

Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, and the Bhakti Movement

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation concerns the reception history of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (BhP), an influential Hindu scripture, among Sanskrit intellectuals who lived between the 13th and 18th centuries CE. The BhP is most widely recognized for its celebration of bhakti, or religious devotion to an embodied god, through its narrative, didactic, and philosophical treatment of the god Kṛṣṇa. Composed in Sanskrit, the BhP was also closely connected to popular traditions of vernacular poetry and song, collectively known as the “bhakti movement.” I study the rise to prominence of this text-tradition by examining its impact on two important systems of Sanskrit scriptural interpretation: Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta. I situate the shifting discursive registers of these hermeneutical traditions in particular social contexts, paying special attention to the lives and careers of scholars in the academic center of Banaras in early modern north India. I also investigate how Sanskrit discourse about the BhP reveals intersections between popular religious movements and elite scholarly pedagogy. The thesis contributes to a number of scholarly fields, each wider than the previous. First, it provides a fuller picture of how particular Sanskrit systems of knowledge experienced change in precolonial India. Second, it attempts to understand the challenges that bhakti, *qua* the public expression of personal devotion, posed to Sanskrit intellectuals. Third, it revisits certain binaries and narratives in the historiography of Indian religion and philosophy. Fourth, it incorporates the insights of intellectual and social history into the study of the premodern non-West. Finally, it helps make a space for intellectual history within religious studies, and for religion among intellectual historians.

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*vīṇāṃ na dhatte kimu śubhravastraṃ
no rājahaṃse śayitā kadāpi |
vidyāpradāne tu na ko 'pi bhedaḥ
sarasvatī sā jagati prasiddhā ||*

She never played
a fancy instrument,
dressed in all-white, or
reclined on a royal swan.

But when it came to
imparting knowledge,
she was just as good,
so we knew her as:

Sarasvatī.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Let it go. What's the point of talking about the past now?

-Nārāyaṇa, *Hitopadeśa*, 1.375¹

*It may be the same flowers
wreathed around your head
time and time again,
but when strung together
in a way never seen before,
they spark new wonder.*

-Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (9th C.), *Nyāyamañjarī*, v.5²

A Quick Refresher

This dissertation is about the reception history of a popular Hindu scripture, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (BhP), between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries CE. I show how the BhP challenged and refashioned scholastic writing in Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta, two important systems of Sanskrit scriptural interpretation. I situate the shifting discursive registers of these hermeneutical traditions in particular social contexts, paying special attention to the lives and careers of scholars in the academic center of Banaras in early modern north India. I trace the movement and migration of the BhP through a variety of Hindu scholastic and sectarian communities,³ and examine how singers and storytellers, in both Sanskrit and the vernacular, mirrored and reproduced the BhP's legacy as a bridge between elite theological reflection and

¹ Judit Törszök, trans., *Friendly Advice by Nārāyaṇa and King Vikrama's Adventures* (New York: New York University Press; JJC Foundation, 2007), 174: yātu, kim idānīm atikrāntopavarṇanena?

² *Nyāyamañjarī of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa*, ed. K.S. Varadacharya (Mysore: Oriental Research Institute, 1969), 1:

tair eva kusumaiḥ pūrvam asakṛtkṛtaśekharāḥ |
apūrvavaracane dāmnī dadhaty eva kutūhalam ||

³ The vexed politics of using the term “sectarian” in the context of Hinduism have been summarized nicely in Elaine Fisher, “A New Public Theology: Sanskrit and Society in Seventeenth-century South India” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013), 1-19.

everyday devotional poetry. Ultimately, I attempt to improve our understanding of the history of precolonial Sanskrit knowledge, to provide an account of the intersections between popular religious movements and scholarly pedagogy, and to help create a space for intellectual history within religious studies, and for religion among intellectual historians.

The Bhāgavata Purāna

Several of the foregoing terms require further explanation, beginning with the BhP. Composed in Sanskrit and probably completed around the tenth century CE, the BhP is a narrative, didactic, and philosophical treatment of the life of the god Kṛṣṇa. It was instrumental in exalting the place of “bhakti,” or religious devotion to an embodied god, above other paths to salvation or liberation—namely, “jñāna,” philosophical gnosis, and “karma,” ritual activity (or, simply, action). These three terms, karma, jñāna, and bhakti, are reflected in the title of this dissertation, to signify the shifting relationship among the text-traditions that represented them.⁴ The BhP was subsequently translated, explicated, painted, and performed throughout the subcontinent and across religious communities, so as to become one of the most influential Hindu scriptures of modern times, perhaps only next to the Bhagavad Gītā and the Upaniṣads. The BhP more or less defined bhakti as the complete absorption in and devotion to Kṛṣṇa, often but not always considered an incarnation of Viṣṇu.⁵ It therefore became central to many Vaiṣṇava religious groups—that is, those who adopted Viṣṇu as the supreme God. Many of the vernacular, sometimes subaltern religious communities that dotted the subcontinent in the second

⁴ On the concept of a text-tradition, and its usefulness to the study of Indian philosophy, see Lawrence McCrea and Parimal Patil, *Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India: Jñānaśrīmitra on Exclusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 3-7.

⁵ See Edwin F. Bryant, “Krishna in the Tenth Book of the *Bhagavata Purana*,” in *Krishna: A Sourcebook*, ed. Edwin F. Bryant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 111-135.

millennium, members of the so-called “bhakti movement,” were also dedicated to the celebration and poetic memory of Kṛṣṇa.⁶ Some of these communities saw fit to distance themselves from alternative theistic traditions: namely, those of the Śaivas and Śāktas, who organized their religious life around the gods Śiva and Śakti.⁷ Vaiṣṇava proponents of bhakti censured these groups either on sectarian religious grounds—that is, as being associated with degenerate Tantric practices—or on philosophical ones, accusing them of promulgating a nondualist monism.⁸ However, the concept of bhakti itself was prominent in Śaiva writings, and it is possible that the BhP moved in Śaiva circles.⁹ The tensions and intersections between Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, and between bhakti monotheism and nondualist monism, will be central to this study of the BhP's reception.

Mīmāṃsā

The next term is Mīmāṃsā. Around the turn of the first millennium CE, a set of aphorisms, the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras* by Jaimini, developed a hermeneutics of the Veda, the paradigmatic Brahmanical Hindu scripture. A desiderative noun formed from the Sanskrit verb “to think,” Mīmāṃsā literally means “investigation” or “inquiry.” The term “hermeneutics” usefully describes Mīmāṃsā as a tradition that attempted to understand a corpus of texts, the

⁶ See John Stratton Hawley, *A Storm of Songs: India and the Idea of the Bhakti Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

⁷ See Alexis Sanderson, “The Śaiva Literature,” *Journal of Indological Studies* 24 & 25 (2012-2013): 1-113.

⁸ See, e.g., Patton Burchett, “Bhakti Religion and Tantric Magic in Mughal India: Kacchvahas, Ramanandis, and Naths, circa 1500-1750” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012). See also John Stratton Hawley, “The Four *Sampradāys*: Ordering the Religious Past in Mughal North India,” *South Asian History and Culture* 2.2 (2011): 160-183.

⁹ See Hamsa Stainton, “Poetry and Prayer: *Stotras* in the Religious and Literary History of Kashmir” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013), 298ff.; Jason Schwartz, “Caught in the Net of *Śāstra*: Devotion and its Limits in an Evolving Śaiva Corpus,” *Journal of Hindu Studies* 5.2 (2012): 210-231; V. Raghavan, “The *Sūta Saṃhitā*,” *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 22 (1941): 250-251.

Veda, by developing systematic interpretive principles. These principles both argued for the epistemological validity of the Veda, defined as distinct from competing scriptural traditions and possessing transcendental authority, and organized the Veda's internal components based on a hierarchy of meaningful language.¹⁰ Vedic Brahmins—and this was a fundamentally Brahmanical tradition predicated on a caste-and-class-bound system of ritual, social, and ethical norms (*varṇāśrama dharma*)—developed the discipline of Mīmāṃsā in reaction to two broad phenomena. First was the fact that the worldview of the Veda had already become archaic by the turn of the first millennium; it was, in other words, a denaturalized entity that nevertheless held sway over orthoprax Brahmanical life, and whose symbolic power would continue for centuries. The second phenomenon was the axiological critique of the Veda enunciated by the renouncer movements of the mid-first millennium BCE, such as Buddhism and Jainism, which rejected the Veda's authority entirely, and offered a vision of emancipation from the suffering of worldly life. Mīmāṃsā as a language of apologetics came into being as a response to these two trends. The *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras* were later elaborated upon by Śābara (5th C. CE) and his most famous commentator, Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa (7th C. CE).

The importance of Mīmāṃsā in the life of the BhP was twofold. First, Mīmāṃsakas, or practitioners of Mīmāṃsā, developed a hierarchy of Sanskrit scriptural genres, placing the unauthored, eternal Veda at the top, ranking some texts of human composition below them, like the epics and *purāṇas*, and ejecting some “divinely inspired” scriptures, like the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva Āgamas, outside the pale of Vedic society altogether. This meant that a text like the BhP, a *purāṇa* (a “legend” or “ancient chronicle”), was to be considered subordinate to the Veda,

¹⁰ Cf. Lawrence McCrea, “The Hierarchical Organization of Language in Mīmāṃsā Interpretive Theory,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28.5 (2000): 429-459.

deriving its authority solely on account of its authors' purported preservation of the meaning of the Veda. However, some scholars in the second millennium began to challenge this hierarchical organization of scripture. The BhP would emerge as a prime player in this renegotiation.

Second, Mīmāṃsā was a classically atheist discipline. It argued vehemently against the existence of an omniscient creator-god, had no time for human pretensions to supernatural perception, and even asserted that the Vedic gods were nothing but linguistic constructs.¹¹ The BhP, of course, placed God front and center and all around. The phenomenon of a theistic Mīmāṃsaka, which would have seemed laughable to someone like Kumāṛila Bhaṭṭa, did become a reality at a particular historical moment, a moment that was at least partially a result of Mīmāṃsā's intersection with the BhP.

Vedānta

Another factor that contributed to the theistic turn in Mīmāṃsā was the rise of a Vedic hermeneutical tradition that called itself the “latter” or “Uttara” Mīmāṃsā. This was Vedānta, the third term I take up for explication. On one level, Vedānta simply signified the Upaniṣads, or the “end of the Veda,” exploiting the ambiguity in the word “end” to mean both sequential conclusion and final purport. In this dissertation, Vedānta is discussed as an intellectual tradition that attempted to extract a coherent philosophical theology from the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad Gītā, and the aphoristic *Brahma Sūtras*—a set of three departure points called the *prasthānatraya*. Vedānta was at turns continuous with and distinct from what it labeled its

¹¹ Cf. Francis X. Clooney, “Why the Veda Has No Author: Language as Ritual in Early Mīmāṃsā and Post-Modern Theology,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55.4 (1987): 659-684; Francis X. Clooney, “What's a god? The quest for the right understanding of *devatā* in Brāhmaṇical ritual theory (*mīmāṃsā*),” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 1.2 (1997): 337-385; Lawrence McCrea, “Just Like Us, Just Like Now': The Tactical Implications of the Mīmāṃsā Rejection of Yogic Perception,” in *Yogic Perception, Meditation, and Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Eli Franco (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 55-70.

“prior” incarnation, or “Pūrva” Mīmāṃsā.¹² If the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras* held that the Veda was fundamentally about *dharma*, ritual action performed for a particular result, the *Brahma Sūtras* claimed that the Veda cohered around communicating the knowledge of Brahman, the ultimate reality, from which the whole universe came into being. The realization of Brahman, said the *Brahma Sūtras*, was the whole purpose of the Upaniṣads, and would grant liberation from the suffering of finite worldly existence. One of the basic differences between Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta was the former's emphasis on karma, on the proper maintenance and performance of Vedic ritual, and the latter's insistence that jñāna, knowledge, could release one from precisely those karmic bonds that kept the cycle of death and rebirth moving.

Several schools of Vedānta formed around the interpretation of the *prasthānatraya*. In this dissertation, I concentrate on Advaita Vedānta, the “nondualist” interpretation of Vedānta that is generally traced to the eighth-century philosopher Śaṅkara, or Śaṅkarācārya. In Śaṅkara's account, Vedānta tried to communicate the ultimate unity—the nonduality—between Ātman, the Self, and Brahman, the all-pervading reality. The way to liberation for a student of Vedānta, who desired release from the cycle of death and rebirth (*saṃsāra*), was to achieve an immediate knowledge (jñāna) of the true nature of the Ātman as nondifferent from Brahman. Any hint of plurality or differentiation in the world, according to Śaṅkara, was a superimposition, like a snake erroneously seen in place of a rope, inexplicable as being either wholly real or unreal. Famously, Śaṅkara called this everyday veiling of nondual reality an “illusion” (*māyā*), and his idealist leanings frequently led to accusations that he was a Buddhist in Brahmin clothing (*pracchannabauddha*).¹³ Śaṅkara's Advaitic reading of Vedānta left little room for a personal,

¹² See Johannes Bronkhorst, ed. *Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta: Interaction and Continuity* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007).

¹³ This criticism was not entirely off the mark, since early Advaita owed significantly to Mahāyāna Buddhist forms

embodied god, possessed of attributes, who would be unsuited to the forbidding austerity of the formless, partless, undifferentiated Brahman. At best, God was a concept that belonged to the transactional, empirical world (*vyavahāra*), a being fully conscious of his identity with Brahman, capable of incarnating in such figures as Kṛṣṇa. From an ultimate perspective (*paramārtha*), however, God and the individual soul must be considered one and the same, for in Advaita, Ātman is Brahman. The BhP, however, both expressed sentiments very close to Advaita and celebrated the god Kṛṣṇa in full aesthetic glory, a juxtaposition that some have called “Advaitic theism.”¹⁴ The extent of the BhP's Advaita sensibilities, and its relationship with the Advaita Vedānta inaugurated by Śaṅkara, remains a topic of debate.

This is especially the case because Advaita Vedānta was not the only Vedānta on the block. Soon after Śaṅkara, several Vaiṣṇava philosophers, who were affiliated with temples, scriptures, ritual manuals, and devotional poetry that glorified the god Viṣṇu, offered competing theistic readings of Vedānta's core texts. Most influential were the South Indian philosophers Rāmānuja (11th C.), proponent of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, whose followers were known as Śrīvaiṣṇavas, and Madhva (13th C.), proponent of Dvaita (or Tattvavāda) Vedānta. Later centuries would see still more Vaiṣṇava Vedānta traditions further to the north that traced themselves to Nimbārka (13th C.?), Vallabha (15th-16th C.), and Caitanya (15th-16th C.). Though they did not always present a unified front, each individually resisted the monistic implications of Advaita Vedānta.¹⁵ Some of these Vedāntins also took direct inspiration from the BhP, emphasizing its

of nondualism. See Richard King, *Early Advaita Vedānta and Buddhism: The Mahāyāna Context of the Gauḍapādīya-kārikā* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995).

¹⁴ See Daniel P. Sheridan, *The Advaitic Theism of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986).

¹⁵ See Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, 99-147, for an account of the “four-*sampradāy*” rubric, a genealogical narrative from the seventeenth century, in which the sectarian traditions of Rāmānand, Keśav Bhaṭṭ Kāśmīrī, Caitanya, and Vallabhācārya, found their ancestry in four Vaiṣṇava (i.e., non-Advaita) Vedānta counterparts in the south.

exaltation of bhakti, rather than jñāna, as the highest spiritual attainment. The BhP became as much a source of contestation between these schools of Vedānta as their interpretations of the *prasthānatraya*.

Early Modernity

I have used the term “early modern” to refer to a periodization of Indian intellectual history within which part of my research takes place. My impetus for studying the shifting registers of discourse in Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta within this period—1550 CE-1750 CE—comes from a collaborative research project called “Sanskrit Knowledge-Systems on the Eve of Colonialism.” In brief, the project has sought to understand the full effect of the purported epistemic rupture initiated by colonial technologies of rule on traditional modes of Sanskrit theoretical production,¹⁶ by studying the prolific output of such intellectual content in that early modern period. The group's work aims to examine seven knowledge-systems, or *sāstras*, in their bibliographical, prosopographical, and substantive dimensions, selected for their centrality to Sanskrit culture, comparative and historical value, and/or their new vitality in the early modern period. These disciplines are: *vyākaraṇa* (language analysis), *mīmāṃsā* (hermeneutics), *nyāya* (logic/epistemology), *dharmaśāstra* (moral/political philosophy), *alaṃkāraśāstra* (poetics), *āyurveda* (life-science), and *jyotiḥśāstra* (astrology).¹⁷

There are two ways in which my dissertation engages this project: first, by adding Advaita Vedānta to the disciplines studied, and second, by complicating the epistemic nature of

¹⁶ See Sudipta Kaviraj, “The Sudden Death of Sanskrit Knowledge.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33.1 (2005): 119-124.

¹⁷ See Sheldon Pollock, “The Languages of Science in Early Modern India,” in *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Durham: Duke University Press), 20-21.

the “early modern” periodization. Before offering my emendation to that periodization, I will summarize the reasoning behind it. As a first-order category, the early modern describes a global phenomenon, which, as the social historian John Richards argues, consists of six distinct but complementary large-scale processes: 1) The creation of global sea passages and an increasingly efficient transportation network; 2) The rise of a truly global world economy; 3) The unprecedented growth around the world of large, stable states; 4) The doubling of world population; 5) The intensified use of land to expand production; and 6) The diffusion of several new technologies and organizational responses to them.¹⁸ While there are objections to including South Asia in this world history,¹⁹ tracking these changes in the social history of the early modern world allows us an additional lens into the corresponding intellectual changes that have come to define the European sense of its own modernity, and which find remarkable though inexact parallels in India.

This intellectual “newness” in the context of early modern India was first laid out in a

¹⁸ See John Richards, “Early Modern India and World History,” *Journal of World History* 8.2 (1997): 198-203.

¹⁹ For a more sober assessment of the difficulties with such periodization, in particular the many guises of “modernity” in sociological and historical writing, see Jack Goldstone, “The Problem of the ‘Early Modern’ World,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41.3 (1998): 249-284. For a critique of the “early modern” in India as being an imprecise marker of intellectual value, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Muddle of Modernity,” *American Historical Review* 116.3 (2011): 663-675, esp. 674-675: “Turning specifically to the question of whether or not ‘early modern’ was an apt way of periodizing history in the Indian subcontinent, my question would be: Which Indian or South Asian thinkers from the precolonial period, then, must we still wrestle with in fabricating or thinking about democratic forms of public life? But historians can ask such questions only if they clarify to themselves and their readers what is at stake for them in debates about modernity. The word is not very useful if it is treated merely as a synonym for institutional or infrastructural change over time—that is to say, for modernization.” A partial response to Chakrabarty’s critique, from the perspective of a social historian of precolonial Western India, has been offered by Rosalind O’Hanlon, “Contested Conjunctures: Brahman Communities and ‘Early Modernity’ in India,” *American Historical Review* 118.3 (2013): 765-787. See *Ibid.*, 787: “As long as this older history remains over the routine intellectual horizon of scholars engaged with colonial social change, whether of elites or ‘subalterns,’ it will continue to be difficult to grasp the nature of India’s colonial ‘modernity.’ While this is so, we risk reproducing a history very much in colonialism’s own self-image, in which all forms of modernity emanated from its transforming presence.”

2001 essay by Sheldon Pollock.²⁰ The essay identifies a set of innovations in the conceptions and discursive protocols of early modern Sanskrit intellectuals, as well as the structure and substance of the new sense of historicity according to which their scholarly work began to be organized. But when the intellectual production of early modern India is juxtaposed with comparable developments in Europe, the divergence in historical trajectory could not be more stark.²¹ In Europe, early modernity saw changes across intellectual disciplines: in literary culture, the “quarrel between the ancients and moderns”; in philosophy, the shift away from scholastic writing and theological concerns; and at the nexus of language and power, the displacement of Latin by vernacular languages as the primary medium of intellectual and pedagogical activity. In India, however, these changes were similar but different. Sanskrit intellectuals also possessed a new sense of historicity, of distance from their predecessors, but articulated it in ways that seemed to urge a sense of continuity with the past rather than a radical break. Philosophy remained a primarily scholastic endeavor, though different genres of writing flourished, especially introductory primers and doxographies. They also resisted, with varying degrees of success, the use of vernaculars as primary languages of knowledge-production. While this divergence led to normative colonial-era judgments regarding the stultifying, essentially stagnant nature of premodern India, Pollock does make the provocative claim that “In the face of European modernity, Indian systems of thought, or rather Sanskrit systems, simply vanished as a significant force in Indian history.”²²

²⁰ Sheldon Pollock, “New Intellectuals in Seventeenth-Century India.” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 38.1 (2001): 3-31.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

²² *Ibid.*, 24.

This declaration regarding the “death” of Sanskrit knowledge—not causally but co-evally linked to the imposition of colonial modernity—has been contested by several parties, who generally point to the continuity of Sanskrit as a vital language of public disputation in the colonial period.²³ Pollock himself has moved away from characterizing the Sanskrit scholarly trend to apply the new subtleties of argumentation to the analysis of ancient categories as simply another instance of arrested development. What we must resist, he asserts, is conceptual symmetry; what we require instead is historical synchronicity.²⁴ If this new intellectuality of early modernity did not transform into a condition of the secular modern, then the fault lies not with the text traditions themselves, but with our expectation in hindsight of some inevitable developmental goal.²⁵ For as Richard Eaton comments in a different context, to study this moment as one of failure, as a non-event, would be to commit the historical fallacy of attempting to explain a counter-factual proposition.²⁶

While the ability to think comparatively about European and Indian intellectuality is an attractive proposition and a salutary accomplishment, as with all macro-narratives it is bound to provoke dissent from particular corners. Parimal Patil has taken up the case of Nyāya, the science of logic/epistemology, which does not exactly fit the model articulated above.²⁷ From

²³ Notably, see Brian A. Hatcher, “Sanskrit and the morning after: the metaphors and theory of intellectual change,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 44.3 (2007): 333-361.

²⁴ Sheldon Pollock, “Introduction,” in *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁶ Richard Eaton, “(Re)imag(in)ing Other²ness: a Postmortem for the Postmodern in India,” *Journal of World History* 11.1 (2001): 61.

²⁷ Parimal Patil, “The Historical Rhythms of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Knowledge-System,” in *Yogic Perception, Meditation, and Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Eli Franco (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 91-126.

Udayana's reconfiguration of Nyāya in the eleventh century, to Gaṅgeśa's inauguration of “new” (Navya) Nyāya in thirteenth-century Mithilā, to Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma's introduction of the discipline into fifteenth-century Bengal, to Jagannātha Tarkapañcānana's participation in multiple epistemic worlds in eighteenth-century Calcutta,²⁸ Nyāya has both experienced several moments of “newness” dispersed across the second millennium and remained a continuous discipline well into the colonial period. A similar case could be made for Advaita Vedānta. Although there is a marked increase in literary activity in the early modern period, and new genres enter the discursive world, many philosophical and hermeneutical innovations can be traced to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—eras for which and preceding which we have little by way of historical contextualization.²⁹ This is especially the case for the relationship between bhakti and Advaita, one of the topics in this dissertation. Moreover, Advaita Vedānta flourished not only throughout the early modern subcontinent, but well into its colonial modernity, of which it became partly constitutive.

Even though we need not adopt a thoroughgoing skepticism of the politics of time that

²⁸ Jagannātha wrote a commentary on Gaṅgeśa's *Tattvacintāmaṇi* and was enlisted by the famous Orientalist William Jones to be the chief *paṇḍit* overseeing the composition of the *Vivādabhaṅgārṇava*, a compilation of juridical opinions from a collection of Hindu scholars. This was the sourcebook for H.T. Colebrooke's *Digest of Hindu Law*, a translation that he completed in 1796. See Rosane Rocher, “Weaving Knowledge: Sir William Jones and Indian Pandits,” in *Objects of Inquiry: The Life, Contributions, and Influences of Sir William Jones*, eds. Garland Cannon and Kevin R. Brine, (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 62. Cf. Rosane Rocher, *The Making of Western Indology: Henry Thomas Colebrooke and the East India Company* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 34-38.

²⁹ Christopher Minkowski has undertaken thus far the most rigorous genealogical work required for a working social history of Advaita in early modern India. See Christopher Minkowski, “Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern History,” *South Asian History and Culture* 2.2 (2011): 205-231. Although he engages with Randall Collins' sociology of world philosophies, Minkowski himself refrains from offering a theory of intellectual change in early modern Advaita. Cf. Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

On “medieval” Advaita teachers, see Srikantha Sastri, “Advaitācāryas of the 12th and 13th Centuries,” *Indian Historical Quarterly* XIV (1938): 401-408. Cf. T.M.P. Mahadevan, ed. *Preceptors of Advaita* (Secunderabad: Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Mandir, 1968).

governs the act of periodization,³⁰ the concept of the “early modern” as a period of intellectual change needs to be particularized for each Sanskrit knowledge-system, taking account of both its intellectual history prior to the sixteenth century, and its resilience in the face of colonial encounter. If we do not begin from the proposition that the early modern is a unique epistemic period applicable across Sanskrit disciplines, we may be more attentive to alternative historical possibilities, without necessarily losing sight of the profound social changes that characterized the early modern world.

Intellectual History

What, exactly, is “Indian” about Indian intellectual history?³¹ Who are the historical intellectuals of intellectual history?³² What *is* intellectual history, now and yet to come?³³ The history of ideas, to put it in barest terms, was for most of the twentieth century a Euro-American exercise in understanding intellectual shifts in their historical context. Although its initial practitioners, such as R.G. Collingwood, were heir to a Hegelian idealism that viewed all history as the history of ideas, members of the so-called “Cambridge School” from the 1960s shifted their attention to the more contingent operations of language in the world. Influenced in particular by the philosopher of language J.L. Austin, and to a degree by the later Wittgenstein,

³⁰ See Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

³¹ See Sheldon Pollock, “Is There an Indian Intellectual History? Introduction to 'Theory and Method in Indian Intellectual History,'" *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36.5 (2008): 533-542.

³² See Christopher Minkowski et al., eds., *Scholar Intellectuals in Early Modern India* (London: Routledge, 2015).

³³ See Annabel Brett, “What is Intellectual History Now?,” in *What is History Now?*, ed. David Cannadine (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 113-131.

historians such as Quentin Skinner³⁴ and J.G.A. Pocock³⁵ understood texts as active expressions of language, or speech acts. Texts, as speech acts, did not merely have the capacity for providing information, but also had performative, or illocutionary dimensions. They made interventions in a broader discourse or milieu within which they participated. Turning to the issue of agency, Skinner insisted that understanding what an author was *doing* in writing a text was indispensable to understanding its meaning. In other words, meaning and understanding were not simply the result of elucidating a text's content, but just as crucially, of understanding a text's context.³⁶

Skinner, Pocock, and the German historian Reinhart Koselleck, proponent of a methodologically eclectic “history of concepts” (*Begriffsgeschichte*),³⁷ were historians of philosophy and political theory in modern and early modern Europe. The “New Historicists” of subsequent decades, many inspired by the cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, sought to move their analysis from texts to broader cultural representations, an act that could be viewed either as stretching what could be read as a “text” or as increasing the range of what counts as a significant cultural artifact.³⁸ Recent volumes have sought to expand the scope of the discipline

³⁴ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Vol. I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³⁵ J.G.A. Pocock, *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³⁶ Cf. Brett, “What is Intellectual History Now?”, 116: “Identification or recovery of a particular utterance as a particular illocutionary act depends on an awareness of its particular speech situation or *context*. We can only know what an author was *doing* in writing a particular text if we know the circumstances of that doing. The result was a method which argues that to understand texts for the specific speech acts that they are, we need to understand the historical context in which they were uttered.”

³⁷ See Reinhart Koselleck, “Social History and Conceptual History,” in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 20-37. Cf. Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1-25; Niklas Olsen, *History in the Plural: An Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

³⁸ See Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Cf. Brett, “What is Intellectual History Now?”, 125-126.

still further, particularly in order to think about more global possibilities.³⁹ It has made a fairly seamless transition into the study of modern, or colonial and postcolonial, Indian intellectual history.⁴⁰ Historians of precolonial India, however, have offered reflections on the theoretical and methodological challenges of studying the history of ideas in Sanskrit systems of knowledge.

Sheldon Pollock, for example, remarks:

What has characterized, indeed virtually defined, Euro-American intellectual history over the past five decades, certainly from the rise of the Cambridge School in the 1960s, and which the New Historicism of the 1980s and 1990s served to reinforce, is the commitment to deep contextualism: for many of its practitioners in the European tradition, intellectual history is entirely a question of charting the production of and intention behind ideas in specific times and places. In India, however, a mix of peculiar cultural-political and environmental factors make this dimension of historical practice very difficult. The non-textualization of life-events (birth, marriage, death); the absence of a political absolutism whose cruel documentary invigilation over its own subjects was, in some small measure, compensated for by the archival richness left to posterity; a climate that destroyed whatever was not recopied every few generations; and, for the Sanskrit intellectual milieu, a constitutional disinclination to time-space localization and a cultural proscription of self-advertisement—these factors and others have conspired to leave the social record of Sanskrit intellectuals a virtual blank.⁴¹

Recent developments in the study of early modern India have begun to address these problems in different ways. We find one such development in the work of Jonardon Ganeri.⁴² Ganeri suggests that Skinner's conception of the text in context is at once too rich and too poor for the study of Indian intellectual history. It is too rich because we possess little knowledge of

³⁹ Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds., *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). Cf. Shruti Kapila, "Global Intellectual History and the Indian Political," in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, eds. Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 253-274.

⁴⁰ See Shruti Kapila, ed., *An Intellectual History for India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Shruti Kapila and Faisal Devji, eds., *Political Thought in Action: The Bhagavad Gita in Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁴¹ Pollock, "Is There an Indian Intellectual History?," 537.

⁴² Jonardon Ganeri, "Contextualism in the Study of Indian Intellectual Cultures," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36.5 (2008): 551-562.

the circumstances of composition of the texts of Indian intellectuals, and too poor because we might instead read Indian texts in what Ganeri calls their “intertextual” contexts.⁴³ In its literary and intellectual context, the Indian (read: Sanskrit) text may be understood as a kind of “intrasystemic intervention.” In other words, when the intellectual “context” is a knowledge-system itself, we may read Sanskrit texts as “proleptic speech interventions intentionally directed towards future audiences.”⁴⁴ It is debatable whether or not Ganeri's revision of Skinner can simply be regarded an extension of his method. Another approach suggests that, at least for the early modern period, we might benefit from incorporating social history into the study of Indian intellectual cultures.⁴⁵ This would mean both moving beyond the focus on Sanskrit as an exclusive, self-contained font of intellectual life, and paying attention to particular figures who were at once rooted in regional cultures and involved in a wider ecumene:

There is, in fact, more biographical information about individual intellectuals than is commonly supposed, particularly when vernacular as well as Sanskrit documentary sources are examined in parallel. We can, furthermore, often gain an understanding of the more immediate as well as the broader social and political circumstances within which scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries worked. These circumstances included political shifts bringing royal courts, temples, and sectarian monasteries into closer connection and challenges from emergent forms of devotional religion. [...] Situating scholars and intellectuals ‘in context’ therefore means attending to their reach across disciplinary boundaries, linguistic and intellectual traditions, geographical regions, social locations, historical periods, and commercial networks – in short, the features that mark what some historians call the ‘global conjunctures’ of the early modern world.⁴⁶

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 553-554.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 555-556.

⁴⁵ See Christopher Minkowski et al., “Social History in the Study of Indian Intellectual Cultures?,” *South Asian History and Culture* 6.1 (2015): 1-9. This approach also takes inspiration from the work of Christopher Bayly. Ajay Skaria observes that “For Bayly, the social function that defines intellectuals is not only that they have access to ‘culture goods’, but that they participate, at whatever level, in the production of knowledge and information. Now, intellectual history becomes integrally part of social and cultural history.” See Ajay Skaria, “Can the Dalit articulate a universal position? the intellectual, the social, and the writing of history,” *Social History* 39.3 (2014): 353.

⁴⁶ Minkowski et al., “Social History in the Study of Indian Intellectual Cultures?,” 2, 7.

In my dissertation, I respond to the imperatives of intellectual history in two ways. First, while I fully adopt the Skinnerian contextual method, and exploit its potential to critique histories of Indian philosophy that consign historical considerations to the margins, I resist the implication that contextualism exhausts the possibilities of meaning within a text-tradition. My point of departure (*prasthāna*) is Peter Gordon's pithy observation, articulated in a critical essay on the topic, that “situated thinking exceeds its own situation.”⁴⁷ By studying the texts in this dissertation as intellectual interventions rather than exclusively for their philosophical content, and by emphasizing the local, contingent character of text-traditions often valorized for their universality, I do not mean to close off the potential for their critical reappropriation in the present.⁴⁸ On the contrary, it is precisely by tracking the many and divergent historical lives that these text-traditions possessed that I show the dynamic possibilities within them.⁴⁹

Second, I follow the recent recommendations from historians of religion both to employ the methods of intellectual history in the study of religion, and to make religious ideas a

⁴⁷ Peter E. Gordon, “Contextualism and Criticism in the History of Ideas,” in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, eds. Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 51. A similar critique of the limitations of Skinner's method comes from Skaria, “Can the Dalit articulate a universal position?”, 352: “In a pure contextualization, if such a thing were possible, universality is treated as only a pervasive error, one that can be avoided once it has been identified. Thus, while the power of Skinner’s intervention lies in its effort to eschew both the historicist and generalizing narratives, in the process that intervention leaves itself without the means to comprehend the immense power of claims to universality.”

⁴⁸ The Nietzschean view of the matter is well-known from his famous essay “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life.” See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 59-123. Less well-known is Gandhi's “activist reading” of the past, admirably reconstructed by Simona Sawhney, “Allegory and Violence: Gandhi's Reading of the *Bhagavad Gītā*,” in *The Modernity of Sanskrit* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 86-124.

⁴⁹ Cf. Brett, “What is Intellectual History Now?”, 127: “We might add that doing intellectual history can itself be understood as poetic in that sense, for intellectual history does not merely unravel the structure of what we have inherited but can also unearth what we have lost: ways of speaking and ways of seeing the world, once current, now exotic and (perhaps) full of possibility.”

constitutive topic of intellectual history.⁵⁰ They rightly point to the relative lack of attention to religion among intellectual historians. Intellectual history most closely affiliates itself with the fields of philosophy, political theory, cultural history, and sociology. Religion, if at all discussed, is generally epiphenomenal to the historians listed above, not always out of any particular ideological commitment, but as a general function of the fields in which they work. How does this neglect play out in the Indian context, or does it?

It has become a truism, perhaps not without a whiff of Orientalism, to assert that in India, the rift between religion and philosophy was much less pronounced, or much less influenced by the baggage of Enlightenment polemics, than in Europe. Certainly there have been histories and studies of Indian philosophy that tried to downplay religious concerns, but even “Hindu theology” has arguably become an appropriate analytical category for Indian intellectual traditions like Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta.⁵¹ Still, there remain divides. For example, as thorough a research agenda as the Sanskrit Knowledge-Systems project possessed, the religious sciences received comparatively little attention, and Vedānta was missing altogether. Recent scholarship on the relationship of Sanskrit with vernacular languages rejects older assertions that religion was instrumental to the initial development of vernaculars, suggesting instead that religious movements employed local languages in reaction to the high register of the cosmopolitan

⁵⁰ See John Coffey and Alister Chapman, “Introduction: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion,” in *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion*, eds. Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad S. Gregory (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 1-23. At times this call for attention to the “return” of religion—as if it ever went away—seems like the intellectual project of aggrieved Catholic theologians. Gregory in particular has taken a broad Catholic axe to social-scientific theses of secularization. See Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

⁵¹ See Francis X. Clooney, “Restoring 'Hindu Theology' as a Category in Indian Intellectual Discourse,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin Flood (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 447-477.

vernacular.⁵² Parts of my dissertation suggest that religious motivations did have an impact on scholarly output, especially in the reactions of Sanskrit intellectuals to vernacular language-use. Religious commitments even prompted some scholars to shift the terms of the otherwise neutral intellectual disciplines in which they worked. At the end of the day, however, I do not attempt to account for historical change in Sanskrit knowledge-systems through the rubric of intentionality or motivation. Instead I provide a wider range of contexts within which that change occurred. Ours not to reason why. Ours but to peer and pry.

The End-Game

“So what?” Miles Davis might ask. Or, in Vedāntic terms, what is the *prayojana*, the end-game, of this undertaking? This project began as an investigation into the history of Advaita Vedānta in its late incarnations—that is, a period long after the composition of its foundational texts. It seems hardly necessary to make a case for the historical significance of Advaita Vedānta to the study of Indian religion and philosophy, at least in modern times. From Orientalist scholars and Christian missionaries to nationalist reformers and New Age gurus, Advaita Vedānta dominated a variety of discourses in nineteenth- and twentieth-century India.⁵³ For some, it played the role of a universalist, non-sectarian philosophy that defined the spiritual core of a nascent nation. For others, it was an amoral, unworldly monism that reflected the pre-political, unchanging character of a subject people. And for still others, it represented a nondualist

⁵² See Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 423-436. For a dissenting voice, “troubled by Pollock’s overall treatment of religion as a kind of constant and largely irrelevant factor that is somehow untouched by power and has no consequences for it[,]” see Yigal Bronner, “A Road Map for Future Studies: *The Language of the Gods in the World of Scholars*,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 31.2 (2011): 542.

⁵³ See Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and the 'Mystic East'* (London: Routledge, 1999), 119-142.

alternative to inherited modes of Western thought; at turns mystical and thoroughly rational, it could attract comparative philosophers and spiritual seekers alike.

Not only is Advaita Vedānta one of the most influential schools of Indian philosophy, it is also one of the most studied. Some argue that it has in fact been *over*-studied, and attempt to counter “the hegemonic narrative...of Advaita Vedānta as the essence and culmination of Indian philosophical systems [...]”⁵⁴ To say that something has been studied much, however, is not necessarily to say it has been studied thoroughly and well. Scholars have yet to provide even a rudimentary, let alone comprehensive account of the history of Advaita Vedānta in the centuries leading up to the colonial period, though this history is precisely what set the stage for its modern reception. In other words, our understanding of Advaita Vedānta in the thousand-year period between the writings of Śaṅkara, widely considered the foundational figure of the tradition, and the lectures of Swami Vivekananda, one of the first spokespeople for a modern Hinduism, remains largely incomplete. As Michael Allen suggests, a wider perspective on Advaita's rise to prominence would require looking beyond the “classical” Sanskrit philosophical works belonging to Śaṅkara's school, and include all those Advaitic works outside that canon, which Allen calls “Greater Advaita Vedānta.”⁵⁵ Allen's own work, for example, addresses the

⁵⁴ See Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 15.

⁵⁵ See Michael Allen, “*The Ocean of Inquiry: A Neglected Classic of Late Advaita Vedānta*” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2013), 6: “I suspect that in order fully to understand Advaita's rise to prominence—not just in Banaras now, but across the subcontinent—we will have to look outside the received canon of Sanskrit philosophical works. Scholarly treatments of Advaita Vedānta do not usually include, for example, the popular Maharashtrian saint Jñāneśvar (13th c.), though his works clearly bear the stamp of Śaṅkara's Vedānta. Or consider the widely read and adapted *Adhyātma-rāmāyaṇa* (ca. late 15th c.)—another work seldom included in surveys of Vedāntic literature—which synthesizes non-dualist metaphysics with *Rāma-bhakti*, and which was one of the main sources for Tulsīdās's *Rāmcaritmānas*. The *Tripurā-rahasya*, to take an example from a very different milieu, is a work of South India Tantra, yet its *jñāna-khaṇḍa* is deeply indebted to Advaita Vedānta. From more recent times, take the popular saint Sai Baba of Shirdi (d. 1918), who is not considered an Advaita Vedāntin, but who often quoted from and recommended Advaitic works such as the *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha*. These are just a handful of examples, from very different periods and milieus, of the dissemination of Advaita Vedānta—or at least of teachings inspired by Advaita—outside the received canon of Sanskrit philosophical works, a phenomenon that might be referred to as ‘Greater Advaita Vedānta.’”

popularization and dissemination of vernacular Advaita through the Hindi writings of the Dādūpanthī Niścaldās. Forthcoming work by Shankar Nair studies the cross-cultural scope of Advaita in early modern North India, focusing on the formation of a “Persian Sufi Vedānta” under the Mughal aegis.⁵⁶ Elaine Fisher directs our attention to the South and the fusion of an ascendant Smārta Advaita with Tantric Śaiva and Śākta traditions, affiliated with the monastic center of Kāñcīpuram and the Nāyaka courts of Tamilnadu.⁵⁷ These examples of historically sensitive scholarship on Advaita Vedānta carry a great deal of promise for its future.

In this dissertation, I study the impact of another “greater” Advaita text, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, on scholars affiliated with the “classical” Advaita tradition. Sometimes that relationship is fraught; sometimes it is symbiotic. Either way, a more historically thorough understanding of that relationship shines a light on how it has been narrativized—say, with binaries such as monism vs. monotheism, jñāna vs. bhakti, or scholars vs. devotees. Quentin Skinner has the following to say about what intellectual history offers to thinking about the present.

[O]ne of the uses of the past arises from the fact that we are prone to fall under the spell of our own intellectual heritage. As we analyse and reflect on our normative concepts, it is easy to become bewitched into believing that the ways of thinking about them bequeathed to us by the mainstream of our intellectual traditions must be *the* ways of thinking about them. Given this situation, one of the contributions that historians can make is to offer us a kind of exorcism. If we approach the past with a willingness to listen, with a commitment to trying to see things their way, we can hope to prevent ourselves from becoming too readily bewitched. An understanding of the past can help us to appreciate how far the values embodied in our present way of life, and our present ways of thinking about those values, reflect a series of choices made at different times between different possible worlds.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ See Shankar Nair, “Philosophy in Any Language: Interaction Between Arabic, Sanskrit, and Persian Intellectual Cultures in Mughal South Asia” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2014).

⁵⁷ See Fisher, “A New Public Theology.”

⁵⁸ Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Vol. 1*, 6.

First of all, I find this sentiment beautiful—and aesthetics guide our intellectual choices as much as our rational acceptance of them. What it means to me is that to be concerned with the historiography of religion and philosophy is itself a philosophical endeavor. Skinner's invocation of “different possible worlds” is one that derives from the discipline of historical study itself. This is not to diminish the philosophical value of his subject matter, but to subject it to the exigencies of what Wilfred Cantwell Smith would have called “critical corporate self-consciousness,” the acknowledgment of our collective participation in assigning as well as receiving value from our intellectual progenitors.⁵⁹ One of the intellectual heritages I engage with in this dissertation is how histories of Indian philosophy have marginalized the study of historical change.⁶⁰ As I will show in the case of Advaita Vedānta, many of these changes turn out not to be “philosophical” at all, in the sense of promulgating new doctrine, but rather hermeneutical. In other words, it is the shifting registers of scholastic discourse that betray distinct historical tensions, to which intellectuals attempted to respond in illocutionary fashion. Such innovations were part of the fabric of Sanskrit intellectual life in early modern India, perhaps nowhere more so than in and across Vedānta traditions. Yet this later history is frequently subsumed under the modern encyclopedic effort to delineate the “real spirit” of Indian philosophy, neatly packageable into discrete doctrines, stripped of their historical specificity.⁶¹ The way in which the past acts

⁵⁹ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief: The Difference Between Them* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1998), 148.

⁶⁰ Cf. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 11: “Books titled 'The History of Indian Philosophy' rarely deal with history. The 'historical' portion of such books is generally limited to a few sentences at the beginning of each section listing the philosopher's dates and (optionally) in which part of India he lived.”

⁶¹ See, e.g., the criticisms of the historian Surendranath Dasgupta, who assessed literary activity in early modern Advaita as being “syncretistic,” “lacking in originality,” and “philosophically uninteresting.” See Minkowski, “Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern History,” 206, 212. In his study of Sanskrit bitextual (*śleṣa*) poetry, Yigal Bronner criticizes the Romantic notion, pervasive among many twentieth-century historians of Sanskrit literature, that the earliest expressions of poetic or philosophical thought are its unalterable essence, and that all

upon us, the anxiety of influence, and the reading and writing practices in which we as scholars participate—in other words, history—were no less the concerns of the thinkers so often studied as “philosophers.” Yet it is precisely access to history that we are reluctant to allow these Indian intellectuals, or at best subordinate to their supposedly more salient philosophical concerns.

For example, a recently classic work on postcolonial thought bemoans the fact that Indian social scientists have no reason to engage with the thought-worlds of premodern philosophers like Bhartṛhari, Gaṅgeśa, or Abhinavagupta.⁶² They are not at all considered contemporaries in the way that, say, Hegel or Marx has become indispensable to thinking about modern democratic politics. Some have responded by advocating for the inclusion of premodern Indian philosophers within the genre of intellectual history, precisely so that they may become “participants in twenty-first-century philosophical conversations.”⁶³ But what if this whole desire to contemporize misses the point? As Skinner says above, one of the benefits of intellectual history is in the vision it provides of alternative historical worlds that, regardless of whether they look different or similar to our own, are in and of themselves salutary reminders of how historically contingent the present is.

In my dissertation, for example, I study the academic careers of the Devas of early modern Banaras, a family of Brahmin scholars who moved from Maharashtra in the sixteenth century. They ended up becoming quite successful, but some things about Banarasi academic culture rubbed them the wrong way. The Devas found themselves reacting to its almost secular,

later developments are symptoms of decay or degeneracy. See Yigal Bronner, *Extreme Poetry: The South Asian Movement of Simultaneous Narration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 17.

⁶² See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 5.

⁶³ See Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 22.

this-worldly intellectual hegemony with their own form of religious rhetoric. Their writings reflect an unease not with the lack of academic freedom, but with scholarly liberti(n)es they felt were multiplying too fast. As I show in my chapter on them, the Devas would probably seem awfully familiar to members of that modern society of *paṇḍits*: Western academia. Like present-day academics who have private religious lives, they too dealt with the tension between scholarly success and personal piety. Like members of any academic family, they wanted both to honor their heritage and to stake out their own positions, to disagree without disrespect. And like many immigrants in search of new economic opportunities, they tried to maintain a sense of continuity with the culture of their origin.

This sense of familiarity with the present raises the question: Why do we need to situate the Devas in relationship to their European contemporaries? Why are the questions we ask about them determined by the teleology of the modern West?⁶⁴ Why does time have to be linear when it comes to the history of ideas? After all, in many ways the historical contexts of early modern Europe and India were completely reversed. Consider the following contrasts from just the seventeenth century:

- In Europe there prevailed a religious orthodoxy against which secular voices struggled to find representation, while in India, largely secular political structures allowed intra- and inter-religious exchange.⁶⁵
- In Europe, a theological intolerance of religious pluralism made virtually all textual criticism revolve around a single monolithic text, the Bible, while in India, a plurality of texts and traditions circulated in a world in which religious pluralism was the norm rather than the exception.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Cf. Pollock, "Introduction," 1-4.

⁶⁵ Even apart from Akbar's famous interreligious salons, the ascendancy of Mughal rule in general benefited the fortunes of Sanskrit philosophers. See Minkowski, "Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern India," 220-222.

⁶⁶ This contrast can be highlighted through the example of the French Oratorian Richard Simon, who had, in his *Critical History of the Old Testament* (1678), revived old questions about the integrity of the biblical text. Simon

- In Europe, a widespread political absolutism sought to silence intellectual freedom through increasingly repressive forms of invigilation, while in India, scholars like the Devas possessed relative intellectual freedom and patronage from Hindu and Muslim rulers alike.⁶⁷

This is not to go so far as to say that “there is no shame in premodernity,”⁶⁸ or that the Sanskrit domination of science in early modern India represented a kind of “civilizational achievement.”⁶⁹

I think there is plenty of scope for the ethical criticism of dominant traditions, premodern and modern alike.⁷⁰ All I suggest is that before proclaiming who has been relegated to the “waiting room of history,” maybe we should take a look at our fellow passengers first.⁷¹

went on to demonstrate the additions and changes made to the Bible over its historical course, claiming that Moses could not have been the author of everything attributed to him. It should be emphasized that Simon was no Spinoza. He considered the transformations of the text to be effects of divine Providence, which preserved the purity of doctrine and not the consistency of text. Faith for him could subsist without Scripture, since its true meaning was possessed by the Church. Nevertheless, the book was seized upon publication, banned by the King's Council, and burned publicly. Needless to say, Simon was immediately expelled from the Oratory. See Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion and Philology in the Nineteenth Century*, tr. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 22-28. Cf. Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 447-456.

Practices of text-editing were legion in the premodern Sanskrit world, and sometimes, though not always, involved issues of sectarian identity and scriptural authenticity. Yet they never provoked nearly the same level of repression from on high or internecine violence. See Elaine Fisher, “The Sources of Sectarian Debate: The Extra-Textual Life of Sanskrit Philology in Seventeenth Century South India” (paper presented at South Asia Graduate Student Conference, University of Chicago, April 5, 2012). Cf. Sheldon Pollock, “What Was Philology in Sanskrit?” in *World Philology*, eds. Sheldon Pollock, Benjamin A. Elman, and Ku-ming Kevin Chang (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 114-136.

⁶⁷ See Sheldon Pollock, *The Ends of Man at the End of Premodernity* (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences), 85-87.

⁶⁸ Sheldon Pollock, “Pretextures of Time,” *History and Theory* 46.3 (2007): 381.

⁶⁹ Pollock, “The Languages of Science,” 38.

⁷⁰ Cf. Pollock, “Is There An Indian Intellectual History?”, 541: “[T]he Indian case reconnects with a problem shared by all other national or civilizational traditions of intellectual history, namely the fact that by definition they study the textualized thoughts of the elite, unlike social history’s study of ‘mentalities,’ the thought worlds of ordinary people (which are somehow more real than others). But while Walter Benjamin’s oft-quoted thesis VII on the philosophy of history may well be true, that ‘no document of civilization...is not at the same time a document of barbarism,’ it by no means follows that study of the documents of civilization cannot contribute, through a commitment to both understanding and critique, toward an emancipatory, or at least humanizing, humanities.”

⁷¹ See Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 8.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter 2, I attempt to account for the chronological gap between the composition of the BhP and its first exegetical treatments, some three to four centuries later. I track the movement of the BhP between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries, from the Tamil South to Orissa, Maharashtra, and Kerala, by studying the inscriptional, philosophical, and literary culture of these regions. I situate the BhP at the nexus of a number of intellectual, religious, and artistic currents: competing traditions of Vedānta, exchange between Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava communities, and the rise of Sanskrit praise-poetry together with an aesthetics of bhakti, or “bhaktirasa.” I devote particular attention to the Orissan exegete Śrīdhara Svāmin, the Yādavas of Maharashtra, Hemādri and Vopadeva, and the Keralite poet and commentator Pūrṇasarasvatī.

Chapter 3 examines the impact of the BhP on Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta through the intellectual history of a single text, the *Bhagavannāma* (BNK), or “Moonlight of God's Name.” Written by Lakṣmīdhara, a later contemporary of Śrīdhara, around the turn of the fifteenth century, the BNK argues in the language of Mīmāṃsā that the genre of *purāṇa* should be accorded Vedic status. Particular attention is given to justifying the BhP's claims that singing God's name dissolves all sins—a stark rejection of the normative expiatory practices of *dharmaśāstra*, a discourse that grounds itself in the metalegal framework provided by Mīmāṃsā and its socialization of the ritual world.⁷² Much of this controversy centers around the canonicity of the BhP, indeed the entire genre of *purāṇa*: to be precise, how the authority of the *purāṇa* should relate to the textual hierarchy of *śruti* and *smṛti* established by Mīmāṃsā. This debate not only illustrates the logical conclusion of the shifting notions of legitimation between early and

⁷² See Sheldon Pollock, “From Discourse of Ritual to Discourse of Power in Sanskrit Culture,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4.2 (1990): 315-345.

late-classical Mīmāṃsā, by which time the relative degrees of authority between *śruti* and *smṛti* had become notably less defined, but also highlights the difference between Lakṣmīdhara and his predecessors in terms of how they viewed the *purāṇa* and the authority of the BhP.

I also contextualize the BNK in the wider world of Vaiṣṇava Vedānta traditions, including but not limited to Advaita Vedānta. Lakṣmīdhara is attributed a separate work on Advaita called the *Advaitamakaraṇḍa*, but in the BNK he responds critically to Advaitic interpretations of the BhP. The later history of the BNK, which comprises the second half of the chapter, poses still further problems of philosophical belonging. At roughly contemporaneous moments in the sixteenth-century Doab, both Advaita Vedāntins and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas—generally depicted in hagiographical literature as intractably opposed—laid claim to the BNK as a source of theological inspiration. Only a century or so later, the BNK made its way down to South India, where the musical-performative tradition popularly known as the *bhajana sampradāya* began to take shape during the rule of the Thanjavur Marathas. According to the patrons and performers of this tradition of *purāṇic* storytelling (*harikathā*) and devotional singing (*nāmasaṃkīrtana*), the BNK was a foundational text for the *sampradāya*. And finally, modern manuscript catalogues and editions of the BNK differ widely on how they categorize it: some as a work of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, some as Caitanya Vedānta, and still others as Dvaita Vedānta. Ultimately, I suggest that these plural histories point to the local, fragmentary character of a text-tradition often valorized for its universality.

Chapter 4 picks up one genealogical strand of the BNK in early modern Banaras. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Banaras became a site of significant social and intellectual contestation whose outcomes exerted their influence well into Indian modernity. Recent

scholarship has demonstrated that Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta seem to have been favored by that city's intellectual elite, many of whom emigrated from the Deccan and South India.

However, much work needs to be done in order to contextualize this claim within the social and intellectual history of both traditions. This chapter concentrates on a particular problematic: the relationship between popular religious movements and the rarefied air of scholarly pedagogy.

