saha sammataih ||
bhuvam apālayad ādṛta-śāsano nṛpatibhir divam indra ivādhirāt ||*

accretion of the appropriate virtues, ascribe these to him: he is like a god in all the respects that define kingship: the redistribution of resources, clarity of speech, martial superiority and knowledge. For now, let us merely note these factors of good governance, to which we return below.

When the emperor of ascetics had become king and began to rule the earth, his ministers, who were wise, became incredulous and wondered among themselves whether this one, who had come back to life, was the same as the one who died: “Indeed, he does not appear as before, for now he seemed to be the repository of every divine virtue.³⁰ He showers wealth among supplicants like Yayāti, he speaks with clarity of meaning like the teacher of the gods (Bṛhaspati), he subdues hostile kings like Arjuna, and like Śiva, he knows all.”³¹

The ministers’ suspicions grow stronger as the kingdom, under the rule of the revived Amaruka (Śaṅkara), flourishes prodigiously. Trees bear fruits and flowers regardless of season, cows and buffaloes give inordinate amounts of milk, timely rain yields massive harvests and, most importantly, “all the subjects adhere to their own duties.”³² With the kingdom flourishing under his rule, Śaṅkara devotes his energies to love-making, the real reason for his assumption of a king’s body. The poem’s description of Śaṅkara’s immersion in the erotic arts is,

³⁰ *iti nṛpatvam upetya vasuṇḍharām avati saṅyami-bhū-bhṛti mantriṇaḥ |
tam adhikṛtya paraṃ kṛta-saṃśayā iti jajalpur analpa-dhiyo mithaḥ ||
mṛtim upetya yathā punar utthītaḥ prakṛti-bhāgya-vaśena tathā tvayam ||
narapatiḥ pratibhāti na pūrvavat samuditākhila-divya-guṇodayaḥ ||*

³¹ *vasu dadāti yayāti-vad arthine vadati gīṣ-pati-vad giram artha-vit |
jayati phālgun-avat prati-pārthivān sakalam apy avagacchati śarva-vat ||*
Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 374–75.

³² *sva-vihita-dharma-ratāḥ prajāś ca sarvāḥ |*

unsurprisingly, very similar to the descriptions of the love-making of kings that are a commonplace of Sanskrit court poetry. As the following verses demonstrate, the poem describes Śaṅkara's transformation into an aesthete, of the very kind who forms the object of the analysis of Rao et al, a man for whom the ultimate human end is enjoyment (*bhoga*). Indeed, Śaṅkara is distinguished by the fact that he enjoyed (*bubhuje*, from the verbal root *bhuj* which gives us *bhoga*) those objects (*viṣayān*) that other kings could never hope to enjoy. Thus, the elaboration of enjoyment as a means to subject-formation implies a concomitant epistemology, wherein an aesthete is distinguished by his subjectivity; his experience of different objects – fine or base – forms his *self* as an aesthete. Thus, it would be implausible for Śaṅkara to learn the fine art of aesthetic enjoyment by reading treatises on the subject; experience is constitutive of an aesthetic self. Indeed, without experience it would make little sense to speak of an aesthetic sensibility.

Then, having entrusted the burden of governance to his most trustworthy ministers, taking up the companionship of his lovers, the king indulged in those [sex] objects that other kings could never have.³³

On the crystal floors, white like the moonlight, there were charming pillows, on which the king, while playing dice games with beautiful young women, concocted wagers in case each won: biting the lower lip, carrying her in his arms, striking with a large water-lily, and reciprocating advances.³⁴

Sipping on intoxicating wine, all the more appealing because taken from the hands of a lover, redolent with the breaths that swirled between them, and pleasant because it touched the nectar of her bottom lip, he served his

³³ *atha rājya-dhuraṃ dharādhipaḥ paramāpteṣu niveśya mantriṣu |
bubhuje viṣayān vilāsinī-sacivo' nya-kṣiti-pāla-durlabhān ||*

³⁴ *sphaṭika-phalake jyotsnā-śubhre manojña-śiro-grhe vara-yuvatibhir dīvyann akśair durodara-keliṣu |
adhara-daśanaṃ bāhv-āvāhaṃ mahotpala-tāḍanaṃ rati-vinimayaṃ rājā' kārṣid glahaṃ vijaye mithaḥ ||*

lovers that wine, gleaming in the moonlight, out of golden goblets, with affection.³⁵

The king was satisfied at drinking in his beloved's face, its locks askew, flushed with lust, its half-budded eyes showing slight embarrassment, fragrant as a lotus, beset with moans of pleasure, its hair standing on end, aglow with faint perspiration. She babbled charmingly because she was drunk.³⁶

As the poem tells it, Śaṅkara is prodigiously precocious in matters of love, despite being a novice. Nevertheless, tethering the self to pleasure (*kāma*) or enjoyment (*bhoga*) comes at a great price: one forgets that one is *really* Brahman. The occlusion of the *self* as it truly is (according to Advaita Vedānta) means a loss of sovereignty, and in the case of Śaṅkara, a loss of identity. As he spends more time secluded in the seraglio, Śaṅkara forgets who he really is, namely a sovereign self, entirely liberated from the pull of the baser human ends, particularly pleasure (*kāma*). In other words, in depicting Śaṅkara thus, the poem presents us with the very inverse of its vision of sovereignty, the case of a self so consumed by pleasure, that it ceases to be an independent self. The formation of an aesthetic self provides no transcendence; rather, this formation obscures the real self, the liberated, sovereign self. As time passes, Śaṅkara's students, who have been assigned to protect his self-less body, fear that Śaṅkara has abandoned them and set out to find him. They do not know where he is, but they know the signs that should indicate Śaṅkara's presence:

³⁵ *adharaja-sudhāśleṣād rucyaṃ sugandhi mukhānila-vyatikara-vaśāt kāmaṃ kāntā-karāt tam atipriyam |
madhu mada-karaṃ pāyaṃ pāyaṃ priyāḥ samapāyayat kanaka-caṣakair indu-cchāyā-pariṣkṛtam ādarāt ||*

³⁶ *madhu-mada-kalaṃ manda-svinnaṃ manohara-bhāṣaṇaṃ nibhṛta-pulakaṃ sītākāḍyaṃ saroruha-saurabhaṃ |
dara-mukulitākṣīṣal-lajjaṃ viṣṭvara-manmathaṃ pracarad-alakaṃ kāntā-vaktraṃ nipīya kṛtī nṛpaḥ ||*
Vidyāranya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 377.

In the care of a ruler who is ever blissful, the people are emancipated, untouched by malady or malaise, freed from the threat of theft, ever devoted to their own duties. Indra sends timely rain, and the earth blooms with whatever is desired.³⁷

Therefore, setting aside sloth, we will now search for the lotus feet of the greatest teacher, the bridge over the endless ocean of rebirth. Let us tarry no longer here!³⁸

Once again, the text recapitulates the effect that a true sovereign has upon governance. Under the rule of a true sovereign, the kingdom is oriented toward the highest human end for social, religious life: *dharma*. The maintenance of *dharma* is nothing but the renewal of the cosmos, and in a kingdom that produces *dharma*, the cosmos conspires to engender prosperity. Inevitably, the disciples find a kingdom that exhibits every sign of dharmic virtue. They disguise themselves as singers to enter the court of Amaruka (Śaṅkara). Once at court, they sing a song for the king, the words of which are meant to remind him of his true identity as the ultimate liberated self. With this song of the self, the text once again stresses the salience of employing skillful means (*upāyakauśalya*) to reach a diverse audience. In this case, even though the hearer is none other than Śaṅkara, he suffers from existential amnesia. Since he has become an aesthete, the only means to reach him is through the arts. And so his students compose a song specially to rouse his hidden self. They sing the verses below, and their refrain is the (*tattvam*) essence of the

³⁷ *nitya-triptāgrayāy-āśrite nirvṛtāḥ prāṇino roga-śokādinā nekṣitāḥ |*
dasyu-pīḍojjhītāḥ sva-sva-dharme ratāḥ kāla-varṣī svarāṇ medinī kāma-sūḥ ||

³⁸ *tad ihālasyaṃ apāsya vicetum niravadhi-samsṛti-jaladheḥ setum |*
deśika-vara-pada-kamalaṃ yāmo na vṛthā anehasam atra nayāmaḥ ||
Vidyāraṇya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 385.

Upaniṣads: “You are that” (*tat tvam asi*). In this way, the singer-students remind their teacher of the secret truth that one’s true identity is the liberated self. The self, in any other configuration, is constrained by forces external to it which, in the final analysis of Vedānta, are mere illusion (*māyā*). Thus, a self, otherwise liberated, that devotes itself to pleasure ceases to be liberated and becomes increasingly alienated from itself, mistakenly conceiving of itself as an enjoyer (*bhoktr*) rather than as radically independent.

O moon-faced one! Abandoning everything that has preceded, you are now pursuing pride, which confects a new heart! How do you not remember who we really are, o destroyer of desire? Recall [that you are], through our words, the ultimate [reality].³⁹

Denying completely all manifestations of multiplicity, embodied or not, with the scriptural admonition “it is not [this]” “it is not[that],” (*neti neti*), all manifestations of multiplicity, embodied or not, the wise know that truth, which is incapable of suppression, as the self -- the truth that “You are that.”⁴⁰

Having generated the sky, and having entered creation secretly, the self is sheathed by sheaths made of food and so on, like a grain of rice by chaff. The seers, having split that chaff by threshing it with their logic retrieve the grain which is the reality that “You are that.”⁴¹

When horses run unrestrained over rough terrain, the [wise] tug at the reins, and having checked the [horses] they tie it [to a stake] with a rope; so too, when the senses run rampant across the terrain of objects, the wise

³⁹ *parva-śāsi-mukha sarvam apahāya pūrvam kurvad iha garvam anusṛtya hṛd-apūrvam |
na smarasi vastv asmadīyam iti kasmāt saṁsmara tad asmara param asmad-uktyā ||*

⁴⁰ *neti nety-ādi-nigama-vacanena nipuṇam niśidhya mūrtāmūrta-rāśim |
yad aśakya-nihnavam svātma-rūpatayā jānanti kovidās tat tvam asi tattvam ||*

⁴¹ *khādyam utpādyā viśvam anupraviśya gūḍham anna-mayādi-kośa-tuṣa-jālo |
kavayo vivicya yukty-avaghātato yat taṇḍulavad ādadati tat tvam tattvam ||*

check it by showing it the defects [of this view], and having bound it with the rope that is itself they tie the rope to that truth, which is “You are that.”⁴²

The wise know that the truth -- sewn together to the states that are excluded, such as waking and the like, just like the fiber that is distinct from the lotus flowers -- is distinct from the trio of adjuncts, and it is “You are that.”⁴³

That -- which is taught to be the cause of such Vedic statements as “All that [exists, has existed, and will exist,] is Puruṣa,” just as gold is the underlying cause of all ornaments, such as diadems, made from it -- is expressed, in its essence, in the truth, “You are that.”⁴⁴

The I, who appears here, in this body, is the same as that one who appears in the disc of the sun. He am I. That, which the scholars of the Veda painstakingly teach interchangeably is the truth, “You are that.”⁴⁵

The *brahman* the Brahmins, internally cleansed, wish to know through dharma (comprising Vedic recitation and righteous donations), through faith, through rituals, through knowledge, and through reason, is the truth that “You are that.”⁴⁶

The steadfast are successful in searching after it in the self by the self, by means of such disciplines as equanimity, restraint and quiescence. They who know that the nature of reality is the unbounded bliss of pure

⁴² *viṣam aviṣayeṣu saṃcāriṇo 'kṣāśvān doṣa-darśana-kaśābhighātataḥ |
svairam saṃnivartya svānta-raśmibhir dhīrā badhnanti yatra tat tvam asi tattvam ||*

⁴³ *vyāvṛtta-jāgrad-ādiṣv anusyūtaṃ tebhyo 'nyad iva puṣpebhya iva sūtram |
iti yad aupādhika-traya-pṛthaktvena vidanti sūrayas tat tvam asi tattvam ||*

⁴⁴ *puruṣa evedam ityādivedeṣu sarva-kāraṇatayā yasya |
sārvātmyaṃ hātakasyeva mukuṭādi-tādātmyaṃ sarasam āmnāyate tat tvam asi tattvam ||*

⁴⁵ *yaś cāham atra varṣmaṇi bhāmi so 'sau yo 'sau vibhāti ravi-maṇḍale so 'ham iti |
veda-vādino vyatihārato yad adhyāpayanti yatnatas tat tvam asi tattvam ||*

⁴⁶ *vedānuvacana-sad-dāna-mukha-dharmaiḥ śraddhayā 'nuṣṭhitair vidyayā yuktaiḥ |
vividīṣanty'atyanta-vimalasvāntā brāhmaṇā yadbrahma tat tvam asi tattvam ||*

consciousness are no longer overcome by lassitude, knowing the truth that
“You are that.”⁴⁷

The song of the self awakens Śaṅkara to his real identity and he relinquishes the body of the dead king to return to his previous form. This episode, ostensibly about Śaṅkara acquiring a knowledge of sex in order to debate Ubhayabhārātī, shows the particular perils of the mode of kingship that was ascendant during the Nāyaka period, the mode of king-as-enjoyer (*bhoktr*). There are two distinct positions that this episode advances that are relevant to my analysis.

First, it shows not merely that the soteriological program advanced by Śrīṅgeri’s brand of Advaita Vedānta is concerned with the liberation of the self from the constraints of sociality, but that liberation amounts to a radical sovereignty. In a post-mortem state, where the self is no longer bound by the body, liberation is abstracted to a general state described by the bliss of pure consciousness (*sac-cid-ānanda*).

But we ought to recall here that the Śrīṅgeri Advaita Vedāntins also promulgated liberation-while-living (*jīvan-mukti*), a dimension of their ideology that I have discussed in chapter two. In entertaining this possibility, the Advaita Vedāntins differ from their rival Vedāntins, the Madhva (dualist) and the Viśiṣṭādvaita (Rāmānujīya, qualified monist). This distinction caused considerable friction between the Advaita Vedāntins and the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, who denied the possibility of a class of ascetic virtuosi (*saṃnyāsins*) who could be roaming around in a state of liberation. Indeed, Śaṅkara is the paradigm of this class, the liberated ascetic, who, although he has realized the sovereignty of his self, is able, nevertheless, to act in a social world. Since such a person is characterized by total and radical sovereignty, would he not be

⁴⁷ *śama-damoparamādi-sāadhanair dhīrāḥ svātmanā ’tmani yad anviṣya kṛta-kṛtyāḥ |
adhigatāmita-sac-cid-ānanda-rūpā na punar iha khidyante tat tvam asi tattvam ||*
Vidyāranya, *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 389–93.

uniquely positioned to govern? Completely free from the corrupting influences of the baser human drives, could he not dispense *dharma* with perfect disinterest? Sovereignty is the key to this conception of the political good. In fact, in the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, which constitutes a hierarchy of theological viewpoints from an Advaita Vedānta perspective, one of the key critiques leveled at the Madhva dualist Vedāntins is that their system cedes the sovereignty of the self to Viṣṇu. Thus, according to this critique, the Madhva conception of liberation, wherein the individual self must remain subordinated to Viṣṇu, is susceptible to suffering, since the liberated self is not sovereign.⁴⁸ As the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* contends, and as Śāṅkara's conduct shows, liberation is not compatible with dependence; a liberated self is radically independent.

Second, the mode of kingship in which the king is an enjoyer (*bhoktr*) could not possibly result in transcendence, because it entails the alienation of the self from its true nature. Thus, kings who give themselves over to ceaseless consumption fashion a self that is constituted by its relation to the objects of enjoyment, and thus they lose sight of the ultimate human ends that ought to guide human action: liberation (*mokṣa*). The ideology of consumption, in this schema, leads to a spiritual dead-end. Not only is there no way of transcending the cycle of rebirth, but

⁴⁸ The following is a translation of the commentary on this critique, which I have preferred to the original text – which the commentary rephrases -- for the facility of the prose: The Māheśvaras, disapproving of the Vaiṣṇava school (of Madhva), resort instead to the Pāśupata śāstra. On the Vaiṣṇava view, the state of dependence is not the state of the cessation of suffering and the like, i.e. the ends that are desired. For, suffering, which is the cause of dependence, would exist even in a state of liberation. For even the liberated self remains a devotee of Viṣṇu. Thus, [on this view] liberation is not the cessation of all manner of suffering, and thus, the Māheśvaras do not approve of this Vaiṣṇava school (of Madhva). Rather, the Māheśvaras seek ultimate sovereignty in the state of liberation. What's more, the liberation that the Vaiṣṇavas seek cannot succeed through reason either. Since servitude in a state of liberation runs counter to reason. Thus, the inference: devotees are not liberated, because they are dependent, or because they lack ultimate sovereignty, just like the bound self.

vaiṣṇava-matam arocayamānā māheśvarāḥ Pāśupata-śāstram āśrayanta ity'anvayaḥ | vaiṣṇava-mate para-tantratvaṃ duḥkhāntādikasyepsitasyāspadam na bhavati | mokṣe pāratantrya-nimittaka-duḥkha-sattvāt | muktāpi viṣṇor nityaṃ sevakā eva | tathā ca sarva-vidha-duḥkhasyānto mokṣe na bhavati ato vaiṣṇava-matam māheśvarāṇām na rocate | māheśvarās tu mokṣe pāramaiśvaryaṃ kāmāyante | pāramaiśvaryaṃ niratiśayaiśvaryaṃ | kiṃ ca vaiṣṇavābhimito mokṣo yuktyāpi na siddhyati | yato mokṣāvasthāyāṃ dāsyam yukti-viruddham | tathā cānumānam sevakā muktā na bhavanti para-tantratvāt pāramaiśvarya-rahitatvād vā baddha-jīvavad iti |

Cannibhaṭṭa, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, 161.

rather, every single act of enjoyment constricts the chain of existence coiled around the self. According to the Advaita Vedānta ideology of liberation, breaking free of this chain is the only way to attain true sovereignty of the self.

Nevertheless, I do not think that this means that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* ought to be construed as recommending a theocratic polity, in which the monastery is the governing institution. Rather, the text's discomfort with Śaṅkara occupying the throne conveys an anxiety about the effects of wielding military power. The text argues, quite forcefully, that, as regards transcendental questions, the king should follow the recommendations of religious leaders, who are the most able interpreters of the Veda. Thus, a Vedic kingship would require the king to cede sovereignty to the monastery in managing their own affairs, and would compel the state to intervene, with military force, on behalf of the monastery to secure its prerogatives and privileges. I take up the implications of this program below, where I analyze the historical context that informed and shaped the composition of the text.

A Self Divided

As this foregoing analysis has shown, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* makes a sharp distinction between the kind of sovereignty a king may claim and exercise and the transcendent, ultimate sovereignty that only an ascetic of the highest order can attain. The rhetorical point of this distinction is two-fold: first, it forecloses on the possibility, elaborated in the court literature of the Nāyaka period, that kingship, especially in its aesthetic mode, could be a means to transcendence; and second, it argues that the only true sovereign is the liberated soul, in other words, the guru of the Advaita Vedānta order at Śrīṅgeri.

It would be wrong, nevertheless, to suppose that this Śrīṅgeri Advaita Vedāntin attitude to kingship remained unchanged through its history. In fact, one of the earlier texts in the corpus produced by the scholars of Śrīṅgeri takes a very different attitude to the figure of a dharmic Śaiva king, as a figure who is dependent for his sovereignty upon the legendary monastic guru of Śrīṅgeri, Vidyātirtha. The introduction to the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālāvistara*, a treatise summarizing the main topics of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* of Jaimini, characterizes Bukka, the Saṅgama king of Vijayanagara (r. 1356 – 1377), in the traditional terms of royal encomium, and draws upon the same tropes that we find in the *praśasti* genre. There are two important themes that I want to draw out of the excerpt I translate and analyze below. The first is this text's use of *dharma*, and the second is its identification of the king as an incarnation of Śiva and as the ultimate principle of Vedānta (*brahman*).

The history of the concept of *dharma* in Indian intellectual and religious history is much too complex to rehearse here.⁴⁹ I delineate the important dimensions of *dharma* that are invoked in this instance in order to describe the fashioning of a kingly self. The excerpted verses have two important implications for my argument.

The first is that the fashioning of the self is constitutive of sovereignty. The domains of such self-fashioning are the external and the internal. That is, the king must fashion his external self to ensure the protection and prosperity of his subjects. (In other words, he must perform the *dharma*, in the sense of good governance, proper to his office). And, on the other hand, the king must assiduously cultivate his internal self; by performing Vedic rituals. (In other words, he must instantiate the *dharma* of Mīmāṃsā discourse, which is the proper result of the performance of

⁴⁹ For a history of the concept in India refer to the following two volumes: Alf Hiltebeitel, *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative*, South Asia Research (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Patrick Olivelle, *Dharma: Studies in Its Semantic, Cultural, and Religious History*, Sources of Ancient Indian Law (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2009).