What sort of challenge did the public expression of personal devotion pose to early modern Sanskrit intellectuals? How did the growth of theistic traditions influence intellectual writing across Sanskrit knowledge-systems? More particularly, what space might bhakti have found among the intellectuals of Banaras, jostling for attention with well-established disciplines

expounding karma and jñāna—that is, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta? And how might we situate these shifting registers of intellectual discourse against the social changes of the early modern world?

In this chapter, I address these questions by focusing on the intellectual corpus of the Deva family of Maharashtrian Brahmins, in order to discern the tensions between their philosophical interest in scriptural study (jñāna), their pedagogical commitment to ritual hermeneutics (karma), and their religious devotion to an embodied god (bhakti).

Chapter 5 engages with historiographical accounts of the intersection between bhakti and Advaita Vedānta, which have tended to concentrate on their philosophical compatibility. One of the major figures at this junction is the Advaitin Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, most of whose oeuvre has been studied quite thoroughly. I offer a reading of a relatively neglected work,

Madhusūdana's commentary on the first three verses of the BhP, which provides an interesting view of the diverse communities of interpretation around the BhP. Next I take up another work on the margins of the classical, Śaṅḍilya's *Bhakti Sūtras* (SBS), or the “Aphorisms on Bhakti.”

The SBS set the very idea of bhakti as an object of theoretical inquiry in opposition to jñāna and karma. Although it is quite plain that the SBS model themselves on their Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta predecessors, there have been surprisingly few studies of their intellectual history. I will argue that because the SBS were virtually unknown until the seventeenth century, their composition should be located in the new intellectual economy of early modern India.

Not surprisingly, scholarly discussion of the exegetical tradition is even more scant than of the aphorisms themselves. The works of the seventeenth-century Advaitin Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha present us with an opportunity to study the links between Mīmāṃsā, Advaita Vedānta, and bhakti with the greatest level of historical specificity. I discuss the logic of Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha's commentary on the SBS, the *Bhakticandrikā*, or “Moonlight of Bhakti.” Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha was a protégé of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, but appears to have gone farther than his predecessor in supporting the SBS' assertion that Vedānta study should be subordinate to attaining bhakti. I make special note of Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha's remarkable incorporation of non-Advaita Vedānta writings into his commentary. I also follow his attempts to make bhakti a constitutive part of Yoga practice in his commentary on the *Yoga Sūtras*, the *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā*. Finally, I demonstrate how the SBS made a surprising cameo in the works of an eighteenth-century Śaiva/Śākta intellectual of the Tamil South, Bhāskararāya. In the end, I suggest that we should revisit the relationship between bhakti and Advaita by paying attention not only to a wider range of texts, but to the historical interventions they attempted to make.

Chapter 2: The Darkness at Dusk

*We'd set out to travel on Advaita Road
initiates at the throne of our inner bliss,
when a trickster forced us to be his slaves,
the one making love to the farmers' wives.*

-Līlāśuka Bilvamaṅgala, *Bilvamaṅgalastava* 2.2⁷³

The BhP in Transit: Śaivas, Vaiṣṇavas, Advaita Vedāntins

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa (BhP), one of the most influential Hindu scriptures of the second millennium, is believed to have found its final textual form around the tenth century CE in South India. Its first extant scholastic treatments, however, date from a full three to four centuries later, in regions to the north: Maharashtra and Orissa. This gap has gone largely unaccounted for in scholarship on the reception history of the BhP. While the popularity of the BhP among religious elites and humbler poet-saints has formed the subject of decades of scholarship on the “bhakti movement,” the early centuries of the BhP's dissemination remain insufficiently studied. The question of this chapter is simple: If the BhP does not have a significant afterlife in the Tamil South, but it does elsewhere a few centuries later, how does it get there? Answers, however, are much less readily forthcoming. In this chapter, I situate the BhP's entry into the Sanskrit intellectual world against the backdrop of contemporary transitions and transactions between Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religious communities. I revisit the chronology and geography of the BhP in an attempt to explain the relative silence surrounding the BhP in several southern intellectual traditions. I offer some thoughts on the problem of philosophical belonging: Who really cared

⁷³ See *The Bilvamaṅgalastava*, ed. Frances Wilson (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 88 (my trans.):

advaitavīthīpathikāḥ pravṛttāḥ
svānandasimhāsanalabdhadīkṣāḥ |
śaṭhena kenāpi vyaṃ haṭhena
dāsīkṛtā gopavadhūvīṭena ||

about the BhP? I make the case that, counterintuitive as it may seem, the BhP flourished in communities that offered a version of Advaita, or nondualist Vedānta. And I reflect on the development of an aesthetics of religious devotion (bhaktirasa) as it moved between Śaiva poets and Vaiṣṇava exegetes of the BhP. What follows is a necessarily fragmentary attempt to reconstruct some of the possible contexts for the medieval transmission of the BhP and its ideas of bhakti. In one sense this is an argument from silence, but it is also an argument from loud whispers. Whether those whispers lead us to greater truth, or are simply nefarious sirens, they are insistent and compel us to listen.

What are the sources for assigning the BhP to the tenth-century south? In a famous passage from around the turn of the eighteenth century about the glory of the BhP, the *Bhāgavata Māhātmya*, a personified bhakti describes her travels from south to north: “I was born in Dravida, grew up in Karnataka, went here and there in Maharashtra, and became old and worn in Gujarat.” Finally, upon reaching Brindavan, the land of the god Kṛṣṇa's exploits, her beauty is restored, just like new.⁷⁴ Scholars such as Friedhelm Hardy and D. Dennis Hudson sought to demonstrate that the BhP was embedded and embodied in the Tamil South. In his book on the roots of emotional devotion to Kṛṣṇa, *Viraha-Bhakti*, Hardy argued that “the character of intellectual bhakti was completely transformed under the influence of a regional, vernacular tradition.”⁷⁵ That tradition belonged to the Tamil Āḷvārs, whose songs and narratives found Sanskrit expression in the BhP, the text that exemplified the attempt to harmonize the complex

⁷⁴ See John Stratton Hawley, “The *Bhāgavata-Māhātmya* in Context,” in *Patronage and Popularisation, Pilgrimage and Procession*, ed. Heidi Pauwels (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2009), 82.

⁷⁵ Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti: The early history of Kṛṣṇa devotion in South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 44.

encounters between Tamil and Sanskritic Hinduism.⁷⁶ Hudson supported this claim with a sophisticated reading of the multiple layers of the BhP alongside the architectural projects of the Pallava kings. Assigning different dates to different chapters, Hudson argued that the final layer was closely identified with, in fact replicated in, the sculptural program of the Vaikuntha Perumal temple in Kāñcīpuram.⁷⁷ Taken together, their arguments locate a significant part of the composition of the BhP in the Tamil South around the turn of the first millennium. Edwin Bryant, however, has offered considered disagreements with both the date and the provenance of the BhP.⁷⁸ The temple architecture only proves the *terminus ante quem* of the text, he argues, and the Ālvārs may well have been influenced by the BhP rather than the other way around.⁷⁹ Moreover, the narrative of migration in the *Bhāgavata Māhātmya* was likely an invented tradition, a case of the north looking back to the south as the source of archaic wisdom and authority.⁸⁰ Whether or not the BhP did in fact originate in the south, or was completed there, these debates over the provenance of the text do not in themselves account for the virtual absence of intellectual engagement with the BhP for several centuries. Nor do they satisfactorily explain how the BhP was popularized and transmitted after its composition, wherever and whenever it may have been. The *Māhātmya* account, for all of its invention, remains a guiding metaphor in

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 489.

⁷⁷ D. Dennis Hudson, *Krishna's Mandala: Bhagavata Religion and Beyond*, ed. John Stratton Hawley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 125-140.

⁷⁸ See Edwin F. Bryant, "The Date and Provenance of the *Bhāgavata Purāna* and the Vaikuntha Perumal Temple," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 11.1 (2002): 51-80.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 66-69.

⁸⁰ See John Stratton Hawley, *A Storm of Songs: India and the Idea of the Bhakti Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 73: "I think the author of the *Māhātmya* belonged to a community of north Indian Vaiṣṇava Brahmins who felt besieged by a profusion of *Bhāgavata Purāna* performance practices that they no longer controlled, and who therefore turned to the south to shore up their authority as purveyors of the *Bhāgavata*'s special power."

this chapter for the movement and migration of the text.

No doubt, there is a vernacular story to be told here. The editors of a recent volume of essays on the BhP agree that “a detailed account of the Bhāgavata's vernacularization is a much needed chapter in the story of the Bhāgavata's life in the world.”⁸¹ Sheldon Pollock notes that the BhP emerged as a focal text for the literarization of many vernacular languages; texts such as Potana's *Bhāgavatamu* in Telugu (15th C.) and the *Gadyarāja* of Hayagrīva in Marathi (1320 CE) were versions of the BhP in the high cosmopolitan register, while in the sixteenth century Eknāth and Nanddās composed versions in more regional Marathi and Braj Bhasha.⁸² The BhP moved between social locations as well. The first recognizable work of Bengali *belles lettres*, as Jesse Knutson has shown, was the *Śrīkrṣṇakīrttana* of Baḍu Caṇḍīdās (14th-15th C.), “an incompletely literary work, a text of the dust and dirt of the rural outdoors,” that did the double duty of “speaking to a legacy of cosmopolitan poetry and yet still marking itself as...rural and provincial[.]”⁸³

But even if these works had precedessors, they too appeared some centuries after the BhP's composition. So who really cared about this text that would become so widespread as the source *par excellence* of Vaiṣṇava devotional religion?⁸⁴ On the Sanskrit scholastic level, the

⁸¹ Ravi Gupta and Kenneth Valpey, “Introduction: Churning the Ocean of *Līlā*,” in *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa: Sacred Text and Living Tradition*, eds. Ravi Gupta and Kenneth Valpey (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 13.

⁸² Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 310-312, 351, n.44, 382.

⁸³ Jesse Knutson, *Into the Twilight of Sanskrit Court Poetry: The Sena Salon and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 93-95, 100.

⁸⁴ Together with, of course, a host of other epic and *purāṇic* sources that formed a continuum: namely, the Bhagavad Gītā, *Harivaṃśa* and *Nārāyaṇīya* sections of the Mahābhārata, as well as the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the *Viṣṇudharma*. On the last of these, see Reinhold Grünendahl, ed., *Viṣṇudharmāḥ: Precepts for the Worship of Viṣṇu*, Vols. 1-3 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983).

ostensible place to begin this investigation would be the writings of Rāmānuja (11th C.) and Madhva (13th C.), the famous Vaiṣṇava founders of the Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita schools of Vedānta. Both Rāmānuja and Madhva had ties to temple traditions centered on the ritual worship of Viṣṇu. Rāmānuja's Śrīvaiṣṇava predecessors and successors, moreover, were inspired by the same Āḷvār poetry that Hardy situates at the heart of the BhP. However, the BhP does not seem to have played a major role in the development of their theologies. In Rāmānuja's case, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* was of much more fundamental importance to his theological enterprise.⁸⁵ It is the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* alone, he writes in his *Vedārthasamgraha*, that “has been accepted without dissension, by all the educated in the East, North, South, and the West because it alone is adequate in the decision on all observances and all reality.”⁸⁶ Even his illustrious follower Vedānta Deśika (13th C.), who wrote in Sanskrit, Tamil, and Maṇipravāla, cared less about the BhP and more about theorizing and exemplifying specifically Śrīvaiṣṇava forms of devotion. For example, Vedānta Deśika's Sanskrit praise-poem, the *Mahāvīravaibhava*, though inspired by Tamil panegyric used by the Āḷvārs, was dedicated to Rāma in a spirit of respectful devotion, far from the erotic mood of Kṛṣṇa-centered bhakti preferred by the BhP.⁸⁷

As for Madhva, his *Bhāgavatātātparyanirṇaya*, “Understanding the Purport of the BhP,” is perhaps the first extant work of Vedānta which approaches the BhP as an independent theological source-text.⁸⁸ True to Madhva's inimitable inventiveness, however, this text is less a

⁸⁵ See Sucharita Adluri, *Textual Authority in Classical Indian Thought: Rāmānuja and the Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁸⁶ Quoted in Sucharita Adluri, “Śruti and Smṛti in Rāmānuja's Vedānta,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 15.1 (2006): 209. Cf. Johannes van Buitenen, *Rāmānuja's Vedārthasamgraha: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Annotated Translation* (Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, 1956), 140.

⁸⁷ Ajay Rao, *Refiguring the Rāmāyaṇa as Theology: A History of Reception in Premodern India* (London: Routledge, 2015), 110.

⁸⁸ *Bhāgavata-Tātparya-Nirṇaya*, ed. Bannanje Govindacharya (Udupi: Akhila Bhārata Mādhva Mahā Mandala

work of exegesis than a series of extracted verses deployed to support his maverick theological vision. Madhva comments with extreme brevity on selected verses from each chapter of the BhP, and follows these glosses with long quotations from several sources, many of which were famously “unknown” to his other Vedānta contemporaries.⁸⁹ If the *Bhāgavatātāparyanirṇaya* had any impact on the Sanskrit intellectual world, it did not reach far beyond his own community until perhaps the synthesizing efforts of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theologian Jīva Gosvāmin in the sixteenth century.⁹⁰

Conspicuously missing from this account, however, is attention to the role that Advaita Vedānta may have played in the transmission of the BhP. There are a few reasons why this may be the case. First, the traditions of Vedānta that affiliated themselves with Vaiṣṇava theology were historically hostile to Advaita, from those of Rāmānuja and Madhva above to Vallabha and Caitanya in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, who were more directly influenced by the BhP. These traditions and the texts they valued, according to the logic of histories of Indian philosophy, were properly theistic in nature, in contradistinction to the necessarily non-theistic implications of nondual Advaita Vedānta: a classic and insurmountable distinction between monotheism and monism.⁹¹ Andrew Nicholson sums up this line of thinking:

Publications, 1980).

⁸⁹ See Roque Mesquita, *Madhva's Unknown Literary Sources: Some Observations* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2000).

⁹⁰ See *Tattvasandarbhā* 28, trans. in Stuart Mark Elkman, *Jīva Gosvamin's Tattvasandarbhā: A Study on the Philosophical and Sectarian Development of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Movement* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 121: “And here, the authoritative words of Śruti, the Purāṇas, etc. will be quoted just as I have seen them; . . . In some cases, I have been unable to personally see certain verses, and so have taken them from the *Bhāgavatātāparyā*, *Bhāratātāparyā*, and *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, etc. of the venerable Madhvācārya...”

⁹¹ Many such modern histories of Indian philosophy separate the reconstruction of Vaiṣṇava Vedānta thought from Advaita Vedānta on these grounds. See, e.g., Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. IV* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961); R. Balasubramanian, ed., *Theistic Vedānta* (New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations, 2003).

[A]s Dasgupta has pointed out,⁹² the Vedāntic teachings presented in the Purāṇas are generally not compatible with the teachings of Śaṅkara and, instead, have more in common with Rāmānuja and Vijñānabhikṣu....It should therefore not be surprising that Advaita Vedāntins less frequently quote the Purāṇas. For Vedāntins of other affiliations, however, the Purāṇas stand side-by-side with the Bhagavad Gītā as the most important *smṛti* texts.⁹³

A second reason is less philosophical than sectarian. From the fourteenth century onward in the south, philosophical differences between Advaitins and their opponents also came to be structured around Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religious identities. As Matthew Clark has recently shown, the early history of the Vijayanagara empire—its founding under the Saṅgama kings Harihara and Bukka (ca. 1350 CE), their patronage of the Vedic commentators Sāyaṇa and Mādhava, and their reverence for Vidyāraṇya, the ascetic pontiff of the Śṛṅgerī monastery—demonstrates how a new Brahmanical form of Advaita was fashioned to fit a Śaiva political regime and monastic project.⁹⁴ The enshrining of Advaita orthodoxy in fourteenth-century Vijayanagara, and its subsequent displacement by the Vaiṣṇava Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita preferences of the Sāluva, Tuluva, and Araviḍu dynasties, would set the stage for social and philosophical disputation in South India for the next few centuries.⁹⁵ Among non-Brahmanical traditions, the Śaiva affinity of Nāth Yogic and Siddha traditions that shared a language, if not always a social space, with nondualist thought, further strengthened the perceived ties between Śaivism and Advaita.

⁹² Cf. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 496.

⁹³ Andrew Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 75.

⁹⁴ Matthew Clark, *The Daśanāmī-Samnyāsīs: The Integration of Ascetic Lineages into an Order* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 177-226. Important historiographical revisions made by Clark include the dissociation of Mādhava from Vidyāraṇya (*Ibid.*, 208-214) and the suggestion that Vidyāraṇya's appellation "Kriyāśakti" indicates that he may have been a Kālāmukha Śaiva prior to his ascension of the Śṛṅgerī *gaddī* (208).

⁹⁵ See Valerie Stoker, "Polemics and Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Vijayanagara: Vyāsātīrtha and the Dynamics of Hindu Sectarian Relations," *History of Religions* 51.2 (2011): 129-155.

Scholarly attempts to study Advaita Vedānta and Vaiṣṇavism together either proclaim Advaita Vedānta as inherently non-sectarian, downplaying its own social contexts, or seek common philosophical ground between two identities defined as historically contradictory.⁹⁶

But what are we talking about when we talk about Advaita Vedānta? Most immediately it is that exegetical theology systematized by the eighth-century philosopher Śaṅkarācārya. In his commentaries on the *Brahma Sūtras*, some of the Upaniṣads, and the Bhagavad Gītā, and his prose work *Upadeśasāhasrī*, Śaṅkara attempted to develop a coherent exposition of absolute nondualism. An older contemporary of Śaṅkara was Maṇḍana Mīśra, frequently (though erroneously) identified with Śaṅkara's disciple Sureśvara.⁹⁷ Soon after Śaṅkara, Sureśvara and Padmapāda, another of Śaṅkara's disciples, wrote important works building on his exposition of Advaita, the *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi* and *Pañcapādikā*, respectively.

The history of Advaita after Śaṅkara, however, is a series of stops and starts, and is by no means cohesive or indicative of any continuous lines of transmission. Approximately one hundred years passed before the emergence of the polymath Vācaspati Mīśra (850 CE, Mithilā), who attempted to reconcile Maṇḍana with Śaṅkara in his commentary on the latter. It was actually Maṇḍana who represented the main exponent of Advaita Vedānta to its initial detractors

⁹⁶ More on this in Chapter 5, but for the former, see T.M.P. Mahadevan, ed., *Preceptors of Advaita* (Secunderabad: Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Mandir, 1968); Krishna Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement: A New Perspective* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1987). For the latter, see Bradley Malkovsky, *The Role of Divine Grace in the Soteriology of Śaṅkarācārya* (Boston: Brill, 2001); Lance Nelson, "Theological Politics and Paradoxical Spirituality in the Life of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 15.2 (2007): 19-34.

⁹⁷ In his introduction to Maṇḍana Mīśra's *Brahmasiddhi*, S. Kuppaswami Sastri provided the most authoritative refutation of the identity of Maṇḍana and Sureśvara, citing the inconsistency between the hagiographical tradition and the evidence internal to the texts. Though Sastri was himself quite the committed Advaitin, his frank and philologically sound dismissal of the hagiographies caused quite a ripple in South Indian scholarly circles, prompting even the author of the foreword to his edition to question Sastri's conclusion. See *Brahmasiddhi*, ed. S. Kuppaswami Sastri (Madras: Government Press, 1937), v-ix, xxi-lxxv.

from other philosophical schools, which took little notice of it in general; Buddhists, Jains, Naiyāyikas, and Mīmāṃsakas seemed quite content to debate amongst themselves until at least the turn of the first millennium.⁹⁸ At around this time, another full century after Vācaspati Miśra, influential works were written by Prakāśātman (ca. 1000 CE, *Pañcapādikāvivarāṇa*), Vimuktātman (ca. 975 CE, *Iṣṭasiddhi*), and Sarvajñātman (1027 CE, *Samkṣepaśārīraka*). Other than the correspondence of their names (ending in *-ātman*), we know virtually nothing about them. After the Vaiṣṇava Vedānta interventions of Rāmānuja and Madhva, a new wave of Advaita literary activity characterized the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, including works by Ānandabodha, Ānandānubhava, Anubhūtiśvarūpācārya, and Akhaṇḍānanda. Still, we know very little about the historical context of these authors and their works, or whether they took any notice of the alternative Vedāntas on offer. Some think that Ānandagiri (13th C.), commentator on Śāṅkara's canonical works, was the head of the Dvārakā monastery in Gujarat, but more probably he was a native of Orissa.⁹⁹ Some signs put Citsukha (13th C.) in Bengal, but he could have lived in the Deccan.¹⁰⁰ We know that Śrīharṣa (12th C.), author of the *Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍakhādyā*, lived in Kanauj, and that Kṛṣṇa Miśra (11th C.), author of the *Prabodhacandrodaya*, was at the Candella court in central India, but have no clue how they received their ideas, or indeed if they had any ties to Śāṅkara. The social history of teaching lineages and textual transmission in medieval

⁹⁸ See Daya Krishna, “Vedānta in the First Millennium AD: The Case Study of a Retrospective Illusion Imposed by the Historiography of Indian Philosophy,” *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research* 13 (1996): 201-207.

⁹⁹ Ānandagiri's first work, composed under Anubhūtiśvarūpācārya's guidance, was written under the rule of Nṛsiṃhadeva, the king of Kaliṅga, who ruled from 1238-1264 CE. For the claim that he was from Gujarat, see *Tarkasamgraha*, ed. T.M. Tripathi (Baroda: Central Library, 1917), vii-xi.

¹⁰⁰ Citsukha studied with one Jñānottama, whom he styles as the preceptor of the King of Gauḍa, but his pupil Sukhaprakāśa in turn instructed Amalānanda, who clearly identifies his patronage from the Yādava king Kṛṣṇadeva. See Mahadevan, ed., *Preceptors of Advaita*, 64.

Advaita remains a desideratum, as does a thorough investigation of these texts in context.

What this scattered transmission of Advaita points to for our purposes is that Advaita Vedānta was a shifting, splintered tradition, a sprawling banyan tree with a mesh of roots, sometimes intersecting, sometimes leading nowhere, sometimes of indiscernible origin. To single out a branch or doctrine or text as representative of the whole is to take the tradition, and its opponents, at their own word. Even if we exclude other forms of non-Vedic nondualist thought, such as Kashmiri Śaivism, the act of restricting Advaita to “Śaṅkara's Advaita,” or using his as the model against which all else is to be measured, reduces other texts and interpreters that exhibit Advaita affinities to bit players in Advaita history—or to players who are not following the rules.¹⁰¹ To the more specific problem of Advaita and Vaiṣṇavism, Paul Hacker demonstrated that Śaṅkara himself probably belonged to a Vaiṣṇava milieu, “either by origin, environment, or circumstance.”¹⁰² It was only in the sixteenth century and beyond that Śaṅkara himself was

¹⁰¹ The Kashmiri Śaiva nondualists, who drew upon a completely independent Āgamic scriptural tradition, viewed themselves as quite distinct from, and quite superior to, followers of a Brahmanical Advaita Vedānta grounded in the Vedic Upaniṣads. But there was certainly exchange between the two, and some were more accommodating than others. In his opening comment on the tenth aphorism of his *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*, the eleventh-century Śaiva Kṣemarāja says: “Here we see the only thing that distinguishes Śaiva nondualism from the Vedāntins...that the Lord who consists of consciousness is constantly performing the Five Actions.” See *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya of Kṣemarāja*, ed. J.C. Chatterji. KSTS No. 3. (Srinagar: Kashmir Pratap Steam Press, 1911), 22-23: iha īśvarādvayadarśanasya brahmavādidibhyaḥ ayam eva viśeṣaḥ, yat...sadā pañcavidhakṛtyakāritvaṃ cidātmano bhagavataḥ. Cf. Whitney Cox, “A South Indian Śākta Cosmogony: An Annotated Translation of Selections from Maheśvarānanda’s *Mahārthamañjarīparimala*, gāthās 19 and 20,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 40.2 (2012): 208, n.20.

The line of influence went the other way in the work of Vidyāraṇya (14th C.), or whoever was the author of the *Jīvanmuktiviveka*, who co-opted the unaffiliated nondualism of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* into his version of “Yogic Advaita.” See Walter Slaje, “On Changing Others' Ideas: The Case of Vidyāraṇya and the Yogavāsiṣṭha,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 41.2 (1998): 103-124. Cf. Andrew Fort, *Jīvanmukti in Transformation: Embodied Liberation in Advaita and Neo-Vedānta* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 97-113. Rarely, however, does the act of synthesis with this distinct Advaitic tradition elicit scholarly doubts about the authenticity of the Advaita Vedānta in question—certainly not in the same way as with the BhP. See *Ibid.*, 97-98: “The significant differences in emphasis and focus between Vidyāraṇya's (and the LYV's) Yogic Advaita and Śaṅkara's mainstream 'Vedāntic' Advaita rarely lead to direct opposition or contradiction—thus it is still Advaita.”

¹⁰² Paul Hacker, “Relations of Early Advaitins to Vaiṣṇavism,” in *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedānta*, ed. Wilhelm Halbfass (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 35.

hagiographically appropriated as a Śaiva representative of Advaita Vedānta, and retrojected onto the foundational moment of the Vijayanagara empire. Hacker concluded:

The fact that radical Advaitism was cultivated in Vaiṣṇava circles is borne out also by the existence of texts that expressly profess Vaiṣṇavism and teach radical Advaitism at the same time. To this category belong certain passages of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (which may date from a time not far distant from Śaṅkara's lifetime) and of the *Paramārthasāra* ascribed to Ādiśeṣa...¹⁰³

Obviously what concerns us here is Hacker's mention of the BhP. By now it is old news that the BhP exhibits what Daniel Sheridan has called “Advaitic theism.”¹⁰⁴ That it is different from “Śaṅkara's Advaita” is fairly clear, and the Vaiṣṇava Vedāntins who eventually laid claim to the text made sure to emphasize that difference. But the persistent presence of Advaitins who both directly linked themselves to Śaṅkara, and found inspiration in the BhP, will surface repeatedly in this dissertation and later in this chapter.

The fact that Vaiṣṇavas like Rāmānuja and Madhva were contending with Advaita in the first place, even in their *purāṇic* exegeses, makes one wonder to whom they were responding. Rāmānuja consistently used the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (VP) to counter Advaita interpretations not just of Vedānta, but of the VP itself. Sucharita Adluri comments that in Rāmānuja's *Śrībhāṣya*, his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras*:

Rāmānuja has the objector (Advaitin) quote generously from the VP as well, in order to establish the non-dual (Advaita) point of view....Such use of the VP to support the objector's point of view is not evident in Rāmānuja's other commentaries. There is a sense of a deliberate re-reading, reclaiming of the VP as a Viśiṣṭādvaita text that is not seen in his other commentaries. This suggests that perhaps the VP was also an important text for the Advaitins or that Rāmānuja has the Advaitin utilize the VP for rhetorical purposes.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰⁴ Daniel P. Sheridan, *The Advaitic Theism of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986).

¹⁰⁵ Adluri, *Textual Authority in Classical Indian Thought*, 11.

The same goes for Madhva and the *Bhāgavatātātparyanirṇaya*. In his historical review of Dvaita literature, B.N.K. Sharma claims that “[Madhva] was contending with powerfully established Advaita commentaries on the Purāṇa.”¹⁰⁶ Madhva pays greatest attention to those passages in the tenth and eleventh cantos of the BhP, “which strike a strong note of Transcendentalism, verging on a Monism....particularly tinged with monistic phraseology and ideas, which have been fully exploited by monistic commentators.”¹⁰⁷ Sharma refers to Jīva Gosvāmin's *Tattvasandarbhā* (16th C.), which mentions commentaries by the Advaitins Citsukha and Puṇyāranya. There is no extant evidence for the existence of these commentaries, and I am inclined to think that they never did exist.¹⁰⁸ That is not to say, however, that the BhP did not have a history of being important to Advaitins—just not the Advaitins one might easily recognize.

It is at this juncture that we find Śrīdhara Svāmin (ca. 1350-1450 CE), native of Orissa and author of the first extant commentary on the BhP.¹⁰⁹ For someone with such a wide-ranging

¹⁰⁶ B.N.K. Sharma, *History of the Dvaita School of Vedānta and its Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1961), 128.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

¹⁰⁸ Nothing is extant, at least, in the official manuscript record. Cf. Julius Eggeling, *Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office* (London: Secretary of State of India in Council, 1887), 1264b. Anecdotal evidence suggests otherwise. Shrivatsa Goswami of Sri Caitanya Prema Samsthana, Vrindavan, has informed me and others that he has a copy of the *Citsukhī* commentary on the tenth *skandha* of the BhP. Cf. Lance Nelson, “Bhakti Preempted: Madhusūdana Sarasvatī on Devotion for the Advaitin Renouncer,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 6.1 (1998): 71, n.5. With due deference to Shrivatsaji's resources, I have to see it to believe it. Seventeenth-century Advaitin polemicists like Rāmāśrama also claimed that not only Citsukha but Śaṅkara himself had authored commentaries on the BhP, but their counterparts pointed to the lack of contemporary proof for the existence of these commentaries. See Christopher Minkowski, “I'll Wash Out Your Mouth With My Boot: A Guide to Philological Argument in Mughal-era Banaras,” in *Epic and Argument: Essays in Honor of Robert P. Goldman*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010), 123-124.

¹⁰⁹ B.N.K. Sharma (*History of the Dvaita School of Vedānta and its Literature*, 129) claims that Śrīdhara was influenced by some degree to Madhva, based on a few citations we find shared between the two. It is not impossible, given that both Mādharma tradition and inscriptional evidence suggest that one Narahari Tīrtha, a Dvaitin, was minister at the Kalinga court in the 13th-14th century (*Ibid.*, 226-228). But the textual evidence is admittedly thin. More explicit and extensive links between Madhva and Śrīdhara remain to be excavated.

impact on later exegetes of the BhP, we know very little about Śrīdhara's historical milieu.¹¹⁰ The dissertation on Śrīdhara himself is still waiting to be written: Was he an abbot at a supposed Advaita monastery at Puri? Whom did he directly influence and how? From where did his exegesis emerge in the first place, indebted to but detracting from Śaṅkara's Advaita? Preliminary attempts at understanding Śrīdhara's contribution have been made by Daniel Sheridan and Ravi Gupta.¹¹¹ Sheridan calls for further study of Śrīdhara and the BhP in their own contexts, in order to establish the difference between the BhP's Advaita and Śaṅkara's Advaita, to clarify Śrīdhara's place in the history of Vaiṣṇavism and Vedānta, and to understand his impact on later schools of BhP interpretation, especially the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.¹¹² Gupta picks up on the last of these exhortations, and carefully reads Jīva Gosvāmin's use of Śrīdhara as he develops his distinctive “inconceivable difference-and-non-difference” (*acintyabhedābheda*) philosophy. Both Sheridan and Gupta are concerned to distance Śrīdhara from Śaṅkara's Advaita; his theological position is instead “halfway to the metaphysical nuances of *acintyabhedābheda*.”¹¹³ There are two points important to distinguish here. One is Śrīdhara's own version of Advaita, which is demonstrably different from Śaṅkara's Advaita—at least, in its refusal to engage with theories of ignorance (*avidyā*) and illusion (*māyā*), which are held to be definitive of “pure” scholastic Advaita Vedānta.¹¹⁴ The other, however, is the implicit teleology in these accounts: If Advaita is

¹¹⁰ See P.K. Gode, “Date of Śrīdharasvāmin, Author of the Commentaries on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and Other Works – Between c. A.D. 1350 and 1450,” in *Studies in Indian Literary History, Vol. II*. (Bombay: Bhāratīya Vidyā Bhavan, 1954), 169-175.

¹¹¹ Daniel P. Sheridan, “Śrīdhara and His Commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 2.3 (1994): 45-66; Ravi M. Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta of Jīva Gosvāmī* (London: Routledge, 2007), 65-84.

¹¹² Sheridan, “Śrīdhara and His Commentary,” 47.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹¹⁴ See Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta of Jīva Gosvāmī*, 70: “As such, he makes no attempt to go beyond

one thing (Śaṅkara, *māyā*, non-theism) and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism quite another (Caitanya, *bhedābheda*, bhakti), then Śrīdhara must have belonged to a world that moved away from classical Advaita and tried to bring others into the properly Vaiṣṇava fold.¹¹⁵

My point is not that Śrīdhara was or was not an Advaitin, or that he belonged to one faction over another. I have already suggested that Śaṅkara's Advaita was not the only one around, and the spectrum of Advaitins in Vaiṣṇava milieus may well have extended from Śaṅkara through to Śrīdhara. All I would add to this discussion is that who Śrīdhara was cannot be determined retroactively, and without a wider perspective on the BhP's rise to prominence. A proper study of Śrīdhara's own writings, on the BhP, VP, and Bhagavad Gītā, is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, we might be able to get a sense of how someone like Śrīdhara came about in the first place. If we zoom out from the internal debates of Vaiṣṇava Vedānta, we find an intersecting circle that may also have contained the BhP, and accompanied its transmission.

I am referring in particular to the world of Śaivism, that famously adaptable system of political theology that so dominated the religious landscape of early and medieval India.¹¹⁶

Recent studies have shown how the BhP's concept of bhakti overlapped significantly with Śaiva literature, in particular the Śivadharmā corpus.¹¹⁷ Specifically, the emotional elements of bhakti

the text of the *Bhāgavata* to articulate a theory of ignorance in Advaitic terms. Indeed, Śrīdhara was perhaps closer to the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava view of *śakti* than he was to Advaitic concepts of *māyā*.”

Cf. Nelson, “Bhakti Preempted,” 71, n.5: “Śrīdhara Swāmin (ca. 1350-1450)—nominally an Advaitin but sympathetic to devotion, was sufficiently influenced by Vaiṣṇavism to accept a plurality of souls and a more realistic interpretation of *śakti* than Śaṅkara. He therefore cannot be considered a true non-dualist.”

¹¹⁵ See Sheridan, “Śrīdhara and His Commentary,” 65: “[I]t may not be far off the mark when Jīva Gosvāmin contends that Śrīdhara has adopted the non-dualism of Śaṅkara in order to lure Advaitins into the faith of Vaiṣṇava bhakti.”

¹¹⁶ See Alexis Sanderson, “The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism During the Early Medieval Period,” in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. Shingo Einoo (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, 2009), 41-350.

¹¹⁷ Jason Schwartz, “Caught in the Net of *Śāstra*: Devotion and its Limits in an Evolving Śaiva Corpus,” *Journal of Hindu Studies* 5.2 (2012): 210-231.

that Friedhelm Hardy and others felt were unique to the BhP—hairs raising on end, tears of bliss, the ecstatic experience of divine presence—were part of a shared language of bhakti between Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava traditions.¹¹⁸ The extent to which this overlap explains the background to Śrīdhara's own work is difficult to determine merely from the textual record. In the opening to his commentary on the BhP, Śrīdhara invokes both “the Lord of Umā (Śiva) and Mādhava (Viṣṇu), who comprise each other's selves and love to praise each other.”¹¹⁹ And across his works, Śrīdhara makes repeated reference to Nṛsiṃha, the god who marks the transition of Orissa's dominant political theology from Śaiva to Vaiṣṇava.¹²⁰ But the general historical understanding that Orissa was a site of fluidity between Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava boundaries is seldom otherwise reflected in Śrīdhara's intellectual corpus.

Perhaps we can look to the inscriptional record, that archivist's dream and humanist's nightmare, for more solid connections between Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism in pre-Śrīdhara Orissa. A recent publication of copper-plate inscriptions from Orissa offers three revealing pieces of evidence for the claim that it was fertile territory for the BhP to flourish: 1) Rent-free land grants to Vedic Brahmins with Vaiṣṇava names; 2) Non-sectarian political patrons; and 3) Massive migration to the East from the West, Midwest, and South.¹²¹ The inscriptions show that between

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 214-216.

¹¹⁹ *Bhāgavata Purāṇa of Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa With Sanskrit Commentary Bhāvārthabodhinī of Śrīdhara Svāmin*, ed. J.L. Shastri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 13:

mādhavomādhavāv īsau sarvasiddhividhāyinau |
vande parasparātmānau parasparanutipriyau || 3 ||

¹²⁰ See Sara M. Adams, “From Narasimha to Jagannātha: The Long Journey from Forest to Temple,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 17.1 (2008): 5-28; Anncharlott Eschmann et al., “The Formation of the Jagannātha Triad,” in *The Cult of Jagannāth and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, eds. Anncharlott Eschmann et al. (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1978), 167-196.

¹²¹ Subrata Kumar Acharya, *Copper-Plate Inscriptions of Odisha* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2014).

the eighth and twelfth centuries CE, several kings in Orissa set up tax-free land grants to a variety of Brahmin donees. Many of these Brahmins possessed Vaiṣṇava names, the kind associated with later interpreters of the BhP: Śrīdharaśvāmi, Vallabhasvāmi, Madhusūdanasvāmi, Puruṣottamasvāmi, Viṣṇusvāmi, and so forth.¹²² They tell us that they were trained in different recensions of the Veda and versed in *smṛti* literature; that they sometimes functioned as *purāṇic* storytellers; that they were poets and philosophers and ministers; and that they were allowed to live unmolested (*sarvopadravavarjita*), free of any oppression (*sarvapīḍāvarjita*), and exempt from military interference (*abhaṭapraveśa*).¹²³ Some were even given priestly responsibilities that included arranging dance and music in the temple of their deity.¹²⁴ Thus we have a concentrated community of scholarly Brahmins, mostly devoted to Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, who were familiar with traditions of musical performance. It is not clear if they had an affinity for Advaita Vedānta in particular, but they are most certainly possible predecessors for *the* Śrīdhara Svāmin. The BhP could have been redacted or preserved in these Brahmin settlements (*agrahāra*) to provide the groundwork for someone like Śrīdhara to come along: namely, a community that continued the sort of Vaiṣṇava Advaita that Hardy and others recognized was at the heart of the BhP. Further corroboration would require renewed attention to those layers of the BhP which Hudson studied so carefully, and the different exegetical emphases they are given by Śrīdhara.

Who were the political patrons of these land grants? A majority of the donors identified

¹²² The examples span centuries, from the regimes of Śubhākaradeva (8th C.), a Buddhist king of the Bhaumakara dynasty who assumed the title *paramasaugata*, to Gayādatuṅga (10th C.), a Śaiva *māheśvara* of the Tuṅga family, to Narasiṃhadeva II (14th C.), a thoroughly Vaiṣṇava ruler. See, e.g., *Ibid.*, 191-193, 393, 497.

¹²³ The examples are numerous, but see especially *Ibid.*, 347: “The donee is described as well-versed in Tarka, Vedānta, and the Vedas. He was a poet, an *upaśani* and a good minister (*śrīmānpātraṃ sa uttamaṃ*, 1.14). His father Kṛṣṇa was an expert in the Yajurveda and his grandfather Goula was well-verse[d] in the Śruti, Smṛti and the Purāṇas.”

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 479.

themselves as *paramamāheśvaras*, or “Great followers of the Great God (Śiva),” further demonstrating the non-sectarian nature of Śaiva political practice. The Bhaumakaras of the eighth century were Buddhists (*paramasaugata*, *paramatathāgata*), and made donations to Vaiṣṇava Vedic brahmins for the increase of religious merit.¹²⁵ The tenth-century Somavamśī rulers of Utkala, in northern Orissa, identified themselves as *paramavaiṣṇavas*, and yet maintained ties to local Tantric gods and goddesses.¹²⁶ The twelfth-century imperial Gaṅgas, however, completely blurred these boundaries, calling themselves both *paramamāheśvara* and *paramavaiṣṇava*.¹²⁷ These Coḍas from the Telugu and Tamil country also encouraged a vigorous and open immigration policy that brought people from Madhyadeśa (the Midwest), Dakṣiṇa regions (South), and Mahārāṣṭra (West).¹²⁸ That many of the Gaṅgas' inscriptions were written in Telugu-Kannada script testifies to their interest in maintaining a cosmopolitan public image (and imperial legitimacy) among their new immigrant citizens.¹²⁹ Taken together, these inscriptions reveal significant material evidence for the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava political, religious, and geographical continuum that I believe forms part of the reception history of the BhP in Orissa.

Some fragmentary clues point to a similar continuum in medieval Maharashtra as well. As R.C. Dhere has shown, the Marathi poet-saints of the Vārkarī tradition interwove the exploits of Viṭṭhal, originally a local deity who straddled the lines between Śiva and Viṣṇu, with that of

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 291ff. One Rāṇaka Raṇabhañjadeva, for example, is described as having received the blessings of the Goddess Stambheśvarī (*Ibid.*, 300, 303).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 421ff.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 279, 373, 422.

¹²⁹ The copper-plate grants of Anantavarman Coḍagaṅgadeva (1077-1147 CE) were written in different scripts at different times during his reign. The early plates were in old Nāgarī and proto-Odia, while the later ones were written in Telugu-Canarese with a long genealogical account of imperial Gaṅga history. *Ibid.*, 460, n.49.

the BhP's beloved Krishna.¹³⁰ Dhere also proposed tantalizing connections between Viṭṭhal of Paṇḍharpūr and Jagannāth of Puri in Orissa, but unfortunately did not go on to publish his findings.¹³¹ The BhP also became a source of inspiration for two prominent intellectuals at the court of the Yādavas of Maharashtra: Vopadeva and Hemādri (fl. 1275 CE), authors of the *Bhāgavatamuktāphala* and *Kaivalyadīpikā* commentary on it, respectively.¹³² Vopadeva is more famous for his grammatical work, the *Mugdhabodha*,¹³³ while Hemādri is well-known for his voluminous work on Brahmanical jurisprudence (*dharmasāstra*), the *Caturvargacintāmaṇi*.¹³⁴ The *Muktāphala* is more or less a compilation of verses from the BhP interspersed with explanatory notes, and organized into four sections, which address the object of religious affection, the exalted status of bhakti itself, the material practices of worship, and the characteristics of the devotee. The work is perhaps the first of its kind to offer a typology of bhakti and its practitioner, specifically dedicated to Viṣṇu and directly adapted from the BhP.

There is also an important tradition of premodern philological dispute, recognized from the

¹³⁰ Ramchandra Chintaman Dhere, *Rise of a Folk God: Vitthal of Pandharpur*, tr. Anne Feldhaus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹³¹ See Dhere, *Rise of a Folk God*, 11: “In the third stage, I plan to present a comparison of how the three folk deities Viṭṭhal, Venkateś, and Jagannāth fashioned the regional cultures of Maharashtra, Andhra, and Orissa, respectively.” Although this quote does not directly suggest that the three were connected, I infer that Dhere wanted to prove their mutuality, for later in the book he brilliantly links Viṭṭhal with Venkateś by discussing the extraordinary importance given to tamarind trees in both devotional cults (*Ibid.*, 49ff.). There might be a tamarind connection between all three. During the annual search for the neem tree from which the wooden idols of the Jagannāth temple are (re-)carved, the so-called Navakalevara ceremony, one of the criteria is that there must be a tamarind tree in the vicinity. Cf. Albertina Nugteren, “Weaving Nature into Myth: Continuing Narratives of Wood, Trees, and Forests in the Ritual Fabric around the God Jagannath in Puri,” *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 4.2 (2010): 159-172.

¹³² *Muktāphala of Vopadeva with Kaivalyadīpikā of Hemādri*, ed. Durgamohan Bhattacharya (Calcutta: Calcutta Oriental Press, 1944).

¹³³ See V. Raghavan, “Bopadeva,” in *Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagavata Writers*, ed. V. Raghavan (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1978), 122-134.

¹³⁴ The fifth section of Hemādri's text, the *Muktikhaṇḍa*, is no longer extant. This is unfortunate, since it would probably tell us a great deal about Hemādri's Vedāntic affinities.

earliest scholarship on the BhP, that considered Vopadeva, and not the “compiler” Vyāsa, to have been the author of the BhP itself.¹³⁵ Whatever the motivations behind these accusations, the memory that the BhP first took shape in Maharashtra reflects a renewed emphasis on the text at this time.

Like Śrīdhara, Vopadeva and Hemādri were Advaitins of a sort, if not “confirmed” in the sense that the famous Sanskrit scholar V. Raghavan desired.¹³⁶ Hemādri quotes Śaṅkara approvingly in his *Kaivalyadīpikā*, and in general exhibits a knowledge of Advaita language appropriate to both the BhP and Śaṅkara.¹³⁷ In *Muktāphala* 6.43, Vopadeva cites a verse from the BhP which reads: “Bhakti, experience of God, and detachment from other things—all three appear at the same time.”¹³⁸ Hemādri comments:

When bhakti of this sort comes about, after one worships the embodied God (*saguṇa*), and one has the direct experience [of truth], manifesting as one's own self, there comes into being an unlimited love, the removal of the veiling power of ignorance, and self-fulfillment. That is what is expressed in the verse. From bhakti...comes the experience of the Self as Brahman. Since that is nothing but supreme bliss, one has a distaste for everything else.”¹³⁹

This is fairly close to the BhP's own theology, though the mention of the veiling power of ignorance (*avidyā*) borders on being classically Advaitic. However, while commenting on

¹³⁵ See Minkowski, “I’ll Wash Out Your Mouth With My Boot.”

¹³⁶ Raghavan, “Bopadeva,” 125: “Bopadeva was a confirmed Advaitin. And so was Madhusudana Sarasvati associated with him. There was a strong tradition of *Advaita-cum-Bhakti* that had grown, whose seeds can be traced to Śaṅkara himself.”

¹³⁷ *Muktāphala...with Kaivalyadīpikā*, 77: tad uktaṃ **śrīśaṅkarācāryaiḥ** – jñānajñeyavihīno 'pi sadājña iti | *Ibid.*, 130: taduktaṃ **śaṅkarācāryaiḥ** – yo 'sau so 'haṃ so 'smy aham eveti vidur yam iti |

¹³⁸ BhP 11.2.42ab: bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktir anyatra caiṣa trika ekakālah |

¹³⁹ *Muktāphala...with Kaivalyadīpikā*, 109: yadā caivaṃ bhaktir jāyate ata eva saguṇopāsanām upāsya sāksātkāre sati tasyātmatayā sphuraṇāt tatraivānupādhiḥ premā avidyāyāś cāvarakatvanivṛttir ātmakāmatā ca bhavatīty āha “bhaktir” iti | bhaktiḥ premātmikā...tata ātmano brahmatvānubhavaḥ | tasya ca paramānandarūpatayā anyatra viraktir aruci |

Muktāphala 19.26, which cites BhP 10.51.56,¹⁴⁰ Hemādri takes full advantage of the Advaita vocabulary of the verse:

Why is he free of qualities (*nirguṇa*)? Because he is free of any taint (*nirañjana*). Taint is the veiling of consciousness called *māyā*. For anything with attributes (*saguṇa*) is connected with *māyā*. Hence he is nondual (*advaya*), since it is only in connection with *māyā* that duality is possible. Why is he nondual? Because he is “mere consciousness” (*jñaptimātra*). The idea is that *māyā* is inexplicable as being existent or non-existent.¹⁴¹

Similar language emerges in his commentary on *Muktāphala* 17.3, a citation in which the sage Nārada exclaims to Vyāsa that his firm consciousness of the beloved Kṛṣṇa allows him to “see that my own delusion has constructed the idea of this very body upon my true self that is Brahman.”¹⁴² Hemādri says that “construction” really means

superimposition, like the snake on the rope.... The use of two different words for “this” indicates that superimposing a [not-]really existent snake on a rope does not quite match with saying that a really existent body is superimposed on Brahman. Instead, the text says “this very body.” The point is that it is inexplicable (*anirvācya*).¹⁴³

The opacity of this explanation (not to mention the textual transmission) aside, Hemādri is familiar with the buzzwords and metaphors of classical Advaita Vedānta: superimposition,

¹⁴⁰ tasmād visṛjyāśiṣa īśa sarvaśo
rajastamaḥsattvaguṇānubandhanāḥ |
nirañjanaṃ nirguṇam advayaṃ param
tvāṃ jñaptimātraṃ puruṣaṃ vrajāmy aham ||

¹⁴¹ *Muktāphala...with Kaivalyadīpikā*, 311: nirguṇaḥ kutaḥ | yato nirañjanaḥ | añjanaṃ prakāśāvaraṇaṃ māyākhyam
| saguṇo hi māyāsambandhāt | ato 'dvayaḥ | māyāsambandhe hi sati dvitīyatvaṃ syāt | kuto 'dvayaḥ | yato
jñaptimātraḥ | māyāyāḥ sattāsattābhyām anirvācyatvād ityarthāḥ |

¹⁴² BhP 1.5.27:

tasmimś tadā labdharater mahāmune
priyaśravasy askhalitā matir mama |
yayāham etat sadasat svamāyayā
paśye mayi brahmaṇi kalpitam tv idam ||

¹⁴³ *Muktāphala...with Kaivalyadīpikā*, 269: mamaiva māyayā mayy eva brahmarūpe kalpitam āropitam
rajjubhujaṅgavat | [...] etad idam iti padadvayena yathā 'nyatra [a?]satyo bhujāṅgo rajjivām āropito na tathā
'nyatra satyaṃ rūpadvayaṃ brahmaṇy āropitam kintv idam eva ity uktam | anirvācyam ityarthāḥ |

inexplicability, snake-and-rope. Śrīdhara is less forthcoming about his Advaitic sensibilities in this regard, even in commenting on the same verse.¹⁴⁴ It is not apparent from these examples whether or not Hemādri and Śrīdhara emerged from a similar milieu. Other possible links between their writings, approximately a century apart, would require a cross-referential study outside the scope of this chapter.

What about the possible shared backdrop of Śaivism? For that we may turn from philosophical to literary culture. As is well known, the BhP came to serve as one of the most important sources for the theory of bhaktirasa, the special category of religious aesthetics introduced rather late into the domain of Sanskrit poetics (*alamkāraśāstra*). Developed most fully by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas in the sixteenth century, the theory finds precursors in none other than Vopadeva's *Muktāphala*, and was elaborated by Hemādri in the *Kaivalyadīpikā*.¹⁴⁵ The fourth section of the *Muktāphala*, extending from chapters 11 to 19, details how bhakti should be understood not just as another rasa, but as the paradigmatic rasa, experienced through the nine canonical ones: the erotic (*śṛṅgāra*), comic (*hāsya*), tragic (*karuṇa*), violent (*raudra*), heroic (*vīra*), frightening (*bhayānaka*), disgusting (*bībhatsa*), wondrous (*adbhuta*), and quiescent (*śānta*). Each of these, according to Vopadeva and Hemādri, could be found in the BhP, and contributed in their own way to the aesthetic experience of bhakti, “the delectation produced through listening, etc., to the story of the Devotees which embody the nine rasas...”¹⁴⁶ Hemādri was clearly familiar with the broader discourse of Sanskrit poetics. He quoted frequently from

¹⁴⁴ Cf. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa... With Bhāvārthabodhinī*, 24. Śrīdhara has a different reading of the final *pāda*, substituting the word *pare* for *tv idam*, thus sidestepping Hemādri's interpretive problem altogether.

¹⁴⁵ See Neal Delmonico, “Sacred Rapture: A Study of the Religious Aesthetic of Rupa Gosvamin” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1990), 164-175.

¹⁴⁶ Raghavan, “Bopadeva,” 133.

famous works such as Hemacandra's *Kāvyañuśāsana* (12th C.), Bhoja's *Sarasvatīkañṭhābharaṇa* (11th C.), Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaṇprakāśa* (11th C.), and Dhanañjaya's *Daśarūpaka* (10th C.), and most contentiously, the Kashmiri Śaiva Abhinavagupta (11th C.).¹⁴⁷ Hamsa Stainton has shown that concepts of bhaktirasa seem to be incipient in the praise-poetry of the Śaivas of Kashmir.¹⁴⁸

Although not directly linked to Sanskrit aesthetics in its early forms, the use of the term bhaktirasa in Śaiva praise-poetry was ambiguous enough that Abhinavagupta felt compelled to argue against its inclusion among the canonical rasas, instead subordinating it to *śānta*.¹⁴⁹ And it is precisely Abhinavagupta's position that Hemādri resists in the *Muktāphala*.¹⁵⁰

This conjuncture leads to provocative questions about the relationship between a Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava poetics of devotion mediated through the BhP. There is an old claim that Abhinavagupta was the first to cite the BhP, on the strength of a quotation found in his commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā (14.8). However, R.C. Hazra pointed out that the quotation was scribbled in the margins of an old Śāradā manuscript of the commentary, and may not have

¹⁴⁷ Delmonico, "Sacred Rapture," 167.

¹⁴⁸ Hamsa Stainton, "Poetry and Prayer: *Stotras* in the Religious and Literary History of Kashmir" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012), 175-205, 313-327.

¹⁴⁹ "It is for that very reason that bhakti and faith, which have to do with surrender to God, are accessories to [*śāntarasa*] in a manner other than [transitory emotions like] memory, resolve, fortitude, perseverance, et al. Thus they are not counted as distinct rasas."