Vedic ritual). Thus, the figure of the king becomes, in this idealized form, the site for the synthesis of the two types of *dharma*: the *dharma* of good governance and the *dharma* of the Mīmāṃsā theory of Vedic ritual. The verse, insofar as it uses the poetic device of *śleṣa* (paronomasia), conspicuously conflates these two distinct conceptions of *dharma* in the person of the king. The synthesis of these two kinds of *dharma* makes more powerful the praise of the king as the instantiation of the two ultimate forces: *Śiva*, who is the symbol of power and sovereignty, and *brahman*, the symbol of transcendence and liberation.

In this singular passage, therefore, the king is characterized as capable of ensuring *both dharmic* governance (success within the web of *saṃsāra*) *and* transcendence of this cycle. This is the *inverse* of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*'s representation of kingship. It accords to king Bukka all the religious powers of Vidyātīrtha, the guru of the Śṛṅgeri maṭha, and at the same time acknowledges his royal prerogative to universal dominion, a right that may not be exercised by his structural double, Vidyātīrtha.

The second point follows on from this and provides a sharp contrast to the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. In the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, Śaṅkara is not only a liberated self (one who has realized that one is *brahman*, the ultimate and singular reality) but he is, *simultaneously*, an incarnation of Śiva. This is precisely how Bukka is characterized in the passage excerpted below. He is described as the “ultimate *brahman*, which is known in the Upaniṣads” (*sarvāsu upaniṣatsu pratīyamānaṃ yat paraṃ brahma*), and he “assumes the form of preserver among the manifestations [of Śiva] (*tatra tāsu mūrtiṣv' ayaṃ bhūpālaḥ sthitimūrtiṃ dhatte*). Thus, in this praise of Bukka, we find a model of idealized kingship that is an inversion of the model of kingship advanced by the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. Whereas, in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, the king is forever susceptible to the pulls of *kāma* or *bhoga*, in this characterization, being a liberated self,

Bukka is entirely impervious to those stirrings, while he is, simultaneously, being the instantiation of *brahman* as an enjoyer. (Bukka is said to have assumed the *bhogamūrti* of *brahman*).

How ought we explain the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*'s structural inversion of this earlier model of kingship? I take up this question in the next section, after the following analysis of the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālāvistara*'s idealization of kingship in the person of Bukka.

The use of paronomasia or punning to praise the virtues of a king was common enough in medieval south India to warrant the following analysis from Inden:

Certain metaphors are indeed used to emphasize the power of the king of kings relative to that of the tributary lords that make up the court... the one used above is that of the king of kings as a grammarian. As the comparison of grammar with the science of statecraft already implies, the ordering of a court entailed the following of rules. The evocation here is quite specific. Vital, in these discourses on Indian statecraft, was the capacity of a king of kings, one who would succeed as a Cakravartin, to bring about agreements (*sandhi*) between himself and among other kings whom he had won over to his position, and to bring about dissension or separation (*vigraha*) among those who remained hostile. Both of these terms were also used in grammatical discourse, so there can be little doubt that what was being talked about here was the making of a royal court in the sense of a society of kings.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Inden, *Imagining India*, 240.

This comment on the valorization of the king as a master of the various disciplines follows an encomium of a Rastrakuta king who is praised, using the very same words, as a world-conqueror and a consummate grammarian:

He, a powerful master of the science of politics, desirous of obtaining a lofty position, deprived some of his subordinate chiefs *maṇḍalin* of their places and established others who were deserving, separated from each other by producing disunion and united others, and thus arranged them in a high or low position; as a proficient master of the science of words (i.e. grammar), desirous of making up a long form, drops some letters from their positions and introduces others in their *guṇa* form, separates some on account of their dissimilarity and unites others, and places them in order, above or below.⁵¹

The translation Inden cites above does not make the paronomasia explicit, but the praise-passage employs the same words to exalt the king's perspicacity in foreign policy and his great facility with grammar. Thus, whereas, a phrase may, when applied to foreign policy, be understood to mean "[he] deprived some of his subordinate chiefs of their places and established others who were deserving," this very same phrase, when used in praising the king's knowledge of grammar, is taken to mean, in praising the king's command of grammar, "[he] drops some letters from their positions and introduces other in their *guṇa* form."

The author of the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālāvīstara* uses paronomasia to demonstrate Bukka's great facility for good governance and his thorough knowledge of the topics covered by this highly technical commentary on the *Mīmāṃsāsūtras* of Jaimini. As the author states: "Those

⁵¹ Inden, 239–40.

very meanings of the present book, consisting of 12 chapters [i.e the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*] that are going to be taught on the discourse of *dharma* (*Dharmaśāstra*) that we have decided, and those ends that comprise royal *dharma* (*rājadharmāḥ*), which have been stated in the discourse on governance (*nītiśāstroktā*) – all of those we find in this king (Bukka).’’⁵² Here, I present a short excerpt from the introductory verses and their commentary to show how Mādhava presents this ideal king, Bukka.

*yuktiṃ mānavatīṃ vidan sthiradhṛtir bhede viśeṣārthabhāg
 āptoḥaḥ kramakṛt prayuktinipuṇaḥ ślāghyātideśonnatīḥ |
 nityasphūrty’adhikāravān gatasadābādhaḥ svatantrēśvaro
 jāgarti śrutimatprasaṅgacaritaḥ śrībukkanakṣmāpatīḥ ||*

Good Governance (*nītiśāstra*)

Well-versed in conciliation, which is imbued with honor, with unshakable resolve in conflict, he, most of all, enjoys wealth.

He is skilled at discerning among his counselors, he maintains rank, expert at employing [superintendents], his improvement of other kingdoms is praiseworthy.

Knowledge of Mīmāṃsā (*Dharmaśāstra*)

Knowing the [pra-māṇa] system of logic, he is singularly focused on the division [bheda], of ritual actions; he understands the principle of subordination [śeṣa].

He is adept at ritual transposition [ūha], he knows the sequence [krama] in which to perform the rituals, he is skilled in application [prayukti], his ability to extend a rule [atideśa] is praise-worthy.

⁵² *atra cikīrṣite dharmasāstre vartamānānām dvādaśānām adhyāyānām ye pratipādyā arthāḥ ye ca nītiśāstroktā rājadharmāḥ te sarve ’py’asmin bhūpatāv’ upalabhyante |*
 Mādhava, *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*, 2.

He has untrammelled authority in matters that arise; he removes the obstacles hindering the good. He alone is lord, sovereign.

He is a properly credentialed ritual performer[*adhikāravān*]; his ability is manifest. He is able to avoid defeating arguments [*bādha*] completely and is a master of simultaneous offerings [*tantra*].

His Majesty Bukka, protector of the earth, he, whose deeds and discussions are Vedic, is forever vigilant.

His Majesty Bukka is ever attentive, his performance of entailed rituals [*prasaṅga*] conforms to the Vedas.

The left-hand column is a line-by-line translation of the verse according to the discourses on governance (*nīti-śāstra*) whereas the right-hand column is a line-by-line translation of the verse according to the valences of the same words in the discourse on Vedic ritual (*Mīmāṃsā-śāstra*). This text also refers to the discourse on Vedic ritual as the ritual of dharma (*Dharmaśāstra*), because Mīmāṃsā posits that the transcendental end of the performance of Vedic ritual is the generation of *dharma*. The terms I have noted in parentheses constitute, in order, the topics of the twelve chapters of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*. Although only eleven such terms are mentioned parenthetically, one of them, extension [*atideśa*] forms the topic of two successive chapters, the first on general extension [*sāmānyata atideśaḥ*] and the second on particular types of extension [*viśeṣata atideśaḥ*]. Thus, the author not only praises the king's comprehensive knowledge of the Mīmāṃsā topics, but also uses this occasion to furnish us with a table of contents of sorts.

The auto-commentary on the verse draws out the *nītiśāstra* meanings with greater elaboration. I do not analyze the auto-commentary on this verse in its entirety, but rather focus on the author's explication of the second hemistich:

*nityaspūrty'adhikāravān gatasadābādhaḥ svatantrēśvaro
jāgarti śrutimatprasaṅgacaritaḥ śrībukkanakṣmāpatiḥ ||*

Translation:

He has untrammelled authority in matters that arise; he removes the obstacles hindering the good. He alone is lord, sovereign. His Majesty Bukka, protector of the earth, whose deeds and discussions are Vedic, is forever vigilant.

The author elaborates on this hemistich in his auto-commentary:

His genius, which guides him with regard to what should and should not be done, is ever the sovereign prerogative of this king, for this genius never leads him astray. He removes the impediments of the wise, i.e. of ascetics. Since the rulers of other kingdoms are dependent upon him, they are commanded by another, and he alone is independent. He is the lord. He is the incarnation-as-enjoyer (*bhoktrī*) of the sage Vidyātīrtha, who is the lord of the universe. In his court, the discussion among the scholars is Vedic, since it concerns the meaning of the Vedas. And his deeds are consistently Vedic, since they consist of the contemplation of the secret meaning of the Vedas. It is for this reason that he is said to be possessed of Vedic deeds and discourse. In this way, His Majesty Bukka, is forever vigilant, internally in the meditation on the highest lord, and externally in protecting his subjects. Just as he is deft in all matters of governance, conciliation and conflict and the like, so he, being an incarnation of the

omniscient one, is expert on all the topics of *dharma*, consisting of the discourses on proof and the like. Those matters are demonstrated below.⁵³

As I have stated in introducing this excerpt, this depiction of the idealized king is the inverse of the representation of kingship in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. First, let me note the axes along which this inversion occurs. These are the king's sovereignty (*svatantratva*), his status as enjoyer (*bhoktrtva*), as the master of the royal court, as a fully cultivated self, motivated by both *dharma* and *mokṣa*.

In all these respects, the characterization of Bukka undergoes a structural inversion in the characterization of the kings of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* (Sudhanvan and Amaruka). Bukka, as can be expected of a self-styled universal monarch, is sovereign over his vassals, “who are dependent, insofar as being commanded by another.” Bukka, independent of any external rule, is alone sovereign. Recall that in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, neither of the kings was sovereign, since they were trapped in the snare of desire and experience. Śaṅkara alone, being a liberated self, is considered sovereign. In the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*'s formulation of ideal kingship, Bukka is a lord (*īśvara*), a word derived from the verbal root *īś* (to possess, to be master of) that connotes his sovereignty.

Further, he is identified with Vidyātīrtha (the famed guru of the order of Advaita Vedāntin monks at Śrīgeri) who is called the “lord of the universe” (*jagadīśvara*). Nevertheless,

⁵³ *idaṃ kartavyam idaṃ na ity'evaṃ kāryākārya-viṣaya sphūrtis tasyām adhikāro 'sya rājño nityaḥ sarvatrapratihata-buddhivāt | gato nivāritaḥ satām tapasvinām ābādho vighno yenāsau gata-sadā-bādhaḥ | deśantarādhipatīnām rājñām etad adhīnatvenāparapreṣyatvād ayaṃ svatantraḥ | jagad-īśvarasya vidyā-tīrthamuner bhoga-mūrtitvena ayam īśvaraḥ | yasya sabhāyām goṣṭhi-rūpaḥ prasaṅgo vedārtha-viṣayatvena śrutimān | yadīyaṃ caritam api nirantaram vedoktarasyārthadhyānarūpatvena śrutimad bhavati so 'yaṃ śrutimat-prasaṅga-caritaḥ | evamvidho bukka-bhūpatir antaḥ parameśvaradhyāne bahiḥ prajāpālāne ca nityaṃ jāgarti | yathā nītiśāstrokteṣu sāmabhedādiṣv'ayaṃ kuśala, tathā sarvajñāvatāratvād dharmasāstrokteṣu pramāṇādiprasaṅgānteṣv'adhyāyārtheṣu kuśalaḥ | te cādhyāyārthā upariṣṭāt pradarśyante | Mādhyama, 2.*

Bukka is not the same person as Vidyātirtha; rather he is an incarnation of Vidyātirtha, to be precise, he has assumed the enjoyer-form (*bhogamūrti*) of Vidyātirtha. The very language of *bhoga* (enjoyment or experience) that is used to denigrate kingship in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* is used to praise Bukka here. Whereas Vidyātirtha is a manifestation of *brahman* (the ultimate principle of reality revealed by the Upaniṣads), Bukka is the procreative, active instantiation of that very same principle. Further, Bukka is sovereign and perfect because his conduct and his contemplative exercises cleave to the Vedic notions of the good. In his conduct, he is distinguished in convening the public square, his court, where intellectuals and religious leaders can discuss the meaning of the Vedas in extraordinary detail. Thus, he sponsors the promulgation of the Vedas.

Recall that in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, Śaṅkara is able to frustrate the king's desire to convene precisely such a court where matters of transcendental import would be debated and discussed by the finest philosophers and theologians of the kingdom. Śaṅkara does not merely decline to participate in such a forum, he calls into question the very premise for such a concentration and enactment of royal power. He censures the king for distracting all those intellectuals and philosophers from their duties, and for wasting royal resources that could be diverted to more worthy ends in what is ultimately nothing more than a display of royal power.

Further, Bukka's conduct, "insofar as it takes the form of meditation on the meaning of the secret of the Veda" (*yadīyam caritam api nirantaram vedokta-rahasyārtha-dhyāna-rūpatvena śrutimad bhavati*), is Vedic. Therefore, besides being the foremost patron of Vedic discussion, Bukka is absorbed in the secret meaning of the Vedas, a cryptic description but undeniably laudatory. Bukka manages to cultivate a double-self, which can attend to the dual ends of the Veda: his public self, directed toward *dharma*, and his internal self, directed toward

brahman. Thus, just as in the Vedic commentaries, the dual transcendent ends of the Veda (*dharma* and *brahma*) are synthesized in the very body of the king, which is to say, in the body politic.

Finally, Bukka is praised as an incarnation of the omniscient Śiva; his comprehensive knowledge of *dharma* (as explicated in the Mīmāṃsāsūtra of Jaimini) makes him the ideal patron. The king's claim to omniscience is similarly inverted in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, just as we might expect: it is Śaṅkara who, in the final canto of the work, ascends to the throne of omniscience.⁵⁴ The next verse of the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālāvistara* clarifies the nature of Bukka's transcendence and omniscience. In this slightly convoluted configuration, Bukka is constituted in relation to the two axes of transcendence, Śiva (the axis of power) and *brahman* (the axis of knowledge), mediated by the insertion of Vidyātīrtha. Thus, as the auto-commentary explains, Bukka has assumed one of Śiva's five forms, particularly suited to uphold creation. On the other hand, Bukka is a manifestation of the ultimate reality of Vedānta discourse, *brahman*. In this regard, he is equivalent to Vidyātīrtha, the former guru of Śṛṅgeri monastery, who was also a manifestation of this ultimate reality. These myriad transcendent forces conspire in the person of the king to render him perfect in the two modes prized by the Veda: he is the perfect ruler, enacting *dharma* on earth, and he is omniscient, complete in his knowledge of the secret meaning of the Vedānta. In other words, he is a liberated self.

⁵⁴ Thus, having reduced the goddess to silence, the noble one [Śaṅkara] rejoiced upon ascending to the seat of omniscience. He was honored by the wise, by the goddess of Speech, much like Yājñavalkya was by Gārgi and those headed by Kahola.

*itthaṃ niruttara-padāṃ sa vidhāya devīm
sarvajña-pīṭhaṃ adhiruḥya nananda sabhyaḥ |
saṃmānito bhavad asau vibudhaiś ca vāṅyā
gārgyā kahol-amukharair iva yājñavalkyaḥ ||
Vidyāranya, Śaṅkaradigvijaya, 627.*

*yadbrahma pratipādyate praguṇayat tatpañcamūrtiprathāṃ
 tattrāyaṃ sthitimūrtim ākalayati śrībukkaṇakṣmāpatiḥ
 vidyātīrthamunis tadātmani lasanmūrtistvanugrāhikā
 tenāsya svaguṇair akhaṇḍitapadaṃ sārvañṇyam udyotate ||*

The ultimate reality [brahman], which manifests the fame of his [Śiva's] five forms, is demonstrated therein [in the Śaiva scriptures], with regard to which, this king, His Majesty Bukkaṇa, assumes the form of preserver. Since the sage Vidyātīrtha appears in that form, it supports the universe. Thus, his [the king Bukka's] omniscience is expressed completely, with his virtues.

Auto-commentary:

That same highest *brahman*, which is known from the Upaniṣads, is shown to clarify or make manifest, in the Śaiva scriptures, the fame or dissemination of the five forms [of Śiva], namely, *īśāna*, *tatpuruṣa*, *aghora*, *vāmadeva*, and *sadyojāta*, that are assumed in order to accomplish the five effects: creation, maintenance, destruction, suppression, and grace. And with regard to those forms, this earth-protector (Bukka) bears the form of maintenance. Since the sage Vidyātīrtha appears in the essence of this form, it is said to favor the entire universe. Since this monarch is the highest *brahman* described in the Vedānta, and since he is the incarnation of Śiva's form of stability as stated in the Āgamas, and since the sage Vidyātīrtha manifests as the essence of that form, so this king is omniscient and further, the protector of all subjects, from the learned to women. This much is indisputably true.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ *sarvāsūpaniṣatsu praṭīyamānaṃ yatparaṃ brahma tadeva śaivāgameṣu sṛṣṭi-sthiti-saṃhāra-nirodhanānugraha-lakṣaṇa-pañcakṛtya-siddhy-artham īśāna-tatpuruṣāghora-vāmadeva-sadyojāta-lakṣaṇānāṃ pañcānāṃ mūrtīnāṃ prathāṃ prasiddhiṃ vistāraṃ vā praguṇayati prakāṅkarotīti pratipādyate | tatra tāsu mūrtiṣv 'ayaṃ bhūpālaḥ sthiti-mūrtiṃ dhatte | tasyā mūrter ātmani lasan vidyā-tīrtha-muniḥ kṛtsnasya jagato 'nugrāhikā mūrtirity 'ucyate | yasmād ayaṃ bhūpo vedāntoktaṃ paraṃ brahma yasmāc cāgamoktā maheśvarasya sthiti-mūrtiḥ yasmāc ca śrī-vidyā-tīrtha-*

Anxieties of Disorder

How are we to explain the profound swing of the pendulum from the ideal of kingship detailed in the early (latter half of the 14th century) *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā* to the subtle but clear undermining of the institution in the late *Śāṅkaradigvijaya*, texts that are from the same corpus produced by partisans of the Śṛṅgeri monastery? There are no clear answers here, but I present a case, in the following section, to argue that the changed political circumstances in Karnataka, from the fourteenth- to the seventeenth-century, could be a plausible explanation for the shift in the monastery's attitude toward kingship. To be clear, as I have stated above, I do not think that the *Śāṅkaradigvijaya* is an argument for the king to cede all power to the maṭha; after all, worldly power, according to the *Śāṅkaradigvijaya*, can have deleterious effects on the pursuit of liberation: it may even cause a liberated self to be alienated from itself. Rather, the *Śāṅkaradigvijaya* is a strenuous assertion of the privileges and prerogatives of the monastic institution. It argues for the privilege of the monastery to secure its own interests, for which the institution can point to Vedic sanction.

Thus, the *Śāṅkaradigvijaya* draws a distinction between power and authority; the monastery, and its leaders, should eschew the accretion of power, particularly military power, which might result in violence. But the monastery must assert its authority to encompass kingship, particularly in matters of transcendent import. Thus the kingdom must, where the prerogatives and privileges of the monastery are threatened, intervene on the monastery's behalf. A kingdom that abjures this sacred charge becomes a political entity bereft of any transcendental

munis tadātmani saṃnidhāya prakāśate tasmāt sarvajñatvam asya rājña utkarṣeṇāvidvad-aṅganā-gopālam avivādena pratibhāśate |
Mādhava, *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*, 3.

authority or legitimacy. In this section, I argue that the effective disintegration of the power and the authority – in that order – of the Vijayanagara empire in the aftermath of the Battle of Talikota (1565) and the shift to a system of regional governance by the successor Nāyaka states inaugurated a period of some instability for Śṛṅgeri, during which time the monastery struggled to secure its assets and prerogatives (such as the right to extract revenue). The Nāyaka state of Ikkeri did, eventually, step into the breach and guarantee the security of the monastery, but the events of the intervening episode may have engendered the anxiety about the reliability of royal authority that we find evinced in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*.

If we assume, on Bader’s recommendation, that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* was composed, at the earliest, during the latter half of the seventeenth century or even during the eighteenth century,⁵⁶ then we must ask ourselves what transpired in the seventeenth century that would have provided the impetus for the assertion of the monastery’s authority over the power of kingship. We have to go back to before 1565, when the Battle of Talikota resulted in the slow-motion demise of the Vijayanagara empire.⁵⁷ The defeat of the Vijayanagara forces meant, at the very least, the destruction of Vijayanagara as the old center of imperial power. The capital was moved to Penukonda in the aftermath of the war, and the Aravidu rulers kept the Vijayanagara empire, even if only as an idea, alive for another century. Concurrently, the defeat was a setback for the imperial order that the capital city symbolized. Whereas, prior to 1565, Śṛṅgeri’s assets and income were guaranteed by the kings of the Vijayanagara empire,⁵⁸ after the Battle of Talikota, it

⁵⁶ Jonathan Bader, *Conquest of the Four Quarters* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2000). Pp 55 – 56.