See *Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharatamuni with the Commentary Abhinavabhāratī by Abhinavaguptācārya*, Vol. 1, rev. ed. K. Krishnamoorthy (Vadodara: Oriental Institute, 1992), 334: ata eveśvaraprañidhānaviṣaye bhaktiśraddhe smṛtimatidhṛtyutsāhādyanupraviṣṭebhyo 'nyathaivā(śyaivā)ñgamiti na tayoh pṛthagrasatvena gaṇanam |

¹⁵⁰ See Delmonico, "Sacred Rapture," 168-169. Admittedly the discourse of aesthetics was non-sectarian, as Bhoja famously put it in the *Śṅgāraprakāśa* (*sāhityasya sarvapārśadatvāt*). See Sheldon Pollock, "Sanskrit Literary Culture from the Inside Out," in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California, 2003), 70, n.68. Hemādri criticizes both Abhinavagupta, a Śaiva, and Hemacandra, a Jain, indiscriminately, and only on the grounds that they did not accept bhakti as a rasa. Then again, Hemacandra was merely reproducing the original discussion about additional rasas from the *Abhinavabhāratī* in his *Kāvyañuśāsana*.

been Abhinavagupta's own.¹⁵¹ Nor is the BhP listed as an authority cited in any of his other works, and it does not appear to have been especially popular among the Śaivas of Kashmir.¹⁵² Moreover, it is difficult to link the *Muktāphala* to any Śaiva line of thinking about bhaktirasa. Beyond offering the first systematic argument in favor of bhaktirasa, Hemādri and Vopadeva just do their own thing, seemingly unprecedented.¹⁵³ But there is an alternative genealogy of the nexus between bhakti, aesthetics, Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, and Advaita Vedānta. For that we turn to the poet and commentator from Kerala, Pūrṇasarasvatī, who lived between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries CE.

Three things in particular draw our attention to Pūrṇasarasvatī: First, his Vaiṣṇava inclinations as a Śaiva initiate; second, his interest in devotional praise-poetry as both a locus for bhaktirasa and a resource for Advaitic meditation; and third, his own addition to the genre of Sanskrit messenger-lyric, the *Haṃsasandēśa*. Better known in the history of Sanskrit literature for his commentaries on exemplary works such as Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava*, and Murāri's *Anargharāghava*, Pūrṇasarasvatī was also very familiar with Kashmiri schools of Śaivism and the philosophical tradition of Advaita Vedānta.¹⁵⁴ He was an

¹⁵¹ R.C. Hazra, "The Bhāgavata-Purāṇa," *New Indian Antiquary* 1 (1938): 524.

¹⁵² Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, 487, n.20.

¹⁵³ Śrīdhara Svāmin too offers an abbreviated understanding of bhaktirasa in his commentary on BhP 10.43.17. See Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta of Jīva Gosvāmī*, 73, n.12: "The Lord, who is the embodiment of the multitude of all *rasas* beginning with amorous love, appeared in accordance with the wishes of each person there, and not in his fullness to everyone....The rasas which were manifest in the wrestlers, etc., are delineated in order by this verse, '(The rasas are) wrath, wonder, amorous love, mirth, heroism, compassion, terror, disgust, tranquility, and devotion (bhakti) imbued with love (*prema*).'" It is not clear just from this section whether or not Śrīdhara knew of Vopadeva and Hemādri's writings on the topic, but the idea of bhaktirasa clearly had purchase in a wider intellectual sphere, as his untraced verse demonstrates. Later Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava commentators such as Sanātana Gosvāmī and Jīva Gosvāmī picked up on this passage, in tandem with the *Muktāphala*'s more elaborate system of classification, to develop their theory of bhaktirasa.

¹⁵⁴ N.V.P. Unithiri, *Pūrṇasarasvatī* (Calicut: Calicut University Press, 2004), 322-328.

unusual figure in the history of Sanskrit literary interpretation. In his reading of Bhavabhūti's secular play *Mālatīmādhava*, each character becomes an allegorical representative of a divine being or a philosophical concept, much as in the classic Vedāntic allegorical drama, the *Prabodhacandrodaya*.¹⁵⁵ He extended this allegory to the author of the play himself. In his commentary on the third benedictory verse of the *Mālatīmādhava*, Pūrṇasarasvatī believed that Bhavabhūti, “that moon among poets, who knows both sides of the ocean that is Sāṃkhya and Yoga, and is the very stage on which the actresses called Upaniṣads sing and dance,” was communicating the secrets of Tantric yoga practice that one should properly receive from one's guru, and would ultimately lead to liberation.¹⁵⁶ He even saw Bhavabhūti as a *paramahaṃsa*, a liberated saint of the highest renunciate order, whose doctrine was that of Advaita Vedānta.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 155-156. His own drama, the *Kamalinīrājahaṃsa*, can be read as an allegory expressing the philosophies of Śaiva and Śākta Tantrism. The play itself begins by invoking the androgynous form of Śiva, Ardhanārīśvara. See *Ibid.*, 55-61. Pūrṇasarasvatī quotes the *Prabodhacandrodaya* a handful of times across his works (*Ibid.*, 339).

¹⁵⁶ See *Mālatīmādhavaḥ: Śrīpūrṇasarasvatīviracitayā Rasamañjaryākhyayā vyākhyayopetam*, ed. K.S. Mahādeva Śāstrī (Anantaśayana: Rājakīyamudraṅālaya, 1953), 9-10: atra cāyam akhilopaniṣadaṅganāraṅgamaṅḍapena sāṃkhyayogapārāvārīṇena kavikulendunā gurumukhaikagamyo 'tirahasyo 'rthaḥ sūtrito 'nusandheyah |

The specific yogic terminology is scattered through the rest of the interpretation, but here is one example: “The compound in the third quarter of the verse—[Śiva's third eye] whose corner is cooled by the flow of nectar dripping from the moon atop his crest that is heated with fire—really signifies the corner that has been refreshed by the abundant shower of supreme ambrosia that drips from the lotus-moon of the aperture atop the head (*brahmarandhra*), liquefied by the inner flame of the one who courses along the stream of the central arterial channel (*suṣumnā*).”

Ibid., 10: arcir iti sauṣumnasaraṇiviharaṇarasikanijaśikhādrāvitāt brahmarandhrāravindacandrān niṣyanditena paramāmṛtavṛṣṭipūreṇa sātkaṛiprāntam ityarthaḥ |

¹⁵⁷ See Jason Schwartz, “Parabrahman among the Yogins,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, forthcoming, 30. Schwartz (*Ibid.*, 31-33) describes how Pūrṇasarasvatī recognized and elaborated on the philosophical language playfully embedded in the *Mālatīmādhava*, in the process seeking to “reconcile the two systems” of Advaita Vedānta and the Pratyabhijñā theology of Kashmiri Śaivas. That Bhavabhūti toyed with Advaita concepts in his broader literature is quite clear. Take, for example, his *Uttarāmacarita* 1.39, which conflates nonduality with true love (my trans.):

“To be not-two in both joy and sorrow, and together in every situation; where the heart finds peace and feelings never age; which stays firm when time removes all veils and affection ripens; if you're lucky, you might get to experience it—once.”

Pūrṇasarasvatī was probably trained in a Śaiva monastery in central Kerala, or at least studied with a Śaiva teacher, given his Tantric textual repertoire.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, in keeping with the non-sectarian quality of this form of Śaiva religiosity, he was devoted to Viṣṇu.¹⁵⁹ At the opening to his commentary on the *Mālatīmādhava*, after invoking the form of Śiva known as Dakṣiṇāmūrti, he imagined his own teacher, Pūrṇajyoti, as a manifestation of the Kṛṣṇa of the Bhagavad Gītā, containing within himself the universal cosmic form.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, he wrote a

See *The Uttaraṛāmacharita of Bhavabhūti with the commentary of Vīrarāghava*, eds. T.R. Ratnam Aiyar and Kāśīnātha Pāṇḍurang Parab (Bombay: Nirṇaya Sagar, 1903), 41:

advaitaṃ sukhaduḥkḥayor anugataṃ sarvāsv avasthāsu yad
viśrāmo hṛdayasya yatra jarasā yasminn ahāryo rasaḥ |
kālenāvaraṇātyayāt pariṇate yat snehasāre sthitaṃ
bhadrāṃ tasya sumānuṣasya katham apy ekaṃ hi tat prāpyate ||

¹⁵⁸ N.V.P. Unithiri (*Pūrṇasarasvatī*, 17) suggests that Pūrṇasarasvatī was associated with Mallappaṭṭam near Taḷiparamba in Kannur district. This geography could explain the juxtaposition of Śiva and Viṣṇu in his benedictory and devotional writings. The Rājarājeśvara temple in Taḷiparamba features none other than Dakṣiṇāmūrti, invoked below, on the southern side. It is adjacent to the Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa temple, whose deity is brought to the Rājarājeśvara temple during festivals such as Śivarātri.

¹⁵⁹ Unithiri (*Pūrṇasarasvatī*, 37-44) claims that before becoming a renunciate at the Śaiva monastery, Pūrṇasarasvatī was actually known as Viṣṇu, the same Viṣṇu who wrote the *Pañcikā* commentary on Murāri's *Anargharāghava*. His elder brother, Divākara, described Viṣṇu in his *Amogharāghava* as one who adorned the family name with his pious deeds, the very personification of Vedic rites, who desired the joy of serving Śiva. *Ibid.*, 43, n.12, quoted in Ullur S. Paramesvara Iyer, *Keralasāhityacaritram*, Vol. 1 (Thiruvananthapuram: University of Kerala, 1990), 188-190:

tasyātmajo viṣṇur alaṅkariṣṇuḥ
kulaṃ pavitrair amalaṃ caritraiḥ |
bhūteśasevāsukham āptukāmaḥ
śrauto vidhir mūrta ivāvīr āsīt ||

¹⁶⁰ See *Mālatīmādhavaṃ: Śrīpūrṇasarasvatīviracitayā Rasamañjaryākhyayā vyākhyayopetam*, 1-2:

śirasa iva galantīm antarabhyudgiranī
surasaritam udārāṃ vākchalād ānanena |
dahatu bhavabhayaṃ sāmūrtir aiśī munīnām
daharakuharalīlādakṣiṇā dakṣiṇā vaḥ || 3 ||

yadgītārthaśravaṇarasato dhvastamohāndhakārah
kṛṣṇānandī trijagati naro jiṣṇubhūyaṃ jihīte |
svasminn eva prakāṣitamahāviśvarūpaṃ tad ekaṃ
pūrṇajyotiḥ sphuratu hṛdi me puṇḍarīkāyatākṣam || 4 ||

commentary on the hymn called the *Viṣṇupādādikēśastotra*, a genre of praise-poetry (*stotra*) that describes a deity, in this case Viṣṇu, from foot to head.¹⁶¹

Interestingly, Pūrṇasarasvatī assigns authorship of the hymn to the Advaita philosopher Śaṅkarācārya.¹⁶² The *stotra* itself was probably composed much later, given the many references to post-Śaṅkara texts.¹⁶³ But Pūrṇasarasvatī's attribution, like all apocrypha, is still historically meaningful. It shows not only that there was a vibrant memory of Śaṅkara in his purported land of origin, but also a historically identifiable attempt to link that memory to a particular kind of bhakti.¹⁶⁴ Pūrṇasarasvatī's commentary, called the *Bhaktimandākinī*, begins with an elaborate account of the Advaitic reasoning behind Śaṅkara's composition, worth reproducing in full:

First of all, among the three practices prescribed for realizing the Self in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.5—namely, hearing (*śravaṇa*), contemplating (*manana*), and meditating (*nididhyāsana*) on the teachings about the Self—the place of primacy goes to meditation, which is the mother of the absorption (*samādhi*) that is nothing but the experience of one's unity with Supreme God, produced by the six limbs [of yoga], restraint and so

¹⁶¹ N.V.P. Unithiri et al., eds., *The Bhaktimandākinī: An Elaborate Fourteenth-Century Commentary by Pūrṇasarasvatī on the Viṣṇupādādikēśastotra Attributed to Śaṅkarācārya*. École française d'Extrême-Orient, Collection Indologie 118 (Pondicherry: Institut français de Pondichéry, 2011).

¹⁶² *Bhaktimandākinī*, 7:

śrīmacchaṅkarapūjyapādaracitaṃ pādādikēśāvadhi-
stotraṃ dātraṃ aghasya netraṃ amalaṃ gātraṃ hareḥ prekṣitum |
vyācikyāsati mayy aho sati satām eṣā vidhā hāsitum
vyaktā bhaktir athāpi viṣṇupadayoḥ puṣṇāti me dhṛṣṇutām ||

¹⁶³ Fred Smith, "REVIEWS: *The Bhaktimandākinī*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 76.3 (2013): 524.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Stainton, "Poetry and Prayer," 43-44: "The list of *stotras* attributed to Śaṅkara goes on and on. This group of texts raises many of the same challenges hindering the study of *stotras* and their history: uncertain authorship and provenance, the accretion of frame stories (many of which are hagiographical), the complex and shifting textual record of these compositions, and their sheer number and diversity. To be blunt, the *stotras* attributed to Śaṅkara represent a significant weakness in the scholarly understanding of India's religious history. Unfortunately, the tangled origins of these compositions have prevented many scholars from asking more interesting questions, such how they have been interpreted over time and how they have shaped perceptions of Śaṅkarācārya and Advaita Vedānta. Overall, the ascription of such a diverse range of hymns to this one author, along with their great popularity, remains a fascinating and understudied feature of *stotra* literature."

forth.¹⁶⁵ [This is supported with a variety of *purāṇic* quotations...]¹⁶⁶

Meditation fixes the mind upon that precious form (of the Supreme Lord): the celestial tree that removes the fatigue of those helplessly wandering on the roads of the desert called *samsāra*, scorched by the rays of the sun that is the three afflictions; the fire that burns up the entire mass of one's ill deeds; the bestower of everything auspicious; the singular essence of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss called Viṣṇu, the apparent modification of the Supreme Brahman, like the congealed form of ghee; the root of every divine incarnation; the repository of all powers; the pure reality-principle, totally free of dependence on the cycle of action, unlike minor deities, who has assumed a form in order to bless devotees.

The mind, moreover, extremely fine and subtle as it is, should be yoked to this particular form of the Supreme Lord in this fashion, and can be fixed upon him who has demonstrably sweet mannerisms, by being withdrawn, together with the senses, from anything other than him—specifically, with practice and detachment from other objects, as the Bhagavad Gītā (6.35) teaches.

In order to shower his grace on those virtuous people who want both enjoyment and liberation, the venerable author of the commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* (*śārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣyakāra*), a partial incarnation of the Supreme Lord himself, his heart submerged in compassion, began this hymn that depicts that form of Lord Puruṣottama from toe to head. In that way, he also felt he could teach the principles of all the Vedas, *dharmaśāstra* texts, *purāṇas*, epics, Mīmāṃsā, and Nyāya.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Schwartz (“Parabrahman Among the Yogins,” 28) suggests that in this passage, “Pūrṇasarasvatī ascribes to Śāṅkara’s Vedānta a doctrinal privileging of *nididhyāsana* essentially alien to the system (and indeed more akin to rival interpretations offered by Vācaspatimīśra and Bhāskara).” In the *Pañcapādikāvivarāṇa* of Prakāśātman (1000 CE), the place of primacy is accorded to *śravaṇa*, accompanied by *manana* and *nididhyāsana* as auxiliary elements. By privileging *nididhyāsana*, says Schwartz, Pūrṇasarasvatī participated in a broader process of reframing Advaita Vedānta to fit Yoga doctrine—one which began with Anubhūtiśvarūpācārya in the thirteenth century. Pūrṇasarasvatī quotes Ānandabodha and Citsukha in his *Rasamañjarī* commentary on the *Mālatīmādhava*, which Schwartz takes as evidence that he knew the genealogy of thinking that influenced this shift. (*Ibid.*, 30-31, n.60).

¹⁶⁶ *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 6.7.91-2, 6.7.74-6.

¹⁶⁷ *Bhaktimandākinī*, 7-10: tatra tāvat “ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ” iti svavihitasyātmadarśanasya sādhanatayā śrutyā “śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsītavyaḥ” iti pratipāditānām śravaṇamanānanididhyāsānām madhye, yamādiṣaḍaṅgaṇiṣpādyasya paramēśvaraikyānubhavarūpasamādhimātur nididhyāsānasya prādhānyam [...]

ityādivacanāt karmayonitvenāśuddhān devādīm apāsya karmapāratantryarahite bhaktānugrahāya kṛtapariagrahe viśuddhatattvātmake samastaśaktyādhāre sarvāvatārabījabhūte ghṛtakāṭhinyavat parabrahmaṇo viṣṇvākhye vivarte saccidānandaikarase sakalamaṅgalaprasotari samagraduritātūlajālaploṣajātavedasi, tāpatrayataraṇikiraṇataptasamsaraṇamarudharaṇisaraṇisamaṅgalaṇavidhuraṇaparīśramaharaṇasuraviṭapini, viḡraharatne manaḥsthirīkaraṇātmakatvāt,

manasaś ca taralatarasvabhāvasya paramēśvaravīgraha evamprakāravīśiṣṭatayānusandheya iti pradārśitamadhuraprakāre tasmimṣ taditaraviṣayapratyāhṛtasya bāhyendriyasahitasya “abhyāsena tu kaunteya

There is no doubt as to Pūrṇasarasvatī's Advaita affinities here—by Śāṅkarācārya, he means *the* Śāṅkarācārya, identified as the author of the commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras*. He uses technical Advaitic terms to describe God as the “apparent transformation” (*vivarta*) of the Supreme Brahman, defined as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (*saccidānanda*). And he subordinates the entire purpose of visualizing God to the traditional Advaitic practice of “listening, reflection, and meditation” (*śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsana*).¹⁶⁸ But Pūrṇasarasvatī's understanding of bhakti was derived not only from the classical tradition of Advaita Vedānta, which subordinated it to a lesser preparatory role, but also precisely from those texts that were contested between Vedānta traditions, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. He quotes the former no less than fifty-two times and the latter seventy-five times in the *Bhaktimandākinī*.¹⁶⁹ He also draws a connection between bhakti and rasa within the praise-poem, not so much in the systematic fashion of Hemādri, but instead echoing the Kashmiri Śaiva purveyors of the *stotra* genre. Beyond his casual mentions of the term bhaktirasa,¹⁷⁰ Pūrṇasarasvatī justifies the whole

vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate” iti bhagavadvacanād, abhyāseṇa viṣayāntaraviraktyā ca sthīrīkāryatvāt,

bhuktimuktyabhilāṣukasukṛtījanānugrahārthaṃ paramakaruṇāparādhīnacetāḥ parameśvarāvātārabhedabhūto bhagavān śrīmacchārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣyakāraḥ, tadvigrahaprakāśanāya bhagavataḥ puruṣottamasya pādādikeśāntavigrahavarṇanarūpaṃ stotram ārabhamāṇaḥ, taddvārā sakalavedadharmasāstrapurāṇetiḥāsamīmāṃsānyāyādyarthāṃś ca prasaṅgato vyutpipādaiṣuḥ [...]

¹⁶⁸ I have discussed the general intellectual history of the “injunction” (*vidhi*) implied in the Upaniṣadic statement quoted by Pūrṇasarasvatī: “One should see, hear, reflect, and meditate on the Self” (*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ*) in Anand Venkatkrishnan, “*Hum Hain Naye, Andaz Kyun Ho Purana?* Hermeneutical Innovations in Advaita Vedānta Intellectual History” (paper presented at the South Asia Graduate Student Conference, University of Chicago, April 5-6, 2012).

¹⁶⁹ Unithiri, *Pūrṇasarasvatī*, 324, 326-327.

¹⁷⁰ In the first instance, Pūrṇasarasvatī defends the use of different verbs to express praise in no particular order, in the process referring to the author of the *Kāma Sūtra* (2.2.31): “Here, the use of particular verbs at different times, like 'May he protect us' or 'I worship' or 'I bow down' should be understood as a result of the agitation on the part of the composer, whose heart is out of control in its attachment to the Lord, swayed to and fro by **bhaktirasa**. In such circumstances, the absence of grammatical order is in fact an aesthetic virtue, since it causes the sensitive listener to respond with amazement. As Vatsyāyana says: 'Manuals are only useful insofar as people lack *rasa*. But when the wheel of love gets underway, there is neither manual nor sequence.'”

enterprise of composing *stotras* on account of its widespread appeal as a method of instruction, that requires a degree of aesthetic sensitivity to appreciate. When an opponent objects that God's physical features have been amply described in the *purāṇas*, and need no further representation in hymn form, Pūrṇasarasvatī responds that different people have different capacities to receive meaning, and some prefer certain methods to others.¹⁷¹ He berates the opponent for his naïveté and his total lack of poetic comprehension:

It is based on the differences between people in need of instruction that such a wide range of technical treatises are laid out for study. Otherwise, if everyone could understand the truth that was to be communicated in just a few words, what would be the use of these voluminous tomes, tangled with all sorts of opinions, arguments, and concepts? If a single mantra could get us everything we wanted, what is the purpose of this merry-go-round of all manner of mantras and techniques and ritual formulae? Anyway, enough of this sort of circumlocutory mode of explanation, uninformed by the principles [of poetry?], rasas, aesthetic emotions, and poetic devices. It is well-established that this undertaking of the blessed teacher, ocean of boundless knowledge, whose every act is exclusively dedicated

Bhaktimandākinī, 47: atra ca, kadācit pāyān na iti, kadācit vande iti, kadācit praṇaumītyādikriyāviśeṣaprayogo bhaktirasāvedhena bhagavadanusandhāne paravaśahṛdayasya prayoktuḥ sambhramavaśād iti mantavyaḥ | evaṃvidhe ca sthale, prakramabhedāḥ pratyuta sahr̥dayacamatkārakārīti guṇa eva, “śāstrāṇām viśayas tāvad yāvan mandarasā narāḥ | raticakre pravṛtte tu naiva śāstraṃ na ca kramaḥ ||” iti vātsyāyanoktatvāt |

Another comes in the course of explaining the term “with a playful mind” (*kelibuddhyā*) in verse 23. “By this [the poet] expresses a prayer for the most superior **bhaktirasa**, by means of detachment from sensual enjoyments, as described in the verse (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.20.19): ‘The abiding love that the indiscriminating have for objects of the world—let that same love never leave my heart as I remember you.’”

Bhaktimandākinī, 79: anena ca “yā prītir avivekānām viśayeṣv anapāyinī | tvām anusmarataḥ sā me hr̥dayān māpasarpatu ||” ity uktarītyā bhogyaviśayaviraktyā sātīśayabhaktirasaprārthanām dyotayati |

Finally, he refers to “relishing the ambrosia that is **bhaktirasa**” (*bhaktirasāmṛtāsvāda*) in his commentary on verse 25. See *Bhaktimandākinī*, 87.

¹⁷¹ He quotes the Kashmiri Śaiva Utpaladeva's *Īśvarapratyabhijñānārikā* (2.33) in support of this idea. Trans. Isabelle Ratié, “‘A Five-Trunked, Four-Tusked Elephant is Running in the Sky’: How Free is Imagination According to Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta?” *Asiatische Studien* 64.2 (2010): 359, n.47: “In an object that is one (*eka*), [because it is] established through a synthesis (*anusandhāna*), an [elementary] phenomenon (*ābhāsa*) can also be distinguished according to [the subject’s] free will (*ruci*), a [particular] desire (*arthitva*), [or] according to education (*vyutpatti*).”

yathāruci yathārthitvaṃ yathāvyutpatti bhidyate |
ābhāso 'py artha ekasminn anusandhānasādhithe ||

to giving grace to others, is manifestly meaningful—so that those who have become infused with *rasa*, with their tender and artless minds, may alight upon this extremely deep subject matter.¹⁷²

The *Bhaktimandākinī* thus envisions bhakti as a combination of several factors: yogic visualization, Vedāntic allegorization, and aesthetic appreciation. In doing so, it encourages a devotional experience that Steven Hopkins calls “extravagant beholding, that holds in tension together ideal visionary forms with the concrete, material reality of the individual object of love.”¹⁷³ Hopkins discusses extravagant beholding primarily through Śrīvaiṣṇava examples of the *pādādikeśa* genre (not to mention a dazzling comparative study of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic literatures). As Fred Smith notes, the *Viṣṇupādādikeśastotra* was probably used “as a meditative text among certain circles of South Indian Vaiṣṇavas.”¹⁷⁴ The word “certain” here bespeaks a spectrum that must have included, or even foregrounded, people like Pūrṇasarasvatī, Śaiva-Vaiṣṇavas with Advaitic affinities. For Pūrṇasarasvatī did not emerge in a vacuum, least of all in the rich literary world of medieval Kerala.

Perhaps the most famous Vaiṣṇava *stotra* produced in Kerala was the *Mukundamālā* of King Kulaśekhara, traditionally considered to be one of the Tamil Āḷvārs from the ninth century, but there is some debate over his identity and date.¹⁷⁵ He was certainly known to Pūrṇasarasvatī,

¹⁷² *Bhaktimandākinī*, 12: vyutpādyabhedāpekṣayā hi śāstrāṇi vicitrāṇi vistīryante | anyathā parimitākṣaropadeśyena tattvena sarveṣāṃ caritārthatvāt kimartha eṣa vividhavikalpajalpakaḥ | pañcālo granthaskandhātibhāranibandhaḥ? ekenaiva mantreṇābhīmatasakalārthasiddhau kiṃprajoyanā ceyam bahuvīdhamantratantrapāratantryayantraṇā? ity alam atattvarasabhāvālamkārataraṅgitabhaṅgipratipādanena | sarasatām āpādyā, mṛdulasaralāmatīnām atigahane 'sminn arthe 'vatarānārtham sārthaka eva parānugrahaikasakalavyāpārāṇām apārajñānapārāvārāṇām bhagavatām ācāryāṇām ayam ārambha iti sthitam |

¹⁷³ Steven P. Hopkins, “Extravagant Beholding: Love, Ideal Bodies, and Particularity,” *History of Religions* 47.1 (2007): 8.

¹⁷⁴ Smith, “REVIEWS: *The Bhaktimandākinī*,” 524-525.

¹⁷⁵ See Siegfried Lienhard, *History of Classical Poetry: Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1984), 143. Bhandarkar placed him in the first half of the twelfth century. See R.G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1913), 50.

who not only quotes the *Mukundamālā* frequently but also calls Kulaśekhara a *paramabhāgavata*, an imperial title adopted by Vaiṣṇava kings all the way from the Gupta period.¹⁷⁶ Immensely popular in Kerala, the *Mukundamālā* was commented upon by an Advaitin contemporary of Pūrṇasarasvatī named Rāghavānanda.¹⁷⁷ Rāghavānanda's autobiographical notes at the end of his *Kṛṣṇapadī*, an Advaitic commentary on the BhP, suggest a similar affiliation with Śaiva teachers and specifically the Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa temple which Pūrṇasarasvatī frequented.¹⁷⁸ He opens his *Tātparyadīpikā* commentary on the *Mukundamālā* with verses from the eleventh canto of the BhP that exalt bhakti above all other means to liberation, then launches into a summary of classical Advaita teaching about the unity between Ātman and Brahman, and the illusory nature of duality, before quoting from the *Sāmbapañcāsikā* (v.15), a Śaiva hymn from eighth-century Kashmir, to express the non-difference between the act of praise, the one who praises, and the object of praise.¹⁷⁹ Still later in the *Tātparyadīpikā*, Rāghavānanda goes so far as to say that bhakti and liberation (*mukti*) are basically the same thing, once again making no secret about his inspiration from the Kashmiri Śaivas, this time referring directly to the philosopher and poet Utpaladeva:

¹⁷⁶ *Bhaktimandākinī*, 50, 88, 161 (*paramabhāgavataśrīkulaśekharamahārāja*). On the Guptas styling themselves as *paramabhāgavatas*, see Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, 43.

¹⁷⁷ *Śrīmukundamālā with Tātparyadīpikā of Rāghavānanda*, ed. K. Rama Pisharoti (Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1933). Pisharoti assigned Rāghavānanda to the seventeenth century, but Kunjunni Raja disputes this date, questioning the identification of Rāghavānanda's teacher, Kṛṣṇānanda, with the seventeenth-century author of the *Siddhāntasiddhāñjana*. See K. Kunjunni Raja, *The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature* (Madras: University of Madras, 1980), 8.

¹⁷⁸ Kunjunni Raja, *The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature*, 7, n.34.

¹⁷⁹ *Śrīmukundamālā with Tātparyadīpikā of Rāghavānanda*, 1-3. On the *Sāmbapañcāsikā*, see Stainton, "Poetry and Prayer," 210ff., 216-217 for the verse in question. Rāghavānanda also wrote a commentary on the BhP from an explicitly Advaita perspective. Like Śrīdhara above, commenting on BhP 10.43.17, he also described how the verse implied that Kṛṣṇa was the locus of all rasas, but unlike Śrīdhara, he did not make any mention of "bhaktirasa." See *Sreemad Bhagavatam 10th Skandha Part I, With the Commentary of Raghavananda Muni*, ed. M.B. Sankaranarayana Sastri (Trichur: The Mangalodayam Press, 1949), 398-399.

Here we must posit the following: *Mukti* is the direct, unmediated awareness of Brahman as pure inner consciousness—Brahman that has the form of the singular essence that is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, characterized as being the cause of the creation, preservation, and dissolution of the world. This awareness has as its source the great statements [of the Upaniṣads], such as “That you are.” Bhakti, for its part, is a certain unprecedented vision, a splendorous joy in the mind, which manifests through such signs as hairs standing on end, tears falling, and staring with mouth agape. It appears at the exact same time as when both one's unsurpassed veneration and faith in God as well as one's unsurpassed love grounded in the Self culminate in the undivided [unity of] Ātman and Brahman. There is thus a mutual recursion of the manifestation of eternal, unsurpassed love. And for that very reason—since they have the same cause, occur at the same time, operate in the same locus, and have the same object—[bhakti and *mukti*] are, from the perspective of absolute truth (*vastutaḥ*), one and the same, but different in empirical experience (*vyavahārataḥ*). Therefore it is appropriate to say that the choice of one or the other is just a matter of desire, because when one is achieved the other is inevitable. So we have a *purāṇic* quote—a very Upaniṣad (BhP 11.2.42): “Bhakti, experience of God, and disdain for other things—all three appear at the same time.” And it is with this in view that the revered author of the [*Śiva*] *stotrāvalī* proclaimed (1.7, 20.11): “Lord! You alone are the Self of all, and everyone loves themselves, so people will really flourish if they realize that bhakti for you is spontaneous—within their own nature. Those who prosper with the wealth of bhakti, what else can they pray for? Those who are impoverished without it, what else can they pray for?”¹⁸⁰

Another source of praise-poetry at the nexus of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, and Advaita

¹⁸⁰ *Śrīmukundamālā with Tātparyadīpikā of Rāghavānanda*, 14: atraitad avadheyam – muktir nāma viśvotpattisthitisaṃhāraheturvopalakṣitasya saccidānandaikarasamūrter brahmaṇas tattvamasyādimahāvākyapramāṇakaḥ pratyakcinmātratāsākṣādbodhaḥ, bhaktiḥ punar Īsvaraniṣṭhaniratiśayabahumānaviśvāsayor ātmaniṣṭhaniratiśayapremṇaḥ cākhaṇḍabrahmātmāparavyasitatayā tatsamasamayābhivyañyamāno romaharṣāśrupātamukhavikāsādiliṅgakaḥ kaścanāpūrvadarśano mānasollāso yo 'sau nityaniratiśayaprītyāvīrbhāvāparaparyāyo bhavatīty ato 'nayo ekanimittatvāt ekakālatvād ekādhikaraṇatvād ekaviśayatvāc ca vastuta aikarūpyaṃ vyavahārataś ca bhedaḥ, tenātreccāvikalpo yuktatarāḥ anyatarasiddhāv aparasyāvaśyaṃbhāvād iti | tathā ca purāṇopaniṣat - “bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktir anyatra caitat trika ekakālam” ity etad abhisandhāya ca śrīmān stotrāvalīkāraḥ prāvocat -

tvamevātmeśa sarvasya sarvaś cātmani rāgavān |
iti svabhāvasiddhāṃ tvadbhaktiṃ jānañ jayej janaḥ ||
bhaktiḥ lakṣmīsamṛddhānāṃ kim anyad upayācitam |
enayā vā daridrāṇāṃ kim anyad upayācitam || iti |

Cf. *The Sivastotrāvalī of Utpaladevāchārya with the Sanskrit commentary of Kṣemarāja*, ed. Rājānaka Lakṣmaṇa (Varanasi: The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1964), 6, 346. On Utpaladeva's *Śivastotrāvalī*, and the commentarial tradition thereon, as addressing the nature of bhakti in the context of nondualist theology, see Stainton, “Poetry and Prayer,” 188-210, esp. 210: “For both Utpaladeva and Kṣemarāja, poetry and aesthetics are ways of moving beyond the normal, dualistic language and understandings to cultivate an extraordinary experience for their audiences grounded in a radical theology of non-dualism.”

Vedānta was the fourteenth-century poet Līlāśuka Bilvamaṅgala.¹⁸¹ His two *stotras*, the *Bilvamaṅgalastava* and *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta*, quickly spread through the south, and by the early decades of the sixteenth century found their way north to Caitanya and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.¹⁸² The epigraph to this chapter, taken from the *Bilvamaṅgalastava*, suggests Līlāśuka's Advaita background. That he was also a Śaiva can reasonably be inferred from his confession in

Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta 2.24:

I'm a Śaiva for sure, there's no doubt about it,
devoted to chanting the five-letter name,
and yet my heart dwells on the farmer's wife's boy
whose smiling face blooms like the *atasī* flower.¹⁸³

On the vernacular side of things, the poet Ceruśserī composed his *Kṛṣṇagāthā* in the fifteenth century, “the most extreme example of the medium of Malayalam and the poetics of Sanskrit cohabiting the same genre.”¹⁸⁴ The *Kṛṣṇagāthā* was ostensibly an adaptation of the BhP, but included the idioms and themes of Malayalam courtesan literature, fusing bhakti with a secular eroticism.¹⁸⁵ No doubt, when taken together, it was works such as these that set the stage for the

¹⁸¹ On the date, see Lienhard, *History of Classical Poetry*, 145. For a more detailed discussion, see Frances Wilson, *The Love of Krishna: The Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta of Līlāśuka Bilvamaṅgala* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975).

¹⁸² See Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, 210-211.

¹⁸³ śaivā vyaṃ na khalu tatra vicāraṇīyaṃ
pañcākṣarījapaparā nitarāṃ tathā 'pi |
ceto madīyam atasīkusumāvabhāsam
smerānanam smarati gopavadhūkiśoram ||

Frances Wilson (*The Bilvamaṅgalastava*, 4-6) suggests that the verses to Śiva in the *Bilvamaṅgalastava* are part of the original collection. In the *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta*, Bilvamaṅgala also invokes his guru Somagiri (1.1) and Īśānadeva (1.110), both plainly Śaiva names.

¹⁸⁴ Rich Freeman, “Genre and Society: The Literary Culture of Premodern Kerala,” in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 469.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 469: “This interweaving of bhakti with erotics, encountered readily in the early Manipravalam works but notionally not in Pattu or in mainstream late Manipravalam, continues to invite apologies or condemnation from contemporary critics. When condemned, the erotics are linked up with the Brahmanical decadence of medieval Kerala as a blight in an otherwise fine work. But since the erotic in this case has invaded the heart of Pattu in an

more famous Advaitic versions of the BhP in Kerala—most recognizable among which was the *Nārāyaṇīya* by Melputtūr Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa in the late sixteenth century.¹⁸⁶ Pūrṇasarasvatī's bhakti was thus at once northern and southern. If the *stotra* genre took off in the far reaches of Śaiva Kashmir, after its Buddhist and Jain predecessors, it was followed by a profusion of works from the south that drew upon their own local resources: Vaiṣṇava neighbors, Vedāntic philosophy, and the BhP.

A final insight into the transit of the BhP comes from Pūrṇasarasvatī's own poetry. If the *Bhaktimandākinī* took a relatively sedate, philosophical view of bhakti, Pūrṇasarasvatī exploited the erotic motifs of bhakti in his *Haṃsasandeśa*, a lyric poem in the messenger-genre (*sandeśakāvya*).¹⁸⁷ In the *Haṃsasandeśa*, a lovelorn woman enlists a goose to take a message to her faraway lover. Already we see an inversion of the classic *sandeśakāvya*. Unlike his predecessors Kālidāsa (*Meghasandeśa*) and Vedānta Deśika (*Haṃsasandeśa*),¹⁸⁸ Pūrṇasarasvatī

overtly devotional work of high stature, other attempts to reconcile the dilemma emerge. A recent analysis, for instance, attempts to posit that the erotics are allegorical and bent to the higher and more encompassing purposes of *bhakti*.”

¹⁸⁶ The intersection of bhakti and Advaita in Kerala is a topic that would require another chapter entirely, but we may make note of two figures close to Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, one a contemporary and the other inspired by his work. The first, Devanārāyaṇa, wrote the *Vedāntaratnamālā*, an Advaita commentary on the first verse of the BhP, and the second, Rāmapāṇivāda (18th C.), wrote the *Viṣṇuvilāsa*, a Sanskrit *kāvya* with its share of Advaita doctrine sprinkled throughout. See S. Venkitasubramonia Iyer, “Vedāntaratnamālā of Devanārāyaṇa,” *Journal of the Travancore University Oriental Manuscripts Library* 4.1 (1948): 1-6. See also *Viṣṇuvilāsa of Rāmapāṇivāda*, ed. P.K. Narayana Pillai (Trivandrum: S.V.G. Press, 1951). On the complex social context of bhakti literature in Kerala, expressed differently across caste communities and linguistic registers, see Freeman, “Genre and Society,” 479-484. Of particular interest is Pūntānam Nampūtiri, a Brahmin who translated the *Kṛṣṇakarnāmrta* into Malayalam at the behest of his non-Brahmin friend, and whose *Jñānappāna* was “an independent treatise that casts an *advaita* and *bhakti* fusion into the simple song-form of the *pāna* chant” (*Ibid.*, 483-484).

¹⁸⁷ *The Haṃsasandeśa*, ed. K. Sāmbaśiva Śāstrī (Trivandrum: Superintendent, Government Press, 1937). On the genre of *sandeśakāvya* in Kerala, see Freeman, “Genre and Society,” 469-475.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Yigal Bronner and David Shulman, “‘A Cloud Turned Goose’: Sanskrit in the Vernacular Millennium,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43.1 (2006): 1-30.

chooses a female narrator.¹⁸⁹ At first we only know that she is longing anxiously (*raṇaraṇakataḥ*)¹⁹⁰ for a certain hardhearted faraway lover,¹⁹¹ but in the tenth verse we discover that he is none other than Kṛṣṇa, scion of the Vṛṣṇis. The forlorn woman, a typical representative of Friedhelm Hardy's *viraha-bhakti*, love-in-separation, then guides the goose through “all of the places my lover has loved.”¹⁹² The route begins in Kāñcīpuram, which, according to Dennis Hudson, was the home of the BhP. The goose then glides over several Tamil Vaiṣṇava hotspots: Śrīraṅgam, site of the famous Raṅganātha temple, the Kāverī and Tāmraparṇī rivers, and even Ālvār Tirunagari, home of the poet-saint Nammālvār. Here, Pūrṇasarasvatī invokes the memory of Nammālvār and his *Tiruvāymoḷi*:

¹⁸⁹ This may be a result of the courtesan-centered Manipravalam literature of Kerala. See Freeman, “Genre and Society,” 470-471: “In certain formal properties, the two surviving Manipravalam messenger-poems seem clearly to aspire to the established Sanskrit prototype....In much of their thematic matter and its treatment, however, they might just as readily appear as a further development of the *accicaritams*. These, it will be recalled, are the earliest metrically mixed works (*campu*) in Manipravalam and, like the Kerala *sandēśakāvyas*, are ostensibly in praise of courtesan-dancers. The *accicaritams*' mode of setting out a kind of amorous traveler's descriptive account anticipates in many particulars the principal thematics of the Manipravalam messenger-poem: roving over the landscape and social locales of markets, palaces, and temples to eventually arrive at the heroine's house; the subsequent description of the heroine, her attributes, and abode; as well as the erotic sentiments that saturate these descriptions.”

¹⁹⁰ Pūrṇasarasvatī seems to have drawn this relatively rare term directly from his favorite Bhavabhūti. We encounter it in both *Mālatīmādhava* 1.44c (*raṇaraṇakavivṛddhiṃ bibhrad āvartamānam*) and in the prose before *Uttararāmacarita* 1.39 (*seyam eva raṇaraṇakadāyini...virahabhāvanā*). See *The Mālatīmādhava of Bhavabhūti*, ed. M.R. Telang, rev. ed. V.L.S. Pansikar (Bombay: Nirṇaya Sagar, 1936), 47. See also *The Uttararāmacharita of Bhavabhūti*, 41.

¹⁹¹ *The Hamsasandēśa*, 1:

kācit kāntā virahaśikhinā kāmīnī kāmataptā
nirdhyāyantī kam api dayitaṃ nirdayaṃ dūrasaṃstham |
bhūyo bhūyo raṇaraṇakataḥ puṣpavāṭīm bhramantī
līlavāpīkamalapathikaṃ rājahaṃsaṃ dadarśa || 1 ||

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 3:

prāṇaḥ prācāṃ nigamavacasāṃ prāṇanātho ramāyās
trāṇyoccais tapasi caratām vṛṣṇivaṃśe 'vatīṛṇaḥ |
yasmin yasmin sa khalu ramate vallabho me pradeśe
taṃ taṃ citte varaguṇa mayā kathyamānaṃ nidadhyāḥ || 10 ||

Bow down your head to
 that image of Murāri—
 we call him Śaṭhakopan—
 who made manifest scripture's sense,
 that water we delight in,
 by wreathing it in words
 that belong to Tamil lands,
 and who here relieves
 for all his lovers
 the pain of life-experience.¹⁹³

After a considerable detour through Kerala, during which he visits the temples at Trivandrum and Trichambaram, the goose goes directly to his final destination, none other than Brindavan. The message he delivers to Kṛṣṇa locates the distress of his mistress in that particular narrative landscape created by the BhP. It brings up the BhP's favorite stories: the felling of the two Arjuna trees, the lifting of Mount Govardhana, and Kṛṣṇa's dalliances with the young women of the village Braj. At this point, in the goose's telling, the heroine daydreams that her divine lover briefly appears and tries to go in for an embrace, only to find her arms firmly crossed over her breasts, and her eyes crimson, rimmed with tears. “Your chest is splashed with saffron from all those *gopīs*' breasts,” she admonishes him. “Don't let it get pale by rubbing up against mine.”¹⁹⁴ The tone of intimacy, withdrawal, and intense longing that characterizes bhakti poetry for Kṛṣṇa in all languages comes to a stirring conclusion:

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 5:

āviścakre nigamavacasām artham ānandatūrtam
 yā saṃgranthya dramīḍadharāṇībhāṣayā bhūṣayeva |
 tāṃ bhaktānām bhavaparīṇatam tāpam atrodharantīm
 mūrtim mūrdhnā vinama śaṭhakopābhīdhānām murāreḥ || 22 ||

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 16:

saṃkalpais tvām kṣaṇam upagataṃ satvarāśleṣalolaṃ
 raktāpāṅgī stanakṛtabhujasvastikā sāśram āha |
 gopastrīṇām kucaparicitaiḥ kuṅkumair aṅkitaṃ te
 vakṣo mā bhūt kucavilūṭhanair luptaśobham mameti || 85 ||

You know how when dark Draupadī,
 dragged about by dastardly devils
 in that great hall, called out in duress:
 “Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, KṚṢṆA!!”
 it reached your ears so far away—

Well I find it strange that
 you can't seem to hear
 the cries of this woman
 when you're sitting in her heart.¹⁹⁵

And so we end up where we began, from the Tamil Ālvārs to the Sanskrit BhP, and from the South to Brindavan, but through a very different route from the one we generally take. On this less-traveled road we find strange, many-headed creatures: Śaiva Vaiṣṇavas, Advaitic devotees, easterners from the west and southerners from the north. If they seem fantastic and mysterious and inexplicable, perhaps it's because we've been asking the wrong questions, looking in the wrong places. For all of his considerable erudition, Friedhelm Hardy was disappointingly general when it came to the medieval history of the BhP. Except for one brilliant article on the ascetic Mādhavendra Purī, a possible link between South Indian bhakti and Bengali Vaiṣṇavism,¹⁹⁶ Hardy repeated what has become a conventional understanding of the bhakti movement, associating the proliferation of Vaiṣṇava traditions of Vedānta with structural similarities between vernacular bhakti poets.¹⁹⁷ He was creative enough to imagine that the initial shift of bhakti from north to south could have been inaugurated by “bards narrating to local

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19:

kṛtsnadviṣṭaiḥ kurubhir adhamaiḥ kṛṣyamāṇā sabhāyām
 kṛcchrasthā yad vyalapad abalā kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇeti kṛṣṇā |
 tat te dūrām śravaṇapadavīm yātam etat tu citraṃ
 cittastho 'pi pralapitagiraṃ yan na tasyāḥ śṛṇoṣi || 98 ||

¹⁹⁶ Friedhelm Hardy, “Mādhavendra Purī: A Link Between Bengal Vaiṣṇavism and South Indian *Bhakti*,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1 (1974): 23-41.

¹⁹⁷ Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, 556ff.

chieftains the exploits of Kṛṣṇa, travellers bringing back with them some poems about the *gopīs*, or Vaiṣṇava brahmins practising [*sic*] in their *agrahāra*...the *bhakti-yoga* of the *Gītā*.”¹⁹⁸ If he had spent the time (or, alas, lived long enough) to follow bhakti's movement from south to north, he might have come to similar insights. But his absence, like the afterlife of the BhP, leaves a gap in history that is difficult to fill.

In this chapter, I have tried to situate the BhP at the crossroads of a number of intellectual currents that are often at odds in the historiography of Indian religion and philosophy: Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, bhakti and Advaita Vedānta. I offer a brief overview of the material, literary, and philosophical cultures of particular regions that may illuminate the path of the BhP after the time of its initial composition. But how did particular systematic forms of Sanskrit thought, the knowledge-systems of Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta, at their core hostile to the very idea of devotion to an embodied god, come to reconcile themselves to it? How did the BhP become instrumental to this process? Who were the agents that carried it out? Were they more interested in reconciliation or revolution? The following chapter studies the BhP's meteoric rise to prominence through the intellectual history of a single text, the *Bhagavannāma-kaumudī*, that changed the way premodern scholars would come to think about the authority and power of the BhP. That the *Bhagavannāma-kaumudī* also influenced a wide range of scholarly and religious communities, who did not always intersect or indeed see eye-to-eye, further highlights the need to study the BhP and its text traditions from unlikely angles. Therein lies the promise of writing histories in the plural.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

Chapter 3: Mīmāṃsā in the Moonlight

Not everything is good just because it's "purāṇa."

-Kālidāsa, *Mālavikāgnimitra*, 1.2a¹⁹⁹

O mind, praise the name of Rāma.

-T. Shankara Iyer, *rāma nāmame tudi*

The *Bhagavannāmakaumudī* in Context

In the previous chapter, we explored some possible explanations for the relative silence surrounding the transmission of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (BhP) in the few centuries after its composition. We also tried to chart the geography of its initial efflorescence, in the commentarial work of Śrīdhara Svāmin in Orissa and in the writings of Hemādri and Vopadeva in Maharashtra. One of the BhP's most enduring legacies was its relationship with devotional bhakti poetry in both Sanskrit and vernacular languages. In addition to a common set of narrative episodes, many of these poems and songs shared a constant refrain: The name of God is all-powerful.²⁰⁰ Scholars such as V. Raghavan, writing in the heyday of Indian independence, suggested that the presence of this motif across Sanskrit praise-poetry, Marathi *abhangs*, Hindi *pad*s, and Telugu Carnatic music proved that the "bhakti movement" was a cultural phenomenon that presciently mapped the nascent nation-state.²⁰¹ In a famous essay delivered as the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel memorial lecture in 1966, Raghavan described bhakti saints and singers as the "great integrators" of India,

¹⁹⁹ *The Mālavikāgnimitra of Kālidāsa*, ed. Kāśīnāth Pāṇḍurang Parab, rev. V.L.S. Paṇṣīkar (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar, 1924), 3: purāṇam ity eva na sādhu sarvaṃ

²⁰⁰ An entire volume of the *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* (2.2, 1994) was dedicated to studies on the name across Indian religious and philosophical traditions.

²⁰¹ See John Stratton Hawley, *A Storm of Songs: India and the Idea of the Bhakti Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 19-28.

who bridged the gap between elite theology and popular religion. And in other complementary essays, he developed the idea of a *Nāmasiddhānta*, an India-wide tradition of scholarship and song which fused the theory and practice of singing the name of God.²⁰² Raghavan thought that the *Nāmasiddhānta* was inherently capacious, mirroring the Indian nation-state itself, with room for every scholarly antinomy: abstract philosophy and popular practice, Sanskrit and the vernacular, jñāna and bhakti. No doubt he overreached, and suppressed the caste- and class-bound character of the traditions he believed to be universal.²⁰³ Raghavan was, in the end, a creative participant in a living tradition, steeped in those Smārta sensibilities that profess to include even when they implicitly exclude.

This chapter revisits the idea of the *Nāmasiddhānta* by exploring the plural histories of one of its earliest expositions: The *Bhagavannāmakāumudī* (BNK), or “Moonlight of God's Name.”²⁰⁴ The BNK has thus far been studied only piecemeal. Scholars have briefly discussed its incipient formulations of the aesthetic theory of bhaktirasa,²⁰⁵ its impact on Gauḍīya (Bengali) Vaiṣṇavism,²⁰⁶ and its legacy in the Tamil South.²⁰⁷ I will also elaborate on these insights in this chapter. Largely ignored, however, is the text's own primary concern: to defend the ultimate

²⁰² See V. Raghavan, *The Power of the Sacred Name* (Bloomington: World Wisdom Press, 2011).

²⁰³ See Davesh Soneji, “The Powers of Polyglossia: Marathi *Kīrtan*, Multilingualism, and the Making of a South Indian Devotional Tradition,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 17.3 (2014): 342: “In other words, what most Smārta Brahmin practitioners of *bhajana*, and certainly Singer and Raghavan, would see as the ingenuity of Tamil Brahmins as 'preservers' of pan-Indian traditions, I would argue, cannot be disassociated from the historical roles offered to local Smārtas, but also to others, at the Tanjore court as intellectuals, musicians, and performers of drama and dance in a culture of public multilingualism.”

²⁰⁴ *Bhagavannāmakāumudī*, ed. Gosvāmī Dāmodar Śāstrī (Kāśī: Acyutagrāhamālā, 1927).

²⁰⁵ Neal Delmonico, “Sacred Rapture: A Study of the Religious Aesthetic of Rupa Gosvamin” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1990), 176-183.

²⁰⁶ Mans Broo, “The Vrindāvan Gosvāmins on Kīrtana,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 17.2 (2009): 63-64.

²⁰⁷ Raghavan, *The Power of the Sacred Name*, 49-55.

validity of *purāṇic* utterances in the official language of Sanskrit scriptural hermeneutics, or Mīmāṃsā. The BNK represents a serious scholastic attempt to accord the genre of *purāṇa*—specifically, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa—a superlative place in the hierarchy of Sanskrit scripture. In itself, the BNK thus makes an extremely important yet unrecognized intervention in Sanskrit intellectual history. Its reception history is no less significant. At roughly contemporaneous moments in the sixteenth-century Doab, both Advaita Vedāntins and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, generally depicted in hagiographical literature as intractably opposed, laid claim to the BNK as a source of theological inspiration. And only a century or so later, the BNK made its way back down to South India, where the musical-performative tradition known as the *bhājana sampradāya* began to take shape during the rule of the Thanjavur Marathas. In the latter part of this chapter, I look at the diverse reception history of the BNK for what it may reveal about the local, fragmented character of a text tradition valorized for its universality.

The identity of Lakṣmīdhara, author of the BNK, is still an open question.²⁰⁸ The best historical guess places him around the turn of the fifteenth century, assuming that he is also the author of the *Advaitamakaranda*, a popular work that expresses the classical doctrines of Advaita Vedānta in twenty-eight verses.²⁰⁹ The *Advaitamakaranda* was quoted by Brahmānanda Bhāratī, who probably lived toward the end of the fifteenth century, in his commentary on Bhāratīrtha's *Dr̥gdr̥śyaviveka*. Both the *Advaitamakaranda* and *Bhagavannāmakaumudī* also make reference to Lakṣmīdhara's teacher, Anantānanda.²¹⁰ There is also a verse in a manuscript of the BNK in the

²⁰⁸ See T.M.P. Mahadevan, ed., *Preceptors of Advaita* (Secunderabad: Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Mandir, 1968), 201-205; Srikantha Sastri, “Advaitācāryas of the 12th and 13th Centuries,” *Indian Historical Quarterly* XIV (1938): 401-405.

²⁰⁹ *Advaitamakaranda*, ed. R. Krishnaswami Sastri (Srirangam: Vani Vilas Press, 1926).

²¹⁰ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 2:

Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Library (probably added later) which claims that Lakṣmīdhara was author of three works: the BNK, the *Advaitamakaranda*, and the *Amṛtatarāṅgiṇī*, an incomplete and still-unedited commentary on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.²¹¹

Geographically speaking, Lakṣmīdhara was probably a native of Orissa.²¹² There exists in the Śāṅkara *maṭha* at Puri an unpublished commentary on the *Advaitamakaranda* by Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma,²¹³ a famous scholar of Navya Nyāya who was later claimed by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava hagiographers as a convert to Caitanya's movement.²¹⁴ Moreover, it seems clear that Lakṣmīdhara

yatpādapdmanakhakāntitarāṅgajīryaj-
jambārajāṅghikadhiyāṃ na dhiyāṃ abhūmiḥ |
niḥsīmasaukhyajaladhir jayatād **anantaḥ**
so '**smadgurur** jagadanugrahajāgarūkah ||6||

Ibid., 6-7, where Lakṣmīdhara equates his teacher, Anantānanda “Raghunātha,” with Rāma the “Lord of Raghus,” absorption in whose name is the purpose of the inquiry conducted in the BNK: asya vicārasya sakalaśrutismṛtītiḥāsapurāṅgamārthasatattvasandehasandohalatālavitracarāṇanakhacandrikā'ñcalasya **śrīmadanantānandar**aghunāthasya karuṇākādambinīmuktasūktisudhoddhārāsāraiḥ smṛtipurāṇavacanavirodhābhāsabhāvitānitāntamasṛṇāsaṅkāpaṅkaprakṣālanena tasyaiva raghurājaśiromaneḥ sarvataḥ prasṁmaraparamakāruṇyasudhā'rṇavasya niraṅkuśamahimadhāmani śrīrāmanāmani svacetasaḥ samādhānam eva prayojanaṃ |

Cf. *Advaitamakaranda*, 2:

kaṭākṣakiraṅcāntanamanmohābdhaye namaḥ |
anantānandakrṣṇāya jaganmaṅgalamūrtaye || 1 ||

²¹¹ See Mahadevan, *Preceptors of Advaita*, 201.