⁵⁷ For more detail on the “fall” of the capital city of Vijayanagara, see Mark T. Lycett and Kathleen D. Morrison, “The ‘Fall’ of Vijayanagara Reconsidered: Political Destruction and Historical Construction in South Indian History,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 56, no. 3 (2013): 433–70.

⁵⁸ This, notwithstanding the cooling of patronage (in the early 16th century) from the Vijayanagara kings of the Tuluva lineage, whose personal adherence to Vaiṣṇava groups saw a revision in the official patronage of the

is not quite clear whether the issue the monastery's security was attended to, in any serious way, by the displaced Vijayanagara rulers. As I show, the Nāyakas of Ikkeri, whose kingdom encompassed the monastery, stepped in as guarantors of the monastery's security in the 1620's, at the same time that they publicly, finally, sloughed off the sovereign imprimatur of Vijayanagara. In this section, I show that this period of instability, between 1565 and 1623, which ended with the Ikkeri Nāyakas asserting their sovereignty, informed the anxieties regarding the authority of kingship evinced in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*.

The Battle of Talikota ushered in a sort of interregnum, extending, in the case of the Ikkeri Nāyakas, to around 1623, during which time the successor Nāyaka states maintained their vassalage to the Vijayanagara kings, even as they were functionally independent of any control by the new center at Penukonda.⁵⁹ While there is some disagreement about the relationship between the Nāyaka states and the old center of Vijayanagara,⁶⁰ it is generally agreed that these regional kingdoms functioned more or less independently, but were obligated to the center by fiscal, military, and ritual relations.

The most significant regional kingdoms under the Vijayanagara imperium were Madurai, Tanjavur, Gingee, Mysore and Keladi-Ikkeri. The Keladi-Ikkeri Nāyakas were, like many a ruling house of medieval South India, a family of agriculturalists that rose to local prominence and became, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, an important administrative organ of the Vijayanagara empire in Western Karnataka. They enter the inscriptional record (with any

kingdom to various Vaiṣṇava groups. This is well documented in Ajay Rao, *Refiguring the Rāmāyaṇa as Theology: A History of Reception in Premodern India* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁵⁹ White, "Beyond Empire: Vijayanagara Imperialism and the Emergence of the Keladi-Ikkeri Nayaka State, 1499 - 1763 C.E." Pp 92 – 93

⁶⁰ For more, see, Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*; Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India, 1500 - 1650.*; Karashima, *A Concordance of Nāyakas: The Vijayanagara Inscriptions in South India*; Stein, *Vijayanagara*.

appreciable frequency) at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the second ruler in the Keladi-Ikkeri lineage, Sadashiva Nāyaka, acquired a number of important regions on the Karnataka coast for military services rendered to Vijayanagara.⁶¹

The Ikkeri Nāyakas continued to flourish as prominent vassals of Vijayanagara, and even after the fall of the capital in 1565 they continued to affirm, in inscriptions, their vassalage to the former empire. It was only in 1623 that Venkatappa Nāyaka asserted the independence of Ikkeri from Vijayanagara.

One of the more arresting themes that emerges from the study of the inscriptions of the early seventeenth century is that the monastery at Śṛṅgeri represented itself in terms strikingly similar to those used by the Nāyakas of Ikkeri. Indeed, one may be forgiven for thinking that these were two parallel, autonomous institutions, responsible for governing their special domains, and with similar conceptions of their own status. The inscriptions adduced below attest to this parallelism. The monarchy and the maṭha, beyond being characterized in the language of universal dominion and triumph, engaged in the same donative practices to constitute and consolidate their authority. First, to attend to the rhetoric common to the representations of monastery and monarchy, notice, in this inscription from 1641, the use of the very same terms to praise the Nāyaka king, Veṅkata, as were used in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* to praise the hegemony of Śaṅkara:

A diamond elephant-goad to the lusty elephants, the group of the bounding
Tauluva rājas; a sun to disperse the thick darkness, the numberless Kirātas;
a boundary mountain to stop the great ocean of the Mlêchhas ever seeking

⁶¹ White, "Beyond Empire: Vijayanagara Imperialism and the Emergence of the Keladi-Ikkeri Nayaka State, 1499 - 1763 C.E." Pg. 91

to overflow the south in various expeditions; of unequalled valor in arms was the king Veṅkaṭa.⁶²

Encomia of this type may be dismissed on the grounds that the *prāśasti* genre had always been used in the praise of kingship, and the universal conquest (*digvijaya*) of even regional kings, was ever described thus. Let us, instead, look to the Nāyaka's structural other, the guru of Śṛṅgeri maṭha. The guru of Śṛṅgeri is praised in royal terms, transposed to a religious domain. For instance, an inscription from 1621 states that at the time, “Abhinava-Narasimha-Bhārati-Svāmi of Śṛṅgeri was ruling his *yoga* throne.”⁶³ An inscription from 1758 describes “the time when Narasimha-Bhārati-Voḍeyar was in the presence of the god Vidyāśāṅkara, ruling the empire of *yoga*.”⁶⁴ Here, we have the converse of the previous case: the guru's dominion over a religious or spiritual domain is described using the terms of royal dominion, his seat is the throne of *yoga*, and his dominion is the “empire of *yoga*.”

This effect is intensified in the second of the citations, which gives the guru the title *voḍeyar*, a variation on the term *odeyar*, which, as Stein explains, was something like a regional chieftain or viceroy, though by the time of this inscription “Wodeyar” was the proper name of a ruling clan of the upper Kaveri.⁶⁵ More interesting still is the use of the epithet “establisher of the pure Vaidikādvaita-siddhānta,” which was used to describe both the Nayakas of Ikkeri (such as

⁶² Mysore (India: State). and Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica*. Pg. 3

⁶³ Rice, *Epigraphica Carnatica*. Pg 93

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Stein, *Vijayanagara*. Pp 81 – 82: “During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the plain, or maidan, of Southern Karnataka was nominally under an agent of the Vijayanagara kings whose headquarters was the fortress at Srirangapatman [sic] in the upper Kaveri. This agent, often dignified by historians with the title of ‘viceroy’, was responsible for collecting tribute from surrounding chiefs, usually calling themselves *odeyar*... Of course, by the time the titled “Voḍeyar” is used in the inscription above, the Wodeyars constituted a ruling house of the upper Kaveri, one that, in the manner of the Nāyakas, had eluded central control by the mid-1500s.

Kelāḍi Veṅkaṭappa-Nāyaka and Sadāśiva-Rāya-Nāyaka, among others)⁶⁶ and the guru of Śṛṅgeri, Sacchidānanda-Bhārati-Svāmi, who is described as “the establisher of the pure Vaidikādvaita-siddhānta, the establisher of the six darśanas, disciple of the succession of gurus descended from the holy feet of Śankarāchāryya.” The “vaidikādvaita-siddhānta” of the inscriptions is the conclusive position (*siddhānta*) of Vedic (*vaidika*) non-dual (*advaita*) Vedānta. Thus, the leaders of these two institutions, the kingdom of Ikkeri and the Śṛṅgeri monastery, in their self-representation, saw themselves as equals, but concerned with the management of parallel domains.

Similarly, the two institutions were indistinguishable in their use of the gift to constitute and replicate their authority. Each gift, with its origin recorded in the inscriptional record, rehearses the illustrious lineage and personal history of the donor and the institution with which he (or she) is affiliated. Let us consider the following inscription from 1621, from the period that concerns this analysis:

At the time when Abhinava-Narasimha-Bhārati-svāmi of Śṛṅgeri was ruling his own *yoga* throne, the svāmi’s chief beloved disciple, Puṭṭappaiya, son of Gangarasaiya of Biḷige, of the Viśvāmitra-gotra, Bodhāyana-sūtra and Yajuś-śākha, repaired the temple of the god Mallikārjuna – and for the service of that god, bought for the maṭha from the shareholders, for 300 varaha, property yielding 45 varaha at a time (*kāla vondakke*) and granted it.

Details of how these 45 varaha are to be expended for the service of the god: For one Brahman to perform the *ekādaśa Rudrābhiśeka*, 9 varaha; for one Brahman to bring 11 pots daily of water from the Tungabhadra, 6 varaha; for *tāmbūla* – 2 haṇa; for 9 perfumes of sandal and frankincense, 1

⁶⁶ Rice, *Epigraphica Carnatica*. Pp 90 – 94.

honnu; for wicks and oil for āraṭi, 1 varaha; for the *pañchāmrita* on Monday, 6 varaha; for the Kārtika pūje, 1 varaha; for evening worship, 9 varaha; for one Brahman to recite the thousand names and offer flowers, 4 varaha; for the worship of the Dhanur-māsa, ½ varaha; for Śivarātri, ½ varaha; for cakes by measure, 2 measure; for 2 perpetual lights, 5 varaha. Altogether, 45 varaha, which he made over, with a petition that the Śṛingeri svāmi's men would maintain it in all its parts.

This very typical inscription from 1621, inscribed during the rule of Keladi-Ikkeri Nāyaka Venkaṭappa records the endowment by a disciple of the guru of Śṛingeri, Abhinava Narasiṃha Bhārati svāmī, of a piece of land that would yield 45 varahas over a certain span of time, unspecified in the record. The yield, 45 varahas, would be spent in maintaining the temple of Mallikāṛjuna, and, according to the breakdown of expenses, would ensure the employment of a number of Brahmans in the tasks required to observe all the rituals and duties associated with the temple.

The inscription notes both the originator, even if symbolic, of the donation, the guru of Śṛingeri, and the intermediary, Puṭṭappaiya, responsible for the acquisition and disbursal of the funds. The intermediary's ritual and familial credentials qualify him as a model candidate for this task. He is the son of Gangarasaiya of Biḷige, a Brahman of the Viśvāmitra clan who belongs to the Yajur Veda and follows the Bodhāyana ritual manuals for domestic and Vedic rituals. This model of an intermediary agent acting on behalf of a primary agent to redistribute resources mirrors the paradigm of royal donation. Thus, every act in this process, from the acquisition of the land to the rituals and duties associated with the maintenance of the temple, re-inscribes the Śṛingeri guru's sovereignty. Each instance of donation reifies his abstract authority and marks people, places, and things with the traces of his power.

The functional and rhetorical symmetry of the two institutions, the maṭha and the monarchy, may lead one to think that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*'s diffidence in kingship is reflective of the rivalry between them. This may well have been the informing drive in the composition of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*; it is impossible to rule out this interpretation, given the general dearth of supporting evidence we possess. Nevertheless, based on the evidence we *do* possess, I argue that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*'s ambivalence toward kingship reflects an anxiety about the reliability of the rulers of Karnataka, in the aftermath of the Battle of Talikota, in ensuring the fiscal and material security of the monastery.

There are two episodes that are mentioned in the inscriptional record that lead me to this conclusion. Both demonstrate the deleterious effects of political instability upon the monastery.

The first episode, which occurred at some time before 1621, is described in an inscription issued on behalf of the guru of Śṛṅgeri, from 1652. Given the fact that this inscription was issued by the maṭha and *not* the Keladi-Ikkeri Nāyaka, we should be persuaded of the veracity of any account valorizing the actions of the Ikkeri king, Keladi Sivappa-Nāyaka. First, the inscription describes the credentials of the issuer of this particular donation, the guru of Śṛingapura, Sacchidānanda Bharatī svāmī:

At the time of the moon's eclipse, the chief āchāryya of the paramahaṃsa sannyāsis, who had seen to the farthest point of grammar and logic, devoted to *yama niyama* and the other eight branches of yoga, the establisher of the pure Vaidikādvaita-siddhānta, the establisher of the six darśanas, disciple of the succession of the gurus descended from the holy feet of Śaṅkarācchāryya and initiated by the lotus hands of Abhinava-Narasimha-Bhārati-svāmī, -- Sachchidānanda-Bhārati-svāmī of Śṛingapura, gave to all the learned Brahmans of Vidyāraṇyapura,

belonging to the various gotras, sūtras and śākhās, a copper śāsana of a rent-free agrahāra as follows...⁶⁷

There are a number of points of interest disclosed in this paragraph. First, the passage does not make perfectly clear the relation between Sachchidānanda Bhārati svāmī and Abhinava Narasiṃha Bhārati svāmī, other than to note that Sachchidānanda Bhārati is the guru of Śringapura and to indicate that he is subordinate to Abhinava Narasiṃha Bhārati. Nevertheless, Sachchidānanda is accorded the honorific virtues typically reserved for the guru of the Śrīgeri monastery. It is possible that Sachchidānanda is the heir-designate to the office of guru of the matha, and Abhinava Narasiṃha Bhārati is the outgoing guru. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in this inscription, unlike older inscriptions issued by the matha, Śaṅkara is identified as the founder of the order. This does not prove that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* must have been composed by this time, but it certainly shows that the myth of the founding, elaborated upon in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* was already in circulation by 1652. Thus, the gurus of the order are quite explicitly connected in a lineage with Śaṅkara quite explicitly. Further, the Sachchidānanda is lauded as “the establisher of the pure Vaidikādvaita-siddhānta.” As I have noted above, this epithet was used, indeed in this very inscription, to describe Keladi Sivappa Nāyaka. Thus, the inscription expresses the pivotal role of political power in sustaining the ideological program of the matha.

Next, the inscription provides a brief history of the monastery, an account that hews closely to the revisionist history of the founding of the matha that we find also in the mid-seventeenth century Telugu narrative *Rāyavācakamu*. In the *Rāyavācakamu*, the founding of the

⁶⁷ Rice. Pg 95

Vijayanagara empire is ascribed to the inspired vision of fourteenth century the Śṛṅgeri guru Vidyāraṇya.⁶⁸ Once again, the important aspect of this excerpt, for our analysis, is that, by appealing to the intertwined histories of Vijayanagara and Śṛṅgeri, it demonstrates the interdependence of the two institutions.

Formerly, the (original) guru of our line, author of the Veda-bhāshya, Vidyāraṇya-śrīpāda, out of charity to the world, through the boon obtained by virtue of his penance from (the god) Vīrūpāksha dwelling on the banks of the Pampā, having founded Vidyānagara, for the protection of cows, gods and Brahmans performed the coronation anointing of Harihara-mahārāya.⁶⁹

According to this myth of origin, not only was the founding guru of Śṛṅgeri, Vidyāraṇya, the founder of Vijayanagara (the inscription refers to it as Vidyānagara, to emphasize the connection to Vidyāraṇya), but the city and empire were founded with the express purpose of instantiating Vedic order. First of all, before founding the city, Vidyāraṇya composed the Vedic commentaries (“Veda-bhāshya”), the very text that forms the subject-matter of this dissertation. Second, the city was founded “for the protection of cows, gods and Brahmans,” an expressly Vedic mission. Finally, Vidyāraṇya himself anointed the inaugural king of the empire; in other words, he conferred the ritual status that a king of such a kingdom would require in order to rule. In locating the origin of Vijayanagara kingship in Vidyāraṇya, the inscription stresses the dharmic root of all governance and inserts the monastery as the basis for *dharmic* rule.

⁶⁸ For a translation and analysis of the *Rāyavācakamu*, see Wagoner, *Tidings of the King: A Translation and Ethnohistorical Analysis of the Rāyavācakamu*.

⁶⁹ Rice, *Epigraphica Carnatica*. Pg 95.

Vidyāraṇya was responsible for the *founding* of Vijayanagara, but Harihara, the first king of Vijayanagara, reciprocated this magnanimous act by “protecting the Karnāṭaka kingdom in peace and wisdom” and entreating the guru of the monastery to expand the scope of monastic power.

This is described in the next passage:

After this, at the time when the rājādhirāja rāja-parameśvara, vīra-pratāpa Harihara-mahārāya, a sun to the waterlilies of the race of hostile kings, was **protecting the Karnāṭaka kingdom in peace and wisdom**, he made petition at the feet of Vidyāraṇya-śrīpāda, **representing that in Śringapura there must be a maṭha and agrahāra**, for the worship of the gods Mallikāṛjuna, Vidyāśankarasvāmi and Śāradā-amma in the maṭha. And for the performance of the religious duties of the vedas and śāstras, he set apart certain landed property, established the agrahāras of Śringapura and Vidyāraṇyapura, and, forming 250 shares, made them over to the feet of Vidyāraṇya-Bhārati-svāmi.⁷⁰

With this passage, the inscription establishes one of the most important functions of kingship: to provide for the proliferation of the Vedic religion through the patronage of ritual, worship and scholarship. Harihara’s efforts are immortalized here in order to valorize this dimension of kingship. The inscription notes with approbation the material support he provided to the maṭha to ensure its continued efflorescence.

The next passage of the inscription describes the inverse of the aforementioned relationship between monarchy and maṭha. It recounts a distressing period when those lands that Harihara had granted to the monastery were expropriated by “those common people,” who thus expropriated important sources of revenue for the monastery and thereby, even if indirectly,

⁷⁰ Ibid, 96.

prevented the appropriate ritual, worship and scholarly activities that constituted the mission of the maṭha. Even though this passage lauds the efforts of Sivappa Nāyaka, who remedied the transgressions by the common people, it implicitly calls attention to the lack of political oversight and security, the sole duty of kingship, that resulted in such a catastrophe.

In course of time the whole of that [bequest] having become dispersed and the common people (*prajādharmadavarū*) themselves being in possession, when the Yaḍava-Murāri, Kōṭe-kolāhala, establisher of the pure Vaidikādvaita-siddhānta, protector of cows, gods and Brahman, devoted to faith in Śiva and the guru, Keladi Sadāśiva-Nāyaka's great-grandson, Keladi Sivappa-Nāyaka, was protecting Araga, Gutti, Bārakur, Magalūr and other places, a kingdom extending to the Western Ocean, ... and was preserving the religious establishment of Srīngapura, in the lands formerly granted by the king for the maṭha, agrahāra and temples, these common people, having made areca plantations, gained huge profits, and mortgaged and sold them to one another, without as was due making over the money to the maṭha, agrahāra and temples, Sivappa-Nāyaka, inquiring into the whole matter, put them down, and the lands the profit of which they had been enjoying he made over to us, when we visited Bidurūr, in the presence of Chandramauleśvara, in order that the religious duties of the maṭha, agrahāra, temples and other (institutions) might be carried on as long as the sun and moon endure.⁷¹

This passage perfectly encapsulates the principal conundrum that the *Śāṅkaradigvijaya* confronts, namely, can an institution which lacks the capacity for exercising force, be considered sovereign? And how can it realize its sovereignty? In this case, Harihara's tax-free grants of land to the monastery had been turned into revenue streams. The maṭha had sold those lands to private

⁷¹ Ibid

individuals who were expected to pay taxes or to pay out some share of their revenue to the monastery. But prior to the rule of Keladi Sivappa Nāyaka (1645 – 1660), those private individuals sold those lands “without as was due making over the money to the maṭha.”

The monastery had no means of enforcing its arrangements. It had to depend upon the kings of Vijayanagara and, after the defeat of Vijayanagara at the Battle of Talikota, on the kings of Keladi-Ikkeri to defend its interests and to enforce its prerogatives. Thus, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* asserts its hegemony over kingship not through an appeal to power but through its appeal to authority. As the guarantors of the ultimate human values, *dharma* and *mokṣa*, the maṭha ought to be able to compel a king to act on its behalf. Should a king, or a polity, do this reliably, then he, or it, earns the right to be called, “establisher of the pure Vaidikādvaita-siddhānta,” as Sivappa Nāyaka is, in this instance. This inscription demonstrates that the assertion of this obligation of kingship to uphold *dharma* (i.e., to secure the financial interests of the maṭha) masks an anxiety about the implications of an unreliable polity. There are other instances of the king intervening to ensure the proper flow of revenue to the maṭha’s coffers.⁷²

The other episode that may give us some indication of the effects of the instability that the Battle of Talikota triggered, particularly for an institution like Śṛṅgeri maṭha, comes from an inscription from 1621 that I have discussed above. The inscription details the donations made by Puṭṭappaiya, the disciple of the guru Abhinava Narasiṃha Bhārati svāmī, to repair the temple of Mallikārjuna and to devote a steady stream of resources for its upkeep. That inscription begins with the following words:

⁷² “Delinquency in the payment of taxes was taken serious notice of by the rulers. This may be seen from the fact that Śivappa Nāyaka enquired of his aḷiya (son-in-law) Keṅcaṅṅa in writing, how he had received information that some tenants of the Śṛṅgeri maṭha in the Mangaḷūru śīme were ‘playing mischief’ without making due payments and ordered him to send for them and see the due amount was paid.” K.D. Swaminathan, *The Nāyakas of Ikkēri* (Madras: P. Varadachary and Co., 1957). Pg 176. For more instances, see also A.K. Shastry, *The Records of the Śṛṅgeri Dharmasaṃsthāna* (Śṛṅgeri: Śṛṅgeri Maṭha, 2009). Pp 103, 105, 109.