²¹² In the opening verse of the BNK, Lakṣmīdhara invokes the god who is “beloved of Puṇḍarīka” (*puṇḍarīkapriya*). At first I believed this was a reference to the Puṇḍalīk remembered as the devotee of Vitthal. However, R.C. Dhare showed that the name “Puṇḍarīk” or “Puṇḍalīk” occurs frequently in lists of Viṣṇu devotees in the *purāṇas*. See R.C. Dhare, *Rise of a Folk God: Vitthal of Pandharpur*, trans. Anne Feldhaus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 151. One such Puṇḍarīka shows up in the “Glory of Jagannāth” section of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, in which he and his friend Ambarīṣa lead dissolute lives until they reach Jagannāth at Puri, sing the names of Viṣṇu, and attain liberation there. Dhare (*Ibid.*, 156) comments: “No matter how far someone has fallen...still he can be saved just by repeating the name of Viṣṇu: this is the truth that the Māhātmya reveals through this story of the salvation of Puṇḍarīk and Ambarīṣ.” The all-purifying power of God's name is the most central claim of Lakṣmīdhara's BNK.

²¹³ See Rajendralal Mitra, *Notices of Sanskrit Mss. Vol. VIII.* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1886), 291-292.

²¹⁴ See D.C. Bhattacharya, “Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma,” *Indian Historical Quarterly* XVI (1940): 58-69; S.K. De, *Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1961), xxiii-xxv, 85-90; Edward Dimock and Tony K. Stewart, *The Caitanya Caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 16; Jonardon Ganeri, *The Lost Age of Reason: Philosophy in*

bore some relationship to Śrīdhara Svāmin, the equally elusive author of the *Bhāvārthadīpikā* commentary on the BhP. First, much of the first chapter of the BNK can be considered an elaboration of Śrīdhara's brief and scattered comments on the power of the divine name into a full-fledged theology. Second, whether or not the two are cut from the same cloth, their intellectual engagement with Advaita Vedānta is clearly mediated by the BhP, whose philosophical connection to “classical” scholastic Advaita, as I explained the previous chapter, is still tenuous. And finally, both Śrīdhara and Lakṣmīdhara make repeated reference to the god Nṛsiṃha, whose transition into the deity Jagannāth of Puri has been well-documented.²¹⁵

Lakṣmīdhara's autobiographical notes also suggest the specter of Śaivism. Although his devotion largely centers on the Kṛṣṇa of the BhP, like Śrīdhara he does not exhibit sectarian preferences. In a verse at the end of the BNK, Lakṣmīdhara describes his teacher as a representative of the unity between Śiva and Viṣṇu:

He who, diving into the oceanic glory
of the water spraying from
his own lotus feet,
then himself placed it atop his head:
he is my guru, my family deity.²¹⁶

The image here is of the river Gaṅgā, who flows from the feet of Viṣṇu onto the head of the waiting Śiva. Only the two are a single entity, the author's family deity (*kuladaivata*), recalling

Early Modern India 1450-1700 CE (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 42-44.

²¹⁵ See Anncharlott Eschmann et al., “The Formation of the Jagannātha Triad,” in *The Cult of Jagannāth and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, eds. Annemarie Eschmann et al. (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1978), 167-196. Also see Sara Adams, “From Narasiṃha to Jagannātha,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 17.1 (2008): 5-28.

²¹⁶ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 135:

svapādapaṅkeruhasīkarasya
nimajya mähātmyamahārṇave yaḥ |
dadhau punas taṃ svayam eva maulau
sa no gurus tat kuladaivatam naḥ ||

the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava continuum of the previous chapter. Elsewhere in the BNK, Lakṣmīdhara quotes a verse from the *Śivadharmottara* (1.40), an influential text of Śaiva teaching (*śivaśāsana*), in support of a claim that one must have “faith” (*śraddhā*) in the words of scripture for it to be effective.²¹⁷ Furthermore, Lakṣmīdhara takes great pains in the BNK to emphasize the equivalence of the two gods. In one passage on the aesthetics of religious devotion (*bhaktirasa*), he uses the technical language of Sanskrit poetics to suggest that the “foundational” and “stimulant” factors (*ālambana-* and *uddīpanavibhāva*) of a devotee's *rasa* could be either Viṣṇu or Śiva.²¹⁸ The use of the language of Sanskrit aesthetics here obviously puts one in mind of the previous chapter's theorists of the intersection between *bhakti* and *rasa*: Hemādri, Śrīdhara Svāmin (partly), and Pūrṇasarasvatī. It appears that Pūrṇasarasvatī knew of the *Amṛtaraṅgiṇī* commentary on the BhP (11.3.11) attributed to Lakṣmīdhara.²¹⁹ Whether it is the same work is nearly impossible to determine, since surviving manuscripts only contain the commentary up to the third canto. In two such manuscripts, however, the author has a Śaiva renunciate name reminiscent of Pūrṇasarasvatī's—Jñānapūrṇa Yati, whose family guru, Anantānanda, is the same as Lakṣmīdhara's.²²⁰ Further corroboration of the identity of Lakṣmīdhara with Jñānapūrṇa awaits

²¹⁷ See *Ibid.*, 72: iti śraddhāhīnasya sarvatrānadhikāraṃ darśayati | **śivadharmottare** 'pi [...] iti guṇavādanirākaraṇena śivaśāsaneṣu śraddhām utpādayan śraddhāvato 'dhikāraṃ darśayati |

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 80: tasya ca ālambanavibhāvo [...] bhagavān ananto vā manāgavalokanakharvīkṛtamadanagarvo mugdhamṛgalāñchanaśekharaḥ śaṅkaro vā [...] Cf. Delmonico, “Sacred Rapture,” 176-183.

²¹⁹ See N.V.P. Unithiri et al., eds., *The Bhaktimandākinī: An Elaborate Fourteenth-Century Commentary by Pūrṇasarasvatī on the Viṣṇupādādikeśastotra Attributed to Śaṅkarācārya*. École française d'Extrême-Orient, Collection Indologie 118 (Pondicherry: Institut français de Pondichéry, 2011), 26: “dhārābhir hastihastābhiḥ” ity atra, **amṛtaraṅgiṇīkārāis** tathā vyākhyātāt |

²²⁰ See S. Kuppuswami Sastri, ed. *A Triennial Catalogue of Manuscripts Collected for the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras, Vol. 3C* (Madras: Superintendent, Government Press, 1922), 4009. See also S.S. Saith, ed., *Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Panjab University Library, Lahore: Vol. II* (Lahore: University of the Panjab, 1941), 139.

the collation of the four surviving partial manuscripts of the *Amṛtatarāṅgiṇī*.²²¹

Not all Śaivas, however, took part so readily in the pluralistic ethos offered in the BNK. Take, for example, the polemic of Lakṣmīdhara's rough contemporary Gopīnātha, a Maharashtrian scholar of *dharmaśāstra*, who had clear affinities for Śaiva theology.²²² As Rosalind O'Hanlon has recently discussed, in his influential *Jātiviveka*, a discourse on classifying caste communities, Gopīnātha speaks contemptuously of those who practice precisely the sort of bhakti which Lakṣmīdhara advocates in the BNK:

Gopīnātha also demonstrated marked hostility to bhakti religion, ascribing menial parentages to 'Vaiṣṇavas'. [...] Such 'Vaiṣṇavas' were lower than Śūdras. [...] They deluded themselves that repeating the name of God was the summit of virtue and a substitute for following their own prescribed place in the social order. Citing the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, he asserted: 'Those who abandon their karma and just recite "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa!" are sinners in the eyes of Hari. The birth of Hari is for the sake of dharma. If you follow your varṇa, āśrama, and the prescribed conduct, you actually worship Viṣṇu, the Highest Man. There is no other way to satiate Him'.²²³

In this passage, Gopīnātha was probably responding to the popularity of Vārkarī devotion to Viṭṭhal in the Maratha country, primarily the prerogative of subaltern caste groups. But it is also possible that Gopīnātha knew of Lakṣmīdhara's own writing on the topic of religious practices that emphasized the repetition of God's name. Whatever their relationship may have been, the discrepancy between their attitudes to bhakti shows that there was a wide spectrum of Śaivas in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, some who rejected and some who accommodated the texts

²²¹ See V. Raghavan, ed., *New Catalogus Catalogorum, Volume 1*, Revised Edition (Madras: University of Madras, 1968), 347.

²²² See Rosalind O'Hanlon, et al., "Discourses of Caste over the Longue Durée: Gopīnātha and Social Classification in India, ca. 1400-1900," *South Asian History and Culture* 6.1 (2015): 103: "He was a traditional Smārta Brahman, from a Śaivite scholar family, in which Kashmiri Śaivite influences were strong. In Sanderson's terms, Gopīnātha seems not to have been an initiate into a particular Śaivite sect, but rather to have worshipped Śiva within a broad framework of Vedic ritual and Smārta attachment to the principles of varṇāśramadharmā, the orders of castes and life-stages."

²²³ *Ibid.*, 111.

and practices of Vaiṣṇava devotional groups (divided by caste and class) in the name of Vaiṣṇavism itself.

Perhaps more interesting than the philosophical or theological impulses “behind” Lakṣmīdhara's work is what he is doing in writing the BNK. Most importantly, he places the BhP firmly within the canon of Sanskrit scripture, using the language of Vedic ritual and philosophical hermeneutics to privilege the BhP more strongly than his predecessors. And in the very same motion, he opens a space for non-Vedic, non-Sanskrit, popular devotional practices, to puncture the forbidding world of scriptural exegesis. He writes approvingly of lyrics (*gāthā*) that are composed in Prakrit (*prākṛtabhāṣā*)²²⁴ and suggests that one might fulfill the goals of human life by praising God with “Vedic, Tantric, or Purāṇic mantras, or ones of human composition” (*śrautais tāntrikaiḥ paurāṇikaiḥ pauruṣeyair vā...mantraiḥ*); there is no rule, he says, that defines how one should praise God.²²⁵ It is quite likely the BNK's location at these multiple intersections—the elite and the everyday, the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava—that contributed to its later impact on a

²²⁴ Cf. Sheldon Pollock, “Sanskrit Literary Culture from the Inside Out,” in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 63: “The word itself, according to the standard interpretation, refers to the 'common' or 'natural' dialect(s) of which Sanskrit represents the grammatically disciplined variety. But in fact it typically connotes a literary language and only very rarely is used to mean spoken vernaculars (the usual term for these was *bhāṣā*, speech).”

²²⁵ See *Bhāgavannāma-kaumudī*, 101, commenting on BhP 6.3.27: **pavitrabhūtā gāthā** yeṣāṃ lakṣaṇāpetam api yannāmāṅkitam padyam vā prākṛtabhāṣāracitam vā teṣāṃ pūtātve katamaḥ sandeha iti |

See *Ibid.*, 124, commenting on *R̥g Veda* 1.156.3: **stotārah** śrautais tāntrikaiḥ paurāṇikaiḥ pauruṣeyair vā studhvam iti vipariṇāmaḥ | vipariṇāmaḥ, na caivam eva stotavyam iti kaścid asti niyamaḥ, yathā vida yathā jānītha tathā studhvam mantraiḥ studhvam iti bhāvaḥ |

Cf. R.C. Hazra, “The Śiva-dharmottara,” *Purāṇa* 27.1 (1985): 186: “The *Śiva-dharmottara* allows the Śaiva teachers to use Sanskrit, Prakrit or any of the local dialects as a medium of religious instruction.” See *Ibid.*, 186, n.13:

saṃskṛtair prākṛtair vākyair yaḥ śiṣyam anurūpataḥ |
deśabhāṣādyupāyais ca bodhayet sa guruḥ smṛtaḥ ||

He is a guru who instructs his student accordingly
by means of Sanskrit or Prakrit or local languages.

diverse group of scholars and sermonizers. Before attending to its reception history, however, I will elaborate on the BNK's intervention in the world of Sanskrit scriptural hermeneutics. In order to do so, I reconstruct the relevant hermeneutical concepts of the BNK's primary intellectual language: Mīmāṃsā.

A Tale of Two *Smṛtis*

Among all the schools of Brahmanical thought, Mīmāṃsā instituted some of the strictest criteria for what scripture could be accepted as normative. This was because the problem of scriptural proliferation—that is, the vast array of Indic text traditions that presented themselves as valid sources of authoritative knowledge—bore directly on the unique authority of the Veda as the source of religious knowledge and practice. The Mīmāṃsā argument for a scripture's ultimate validity (*prāmāṇya*) runs briefly as follows: First, a text cannot have an author, human or divine, for embodied beings lie all the time, and there is no such thing as omniscience or supernatural perception;²²⁶ second, the text cannot refer to historical realities, for that would imply personal authorship; and third, it cannot have a discernible beginning, for that would imply historical contingency.²²⁷ By this account, only the directly perceived, eternal, unauthored Veda (*śruti*) qualifies as authoritative. All other texts in the Brahmanical corpus can only possess, at best, a derivative authority. Even the genre of *smṛti*, from which most Brahmanical cultural practices

²²⁶ On the Mīmāṃsā rejection of yogic perception, see Lawrence McCrea, “‘Just Like Us, Just Like Now’: The Tactical Implications of the Mīmāṃsā Rejection of Yogic Perception,” in *Yogic Perception, Meditation, and Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Eli Franco (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 55-70.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 61, n.9: “Eternal texts, the Mīmāṃsakas argue, cannot refer to particular historical persons or events. Those passages in eternal texts which appear to refer to such persons and events must be understood as figuratively praising or otherwise referring to elements of the (eternally recurrent) Vedic sacrifice—what the Mīmāṃsakas call *arthavāda*. Hence, any apparent reference in a purportedly eternal text to the omniscience of a particular scripture-author would either have to be an *arthavāda* passage (and accordingly be interpreted figuratively), or, as a historical reference, would show that the text is not in fact eternal.”

were drawn, is usually allocated a place below *śruti* in the Mīmāṃsā hierarchy of Sanskrit scripture. The genre of *smṛti* was generally comprised of the epics (*itihāsa*), treatises on ethics and law (*dharmaśāstra*), and ancient myths and legends (*purāṇa*). For many early Mīmāṃsakas, the epics and *purāṇas* were understood to form a single unit, called “*itihāsapurāṇa*.” Sheldon Pollock has demonstrated the “transcendent legitimacy” constructed around the *smṛti* by the Mīmāṃsā tradition, such that *smṛti*, qua “remembered Veda” (*smṛyamāṇa-veda*), was accorded a level of authority almost equivalent to that of *śruti*, qua “recited Veda” (*paṭhyamāna-veda*).²²⁸ Nevertheless, Mīmāṃsakas disqualified most texts—especially those that belonged to Buddhists, Jains, and Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sectarian groups—from occupying the same level of normative validity.²²⁹ However, the entry of the genre of *purāṇa*—in particular, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa—into this exegetical fray prompted a radical re-appraisal within Mīmāṃsā circles of the *śruti-smṛti* continuum. In order to fully appreciate the break effected by the BNK here, it is worth reviewing the history of how Mīmāṃsakas prior to Lakṣmīdhara understood the *purāṇa* in general.

The earliest extant Mīmāṃsā writers, Jaimini and Śābara, do not appear particularly interested in the subject. In Jaimini's aphoristic *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* (MS), and Śābara's prose commentary (*Bhāṣya*) thereon, the primary concern is with delimiting the boundary of *śruti* against *smṛti*. They assert that we may infer the authority of the cultural practices of *smṛti* only insofar as they: a) have the Veda as their root (*śabdāmūla*), and b) are performed by the same agents as those who perform Vedic acts (*karṭṛsāmānya*).²³⁰ Neither makes mention of the

²²⁸ See Sheldon Pollock, “The Revelation of Tradition: *śruti*, *smṛti*, and the Sanskrit Discourse of Power,” in *Boundaries, Dynamics and Construction of Traditions in South Asia*, ed. Federico Squarcini (London: Anthem Press, 2011), 41-61.

²²⁹ See Andrew Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 170.

²³⁰ The so-called *smṛtyadhikaraṇa* of MS 1.3 is analyzed in Pollock, “The Revelation of Tradition,” 47ff. Pollock

purāṇas at all, perhaps because of their relative unimportance (or indeed absence) at the time of the composition of the MS and Śabara's *Bhāṣya*. Sheldon Pollock shows that the seventh-century commentator Kumārila Bhaṭṭa expands the scope and power of *smṛti* so as to virtually eliminate any possible limiting conditions that might hinder its authority.²³¹ One of these possible conditions, the potentially infinite enlargement of the canon of texts that one could reasonably infer to be authoritative, leads Kumārila to reflect on the genre of *itihāsapurāṇa*.²³²

In his *Tantravārttika* commentary on MS 1.3.7, Kumārila engages with an opponent who asks why Buddhist or Jain teachings about compassion, charity, or the practice of meditation, which appear unobjectionable to the learned of the three upper caste-classes (*śiṣṭākopa*), should be considered contradictory to Vedic authority. Kumārila responds by defining those texts that have been “accepted by the learned” (*śiṣṭaiḥ pariḡrhitāni*) as the fourteen or eighteen “strongholds of knowledge” (*vidyāsthānāni*), among which the *itihāsapurāṇa* feature, but not Buddhist or Jain scriptures.²³³ Kumārila explains further that the *itihāsapurāṇa*, although of human authorship (*kṛtrima*), are mentioned in the Veda itself as a source of knowledge (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 7.1). The Upaniṣad's mention of *itihāsapurāṇa* as the “fifth” Veda means

provides the following clarifying note on the concept of *karṣāmānya*: “Insofar as the same people who perform the acts of *dharma* required by the Veda also perform acts of *dharma* 'not based on sacred word', we must assume that the authority for these other actions is conferred, not by directly perceptible Vedic texts, but by texts inferentially proven to exist” (*Ibid.*, 48).

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 53ff.

²³² Kumārila probably did not have any specific *purāṇa* in mind, given that the formula encompasses a whole range of texts from fictitious prose to royal genealogies to didactic discourses. P.V. Kane notes that his remarks across the *Tantravārttika* suggest that some of the extant Purāṇas existed in his day and “were looked upon by him as authoritative in the province of Dharma equally with the Smṛtis of Manu, Gautama and others.” See P.V. Kane, “The Tantravārtika and the Dharmasāstra Literature,” *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (N.S.) Vol. 1 (1925): 102.

²³³ Cf. Cezary Galewicz, “Fourteen Strongholds of Knowledge: On Scholarly Commentaries, Authority, and Power in XIV Century India,” in *Texts of Power, The Power of the Text: Readings in Textual Authority Across History and Cultures*, ed. Cezary Galewicz (Krakow: Homini, 2006), 141-164.

only that they serve as auxiliary means of arriving at the knowledge of *dharma*. Moreover, this is possible for the *purāṇas* and other *vidyāsthānas* only because their authors are the very sages named in the Veda, who are not historical figures but recur eternally with each historical cycle.²³⁴ In other words, the *purāṇas* are not independent with respect to *dharma*, but are accepted as canonical only inasmuch as they support Vedic commands. In these and other passages, Kumāriḷa does not appear to consider the genre to be especially different from *smṛti*. His commentary on MS 1.3.2 suggests that the injunctive and explanatory portions of the *itihāsapurāṇa* work in the same way as those of *smṛti*. Those that have a bearing on *dharma* originate in the Veda; those that do not, and, say, serve some worldly purpose, originate in everyday experience.²³⁵ Either way, they are derivative of and subordinate to the Veda.

Kumāriḷa's only other discussion of the purpose of *purāṇas* appears, tellingly, in his commentary on MS 1.2.7. This section deliberates on the difference between linguistic components of the Veda—in particular, between the *vidhi*, an independently authoritative injunction, and *arthavāda*, a particular kind of sentence, possessing a narrative or descriptive form, which is purposeful only in a subordinate position to the overall Vedic ritual context, insofar as it serves to enhance or commend a *vidhi*. Since they are not direct exhortations, *arthavādas*, or “descriptions of the purpose,” are considered supplementary sources of praise or

²³⁴ *Mīmāṃsādarśana Vol. 1B*, ed. V.G. Apte (Pune: Anandashrama Press, 1929), 202, ll.21-26:

itihāsapurāṇaṃ ca kṛtrimatvena niścite |
tathā 'py akṛtrime vede tadvidyātvena sammatam ||

evaṃ hy upaṇiṣatsūktam: “ṛgvedaṃ bhagavo 'dhyemi yajurvedaṃ sāmavedaṃ atharvavedaṃ caturtham
itihāsapurāṇaṃ ca pañcamam” iti | tena
pratikalpamanvantarayuganiyataniyarṣināmābhidheyakṛtrimavidyāsthānakārā ye vede 'pi mantrārthavādeṣu
śrūyante tatpraṇītāny eva vidyāsthānāni dharmajñānāṅgatvena sammatāni |

²³⁵ Ganganath Jha, trans., *Tantravārttika* (New Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1983), 119.

deprecation of the content of injunctions and prohibitions, respectively. Quite simply, they ensure that the listener will be encouraged, or incited, or prompted (*prarocita*) to perform or desist from the action specified by the injunction or prohibition. In Śabara's *Bhāṣya*, an opponent argues that the *vidhi* could serve quite well in and of itself to incite the agent to action, making the function of *arthavādas* irrelevant. Śabara agrees, in principle, and essentially responds that we must somehow account for such supplementary passages, since they exist in abundance, after all.²³⁶ If this was a problem for the Veda, which Mīmāṃsakas already held to possess inherent validity, so much more so the *itihāsapurāṇa*, which are comprised almost entirely of narrative passages. Kumārila takes this opportunity to apply the same logic of hierarchical organization to their language.²³⁷ It is clear that even though he analogizes the work of Vedic and *purāṇic* injunctions, he views them as the result of very different compositional and intentional processes. The passage is worth quoting in full:

This is the way the statements of the Mahābhārata, etc., should be interpreted. They too, falling in line with such injunctions as “One should instruct the four caste-classes,” seek

²³⁶ *Mīmāṃsādarśana Vol. 1B*, 118, ll.1-4:

tadabhāve 'pi pūrvavidhinaiva prarocayiṣyata iti | satyaṃ, vināpi tena sidhyet prarocanam | asti tu tat, tasmin vidyamāne yo 'rtho vākyaṣya so 'vagamyate stutiḥ prayojanaṃ tayoḥ | tasminn avidyamāne vidhinā prarocanam |

Kumārila suggests, quite sarcastically, that such an objection should have been directed at the purported author of the Veda, who could be grilled on why he made sentences so long, when the purpose could have been accomplished with much less verbiage. In the absence of such an author, there is no scope for such an objection. *Ibid.*, ll.14-15:

yo nāma vedasya kartā syāt sa evaṃ paryanuyujyeta laghunopāyena siddhe kiṃ mahāvākyaṃ āśrayasīti | tadabhāvān na paryanuyogaḥ |

²³⁷ Cf. Lawrence McCrea, “The Hierarchical Organization of Language in Mīmāṃsā Interpretive Theory,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28.5 (2000): 429-459. The thirteenth-century commentator Someśvara Bhaṭṭa perceptively notes that this extension of intra-Vedic interpretive principles into the realm of *itihāsapurāṇa* is closely connected to the discussion of the authority of the *vidyāsthānas* in MS 1.3. See *Nyāyasudhā*, ed. Pandit Mukunda Shastri (Benares: Vidya Vilasa Press, 1901), 40: evaṃ vaidikārthavādopayogaṃ vyutpādya smṛtyadhikarānavakṣyamāṇaprāmāṇyavidyāsthānāntaragateṣu arthavādeṣu tam eva nyāyam atidiśati “evaṃ ca” iti | itihāsapurāṇayor arthavādabahutvād “bhāratādi” ity uktam |

to accomplish certain goals of human life.²³⁸ Their result is not contained in the recitation itself, but in the understanding of the means to achieve *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*, and to avoid their opposites. And even in these works, such as the teachings on charity (*dānadharma*), kingship (*rājadharma*), and liberation (*mokṣadharmā*), there are some direct injunctions (*sākṣād vidhayaḥ*), whereas some passages are *arthavādas*—narrative accounts of the deeds of others, and old legends. If we had to derive literal meaning from every single tale, it would obviate the injunction to “instruct the four caste-classes,” so we understand some implication of praise or condemnation therein. And since their exclusive purpose is either praise or deprecation, one shouldn't spend too much time paying attention to the truth-claims of such stories.

After all, Vālmīki, Vyāsa, and others composed their own works in accordance with their study of the Veda. And since those whom they chose to instruct were of varying intellectual capacities, this makes perfect sense. In one context, some people learn from mere injunctions; others learn from injunctions mixed with *arthavādas*, some minor and some longer. The authors began composing with the desire to attract the minds of anyone and everyone.

Now in such works, some injunctions and prohibitions have the Veda as their root (*śrutimūlāḥ*), while some are derived from worldly experience, and have to do with [acquiring] wealth and happiness. Similarly, some *arthavādas* are Vedic in character, some are just worldly, and some [the authors] simply composed on their own in poetic fashion. All of them are authoritative inasmuch as their role is one of praise.²³⁹

²³⁸ The analogy here, Someśvara points out, is to the Vedic meta-injunction “One should study one's [recension of] the Veda” (*svādhyāyo 'dhyetavyaḥ*), which commands other injunctions to command agents. In this way, the so-called *adhyayanavidhi* is the take-off point for the entire process of Vedic ritual. Similarly, the “injunction to instruct” (*śrāvāṇavidhi*) encompasses *itihāsapurāṇa* literature, such that its language entirely subserves the purpose of attaining the *caturvarga*, the goals of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*.

See *Nyāyasūdhā*, 40: nanv adhyayanavidhibodhitapurūṣārthānubandhitvabalena vaidikārthavādānām śroutārthātikrameṇa lākṣaṇikastutinindāparatvam avadhāritam atra tu katham ity āśaṅkyātrāpy adhyayanavidhisthānīyaṃ vidhiṃ darśayati |

On the *adhyayanavidhi* as “meta-injunction,” see Kei Kataoka, “Scripture, Men and Heaven: Causal structure in Kumāri's action-theory of *bhāvanā*,” *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 49.2 (2001): 12-13.

²³⁹ *Mīmāṃsādarśana Vol. 1B*, 116, ll.6-16:

evam ca bhāratādivākyāni vyākhyeyāni | teṣāṃ api hi “śrāvayec catur varṇān” ity evamādividhyanusāreṇa puruṣārthatvānveṣaṇād akṣarādi vyatikramya dharmārthakāmamokṣādharmānarthaduḥkhasaṃsārasādhyaśadhanapratipattir upādānaparityāgāṅgabhūtā phalam | tatrāpi tu dānarājamokṣadharmādiṣu kecit sākṣād vidhayaḥ kecit punaḥ parakṛtipurākalparūpeṇārthavādāḥ | sarvopākhyāneṣu tātparye sati “śrāvayed” iti vidher ānarthakyāt kathaṃcid gamyamānastutinindāparigrahaḥ | tatparatvāc ca nātvopākhyāneṣu tattvābhiniveśaḥ kāryaḥ | vedaprasthānābhyāseṇa hi vālmīkidvaipāyanaprabhṛtibhis tathaiva svavākyāni praṇītāni | pratipādyānām ca vicitrabuddhitvād yuktaṃ evaitat | iha kecid vidhimātreṇa pratipadyante | apare sārthavādenāpare 'lpenārthavādenāpare mahatā | sarveṣāṃ ca cittaṃ grahītavyam ity evam ārambhāḥ | tatra tu kecid vidhipratīṣedhāḥ śrutimūlāḥ kecid arthasukhādiṣu lokamūlās tathārthavādāḥ kecid vaidikā eva kecid laukikā eva kecid tu svayam eva kāvyanyāyena racitāḥ | sarve

Two points emerge from this reflection on the genre of *itihāsapurāṇa* that will become relevant for the BNK. First, Kumārila is quite firm in assigning the *itihāsapurāṇa* literature a subordinate role. It is quite certainly of human origin (*pauruṣeya*), though its authors, unlike the Buddha, had based their writings on their study of the Veda. But even within their compositions, there is a hierarchical organization of language; only those direct injunctions which appear to have the Veda as their root are purposeful. The vast majority of the literature is either supplementary (*arthavāda*) or composed with poetic fancy (*kāvyanāya*). The second point is closely linked to this judgment. Kumārila seems rather uninterested in the literature as a whole. The *purāṇas* may contain some useful accounts of royal genealogies, pretty hymns to deities (which he judges to have an “invisible” [i.e., non-instrumental] purpose), and a certain overall listening pleasure, but as he admonishes at the end of the first paragraph above, one should not be too attracted to their truth-value (*tattvābhiniveśaḥ*). They are, after all, intended for everyone and make concessions to people's diverse intellectual capacities (*vicitrabuddhi*). The scope of the Veda, however, is emphatically restricted. Kumārila suggests that you may dabble in the *itihāsapurāṇa* if you wish, but urges you not to think they will help you in any substantive way.

Ganganath Jha calls Kumārila's view on the authority of *purāṇas* a “liberal” one.²⁴⁰ When compared to the eleventh-century Mīmāṃsaka Pārthasārathi Mīśra, Kumārila does come off as rather broad-minded. In the opening chapter of his *Śāstradīpikā* (1.1.1), Pārthasārathi engages in fierce polemic against several philosophical schools on issues of epistemology, saving particular rancor for Advaita Vedānta. In one of these diatribes, he castigates Vedāntins for their excessive

ca stutyarthena pramāṇam |

²⁴⁰ Ganganath Jha, *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā in its Sources* (Benares: Benares Hindu University, 1942), 215.

reliance on texts that they have utterly misunderstood, and that themselves provoke confusion:

This Advaita doctrine has been promulgated by people who have put zero effort into logical reasoning, who do not comprehend the purport of textual statements, and who are deluded by: a) the Upaniṣadic discourses that *figuratively* discuss the unreality of the world (given its instability) and actually *praise* Brahman, and b) the *itihāsapurāṇa* that conform to them. Therefore, it is a madman's chatter that should be totally disregarded.²⁴¹

The fundamental interpretive disagreement here between Pārthasārathi and his Vedāntin interlocutor is one of the value of the Upaniṣads. For Mīmāṃsakas, the Upaniṣads fell under the category of *arthavāda*. Since they do not instruct us in the performance of ritual action, by the logic of MS 1.2 previously discussed, they must be subordinate to the overall ritual context of the Veda. Mīmāṃsakas urged that the Upaniṣads do not actually tell us about really existing things. Their teachings about the Self, the Ātman, only reinforce the common-sense notion that a sacrificer must have a non-corporeal, permanent self, to perform his ritual actions and enjoy their fruits in another world. All their talk about the unreality of the world is only a figurative way to discuss its inconstancy; Mīmāṃsakas were, after all, ontological realists. As *arthavādas*, Pārthasārathi says, the Upaniṣads function just like the *itihāsapurāṇa*, which contain many teachings that build on Upaniṣadic speculations. Pārthasārathi criticizes Vedāntin reading practices here more than the texts on which they rely. Nevertheless, he is clear about the role of those texts: the Upaniṣads, here lumped together with the *purāṇas*, must not exceed the scope given to them by appropriate Mīmāṃsā interpretive theory.

For Vedāntins, however, the Upaniṣads were independently meaningful, and communicated knowledge of Brahman *qua* supreme truth. Not only were the Upaniṣads not

²⁴¹ *Śāstradīpikā*, ed. Dr. Kiśoradāsa Svāmī (Vārāṇasī: Sādhuvelā Saṃskṛta Mahāvidyālaya, 1977), 65: tasmā brahmaṇaḥ praśamsārthair asthāyitvena prapañcasyāsattvam upacaradbhir aupaniṣadair vādais tadanusāribhiś ca itihāsapurāṇair bhrāntānām vākyatātparyam ajānānām nyāyābhīyogaśūnyānām pralāpo 'yam advaitavāda ity upekṣaṇīyaḥ |

“merely” *arthavādas*, argued Vedāntins, they worked as sources of valid knowledge because the ritual portion of the Veda (*karmakāṇḍa*) did not exhaust its communicative scope. The Vedas were to be understood as offering information and not just injunction. From this perspective, the Upaniṣads were more meaningful precisely because they allowed one to be released from the onerous burdens of ritual activity. It is well known how Vedāntins overturned the Mīmāṃsā hierarchy of meaningful Vedic language in order to support the authority of the Upaniṣads.²⁴² But early Vedāntins like Śāṅkara also expressed a desire to limit scriptural proliferation.

For Śāṅkara, the Upaniṣads alone, being nothing but the revealed word of the Veda, could effect liberation on the part of its listeners. Around the turn of the first millennium, however, philosophers who accepted the authority of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religious scriptures argued for their validity. One such argument was put forward by the Kashmiri Śaiva Jayanta Bhaṭṭa in his *Nyāyamañjarī* (9th C.). Jayanta distinguished types of Āgamas, or non-Vedic scriptures, differentiating between those that did or did not explicitly contradict the Veda. He argued that the Śaiva Āgamas were just as valid as the Veda, but not for the reasons that Mīmāṃsakas offered. As a proponent of Nyāya philosophy, Jayanta believed that the authority of scripture rested in its having been composed by a reliable author, namely God (*īśvara*). According to Jayanta, both the Śaiva Āgamas and the Veda were composed by God, and found mainstream acceptance within a respectable public (*mahājanasamūha*). In appealing to both divine and human authorities, Jayanta at once extended and limited the scope of authoritative scripture, including the Śaiva Āgamas but excluding Buddhist scriptures that directly contradicted the Veda.²⁴³

²⁴² See Wilhelm Halbfass, “Human Reason and Vedic Revelation in Advaita Vedānta,” in *Tradition and Reflection: Explorations in Indian Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), 148ff.

²⁴³ Cf. Jonathan Duquette, “Tradition, Identity, and Scriptural Authority: Religious Inclusivism in the Writings of an Early Modern Sanskrit Intellectual” (paper delivered at Sanskrit Traditions in the Modern World Conference, University of Manchester, May 29, 2015), 4-5.

Another serious attempt to expand the canon of Sanskrit scripture was the *Āgamaprāmāṇya* of Yāmuna (11th C.), forerunner of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition of Vedānta.²⁴⁴ In this book, on the “Authority of the Āgamas,” Yāmuna put forth two main arguments for why the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra Āgamas, scriptural texts which technically fall outside the Vedic canon, should be considered valid sources of knowledge. First, he stated that the Āgamas are the direct utterances of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu, and therefore supremely authoritative. Second, he claimed that they achieve Vedic status by being derived from a lost recension of the White Yajurveda, the Ekāyana Śākhā. While the former approach strays into broader theistic modes of argument, the latter more closely mirrors the Mīmāṃsā defense of *smṛti* as “remembered Veda.” According to his commentator Vedānta Deśika (13th C.), in his *Nyāyapariśuddhi*, it was quite possible that, like the *smṛti*, the Āgamas had as their basis Vedic texts (*śrutimūla*) that are now lost to us. We may thus infer the authority for practices not validated by extant Vedic texts. If there was contradiction between *śruti* and *smṛti*, as Mīmāṃsakas had previously discussed, one must differentially situate them according to their relative weight (*balābalavyavasthā*). But if there was contradiction between the Āgama (*bhagavadharmaśāstra*) and the Veda, either may be appropriate (*vikalpa*) given that differences can be chalked up to particular contexts of time, place, and eligible agents (*deśakālādhikāryavasthā*). Vedānta Deśika is more circumspect than Yāmuna here in toeing the Mīmāṃsā line.²⁴⁵ He is content to draw parallels with the *śrutimūla*

²⁴⁴ Among Śrīvaiṣṇavas, of course, the *Tiruvāymoḷi* of Nammālvār was believed to be a “Tamil Veda” that paralleled, not just imitated or derived from, the Sanskrit Veda. See John Carman and Vasudha Narayanan, *The Tamil Veda: Piḷḷān's Interpretation of the Tiruvāymoḷi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

²⁴⁵ However, see the opening to Vedānta Deśika's *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* for the unambiguous claim that the Āgamas are valid because they are God's infallible word. See *Śrī Pāñcarātrarakṣā of Śrī Vedānta Deśika*, ed. M. Duraiswami Aiyangar and T. Venugopalacharya (Madras: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1967), 2: bhagavanmukhodgatasya śāstrasya kāraṇadoṣādyabhāvena kvacid apy aprāmāṇyaṃ na śaṅkanīyam.

argument, that the Āgamas have the Veda as their root, and to give them an extra edge over *smṛti* with the passing remark that they are also “directly grounded in the compassion of the Lord” (*sākṣād īśvaradayāmūlatvāt*). In both cases, however, authority is derivative. The *smṛti* and the Āgama occupy the same place on the podium, even if one is stretching its neck a little higher for the photographers.²⁴⁶

This state of affairs changed with the advent of the iconoclastic exegete Madhva, who opened the scriptural canon to “all sacred lore” (*sarvavidyā*). As Valerie Stoker has discussed, Madhva refashioned the *vedamūla* doctrine to mean that any text which illuminates the meaning of the Veda, and is therefore “rooted” in it, is independently valid.²⁴⁷ This includes not only Pāñcarātra Āgamas, but the Mahābhārata, *purāṇas*, and all of those “unknown sources” which Madhva is infamous for quoting.²⁴⁸ In Madhva's account, these authored sources manifested simultaneously with the eternal Veda, since both were transmitted by the god Viṣṇu through a series of hierarchically ordered sages.²⁴⁹ Thus no one text-tradition is given a privileged place; each informs the other in a symbiotic relationship.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ See *Nyayaparishuddhi by Sri Venkatnath Sri Vedāntāchārya*, ed. Vidyabhūshan Lakshmanāchārya (Benares: Vidya Vilas Press, 1918), 474-475. See also M. Narasimhachary, “Introductory Study,” in *Āgamaprāmānya of Yāmuna*, ed. M. Narasimhachary (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1976), 11-12.

²⁴⁷ See Valerie Stoker, “Conceiving the Canon in Dvaita Vedānta: Madhva's Doctrine of 'All Sacred Lore,’” *Numen* 51.1 (2004): 55ff.

²⁴⁸ See Roque Mesquita, *Madhva's Unknown Literary Sources: Some Observations* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2000).

²⁴⁹ See Stoker, “Conceiving the Canon,” 60: “If we understand *śruti* to mean 'that which was heard by the ancient ṛṣis [or 'seers'] as part of a primordial cognition in the beginning of creation,' then Madhva's assertion in his [*Rṅbhāṣya*] that Viṣṇu reveals the Vedic corpus together with certain *Vedamūla* traditions effectively incorporates these *pauruṣeya* traditions into the primordial cognition and thus, into the category of *śruti*.”

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 59: “Madhva's understanding of the *Vedamūlatva* principle is vindicated by a Vedic text itself, and he does not need to measure the *Bhāgavata Purāna* against the [*Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*] because the two can be consulted interchangeably to illuminate suprasensible reality.”

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa, however, had its own ideas about scriptural hierarchy. Although *purāṇas* were generally classified by Mīmāṃsakas as *smṛti*, they themselves were concerned with appropriating the status of *śruti*, as the “fifth Veda.” As Barbara Holdrege has demonstrated, the BhP is distinctive in its claims to be the quintessential scripture, the fruit and the culmination, of the entire Brahmanical canon.²⁵¹ This would have posed a significant problem to Mīmāṃsakas, had the very genre of *purāṇa* not been so irrelevant to the figures we have studied. But when it emerged from the narrative into the scholastic world, the BhP had a much bigger impact than any previous reworking of Mīmāṃsā. Mīmāṃsakas had developed a clear ranking system of textual genres that mirrored the internal hierarchies of language within the Veda. By claiming Vedic status for itself, the BhP challenged that hierarchy. If, in the Mīmāṃsā taxonomy, the BhP as *purāṇa* was on a par with *smṛti*, it certainly acted like *śruti*. It believed that its language was just as powerful, just as capable of effecting action and communicating knowledge, as that of the Veda, and that it was the best and brightest of all the *purāṇas*.²⁵² This claim bolstered the BhP's overall strategy to exalt religious devotion to Kṛṣṇa (bhakti) above meaningless ritual (karma) and dry philosophy (jñāna). But that strategy remained a rhetorical one, inasmuch as it was confined to the language of scripture and not of scriptural interpretation.

²⁵¹ See Barbara Holdrege, “From Purāṇa-Veda to Kārṣṇa-Veda: The Bhāgavata Purāṇa as Consummate Śruti and Smṛti Incarnate,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 15.1 (2006): 31-70.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 52: “In both of these statements—concerning its superior status among the Purāṇas and Itihāsas, respectively—the Bhāgavata Purāṇa invokes the authority of the Vedas as one of the means of establishing its superiority: the Bhāgavata is superior to the other Purāṇas in part because of its special status as the essence of all the Upaniṣads (*sarva-vedānta-sāra*); it is superior to the Itihāsas because it is not only the essence (*sāra*) of the Itihāsas but also that of the Vedas. The Bhāgavata reserves for itself the special status of the *purāṇaguhya*, the Purāṇa that contains the deepest mysteries, because it alone is the concentrated essence of the entire *śruti* literature (*akhila-śruti-sāra*)—not only the Upaniṣads, but also the Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, and Āraṇyakas. This *śruti* pertaining to Kṛṣṇa also proclaims itself the fruit (*phala*) of the wishyielding tree of Veda (*nigama-kalpataru*) and ultimately asserts that it is equal to the Veda (*brahma-sammita*, *veda-sammita*). Finally, the Bhāgavata goes even further and declares itself the quintessential scripture that represents the concentrated essence (*sāra*) of all the sacred texts—*śruti* and *smṛti*.”

It is here that Lakṣmīdhara's intervention in BNK became so crucial. The BNK posed a scholastic and not merely rhetorical challenge to the Mīmāṃsā discourse of scriptural orthodoxy, by using the language of Mīmāṃsā both to legitimize the authority of the genre of *purāṇa*, and to rank it above the genre of *smṛti*. I believe that the BNK's attempt to expand and, in fact, supplant parts of the Sanskrit scriptural canon reflects one of the first systematic scholastic elaborations of the BhP's own claims to being a “*purāṇa* that is Veda” (*purāṇaveda*).²⁵³

What immediately distinguishes the BNK's treatment of the place of *purāṇa* from earlier discourse on the topic is that the stakes are significantly higher. It is not simply concerned with the “validity” of *purāṇic* utterances, such that they could be considered authoritative sources of knowledge, and may be both juxtaposed with *smṛti* and corroborate *śruti*. Instead, the BhP's self-aggrandizing language forces Lakṣmīdhara to reckon with the superiority of its truth-claims, and, importantly, its social practices. The BNK systematically develops one of these claims: Singing God's name (*nāmasaṃkīrtana*) removes all sins, and fulfills the goals of human life (*puruṣārtha*). The BNK is strewn with quotations from several *purāṇas*, but especially the BhP, that support the all-purifying power of singing God's name.²⁵⁴ Among the many ritual, ethical, and social norms that the genre of *smṛti* represented, the BNK selected for particular criticism the

²⁵³ See *Ibid.*, 53: “[B]y identifying Kṛṣṇa with the Veda, the Bhāgavata overcomes the problem posed by the lack of reference to Kṛṣṇa in the Vedic Saṃhitās: Kṛṣṇa is not mentioned in the Vedas because he himself *is* the Veda on an ontological level. Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate reality who is celebrated in the Upaniṣads as Brahman, whose inner essence is Veda, knowledge, and whose outer form is constituted by the Vedic *mantras*. His Self is the threefold Veda (*trayī-vidyātman*), his very substance is Veda (*sarvaveda-maya*), and his body is composed of the *ṛcs*, *yajuses*, *sāmans*, and *atharvans*. Realization of the supreme reality of Kṛṣṇa, which is the goal of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa's devotional teachings, is understood in this context to be tantamount to realization of the eternal Veda.”

Cf. Fred Smith, “Purāṇaveda,” in *Authority, Anxiety, and Canon: Essays in Vedic Interpretation*, ed. Laurie L. Patton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 97-138.

²⁵⁴ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 70: **śrībhāgavate** tu śṛṅgagrāhikayaiva mahāpātākāny anukramya saṅkīrtanenaiva tannivṛttir abhihitā [...]

normative practices of expiation prescribed by *dharmasāstra*. In these traditional sources of Brahmanical jurisprudence, each transgression has its own corresponding penance. The intricacies of these *smārta* practices, so-called because they belonged to the *smṛti*, formed the subject of centuries of Sanskrit scholarship on *dharmasāstra*. The BhP, however, dispenses with all such practices in a single verse:

For all sinners whosoever,
this single thing serves as atonement:
To recite the name of Viṣṇu,
for [God's] mind has turned to him.²⁵⁵

The first three chapters of the BhP's sixth canto feature repeatedly in the BNK. They tell the story of Ajāmila, a dissolute Brahmin who calls out to his son, Nārāyaṇa, with his dying breath. Because he dies with God's name on his lips, he is taken to heaven despite protestations from the messengers of Yama, the god of death. God's heavenly messengers insist that Ajāmila was saved from all his sins merely by uttering God's name, albeit inadvertently, out of control (*vivaśa*).²⁵⁶ Such claims about the power of the name are part of the BhP's narrative strategy of exalting Kṛṣṇa as the ultimate God, but only comprise a minor section of the text as a whole. Lakṣmīdhara, however, extracts from this story an entire theology of the divine name. In doing so, he builds on Śrīdhara Svāmin's attempt to discuss this text using the hermeneutical techniques previously allocated to Vedic scripture. In his commentary on this section of the BhP, Śrīdhara offers some brief remarks that bear close resemblance to Lakṣmīdhara's more elaborate defense

²⁵⁵ BhP 6.2.10:

sarveśāṃ apy aghavatām idam eva suniṣkṛtam |
nānavyāharaṇaṃ viṣṇor yatas tadviṣayā matiḥ ||

²⁵⁶ BhP 6.2.7:

ayaṃ hi kṛtanirveśo janmakotyamhasām api |
yad vyājahāra vivaśo nāmasvastyayanam hareḥ ||

of the *purāṇa*'s injunctive power in the first chapter of the BNK. Commenting on BhP 6.2.8, which reaffirms that Ajāmila was released of all his sins by calling out the four-syllable name, Nārāyaṇa,²⁵⁷ Śrīdhara says the following:

This verse responds to the following potential query: “Surely God's name only makes one's actions excellent, as one source has it: 'By remembering him and uttering his name, what little one does in terms of penance, rituals, or sacrifices becomes fully perfected. I bow to that Acyuta every day.' How could God's name remove sins all by itself?” [...] This is the idea: Even when God's name is an element of performing ritual actions, it can serve as the ultimate expiation, because the logic of “distinctness of connection,” which suggests that the same thing can be used differently in two cases, applies here just as in the case of *khādira* wood.²⁵⁸ So we have thousands of cases in the *purāṇas* where the name functions independently [such as *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 6.8.19]: “Even when his name is uttered inadvertently, a person's sins instantly scatter, like so many deer scared off by a lion.” And one shouldn't think that these are *arthavādas*, because they are not subordinate to any *vidhi*. Nor should the lack of an explicit *vidhi* prompt one to imagine that [these sentences] must be subordinate to something else; especially not when we have indicative sentences in the Veda that serve as *vidhis*, inasmuch as they communicate something that is not a given, accessible by any other means of knowledge. There are Vedic mantras, too (*Rg Veda* 8.11.9; 1.156.3), from which we glean that the name is more powerful than all other acts, including austerity and charity. And as it is, the discourse on MS 9.1 (*devatādhikaraṇa*) shows that mantras and *arthavādas* are authoritative with respect to their own subject matter.²⁵⁹ Therefore, all one's sins can be removed simply by the mere

²⁵⁷ BhP 6.2.8:

etenaiva hy aghono 'sya kṛtaṃ syād aghaniṣkṛtam |
yadā nārāyaṇāyeti jagāda caturakṣaram ||

²⁵⁸ MS 4.3.5 says that in a case where one and the same thing is both obligatory as well as contingent, or optional, there is “distinctness of connection” (*saṃyogaprthaktva*), such that the same thing can be used in two cases. In his *Bhāṣya*, Śābara gives the example of two Vedic sentences that enjoin the use of *khādira* wood—one for the purpose of the ritual act (*kratvartha*), and the other for obtaining a general human result (*puruṣārtha*). Here, Śrīdhara analogizes the work of the *khādira* to that of God's name; in one instance, it supports the acts of performing activities such as penance, sacrifice, etc., but in another context, it can remove all sins.

²⁵⁹ This is a rather disingenuous claim, if Śrīdhara is indeed referring to the classical Mīmāṃsā take on MS 9.1, the so-called *devatādhikaraṇa*. As Francis Clooney has shown, Mīmāṃsakas argued that the deities (*devatā*) mentioned as recipients of a sacrificial offering cannot be considered the purpose for which the sacrificial act is performed. In his commentary on MS 9.1.6-10, Śābara insists that not only are deities subordinate to the ritual act itself, there is no evidence at all that they have physical corporeality, no matter what popular *smṛti* texts, mantras, and *arthavādas* might say. Vedāntins such as Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja respond that the gods are in fact embodied beings, capable of engaging in meditative practice. They support this by referring to precisely the mantras, *arthavādas*, *itihāsas*, and *purāṇas* that Mīmāṃsakas tried to avoid. See Francis X. Clooney, “*Devatādhikaraṇa*: A Theological Debate in the Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta Tradition,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 16.3 (1988): 277-298.

semblance of Nārāyaṇa's name.²⁶⁰

In this paragraph, which probably sets the stage for much of the following discussion, Śrīdhara effectively says this: There are sentences in the *purāṇa* that tell us about the power of God's name; they are not *arthavādas*, because there are no *vidhis* around to which they could be subordinated; although they are in the indicative mood, they possess injunctive potency; there are also Vedic mantras that extol the power of God's name; mantras and *arthavādas* are just as instructive as *vidhis*; so *purāṇic* utterances function more or less like Vedic injunctions, authoritatively and effectively. This is an argument admirable for its brevity and self-assurance, but does not engage thoroughly with Mīmāṃsā's opposition to the *purāṇa*'s independent authority. Nor does it deal with the problem of how to evaluate the *purāṇa*'s claims against those

At best, Śrīdhara may be drawing on the Vedānta interpretation of the same section, articulated in several Vedānta commentaries on *Brahma Sūtra* 1.3. In the Advaitin Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahma Sūtra* 1.3.33, “he insists that even an arthavāda can be the vehicle of genuine, fully authoritative revelation, provided that it is a *vidyamānāarthavāda*, that is, neither a mere repetition (*anuvāda*) of what is already known otherwise, nor a *guṇavāda*, which has to be explained metaphorically, since its literal would contradict obvious facts.” See Halbfass, “Human Reason and Vedic Revelation in Advaita Vedānta,” 150.

Even if Śrīdhara was referring to the Vedānta discussion, he attempts to put mantras and *arthavādas* on par with Vedic injunctions (*vidhi*), inasmuch as they are authoritative “with regard to their own subject matter” (*svārthe*)—that is, not subservient to some external injunction. Lakṣmīdhara builds on this below. However, most Vedāntins were not concerned with injunctions at all, but with the Upaniṣads that were precisely *not* about enjoining ritual activity. As Halbfass continues (*Ibid.*, 150): “In general, however, Śaṅkara leaves no doubt that in his view the concept of arthavāda cannot do justice to the Upaniṣads, this culmination of the Veda (*vedānta*). On the other hand, the central statements of the Upaniṣads cannot be interpreted in terms of cognitive or meditational injunctions, the truth concerning ātman/brahman is nothing 'to be done' or 'enacted' (*kārya*).”