Keladi Sadāśīva-Nāyaka's grandson Venkaṭappa Nāyaka having re-established Śṛingeri (*punar-pratishtheyam māḍi*) at the time when Abhinava Narasiṃha Bhārati svāmi was ruling his own *yoga* throne.⁷³

The inscription states that, already in 1621 -- which is to say, a few years before the Keladi-Ikkeri Nāyakas would finally proclaim their sovereignty independent of the Vijayanagara state (or what remained of it) – Venkaṭappa Nāyaka had “re-established Śṛingeri.” The reference is oblique, and there are few clues in the inscriptional record to reconstruct the acts of Venkaṭappa Nāyaka that led to this great honor. A. K. Shastry, a modern partisan of the maṭha, attributes the conferral of this title to the many grants that the king made to Śṛingeri.⁷⁴ There is no doubt that the guru of the maṭha recognized Venkaṭappa Nāyaka for three reasons. First, for ensuring the fiscal and material security of the monastery; second, for making additional grants of land and cash to bolster the monastery's position; and third, for guaranteeing the prerogatives and privileges of the monastery against the assertions of other regional monasteries.⁷⁵

In the fore-going analysis of the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*'s representation of kingship, I have offered two possible explanations for the poem's subtle undermining of the office of the monarch. The first, extrapolated from the analysis of Rao et al on the model of Nāyaka kingship, argues that the monastery's claims to transcendental authority may have been challenged by this new paradigm of royal authority, which was predicated on the king as enjoyer (*bhoktr*). The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, on this view, ought to be interpreted as a refutation of this ascendant mode of

⁷³ Rice, *Epigraphica Carnatica*. Pg 93.

⁷⁴ Shastry, *The Records of the Śṛīngēri Dharmasamsthāna*. Pg 13

⁷⁵ The rivalry with the Kuḍalī maṭha seems to have been particularly contentious. For more on this, see Clark, *The Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs: The Integration of Ascetic Lineages into an Order*. Pp 133 - 142.

kingship. First of all, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* argues that *bhoga* can never be transcendental, since it results in the erasure of the true sovereignty of the subject. Second, only non-dual (advaita) Vedānta promises the full realization of the self, characterizing the state of liberation as complete autonomy. Nevertheless, the guru as sovereign finds himself in a paradoxical bind, which I have discussed in chapter two. Thus, though the liberated self alone is truly sovereign, action is difficult to adopt, particularly the actions of kingship, war-making and love-making chief among them. The guru, as I have indicated in my earlier analysis, is particularly well suited to the two dimensions that made up monastic governmentality: re-distributing resources (pastoral care) and teaching (monastic discipline). The appropriate place of kingship, in this hierarchy, is as the executor of the will of the sovereign, Śaṅkara, and by extension, the maṭha.

The second explanation is really a variation on the first. I have shown that the political events of the latter half of the sixteenth century caused disruptions in the smooth workings of the maṭha. As inscriptions from the period demonstrate, the maṭha at Śṛṅgeri could not rely on the relevant political actors to secure and enforce their agreements, sources of revenue, and other privileges and prerogatives.⁷⁶ In other words, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* sought from the monarch affirmation of its authority alone, among its competitors. On this view, the political instability of the post-Talikota years resulted, for the maṭha, in an acute anxiety about the reliability of the institution of the monarchy to affirm the values that placed the maṭha at the very apex of the social order. Thus, the confidence that was expressed, in the fourteenth century *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*, in the *dharmic* character of Bukka as the political counterpart of the guru Vidyātirtha was no longer evident in the kings presented in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. The radical

⁷⁶ Shastry cites a letter from Ikkeri Vīrabhadra Nāyaka to Sachchidānanda Bhārati of Śṛṅgeri making clear that only the Śṛṅgeri guru is entitled to assume imperial titles and insignia. Shastry, *The Records of the Śṛṅgeri Dharmasamsthāna*. Pg. 104.

proposition of the maṭha taking over kingship, radical because it would result in the erasure of the self, was nevertheless enacted in the myth, indulged but not affirmed. Rather, the maṭha would remain hopeful that a *dharmic* king would ensure its universal hegemony.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the poem's representation of the relationship between contingent, partial royal power and transcendental, sovereign religious authority. I showed that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* takes a dim view of royal power, once again by applying to it the four-fold hierarchy of human ends. The institution is corruptible because the king must traffic in *kāma* and *bhoga* in his pursuit for power. More importantly, from the text's viewpoint, trafficking in these values can lead to a profound self-alienation, so that the king progressively loses his sense of self and is held hostage by his passions. The figure of Śaṅkara stands athwart the ineluctable progress of the model of transcendence-through-consumption (*bhoga*) that the Nāyaka rulers have embraced. Thus, the sole sovereign self capable of administering rule with complete detachment is the liberated ascetic, here Śaṅkara. But even Śaṅkara risks losing sight of his liberated self, so strong is the pull of desire.

I provide two plausible accounts for this view of kingship, itself a radical shift from the view adopted in the earlier texts of the same purported corpus. First, this shift could be construed as a caution to the theory of kingship that was being cultivated in the Nāyaka kingdoms of this period. According to that theory, enjoyment or experience (*bhoga*), beyond being the principal driving force of kingship, came to be theorized as transcendent in itself. Thus, the king, identified with divinity, could find apotheosis through enjoyment. Against this theory, the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* hammers home the doubly deleterious effects of giving over to consumption:

first, the kingdom suffers because the king is no longer interested in his *svadharma*. Second, the king's self suffers from an acute alienation, which forecloses on the possibility of liberation. In the face of the corrosive effects of an effete theory of consumption, the text preaches the sterner stuff that makes up monastic rule, which alone is *really* concerned with the ultimate welfare of the self.

The second, more speculative, explanation I provide for this subtle undermining of kingship is informed by the political events of the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century. With the Battle of Talikota, which scrambles the balance of power in Karnataka, there follows a period of almost seventy years during which the Ikkeri Nāyakas, despite ruling Western Karnataka, continue to recognize the sovereignty of the displaced rulers of the Vijayanagara empire. The inscriptional record attests to the difficulties Śringeri faced, during this period, in ensuring the endurance of its prerogatives and privileges. I argue that this period of relative instability may have engendered anxieties regarding the reliability of kingship that we find expressed in the poem. Though it is difficult to be certain of the historical events that informed the composition of the poem, there can be no doubt that the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* arrogates to itself untrammelled religious and political authority, even as it remains unsure about the constitution of power that must undergird these claims.

Conclusion

The Sense of an Ending

But a text in a scholastic tradition is often more than classical or central. To use Halbertal's term, it may be formative: that is, "one in which progress in the field is made through interpretation of the text itself. A text-centered culture that has formative texts proceed in that mode; its achievements are interpretive." Such a text is not merely important to the field...but constitutive of it.

–Georges Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*¹

The Rebirth of a Guru

In a 1998 publication titled *Yoga, Enlightenment and Perfection*, the Śrīngeri maṭha commemorated the life and teachings of Abhinava Vidyāīrtha, who reigned as guru of the maṭha from 1954 until he achieved liberation-in-death (*videha-mukti*) in 1989. It is only fitting that we should end this dissertation with a brief summary of the life of the modern (Abhinava) Vidyāīrtha, our textual corpus having begun with salutations to the legendary Vidyāīrtha. Abhinava Vidyāīrtha's life, works, and teachings, told in the words of his students, illustrate the key elements of the commentarial corpus that I have sought to draw out for explication. In a way, the life of this single supererogatory figure is a distillation of this thesis; in the progression it charts of the guru's life, it contemplates and encompasses the varieties of Vedic experience and brings a new order to this ancient tradition.

¹ Georges B. J. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2003), 100.

A guru enlivens the textual tradition. He forges a synthesis of its myriad streams, in his life, his teachings, and the lives of his subjects. In his individual and institutional incarnations, the guru fosters pastoral care for his students and subjects alike. As the institutional ruler, Abhinava Vidyātīrtha “was intent on the dissemination of the Vedas and the *śāstras*. Every year, He organised a *vidvat-sadas* (assembly of scholars) during *Śaṅkara-jayantī* and *Vināyaka-catūrtthī* and honoured the *panditas*.”² Pastoral care was similarly evinced in his deep affection and concern for his students’ spiritual welfare. As one of his students recalls, “Even while I was a *brahmacārin*, He had great affection for me. Once, during the early days of my stay in Sringeri, I went to other side of the river on a *pradoṣa* day. That night, while seated for *pūjā*, He asked, ‘Did you got to the other side?’ ‘Yes, I did,’ I answered. He said, ‘It is enough if you stay in Narasimhavana itself. I will be observing you.’ From this, I understood the concern and affection that he had for me.”³ Nor were his ministrations confined to the cloisters of the maṭha. “He used to discourse in a beautiful and lucid manner. He made people easily comprehend even profound *Vedāntic* truths. The minds of people underwent a great transformation for the better on hearing His talks; the greatness of the talks was such that the listeners became dedicated to the performance of their duties.”⁴

On the other hand, as the ruler of religious subjects, the guru bore, on his institutional body, the marks of monastic government. Thus, two years after his coronation in 1954, Abhinava Vidyātīrtha embarked upon a *digvijaya*, following in the footsteps of Śaṅkara, the founder of his order and the first emperor of the Vedic kingdom. Abhinava Vidyātīrtha toured his spiritual

² *Yoga, Enlightenment and Perfection of His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha Mahaswamigal* (Chennai: Sri Vidyatheertha Foundation, 2015), 8.

³ *Yoga, Enlightenment and Perfection of His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha Mahaswamigal*, 8.

⁴ *Yoga, Enlightenment and Perfection of His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha Mahaswamigal*, 5.

dominion for two years, teaching and tending to his flock. Furthermore, though he was a *saṃnyāsin*, he performed rituals for the sake of those subjects.⁵ He founded maṭhas, schools, hospitals, guesthouses, and temples for his subjects, and invested a whole range of public works to benefit his flock.⁶ In other words, the constituent elements of monastic governmentality that I have described and analyzed in this dissertation endure to this day. The guru as a spiritual sovereign continues to rule over a vast spiritual dominion, even if the quotidian affairs of the maṭha's governance are delegated to an army of administrators. Even as lineaments of monastic identity that could not be discerned in the original strata of texts and inscriptions have come to the fore (such as the incorporation of Śaiva tantra rituals into the guru's repertoire), the ideological underpinnings of monastic power have remained stable. Even now, as the biography of the late guru shows us, the maṭha's power springs from its singular capacity both to care for its followers and to cultivate their souls, a dual disposition that I have sought to discern in my examination of the earliest texts produced by this ancient institution.

The Rebirth of Homo Vedicus, Redux

In this dissertation, I have attempted to advance a theory of monastic power as it was idealized in a corpus of texts and inscriptions in the latter half of the fourteenth century. At that time, when the parvenu warriors of the Saṅgama clan were seeking to establish themselves in Karnataka, they sought an alliance with the maṭha at Śṛṅgeri. Inscriptions from the first forty years of Saṅgama rule evince the peculiar model of authority that undergirded these two institutions, the court and the maṭha. The Saṅgama kings drew their temporal authority from the

⁵ *Yoga, Enlightenment and Perfection of His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha Mahaswamigal*, 5.

⁶ *Yoga, Enlightenment and Perfection of His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha Mahaswamigal*, 7.

transcendent authority of the guru, who symbolized, institutionally and personally, the worldly manifestation of Vedic rule. At the same time, these first kings of Vijayanagara attached themselves to the maṭha's considerable immanent and material power, absorbing the maṭha's subjects into the bounds of the kingdom. The kings stood foremost as the guarantors of *dharma*, which is another way of saying that kingship's claims to moral authority depended upon its capacity to protect the property, privileges, and prerogatives of the maṭha.

The royal inscriptions provide only a partial picture of monastic sovereignty and power; these important records document merely the nexus between the court and the maṭha. The textual corpus, on the other hand, gives us a full-blooded account of the ideological underpinnings of monastic governmentality; in other words, it defends the view that the maṭha ought to be the sole arbiter and governor of the transcendent human values that the Vedas define and enjoin. Over the ensuing centuries, the *ought* of the texts and the *is* of the world are closer or farther apart, depending upon the contingent configuration of governance. Nevertheless, we should ascribe to this expansive initial articulation of monastic power the enduring success of the maṭha as an institution concerned with the ultimate concerns of its followers.

The maṭha's case for sovereignty and its model of power were predicated upon its monopoly (or, attempted monopoly, at the very least) over the *meaning* of the Veda. By controlling the meaning of this corpus, by controlling access to this meaning, by taking the Veda to be the ultimate and sole source of religious conduct, and by formulating the forms of life that were supported by, and which would in turn support the Veda, the maṭha built an unassailable foundation that stands today. The Vedic commentaries formed the cornerstone in this effort. They constituted a node where a variety of institutions, practices, conventions, and structures converged to reify the maṭha's transcendent authority. I have shown how these dimensions of

monastic power resulted in a totalizing vision of Vedic society, from which irreligious forces and elements had to be expunged.

To put it differently, the maṭha controlled the means of subject formation. It did so materially, using the first of the two levers of monastic governmentality: pastoral care. It redistributed and generated the resources required to support the entire range of Vedic vocations: teacher, scholar, ritual officiant, ritual householder, student, and scribe. In making sense of the Vedas, the maṭha gave meaning to the lives of its subjects. From the *śūdra* to the *saṃnyāsin*, the range of Vedic subjectivities were comprehended in this totalizing hermeneutic project. I refer to the two key figures who emerged from this sense-making enterprise with the term “Homo Vedicus,” the ritual *grhastha* (householder) and the *saṃnyāsin*, the course of whose life is determined by the Vedic injunction to which he must submit. This is the second lever of monastic governmentality: disciplinary power. The maṭha invested these select subjects with a special type of subjectivity, with the responsibility of “knowing” the meaning, the true meaning, of the Vedas. Here “knowing” entailed the assumption of particular modes of living, the point of which was to realize either of the two transcendent ends of the Veda (*dharma* and *mukti*). Thus, realizing or knowing *dharma* began with the initiation of the twice-born male into the ranks of students of the Veda and extended to the obligatory performance of ritual as long as one lived. The realization of *mukti* began with the initiation of the subject into the order of superordinate *parama-haṃsa saṃnyāsins*, and consisted of studying the Vedānta texts followed by the yogic realization of the ultimate reality.

In the kingdom of knowledge that the maṭha’s guru breathed into existence, the injunction to “know” the Veda’s true meaning brought meaning to the Vedic householder’s performance of the ritual. In the recursive play of knowledge, meaning and purposeful action, the

ritual agent's knowledge of the meaning of the Veda was crystalized in each ritual performance. The performance of the ritual in turn, produced in the ritual agent a desire to know (*vividiṣā*) the self, which, in turn, was the ultimate meaning of the Veda. Knowledge and practice, like the two strands of the double helix, encoded a path by which the subject of the maṭha could ascend the steps to the throne of omniscience, the knowledge of the self. Homo Vedicus, the maṭha's ideal subject, represented, in the trajectory of his religious progress, the highest station to which man could attain.

The particular configuration of knowledge and practice that constituted the DNA of Homo Vedicus set him apart from all other forms of cultural formation. The project of Sanskrit culture, encoded in its disciplinary texts, the *śāstras*, was to denature man in order to reform him. The project of *śāstric* culture was to discipline man's pursuit of natural ends, broadly divided into power and pleasure. Śāstric culture provided the normative grammar to guide people to discipline their natural energies and drives. Still, the *śāstras* did not dare dictate what man ought to desire; it simply taught him the proper manner and mode of pursuing those ends. Homo Vedicus represented a higher order of achievement altogether. The Veda, the *śāstra par excellence*, first taught man that there were certain ends, beyond the reach of his natural inclinations and desires, that he ought to desire to know, transcendent ends that he should assiduously strive to realize. Second, it provided him with the means to realize those ends, the highest of which was simply the knowledge of the self. In this way, the maṭha's project of religious cultivation marked an apogee of human achievement; it represented the only means for man to transcend the constitutive elements of his being. In short, the maṭha promised immortality.

In the first two chapters of the dissertation, I have detailed the workings of disciplinary power, which the monastery wielded in forming its subjects. The Vedic injunction (*vidhi*) provided the engine for the hermeneutic machine that processed raw human material into meaningful Vedic units: the householder and the *saṃnyāsin*. The two modes of life realized the two principal ends of the Vedas, *dharma* and *mukti*, and thus formed the nucleus of meaning around which the remainder of the maṭha's Vedic vision was organized. Central to both modes of life was an injunction to *know*, which, in the expanded sense of the term, entailed a set of propositions, practices, conduct, and conventions that realized that particular form of life. The life of the ritual householder was set in motion by the injunction to know the Veda, the single directive that gave shape to the distinct phases of his life. In studentship, it amounted to understanding the meaning of the Vedic text. I have demonstrated that the Vedic commentaries effectively reconstituted the text of the Veda. I have argued that this reconstituted text transformed the experience of the text itself. This new text made Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics, long an abstract system, concrete, enriching the ritual action with layers of meaning. In studentship, the subject learned the Vedic texts and their meanings. As a ritual performer, he was enjoined to perform the ritual with the full weight of its knowledge. Constant ritual practice produced a transformation of his self; through repeated practice, the ritual fell away and all that remained was knowledge. In this idealized schema of subject-formation, the ultimate goal of ritual practice was simply the knowledge of the self.

The second paradigmatic subject, the *parama-ḥaṃsa saṃnyāsin*, was similarly constituted by a single Vedic injunction: the injunction to learn the Vedānta. The injunction itself comprised a tripartite program of perfection. First, the *saṃnyāsin* learned (*śravaṇa*) the texts of the Vedānta with a teacher; often, as we have learned from inscriptional evidence and from the

biography of Abhinava Vidyāīrtha, the guru of the maṭha served as teacher. In the second stage of studentship, the *saṃnyāsin* subjected those texts to disciplined scrutiny (*manana*). Once he had attained the ultimate knowledge of Brahman, he implemented a regimen of yogic practice that was designed to transform his awareness; he sought, through this practice, to experience this knowledge of Brahman in an immediate sense. In other words, yoga was the means to transforming the propositional knowledge of the ultimate (the knowledge that the self *is* Brahman) into an unmediated and sustained experience of this ultimate truth.

In other words, these programs of religious self-formation resulted in enlivening the texts that sustained the tradition. It was, to invoke Agamben's formulation, the collapsing of a life to the rule. In thus reconstituting the Vedic canon to mark the limits of the human, the maṭha oversaw a quiet revolution in political theology. In the final three chapters of the dissertation, I explored the maximalist implications of this radical reformulation of religious subjectivity and religious authority. As gatekeepers of the Vedas, appointed to comprehend and circumscribe the proper sphere of religious practice, the scholiasts of Śrīṅgeri produced a great variety of texts that naturalized this revolutionary reinterpretation. In these texts the partisans of the maṭha presented a perfect Vedic order that had in its all-encompassing hierarchy a subordinate for the competing religious traditions. Conspicuously marginalized were those rival Vedānta orders that sought to provide an alternative view of tradition. They were dismissed as pretenders and threatened with expulsion from the normative realm. Kingship too was accorded its rightful place, not in its typical perch at the top of the pecking order but subordinated to the sole sovereign, the office of the guru, which continues to be occupied to this day, long after the rāyas of Vijayanagara and Ikkeri have sunk in the tides of time.

The Politics of Ascetics

The history of Śrīṅgeri maṭha is one of those untold stories that continues to have a profound impact upon the course of politics in modern India. The theory of ascetic power that the maṭha, among other similar institutions, developed and disseminated was quietly influential in shaping the political practices and thought of nationalist leaders in the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries. From Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's formulation of a truly indigenous theory of political power in *Anandamath* (the story of the *saṁnyāsīn* rebellion; the first stirrings of a nationalist spirit) to Gandhi's eclectic regimen of ascetic practices that were intended to transform the national soul, the legacies of the theory of ascetic power that I have elaborated upon here have been a strong undercurrent in the practice of power in India. The present political moment is illustrative of the maturing of two parallel streams of institutional ascetic power. The first stream is evident out in the spectacular success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), whose ascendancy can be ascribed to the discipline and loyalty of its activist corps (the *pracharaks*) of the cultural wing of the party (RSS). The leadership of the party (including the current Prime Minister) is comprised of former members of this select group, who were trained as ascetics in the art of political organization. As boys, these individuals entered the order of the RSS and were formed as political agents through a regimen of disciplinary practices ranging from the martial marching and drilling to more monastic celibacy. One of the central projects that the BJP government has adopted is to reimagine India's image on the world stage. Spurning the image of India as a developing country often in need of aid and support from the U.S., the BJP government has unveiled a public relations campaign to rebrand India as the Guru of the World

(*vishva-guru*). It is hard to ignore the invocation of the *jagad-guru*, the title given to the Śaṅkarācāryas of the Advaita Vedānta maṭhas. The second stream is the more obvious, the figure of the *saṃnyāsin*-turned-politician; Yogi Adithyanath, the current Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh state, is perhaps the most familiar such member, though a number of prominent female ascetics have risen through the leadership ranks of the BJP. The line that connects the Śṛṅgeri maṭha of the fourteenth century to the modern manifestations of ascetic power is by no means straight. Nor is it easily traced. Nevertheless, the echoes of that medieval manifesto of monastic supremacy still reverberate in the halls of power in modern India.

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