²⁶⁰ See *Bhāgavata Purāṇa...With Sanskrit Commentary Bhāvārthabodhinī of Śrīdhara Svāmin*, ed. J.L. Shastri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 282: *nanu karmasādguṇyakaram harer nāmeti yuktam, “yasya smṛtyā ca nāmoktyā tapoyajñakriyādiṣu | nyūnaṃ sampūrṇatām yāti sadyo vande tam acyutam ||” ityādivacanāt, svāntryeṇa tv aghanivartakam harer nāma katham syāt tatrāhuḥ – etenaiveti | [...] ayam bhāvaḥ – karmāṅgatve 'pi harināmnaḥ khādiratvādivat saṃyogapṛthaktvena sarvapṛāyaścittārthatvaṃ yuktam eva | tathā hi - “avaśenāpi yannāmi kīrtite sarvapātakaiḥ | pumān vimucyate sadyaḥ śiṃhatrastair mṛgair iva ||” ityādībhiḥ purāṇe tāvat sahasraśo nāmnaḥ svāntryam avagamyate | na caite arthavādā iti śaṅkanīyam, vidhiśeṣatvābhāvāt | na ca vidhyaśravaṇād anyāśeṣatā kalpanīyā yadā “āgneyo 'ṣṭākapālo bhavati” ityādivad aprāptārthatvena vidhikalpanopapatteḥ | mantreṣu ca “martā amartyasya te bhūri nāma manāmahe | viprāso jātavedasaḥ”, “āśya jānanto nāma cidviktana” ityādiṣu nāmnas tapodānādisarvadharmādhikyam avagamyate | upapāditaṃ ca mantrārthavādānām api svārthe prāmāṇyaṃ devatādhikaraṇe | tasmāc chrīnārāyaṇanāmābhāsamātreṇaiva sarvāghaniṣkṛtaṃ syād iti |*

of *smṛti*, given that the methods of expiation they prescribe are incommensurate.²⁶¹

Lakṣmīdhara is much more detailed in this and other respects. In the third chapter of the BNK, Lakṣmīdhara directly takes on the problem of *purāṇa* versus *smṛti*.²⁶² He offers two possibilities when it comes to negotiating the disparity between *purāṇic* and *smārta* practices of expiation. One is *vyavasthā*, “differential situation,” and the other *vikalpa*, or “option theory.” These terms were first used in Mīmāṃsā to resolve conflicts between ritual injunctions, and were later adopted by authors of *dharmaśāstra*.²⁶³ According to the principle of *vyavasthā*, the

²⁶¹ Even in those few instances where Śrīdhara does bring up this conflict, he softens the BhP's critique of *smṛti* authors. In BhP 6.3.24, for example, the god of death Yama says that “In general, great men do not know this [*bhāgavata dharma*]—ah, their minds are plenty confused by Goddess Illusion. Their thoughts dulled by the Three Vedas, with their sweet, flowery language, they engage in massive sacrificial activities.” (Cf. Bhagavad Gītā 2.42).

prāyeṇa veda tad idaṃ na mahājano 'yaṃ
devyā vimohitamatiṛ bata māyayālam |
trayyāṃ jaḍīkṛtamatiṛ madhupuṣpīṭāyāṃ
vaitānike mahati karmaṇi yujyamānaḥ ||

Śrīdhara comments: “This is the idea: Just as doctors who do not know of the immortal *sañjīvanī* herb prescribe extremely bitter leaves, etc., to cure diseases, so also do great men, unaware of this great secret—with the exception of the twelve authorities mentioned in BhP 6.3.20 (Svayambhū, Nārada, Śambhu, Kumāra, Kapila, Manu, Prahlāda, Janaka, Bhīṣma, Bali, Śuka, and Yama, the speaker)—prescribe penances like the twelve-year vow. To say that their minds have been 'dulled' by the sweet and attractive *arthavādas* of the Vedas really means that they are 'absorbed' in them. That is why they engage in super-extensive rituals and not minor ones. For we see that everyday people have faith in great big mantras, but not in short ones. Therefore these authors did not actually say that there was no scope for accepting this [*bhāgavata dharma*].”

See *Bhāgavata Purāṇa... With Bhāvārthabodhinī of Śrīdhara Svāmin*, 286: ayam bhāvaḥ –
yathāmṛtasamjīvanauśadham aḥānto vaidyā roganirharaṇāya trikaṭukanimbādīni smaranti tathā
svayambhūśambhupramukhadvādaśavyatirekeṇāyaṃ **mahājano** 'tiguhyam idaṃ ajñātvā dvādaśābdādikaṃ
smaratīti | kiṃ ca **māyayā** devyā alaṃ vimohitamatiṛ **ayaṃ** jano **madhu** madhuraṃ yathā bhavaty evaṃ
puṣpīṭāyāṃ puṣpasthānīyair arthavādair manoharāyāṃ **trayyāṃ jaḍīkṛtā** abhiniviṣṭā **matir** yasya | ato **mahaty**
eva **karmaṇi** śraddhayā **yujyamāno** nālpe pravartate | drśyate hi prākṛtasya lokasya mahati mantrādaḥ śraddhā
alpe cāśraddhā | tasmād asya grāhako nāstīti tair noktam |

²⁶² See *Bhagavannāmaumudī*, 60ff.

²⁶³ See Patrick Olivelle, *The Āśrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 134-136. On the changing nature of the division of scholastic labor between Mīmāṃsakas and *dharmaśāstrīs* from classical to early modern India, see Lawrence McCrea, “Hindu Jurisprudence and Scriptural Hermeneutics,” in *Hinduism and Law: An Introduction*, ed. Timothy Lubin et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 123-137.

alternatives opened up by a conflict between injunctions are restricted to definite groups of people.²⁶⁴ In the BNK, a prima-facie objector invokes this principle, to suggest that in the matter of choosing between either singing God's name or performing normative practices of expiation, the people involved must be differentially qualified. Only those who sing with “faith” (*śraddhā*), among other qualities, can achieve its result; others, however, must undertake *smārta* penances.²⁶⁵ Lakṣmīdhara himself supports the *vikalpa*, which permits the practitioner an open option between injunctions that are of equal authority.²⁶⁶ Since the *purāṇa* and *smṛti* are on equal

²⁶⁴ See Olivelle, *The Āśrama System*, 136.

²⁶⁵ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 70-74. The mention of *śraddhā* here merits a brief comment. According to the argument reconstructed by Lakṣmīdhara, the proper relationship (*sambandha*) between an injunction (*vidhi*) and its performer (*puruṣa*), whether interpreted in Bhāṭṭa terms (*qua iṣṭasādhana*) or Prābhākara ones (*niyoga*), is impossible without “*śraddhā*.” He argues that both the ritual- (*karmakāṇḍa*) and knowledge-oriented (*jñānakāṇḍa*) portions of the Veda justify the notion that *śraddhā* is indispensable to one's eligibility to perform [a ritual act] or realize [the truth of the Upaniṣads]. He cites examples from the Veda, such as *Rg Veda* 10.151.1: “With *śraddhā* is the fire kindled; with *śraddhā* is the oblation offered” and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.23: “Having become one endowed with *śraddhā*, one may see the self within one's own self.”

All this talk of *śraddhā* appears to be a significant deviation from classical Mīmāṃsā, which does not care about the word at all. I can only speculate that its origins lie in Śaiva or broadly Āgamic teaching, as does perhaps the whole issue of the injunctive quality of *purāṇic* language. For example, Lakṣmīdhara further marshals evidence from the *Śivadharmottara* (1.40), a Śaiva *purāṇa*:

vidhivākyam idaṃ śaivaṃ nārthavādaḥ śivātmakaḥ |
lokānugrahakartā yaḥ sa mṛṣā 'rthaṃ kathaṃ vadet ||

Śiva's words are injunctive, not simply explanatory.
How could the merciful one say anything false?

Although the full text of the *Śivadharmottara* has yet to be critically edited, hints as to the relevant context may be gleaned from R.C. Hazra, “The Śiva-dharmottara,” 198, n.57, on the fivefold progression of *śraddhā*:

bhaktir bhāvaparā prītiḥ śivadharmaikatānatā |
pratipattir iti jñeyam śraddhāparyāyapañcakam ||

The precise meaning of each word in this citation eludes me, but I believe the *Śivadharma* corpus in general contains valuable clues to the introduction of bhakti and *purāṇa* into the sphere of Sanskrit scholastic discourse. Cf. Schwartz, “Caught in the Net of *Śāstra*,” 210-213.

²⁶⁶ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 130-131. Lakṣmīdhara assures his worried opponent that there is still a scope for *smṛti*, at the end of the day, and analogizes the choice (*vikalpa*) in question to that of choosing between types of medication from a doctor—some are easy to swallow and others are painful. Some people, he says, are inherently averse to the “easier” medication, so they are given a different one. Similarly, since people are generally divorced from the Supreme God, their hearts being engulfed with bad habits (*vāsanās*) that are difficult

footing, one may therefore choose freely between them. But in the middle of this debate,

Lakṣmīdhara offers a fascinating and radically new claim about how one should think about the *purāṇa*:

Therefore, we may comfortably say that no scriptural citation conflicts with any other one. It is only in order to settle the minds of qualified aspirants of middling faith that we imagine this path of non-contradiction. But there is another, far truer way of thinking (*pāramārthikaḥ*), which runs as follows: In matters of contradiction between *smṛti* and *purāṇa*, none of these methods of differentiation really enters into it. For there *does* exist a hierarchy of authority between them. *Smṛtis*, of course, are the utterances of great sages, composed in different words, once they had understood meaning directly from the Veda. But *purāṇas* are Veda itself.

As it says in the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* and the Mahābhārata (1.12.4ab), “One should corroborate the Veda with *itihāsapurāṇa*.” There is also the etymology: X is called a “*purāṇa*” because it “fills out” [some other Vedic text] (*pūraṇāt*). And it isn't as though it is possible to expand the Veda with something that is other-than-Veda (*avedena*). After all, you can't complete an unfinished golden bracelet with tin. You may object: “If the word 'Veda' includes both *itihāsa* and *purāṇa*, then we must find something else for '*purāṇa*' to signify. And if it doesn't, then there cannot be complete identification between Veda and *itihāsapurāṇa*.” Our reply is that even if there is no difference among the cluster of words which present a coherent, distinct meaning, inasmuch as they are all unauthored (*apauruṣeya*), we still specify their difference on account of distinctions in systems of accentuation and recitation (*svarakramabheda*).²⁶⁷

In this crucial passage, Lakṣmīdhara goes further than any of his predecessors in Indian intellectual history in evaluating the place of *purāṇa* in the hierarchy of Sanskrit scripture. Not

to restrain, they are given alternative methods of expiation.

Ibid., 130: nanv evaṃ purāṇārthe parigṛhyamāṇe smṛtīnām atyantabādha eva syād ? [...] astyevāvakāśaḥ smṛtīnām, dṛśyate ca sukaraduṣkarayor vikalpo vaidyakeṣu, tatra ca kiṃcit sukaram api kasmaicit svabhāvād eva na rocate, atas tadarthaṃ duṣkaram api cikitsāntaraṃ vidhīyate; tadvad ihāpi durvāradurvāsanāvāsītacetasaḥ prāyeṇa parāṇmukhā eva puruṣottamāt puruṣāḥ, tadarthaṃ prāyaścittāntaravidhānam |

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 91: tasmān na kenacit kiṃcid virudhyata iti sarvaṃ sustham | evaṃ madhyamaśraddhānām adhikāriṇām manāṃsi samādhātum utprekṣate panthānam avirodhasya | anya eva punaḥ panthāḥ pāramārthikaḥ, tathā hi smṛtipurāṇavirodhe vyavasthā["]dayo naiva nivisante, viṣamaṃ hi prāmāṇyam anayoḥ, vedād avagate 'rthe padāntarair upanibaddhāni maharṣivākyāni khalu smṛtayah, purāṇāni punar vedā eva śrīmahābhārate mānavīye ca - “itihāsapurāṇābhyām vedaṃ samupabṛṃhayet” iti vacanāt, pūraṇāt purāṇam iti vyutpatteś ca, na ca atra avedena vedasya bṛṃhaṇaṃ saṃbhavati, na hy aparipūrṇasya kanakavalayasya traṇuṇā pūraṇaṃ saṃbhavati | nanu yadi vedaśabdaḥ purāṇam itihāsaṃ ca upādatte tarhi purāṇam anyad eva anveṣaṇīyaṃ; yadi tu na, na tarhi itihāsa-purāṇayor abhedo vedena? ucyate – viśiṣṭaikārthapratipādakasya padakadambakasya apauruṣeyatvād abhede 'pi svarakramabhedād bhedanirdeśo 'py upapadyate [...]

only does *purāṇa* take precedence over *smṛti*, it does so because *purāṇa* is *Veda*. They are only separated by the exigencies of language, modes of intonation, recitational order. The *purāṇa* here is not even considered to be a separate genre. It is nothing but *Veda*, only articulated in slightly different, unaccented language. Barbara Holdrege points out that the BhP accords itself Vedic status to represent itself as the revelation of Kṛṣṇa himself, in turn identified with the Vedic revelation.²⁶⁸ Lakṣmīdhara is perhaps the first to give the BhP's claim such an elaborate hermeneutical defense. Śrīdhara does not provide this kind of argument for the authority of the *purāṇa*. In fact, quite to the contrary, in the opening his commentary on the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, he sticks with the traditional explanation that the *purāṇas* are authoritative and purposeful because they are *vedamūla*, the recorded memories of their human authors.²⁶⁹ Not only does Lakṣmīdhara's argument contradict Mīmāṃsā orthodoxy, it gives the genre of *purāṇa* a superlative sheen.

The language of *upabṛṃhana* (“corroboration” or “expansion”) in this passage does contain exegetical precedents in Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. Sucharita Adluri has demonstrated Rāmānuja's use of the concept to bolster the authority of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, not only in order to interpret the canonical texts of Vedānta, but actually to read into them theological concepts from

²⁶⁸ Holdrege, “From Purāṇa-Veda to Kāṛṣṇa-Veda,” 56: “Kṛṣṇa, who is Veda incarnate, is embodied in the Bhāgavata, which is therefore Kṛṣṇa incarnate and, by extension, Veda incarnate. In the final analysis, then, the Bhāgavata's declarations that it is *brahma-sammīta* are assertions of its identity with that totality which is simultaneously Brahman, Kṛṣṇa, and Veda. The Bhāgavata, as Śabdabrahman and *bhagavad-rūpa* and *śruti* incarnate, is Brahman embodied in the Word, Kṛṣṇa embodied in sound.”

²⁶⁹ See *Viṣṇupurāṇa with Sanskrit Commentary of Sridharacharya, Vol. I*, ed. Thanesh Chandra Upreti (Delhi: Parimal Publications, 1986), 1: *iha khalu purāṇānām īśvaranīśvasitasvarūpatvena vedamūlatvena idānītanānām vyāsavasiṣṭhaparāśarādīnām smṛtirūpatvena ca pramāṇatvaṃ prajoyanavattvañ ca durapahṛtam eva* | The language here is a little more complicated. Śrīdhara offers another possibility for the *purāṇas*' authority—that it is of the nature of “God's own breath,” a term classically used by Vedāntins from Śāṅkara onward to describe the *Veda* as eternally co-existent with Brahman. But he does not elaborate, and is content to say that the *purāṇas* are authoritative on account of their being like *smṛti*.

the *purāṇa* itself.²⁷⁰ But for Rāmānuja, the authority of the *purāṇas* is predicated on its divine authorship, not its Vedic status. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is privileged because it is composed by an embodied being, the creator Brahmā, in his most lucid state (*sattva*).²⁷¹ The BNK, however, does away with this gap between *śruti* and *purāṇa* entirely, and it insists that because this is so, the claim that *smṛti* has any degree of priority is totally vitiated. If there is any conflict between *śruti* and *purāṇa*, the latter loses out only because it comes later in the order of recitation, where meanings tend to shift around; when it comes to *smṛti*, however, the *purāṇa* is always better.²⁷²

An opponent, rather shocked by this wholesale overturning of scriptural hierarchy, follows the argument to its logical extent. In his response, Lakṣmīdhara doubles down:

Objection: In that case, wouldn't these *purāṇic* statements, having cast off all fetters (viz. all limits on their textual authority), each communicating their own subject as they desire, render the *smṛtis* empty of meaning entirely, insofar as the latter find themselves stripped of the barest scope [for purposeful instruction]?

Reply: So be it! How could anyone deny the directness of the *purāṇas* and introduce [the possibility that] they are differentially situated (*vyavasthāpana*)? After all, as [Śiva says to Pārvatī] in the *Nārādīya Purāṇa* (2.24.17):

“Oh beautiful faced one! I consider the meaning of the *purāṇas* to be greater than the meaning of the Vedas! Dear goddess, the Veda is established within the *purāṇa*. There is no doubt on this matter.”

[...] and in the *Skanda Purāṇa* (untraced):

“The *śruti* and *smṛti* are the two eyes, the *purāṇa* is considered the heart. Without the *śruti* and *smṛti*, one is blind, and would be one-eyed without one or the other. But it is better to be one-eyed or blind than without one's heart—without the *purāṇa*.”²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Sucharita Adluri, *Textual Authority in Classical Indian Thought: Rāmānuja and the Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

²⁷¹ Sucharita Adluri, “Scriptural Innovation in Medieval South India: The Śrīvaiṣṇava Articulation of Vedānta” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2009), 56ff.

²⁷² *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 92: ata eva śrutipurāṇavirodhe purāṇadaurbalyam ānupūrvībhedāt kadācid artho 'py anyathā syād iti, smṛtipurāṇavirodhe punaḥ purāṇāny eva balīyāṃsi |

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 92-93: evaṃ samullaṅghitasakalāśṛṅkhaleṣu yathāsvam eva svam svam artham abhidadhāneṣu

The claim seems tautological, no doubt: the *purāṇas* are *śruti* because they tell us that they are. It makes sense, however, given the Mīmāṃsā background to the argument. Like Śrīdhara on BhP 6.2.8, Lakṣmīdhara extends to the *purāṇa* the Mīmāṃsā concept that Vedic utterances are self-validating. The entire first chapter of the BNK seeks to disprove the claim that *purāṇic* statements do not carry their own meaningful weight—that is, that they must be subordinate to a Vedic injunction. In this chapter, Lakṣmīdhara argues against the “scaremongering of those ignorant of Mīmāṃsā discourse” (*aviditamīmāṃsāvṛttāntānām vibhīṣikā*) who say that *purāṇic* language is merely *arthavāda*—an ironic accusation, to say the least, because virtually every Mīmāṃsaka in history had said precisely that.²⁷⁴ The specific opponent to whom Lakṣmīdhara is responding remains unclear, but given my reconstruction of prior Mīmāṃsā discussions of the *purāṇa*, one can imagine the resistance to his efforts. In arguing that the *purāṇa* is nothing but Veda, Lakṣmīdhara opens the possibility for its utterances to be equivalent to Vedic injunctions.

purāṇavacaneṣu manāg api kvacid ekam avakāśam alabhamānānām smṛtīnām yadi nāma viṣayasarvasvāpahāraḥ
prasajyeta | prasajyatām nāma, kathaṃ nu purāṇānām āñjasyam upamṛdya vyavasthāpanapṛastāvah | uktam hi
nāradīye –

vedārthād adhikaṃ manye purāṇārthaṃ varānane |
vedaḥ pratiṣṭhito devi purāṇe nātra saṃśayaḥ ||

[...] skānde ca –

śrutismṛtī hi netre dve purāṇaṃ hṛdayaṃ smṛtam |
śrutismṛtibhyāṃ hīno 'ndhaḥ kāṇaḥ syād ekayā vinā ||
purāṇahīnād hṛcchūnyāt kāṇāndhāv api tau varau |

²⁷⁴ The critique that the *purāṇas* were nothing but *arthavāda* was felt closely enough in the world of *purāṇic* interpretation to merit a response in the *Bṛhannārādīya Purāṇa* (1.61), quoted by R.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas, Vol. 1* (Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1958), 312, n.115 (my trans.):

purāṇeṣu dvijaśreṣṭhāḥ sarvadharmapṛavaktṛṣu |
pṛavadanty arthavādatvaṃ ye te narakabhājanāḥ ||

“O best of Brahmins, those who proclaim that *purāṇas*, which discuss the entire *dharma*, are *arthavāda*, are going straight to hell.”

In the context of the first chapter, the problem of an utterance's being able to express exactly what it intends (*vivakṣitārtha*), and not be subordinate to some other purpose, hinges on its injunctive capacity, and, consequently, its ability to effect practical action. Lakṣmīdhara's opponent attempts to foreclose that possibility, suggesting that the *purāṇa*'s valorization of singing the name of God simply falls under the category of praise (*stāvakatva*), the sole prerogative of the *arthavāda*.²⁷⁵ Lakṣmīdhara responds by applying a Vedāntic hermeneutical principle to the *purāṇa*. Just as the Veda has the authority to instruct us with respect to both ritual action (*kārya*) and already existent entities (*siddha*), he says, the *purāṇa* can do the exact same thing.²⁷⁶ It bears repeating that Lakṣmīdhara's entire line of argument builds up to the idea that there is no essential difference between *purāṇa* and Veda. It becomes possible, then, to use the same hermeneutical tools previously applied to the Veda, a strategy that becomes amply clear in this final example. Here, Lakṣmīdhara uses a famous Mīmāṃsā analogy to explicate a verse from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* that sums up the claim of the entire BNK: “There is only one form of penance for the affliction that attaches to a person when he has committed a sin: simply remember God's name.”²⁷⁷ Lakṣmīdhara argues that just like Vedic injunctions, this statement does not describe the prerequisite for the eligible agent of a ritual action but rather the result of that action:

For one afflicted by a particular thing, benefit lies in the removal of that thing. In this instance, to say that singing is the means to benefit one afflicted by sin is effectively to say that it is a means to removing sin. The word “simply” (*para*) is a synonym for

²⁷⁵ Recall Kumāriḷa's comment: “All of them are authoritative inasmuch as their role is one of praising [an external injunction]” (*sarve stutyarthena pramāṇam*).

²⁷⁶ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 12: yasmād vākyād yo 'rthaḥ svarasato 'vagamyate siddhaḥ kāryo vā tatra tatpramāṇam eva purāṇavacanam |

²⁷⁷ *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 2.6.40:

kṛte pāpe 'nutāpo vai yasya puṃsaḥ prajāyate |
prāyaścittaṃ tu tasyaikaṃ harisaṃsaraṇaṃ param ||

“exclusively” (*kevala*); the idea is that singing is a self-sufficient means. The word “one” means “once” (*sakṛt*), and “remembering” is an explanatory repetition [of the initial action prescribed by the injunction] (*anuvāda*), since it recalls the entire practice of singing God's name. It has as its result a provocation (*prarocana*) in the form “This fits together.”²⁷⁸ [In injunctions like “one desirous of heaven should perform a sacrifice”] the term “desirous of heaven” describes not a person, but the particular desired object which is first required by the injunction defined by that object (viz. heaven). Only in a second-order sense does the term “desirous of heaven” signify the actual eligible ritual participant. This is the conclusion of those who understand the heart of Mīmāṃsā.²⁷⁹

Lakṣmīdhara insists that the ability of singing God's name to remove sins does not rest on the agent. He does not *have* to be afflicted, or desire release from that affliction (*anutāpa*), in order for singing God's name to work. It just so happens that the act of singing does that already. Just as the Vedic injunction to perform a sacrifice to attain heaven does not depend on the agent's desire to attain heaven, the *purāṇic* statement that singing—here recalled to the mind by the mention of “remembering” God's name—is enough to expiate one's sins does not depend on any qualification on the part of the singer. The statement he cites here is not an injunction *per se*, but by offering an “encouragement” (*prarocana*), it functions as an *arthavāda* that recalls previous *purāṇic* injunctions to sing God's name. Thus the language of the entire *purāṇic* corpus can be treated Mīmāṃsically, if we will, as if it were the language of the Veda—because it is.

I have spent this much time concentrating on these properly Mīmāṃsā topics because the majority of the BNK turns on just such increasingly fine debates. The author is familiar with

²⁷⁸ Anantadeva comments: “The thought-process behind this 'provocation' is that this act of singing will remove *saṃsāra* because it has as its result the remembrance of God.” See *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 113, ll.21-22 (*Prakāśa* comm.): etatkīrtanaṃ saṃsāranivartakaṃ harismaranaphalakatvād iti bhāvaḥ |

²⁷⁹ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 110: yo hi yasmād anutaptas tasya tannivṛttir eva hitaṃ tataś ca pāpād anutaptasya kīrtanaṃ hitasādhanam ityukte pāpakṣayasādhanam ityuktaṃ bhakvati, paraśabdaś ca kevalaśabdaparyāyaḥ, kīrtanam eva puṣkalaṃ sādhanam ityarthah | ekam api sakṛd iti ca harikīrtanasya sarvasyaiva smāratvāt saṃsmaraṇam ityanuvādaḥ, sa ca prarocanaphalaḥ; samīcīnaṃ hy etad iti, svargakāmādirpadam api samīhitalakṣaṇasya vidheḥ prathamāpekṣitasamīhitaviśeṣaṇasamarpaṇaparam eva na puruṣaparam, arthatas tu svargakāmo 'adhikārīti mīmāṃsāhṛdayavedināṃ nirṇayaḥ |

Nyāya as well, paraphrasing Udayana's *Ātmatattvaviveka*,²⁸⁰ but its presence is negligible compared with the overwhelming Mīmāṃsā emphasis of the text. And no wonder: for the *purāṇa* as a genre to be officially reckoned among the canon of Sanskrit scripture would have required engaging with the norms of the pre-eminent discourse on the topic.²⁸¹ The BNK demonstrates a shift in the way intellectuals trained in Mīmāṃsā perceived the Bhāgavata Purāṇa: not merely as a supplementary source, but as an independently authoritative scripture.

The BNK in the World of Vedānta

If the BNK's relationship with Pūrva Mīmāṃsā was fractious, what about the latter, Uttara Mīmāṃsā? As I suggested in the previous chapter, Lakṣmīdhara's probable predecessor Śrīdhara Svāmin belonged to a class of Vedāntins concentrated in Orissa who sought to re-envision their relationship to “classical” Advaita Vedānta. Even on that classical side, beginning with Ānandagiri and Anubhūtiśvarūpācārya in the thirteenth century, Advaita Vedāntins in Orissa embarked on a project of canonizing Śaṅkara's works, while distancing themselves from the competing Advaita of his contemporary Maṇḍana Miśra.²⁸² Lakṣmīdhara invokes a different set of sources for his bhakti-infused Vedānta. These include not only a wide range of both Śaiva and

²⁸⁰ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 96: sādhanāvyāpakatve sati sādhyavyāpaka upādhir ity asminn udayananaye yujyata evopādhitvam | Cf. *The Ātmatattvaviveka of Śrī Udayanāchārya*, ed. Dhundiraja Sastri (Benares: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1940), 403 (*Īśvarasiddhiprakaraṇa* 4.5): kaḥ punar upādhiḥ, sādhyaprayojakaṃ nimittāntaram | kim asya lakṣaṇam, sādhanāvyāpakatve sati sādhyavyāpakatvam |

²⁸¹ Annabel Brett's comments on the strategies which authors must use in order to make intellectual interventions are particularly germane to Lakṣmīdhara's efforts in the BNK: “Any prospective agent is limited not only in what he or she can conceive, but also in what he or she can legitimate or justify, by the shared horizons of expectation implicit in a particular language. Because of the link between public discourse and public action, an agent proposing an innovative course of action would necessarily also need to engage in one of several possible linguistic strategies (the most common of which is attempting to redescribe the proposed action within the normative terminology of the prevailing discourse).” See Annabel Brett, “What is Intellectual History Now?”, in *What is History Now?*, ed. David Cannadine (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 119.

²⁸² See note 99 above. Anubhūtiśvarūpācārya famously denounced the ninth-century commentator Vācaspati Miśra as “Maṇḍana's piggyback rider” (*maṇḍanaprṣṭhasevī*).

Vaiṣṇava *purāṇic* sources, especially the *Viṣṇudharma*, but also sectarian Āgamas, and late Upaniṣads like the *Nṛsiṃhatāpanīya*. The theology of liberation within the BNK does not in and of itself allow us to categorize Lakṣmīdhara as one kind of Vedāntin or another, even though his *Advaitamakaranda* leaves little doubt. If he did inhabit the Advaita world, however, he did so at an oblique angle.

For example, in the following passage from the third chapter of the BNK, an opponent suggests that the author's talk about “singing” (*kīrtana*) or “remembering” (*anusmaraṇa*) the name of Kṛṣṇa actually stands for something more important: the Advaitic realization of the Self within all. He argues that one should interpret references to a personal god and devotional practice in a language appropriate to Advaita Vedānta:

Objection: Well, who wouldn't say that “remembering Kṛṣṇa” can remove all sins, from the most heinous to the miscellaneous? After all, that is nothing but knowledge of Brahman (*brahmavidyā*). You see, the word “Kṛṣṇa” breaks down like this: either a) the one who ploughs up (*kṛṣati*)—that is, tears up or splits apart—the forest of *samsāra*; or b) the one who attracts (*karṣati*)—that is, brings under control—all ignorance. In other words, Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Self (*paramātmā*) in the form of eternal bliss. [...] To think on that most excellent eternal bliss, the Self of all, over and over again is in fact meditation (*nididhyāsana*), characterized either by repeated concentration on a single concept or by the complete removal of heterogeneous thoughts. *Nididhyāsana* serves as an auxiliary to achieving the result of “hearing [the Upaniṣads]” (*śravaṇa*), which leads to the direct perception of the Self as truth (*ātmasatattvasākṣātkāra*), by removing doubts about its impossibility. In the same way, destroying the sins that prevent that same liberating knowledge also becomes a means to achieving it.²⁸³

From the vantage point of “classical” Advaita, this sort of interpretation would have seemed quite sensible. The opponent invokes the common Vedāntic triad of *śravaṇa*, *manana*,

²⁸³ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 62-63: nanu ko nāma na brūte kṛṣṇānusmaraṇam mahāpātakādīprakīrṇāntasarvāghasamharaṇam iti, sā hi brahmavidyā, tathā hi kṛṣati vilikhati vidārayati samsārātavīm iti vā karṣati ākarṣati ātmasātkaroti vā 'jñānam iti vā kṛṣṇaḥ paramātmā sadānandarūpo vā [...] tasmān niravadyasya sarveṣāṃ ātmabhūtasya sadānandasyānusmaraṇam punaḥ punaś cintanam sajjātyapratyayāvṛtilakṣaṇam vijātyapratyayanīrodhalakṣaṇam vā nididhyāsanaṃ iha upādīyate tasya ca ātmasatattvasākṣātkāraṇabhūtam śravaṇam prati phalopakāryaṅgabhūtasya asambhāvanānirāsavat tatpratibandhakapātakapradhvaṃso 'pi dvārakāryam bhavaty eva [...]

and *nididhyāsana*, a kind of program of scriptural study that culminates in self-knowledge. He offers an Advaitic metaphysics for the word “Kṛṣṇa,” which merely refers to the Supreme Self: all-pervading, free of attributes, undifferentiated. He also offers an etymology for the word that is not too farfetched. In fact, we might speculate that this sort of reading of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa was prevalent in the milieu into which Lakṣmīdhara made his intellectual intervention. His response is quite unambiguous:

Reply: This line of reasoning is unbecoming. First of all, the word “Kṛṣṇa” means conventionally that Brahman whose skin is dark as the Tamāla tree, and who suckled at Yaśodā’s breast. And as the maxim goes, the conventional meaning trumps the etymological. But even if it were derivative, the term still refers in every way to that crest-jewel among cowherds, whose eternal bliss sparkles through his own perpetual glory, having completely cast aside the fog of ignorance—that one who bestows the unfettered joy of liberation to everyone from the women of Gokula, who transgressed all boundaries while caught in the irresistible clutches of love; to enemies like Pūtanā, whose entire behavior was unrestrained, out of control, possessed by an extremely volatile wrath; to the birds, animals, and snakes along the Yamunā River, whose consciousness was totally diverted [from him]; and even to the trees, bushes, creepers, and herbs of Vṛndāvana, whose sense-faculties were wrapped in the dense veils of delusion. *He* is the one we understand [as Kṛṣṇa], not the attributeless Brahman, since it is the most common referent of the word and most immediately intuitive.²⁸⁴

According to Lakṣmīdhara, “Kṛṣṇa” does not stand in for any higher reality; he is uniquely himself. This explicit claim to the distinctiveness of a personal Kṛṣṇa over the impersonal Brahman is more than a question of metaphysics. It also displays a clear preference for the practical alternative of bhakti. The character of liberation is the same—immediate apprehension of the Self—but it is accessible to a wider, much less austere range of beings.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 64: idam asundaram, kṛṣṇaśabdasya tamālaśyāmalatviṣi yaśodāstanandhaye brahmaṇi rūḍhatvād, rūḍhir yogam apaharati iti nyāyāt | yaugikatve vā durvāramadanamahāgrahagrhitatayā samullaṅghitasakalasetūnām gokulakāminīnām, ativiśamaroṣāveśavivaśaviśrīnkhalasakalakaraṇavṛttīnām pūtanāprabhṛttīnām aratīnām, atyantaparācīnacetasām yamunāvanapaśupakṣisarīspāṇām, atibahalamohapaṭalīpinaddhasarvendriyāṇām vṛndāvanatarugulmalatāvīrudhām api muktisukham anivāritam vitarato nityanirastanīhāratayā nirantarasvamahimasamullasadanantānandasya gopālaśiromaṇeḥ sarvaprakāro 'pi yogo 'syaiva iti tasyaiva iha grahaṇam na nirguṇasya brahmaṇaḥ prayogaprācuryāt tatraiva prathamapratīter udayāt |

But that this debate takes place within and not outside the realm of Advaita Vedānta is made clear later in the third chapter. Here, an opponent challenges Lakṣmīdhara to explain how the act of singing (*kīrtana*), being an activity, can lead to liberation. As all Vedāntins know, it is knowledge (*jñāna*) and not action (*karma*) that leads to liberation:

Objection: Surely *kīrtana* is an activity, and activities cannot result in liberation. Great teachers have explained through the reasoning of *śruti*, *smṛti*, *itihāsapurāṇa*, and *āgama*, that knowledge is the sole means to that [viz. liberation].

Reply: Only as a means to knowledge is [*kīrtana*] a means to liberation. It is for this very reason that meditation (*samādhi*) is enjoined with respect to [producing an] effect, for neither is *samādhi* a means to liberation. If you ask what it is, it is nothing but a means to knowledge—moreover, not directly, like “hearing [the Upaniṣads]” (*śravaṇa*), but rather by way of eradicating obstructions. So too is the case with *kīrtana*.²⁸⁵

In the Advaita Vedānta triad of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*, or hearing, reflecting, and meditating on the teachings of the Upaniṣads, only the first is supposed to lead directly to liberation. This is because the object of that liberating knowledge—Brahman—is not in fact an object, but constitutes one's own Self, Ātman. Thus it cannot be achieved or attained by some activity; it is not “out there” for one to get, it can only be known. In other words, hearing the Upaniṣadic statement that you are Brahman should be enough to make you realize that you are Brahman. Because that patently does not happen, early Advaitins interpreted *manana* and *nididhyāsana* (here called *samādhi*) as auxiliary disciplines that help effect the result of *śravaṇa*.²⁸⁶ Here Lakṣmīdhara analogizes the work of *kīrtana* to that of *samādhi*; it is not

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 120: nanu kīrtanam kriyā, na ca kriyāsādhano mokṣaḥ, tasya śrutismṛtītiḥāsapurāṇāgamayuktibhir jñānaikopāyatvenācāryair avadhāritatvād jñānasāadhanatvam eva tasya mokṣasāadhanatvam, ata eva samādheḥ kārye vidhānam, na hi samādhir api mokṣasāadhanam, kiṃ tarhi ? jñānasāadhanam eva, tad api na sākṣāt śravaṇavad, api tu pratibandhanirāsadvāreṇa, evaṃ kīrtanam api |

²⁸⁶ This whole process remains inscrutable to many philosophers and scholars of Advaita Vedānta. It clearly also bothered Advaitins themselves, who, at some historical juncture, began to privilege meditation and similar yogic practices, eventually making a Yogic Advaita commonplace. This is the subject of a forthcoming essay by Jason Schwartz, “Parabrahman Among the Yogins,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, forthcoming.

On problems with the actual mechanics of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*, see John Taber, “Review:

enjoined as a direct means to liberation, for it is an activity, but only mediately, as a means to knowledge, the same liberating knowledge offered by the Upaniṣads. Despite his riveting exposition of an intimately personal God, and commitment to embodied practices of worship, Lakṣmīdhara does not assign ultimate value to his subject matter. Singing the name of God emerges as an independent but intermediary step in a much more complex hierarchy that Lakṣmīdhara attributes to the BhP itself:

Here is the sequence: 1) From *kīrtana* comes the dissolution of sins. 2) Its repetition leads to the accumulation of appropriate latent tendencies (*vāsanās*) and the removal of sinful *vāsanās*. 3) Then comes uninterrupted engagement in the service of God's devotees. 4) From that comes an unwavering blessed bhakti toward the Supreme God whose glory is described by [those devotees]. 5) Then the total erasure of sorrow and so forth. 6) From that comes a super-abundance of purity. 7) Then the direct experience of the truth (*tattvasākṣātkāra*). 8) Then liberation (*mukti*). This has been explicated in the *Bhāgavata* in great detail. [...]

Now say that one who has heard the settled doctrine of the Upaniṣads (*śrutiśiraḥsidhānta*), on account of some obstruction, finds that access to the knowledge

Freedom Through Inner Renunciation: Śaṅkara's Philosophy in a New Light,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123.3 (2003): 695: “When all is said and done...we still have a very poor understanding of how Śaṅkara thought liberation is supposed to come about. The picture we are presented with is roughly the following: liberation results from a full comprehension of the identity of the self with Brahman, which is achieved through the 'discipline of knowledge,' namely, the hearing, reflecting, and meditating upon crucial Vedānta texts, which in turn is somehow supported by the purification of the mind brought about by the observance of prescribed rituals as well as the practices of yoga. How do the immediate and remote means of liberation really work? Are the reflection and meditation on the word that lead directly to realization, for example, akin to puzzling over a math problem? We have some notion of what Śaṅkara means by *manana*: the progressive as-certainment of the meaning of the Upaniṣad statements and the successive removal, through independent reflection, of misconceptions about the self. But what is *nididhyāsana*? Is it merely the continuous flow of attention on the truth once realized, as some texts (e.g., BAUBh 1.4.7) suggest, or is it a repetition of the mediate, discursive knowledge of the self acquired from the Upaniṣads until a vivid, direct experience of reality is attained? To be sure, Śaṅkara rejects the latter...as an enjoined means of liberation, yet he also allows that if hearing the *mahāvākya* once does not produce realization, it must be repeated. How, if it doesn't work the first time, can it work later? Here, perhaps, 'purity of mind' is crucial, which Śaṅkara mentions in various places as conducive to the direct realization of the meaning of the Vedānta passages. But what is that and how does it function? Is it like the clarity of mind one has upon awakening from a good night's sleep, which enables one to see the solution to the math problem one couldn't see the night before? Śaṅkara nowhere discusses it. In general, what is the change that takes place that converts a mediate knowledge of the self—the mere intellectual understanding 'I am Brahman,' which makes no difference in my life—into a direct, life-transforming realization, and how do the various practices that Śaṅkara mentions throughout his works but never really explains or connects together, contribute to it? This, I would maintain, is what we, as scholars outside the tradition, do not yet, and indeed may never, understand.”

of truth (*tattvajñāna*) has been closed, as it were. For such a person, bhakti for God opens up that knowledge of truth by removing the obstruction in the fashion described above. However, if someone has not heard the doctrine of Vedānta at all, he may repeat *ad infinitum* the names of Lord Nṛsiṃha, alias the great Viṣṇu seated on a throne as the lord of the ambrosial river that is Prahlāda's heart, the sole controller of the world, the great ocean of uninhibited compassion. When he leaves his body, the Lord himself will instruct him in the knowledge of the self (*ātmajñāna*) that saves him from *saṃsāra*.²⁸⁷

Two points from this passage merit further comment. First, Lakṣmīdhara does not essentially disagree with the Advaita Vedānta principle that self-knowledge is the source of liberation, and that liberation is the ultimate goal of human life. He does, however, offer an alternative route to how one might achieve self-knowledge outside the bounds of the Upaniṣads, just as he does in the previous passage about bhakti to Kṛṣṇa. The second point concerns Lakṣmīdhara's invocation of the deity Nṛsiṃha. As I suggested toward the beginning of this chapter, Nṛsiṃha was clearly central to the religious world that Śrīdhara and Lakṣmīdhara inhabited.²⁸⁸ In his learned study of the legend of Prahlāda, Paul Hacker pointed out that the

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 120-121: tatrāyaṃ kramah - kīrtanāt pāpakṣayaḥ, tadāvṛtṭyā tadviṣayāṇāṃ vāsanānāṃ pracayaḥ; apacayaś ca pāpavāsanānāṃ, tato bhagavajjanasevāsātatyam, tatas tadupavarṇitamahimani bhagavati puṇyaślokeśvare bhāgavatī naiṣṭhikī bhaktiḥ, tataḥ śokādīnāṃ atyantocchedaḥ, tataḥ sattvasya paramotkarṣaḥ, tatas tattvasākṣātkāraḥ, tato muktir iti, ayam arthaḥ śrībhāgavate savistaram upavarṇitaḥ | [...] tatra śrutiśiraḥsidhāntaṃ yasya śrutavato 'pi kutaścīt pratibandhāt tattvajñānam utpannam api nimīlitam iva tasya bhagavadbhaktir uktayā rītyā pratibandhaṃ nirudhya tattvajñānam unmīlayati, yaḥ punar aśrutavedāntasiddhānta eva jāgadekaniyantur niryantṛaṇadayā'mṛtamahārṇavasya mahāviṣṇoḥ prahlādahṛdayasudhāsariṭpatiparyañkaśāyinaḥ śrīnṛsiṃhasya nāmāni nirantaram āvartayati; tasya bhagavān svayam eva dehāvasānasamaye saṃsāratāraṅgam ātmajñānam anugṛṇāti |

²⁸⁸ The very first verse of Śrīdhara's commentary on the BhP invokes Nṛsiṃha (my trans.):

vāgīśā yasya vadane lakṣmī yasya ca vakṣasi |
yasyāste hṛdaye saṃvit taṃ nṛsiṃham ahaṃ bhaje ||

“On whose tongue is the goddess of speech; and on whose chest is Lakṣmī; in whose heart consciousness abides—that Nṛsiṃha do I worship.”

Christopher Minkowski points out that Śrīdhara devotes special attention to the Vedastuti section of the BhP (10.87): “At the end of the commentary to each verse he supplies an ornate verse of his own creation that summarizes the commentary, under the same conceit as the Vedastuti itself, in the form of a praise to his preferred deity, Narahari.” See Christopher Minkowski, “The Vedastuti and Vedic Studies: Nīlakāṇṭha on Bhāgavata Purāṇa X.87,” in *The Vedas: Texts, Language, Ritual*, edited by Arlo Griffiths and Jan E.M. Houben (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2004), 130.

Narasimha Purāṇa engenders devotion to the divine name of Viṣṇu, combined with the visually entrancing emotional bhakti we find characteristic of the BhP and the BNK.²⁸⁹ He also demonstrated that Prahlāda was a figure of Advaitic importance in the BhP—much more so there than in any other Vedānta circles, but resistant to being easily categorized within one school or another.²⁹⁰ The figure of Nṛsiṃha here is not merely indicative of the author's geographical provenance, but also his religious and philosophical sensibilities. In the passage immediately following the one quoted above, Lakṣmīdhara elaborates on a section from the *Nṛsiṃhatāpanīya Upaniṣad*, as proof of his claim that praise (*stuti*) of God ultimately results in the revelation of self-knowledge, since when God is pleased by that praise, he himself bestows self-knowledge.²⁹¹ He follows with an etymologically creative reading of a mantra from the *Ṛg Veda* (1.156.3),²⁹² which for him prefigures the claim that singing the name of Viṣṇu results, eventually, in the realization of Brahman.²⁹³ Attempts to find Viṣṇu as the Supreme God in the Veda was a common

²⁸⁹ Gerhard Oberhammer, “Review: *Prahlāda: Werden und Wandlungen einer Idealgestalt*,” *Oriens* 17 (1964): 269.

²⁹⁰ See Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti: the early history of Kṛṣṇa devotion in South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 538: “Hacker has said of the Prahlāda-episode in the BhP that 'its philosophical teaching agrees with the monistic Vedānta to a great extent [...] but although it shows an unmistakable leaning towards the philosophy of the advaita school, yet it does not appear to be simply identical with any branch of this school.'”

²⁹¹ *Nṛsiṃhatāpanīya Upaniṣad* 4.4: prajāpatir abravīd etair mantrair nityaṃ devaṃ stuvadhvam | tato devaḥ prīto bhavati svātmānaṃ darśayati tasmād ya etair mantrair nityaṃ devaṃ stauti sa devaṃ paśyati so 'mṛtatvaṃ ca gacchati ya evaṃ vedeti mahopaniṣat |

²⁹² tam u stotāraḥ pūrvyaṃ yathā vida
ṛtasya garbhaṃ januṣā pipartana |
āśya jānanto nāma cidviviktana
mahas te viṣṇo sumatiṃ bhajāmahe ||

“Hymners, propitiate of your own accord that ancient Vishnu, since you know him as the germ of sacrifice; cognizant of his greatness, celebrate his name: may we, Vishnu, enjoy thy favour.”

See H.H. Wilson, trans., *Ṛig-Veda Sanhitā: A Collection of Ancient Hindu Hymns, Constituting the Second Aṣṭaka, or Book, of the Ṛig-Veda* (London: W.H. Allen & Co, 1854), 98.

²⁹³ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 124: bhajāmahe iti brahmavidyām āśāsānāḥ kīrtayatetyarthaḥ, tataś cāpavargaphalakajñānasādhanatvam evāpavargasādhanatvaṃ kīrtanasya |

practice among promulgators of the Śrīvaiṣṇava and Mādhva traditions of Vedānta.²⁹⁴ However, neither Sāyaṇa²⁹⁵ nor Madhva,²⁹⁶ two prior commentators on the *Ṛg Veda*, reads the verse this way, supporting the notion that Lakṣmīdhara's interpretations are the product of a unique local intellectual milieu.²⁹⁷

It is important to be clear about the degree of difference between the BNK and previous Vedānta traditions in this regard. Prior to Lakṣmīdhara, theologians of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition engaged in their own way with texts that promoted bhakti to God's name. In the twelfth century, Rāmānuja's younger contemporary Parāśara Bhaṭṭar wrote a Sanskrit commentary on the *Viṣṇusahasranāma*, the “Thousand Names of Viṣṇu.”²⁹⁸ This text from the *Anuśāsana Parvan* of

²⁹⁴ See Valerie Stoker, “Vedic Language and Vaiṣṇava Theology: Madhva's Use of *Nirukta* in his *Ṛgbhāṣya*,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 35.2 (2007): 169-199.

²⁹⁵ See Max Müller, ed., *Rig-Veda-Sanhita with the Commentary of Sayanacharya, Volume II* (London: W.H. Allen & Co, 1854), 200.

²⁹⁶ See *Ṛgbhāṣyam & Khaṇḍārthanirṇaya*, ed. Bannaḷe Govindacharya (Udipi: Akhila Bhārata Mādhva Mahā Mandala Publication, 1973).

²⁹⁷ Perhaps not coincidentally, Śrīdhara cites *Ṛg Veda* 1.156.3 briefly in his commentary on BhP 6.2.8, which I have translated above. Although I do not have the space to develop the point, Lakṣmīdhara's understanding of mantras in the course of this interpretation is rather strange in the light of earlier Mīmāṃsā discourse. In support of the claim that mantras can be injunctive, Lakṣmīdhara cites a verse from Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa's *Tantravārttika* 2.1.31 (See *Mīmāṃsādarśana Vol. 1B*, 432):

vidhiśaktir niyogena na mantrasyopanīyate |
tato vidhāsyati hy eṣa niyogāt smārayiṣyati ||

This is a curious citation, since the verse forms part of the *pūrvapakṣa* to the *mantravidhāyatvādhikaraṇa* (MS 2.1.8.30-31) which answers the question as to whether or not the injunctive words occurring in mantras, inasmuch as they are the same as those occurring in corresponding Brāhmaṇa passages, have injunctive potency. This *pūrvapakṣa* is met by the *siddhānta* which says that mantras are injunctive only insofar as they recall to the mind that which has been enjoined by the Brāhmaṇa. In the verse cited above, the *pūrvapakṣin* concedes that mantras can serve to recall the enjoined Brāhmaṇa passage, yet insists that this does not vitiate the possibility that mantras may have their own injunctive potency. It is the *pūrvapakṣin* who further cites a mantra (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 13.5.1[13]) to prove his point that there are verbs in mantras which serve the purpose of injunction, and conversely, that there are verbs in the Brāhmaṇas which do not have injunctive power. Cf. Jha, *Tantravārttika*, 565-569. Why Lakṣmīdhara so blatantly mobilizes a *prima facie* position, an act that also goes completely unrecognized by his commentator Anantadeva, is unclear to me.

²⁹⁸ See Vasudha Narayanan, “Singing the Glory of the Divine Name: Parāśara Bhaṭṭar's Commentary on the Viṣṇu

the epic Mahābhārata became extremely popular in many cultures of recitation across southern India. In the introductory portion of his commentary, Parāśara Bhaṭṭar quotes many of the same authorities as Lakṣmīdhara (especially the *Viṣṇudharma* and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*) in support of the claim that merely uttering the name of God relieves one from suffering.²⁹⁹ In keeping with Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, he asserts that this path of bhakti is open to members of all caste-classes, in whatever state they find themselves. There is no prohibition with respect to taking the name of God, who is the most intimate friend, as compassionate as a mother to her son.³⁰⁰ Moreover, he assures us that none of these statements should be considered *arthavāda*, since they express no exaggeration.³⁰¹

So far it seems that Parāśara Bhaṭṭar has anticipated Lakṣmīdhara, but the differences should give us pause. First, although he quotes several *purāṇas* in his commentary, Parāśara Bhaṭṭar explicitly ranks the *itihāsa* over the *purāṇa* as a source of authority.³⁰² Second, he is hardly concerned with Mīmāṃsā responses to his claims, and goes so far as to concede that, although we should not consider statements about the name of God to be *arthavāda*, if one *did* happen to do so, they would be sufficient authorities in their own right, so long as they were not superseded.³⁰³ Third, in direct contrast to Lakṣmīdhara's relative ecumenicism, Parāśara Bhaṭṭar

Sahasranāma,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 2.2 (1994): 85-98.

²⁹⁹ See A. Srinivasa Raghavan, trans., *Sri Visnusahasranama with the Bhashya of Sri Parasara Bhattar* (Madras: Sri Visishtadvaita Pracharini Sabha, 1983), 47-48.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 50: yuktaś caiṣaḥ sarvāvasthenāpi puruṣeṇa mātur iva putreṇa paramavatsalasya sarvabandhoḥ nisargasuhṛdaś ca bhagavato nāmagrahaṇādāv apratiṣedhaḥ |

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 56: na ca eteṣām arthavādatvaṃ śakyaśaṅkam anativāditvāt |

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 4, 8: purāṇebhya itihāsoṭkarṣe vivakṣite [...]; purāṇebhyo balavattaraṃ bahavo buddhiśālino 'dhyavasasuḥ |

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 58: kiṃ ca prabalapramāṇavirodhābhāve arthavādapadānām api svataḥ prāmāṇyataḥ svārthaparityāgaś ca sāhasam anyāyyatvāt |

is emphatic that Viṣṇu alone, not Brahmā or Śiva, is the Lord spoken of by every scripture imaginable.³⁰⁴ The BhP, moreover, hardly features at all in Śrīvaiṣṇava writing, and when it does, its reputation is generally negative. When Vedānta Deśika writes his *Rahasyatrayasāra* in the thirteenth century, he places significant limits on the power of God's name to purify one's sins. After quoting a series of verses from the BhP (6.2.14, 6.3.24, 7.1.32) that we also find in the BNK extolling the liberating power of God's name, Vedānta Deśika warns that these passages should not be taken as literally true:

They only mean that, if the man has no hatred for Bhagavan, the mention of Bhagavan's name is extremely purificatory [...] Certainly it does not mean that derisive speech concerning Bhagavan and the like would destroy sins [...] It is said in the *Bhagavatam* that...in some way or other, those who are associated with Sri Krishna will obtain redemption, provided they have done good deeds in the past [...] These...*śloka*s refer to individuals who had a special competency owing to good deeds done in past lives.³⁰⁵

It is certainly possible that the Śrīvaiṣṇavas influenced the concerns of the BNK. For example, on occasion Lakṣmīdhara mentions the *aṣṭākṣarabrahmavidyā*,³⁰⁶ referring to the eight-syllable mantra “Om Namō Nārāyaṇāya,” which forms a subject of discussion in Vedānta Deśika's *Rahasyatrayasāra*, where it is also known in Tamil as the *Tirumantra*.³⁰⁷ Moreover, Lakṣmīdhara gave a place of privilege to the Vaiṣṇava Āgamas. Even when not quoting them

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 75-76: tathā hi upaniṣadādiṣu paratattvasya...vidhihariśivādiviśeṣaparyavasitākāṅkṣyām “nārāyaṇa param brahma tattvaṃ nārāyaṇaḥ paraḥ” [...] ityādibhiḥ [...] khalu bhagavato niraṅkuśaiśvaryaṃ taditaraniṣkarṣaś ca |

³⁰⁵ See M.R. Rajagopala Ayyangar, trans., *Srimad Rahasyatrayasāra* (Kumbakonam: Agnihothram Ramanuja Thathachariar), 340-341.

³⁰⁶ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 87: āvṛttiśravaṇād eva pāpatāratamyād āvṛttitāratamyam kalpyate, śrūyate ca tad **aṣṭākṣarabrahmavidyāyām** [Untraced] - “gomūtrayāvākāhāro brahmahā māśikair japaiḥ | pūyate tata evārvāṇ mahāpātakino'pare ||” ityādi |

Ibid., 112: “gomūtrayāvākāhāro brahmahā māśikair japaiḥ |” ityādāvapi mokṣasādhanatvād **aṣṭākṣarabrahmavidyāyāḥ**...

³⁰⁷ *Srimad Rahasyatrayasāra*, 346ff. Vedānta Deśika refers here to the mantra's origin in the *Nārādīya Kalpa*, which may have been Lakṣmīdhara's source as well.

directly, he placed them in a continuum with the *śruti* and the *purāṇa*.³⁰⁸ In places, Lakṣmīdhara also seems to have paraphrased the commentary on the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* by the Śrīvaiṣṇava Viṣṇucitta.³⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Lakṣmīdhara was also comfortable quoting positively the *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi* by Sureśvara, that most uncompromising of Advaitins.³¹⁰ And given his authorship of the *Advaitamakaranda*, which would become a classic of Advaita Vedānta literature,³¹¹ as well as his responses to Advaitic interpretations of the BhP, he was probably steeped in an Advaita climate. So what kind of Vedānta was this?

One way to approach this question is to understand the BNK's varied reception history.

Although Śrīdhara Svāmin's commentary on the BhP spread widely throughout the subcontinent

³⁰⁸ See *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 79, where Lakṣmīdhara defines bhakti as the God-consciousness of people engaged in the activities prescribed by *śruti*, *purāṇas*, and the Vaiṣṇava Āgamas:
śrutipurāṇavaṣṇavāgamavihiṭaśravaṇādikarmapravaṇānām indriyāṇām...bhāgavatī vṛttir bhaktir iti |

³⁰⁹ Lakṣmīdhara's comments regarding the “easiness” of singing God's name verses the “difficulty” of *smārta* practices such as the twelve-year vow of expiation may have been influenced by Viṣṇucitta's commentary on *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 2.6.45. See *Śrīviṣṇupurāṇam śrīviṣṇucittīyākhyayā vyākhyayā sametam*, ed. Aṅgaṅgarācārya (Kāñcīpuram: Granthamālā Kāryālaya, 1972), 135:

na caivaṃ sukare nāmakīrtanādau satī duṣkare dvādaśavārṣikādau puruṣāṇām apravṛtter manvādivākyaṇām ananuṣṭhānalakṣaṇo bādha iti śaṅkaṇīyam | bhagavatparāṇmukhānām guruṣu prāyaścitteṣu saśraddhānām pravṛtteḥ |

Similar sentiments are expressed in Śrīdhara's commentary on the same verse, where interestingly he refers to his *Bhāvārthadīpikā* for more details, establishing a chronology of their composition. See *Viṣṇupurāṇa with Sanskrit Commentary of Sridharacharya*, 220:

etad uktaṃ bhavati – dvādaśābdādikaṃ hi deśakālādhikārinīyamādyapekṣaṃ yathāvadānuṣṭhitaṃ kālāntare pāpakṣayahetuḥ, idaṃ (harisaṃsmaraṇam) tu na tathā [...] na caivaṃ satī dvādaśābdādisṃter ānarthakyaṃ śaṅkaṇīyam nāmādau śraddhāśūnyānām tatraiva pravṛtteḥ | vispaṣṭaṅ caitad bhāgavatabhāvārthadīpikāyām prapañcitam ity uparamyate |

³¹⁰ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 108: **naiṣkarmyasiddhikārair** api “upāyān prāptihānārthān śāstraṃ bhāsayate 'rkavat’ iti | Cf. *The Naiṣkarmyasiddhi of Sureśvarācārya with the Chandrika of Jnanottama*, ed. Col. G.A. Jacob (Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1891), 21:

hitam samprepsatam mohad ahitam ca jihāsātām |
upāyān prāptihānārthān śāstraṃ bhāsayate 'rkavat || 1.29 ||

³¹¹ See Christopher Minkowski, “Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern History,” *South Asian History and Culture* 2.2 (2011): 210.

soon after its composition, its unique brand of Advaitic theism may have been transported to Bengal in particular by one Mādhavendra Purī.³¹² In his celebrated essay on the subject, Friedhelm Hardy proposed that elements of Āṅvār bhakti entered the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism of Caitanya and his followers through the figure of Mādhavendra. After offering a schematic illustration of the historical connections between Śrīdhara Svāmin, Mādhavendra and Viṣṇu Purī, and Caitanya himself, Hardy was forced to direct his attention to a stylistic analysis of Mādhavendra's poetry in comparison with South Indian texts. He also ruefully conceded:

That Mādhavendra was a Śāṅkarite monk rather compounds than answers the question; that he can be connected with a whole stream of religious attitudes within *advaita* does not help either, since this trend is not explained either. At the most one can say that it centres around the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*.³¹³

After our investigations in the previous chapter, and our study of the BNK, we are in a position to understand this process better. We now have a wider set of texts and contexts for a form of Advaita Vedānta burgeoning in medieval Orissa, connected in some way to Śāṅkara but departing from him in very identifiable ways.

What is more difficult to explain, however, is the ambivalence with which this heritage was treated by participants in Caitanya's movement. However much it may have unnerved later Gauḍīya hagiographers, the positive presence of Advaita Vedānta in the early Caitanya tradition is quite well-known; Caitanya is supposed to have been formally initiated into the Daśanāmī monastic order of Advaita ascetics.³¹⁴ On the other hand, it is also clear from the narrative tradition that Caitanya was engaged in polemical activity against Advaitins, both at home (as in

³¹² See Hardy, "Mādhavendra Purī: A Link between Bengal Vaiṣṇavism and South Indian Bhakti," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1 (1974): 23-41.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 37.

³¹⁴ See De, *Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, 15-20.

the purported conversion of Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma),³¹⁵ as well as in the Advaita stronghold of Banaras. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* gives us alternately rueful and bullish accounts of Caitanya's activities in that city. In Chapter 17 of the *Madhya Līlā*, Caitanya is more or less laughed out of town by the Advaitin Prakāśānanda and his cohorts, while in Chapter 25 the famous renunciate is made to recant his ways, and acknowledge Caitanya's greatness.³¹⁶ The tension between an Advaita that was acceptable to (indeed, revered by) Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, in contrast with its contemporary degeneration and decadence, was present in narrative and philosophy alike. Ravi Gupta has discussed the efforts by Jīva Gosvāmin (fl. 1560 CE) to construct a solid foundation of philosophical argument and understanding for the devotional edifice of Caitanya's Vaiṣṇavism. Gupta shows how Jīva worked creatively with the resources available to him from multiple Vedānta traditions—selecting freely from Rāmānuja, Śrīdhara Svāmin, Madhva, and even Śāṅkara—to carve out a space for his *acintyabhedābheda* philosophy.³¹⁷ Jīva's debt to Śrīdhara, however, is acknowledged in a curious fashion in his *Tattvasandarbhā*, worth quoting here:

Our interpretation (*vyākhyā*) [of the BhP], however, representing a kind of commentary (*bhāṣya*), will be written in accordance with the views of the great Vaiṣṇava, the revered Śrīdhara Svāmin, only insofar as they conform to proper Vaiṣṇava teaching, [since] his writings were interspersed with the doctrines of Advaita, no doubt in order that he might persuade Advaita ideologues—who nowadays pervade the central regions (*madhyadeśa*)—to become absorbed in the greatness of the Lord.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ This instructor of some of the foremost early modern exponents of Navya Nyāya is also said to have written a commentary on Lakṣmīdhara's own *Advaitamakaranda*. This appears to be the only extant commentary on the *Advaitamakaranda* prior to Svayaṃprakāśa's *Rasābhivyañjikā* all the way in the seventeenth century.

³¹⁶ Dimock and Stewart, *The Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, 586-590 and 761-763, respectively. Prakāśānanda would have been a prime candidate for anti-Advaita polemic, given the popularity of his radical form of illusionism—the *dr̥ṣṭisr̥ṣṭivāda*—after the composition of his *Vedāntasiddhāntamuktāvalī* around the turn of the 16th century. See Minkowski, “Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern History,” 213.

³¹⁷ See Ravi Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta of Jīva Gosvāmin* (London: Routledge, 2007), 63-91.

³¹⁸ Cf. Stuart Mark Elkman, *Jiva Gosvamin's Tattvasandarbhā: A Study on the Philosophical and Sectarian*

Moreover, Śāṅkara himself, Jīva claimed, realized that the BhP was far superior to his own doctrines, and only taught Advaita because God told him to, in order that the BhP may remain hidden.³¹⁹ Jīva's mention of the “midland regions”³²⁰ in the quote above raises at once a geographical and a historical question: From his vantage point of sixteenth-century Brindavan, could these have been the Advaitins of Banaras who so famously rejected Caitanya's brand of “sentimentalist” devotion?³²¹

Whatever the case, it is clear that the BNK was very important to bridging this gap. Around the mid-sixteenth century, Jīva wrote his influential *Ṣaṭsandarbha*, a six-volume compendium of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy. In the opening to the *Tattvasandarbhā*, the first book of the six volumes, Jīva lays out his argument for the Vedic status of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.³²² But is it *his* argument? In order to explain that *purāṇa* is nothing but Veda, Jīva reconstructs the argument of the BNK, almost verbatim.³²³ The presence of Lakṣmīdhara in the

Development of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Movement (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 118: bhāṣyarūpā tadvyākhyā tu samprati madhyadeśādau vyāptān advaitavādinō nūnaṃ bhagavanmahimānam avagāhayitūṃ tadvādena karvuritalipīnāṃ paramavaiṣṇavānāṃ śrīdharasvāmicaraṇānāṃ śuddhavaṣṇavasiddhāntānugatā cet tarhi yathāvad eva vilikhyate.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

³²⁰ The classical definition of *madhyadeśa* was simply the country lying between the Himālayas and Vindhya.

³²¹ See Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta of Jīva Gosvāmin*, 16: “Caitanya is an illiterate *sannyāsī* who doesn't know his own duty,' Prakāśānanda concluded. 'Thus he has become a sentimentalist (*bhāvuka*), wandering in the company of other sentimentalists.” Gupta (*Ibid.*, 31) notes that the term used as a derogatory epithet, *bhāvuka*, may hark to the third verse of the BhP.

³²² See David Buchta, “Defining Categories in Hindu Literature: The Purāṇas as Śruti in Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Jīva Gosvāmi,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 15.1 (2006): 91-94.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 92. Cf. Elkman, *Jīva Gosvāmin's Tattvasandarbhā*, 78: tathā hi mahābhārate mānavīye ca – “itihāsapurāṇābhyāṃ vedaṃ samupabrṃhayet” iti | purāṇāt purāṇam iti ca anyatra | na ca avēdena vedasya brṃhaṇaṃ sambhavati | na hy aparipūrṇasya kanakavalayasya trapuṇā purāṇaṃ yujyate | nanu yadi vedaśabdaḥ purāṇam itihāsaṃ ca upādatte tarhi purāṇam anyad anveṣaṇīyam | yadi tu na, na tarhi itihāsapurāṇayor abhedo vedena | ucyate – viśiṣṭaikārthapratipādakapadakadambasya apauruṣeyatvād abhede 'pi svarakramabhedād bhedanirdeśo 'py upapadyate |

broader Gauḍīya literature preceded Jīva by a generation. Four of his poetic verses in the BNK found their way into the *Padyāvalī* (16, 29, 33, 34), an anthology of Sanskrit poetry compiled by Jīva's uncle Rūpa Gosvāmin. And as a perusal of the broader Gauḍīya archive demonstrates, the BNK clearly held a favorable place in it, a fact due to the work's geographical proximity, theological stance, and perhaps the efforts of Mādhavendra and Co.³²⁴

³²⁴ I am grateful to Rembert Lutjeharms for providing me with a comprehensive list of explicit references to Lakṣmīdhara in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature, which I reproduce here, minus the four verses in the *Padyāvalī*. The abbreviation “HS” refers to the edition by Haridāsa Śāstrī cited in the bibliography.

Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu 3.2.1: ratisthāyitayā **nāmakaumudikṛdbhir** apy asau | śāntatvenāyam evāddhā sudevādyaiś ca varṇitah ||

Tattvasandarbha 47: āhuś ca **nāmakaumudikārāḥ** — “kṛṣṇaśabdasya tamālaśyāmalatviṣi yaśodāyāḥ stanandhaye parabrahmaṇi rūḍhiḥ” iti | Also cited in *Kṛṣṇasandarbha* 57 (HS, 112), Jīva's commentary on *Brahmasaṃhitā*, and Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī's *Daśaślokiḥāṣya* on *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* 3.7.86.

Bhagavatsandarbha 86 (HS, 214): “siddher jñānāt mukter vā” iti **śrībhagavannāmakaumudī** |

Bhaktisandarbha 128 (HS, 250): evaṃ prārabdhahetuvyādhyādiharatvaṃ ca skānde — “ādhayo vyādhayo yasya smaraṇān nāmakīrtanāt | tad eva vilayaṃ yānti tam anantaṃ namāmy aham || ” iti | uktaṃ ca **nāmakaumudyām** “prārabdhapāpaharatvaṃ ca kvacid upāsakecchāvaśād” iti |

Bhaktisandarbha 153 (HS, 298): tad īdṛśaṃ mähātmyavṛndam na praśamsāmātram ajāmilādaḥ prasiddhatvāt | darśitāś ca nyāyāḥ **śrībhagavannāmakaumudyādaḥ** |

Bhaktisandarbha 161 (HS, 316): **nāmakaumudikāraiś** ca “antimapatrayayo ’bhyarhita” ity uktaṃ | [*Ed.* I do not find this in citation in the edition of the BNK I possess.]

Bhaktisandarbha 263 (HS, 530): ata eva “bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktiḥ” [BhP 11.2.40] ityādy uttarapadye ṭīkācūṛṇikā: “nanv iyam ārūḍhayoginām api bahujanmabhir durlabhā gatiḥ kathaṃ nāmakīrtanamātreṇaikāsmin janmani bhaved ity āśaṅkya sadṛṣṭāntam āha bhaktir iti” ity eṣā | ittham utthāpitaṃ ca **śrībhagavannāmakaumudyām** sahasranāmabhāṣye ca purāṇāntaravacanam — “naktam divā ca gatabhīr jitanidra eko | nirviṇṇa īkṣitapatho mitabhuk praśāntaḥ || yady acyute bhagavati sa mano na sajjen | nāmāni tadratikarāṇi paṭhed vilajjah ||” iti |

Bhaktisandarbha 265 (HS, 543): uktaṃ ca **nāmakaumudyām** “mahadaparādhasya bhoga eva nivartakaḥ tadanugraho vā” iti |

Prītisandarbha 110 (HS, 341): kiṃ cālaukikarasavidam prācīnānām api matānusāreṇa sidhyaty asau rasaḥ | tatra sāmānyataḥ **śrībhagavannāmakaumudikāraiḥ** darśitaḥ | tasya viśeṣataḥ tu śāntādiṣu pañcasu bhedeṣu vaktavyeṣu śrīsvāmicaraṇair “mallānām āsanir” [BhP 10.43.17] ity ādaḥ te pañcaiva darśitāḥ |

Sarvasaṃvādinī on *Tattvasandarbha* (HS, 24): tad uktaṃ — “tasmān mantrārthavādayor anyaparatve 'pi svārthe prāmānyam bhavaty eva | tad yadi svarasata eva niṣpratibandham avadhāritarūpam anadhigataviṣayam ca vijñānam utpadyate śabdāt tadantareṇāpi tātparyam tasya prāmānyam kiṃ na syāt? tatsaṅgānavigānayoḥ punar anuvādaguṇavādatve upaṇiṣadām punarananyaśeṣatvād apāstasamastānartham anantānandaikarasam

But the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas were not the only group to lay claim to the BNK. Around the same time, not too far from where Jīva was writing in Brindavan, a family of Maharashtrian Brahmin migrants to Banaras, the Devas, began to express their shared interest in Advaita Vedānta and bhakti in a very different way.³²⁵ The patriarch of the family, Anantadeva, wrote a commentary on the BNK called the *Prakāśa*. Anantadeva's initial education was in Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta, under the tutelage of the Banarasi renunciate Rāmatīrtha, and he went on to write his own textbook on Vedānta, the *Siddhāntatattva*. In this textbook, Anantadeva is quite uncompromising about his Advaita affinities. He tells us in the *Prakāśa* that he composed it after his Advaita manual, but without any sense of ironic distance. He simply states, commenting on the passage cited earlier on the true referent of the name Kṛṣṇa: “I have elaborated that *śravaṇa* is an element [of liberating knowledge], and that *nididhyāsana* acts specifically as an auxiliary aid to effecting its result, in my *Siddhāntatattva*.”³²⁶ By and large, Anantadeva stays faithful to the text of the BNK, appearing to depart from the author's intention only once or twice.³²⁷ His

anadhigatam ātmataṭṭvaṃ gamayantīnām pramānāntaravirodhe'pi tasyaivābhāsīkaraṇena ca svārtha eva prāmāṇyam” iti | (cf. *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 10).

Sarvasaṃvādinī on *Kṛṣṇasandarbhā* (HS, 72-73 & 92-93): “samāhṛtānām uccāraṇam api nānārthakam saṃskārapracayahetuvād ekasyaivocārapracayavad” iti **nāmakaumudīkārair** aṅgīkṛtam | [...] **nāmakaumudyām** tu sarvānarthakṣaya eva jñānājñānaviśeṣo niṣiddhaḥ na tu premādīphalatāratamye |

³²⁵ See Anand Venkatkrishnan, “Ritual, Reflection, and Religion: The Devas of Banaras,” *South Asian History and Culture* 6.1 (2015): 147-171.

³²⁶ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 63, ll.3-4 (*Prakāśa* comm.): śravaṇasyāṅgatvaṃ nididhyāsanasya phalopakāryaṅgatvaṃ cāsmābhiḥ siddhāntatattve prapañcitam | Cf. *Siddhāntatattva*, ed. Tailanga Rama Sastri (Benares: Government Sanskrit College, 1901), 45: eteṣām śravaṇam pradhānam, itare phalopakāryaṅge, śrotavyādivākyeṣu prāthamikatvāt |

³²⁷ See, e.g., *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 15, ll.13ff. (*Prakāśa* comm.). When Lakṣmīdhara cites what he calls the “*puṣkarākṣa siddhānta*,” perhaps referring to a specific interpretive tradition, Anantadeva labels it the brainchild of particular *ekadeśī* or “factional” Vedāntins. According to him, Lakṣmīdhara's own position only begins from a particular point, the operative adverb in the original text being “*svarasataḥ*,” which Anantadeva thinks indicates that the previous position was “not the one to which [the author] was inclined” (*pūrvamate 'svarasapradarśanam*). He continues: “The verses cited in proof should be interpreted as saying that, directly or sequentially, the entire [content of the] Veda is auxiliary to the knowledge of the Supreme Self” (*udāhṛtavākyaṇi tu sākṣātparamparayā paramātmavidyāyām śeṣabhūtaḥ sarvo veda ity evaṃ vyākhyeyāni*).

was clearly the most popular commentary on the text, others only existing in fragments and one or two manuscripts.³²⁸

Like the Gosvāmins, Anantadeva also composed devotional dramas on bhakti. However, they are very different from Rūpa Gosvāmin's attempt to use drama as a mode of religious realization,³²⁹ and contain none of the technical language of devotional poetics, or bhaktirasa. As I discuss in the next chapter, Anantadeva attempted to portray his life of bhakti as quite distinct from his scholarly ambitions, though he tried to convince his contemporaries in scholarly fashion. Apart from their shared interest in the BNK, there seems to be nothing whatsoever that connects the Devas to the Gosvāmins. Unlike Jīva, who tries scrupulously to avoid the ignominy of being classed with the *māyāvādīs*, the classic pejorative term for “illusionist” Advaitins, Anantadeva feels no need to apologize for his Advaita heritage. In his *Siddhāntatattva*, he even supports the *dr̥ṣṭisr̥ṣṭivāda*, the controversial doctrine of subjective idealism which it is unlikely that the Gosvāmins would have ever defended.³³⁰ In an opening verse to his *Prakāśa*, he assures the prospective audience that his commentary “spreads the illumination of the BNK in a manner that does not contradict the meaning of the entire Vedānta.”³³¹ “Vedānta” here probably means

But is this indeed what Lakṣmīdhara is saying? “*Svarasataḥ*” in context appears simply to mean “spontaneously,” and the final clause of the root text seems to follow causally from the verses cited. One wonders who or what comprises this Vedānta “faction” from which Anantadeva believes Lakṣmīdhara needs protecting.

³²⁸ See Siniruddha Dash, ed., *New Catalogus Catalogorum, Vol. XV* (Madras: University of Madras, 2007), 251b.

³²⁹ Cf. Donna Wulff, *Drama as a Mode of Religious Realization: The Vidagdhamādhava of Rupa Gosvāmī* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984).

³³⁰ See *Siddhāntatattva*, 57-60. Anantadeva says that the *dr̥ṣṭisr̥ṣṭivāda* “does not slip into a Buddhist idealism, for the substrate [i.e., Brahman] is a stable entity.” *Ibid.*, 57: na ca bauddhamatapraveśaḥ | adhiṣṭhānasya sthāyitvāt |

³³¹ *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, 1 (*Prakāśa* comm., v.2):

namaskṛtya gurūn sarvavedāntārthāvirodhataḥ |
bhagavannāmakaumudyāḥ prakāśaḥ pravīṇyate ||

“The Upaniṣads” more than a particular system, although for Anantadeva the Upaniṣads fundamentally called for an Advaitic interpretation. That he even had to bring up the problem of the BNK's belonging suggests that this text was moving between and across communities that had very different philosophical commitments. Yet, as I show in the next chapter, nowhere does Anantadeva distance himself from Advaita *per se*, only other Advaitins, and their haughty, self-involved talk about the self-sufficiency of jñāna, divorced from the rhythms of bhakti.

One is compelled to ask, then, whether we should see the Devas and Gosvāmins as fraternal twins, or as independent agents re-envisioning the legacy of Advaita Vedānta. Though remarkably similar in nature, their ideas seem to have moved in different, non-intersecting circles, both during and after their lifetime.³³² The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas exerted their influence across northern India to the courts of Jaipur, where the scholar Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa consolidated their canonical Vedānta status by connecting Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism to Mādhva theology.³³³ The works of the Devas, however, made their way south, as part of the Maratha conquest of Thanjavur.³³⁴ Not only do manuscripts of their works survive in the libraries of Madras and Mysore,³³⁵ but their intellectual interest in the divine name was also resuscitated and refashioned by theologians of the Tamil South.

³³² See Norvin Hein, “Caitanya's Ecstasies and the Theology of the Name,” In *Hinduism: New Essays in the History of Religions*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 15-32; Neal Delmonico, “Chaitanya Vaishnavism and the Holy Names,” in *Krishna: A Sourcebook*, ed. Edwin F. Bryant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 549-575; Barbara Holdrege, “From *Nāma-Avatāra* to *Nāma-Saṃkīrtana*: Gauḍīya Perspectives on the Name,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 17.2 (2009): 3-36.

³³³ See Kiyokazu Okita, *Hindu Theology in Early Modern South Asia: The Rise of Devotionalism and the Politics of Genealogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³³⁴ See Venkatkrishnan, “Ritual, Reflection, and Religion,” 159-161.

³³⁵ For the full record of the Devas' manuscript locations, see V. Raghavan, ed., *New Catalogus Catalogorum, Volume 1*, Revised Edition (Madras: University of Madras, 1968), 164-167; V. Raghavan, ed., *New Catalogus Catalogorum, Volume 2* (Madras: University of Madras, 1966), 124.

The Sacred Name in the South

According to the Sanskrit literary scholar V. Raghavan, the *Nāmasiddhānta* found clearest shape among the saints of the Kaveri delta in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who flourished under the rule of the Thanjavur Marathas: Śrīdhara Venkaṭeśa Ayyāvālī, Bhagavannāma Bodhendra, Sadgurusvāmin, Sadāśiva Brahmendra, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, and Tyāgarāja. We know these names today as progenitors of the present-day musical-performative tradition of *purāṇic* storytelling (*harikathā*) and devotional singing (*nāmasaṃkīrtana*) known as the *bhajana sampradāya*.³³⁶ In response to Raghavan's account, Davesh Soneji contextualizes the *bhajana sampradāya* within the polyglot literary and musical environment of Thanjavur as “the very real result of the workings of a highly local, albeit caste- and class-bound culture of public multilingualism.”³³⁷ Both historical reconstructions demonstrate that the Smārta participants in the *bhajana sampradāya* were at once members of a self-professedly “cosmopolitan” socioreligious community, with strong ties to South Indian Śaiva and Advaita monastic institutions,³³⁸ as well as vernacular-language performers of the BhP's Vaiṣṇava theology. And the text that emerges as a major link between these two identities is the BNK.

The BNK makes a significant cameo in the story of Bhagavannāma Bodhendra. The provenance of the story is unclear,³³⁹ but Bodhendra himself belonged to the seventeenth century.

³³⁶ See Singer, “The Rādhā-Krishna *Bhajan*s of Madras City,” in *Krishna: Myths, Rites, Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966), 90-138. Cf. Venkateswaran, “Rādhā-Krishna *Bhajan*s of South India,” in *Krishna: Myths, Rites, Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966), 139-172. Cf. Soneji, “The Powers of Polyglossia.”

³³⁷ Soneji, “The Powers of Polyglossia,” 342. Cf. Indira Viswanathan Peterson, “Multilingual Dramas at the Thanjavur Maratha Court and Literary Cultures in Early Modern South India,” *Journal of Medieval History* 14.2 (2011): 285-321.

³³⁸ See Elaine Fisher, “A New Public Theology: Sanskrit and Society in Seventeenth-century South India” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013).

³³⁹ See R. Krishnamurthy, *The Saints of the Cauvery Delta* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1979), 49-55. The

The story goes that after being told by his Advaita guru to learn about the power of God's name, Bodhendra traveled to Puri, where he met Lakṣmīdhara's son Jagannātha. A miraculous event that exhibits a communalism of sorts—a Hindu woman who had been abducted by a Muslim is “purified” by repeating God's name while plunging into the temple tank—convinced Bodhendra that Lakṣmīdhara, author of the BNK, was right to say that the name of God is supremely purifying. Bodhendra returned south and, in addition to performing devotional music, proceeded to write his own Sanskrit books on the subject of God's name. Actually, it is more likely that the BNK reached Bodhendra through the network of Rāmadāsī *maṭhas* that were established in the Thanjavur region between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. As Davesh Soneji demonstrates, these institutions were instrumental in transporting the performance of Marathi *kīrtan* to the Tamil South, and possessed their own local performative traditions recently appropriated by the Carnatic musical establishment.³⁴⁰ I will have occasion in the next chapter to reflect on the centrality of Rāma devotional cults, and the Rāmadāsīs in particular, to the preservation and propagation of the *Nāmasiddhānta*.³⁴¹

Only one of Bhagavannāma Bodhendra's works has been printed: The

contemporary *harikathā* exponent Visakha Hari, now very popular in the mostly middle-class, upper-caste Carnatic music circuit, recounts this story in a recent performance in Tamil, which centers on the repetition of God's name in the life of a variety of bhakti poets. See Visakha Hari, “The Power of Rāma's Name” (*Rāmanāmaprabhāvam*), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbavoiwvXcU>. Accessed July 12, 2015.

³⁴⁰ See Soneji, “The Powers of Polyglossia,” 344ff., esp. 365, n.27: “The performance of Marathi *abhaṅg-kīrtans* as part of 'classical' Karnatak music performances is a distinctly twentieth-century phenomenon and has much to do with the urban scripting of the history of Karnatak music as inextricably intertwined with not only the South Indian, but pan-Indian *bhakti* tradition. Marathi *kīrtan* thus becomes integrated, not because of its distinctly local historical connection to the making of this music, but rather because it represents a regional *bhakti* tradition that must be connected, performatively speaking, to Karnatak music's uppercaste, Neo-Advaitic *bhakti* universalism. It is in this process, I would argue, that the local histories of Marathi *kīrtan* in Tanjore become obfuscated.”

³⁴¹ Bodhendra himself writes a series of ten benedictory verses to Rāma in the opening to the *Nāmāmṛtarasāyana* (1-3). Only after these verses does he invoke other, more general and particular gods and gurus: in order, Dakṣiṇāmūrti, his teacher Viśvādhik[endra Sarasvatī], Sarasvatī (Bhārati), and Śaṅkarācārya.

Nāmāmṛtarasāyana, or “Ambrosial Elixir of the Name.”³⁴² A book that reads stylistically like a series of longwinded, repetitive lecture notes, the *Nāmāmṛtarasāyana* is a gloss on a commentary on the *Viṣṇusahasranāma*, which Bodhendra attributes to Śaṅkara, whom he describes as an incarnation of Śiva.³⁴³ Bodhendra asserts that

because singing the name requires no general rule of observance, it is shown [in this commentary] that the act of singing the name, done in whatever way possible, leads to the dissolution of all sins and liberation—whether performed by a woman, a man, eunuch, or any kind of person whosoever; whether helplessly or out of madness; whether with faith or without faith; whether to ward off the pain induced by thieves or tigers or disease; or whether for the purpose of achieving non-lasting results like *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*, or any other purpose.³⁴⁴

Although this is similar to the view of Śrīvaiṣṇava commentators on the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* discussed earlier, Bodhendra explicitly refers to “the [*Bhagavan*]nāmakaumudī...and Anantadeva's works” among the inspirations for his own interpretive efforts.³⁴⁵ That Bodhendra possessed a specifically Advaitic pedigree and recognized a broader tradition at intersection of bhakti and Advaita Vedānta is evident from his mention of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī as “author of the *Advaitasiddhi*,” his use of Madhusūdana's commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā (“which follows Śaṅkara's commentary”) to corroborate his interpretive claims, and his positive citation of other recognizably “classical” Advaitins.³⁴⁶ Moreover, he analogizes the defense of singing

³⁴² *Nāmāmṛtarasāyanam*, ed. Deva Śaṅkara Śarmā (Tanjore: Poornachandrodayam Press, 1926).

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1: bhagavañ śivaḥ...śaṅkaranāmakaparamahaṃsamahāmūnirūpo 'bhavat |

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 17-8: evaṃ nāmakīrtanasya niyamasāmānyānapekṣatvapratipādanāt strīpuṃnapuṃsakānyatamena yenakenacij janenāvaśena vonmādena vā śraddhayā vā śraddhām vinā vā coravyāghrarogādikīrtināśāya vā dharmārthakāmānyatamātmakānītyaphalāya vānyaprayojanāya vā yathākathāṃcitkīrtanāmakīrtanena sakalapāpakṣayo muktīś ca bhavaty evety artho darśitaḥ |

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 71: [nāmamāhātmya]śāstrāṇi svārthaparāṇy eva ityarthapratipādakānām sahasranāmahāṣyanāmakaumudīpuruṣārtharatnākaraṇantadeviyābahugranthānām [...]

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 18: ayam arthaḥ sarvo 'py advaitasiddhināmakaग्रन्थakārair madhusūdanānandasarasvatīśrīcaraṇair bhagavatpādīyabhāṣyānusārīnyām gītāgūḍhārthadīpikāyām kaṅṭharaveṇoktaḥ | Other Advaitins cited are: Nṛsiṃhāśrama (45), Ānandagiri (45), and Vidyāraṇya (48).

God's name against its naysayers to defending the truth of Advaita Vedānta against its philosophical opponents, singling out his closest southern rivals, the followers of Rāmānuja and Madhva.³⁴⁷ Bodhendra is sometimes identified with the 59th pontiff of the Śaṅkara *maṭha* in Kāñcīpuram, Bodhendra Sarasvatī, author of such works as the *Hariharādvaitabhūṣaṇa*, or “Adorning the Non-Difference Between Hari (Viṣṇu) and Hara (Śiva).”³⁴⁸ I think it is quite possible that the two were the same. In the opening to the *Nāmāmṛtarasāyana*, Bodhendra says that Śaṅkara began his commentary on the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* in order to show the glory of “either Viṣṇu's or Śiva's name,” which, whether heard or sung or simply remembered, could bestow all the goals of human life upon all beings.³⁴⁹ Furthermore, the benedictory verses between the two works show significant overlap.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 47: nāmakīrtanasya sādhanatvam apalapantīti tadanusāreṇa nāmakīrtanaśāstrasyānyathānayanam asaṅgatam eva, sarveṣāṃ śāstroktasādhanānām asādhanatvābhīdhānena nindakā bahavo janāḥ santy eveti sakalālaukikaśreyasādhānānām asādhanatvāṅgīkārapateḥ | [...] dr̥ṣyante cādvitīyabrahmajñānasya muktim praty asādhanatvābhīdhānena tannindakā gautamakāṇāda jaiminipātañjalakāpīlatantrābhīmānino **mādhvarāmānuja**śaivaśāktahairanya garbhās ceti vedāntyekadeśinas tu bahavaḥ |

³⁴⁸ *Hariharādvaitabhūṣaṇam* by Bodhendrasarasvatī, ed. T. Chandrasekharan (Madras: Superintendent Government Press, 1954).

³⁴⁹ Cf. *Nāmāmṛtarasāyana*, 1-2: sthāvarajaṅgamātmakasakalaprāṇinām dharmārthakāmamokṣākhya sakalapuruṣārthapradam viṣṇuśivayor nāmnām madhye anyatamanāmaiva, tac ca smṛtam vā kīrtitam vā śrutam vā sarveṣāṃ iṣṭadam bhavaty eveti niścītya tannāmamāhātmyam vaktum sahasranāmabhāṣyam ārabdhavantaḥ...

³⁵⁰ Both works a) mention his guru, Viśvādhikendra Sarasvatī, b) invoke Śaṅkara in very similar fashion, and c) celebrate Rāma as the embodiment of the unity between Viṣṇu and Śiva.

See *Hariharādvaitabhūṣaṇam*, 1:

śrīśagaurīśvarābhinnarūpaṃ rāmam ahaṃ bhaje |
saktīprapannasantrāṇe dīkṣitam sītayā śritam || 2 ||

yasya nāmāpi sarvasmād utkarṣam khyāpayaty aho |
viśvādhikaguroḥ pādapadmaṃ vande mudā sadā || 3 ||

vedāntārthābhīdhānena sarvānugrahakāriṇam |
yatirūpadharam vande śaṅkaram lokaśaṅkaram || 5 ||

Cf. *Nāmāmṛtarasāyana*, 1-3:

Bodhendra's contemporaries also seem to have displayed affinities for both “classical” Advaita and *nāmasaṃkīrtana*. Most intriguing in this connection is one Upaniṣad Brahmayogin, alias Rāmacandrendra Sarasvatī, who is said to have been initiated into monastic life at Kāñcīpuram, and went on to found his own Advaita *maṭha* nearby.³⁵¹ He received his nickname by writing commentaries on 108 Upaniṣads. He also wrote a fascinating work called the *Upeyanāmviveka*, “Analyzing the Name of the One to be Attained.”³⁵² In the introduction to his edition of the *Upeyanāmviveka*, V. Raghavan asserted that it falls in the line of such works as the BNK.³⁵³ This is true, but only in part. The *Upeyanāmviveka* affirms the universally redemptive power of God's name, irrespective of one's caste or social status. But the author is not exclusively concerned with literature on *nāmamāhātmya*, the glory of the name. Instead, he quotes profusely from Śaṅkara's canonical works, such as his commentary on Gauḍapāda's

sarvasya lokasya sadā suguptyai **nāmātmako bhāti harīśayor** yaḥ |
dayāsudhābhdhiḥ sa tadātmako me rāmaḥ sadā vaktrasaroruhe 'stu || 4 ||

vijñānavairāgyaparātmabhaktiśamādibhir yo 'dhikatām prapannah |
viśvādhikākhyām agamac ca tena gurūttamaṃ taṃ praṇamāmi mūrdhnā || 13 ||

śāstrārthaṃ suvinirṇetaṃ iṣṭadaṃ sarvadehinām |
yatirūpadharaṃ vande śaṅkaraṃ lokaśaṅkaram || 16 ||

In the *Hariharādvaitabhūṣaṇa*, Bodhendra also mentions his preceptor Gīrvāṇendra Sarasvatī, who was “both a highly celebrated and influential figure among renunciant scholars of Advaita and most likely the pontiff of a monastic order centered in Kāncīpuram, one which bears some historical relationship to the lineages now most commonly associated with the city.” See Fisher, “A New Public Theology,” 58-59.

³⁵¹ See V. Raghavan, “Upanishad Brahma Yogin, His Life and Works,” *Journal of the Madras Music Academy* XXVII (1956): 113-150. See also Raghavan, ed., *New Catalogus Catalogorum, Volume 2*, 363-367. The historical relationship between Rāmacandrendra's lineage and that of Bodhendra, via the Kāñcī Kāmakoti Pīṭha, is difficult to determine with certainty, even given the distinctive appellation “-Indra Sarasvatī” and their shared interest in the expounding on the name of God. See Fisher, “A New Public Theology,” 59.

³⁵² Cf. Klaus Klostermaier, “Calling God Names: Reflections on Divine Names in Hindu and Buddhist Traditions,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 2.2 (1994): 66-68.

³⁵³ *Upeya-Nāma-Viveka (Nāmārthaviveka) of Upaniṣad Brahmayogin*, ed. V. Raghavan (Madras: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1967), 3.

Māṇḍūkya-kārikā, and from late Upaniṣads like the *Rāmatāpanīya*. In doing so, he departs significantly from the BNK's focus on eradicating sins. God's name is not merely the object of *kīrtana* or *anusmarana*, but *bhāvanā*: absorption, immersion, identification.³⁵⁴ For Brahmayogin, the name “Rāma” actually does equal Brahman, unlike Lakṣmīdhara's insistence that the name “Kṛṣṇa” could not be subsumed under Brahman. In the *Upeyanāmviveka*, one does not invoke the name to save oneself (*he rāma*), one becomes the name (*rāmo 'ham*).³⁵⁵ Bodhendra's *Nāmāmṛtarasāyana* also argues at length that renunciates who would otherwise be engaged in the standard Advaitic practice of “hearing, reflecting, and meditating” on the words of the Upaniṣads (*śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana*), can achieve their aim of unobstructed, immediate self-knowledge (*apratibaddhāparokṣātmajñāna*) much more easily by singing the name of God.³⁵⁶ Although the BNK also saw *kīrtana* as an intermediary step leading to liberating self-knowledge, its emphasis was on the ability of God's name to remove sins, not as an object of Advaitic identification. Both of these texts move us far afield from the relatively limited

³⁵⁴ For more on the concept of *bhāvanā* (imagination) in early modern South India, see David Shulman, *More Than Real: A History of the Imagination in South India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

³⁵⁵ Klostermaier (“Calling God Names,” 68) notes that “Upaniṣadbrahmayogin attributes special significance to the name of RĀMA,” treating it as the essence of both the Nārāyaṇa and Śiva mantras. As we have seen, Bodhendra also centered his devotion to Rāma across his works. And, as it turns out, so did Lakṣmīdhara. Although the majority of the BNK extols the names and virtues of Kṛṣṇa, Lakṣmīdhara gave his teacher the appellation Raghunātha, and in his concluding verses he invokes Rāma's name first. See *Bhagavannāmakāumudī*, 133:

ākṛṣṭiḥ kṛtacetasāṃ sumahatām uccāṭanam cāṃhasām
 ācāṇḍālam amūkalokasulabho vaśyaś ca muktiśriyaḥ |
 no dīkṣāṃ na ca dakṣiṇāṃ na ca puraścaryāṃ manāg īkṣate
 mantra ‘yaṃ rasanāsprṅ eva phalati śrīrāmanāmātmakaḥ ||

“It draws you in if your heart is pure, and eradicates even the greatest sins. It’s easy for anyone, no matter how marginalized; so long as you can utter it, then freedom is yours. You don’t need any initiation, no gift-giving or preparation. This mantra flowers the moment it touches your tongue: Rāma’s name.”

³⁵⁶ See *Nāmāmṛtarasāyana*, 24: paramahaṃsayativariṣṭheṇa
 samyakkṛtavedāntaśravaṇamananananididhyāsanādisakaladharmebyaḥ sakṛnnāmakīrtanam atyantotkṛṣṭam ity
 arthaḥ siddha eva ity ata eva sakṛnnāmakīrtanam apratibaddhāparokṣātmajñānanajanakam ity arthaḥ siddhaḥ |

concerns of the BNK, embedded as they were in the very different context of the Tamil South.³⁵⁷

Their Advaita twist, however, does not imply distance from personalized devotional bhakti. In the course of his research, Raghavan noticed an autographed letter from Upaniṣad Brahmayoginī to Tyāgarāja, asking the latter to visit Kāñcī.³⁵⁸ Raghavan is compelling in his attempts to link the content of Tyāgarāja's popular-courtly Telugu songs to Brahmayoginī's forbidding Sanskrit scholarship.³⁵⁹ Perhaps we should not overplay their relationship; after all, Tyāgarāja was a man who asked: *dvaitamu sukhamā, advaitamu sukhamā*, “Is there more joy in duality or nonduality?” Still, the connection raises questions about the spaces in which the BNK may have circulated in the South: between Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava communities, monastic centers and performative stages, bhakti poetry and Advaita prose.

Conclusion

The modern incarnations of the BNK continue to raise questions about its multiple affiliations. Lakṣmīdhara appears to share an intellectual milieu with Śrīdhara, and both engaged with Advaita Vedānta, as did later commentators on the text. But the BNK manuscript in the Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Library (No. 8237) is listed under “Caitanya Thought,” no doubt due to

³⁵⁷ Bodhendra provides a humorous cultural reference to illustrate his point that those who do not have a taste for singing the name of God are welcome to perform their own, more difficult rituals. “It is just like all those Tamilians,” he says, “who will not deign to eat wheat *laḍḍūs* made with the best ghee and sugar, or even sweetened cow's milk, but will relish chewing bitter *neem* leaves, praising it as the tastiest thing in the world.”

See *Ibid.*, 52: tathā nāmakīrtane 'rucyā atyantagurubhūtheadharmeṣv eva rucyā bahūnām viduṣām aviduṣām ca pravṛtteṣ copapannatvaṃ darśitam | sitaśarkarānvitātyantottamagoḣṣīre uttamasiṭaśarkarāgoḣṛtābhyāṃ vinirmite godhūmapiṣṭavikārarūpalaḍḍukottame cārucyā keṣāṃcit tadbhojanapravṛttyabhāvasya darśanāt bahūnām draviḍadeśasthānām nimbapatracūrṇe rucivaśād atyantāruciharam idaṃ cūrṇam iti ślāghanapūrvakaṃ tatra pravṛtter darśanāt |

³⁵⁸ *Upeya-Nāma-Viveka*, 6.

³⁵⁹ V. Raghavan, *The Spiritual Heritage of Tyāgarāja* (Madras: The Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, 1957), 99-124.

its popularity among the Gosvāmins.³⁶⁰ In his initial catalogue of the Tanjore manuscripts, however, A.C. Burnell listed it as a work of Viśiṣṭādvaita.³⁶¹ And Gosvāmi Dāmodar Śāstrī, editor of the first printed edition of the BNK (1927), was quite explicit about his Mādhva background and the importance of this text to it.³⁶² While it is tempting simply to locate the BNK at the intersection of philosophical, sectarian, and religious boundaries, this chapter has shown that the text circulated within particular communities of Brahmanical interpreters, albeit spread out across the subcontinent, each with their own interests in the text. The BNK's own concerns, moreover, are firmly located in the Sanskrit scholastic world. Whether its scholastic interests were provoked by more local, vernacular (I also use the word in the sense of “everyday”) developments is a question for which a fixed answer is still elusive. After all, it is well known to scholars of the “bhakti movement” that many Indic religious cultures exhorted their adherents to recite the name of God. What could have been the precise relationship of this Sanskrit ideal from the BhP with vernacular devotional literatures, or Tantric practices of mantra repetition, or Sufi notions of the divine presence in language? How might the BNK have participated in a broader “cult of the divine name” that moved between communities: Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, Sanskrit and vernacular, Hindu and Muslim?³⁶³ Can we revisit Raghavan's idea of the *Nāmasiddhānta* as a

³⁶⁰ P.P.S. Sastri, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Tanjore Mahārāja Serfoji's Sarasvatī Mahāl Library, Vol. XIV* (Srirangam: Vani Vilas Press, 1932), 6383-6385.

³⁶¹ A.C. Burnell, *A Classified Index to the Sanskrit Mss. In the Palace at Tanjore* (London: Trübner & Co., 1880), 98.

³⁶² His official title, provided at the end of his editorial introduction, includes his affiliation to the Mādhva *sampradāya*. See *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, Editor's Note (*sampādakīyaṃ vaktavyam*), 8: śrīmanmādhvasampradāyācāryadārśanikasārvaubhaumasāhityadarśanādyācāryatarkaratnanyāyaratna—gosvāmīdāmodaraśāstrī

³⁶³ See Hans Bakker, *Ayodhyā, Part I* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1986), 67-78, 119-124. See also Charlotte Vaudeville, “The Cult of the Divine Name in the Haripāṭh of Dñāndev,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Sudasiens* 12-13 (1968-9): 395-406.

transregional phenomenon, even as we resist its cultural-nationalist implications?

One way to approach this problematic is to attend to the social history of text-traditions in addition to their intellectual history. The BNK's reception history offers some clues, but its own intellectual context remains opaque. I have reconstructed its arguments that address different issues of Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta out of order, rather than following the progression of the text, because those arguments are interspersed within larger topics. Disentangling the logic of the text proper from its fascinating internal debates is an important task, but awaits a more comprehensive study. In the following chapter, I study the intersections between Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, and bhakti with greater specificity by following the career of the BNK commentator Anantadeva, and that of his family, who lived in Banaras in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Situating these traditions in a particular setting allows us to understand the changes in their contours and fortunes in light of the social changes of the early modern world.

Chapter 4: Vedānta in the Moonlight

*Jñāna, Karma, and Bhakti:
Three ways to reach you.
The first for the disenchanted,
to apply themselves to study.
The second for the rapacious,
to devote their actions to you.
But the third for those
neither here nor there,
to hold on tight to your love.*

-Melputtūr Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa (1587 CE), *Nārāyaṇīya* 96.4³⁶⁴

In a lecture I attended at Union Theological Seminary in April 2013, the prominent public intellectual Amartya Sen described a distinction he believed could be found in “early Indian religious texts” between three ways to enlightenment or salvation: karma, work; jñāna, knowledge; and bhakti, faith and devotion. Like any good secular thinker, Sen explained that he found the first two appealing, but the third rather difficult to accept. Surprising though it may seem, Sen might have found kindred spirits in early modern Banaras, the pre-eminent center of Brahmanical learning. Here, bhakti was still an intrusive newcomer, and could be found jostling for attention with karma and jñāna in the Sanskrit scholarly milieu, one in which intellectual life

³⁶⁴ *The Nārāyaṇīya of Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa*, ed. T. Ganapati Śāstrī (Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1912), 348:

jñānaṃ karmāpi bhaktis tritayam iha bhavatprāpakam tatra tāvat
nirviṇṇānām aśeṣe viśaya iha bhaved jñānayoge 'dhikārah |
saktānām karmayogas tvayi ca vinihito ye tu nātyantasaktā
nāpy atyantam viraktās tvayi ca dhṛtarasā bhaktiyogo hy amīṣām ||

The verse was referring to Bhāgavata Purāṇa 11.20.7-8, which provides the same rationale:

nirviṇṇānām jñānayogo nyāsinām iha karmasu |
teṣv anirviṇṇacittānām karmayogas tu kāminām ||
yadr̥cchayā matkathādau jātaśraddhas tu yaḥ pumān |
na nirviṇṇo nātisakto bhaktiyogo 'sya siddhidah ||

was perceived by some as largely directed toward this-worldly, material self-interest. That we may find this surprising at all is indicative of the ubiquity of these three “paths” (*mārgas*) or “methods” (*yogas*) in the self-definition of modern Hinduism. But how early, really, is this threefold analytic? When did karma, jñāna, and bhakti become hypostatized as such? Is there an unbroken link between their earliest formulations and their modern manifestations? Or have particular historical agents and social conditions given different shapes to their relation? These should be instinctive scholarly questions, but part of the difficulty of premodern Indian intellectual history is in figuring out which questions still need asking.³⁶⁵

Let me clarify what I mean by these three terms. Although they are typically defined as “ritual action” (or “action” more broadly) and “philosophical gnosis,” in this chapter, karma and jñāna refer to their representative intellectual discourses: Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. Karma and jñāna, of course, have a much wider and intersecting range of referents in Indian intellectual history, but by this heuristic marker I intend to reflect the way they were used in the scholarly settings I describe in this chapter. Among the many schools of Vedāntic exegesis, I focus on Advaita Vedānta, given both its popularity among scholars in early modern Banaras and its ambivalent relationship to the other two discourses. These knowledge-systems, whose intellectual history “on the eve of colonialism” has been the subject of sustained study over the

³⁶⁵ These three terms are frequently traced to the Bhagavad Gītā. However, the very analysis of the Gītā in terms of “three yogas” was a later innovation, and the authors of the Gītā likely had in mind only two yogas, jñāna and karma; later theistic doctrine was interpolated into a layer that originally presented a doctrine of “detached action” without propagating a “highest Lord.” See Angelika Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrines and Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 93-94. At the same time, the “three yogas” scheme was a premodern, not a modern development. The sixteenth-century Banarasi scholar Madhusūdana Sarasvatī famously used this scheme in his commentary on the Gītā, and the “three yogas” formula itself is clearly articulated in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (11.20.6) around the turn of the second millennium. The poet cited in the epigraph, Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, was a close contemporary of Madhusūdana, albeit a native of Kerala, and evokes the scheme in this verse from the *Nārāyaṇīya*, his lyrical condensation of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. See Francis Zimmermann, “Patterns of Truthfulness.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36.5 (2008): 643-650.

last decade, tended to be the prerogative of an educated elite. Bhakti, or religious devotion to an embodied god, however, occupied a space between the “high” textual world and that of everyday “popular” practice and performance. On the one hand, texts such as the Bhagavad Gītā and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa gave clearest shape to the Sanskrit ideal of bhakti, which, especially in the latter, at once supplements and supplants its ritual and philosophical counterparts.³⁶⁶ On the other hand, the many communities of local, vernacular, subaltern religious practice which sprang up across the subcontinent in the second millennium, and which have come to be narrativized as constituting the “bhakti movement,” seemed to affect distance from highbrow scholarly activity, especially in Sanskrit. This dichotomy between the popular and elite modes of bhakti—one with radical egalitarian impulses, and the other making concessions to dominant forms of religious authority and political power—persists in much present scholarship on the subject.³⁶⁷ While this is a useful distinction, it foregrounds the view “from below” by locating bhakti primarily in the vernacular-subaltern domain rather than suspended between elite and popular worlds. For others, even this is too much. They consider the gap between these worlds to be so wide that even the textualization of subaltern bhakti traditions is only evidence of their being, as it were, always-

³⁶⁶ The Gītā, for its part, clearly presents a top-down concept of bhakti. See Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā*, 13: “[T]he idea of *bhakti* is not presented as a practice of lower-status, illiterate people or as a ‘folk’ religion that priests and aristocrats had to concede in order to remain in power, as some interpreters would have it, but as ‘secret’ knowledge and a rather demanding practice of transforming attachment to oneself into detachment, which is in turn based on attachment to god. In its highest form, it amounts to asceticism in terms of turning one’s life into a sacrificial activity to god.”

³⁶⁷ See, e.g., David Lorenzen, “Bhakti,” in *The Hindu World*, ed. Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby, 185-209 (London: Routledge, 2005), which makes a sharp distinction between *varṇadharmī* and *avarṇadharmī* movements: those that supported the hierarchical caste system, and those that rejected it. Some, going even further, contend that bhakti itself is an “ideology of subordination *par excellence*.” See Ranajit Guha, “Dominance without Hegemony and its Historiography,” in *Subaltern Studies VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 259. Cf. Tracy Coleman, “Viraha-Bhakti and Strīdharmā: Re-Reading the Story of Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs in the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130.3 (2010): 385-412.

already interpellated,³⁶⁸ unable to discard the normative influence of Sanskrit and Brahmanical dominance. At least one scholar has intimated that this textualizing process, in the context of Marathi bhakti traditions, went all but unrecognized in the Sanskrit intellectual world:

The *varkari sampradaya* generated its own textual tradition comprising of the *Dnyaneswari*, *Eknathi Bhagvat* and the *Tukaram Gatha*. However, the “high” brahmanical traditions showed little inclination, at least at the textual level, to take serious note of these developments. Similarly, it may be argued that attempts to include *bhakti* as one of the *rasas*, as seen, for example, in the work of Madhusudan Saraswati, a contemporary of Tulsidas, attest to the impact of *bhakti* on the “high” aesthetic tradition. However, such efforts to appropriate the *bhakti* tradition as an aesthetic experience, without any substantive engagement with its subversive critique, would merely reinforce the broader argument offered here.³⁶⁹

Such assertions, however, obscure the ways in which the relationship between karma, jñāna, and bhakti was negotiated by Sanskrit intellectuals differently at different times, and with reference to both Sanskrit and vernacular worlds. Is it really true that the subversive undercurrents of bhakti as the idiom of social and religious dissent were simply overwhelmed by the vast Brahmanical ocean? Or did the very incorporation of bhakti as an object of systematic theoretical inquiry alongside jñāna and karma signal a shift in the way it was possible to conceive of intellectual and religious life, and of what it meant to be a Brahmin in the first place? Rather than concentrate exclusively on vernacular bhakti traditions, and pass judgment on their relative abilities to maintain a critical edge, I would like to flip the script, and discern the impact of bhakti on the Sanskrit intellectual sphere. I think it is quite possible to demonstrate changes at the textual level within and across Sanskrit knowledge-systems that were motivated by local devotional practices, by investigating: a) the relationship between popular religious movements

³⁶⁸ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 176.

³⁶⁹ Veena Naregal, “Language and power in pre-colonial western India: Textual hierarchies, literate audiences, and colonial philology,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 37.3 (2000): 271, n.40.

and the rarefied realm of scholarly pedagogy; b) the challenges that bhakti religiosity posed to normative scholastic traditions; and c) how personal religious commitments prompted Sanskrit intellectuals to think innovatively about the intellectual traditions they inherited. The demotic registers of bhakti, I suggest, filtered back into the forbidding world of scriptural hermeneutics, ultimately pushing through the glass ceiling of Sanskrit intellectuality. Transmuted and translated into the idioms of Brahmanical culture, they nevertheless left a trace in the changing self-presentation of Brahmin elites. When and how this process occurred has been a peripheral subject in the last two chapters, but now the time has come to address the subject head-on. A useful place to start is the academic center of Banaras, as we find it in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Recent scholarship has focused on early modern Banaras as a site of significant intellectual innovation and social contestation, whose outcomes exerted their influence well into Indian modernity. While it has been noted that Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta represented a kind of philosophical orthodoxy for that city's intellectual elite,³⁷⁰ much work needs to be done in order to contextualize this claim within the social and intellectual history of both traditions. In this chapter, I will discuss the mutual intersections between karma, jñāna, and bhakti as they appear in the corpus of a single family of intellectuals who traced their origins to Maharashtra: the Devas of Banaras. In particular, I will describe the ways in which the Devas, across three generations, situated their pedagogical commitment to Mīmāṃsā (karma) against their philosophical interest in Advaita Vedānta (jñāna), and the relationship of both to their religious devotion to a personal god (bhakti). I will conclude with some thoughts on the social history of

³⁷⁰ See Sheldon Pollock, "New Intellectuals in Seventeenth-Century India," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 38.1 (2001): 21-22; Christopher Minkowski, "Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern History," *South Asian History and Culture* 2:2 (2011): 217.

these intellectual transitions.

In a set of articles on the social history of early modern India, Rosalind O'Hanlon has discussed the migration of Maratha Brahmins into Banaras from the sixteenth century onward.³⁷¹ She describes their domination of the intellectual life of that city, and their ability to adjudicate public disputes of social hierarchy. O'Hanlon attempts to understand how the changing social environment for Maratha Brahmins opened up “the question of what it meant to be a Brahman...and what Brahman community could signify amid the social turbulence of the age.”³⁷² While O'Hanlon's essays primarily address the broadening social function of these Banarasi intellectuals within the context of the Mughal imperial order, they also acknowledge as a necessary complement the study of the new intellectual trends of those scholars.³⁷³ O'Hanlon's insightful study invites a salutary alliance between social history and intellectual history, and while she addresses the former side of the equation, I hope to contribute here to the latter.

Although the family's patriarch was one Āpadeva I, the Devas' literary activity in Banaras can be traced first to Anantadeva I (fl. 1600 CE), followed by his son Āpadeva II (fl. 1625 CE), and grandson Anantadeva II (fl. 1650 CE). The last of these was a prominent participant in Banaras' *dharmasabhās*, assemblies of religious experts convened to decide a question of ritual rights.³⁷⁴ He provides us with the intellectual lineage of the Deva family in his voluminous

³⁷¹ See Rosalind O'Hanlon and Christopher Minkowski, “What makes people who they are? Pandit networks and the problem of livelihoods in early modern Western India,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 45.3 (2008): 383, 395; Rosalind O'Hanlon, “Letters Home: Banaras Pandits and the Maratha Regions in early modern India,” *Modern Asian Studies* 44.2 (2010): 203-204; Rosalind O'Hanlon, “Speaking from Siva's temple, Banaras scholar households and the Brahman 'ecumene' of Mughal India,” *South Asian History and Culture* 2.2 (2011): 256.

³⁷² O'Hanlon, “Letters Home,” 238-239.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 202-203.

³⁷⁴ See O'Hanlon and Minkowski, “What makes people who they are,” 382. Cf. O'Hanlon, “Letters Home,” 231-232, 235. It is likely that the Devas followed a narrative of migration in the mid-sixteenth century similar to that

compendium on *dharmasāstra*, called the *Smṛtikaustubha*³⁷⁵:

There was, on the banks of the Godavari,
a brahmin trained in the Vedic sciences,
a devotee of Krishna: Ekanātha by name.

He had a son, who inherited his qualities,
and understood the essence of all scriptures:
Āpadeva [I], the one who obtained from God
every heavenly station.

He had a son, in turn:
a prolific Mīmāṃsā scholar;
ever attached to the worship of Madhu's enemy (Krishna);
made famous by his pedagogical career (*vidyādāna*);
whose name, Ananta[deva I], achieved its own meaning
by virtue of his countless virtues;
and who composed the “Essence of the Doctrines” of the Vedānta
for the delight of debaters.

His son was Āpadeva [II],
author of the [*Mīmāṃsā*] *nyāyaprakāśa*,
learned in both Mīmāṃsās and the science of ethics (*naya*),
always generous with the infinite nectar of his wisdom.³⁷⁶

elaborated by Śaṅkara Bhaṭṭa in the *Gādhivamśavarṇana*. See James Benson, “Śaṅkarabhaṭṭa's Family Chronicle: The Gādhivamśavarṇana,” in *The Pandit: Traditional Scholarship in India*, ed. Axel Michaels (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 105-118.

³⁷⁵ See Pollock, “New Intellectuals,” 8, n.7, on the genre of the *kaustubha*, and 18-19 on the text's content and location.

³⁷⁶ *The Smṛiti Kaustubha of Anant Deva*, ed. Vasudev Laxman Sastri Pansikar (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar, 1931), 2-3:

āsīd godāvarītīre vedavedīsamanvitaḥ |
śrīkṛṣṇabhaktimān eka ekanāthābhīdho dvijaḥ || 15 ||

tatsutas tadguṇair yuktaḥ sarvaśāstrārthatattvavit |
āpadevo 'bhavad devāt prāpa yaḥ sakalān manūn || 16 ||

mīmāṃsānayakovido madhuripoḥ sevāsu nityodyataḥ
vidyādānavibhāvitottamayaśā āsīt tadīyātmajaḥ |
yasyānantaguṇair ananta iti san nāmārthavattāṃ gataṃ
yenāvādi ca vādināṃ śrutiśiraḥsiddhāntatattvaṃ mude || 17 ||

nyāyaprakāśakartā niravadhividyaṃṛtapradaḥ satatam |
mīmāṃsādvayanayavit tanayas tasyāpadevo 'bhūt || 18 ||

Undoubtedly the most striking claim here is that of direct descent from the Maharashtrian poet-saint Eknāth (1533-1599). While some scholars have accepted the historical accuracy of this claim, others have disputed its veracity, citing its chronological difficulty, its scant historical evidence, and its intellectual improbability.³⁷⁷ The last of these criticisms points to the unlikelihood that a family committed to the social hierarchies of *dharmasāstra* and the intellectual elitism of Sanskrit discourse would have been connected to Eknāth, who never composed in Sanskrit and was notorious for transgressing some of the very laws governing social interaction that they so actively promoted.³⁷⁸ This comment on intellectual incongruity, however, only goes so far. For the Devas exhibited not only a kind of scholarly orthodoxy—that is, by writing books in Sanskrit on Mīmāṃsā, Advaita Vedānta, and *dharmasāstra*—but also a committed religious devotion to the god Kṛṣṇa, which featured explicitly in their intellectual corpus. I will return to Eknāth later, but first I examine the Devas' attempts to navigate the intellectual space between jñāna and bhakti.

Jñāna and Bhakti

We do not have any extant works by the elder Āpadeva, so let us begin with the patriarch Anantadeva I. He studied Advaita Vedānta with a renunciate (*yati*) named Rāmatīrtha, who probably lived in Banaras. P.V. Sivarama Dikshitar has discussed the life and works of Rāmatīrtha, who cites inspiration from two teachers: a *śikṣāguru* (instructor) and a *dīkṣāguru*

³⁷⁷ For a positive view, see Pollock, “New Intellectuals,” 18, 30; O’Hanlon, “Letters Home,” 203; P.V. Kane, *A History of Dharmasāstra, Vol. 1* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1930): 450-452. For the negative, see Jon Keune, “Eknāth Remembered and Reformed: Bhakti, Brahmans, and Untouchables in Marathi Historiography” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2011), 184ff.; Franklin Edgerton, *The Mīmāṃsā Nyāya Prakāśa or Āpadevī* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1986 [1929]), 17-18. There is, of course, a third possibility that none of our authors entertain: that this could have referred to an entirely different Eknāth altogether. But that Anantadeva II bothered to raise this Eknāth to the starting point of the genealogy suggests that he was known well-enough—famously or infamously—to serve as a proper introduction to the whole family.

³⁷⁸ See Keune, “Eknāth Remembered,” 188.

(initiator).³⁷⁹ In the colophons to each of his works, Rāmatīrtha tells us that he is “a bee to the blessed lotus feet of the holy Kṛṣṇatīrtha,” and in his *Tattvacandrikā*, a commentary on Ānandagiri's *Pañcīkaraṇavivaraṇasamgraha*, he mentions his guru as being Jagannāthāśrama, who was also the teacher of the South Indian Advaitin Nṛsimhāśrama.³⁸⁰ Indeed, the connections between Rāmatīrtha and Nṛsimhāśrama, their geographical distribution notwithstanding, could be further evidenced by the fact that both also wrote commentaries on the *Samkṣepasārīraka* of Sarvajñātman (1027 CE), which attracted commentarial attention for the first time in the early modern period.³⁸¹

Whatever may be the historical extent of that relationship, Rāmatīrtha did exert explicit influence on Anantadeva I. In the family tree I have provided above, Anantadeva is said to have written a textbook on Vedānta called the *Siddhāntatattva*, or “Essence of the Doctrines,” which was accompanied by the autocommentary *Sampradāyanirūpaṇa* thereon.³⁸² At the beginning of

³⁷⁹ See P.V. Sivarama Dikshitar, “Rāmatīrtha,” in *Preceptors of Advaita*, ed. T.M.P. Mahadevan (Secunderabad: Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Shankara Mandir, 1968), 221-225.

³⁸⁰ Dikshitar interprets this to mean that Kṛṣṇatīrtha was Rāmatīrtha's *dīkṣāguru*, probably given the shared *-īrtha* appellation, and Jagannāthāśrama his *sikṣāguru*. *Ibid.*, 222. Cf. Minkowski, “Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern India,” 214.

³⁸¹ Minkowski, “Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern India,” 211. There appears to have been one earlier commentary on the *Samkṣepasārīraka*, the *Siddhāntadīpa* of one Viśvaveda, which is no longer extant but which Rāmatīrtha was able to consult prior to writing his *Anvayārthaprakāśikā*. See *Samkṣepasārīrakam*, Vol. 2, ed. Hari Narayan Apte (Pune: Ānandāśrama Press, 1918), 853:

siddhāntadīpaṃ purato nidhāya vedāntamantargṛhasaṃniviṣṭam |
samkṣepasārīrakaratanpuñjam prakāśamādāya mayā viviktam ||

Incidentally, the *Samkṣepasārīraka* was also commented upon by the rather more famous Banarasi scholar Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, who will return in Chapter 5.

³⁸² *Siddhāntatattva*, ed. Tailanga Rama Sastri (Benares: Government Sanskrit College, 1901). Cf. Minkowski, “Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern India,” 214-215. The editor, however (i, vi), assigns the work to Āpadeva's son, Anantadeva II. This seems to be clearly mistaken, as Āpadeva, Anantadeva I's son, himself quotes from the work in his commentary on the *Vedāntasāra*, which I will discuss later. There is a long scholarly history of misidentifying Anantadevas I and II.

the *Siddhāntatattva*, Anantadeva announces: “What has been received through the traditional lineage (*saṃpradāya*) from the blessed Rāmatīrtha—according to scripture and accompanied by sound logic—is being analytically described here.”³⁸³ And again at the end, he emphasizes: “Thus from the grace earned by following the venerable renunciate Rāmatīrtha, Anantadeva has, with delight, presented the 'Essence of the Doctrines,' freed of further disputation.”³⁸⁴ I will discuss the work itself in more detail later, but suffice it to note here that Anantadeva's textbook has a rather uncompromisingly Advaita flavor, even to the extent of defending the *dr̥ṣṭisr̥ṣṭivāda*, the controversial doctrine of subjective idealism which earned many of his contemporaries the pejorative epithet “crypto-Buddhist” (*pracchannabauddha*).³⁸⁵

But Advaita Vedānta did not entirely absorb Anantadeva's attention; indeed, he came to be quite critical of the Advaita world. In an important yet virtually ignored treatise called the *Bhaktinirṇaya* (BN), “The Final Say on Bhakti,” Anantadeva I engaged in polemic against precisely such promulgators of a radically illusionist Advaita Vedānta. Here is an example of his typically belligerent (and, at times, shockingly accusatory) style:

Here some introspective types, only skilled at spinning yarns about Brahman-knowledge

³⁸³ *Siddhāntatattva*, 1:

yac chrīmadrāmatīrthebhyaḥ saṃpradāyasamāgatam |
śrutam sattarkasacivam vivicya tad ihocyate ||

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 60:

ittham parivrājakapūjyapādaśrīrāmatīrthānusṛtiprasādāt |
siddhāntatattvam gatavāgvivādam anantadevena mudā nyarūpi ||

Note that the instrumental inflection on *mudā* in this verse is deftly changed into a dative (*mude*) in the corresponding verse (17) by his grandson Anantadeva II in the *Smṛtikaustubha*. See note 376 above.

³⁸⁵ See Minkowski, “Advaita Vedānta,” 213. Cf. Andrew Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 63. On the *dr̥ṣṭisr̥ṣṭivāda*, see Sthaneshwar Timalsina, *Seeing and Appearance: History of the Advaita Doctrine of Dr̥ṣṭisr̥ṣṭi* (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2006).

(*brahmajñāna*), thinking that they have it all figured out just by talking about it, and bereft of devotion to the Lord, blabber on as follows: “What purpose is there in honoring God who is just Brahman conditioned by *māyā*, or his playful incarnation (*līlāvighraha*), controller of the illusion? There is nothing to be obtained [by it], the agent himself is nothing but Brahman, and so-called agency is illusory anyway. One bathes and performs twilight rituals and the like only to maintain social propriety (*lokavyavahāra*), not that there is anything to be gained by it. So also, prohibited activity is avoided for the same reason, since there is no such thing as hell.”

Such people should be considered deniers (*nāstika*³⁸⁶) in disguise. “How so,” you might ask, “since they accept the Vedānta as a reliable authority with regard to Brahman?” Well then, how can one deny that the performance of merit and sin leads to heaven and hell—does the Veda not instruct us about that as well? You might argue: “When *brahmajñāna* arises, there is no attainment of heaven or hell.” Tell me: how can one achieve *brahmajñāna* without the prerequisites (*sādhana*) of disenchantment and so forth? If you deny these practices in the first place, you are effectively denying the validity of such Vedic statements on the topic as “The Brahmin should become disenchanted” (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.12). That makes you as good as a *nāstika*.³⁸⁷

Anantadeva clearly made a sharp distinction between himself and other Vedāntins, exemplified by accusations of heresy (*nāstikatva*) that resemble the most virulent anti-Advaita critiques, many of which emerged from groups committed to the religious worship of a personal god. Scholarly discussions on the relationship between *jñāna* and *bhakti* have tended to revolve around the philosophical implications of Advaita monism for theologies of personal devotion, and vice versa. But the *Bhaktinirṇaya* has little to do with “philosophical” problems between

³⁸⁶ On affirmers (*āstika*) and deniers (*nāstika*) in Indian history, see Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 166-184.

³⁸⁷ *Śrīmadanantadevaviracitaḥ Bhaktinirṇayaḥ* (henceforth cited as *Bhaktinirṇaya*), ed. Ananta Shastri Phadke (Benares: Sanskrit College, 1937): 27:

atra kecid antarviṣayapravaṇā brahmajñānavārtāmātranirvartananipūṇāḥ tanmātreṇa eva kṛtārthaṃmanyā bhagavadbhaktiśūnyāḥ pralapanti māyopahite brahmaṇi bhagavati tad līlāvighrahe vā māyini kim ity ādaraḥ kriyate prāpyābhāvāt svayaṃ kartur eva brahmarūpatvāt kartṛtvasya mithyātvāt | snānasandhyādikam tu lokavyavahārārtham kriyate na tu tenāpi kiṃcīt labdhavyam asti | evaṃ niṣiddhavarjanam api narakābhāvāt lokavyavahārārtham eva | ta ete nāmāntareṇa nāstikā ity upekṣyāḥ | katham nāstikāḥ vedāntānām brahmaṇi prāmāṇyābhyupagamād iti cet | hanta tarhi (katham) svarganarakādyabhāvaḥ puṇyapāpānuṣṭhāne | vedena eva brahmapratipādanavat puṇyapāpānuṣṭhātṛṇām svarganarakādipratipādanāt | jāte brahmajñāne nāsti svarganarakaprāptir iti cet | katham vairāgyādisāadhanābhāve brahmajñānāvāptir bhavatām | vairāgyādisāadhanam eva na bhavati iti cet tatpratipādakasya “brāhmaṇo nirvedam āyād” ityādivedavacanasya aprāmāṇyābhyupagamena nāstikatvāt |

jñāna and bhakti at all. Instead, the text is mostly concerned with the social consequences of proper methods of interpretation. One fear for Anantadeva, for example, is that the Advaitin's radical disavowal of ritual obligations and devotional sentiments could lead to a total nihilism. What are the implications of choosing one over the other? What does it mean to challenge the Vedānta consensus, or question who the true Vedāntin is? Who is the subject in need of reformation? One example of this attention to the social component of intellectual disagreement, germane to the conflict between Anantadeva and other Advaitins, opens the second chapter of the BN. Here Anantadeva engages an opponent who fears that valorizing practices of bhakti would invalidate the tradition of Vedānta study entirely. He responds with a detailed account of how they are different but equivalent ways to liberation. When pressed to defend this claim in the face of exegetical precedent, he offers both a scriptural and a worldly justification:

Objection: Now if you say that bhakti, by giving rise to the knowledge of truth, is a means to liberation, the whole system of studying the *Brahma Sūtras* becomes meaningless.

Reply: So what if it's worthless? What's it to me? I would also say that it is inappropriate to call the system meaningless. Since it is comprised of inquiry into Vedānta, it is an activity enjoined by such Vedic statements as “One should listen [to the teachings on the Self],” which are directed toward achieving the knowledge that leads to liberation. At the very least, there is an option [between bhakti and Vedānta] since they have the same end. [...] They just have different ways of going about the same thing (*dvārabheda*). One works as follows:

First, you study Vedānta (*vedāntavicāra*) to get rid of any doubts regarding the validity of the scripture which would have you understand that the purport of Vedānta is nondual Brahman. Second, you reflect on this teaching (*manana*) to remove doubts about the object of knowledge itself, that make you think your mind is incapable of uniting with it. Finally, through meditation (*nididhyāsana*) you get rid of your contrary experience [of plurality in everyday life], and achieve liberation upon the direct experience of the truth.

However, in the topic under consideration (bhakti), first you undertake the practices of bhakti-as-means (*sāadhanabhakti*), hearing God's glories, singing them, etc., and then you come upon both bhakti-as-result (*phalabhakti*), which is essentially a total love

for God, as well as the sudden display of God who is the abode of supreme love. Then, when you become detached from your body, house, etc., you realize the truth through God's grace, and then achieve liberation.³⁸⁸

Objection: But surely it is only the first of these methods that the authors of scriptural treatises have explicated, and not the latter.

Reply: What's your point? Not everyone is going to discuss everything. And this second method has good reasoning behind it. It is a matter of universal experience that when you start hearing or singing the glories of God, you begin to feel a sense of delight (*praharṣa*). This is all the more the case for those who have developed a faith (*śraddhā*) by performing sacrifices and other [Brahmanical] activities. And when someone is delighted with something, they develop a love (*anurāga*) for that thing, just like the *cakora* bird's love for the moon. When you fall in love, that object starts to pulsate in your heart, and any attachment to other things simply slips away—just as it does for a young girl intent on her paramour. And when that complete love for God called *phalabhakti* comes to fruition, as a result of the practices of *sādhanabhakti*, then almighty God bestows his grace, and one achieves liberation upon knowing the truth.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ The distinction between bhakti-as-means and bhakti-as-end has an old precedent in Vaiṣṇava writings. In the *Yatīndramatadīpikā* (Ch. 7), the Śrīvaiṣṇava theologian Śrīnivāsa describes the former as generated by human effort and the latter as the grace of God. This maps onto the Śrīvaiṣṇava distinction between acts of worship and surrender (*prapatti*). There, however, bhakti is equated to *nididhyāsana*, or meditation, the third Vedāntic act prescribed above.

This paragraph as a whole alludes to Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary on Bhāgavata Purāṇa 11.2.42: “Love, experience of God, and disdain for other things—these three occur at the same time, just like one who eats is at once happy, nourished, and filled with each bite.”

bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktir
anyatra caiṣa trika ekakālah |
prapadyamānasya yathā'snataḥ syus
tuṣṭiḥ puṣṭiḥ kṣudapāyo 'nughāsam ||

Śrīdhara defines the experience of God as “the sudden flashing-forth of the form of God who is the abode of love” (*premāspadabhaḡavadrūpasphūrti*), and specifies that one becomes “detached towards the household, and so forth” (*gṛhādiṣu viraktir*). See *Bhāgavata Purāṇa of Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa With Sanskrit Commentary Bhāvārthabodhinī of Śrīdhara Svāmī*, ed. J.L. Shastri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 628. Anantadeva explicates this verse further on in the *Bhaktinirṇaya* (37-38), and we find the same verse and commentarial passage cited toward the end of Jīva Gosvāmī's *Bhaktisandarbhā*, ed. Haridāsa Śāstrī (Vrindavan: Gadadhar Gaurahari Press, 1985).

³⁸⁹ *Bhaktinirṇaya*, 33-35: nanv evaṃ bhaktes tattvajñānadvārā mokṣasādhanaṭve caturlakṣaṇā sāstram anarthakam āpadyate | anarthakam evāstu kā no hāniḥ | yad vā tasya vedāntavicārātmakatvāt tasya mokṣasādhanajñānoddeśena “śrotavya” ityādivākyavilhitatvād ānarthakyānupapatteḥ (kintu) tulyārthatvena vṛthiyavavad vikalpaḥ | [...] dvārabheda eva | tathā hi | vedāntavicāreṇādvitīye brahmaṇi tātparyāvadhāraṇe pramāṇāsambhāvanānivr̥ttau, mananena ca prameyāsambhāvanāyām cittasya tadaikāgryāyogyatārūpāyām nivṛttāyām, nididhyāsanena ca viparītabhāvanāyām nivṛttāyām tattvasākṣātkārodaye muktiḥ | prakṛte tu śravaṇakīrtanādisādhanabhakter anuvṛttau bhagavati parapremalakṣaṇānurāgātmikā phalabhaktiḥ parapremāspadabhaḡavanmūrtisphūrtiś ca jāyate | tataś ca dehagehādaḡ viraktasya bhagavatprasādāt

Three things stand out about this passage. First, Anantadeva accuses the Vedāntin of undervaluing his own scriptural tradition—a classic case of “You said it, not me.” Second, he holds up the Brahmin practitioner of Vedic sacrifices as the ideal candidate for bhakti. Not only does he say that taking delight in God's stories is “especially” (*viśeṣato*) true of those who perform sacrifices and other Brahmanical rites, he asserts that such *sādhana* bhakti is only fruitful for those who have the requisite faith, which emerges from the same Brahmanical practices (*yajñādyanuṣṭhāna*) as does the desire to study Vedānta.³⁹⁰ Third, in response to the Vedāntin's critique that the path he proposes is unsupported by the majority of traditional teachers (*śāstrakāra*), Anantadeva foregrounds an “everyday experience” that is nevertheless informed by scriptural authority—the dialectic of theory and practice that pervaded Sanskrit intellectual culture.³⁹¹ We all know, as he says, that hearing the glories of God gives you happiness and fulfillment; after all, we've been told to think that by the Bhagavad Gītā (11.36) and Bhāgavata Purāṇa. If your experience doesn't match, it means you're doing something wrong. Just because a sick man doesn't enjoy drinking milk, that doesn't mean milk is not in itself a source of delight.³⁹²

tattvasākṣātkārodaye muktir iti | nanu pūrvā prañālikā nirūpitā śāstrakārair nottarā | kim etāvātā | na hi sarve sarvaṃ nirūpayanti | yuktā ceyam prañālikā | tathā hi | bhagavataḥ śravaṇakīrtanādyanuṣṭhāne prahaṛṣaḥ sakalajanānām anubhavasiddhaḥ | viśeṣato yajñādyanuṣṭhānanyasraddhāviśeṣavatām | yadanubandhena ca prahaṛṣo yasya tasya tatrānurāgaḥ sampadyate | cakorāder iva candrādau | anurāge ca sampadyamāne tatsphuraṇaṃ tadanyaviśayeṣu cittānubandhaśaithilyaṅ ca | navataruṇyā iva vallabhaviśaye | tataś ca śravaṇakīrtanādinā 'bhyastena bhagavati pūrṇānurāgātmakaphalabhaktiparipāke sakalāśaktiyukto bhagavān prasīdatīti tasya tattvajñāne muktir iti |

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33: yathā hi yajñādyanuṣṭhānasādhyavividiṣāvataḥ puruṣasya vedāntavicāraḥ phalavān evaṃ yajñādyanuṣṭhānasādhyasraddhasya śravaṇādibhaktiḥ phalavatī |

³⁹¹ See Sheldon Pollock, “The Theory of Practice and the Practice of Theory in Indian Intellectual History,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105.3 (1985): 499-519.

³⁹² *Bhaktinirṇaya*, 35: na caitad arthavādāmātram, tadarthapratipādakānām purāṇavacanānām upalambhāt | tatra bhaktyā sādhanaṅmīkayā 'nurāgātmakabhaktyudaye kṛtārthatā bhavatīty uktam bhagavadgītāsu –

sthāne hṛṣīkeśa tava prakīrtyā
jagat prahrṣyaty anurajyate ca |

You have to be the right kind of Brahmin to get what I mean, Anantadeva says, the kind I am telling you to be.

Debates in the BN over what constitutes bhakti, who God is, and what scriptural texts support which claim, in turn reveal debates over who should undertake bhakti, how they should read their texts, and why they should come to terms with a shifting scriptural canon. The injunctive modality is central; the first chapter is titled “An Investigation into the Necessity of Devotion to God” (*haribhaktikartavyatānirūpaṇam*). The word “necessity” or “requirement” (*kartavyatā*) implies the regulation of behavioral standards and not just apologetics. In other words, it is not simply Advaita Vedānta or Mīmāṃsā with which Anantadeva takes issue at various points, it is Advaitins and Mīmāṃsakas. This may seem banal; Sanskrit intellectuals always reconstructed arguments with representative opponents. But in Anantadeva's context, we can glean that these opponents were real, not more-than-real.³⁹³ By giving his work the subtitle

rakṣāṃsi bhītāni diśo dravanti
sarve manasyanti ca siddhasaṅkhyāḥ ||

[...] nanu keṣāñcit bhagavacchravaṇakīrtanādīnāpi na praharṣo dṛśyate, natarāṃ bhagavaty anurāgaḥ | satyam | naitāvatā kācit kṣatir vacanānubhavayoḥ | na hi jvaritānāṃ dugdhapāne harṣo na dṛśyate iti tan na harṣahetuḥ |

This last example is classic Anantadeva. He uses it repeatedly in a benedictory verse we find across his works to defend their value against the criticisms of jealous scholars: “If wicked people of limited intellect, out of envy in their heart, disrespect this well-written work, then so what? Just because sick people do not have a taste for it, pure sweet milk is never at fault.” See *Bhagavannāmaakaumudī*, ed. Govinda Damodar Sastri (Kāśī: Acyutagrāhamālā, 1927), 1, *Prakāśa* comm:

samyañnirūpitam idaṃ yadi nādrīyante
duṣṭā nīkṛṣṭamatayo hṛdī matsareṇa |
kiṃ tāvatā jvaravatām arucer na jātu
dugdhasya śuddhamadhurasya vidūṣaṇaṃ syāt || 3 ||

The same verse is found in Anantadeva's *Sampradāyanirūpaṇa*, an unpublished autocommentary on his aforementioned *Siddhāntatattva*. The manuscript is erroneously catalogued as the *Siddhāntatattva* itself in the archives of the BORI (No. 309 of 1895-98). Cf. P. Peterson, *A Sixth Report in Search of Sanscrit Mss. In the Bombay Circle* (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1899), 23-24.

³⁹³ I allude to David Shulman, *More Than Real: A History of the Imagination in South India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

nirṇaya—a deliberation, determination, or judgment—Anantadeva was perhaps alluding to the very public debates over normative social, ritual, and moral codes for which the Brahmin *paṇḍits* of early modern Banaras were known.³⁹⁴ As we will see in more detail in the subsequent section, many of Anantadeva's critiques in the BN are addressed not at the level of metaphysical reconciliation, such as we find in the work of his more famous contemporary Madhusūdana Sarasvatī,³⁹⁵ but that of social identity and practice. For Anantadeva, bhakti is not just a religion of the heart, but one of the body and mind as well.

In order to understand better the social context in which Anantadeva's works circulated, let us explore his brief forays into literature, a genre which allowed him to provide a more colorful picture of the contested intellectual terrain he adumbrates in the BN. Of particular interest is his *Kṛṣṇabhakticandrikānāṭaka* (KBCN), discussed long ago by the renowned Sanskrit scholar and literary historian Baldev Upadhyaya as “A Devotional Drama in Sanskrit.”³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ Cf. O'Hanlon and Minkowski, “What makes people who they are?”

³⁹⁵ Cf. Chapter 5.

³⁹⁶ Baldev Upadhyaya, “A Devotional Drama in Sanskrit,” *Indian Historical Quarterly* XII (1936): 721-729. Upadhyaya attributes the drama to the junior Anantadeva II, but comparisons with the senior Anantadeva's works make it clear that it was composed by the latter. Except for the superlatively meticulous P.K. Gode, many early twentieth-century scholars confused the two. See P.K. Gode, “Āpadeva, the Author of the *Mīmāṃsānyāyaprakāśa* and *Mahāmahopādhyāya Āpadeva, the Author of the Adhikaraṇacandrikā and Smṛticandrikā* – are they identical?” in *Studies in Indian Literary History* Vol. II (Bombay: Singhi Jain Śāstra Śikshāpīṭh, 1954), 39-48.

The KBCN was printed twice, both times in long-defunct journals: the *Kāvyaetiḥāsasaṅgraha* (Pune, 1881) and the *Grantharatnamālā* (Bombay, 1892). The first is in the British Library, though unavailable to me at the time of writing, while the latter still escapes me. These printed editions were probably based on the (four) manuscripts available in the BORI archives in Pune. Upadhyaya does not tell us what manuscript he looked at, thought it was probably the one deposited in the Benares Sanskrit College. My translations are based on a preliminary edition I have made from three additional manuscripts in the collections of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and two more in Houghton Library, Harvard University. Despite the availability of a printed edition, this philological exercise has served to illuminate interesting features of the material history of the text. The Chandra Shum Shere collection is in the Bodleian, while the last two are in Harvard's Houghton Library. Abbreviations are my own.

1. CSS₁: MS Chandra Shum Shere d. 671(1). Dated Wed. Dec. 4, 1647 CE. Devanāgarī, Paper, 15 folios, 16 lines per page (ff. 1-2v in a different hand). Scribe: Ekanātha, s/o Ananta Bhaṭṭa Tāmaṇ. Owners: Ekanātha (probably same as scribe), and Ramānātha Dīkṣita. This may be one of the oldest extant manuscripts of the text,

Upadhyaya provides a useful synopsis of the play, in which many characters of different philosophical persuasions are progressively conquered in debate (though, it must be said, with little resistance) by two protagonists of bhakti to Krishna.³⁹⁷ The first is a “great Vaiṣṇava” (*mahāvaiṣṇava*), who convinces two sectarians, a Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, of the non-difference between Śiva and Viṣṇu. The second is a devotee of Krishna (*kr̥ṣṇabhakta*), who takes on a series of prideful pedants: a grammarian, logician, Mīmāṃsaka, and Advaita Vedāntin. These are two separate sections. One hero is dispatched to deal with the problem of religious divides, and the other attends to philosophical squabbles between partisan scholars. The *kr̥ṣṇabhakta*, much like the author Anantadeva, is himself a former scholar, accustomed to the ego-driven arena of academic activity. His new life, in the search of artless religious devotion, is pitted against what he considers the self-serving scholarship of his immodest colleagues. It is worth noting that the final character to be convinced of (indeed, converted to) the supremacy of bhakti is an Advaita Vedāntin, Anantadeva's own alter ego. It quickly emerges that this particular *dramatis persona* displays a striking similarity to the Advaitin opponent in Anantadeva's *Bhaktinirṇaya*. A polemical exchange between that haughty Vedāntin (V) and a Mīmāṃsaka (M) who has already

since it circulated in Banaras itself until becoming part of the as-yet incompletely catalogued Chandra Shum Shere collection.

2. **CSS₂**: MS Chandra Shum Shere e. 122. Dated 1775 CE. Incomplete. Devanāgarī, Paper, 21 folios, 12 lines per page.

3. **K**: MS Sansk. d. 88. Dated 1693-4 CE. Description in Moriz Winternitz and A.B. Keith, *Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Vol. II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 174-176. There is an interesting orthographic note about this manuscript: because it was written in the Śāradā script, the text likely circulated among Kashmiri Brahmins in Banaras—not just Maharashtrians like the Devas.

4. **H₁**: MS Indic 1094. Not dated. Devanāgarī, Paper, 20 folios, 11 lines per page.

5. **H₂**: MS Indic 1095. Dated Wed. Apr. 9, 1822 CE. Devanāgarī, Paper, 18 folios, 11 lines per page. Scribe: Kāmarūpa Śarmā. Patron: Raghunātha Śarmā. Location: Pāṭalīputra (present-day Patna).

³⁹⁷ Upadhyaya, “A Devotional Drama in Sanskrit,” 724.

been transformed by the *kṛṣṇabhakta* (KB) takes place as soon as the Vedāntin enters the scene:

V (to the *kṛṣṇabhakta*): Hey, why are you trying to convert people who have no grounding in systematic study of the Upaniṣads? How does the name “Krishna” or devotion to him have anything to do with liberation? When it comes to the highest reality, nothing truly exists, not even your “Krishna.”

M: You prattle on about how things are “constructed,” and won't let it go in the least. Some scholarship that is: you only *deconstruct* the ideas of others.

V: I am that Brahman described by the Upaniṣads, no doubt about it. You've got to understand: the sense-objects you see in me are like a mirage. You can only reach the self when there is neither *dharma* nor *adharma*, neither heaven nor hell. There can't possibly be bhakti to Krishna at that point.

M: Enough! This is blasphemous drivel (*nāstikapralapanam*)!

The harangue goes on a little further, until the *kṛṣṇabhakta* (KB) gets fed up with the debaters:

KB: You all can go ahead and raise a big hubbub about scriptural analysis, day in and day out, since that's where you feel the need to ply your trade: in service of the quest for ever-increasing eminence. I used to do the same, but not anymore, for now I have the uninterrupted joy of constant worship of the blessed Lord of Cowherds (Krishna).³⁹⁸

³⁹⁸ **vedāntī** (*śrīkṛṣṇabhaktam prati*) - katham are upaniṣatpariśīlanaśūnyān pratārayasi ? kveyaṃ kṛṣṇasamākhyā kva ca tadbhaktiḥ kva vā pumartho 'sau ? kalpitam eva samastam brahmaṇi nāsty eva vāstavam kimcit |

mīmāṃsakah -

kalpitam iti khalu jalpasi jahāsi naivālpam apy etat |
buddhiṃ parasya bhettum kevalam etad hi pāṇḍityam || 93 ||

vedāntī -

āgamaśironirūpyaṃ brahmaivāhaṃ na saṃśayas tatra |
yān mayi paśyasi viśayān mṛgajalam iva tān avaihi tvam || 94 ||

ataś ca -

yatra na dharmādharmau svargo narakaś ca dūrato 'pāstau |
tatrātmānam labhatām kutra śrīkṛṣṇagocarā bhaktiḥ || 95 ||

mīmāṃsakah - alam etan nāstikapralapanam | [...]

śrīkṛṣṇabhaktaḥ -

yuṣmābhiḥ pariśīlyatām pratidinaṃ śāstrārthakolāhalas
tatraivāniśavardhamānaśubhatādhyāsānuvṛtter vaśāt |
prāg aṅgikṛta eva so 'yam adhunā nāsmābhir ādrīyate

While the *kṛṣṇabhakta* is set up to win from the outset, the apparent contrast between the intellectual elitism of scholarly pedagogues and the simple piety of religious devotion is not quite thoroughgoing. Anantadeva seems to disown pointless scholarly debate in favor of spontaneous spiritual fervor, but this belies the firmly intellectual context of his entire oeuvre, to which he refers frequently, and not always with a sense of remorse. In the autobiographical sketch he provides in the prologue to another drama, the *Mano'nurañjananāṭaka*, Anantadeva celebrates the co-existence of scholarly accomplishment and bhakti religiosity:

Stage-Manager: The poet Anantadeva's knowledge, which has given rise to this composition, also delights the mind:

He was given over to the study of the “prior” and “latter” Mīmāṃsās,
and generally spent his days instructing others in those disciplines. (8)

Actor: What could the guru of this distinguished person be like?

Stage-Manager: One should rather say “gurus.” First of all, his very own father:

Whose name, Āpadeva, reached every ear,
whose vast knowledge was desired by every heart,
whose character was unparalleled on this earth,
and who served with his very mind
the god as dark as the Tamāla [tree]. (9)

śrīgopālapates trikālabhajanānandānubandhād iha || 96 ||

kva vā° - kvāyam artho 'sau (CSS₁); °**alpam** - °alam (CSS₂); °**nirūpyam** - °nirūpa (CSS₂); **brahmaivāhaṃ** – brahmaivāyam (H₂); **yān** (*emen.*) - Mss. read yan; **yatra na** – yavana (H₂); **dharmādharmau** - dharmo (CSS₂); **alam etan°** - Omitted in H₂; **anuvṛtter** – anuvarter (CSS₁, K, CSS₂); **iha** - ihaḥ (CSS₂).

The final verse mirrors a sentiment expressed in the opening to the *Bhaktinirṇaya*, 1: “Go ahead, get an education, and become rich and famous, tossing your pearls before swine. For my part, I'm content to worship the lotus feet of Govinda—there you find eternal bliss.”

abhyasya vidyāṃ dhanam arjayantu
khyātiṃ ca mūrkhān prati sādhayantu |
vayaṃ tu govindapadāravinda-
dvayaṃ sadānandamayaṃ bhajāmaḥ || 2 ||

And yet another:

Mind ripened by worship to the feet of Rāmacandra,
devoted to the constant memory of Lord Rāma's name,
with an intellect as firm and strong as Rāmacandra's own,
the one renowned to the world as the blessed Rāmatīrtha. (10)

Actor: We've all heard of this world-teacher's great philosophical exercises
(*darśanābhyāsa*), and yet he remains absorbed in the name of God (*parameśvaranāma*).
Ah, what a wonder!

Stage-Manager: What is there to wonder? What cannot one gain when Lord Viṣṇu is
pleased? Look—

True scripture is the entire milky ocean,
its daily study is Mount Mandara,
and analytical reflection is the churning.
But that pure nectar, the blessed name of Hari,
even among devotees who exhaust their efforts,
only reaches the lips of a select few,
through the grace of Śrī's Beloved. (11)³⁹⁹

³⁹⁹ *The Manonurañjana Nāṭaka*, ed. Dr. Mangal Deva Shastri (Allahabad: The Superintendent Printing and Stationery, 1938), 3-4:

sūtradhāraḥ – etannibandhanahetubhūtam asya kaver anantadevābhidhasya jñānam api mano'nurañjanam |

yaḥ pūrvottaramīmāṃsāpariśilanaśīlavān |
tadīyādhyāpanenaiva samayaṃ khalu nītavān || 8 ||

naṭaḥ - asya mahābhāgasya kīdṛśo guruḥ syāt ?

sūtradhāraḥ - gurava iti vaktavyam | ekas tāvat pitaiva |

yasyāpadeva iti nāma na kasya karṇe
vidyācayasya hṛdi kasya na kāṅkṣitaṃ syāt |
śīlaṃ ca yasya manasaiva tamālanīlaṃ
saṃsevataḥ prathitam apratimaṃ pṛthivyām || 9 ||

aparas tu -

śrīrāmacandracaraṅcanapakvacittaḥ
śrīrāmanāmasatatasmarāṅkaikaniṣṭhaḥ |
śrīrāmacandra iva dhairyadhurīṇabuddhiḥ
śrīrāmatīrtha iti yo jagati prasiddhaḥ || 10 ||

naṭaḥ - asya kila jagadguror mahān darśanābhyāsaḥ śrūyate punarapi parameśvaranāmaniṣṭhatvam | aho mahad āścaryam !

sūtradhāraḥ - kim āścaryam kim alabhyam bhagavati prasanne śrīniketane ? paśya -

A third teacher, though not mentioned in Anantadeva's other works, appears clearly in the next verse from the autobiography.⁴⁰⁰ This was Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa (b. 1513 CE), a name that probably refers to the famous *dharmaśāstra* scholar of Banaras who, like the Devas, came from a family of migrant Maharashtrian Brahmins and prominently participated in Banaras' public debates.⁴⁰¹ Rāmatīrtha's simultaneous devotion to jñāna and bhakti no doubt provided a model for Anantadeva's own. But for all these lofty sentiments, and even though he established a household in which academic success was consistent for three generations, Anantadeva was still uncomfortable with the context of his scholarly accomplishments. He concludes the drama with a rueful verse reminiscent of the *kṛṣṇabhakta* in the KBCN:

Through studying scriptures, teaching students, and writing books for fame and renown
[my] mind became proud of its accomplishments.
But now, through [my] merit alone, in each word
that praises Govinda and his qualities,
in the billows of the milky ocean of joy
it obtains felicity.⁴⁰²

sacchāstraṃ nikhilaṃ payombudhir ayaṃ tasyātha dainaṃdinā-
bhyāso mandaraparvato nayacayair ālocanaṃ manthanam |
tatra śrī harināma śuddham amṛtaṃ śrānteṣv ananyeṣv api
śrīkāntasya kṛpāvaśena tu mukhe keṣāṃcid evāñcati ||11||

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 4: “The goddess of speech used to make the lotus-seated (Brahmā) jealous by moving from the lotus face of one learned man to the next. But only when she reached Nārāyaṇa's did she find fulfillment at once.”

īṣyāṃ sarojāsanam ādadhānā
sthitā budhānāṃ mukhapañkajeṣu |
nārāyaṇasyaiva tu saṃśrayeṇa
sadyaḥ kṛtārthatvam avāpa vāñī || 12 ||

⁴⁰¹ On Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa's life, see Benson, “Śaṃkarabhaṭṭa's Family Chronicle, 111-4. Cf. Haraprasad Shastri, “Dakshini Pandits at Benares,” *Indian Antiquary* 41: 7-12.

⁴⁰² *The Mano'nurañjana Nāṭaka*, 102:

śāstrāṇaṃ pariśīlanair bhṛśam aho śiṣyeṣu cādhyāpanaiḥ
khyātyuddeśakṛtair babhūva tu mahākṛtyābhimānaṃ manaḥ |
puṇyair eva tu samprati pratipadaṃ govindatattadguṇa-
ślāghyaṃ saukhyapayodhivīcinicayeṣv ānandam āvindati || 98 ||

What do these passages tell us about the intellectual space which Anantadeva inhabited, and which he attempted to fashion through both his literary and philosophical writing? Baldev Upadhyaya reads the KBCN rather straightforwardly as “a noble embodiment of the firm conviction of the author in the supremacy of the *Bhakti-mārga*.”⁴⁰³ No doubt, there is an almost evangelical, starry-eyed quality to the rhetoric of bhakti's protagonists, complete with stage directions that portray the reformed characters speaking “with deep love, stripped of the desire to cause rifts” (*śithilīkṛtabhedābhiniveśaḥ svānurāgeṇa*). More interesting, however, is the colorful way in which Anantadeva depicts the scholarly *agōn*, not only as a literary representation of his philosophical polemic, but as a mirror to the social atmosphere of the Banarasi scholarly conferences (*paṇḍitasabhā*) in which he likely participated. When the stage-manager of the KBCN walks out onto the set, he is directed to stand before an “audience of scholars” (*paṇḍitamāṇḍalīm*), which the author compares to “the halls of Indra, lined with thousands of glittering eyes” (*ākhaṇḍalasabhām iva vilokanacaṭulasahasranayanāvalīm*). However lofty the description of this ideal audience,⁴⁰⁴ elsewhere in the KBCN is evidence of a serious ethical unease with these settings. In such passages, scholarly sophistication is perceived as sophistry in disguise, a competitive power-grab where victory means both prestige and patronage. Take, for

⁴⁰³ Upadhyaya, “A Devotional Drama in Sanskrit,” 728.

⁴⁰⁴ That Anantadeva sought to construct his audience as much through his literary as his polemical writings can be demonstrated in a surprising cameo that the audience itself makes, somewhat like a Greek chorus, in the prologue to the *Mano'nurañjanāṭaka*. Upon listening to the stage manager and lead actor discuss the worthlessness of a life without listening to the glories of God, the audience members murmur among themselves: “Wow, their dialogue really is pregnant with meaning—so much so that we want this *samsāra* to cease altogether! Now let's listen to all those stories connected with the Lord of Yadus.” See *The Manonurañjana Nāṭaka*, 6:

sabhyāḥ (*svagatam*) – aho paramārthagarbhā evānayor vācaḥ | yadvayaṃ saṃsṛtīnirvṛtikāmāḥ | saṃprati sarvaṃ yadupatyanubandhinibandhanaṃ śroṣyāmaḥ |

example, the following disgruntled complaint from the grammarian (*śābdika*) regarding an upstart logician (*tārkika*), whose irreverent ilk is beginning to dominate local intellectual circles:

They study the new logic (*navyaṃ nyāyam*),⁴⁰⁵ attend academic conferences puffed with conceit, boldly criticize even the revered elders, and take their seats at the head of the table. If anyone starts to speak of scripture, they give each other meaningful glances, roll their eyes sarcastically, and abuse that person to no end.⁴⁰⁶

Similarly, the following cynical comment from a Śaiva partisan lays bare this mercenary attitude to scholarly debate:

Knowledge is only useful if you can make someone else look silly. Cleverness only lives up to its name if you get someone else's money with it. Therefore, you must study everything you can, conquer others in debate, gain professorial recognition, and build a great portfolio.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ On the prominence of Navya Nyāya in early modern India, see Jonardon Ganeri, *The Lost Age of Reason: Philosophy in Early Modern India 1450-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴⁰⁶ navyaṃ nyāyam adhītya samsadam upāgatya smayāveśataḥ
śiṣṭān apy avamatya dhr̥ṣṭamatayaḥ prauḍhāsaneṣv āsate |
śāstre vakti yadaiva kaścana tadā te 'nyonyam udvīkṣitair
bhrūkṣepair hasitais tathopahasitair enaṃ tiraskurvate || 72 ||

navyaṃ° - navyanyāyam (K); **śāstre** - śāstram (K – a later correction for original śāstre); **enaṃ** - evaṃ (CSS₂).

⁴⁰⁷ nāsau vidyā bhavati prabhavati na yayā parābhavo 'nyasya |
bhavati ca na nipunatā sā na yayā paradhanam upānayati || 37 ||

tasmāt -

adhyetavyākhilā vidyā nirjetavyāś ca vādinah |
ānetavyā pratiṣṭhā ca saṃcetavyāś ca sampadaḥ || 38 ||

bhavati – omitted in K, CSS₂; **ca na** - ca (CSS₂), omitted in K; **ānetavyā** - anetavyā (CSS₂).

These concerns were reflected in contemporary South India as well by the satirist and scholar Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita (*Kalivīḍambana* 1.5-6), writing in Madurai at the court of Tirumala Nāyaka (r. 1623-1659 CE). See *The Minor Poems of Nilakantha Dikshita* (Srirangam: Vani Vilas Press, 1911), 3-4:

abhyāsyam lajjamānena tattvaṃ jijñāsunā ciram |
jigīṣunā hriyaṃ tyaktvā kāryaḥ kolāhalo mahān ||
pāṭhanair granthanirmāṇaiḥ pratiṣṭhā tāvad āpyate |
evaṃ ca tathyavyutpattir āyuso 'nte bhaven na vā ||

“A humble seeker of truth must study for a long time. [But] if you want to win in debate, shamelessly raise a big commotion. You get tenure by teaching and writing books. Who knows? Maybe, in this way, you'll gain true erudition by the time you die!”

As is clear from previous passages, Anantadeva I was no slouch when it came to intellectual confrontation. Yet the context of his confessional statements (“I used to want fame, but not anymore”) suggests that bhakti was not simply a public expression of personal devotion, in abstract philosophical conflict with jñāna, but a means to counteract the corrupting effects of new economic demands.⁴⁰⁸ There is a deep ambivalence in Anantadeva's writing toward the new intellectual marketplace of early modern Banaras; the very systems of patronage and intellectual networks that made immigrants like himself so successful are the ones he criticizes for their materialistic excess. In this semi-fictional world, then, Anantadeva's *bhaktimārga* comes to be less a path to salvation from the torment of worldly life than a way to come to terms with it. Scholarship is still important, and you can still make money, but only in the service of God. And if even a supposedly detached Vedāntin can be seduced by the pride of knowledge, so much more Mīmāṃsakas and *dharmasāstrīs*, those in the business of determining scriptural authority and enforcing ritual and ethical norms.⁴⁰⁹ For even if the former exercised his intellectual ambitions within a discipline that was ostensibly unconcerned with the world of everyday life,⁴¹⁰ the latter's scholarly efforts carried significant social consequences. This takes us to the second part of our inquiry, on the relationship between bhakti and karma.

⁴⁰⁸ On the new economic opportunities and intellectual networks available to scholars in early modern Banaras, see Christopher Minkowski et al., “Social History in the Study of Indian Intellectual Cultures?,” *South Asian History and Culture* 6.1 (2015): 1-9.

⁴⁰⁹ On the changing nature of the division of scholastic labor between Mīmāṃsakas and *dharmasāstrīs* from classical to early modern India, see Lawrence McCrea, “Hindu Jurisprudence and Scriptural Hermeneutics,” in *Hinduism and Law*, ed. Timothy Lubin et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 123-137.

⁴¹⁰ See Minkowski, “Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern India,” 205: “Can this unworldly philosophy, which propounded the doctrine of undivided Being, have been changed through its involvement with the world of ordinary life, in which it found such little conceptual interest, and can it in turn have affected change in that world?”

Bhakti and Karma

The previous chapter briefly noted that Anantadeva wrote a commentary on the *Bhagavannāmaakaumudī* of Lakṣmīdhara. The BNK had set the stage for several later discourses on the superiority of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. It emphasized that the practice of singing God's name (*nāmasaṃkīrtana*) was an effective means to expiate sins and, ultimately, led to liberation. It also challenged orthodox Mīmāṃsā concepts by arguing for the independent authority of *purāṇic* language. These arguments had significantly influenced Anantadeva's *Bhaktinirṇaya*, and were in some cases adopted wholesale. For example, in the following passage, Anantadeva responds to a Mīmāṃsaka opponent who takes issue with a *purāṇic* quotation which sanctions singing the name of God. The opponent finds no place or precedent for this form of religiosity. Anantadeva takes umbrage:

On this point, we find some people who fancy themselves Mīmāṃsakas—who are devoid of the Lord's worship, who can't stand singing the name of God, and are only gearing up to fall into the pit of hell—prattling on as follows: “There is no such *dharma* as 'singing' (*saṃkīrtana*) which is available to us in the *śruti* or *smṛti*. In particular, Brahmins who are qualified for rites like the *agnihotra* cannot possibly engage in 'singing.' The verse cited above, however, is nothing but an *arthavāda*.”

All of that is total nonsense. What does it mean to say that it is “just an *arthavāda*”? Do you mean that it is simply not a valid source of knowledge (*apramāṇa*), or invalid insofar as it does not form a single unit with an attendant injunction? You can't possibly mean the first, since the *purāṇa* is just as authoritative as the *śruti* and *smṛti* [...] Nor does the second [possible objection] hold water; since *purāṇic* verses like the one above are authoritative irrespective of their connection with an injunction, this contradicts your charge of their being “mere *arthavāda*.”⁴¹¹

Two salient points emerge from this passage. One is the claim being advanced not just for

⁴¹¹ *Bhaktinirṇaya*, 6: atra kecid bhagavadbhajanaśūnyā mīmāṃsakammanyāḥ parameśvarasaṃkīrtanāsahiṣṇavaḥ kevalaṃ narake paṭiṣṇavaḥ pralapanti | saṃkīrtanaṃ nāma na kaścīd dharmāḥ śrutiṣu smṛtiṣu vā prasiddhaḥ | viśeṣato brāhmaṇānām agnihotrādyadhikāriṇāṃ saṃkīrtanaṃ na saṃbhavati | “dhyāyan kṛte” ityādivākyaṃ tv arthavādamātram iti | tad atyantam asādhu | arthavādamātram iti ko 'rthaḥ | kim apramāṇam eva kiṃ vā vidhyekavākyatām antareṇaiva apramāṇam | nādyah | śrutismṛtivat purāṇānām api prāmāṇyāt | [...] na dvitīyah | “dhyāyan kṛte” ityāder vidhyekavākyatām antareṇa prāmāṇye 'rthavādatvoktivilodhaḥ |

the validity of *purāṇic* knowledge, but for its virtual independence from the Veda in matters of injunction. This line of argument is familiar to us by now from the BNK, as is the defense of *purāṇic* language as being more than “mere *arthavāda*.” The other, perhaps more prominent feature, is the apparent social location of the debate: on the one side is bhakti (“singing”), and on the other, the caricature of a dry, heartless Mīmāṃsaka. Once again, the personalized form and tone of the debate is important. Anantadeva expropriates the primarily conceptual concerns of the BNK's response to Mīmāṃsā and resituates them in the social world of early modern Banaras. He foregrounds matters of social propriety and caste identity, as in the following passage, which reconstructs an opponent's view of which social groups should be required to take up the activity of singing:

On this point, there are some self-styled scholars who say: [Singing] is the prerogative of those who do not belong to the three upper caste-classes, on account of the fact that the latter are constantly engaged in obligatory duties (*nityakarma*) from dawn to dusk, and have no time for singing. Moreover, from the verse—

The Rg, Yajur, Sāma, and Atharva Veda
are [all] studied by the one who utters
the two-syllable word, Hari,

we are given to understand that since an uneducated person becomes learned by singing the name [of God], it is the uneducated Śūdra who is entitled [to that activity]. So too, in the verse (Bhāgavata Purāṇa 1.4.25)—

Women, Śūdras, and Brahmins-in-name-only
are not qualified to study the Three [Vedas].
Thus the sage [Vyāsa], out of compassion,
composed the story of the [Mahā]bhārata—

since the Bhārata was composed for the sake of women and Śūdras and so forth, and it stands here as a synecdoche for the *purāṇa* pure-and-simple, and since singing is a *purāṇic* activity, that must only apply to women, Śūdras, and the like. For we do not hear anywhere in the Veda the injunction “One must sing about Keśava.” Alternatively, it could be that Kṣatriyas and others, since they are not engaged in teaching, etc., may be qualified for singing. But Brahmins, who are occupied by their teaching and other

responsibilities, cannot find the time for it, so singing must be the prerogative of those other than Brahmins.⁴¹²

The opponent here concedes that the public act of devotional singing may be accorded scriptural sanction, but only for those who do not belong to the three self-appointed “upper” caste-classes. Bhakti, in the opponent's eyes, is not an activity suited to the serious, scholarly lifestyle of the Brahmin. Anantadeva proceeds to defend his own position by pointing out: a) that if Brahmins have time to perform *soma* sacrifices, then they can surely find the time for some devotional singing;⁴¹³ b) that just because the *purāṇa* is accessible to “lower” classes does not mean that it is not also a Brahmin prerogative; and c) that among the six karmas associated with full Brahmin status, three of them, including teaching, serve merely as the source of one's livelihood, and are therefore not absolutely required.⁴¹⁴ In sum, singing the name of God is open

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 8-9: tatra kecit paṇḍitammanyā manyante | atraivarṇādhikāram iti | traivarṇikānām
brāhmamuhūrtopakramapradoṣaparisaṁpanīyanityakarmavyagrāṇām saṁkīrtane kālābhāvāt | kiṁca -

ṛgvedo 'tha yajurvedaḥ sāmavedo hy atharvaṇaḥ |
adhītās tena yenoktaṁ harir ity akṣaradvayam ||

ity anadhītasya nāmasaṁkīrtanena adhītasampattiśravaṇād anadhītaśūdrādhikāratvaṁ nirṇīyate | api ca -

strīśūdradvijabandhūnām trayī na śrutigocarā |
iti bhāratam ākhyānaṁ kṛpayā muninā kṛtam ||

iti strīśūdrādīnām arthe bhāratanimāṇād bhāratasya ca purāṇamātropalakṣaṇatvāt saṁkīrtanasya ca paurāṇatvāt
strīśūdrādhikāratvaṁ nirṇīyate | na hi keśavasamkīrtanaṁ kuryād iti kvacid vede śrūyate | athavā kṣatriyādīnām
adhyāpanādivyāpārābhāvāt syāt kathaṁcit saṁkīrtanādhikārah | brāhmaṇānām tv adhyāpanādivyāpṛtānām na
kathaṁcit saṁkīrtanakālo labhyata iti brāhmaṇetarādhikāram saṁkīrtanam iti |

⁴¹³ The implicit critique here is that ceremonies like the *jyotiṣṭoma* are not obligatory (*nitya*) but prompted by a desire for personal gain (*kāmya*), hence susceptible to the accusation of frivolity.

⁴¹⁴ Anantadeva quotes *Manu Smṛti* 10.76 as his source:

ṣaṇṇām tu karmaṇām asya trīṇi karmāṇi jīvikā |
yājanādhyāpane caiva viśuddhāt ca pratigrahaḥ ||

But among the [Brahmin's] six karmas, three are for making a living:
Procuring sacrifice for another, teaching, and accepting gifts from a pure one.

As O'Hanlon notes (“Letters Home,” 224, n.94), the topic of the six karmas became a particular point of contention in determining Brahmin status in early modern India. A so-called “full” Brahmin was a *ṣaṭkarmī*,

to all, and not only can but should become a marker of Brahmin identity.

Perhaps more significant than his response is the fact that Anantadeva raises such an issue in the first place. Once again, far from engaging in metaphysical reflection on the nature of God, Anantadeva situates his “deliberation” (*nirṇaya*) on bhakti in the context of particular social issues: namely, the ways in which the public performance of popular devotion intersects with the self-image of the Brahmins of Banaras. Another example of Anantadeva's broader social concerns is his defense of praising God in vernacular languages:

One should not object by saying that the prohibitions “[A Brahmin] is not to barbarize” and “This 'barbarian' is none other than incorrect speech”⁴¹⁵ mean that one should not even mention the glories of God in the vernacular (*bhāṣā*). For since the latter is enjoined, those prohibitions do not apply. It is also incorrect to suggest that the aforementioned prohibitions place a restriction on the injunction regarding the necessity to sing the names and virtues of God, such that one may only sing in grammatical language (*sādhuśabda*). For those prohibitions can be understood to refer to activities (such as speaking) that generally arise from the desire of the people who perform them [rather than to activities such as singing the names of God, that arise directly from injunctions that tell us to perform them].⁴¹⁶ It is not as though we directly hear [the injunction] “One must sing the names and glories of God exclusively in grammatical speech.”⁴¹⁷

entitled to perform six karmas: *adhyayana* and *adhyāpana* (studying the Vedas for oneself and teaching them to others), *yajana* and *yājana* (conducting a sacrifice and procuring sacrifice through another), and *dāna* and *pratigraha* (giving gifts and accepting gifts). The lesser *trikarmī* Brahmin was only entitled to *adhyayana*, *yājana*, and *pratigraha*. However, Anantadeva seems to suggest here that *adhyāpana* is not quite so important in the larger scheme of things, even though the citation from Manu does not appear to have such evaluative force.

⁴¹⁵ *mleccho vā yad apaśabdah*. An early discussion of this term can be found in the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, which famously links linguistic and moral propriety: “Therefore, a Brahmin is not to barbarize [...] in fact, this barbarian is none other than that incorrect speech” (*tasmād brāhmaṇena na mlecchitavai...mleccho ha vā eṣa yad apaśabdah*). See S.D. Joshi and J.A.F. Roodbergen, eds., *Patañjali's Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya: Paspāśāhnikā* (Pune: University of Poona, 1986), 37-38. Issues of grammatical speech are discussed repeatedly in *Mīmāṃsā*. Cf. Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 66, n.53.

⁴¹⁶ Anantadeva's argument here is that the prohibition (*niṣedha*) against ungrammaticality should have to do in this case with limiting an activity generally taken for granted (*prāptaviṣayatvaniyama*)—viz. speaking in any way one likes—rather than with restricting the force of a particular injunction.

⁴¹⁷ *Bhaktinirṇaya*, 26: na ca “na mlecchitavai” “mleccho vā yad apaśabdah” iti niṣiddhatvād bhāṣayā bhagavadguṇānūvādo 'py akartavya iti vācyam | tasya vihitatvena niṣedhāpravṛtteḥ | na ca bhagavadguṇānāmākīrtanakartavyatāvidher uktaniṣedhānurodhena saṃkoco yuktaḥ sādhuśabdena eva bhagavadguṇānāmākīrtanaṃ iti vācyam | niṣedhasya rāgaprāptaviṣayatvenāpy upapatteḥ | na ca evaṃ sāksāt śrūyate sādhuśabdena eva bhagavadguṇānāmākīrtanaṃ kartavyam iti |

In this seemingly innocuous passage about the grammaticality of speech, Anantadeva engages with a long tradition of arguments about the ethical implications of language use in Sanskrit intellectual history. In brief, these arguments concern the propriety of using Sanskrit versus using vernacular languages, and in what situations either is acceptable. Anantadeva argues, in the technical vocabulary of Mīmāṃsā, that general prohibitions against using the vernacular do not override specific injunctions that require one to sing God's names. Sheldon Pollock has noted that the issue of whether grammaticality was a general moral principle or one restricted to the ritual domain formed a significant point of contention between early modern Mīmāṃsakas.⁴¹⁸ In his *Mīmāṃsākaustubha*, the mid-seventeenth century scholar Khaṇḍadeva (d. 1675 CE), who may have been a relative of the Deva family,⁴¹⁹ took his contemporary Dinakara Bhaṭṭa to task for ignoring the liturgical context of a particular prohibition against incorrect speech. Although he ultimately vindicated Dinakara's view that there existed a prohibition of a general moral scope against learning foreign languages, Khaṇḍadeva distinguished carefully

⁴¹⁸ Sheldon Pollock, *The Ends of Man at the End of Premodernity* (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2005), 54-57.

⁴¹⁹ See Pollock, "New Intellectuals," 18. However, family reunions must have been awkward affairs. Khaṇḍadeva repeatedly criticizes Anantadeva II's *Bhāṭṭālaṅkāra*, discussed further below, in his own *Bhāṭṭadīpikā*. At least, according to his student Śambhu Bhaṭṭa, who meticulously identified Khaṇḍadeva's opponents in his *Prabhāvalī* commentary on the *Bhāṭṭadīpikā*. Then again, Śambhu Bhaṭṭa wasn't beyond criticizing his own teacher, albeit apologetically. See his final benedictory verse in *The Bhattadipika of Khaṇḍadeva with Prabhavali Commentary of Sambhu Bhatta: Vol. 1*, ed. N.S. Ananta Krishna Sastri (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar, 1922), 1: "Even if I've pointed out some deficiencies in my teacher's work here, I haven't foregrounded them in this elaboration. Rather, I hope that those men of sharp intellect who adorn the earth, devoted to the traditional teaching, will set aside my words and decorate his work."

yady apy atra guroḥ kṛtāv api mayāpy udbhāvyate kācanā-
 sambhūtiḥ tadapi pracāracature naiṣā purobhāgitā |
 kintu kṣmātilakāḥ kuṣāgradhiṣaṇāḥ siddhāntabaddhādarā
 madvākyam parihr̥tya tatkr̥tim alaṅkurvantv iyam me matiḥ || 4 ||

On Śambhu Bhaṭṭa, see Lawrence McCrea, "Playing with the System: Fragmentation and Individualization in Late Pre-colonial Mīmāṃsā," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36.5 (2008): 581-582.

between barbarian languages (*barbarādibhāṣā*) and the vernaculars (*bhāṣāśabda*) used by “all vernacular intellectuals in their everyday activities *as well as in chanting the name and virtues of Hari*.”⁴²⁰ Khaṇḍadeva appears to speak of such vernacular activity as commonly accepted, but in Anantadeva we find the matter still unresolved, still part of an ongoing debate between bhakti and karma.

We can follow this debate elsewhere within the family as well. Anantadeva's son Āpadeva is well known for his primer on Mīmāṃsā, the *Mīmāṃsānyāyaprakāśa* (MNP). At the end of the book, Āpadeva makes a significant claim about the nature of *dharma*, which Mīmāṃsā had long defined as that which is enjoined by the Veda for some specific purpose:

This *dharma*, when performed with reference to the particular thing for which it has been enjoined, [generally] becomes the cause of that thing. But when it is performed with the attitude of offering (*arpaṇa*) to Lord Govinda, it becomes the cause of the highest good. And there is no dearth of reliable warrants to support such performance with the attitude of surrender to Him. As the Bhagavad Gītā (9.17) states: “Whatever you do, eat, sacrifice, donate, or perform as penance, O son of Kuntī—do that as an offering to me.”⁴²¹

The account provided here closely follows the Vedāntic inflection given to the teaching of *karmayoga* by the eighth-century Advaitin Śāṅkara in the introduction to his commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā. I will explore the links between Āpadeva's Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta writings in the next section, but here I attend to a verse that highlights the problem of Mīmāṃsā and theism:

Where am I, of dull intellect,
and where this chapter that
conforms to the Bhāṭṭa [school of Mīmāṃsā]?

⁴²⁰ Quoted in and trans. Pollock, *The Ends of Man*, 55, 56, n.92 (my italics).

⁴²¹ See *Mīmāṃsā-Nyāyā-Prakāśa by Āpadeva*, ed. Vasudev Shastri Abhyankar (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1972), 277-278: so 'yaṃ dharmo yaduddeśena vihitas taduddeśena kriyamāṇas taddhetuḥ śrīgovindārpaṇabuddhyā kriyamāṇas tu niḥśreyasahetuḥ | na ca tadarpaṇabuddhyānuṣṭhāne pramāṇabhāvaḥ |

yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat |
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam || iti smṛteḥ |

Therefore, this is but a play of bhakti
to the feet of Govinda and my guru.

While talk of devotional bhakti may appear incongruous in a work of Mīmāṃsā, Āpadeva seems to find multiple precedents for his devotional piety. For example, we find here echoes to a verse from the introduction of Śrīdhara Svāmin's commentary on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa:

Where am I, of dull intellect
And where this churning of the milky ocean?
What place has a tiny atom
Where Mount Mandara itself sinks?⁴²²

It is tempting to think (though by no means definitive)⁴²³ that Āpadeva's verse alludes directly to Śrīdhara and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa,⁴²⁴ invoking a text tradition that had not only

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 278:

kvāhaṃ mandamatīḥ kveyaṃ prakriyā bhāṭṭasammatā |
iti bhakter vilāso 'yaṃ govindagurupādayoḥ ||

Cf. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa...With the Bhāvārthabodhinī Commentary of Śrīdhara Svāmin*, 13:

kvāhaṃ mandamatīḥ kvedaṃ manthanaṃ kṣīravāridheḥ |
kiṃ tatra paramāṇur vai yatra majjati mandaraḥ || 5 ||

⁴²³ The motif of self-deprecating comparison, of course, is an old one in Sanskrit literature. See *The Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa*, ed. M.R. Kale (Bombay: Gopal Narayan & Co., 1922), 2:

kva sūryaprabhavo vaṃśaḥ kva cālpaviṣayā matiḥ |
titīrṣur dustaraṃ mohād uḍupenāsmi sāgaram || 1.2 ||

Where is the dynasty that issued from the Sun?
And where is my mind with its limited scope?
How stupid I am, trying to cross on a raft
an ocean that cannot be traversed!

⁴²⁴ Āpadeva may have wanted to link the Gītā's concept of *arpana* to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa precisely because Śrīdhara himself had done so earlier. BhP 11.2.36 is a virtual restatement of BG 9.17, and has become a prayer that would be immediately recognizable to many present-day Hindus: "One should offer to the Supreme Nārāyaṇa whatever one does: be it in deed, word, or thought, or with the senses, ego, or out of habit."

kāyena vācā manasendriyair vā
buddhyātmanā vānusṛtasvabhāvāt |
karoti yadyat sakalaṃ parasmai
nārāyaṇayeti samarpayet tat ||

Commenting on this verse, Śrīdhara explains: "What are those *dharmas* one defines as '*bhāgavata*'? They are to

become among the most influential in the formation of religious communities in early modern North India, but also, if we are to take Anantadeva II's genealogy at face value, the very one to which the family's saintly ancestor had made a famous vernacular contribution.⁴²⁵ We might also try to situate Āpadeva's sentiment within the larger intellectual trend of theistic Mīmāṃsā. This significant shift from the atheistic commitments of the discipline's foundational figures can perhaps be traced to the thirteenth-century Viśiṣṭādvaita theologian Vedānta Deśika and his *Seśvaramīmāṃsā*.⁴²⁶ But for Āpadeva, a likelier source would have been none other than Lakṣmīdhara's *Bhagavannāmakāumudī*. As already noted, the senior Anantadeva wrote a commentary on the BNK, and Āpadeva's own (still unedited) *Bhaktikalpataru* attests to the influence of his father's work.

We have little understanding of how such an idea entered the discourse, why Mīmāṃsakas began to perceive themselves differently, and what any of this may have to do with the broader “play of bhakti” taking shape in early modern North India. Although Āpadeva's navigation of the terrain that lies between Mīmāṃsā and bhakti seems inchoate, and the rise of theistic Mīmāṃsā, according to Sheldon Pollock, “produced no systemwide change,”⁴²⁷ the

offer all actions to God...[A]s it says in the Bhagavad Gītā, 'Whatever you do, eat, sacrifice, donate, or perform as penance, O son of Kunti—do that as an offering to me.' [...] The idea is that if you do so, then every activity becomes a *bhāgavata dharma*.”

See *Bhāgavata Purāṇa...With Sanskrit Commentary Bhāvārthabodhinī*, 627: nanu ke te bhāgavatā dharmāḥ | īśvarārpitāni sarvakarmāṇy api ity [...] tathā ca bhagavadgītāsu—“yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat | yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam ||” iti [...] tathā sati sakalam api karma bhāgavato dharmā bhavati iti bhāvah |

⁴²⁵ According to the colophon of the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat*, Eknāth's voluminous Marathi commentary on the eleventh canto of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the author began his writing in Paithan and completed it in Banaras. See Keune, “Eknāth Remembered,” 31-32.

⁴²⁶ See Elisa Freschi, “Between Theism and Atheism: A Journey from Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā,” in *Puṣpikā: Tracing Ancient India Through Texts and Traditions*, Vol. 4, ed. Robert Leach (Oxford: Oxbow Books Press, forthcoming).

⁴²⁷ Pollock, *The Ends of Man*, 62.

attempt to reconcile the two was by no means an isolated phenomenon. By the time of Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa in the late seventeenth century, for example, it seems to have become commonplace to assert a defense of Mīmāṃsā theism as something eternally present in the system.⁴²⁸ Like Anantadeva, Kamalākara was concerned to present himself as a proponent of bhakti, unlike those “other” Mīmāṃsakas, as he asserts in his *Mīmāṃsākutūhala*: “Some reproach the *mīmāṃsaka* with being an atheist and so having no business talking about the 'Way of Faith.' This slur may apply to some, but as for me, I believe in God.”⁴²⁹ Khaṇḍadeva, too, felt uncomfortable with the uncompromising atheism of classical Mīmāṃsā, especially the position that the deities invoked in the Veda were no more than words—the so-called concept of *śabdadevatā*.⁴³⁰ After reconstructing Jaimini's rather deconstructionist view, Khaṇḍadeva immediately feels disgusted, saying: “This is the essence of Jaimini's point of view. But even in the act of explaining it thus, my lips feel unclean. My only recourse is to remember God!”⁴³¹ Commenting on this surprising twist, Francis Clooney perceptively notes that “The discourse on *īśvara*—the one truly effective and real *devatā*—and the discourse on the myriad *devatās* are not entirely distinct; they have permeable boundaries, even in the minds of Mīmāṃsakas, who think about both.”⁴³² Clooney's comment is prescient, given that we are only beginning to arrive at the

⁴²⁸ See Pollock, “New Intellectuals,” 13-14.

⁴²⁹ See *Mīmāṃsākutūhala*, ed. P.N. Paṭṭābhirāma Śāstrī (Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, 1987), 44: *nanu nirīśvaravādinā te ko 'yaṃ bhaktimārgapraveśaḥ? patatv ayaṃ pravādāsanir ekadeśiṣu | asmākaṃ tv asty eva īśvaraḥ |* Quoted in and trans. Pollock, *The Ends of Man*, 62.

⁴³⁰ See Francis X. Clooney, “What's a god? The quest for the right understanding of *devatā* in Brāhmaṇical ritual theory (*mīmāṃsā*),” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 1.2 (1997): 337-385.

⁴³¹ See *The Bhattadipika of Khandadeva with Prabhavali Commentary of Sambhu Bhatta: Vol. IV*, ed. S. Subrahmanya Sastri (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1987 [Madras, 1952]), 202: *iti jaiminimataniṣkarṣaḥ | mama tv evaṃ vadato 'pi vāṇī duṣyatīti harismaraṇam eva śaraṇam |*

⁴³² Clooney, “What's a god?”, 354. The commentator Śambhu Bhaṭṭa notes that Khaṇḍadeva (like Kamalākara above) is responding to the possible criticism that if one were to deny the materiality of gods altogether, it would

context in which to be a Mīmāṃsaka theist seemed not only desirable but necessary.

Elsewhere within the Deva family, Āpadeva's own nephew, Bābādeva, though not mentioned in the *Smṛtikaustubha* genealogy, wrote a fascinating work called the *Arpaṇamīmāṃsā*.⁴³³ As its title portends, the *Arpaṇamīmāṃsā* used the language of Mīmāṃsā to explicate the concept of *arpaṇa*, or surrendering one's actions to God, as expressed in the Bhagavad Gītā verse (9.17) cited by Āpadeva at the end of his MNP. In his opening remarks, Bābādeva explains the purpose of this verse for Mīmāṃsā:

As we all know, in this twelve-chapter Pūrva Mīmāṃsā system, the great sage Jaimini analyzed several principles connected with the performance of every *dharma* (i.e., *yajña*, ritual sacrifice), including: the different means of valid knowledge, the application of subordinate rites, the sequence of performance, eligibility for ritual activity, analogical extension, and the relevant adjustments and restrictions on the elements to be extended. But even after having carefully studied and performed these *dharmas*, people experience significant suffering, such as having to return to the mortal world after enjoying the pleasures of heaven. Seeing this state of affairs and unable to tolerate it, God, the very embodiment of compassion, under the pretense of teaching Arjuna, explained the means to liberation in the following verse: “Whatever you do, eat, sacrifice, donate, or perform as penance, O son of Kuntī—do that as an offering to me.”⁴³⁴

be tantamount to admitting unbelief (*nāstikatva*). Cf. *Ibid.*, 381, n.17. In his Sanskrit introduction to the edition of Kamalākara's *Mīmāṃsākutūhala*, P.N. Paṭṭābhirāma Śāstrī offered up a distinction between *yājñika* and *dārśanika* Mīmāṃsakas, mapping onto their respective attitudes toward God (*īśvara*). The former invoke him at the beginning and end of rites, and worship an embodied deity (*saguṇa*), while the latter find no purchase in such invocations, but do acknowledge a formless God (*nirguṇa*). See *Mīmāṃsākutūhala (upodghāta)*, 6.

⁴³³ See V. Krishnamacharya, “Adhikaraṇādarśa of Bābādeva,” *Adyar Library Bulletin* 14.1 (1950): 49-55. In the colophons to both his works, the *Adhikaraṇādarśa* and *Arpaṇamīmāṃsā*, Bābādeva says that he is the son of Bāladeva, son of Anantadeva (sometimes written Ānandadeva). Krishnamacharya points out that two verses cited by Bābādeva in the *Arpaṇamīmāṃsā* as being his grandfather's correspond to verses in Anantadeva I's *Mano'nurañjananāṭaka*. Indeed, one of the manuscripts of the *Mano'nurañjananāṭaka* used for the printed edition appears to have stayed in the family, as it belonged to Bābādeva's son Jagannāthadeva. See *The Manonurañjana Nāṭaka* (Sanskrit introduction), 3: etatpustakaṃ devakulagrasthitam eva yato granthamukhapṛṣṭhe “idaṃ pustakaṃ bābājīdevātmaajagannāthadevasya” iti likhitam upalabhyate |

⁴³⁴ *Arpaṇamīmāṃsā*, MS 40 C.5, Adyar Library, 3-4: iha khalu jaiminimaharṣiṇā athāto dharmajijñāsetyādi prabhutvādāv iyaṃ sarvavarṇānāṃ syād ityantādhikaraṇair dvādaśalakṣaṇapūrvamīmāṃsāyāṃ sarvadharmeṣu pramāṇabhedaśeṣaprayuktikramādhikārātidēśohabādhatantraprasaṅgā vicāritāḥ | tatraivaṃvidhavicāritair api dharmair anuṣṭhitair janasya svargādibhogottarakālikamartyalokapraveśādirūpaduḥkhātīśayadarśanāt tadasahiṣṇur bhagavān karuṇāmūrtir arjunopadeśakaitavena muktyupāyaṃ kathayāmāsa -

yatkaṛoṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat |
yattapasyasi kaunteya tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam || iti |

Bābādeva proceeds to go into exhaustive detail about the grammatical composition of the words in the sentence, in order to understand how exactly the injunction in the verse works, as he would with any other Vedic injunction. This is fundamentally a work of Mīmāṃsā, replete with arguments that draw upon properly Mīmāṃsā discursive topics. If Āpadeva's citation of the *arpaṇa* verse was ancillary to the primary focus of the MNP, the *Arpaṇamīmāṃsā* seeks to make the Gītā an essential part of Mīmāṃsā intellectual production. In some ways it is an elaboration of Āpadeva's citation into a full-fledged theistic hermeneutics. We might understand the MNP as a textbook for students, “How To Do Mīmāṃsā (and Get Rich Trying),” and the *Arpaṇamīmāṃsā* as a supplement, “How To Do Mīmāṃsā (and Feel Good About It).”

The inspiration here is not entirely Vedāntic in character, despite the mention of cycles of rebirth and the search for liberation. Whereas the *Arpaṇamīmāṃsā* urges that the Gītā is primarily a text that instructs us in *karmayoga*, and the bhakti that is attendant on it, the Vedānta teaching on *karmayoga* would have it serve as a preparatory stage for achieving knowledge. At least, this is the Advaita view of the matter, and the Devas were Advaitins. Or were they? There seems to have been no small amount of disagreement within the family about their Vedānta identity, and how they understood their Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta selves. Now that we have investigated the Devas' efforts to relate jñāna with bhakti and bhakti with karma, it only remains to complete the triangle.

Jñāna and Karma

A comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta on the eve of colonialism remains a desideratum for the intellectual-historical study of early modern

India. Recent studies by Sheldon Pollock and Johannes Bronkhorst have shed valuable light on these polemics at various historical moments.⁴³⁵ The former demonstrates that the sixteenth-century South Indian polymath Appayya Dīkṣita's "Discourse on the Refutation of a Unified Knowledge System" between the so-called "prior" and "posterior" Mīmāṃsās adumbrates a larger polemical debate between the Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita schools of Vedānta. The latter volume engages with the classical relationship between the two systems, reiterating more thoroughly that not only were several early Vedāntins not Mīmāṃsakas, but that their relationship as hermeneutical brethren was constructed multifariously by different Vedānta commentators.⁴³⁶ However, for the majority of Indian intellectual history, the line of influence seems to have been more or less unidirectional: while Vedāntins of all stripes tried, with varying degrees of success, to transform an originally non-institutional tradition of metaphysical speculation into a systematic exegetical theology, Mīmāṃsakas took little interest in their self-proclaimed hermeneutical successors.⁴³⁷

The situation appears to have changed considerably in the early modern period. Not only was there an upsurge in explicit theism among Mīmāṃsakas, as we have just witnessed, but authors of Mīmāṃsā works also wrote, independently as well as exegetically, on Vedānta. More

⁴³⁵ See Sheldon Pollock, "The Meaning of *Dharma*: and 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* 32.6 (2004): 769-811; Johannes Bronkhorst, "Vedānta as Mīmāṃsā," in *Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta: Interaction and Continuity*, ed. Johannes Bronkhorst (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007), 1-91.

⁴³⁶ Bronkhorst, "Vedānta as Mīmāṃsā," 33-57.

⁴³⁷ Even where the influences on Mīmāṃsā from Vedānta are explicit, such as the concept of liberation, the two remain at metaphysical cross-purposes with regard to: a) their specific conceptions of the term, given their respective epistemological commitments to the reality or unreality of the world, and b) the way they believe ritual action can effect soteriological ends. See Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, "Knowledge and Action I: Means to the Human End in Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28.1 (2000): 1-24; Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, "Knowledge and Action II: Attaining Liberation in Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28.1 (2000): 25-41.

precisely, several works on Mīmāṃsā of the period were authored by people who had clear commitments to Vedāntic exposition. This phenomenon was nowhere more evident than in the works of Anantadeva and Āpadeva, who both engaged with the *Vedāntasāra* (VS) of Sadānanda. Āpadeva wrote a direct commentary titled the *Bālabodhinī* or the *Tattvadīpikā*,⁴³⁸ while his father Anantadeva wrote his *Siddhāntatattva* under the influence of the Advaita teacher Rāmatīrtha, who also wrote a commentary on the VS.

The VS itself, though long heralded as “one of the most popular and well-read syncretistic works on Vedānta,”⁴³⁹ remains relatively obscure in terms of its origin and early distribution. Assigned approximately to the turn of the sixteenth century, the text's first extant commentaries appear in the latter half of the same, authored by Nṛsiṃhasarasvatī (Banaras, 1588 CE) and Rāmatīrtha (late sixteenth century) respectively.⁴⁴⁰ Its popularity thenceforth was

⁴³⁸ The editors append the former name to the commentary. The concluding verse, however, which precedes the colophon, leaves it ambiguous; *bālabodhinī* could simply mean “for the enlightenment of students.” See *Vedāntasāra of Sadānanda with the Commentary ‘Bālabodhinī’ of Āpadeva* (Srirangam: Vani Vilas Press, 1911), 110 (henceforth cited as *Bālabodhinī*):

anantāṅghriyugaṃ smṛtvā racitā bālabodhinī |
āpadevena vedāntasāratattvasya dīpikā ||

⁴³⁹ See Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 55. The term “syncretistic,” however, should be critically examined, inasmuch as it carries a pejorative tone in much of modern Advaita Vedānta scholarship. Cf. Minkowski, “Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern History,” 212, 216.

⁴⁴⁰ Minkowski (“Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern History,” 207) incorrectly attributes the first commentary to the mid-sixteenth century Advaitin Nṛsiṃhāśrama. For the precise date of Nṛsiṃhasarasvatī's *Subodhinīdīkā*, see the final verse of his VS commentary. See *The Vedāntasāra of Sadānanda, together with the commentaries of Nṛsiṃhasarasvatī and Rāmatīrtha*, Fifth Edition, Revised, ed. Col. G.A. Jacob (Bombay: Nirṇaya Sagar, 1934), 59:

jāte pañcaśatādhike daśaśate saṃvatsarāṅgāṃ punaḥ
sañjāte daśavatsare prabhuvaraśrīśālivāhe śake |
prāpte durmukhavatsare śubhaśucau māse 'numatyāṃ tithau
prāpte bhārgavavāsare narahariṣṭīkām cakārojjvalām ||

Rāmatīrtha's date remains a point of contention. Minkowski (“Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern History,” 208), following Karl Potter, provides a date of 1610 CE. For an earlier assignation, based on an unpublished 1574 CE manuscript of Rāmatīrtha's commentary on the *Mānasollāsa* of Sureśvara, see Mahadevan, ed., *Preceptors of Advaita*, 223.

widespread. Manuscripts of the work proliferated from Banaras to South India, and it even made its way into the studious hands of the Jesuit missionary Father Heinrich Roth, who procured and annotated a copy during his study of Sanskrit in Agra from 1654-1660.⁴⁴¹ Moreover, not only was the VS one of the earliest Advaita Vedānta texts to be printed for a Western audience,⁴⁴² it continues to be an important teaching manual in the contemporary Advaita world.⁴⁴³ But apart from its evident use as a pedagogical resource, there has been little historical examination of the text's direct commentarial tradition.

From the outset of his *Bālabodhinī*, it is clear that Āpadeva is writing within a particular intellectual heritage, “in accordance with the established doctrine (*siddhānta*) and received lineage (*sampradāya*).”⁴⁴⁴ These two terms reflect those used by Anantadeva in his *Siddhāntatattva*, with the autocommentary *Sampradāyanirūpaṇa*. This is no coincidence, for the

⁴⁴¹ For its presence in seventeenth-century Benares, see R. Ananta Krishna Sastry, *Kavindracharya List*, Gaekwad's Oriental Series No. XVII (Baroda: Central Library, 1921), 5. For the south, see P.P.S. Sastri, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Tanjore Mahārāja Serfoji's Sarasvatī Mahāl Library* (Srirangam: Vani Vilas Press, 1931), xi. On Heinrich Roth, see Arnulf Camps and Jean-Claude Muller, eds., *The Sanskrit Grammar and Manuscripts of Fr. Heinrich Roth [1620-1668]* (Leiden: J.R. Brill, 1988), 6, 18-19.

⁴⁴² The text was known to H.T. Colebrooke through the translation of the Serampore missionary William Ward in 1822. See H.T. Colebrooke, *Essays on the Religion and Philosophy of the Hindus* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1858), 214-5. It is also worth noting that Rammohun Roy published a Bengali tract in 1815 titled *Vedantasara*, which was often confused with Sadānanda's work (Potter lists it as a translation), though it was a wholly unrelated, original monograph, containing paraphrases of and expositions on selected aphorisms from the *Brahmasūtra*. He would “translate” the work (albeit not literally) into English the following year as *The Abridgment of the Vedant*. For a detailed look at this fascinating treatise, see Bruce Carlisle Robertson, *Raja Rammohan Ray: The Father of Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 74-96.

⁴⁴³ The Chinmaya Mission, a modern Hindu organization, uses this “Prakarana-grantha” (introductory text) by “Swami Sadananda” for its two-and-a-half year Vedānta course at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya in Mumbai. See “Course Syllabus,” <http://sandeepany.chinmayamission.com/vedanta-course-syllabus/>. Accessed July 27, 2015.

⁴⁴⁴ *Bālabodhinī*, 1 (v.2cd):

āpadevena vedāntasāratattvasya dīpikā |
siddhāntasampradāyānurodhena kriyate śubhā ||

influence of his father's treatise permeates the commentary, at times explicitly⁴⁴⁵ and at times embedded in the discussion at hand. It is also reasonable to think that Āpadeva saw the two as distinct; while the *siddhānta* was a general understanding of Advaita Vedānta as presented in the VS, the *sampradāya* was something specific to his family, a particular discursive language. What is distinctive about these Vedānta works is that both Anantadeva and Āpadeva take great pains to engage with Mīmāṃsā arguments in addition to intra-Advaita debates on certain topics. In a brilliant essay on the *Bālabodhinī*, Patrick Cummins demonstrates how Āpadeva and his father “think with Mīmāṃsā when writing on Advaita...they draw parallels and illustrations from Mīmāṃsā case studies and use Mīmāṃsā principles of interpretation to support their Advaitin positions.”⁴⁴⁶ Importantly, Cummins claims, this does not entail new interpretations of key issues; Mīmāṃsā is a language that allows them to critically examine Advaita topics, but the Devas maintain a strong commitment to Advaita when writing “in Advaita.”⁴⁴⁷ Similarly, Lawrence McCrea suggests that the remarkable variety of attitudes and objectives in late Mīmāṃsā urges us to consider it not so much a “coherent system,” but rather “a kind of language—a rich and complex language, in which one can say many things...but which seems to have no longer any inherent meaning or purpose to it [...]”⁴⁴⁸ I would endorse this claim insofar as it warns us against applying uncritical labels to early modern Sanskrit intellectuals, and complicates the very idea of the “system” as a “basic category of analysis.”⁴⁴⁹ However, these functionalist explanations of

⁴⁴⁵ For example, he quotes Anantadeva I's definition of *virāga* (disenchantment), one of the four classical “spiritual prerequisites” (*sādhana-catustaya*) for a student of Vedānta. See *Bālabodhinī*, 25: taduktam **tātacaraṇaiḥ**—“aiḥikapāralaukikaphalecchāvirodhicetovṛttiviśeṣātmako virāgaḥ” iti | Cf. *Siddhāntatattva*, 30.

⁴⁴⁶ Patrick Cummins, “Āpadeva the Family Man,” (unpublished paper, University of Toronto, 2013), 7.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁴⁸ McCrea, “Playing with the System,” 584-585.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 585.

Mīmāṃsā *qua* technical jargon do not fully account for what is going on in the texts at hand. I do think that there is purchase in considering Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta to be more than mere languages in the Devas' works. There seems to be something almost schizophrenic, or intermediary, about the Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta positions being taken by Āpadeva and his father—something which does not fit neatly within one hermeneutical camp or the other, and certainly not within our conventional understanding of the distinctions between those disciplines.⁴⁵⁰

For an example of the tension between these Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta selves, let us consider Āpadeva's treatment of the *adhyayanavidhi*, the so-called “injunction to study [the Veda].”⁴⁵¹ The injunction *svādhyāyo 'dhyetavyaḥ*, “One's own [recension of the] Veda is to be studied,” was central to the discipline of Mīmāṃsā, since it meant that study of the Veda had as its purpose an understanding of the Veda's meaning (*arthāvabodha*), without which the performance of sacrificial ritual would be ineffective. And in order to understand the meaning, one was required to study Mīmāṃsā, which was by definition the settled interpretive discipline of the Veda. This is the position Āpadeva supports in the MNP, while discussing the rules

⁴⁵⁰ It is also worth recalling, in this context, a verse from the *Vyavahāramayūkha* (v.3) of Nīlakaṇṭha Bhaṭṭa (1640 CE). Nīlakaṇṭha celebrates his own father, Śaṅkara Bhaṭṭa, as having accepted, in his very person, the “nonduality between the Mīmāṃsakas” Śaṅkara and [Kumārila] Bhaṭṭa. Note the explicit division, and subsequent fusion, being portrayed between “the two contradictory systems.” I believe it would not be undue to draw the Banaras connection between the Devas and Bhaṭṭas here. See *The Vyavahāramayūkha of Bhaṭṭa Nīlakaṇṭha*, ed. P.V. Kane (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1926), 1:

virodhimārgadvayadarśanārtham
 dvedhā babhūvātra paraḥ pumān yaḥ |
 śrīśaṅkaro bhaṭṭa ihaikarūpo
mīmāṃsakādvaitam urīcakāra ||

⁴⁵¹ The Mīmāṃsā/Vedānta debate over the *adhyayanavidhi* formed the content of Chapter 20 of Appayya Dīkṣita's *Vādanakṣatramālā*, titled “A Refutation of the Position that the Injunction to Study [the Veda] Results in Knowledge of its Meaning” (*adhyayanavidher arthajñānaphalakatvanirākaraṇavāda*). This chapter immediately succeeds the one translated in Pollock, “The Meaning of *Dharma*.” Cf. *Purvottaramimamsa Vadanakshatramala* (Srirangam: Vani Vilas Press, 1912), 12, 259-280.

governing eligibility for the Vedic sacrifice: “There are, however, also characteristics of the eligible person that, while not explicitly enunciated, must be stated as qualifications of the individual [concerned in the specific rite]. These include knowledge derived from the injunction to study the Veda [...]”⁴⁵² However, Āpadeva undercuts this very position in his VS commentary: “Mīmāṃsakas say that the result of the injunction to study [the Veda] is the knowledge of its meaning, since it is a visible result. The established position (viz. Vedānta) is negative [on this point].”⁴⁵³ He goes on to mobilize reasons for why the result of the *adhyayanavidhi* cannot be anything but recitational acquisition (*avāpti*). His ultimate aim is to defend the Vedāntins' insistence that mere study of the Veda cannot be sufficient qualification for *brahmajijñāsā*, the pursuit of Brahman-knowledge. Thus his father, Anantadeva, says in the *Siddhāntatattva*:

As for what you have said as to the result [of Vedic study] being the understanding of the meaning, that is not supported by Vedāntins. For if that were the case, then it would leave us with the undesirable consequence that such [study] alone would be qualification enough for investigative analysis of Vedānta, as it is for the analysis of the prior subject matter (*pūrvakīyārthavicāra*, i.e., Mīmāṃsā). [And in that case] the separate injunctions, such as the one to “listen [to the Upaniṣad],” that deal with the qualifications relating to being endowed with the fourfold spiritual attainments, would be inappropriate.⁴⁵⁴

Both citations betray an interesting sense of self-referentiality in their use of eponymous forms—Mīmāṃsaka, Vedāntin, the *siddhānta*—drawing boundaries and providing markers of intellectual alliance. Elsewhere in his commentary, Āpadeva closes out arguments with the seemingly innocuous but indicative phrases: “so say the authorities of our tradition,” and “so says my

⁴⁵² *Mīmāṃsā-Nyāya-Prakāśa*, 194: kiṃcit tu puruṣaviśeṣaṇatvenāśrutam apy adhikāri viśeṣaṇaṃ bhavati | yathādhyayanavidhisiddhā vidyā [...]

⁴⁵³ *Bālabodhinī*, 12: adhyayanavidhiphalam arthāvabodhaḥ drṣṭatvād iti mīmāṃsakāḥ | na iti siddhāntaḥ |

⁴⁵⁴ *Siddhāntatattva*, 23: yaccoktam arthāvabodhaḥ phalam iti tan na sahante vedāntinaḥ | tathā sati hi pūrvakīyārthavicārasyeva vedāntavicāre 'pi tanmātrādhikāratvaprasaktau sādhanacatuṣṭayasampannādhikārikaprthakśravaṇavidhyādyanupapattiḥ |

teacher.”⁴⁵⁵ These terms further testify to the text's composition within a particular teaching tradition, one that was apparently continuing to negotiate its multiple intellectual identities.

We may attend to this last point by charting the intellectual history of a particular topic in the commentarial lineage between Rāmatīrtha, Anantadeva, and Āpadeva: on the relationship of *nityakarmas*, the obligatory rites, with Vedāntic knowledge. The early Advaitins Śaṅkara and his disciple Sureśvara both accept the utility of such rituals, but only up to a point. They must be given up if one is committed to knowledge alone, since jñāna and karma (*qua* religious disciplines) operate with fundamentally different metaphysical understandings of selfhood and agency. Sureśvara provides a clear hierarchy, by which ritual action purifies the mind, giving one insight into the ephemerality of the phenomenal world, thence on to disenchantment and the desire for liberation—and their logical eventuation in the renunciation of all ritual action—and so on along the line until one's abidance in self-knowledge.⁴⁵⁶ In conformity with this standard Advaita position, the VS relegates to most ritual actions the role of effecting mental purification (*buddhiśuddhi*) in order to acquire the eligibility for Vedāntic knowledge. Specifically, these are the obligatory (*nitya*), occasional (*naimittika*), and expiatory (*prāyaścitta*) karmas. The VS defines *nityakarmas* as “[actions] such as the twilight worship, which have no outcome other than avoiding the sin of omission if not performed.”⁴⁵⁷ In his commentary, Rāmatīrtha interprets

⁴⁵⁵ *Bālabodhinī*, 22: *iti sāmpradāyikāḥ* (line 3), *ity asmadguravaḥ* (line 11).

⁴⁵⁶ Cf. *Naishkarmyasiddhi* 1.52, as quoted by Rāmatīrtha. See *The Vedāntasāra of Sadānanda, together with the commentaries of Nṛsiṃhasarasvatī and Rāmatīrtha*, ed. Col. G.A. Jacob (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar, 1934), 74, ll. 11-15: *nityakarmānuṣṭhānād dharmotpattir dharmotpatteḥ pāpahānis tatas cittaśuddhis tataḥ saṃsārayāthātmyāvabodhas tato vairāgyaṃ tato mumukṣutvaṃ tatas tadupāyaparyeṣaṇaṃ tataḥ sarvakarma[tatsādhanā]samnyāsas tato yogābhyāsas tatas cittasya pratyakpravaṇatā tatas tattvamasādivākyaṛthaparijñānaṃ tato 'vidyocchedas tataḥ svātmany[ev]avasthānam*. Words in brackets are found in modern editions of the text. Cf. *The Naishkarmyasiddhi of Sureśvarāchārya with the Chandrika of Jnanottama*, ed. Col. G.A. Jacob (Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1891), 34.

⁴⁵⁷ See *The Vedāntasāra of Sadānanda, together with the commentaries of Nṛsiṃhasarasvatī and Rāmatīrtha*, 4: *nityāny akarane pratyavāyasādhanāni sandhyāvandanādīni |*

this sentence to mean that non-performance of these actions is an indicator (*lakṣaṇa*) of the sin of omission, and not its direct cause (*hetu*) *per se*:

The definition of a *nityakarma* is that which has as its purpose the *dissolution* of sins acquired without particular occasion, not that which, if not performed, *produces* the sin of omission (*pratyavāya*).

Objection: But surely, from the use of the present participle in this verse from the traditional authority: “Not performing the enjoined action, engaging in objectionable ones, and miring himself in sensual pleasures, a man falls into decline,”⁴⁵⁸ we are to understand that the non-performance [of *nityakarma*] is the cause (*hetu*) of *pratyavāya*. Then how can you suggest that non-performance does *not* produce that sin?

Reply: That is not so, for the grammarian Pāṇini, in the aphorism which reads “[The present participle suffix can replace the indicative] in expressing a characteristic or cause of another act,” has also given the present participle the meaning of “characteristic” (*lakṣaṇa*).⁴⁵⁹ It is for this reason that the wise, on seeing a man who is overcome by sleep and torpor while he performs *nityakarmas*, indicate (*lakṣyate*) that if he should perform *nitya* and *naimittika* karmas in the right way, then his accumulated sins would dissolve—not that “Such-and-such did not perform the enjoined action, and therefore will incur *pratyavāya*.”⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁸ *Mānava Dharmasāstra* 11.44:

akurvan vihitam karma ninditam ca samācaram |
prasajjañś cendriyārtheṣu narah patanam ṛcchati ||

⁴⁵⁹ *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 3.2.126: lakṣaṇahetvoḥ kriyāyāḥ. The stock example for the former is the sentence *śayānā bhuñjate yavanāḥ*: “The Ionians eat while lying down” (i.e., the Ionians' eating is characterized by their lying down); for the latter, it is *adhīyāno vasati*: “He stays for the purpose of studying” (i.e., studying is the cause of his stay). The idea expressed above means that the non-performance of *nityakarma* does not *cause* the sin of omission, but may simply be indicative, or characteristic, of moral decline. See Ram Nath Sharma, *The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini*, Vol. 3 (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1995), 429-430.

⁴⁶⁰ *The Vedāntasāra of Sadānanda, together with the commentaries of Nṛsiṃhasarasvatī and Rāmatīrtha*, 71, ll.8-16: nirmimittam upāttaduritaḥkṣayārthāni nityānīti nityakarmalakṣaṇam na tv akaraṇe pratyavāyotpādakāni nityānīti | nanu “akurvan” ...iti smṛtau śatṛpratyayād akaraṇasya pratyavāyahetutvam avagamyate tat katham akaraṇasya pratyavāyanutpādakatvam iti cen na | “lakṣaṇahetvoḥ kriyāyāḥ” iti pāṇinīnā śatur lakṣaṇārthe 'pi vidhānāt | ata eva nityādyanuṣṭhānakāle nidrālasyparavaśam naram ālokya śiṣṭair lakṣyate yady asya yathāvannityanaimittikānuṣṭhānam abhaviṣyat tadā sañcitaduritaḥkṣayo 'bhaviṣyat na cāyaṃ [conj. nāyaṃ?] vihitam akārṣīd ataḥ pratyavāyī bhaviṣyatīti |

Unless I am misreading this passage, there seems to be a textual problem here, as the current reading of the last clause would give us a contradictory message: “He *did* perform enjoined action, and therefore will incur the sin of omission.” *ca* and *na* are orthographically similar enough in Nāgari to justify the emendation above.

Rāmatīrtha builds on an argument made earlier by Sureśvara⁴⁶¹ to the effect that the authors of *smṛti* such as Manu, quoted here, could not have intended that a really existing thing (the sin of omission) could arise from a non-existent source (the non-performance of action).⁴⁶² Therefore, *nityakarmas* must be defined positively, as technologies of purification which, if unattended to, could be *indicative*, but only secondarily, of moral degeneration—a move which at once neutralizes their obligatory force and subordinates them to a kind of spiritual cultivation preceding the attainment of knowledge. Such a move, of course, legitimates the institution of monastic renunciation (*saṃnyāsa*), which is predicated on the abandonment of ritual action as inferior, distracting, and ultimately contradictory to the pursuit of Vedāntic knowledge.⁴⁶³

In his commentary on the same VS passage, Āpadeva provides a virtually identical reconstruction, down to the grammatical detail, of Rāmatīrtha's argument, more or less in defense of the idea that performing *nityakarma* serves as a preparatory discipline for knowledge.

⁴⁶¹ See *Taittirīyopaniṣadbhāṣyavārttikam Sureśvarācāryakṛtam*, ed. Hari Narayan Apte (Pune: Ānandāśrama Press, 1911), 8:

nityānām akriyā yasmāt lakṣayitvaiva satvarā |
pratyavāyakriyāṃ tasmāt lakṣaṇārthe śatā bhavet || 1.21 ||

⁴⁶² The Vedāntic logic here refers to *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.2, katham asataḥ saḥ jāyeta: “How could existence emerge from the non-existent?”

⁴⁶³ The concept of *pratyavāya* itself has an interesting intellectual history in Advaita Vedānta. It seems to have been Śaṅkara's general attitude that no such faults of non-performance, especially the *pratyavāya*, applied to the renunciate, whose only obligation was a negative one: to give up ritual action. In his commentary on Śaṅkara's *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (3.4.38), however, the thirteenth-century Advaitin Anubhūtiśvarūpācārya urged that the study of Vedānta was an obligatory duty, a *nityakarma* for renunciates, who would incur *pratyavāya* if they were not to perform it. See *Prakāṣārthavivaraṇam, Volume II*, ed. T.R. Chintamani (Madras: University of Madras, 1989 [1939]), 977: saṃnyāsināṃ śravaṇādividhir nitya eva akaraṇe pratyavāyaśravaṇāt |

His later contemporary Vidyāraṇya (ca. 1350 CE) corroborated this claim in his *Vivaraṇaprameyasamgraha*: “So we have a traditional authority on *pratyavāya*: ‘The renunciate who gives up obligatory rituals, and *doesn't* engage in study of the Vedānta, is as good as a sinner—no doubt about it.’” See *The Vivaraṇaprameyasamgraha of Vidyāraṇya*, ed. Rāmasāstrī Tailāṅga (Benares: E.J. Lazarus & Co., 1893), 4:

nityaṃ karma parityajya vedāntaśravaṇaṃ vinā |
vartamānas tu saṃnyāsī pataty eva na saṃśayaḥ || iti pratyavāyasmarāṇāt |

However, he includes one or two elements, absent from Rāmatīrtha's discussion but present in Anantadeva's *Siddhāntatattva*, which add a Mīmāṃsā twist to the issue at hand. Both Āpadeva and his father embed within this larger discussion—namely, that the performance of *nityakarmas* leads to the purification of the mind—an intra-Mīmāṃsā debate on the fruit of *nityakarma*. I paraphrase Anantadeva's comments as follows, with some notes from Āpadeva:

Settled Opinion: So one who has a basic awareness of Vedāntic teaching can develop a pure mind by performing ritual actions either in this life or in several lives, and obtain the requisite qualities for a student of Vedānta. Now you might be wondering: How do *nityakarmas* like performing the daily evening worship contribute to inner mental purity? The answer is that they do so because performing them results in the dissolution of sins.

Prima Facie Objection: But isn't the point of *nityakarma* to maintain the prior non-existence (*prāgabhāva*) of the *pratyavāya*, the sin of omission obtained when one doesn't perform an enjoined ritual action? Isn't that what it should produce?

Settled Opinion: This cannot be the case. Let us consider the thing that is “to be produced” (*bhāvya*) by the *nityakarma*. That thing cannot be heaven, as posited by the axiomatic *viśvajit* principle,⁴⁶⁴ for not everyone desires heaven all the time, and these actions are by definition enjoined on a daily basis. Now, even if we were to perform such a *nityakarma* everyday, a *pratyavāya* could either arise or not arise. In the former case, it makes no sense to maintain its prior non-existence, and in the latter case there would be no prior non-existence in the first place. (That is, you can't talk about the “prior non-existence of the form of wind” if wind has no form to begin with).

Amicus Curiae: Well, let's say that what one really means to say by “prior non-existence” is “total non-existence” (*atyantābhāva*).

Settled Opinion: It makes even less sense to posit that as the fruit of *nityakarma*. Since “total non-existence” always exists, it would be pointless to perform the *nityakarma* at all. But *nityakarmas* are not fruitless! Everybody has sins, whether done out of ignorance or with full knowledge, and everyone—at least, every affirmer (*āstika*) of the Vedic way of life—always wants to get rid of them and the hateful suffering they bring. So it makes perfect sense to posit the dissolution of sins as the result, the *bhāvya*, of *nityakarma*. Once we have done so, if some traditional authority comes around and says that not performing it can result in *pratyavāya*, then that's all very fine. But the direct definition of the

⁴⁶⁴ The *viśvajit-nyāya* forms the discursive topic of *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* 4.3.7. Since every Vedic injunction, according to Mīmāṃsā, must produce some result, through the syntactic analysis and semantic power of *bhāvanā*, this principle maintains that we must posit that result as “heaven” for those injunctions which do not explicitly enunciate their fruit.

nityakarma must be the dissolution of sins.⁴⁶⁵

The larger Mīmāṃsā issue at stake here is the insistence that the *nityakarma*, like all actions enjoined by the Veda, must be purposeful. If the *nityakarma* were exclusively to be negatively constituted, then it would cease to serve as an *itikartavya*, an obligatory, “how-to-do-it” component of the ritual universe. Anantadeva imported this debate wholesale from a disagreement between two influential Mīmāṃsakas of approximately the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Someśvara Bhaṭṭa and Pārthasārathi Miśra. As Lawrence McCrea has pointed out, the middle of the sixteenth century saw a profusion of Mīmāṃsā literature that engaged with both these classic authors. Moreover, authors felt the need to structure the discussion of central issues in their works by juxtaposing the doctrinal splits between the two.⁴⁶⁶ The particular issue of the *nityakarma* found expression in Pārthasārathi's *Tantrarātna* (on Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's *Tuṣṭīkā* 6.3.2), and in Someśvara's *Nyāyasudhā* (2.4.1).⁴⁶⁷ The former asserted the principle held by Anantadeva

⁴⁶⁵ *Siddhāntatattva*, 25-26: tad ayam āpātajñānavān iha janmani janmāntare vā 'nuṣṭhitakarmabhir viśuddhā'ntaḥkaraṇo nityānityavivekādikam labhate | nanu katham karmaṇām tattatphalasādhanām antaḥkaraṇaśuddhihetutvam ? ucyate | nityānām tāvat karmaṇām pāpakṣayaphalakatvam parair apy abhyupeyate tathā hy “ahar ahaḥ sandhyām upāsīta” ityādīnām viśvajinnyāyena svargo na bhāvyatayā kalpayitavyaḥ | svargakāmanāyāḥ sarvadā sarveṣām asattvena ahar ahaḥ kartavyā'vabodhe bādhaprasaṅgāt | [...] nāpi vihitākaraṇapratyavāyapragabhāvaparipālanam bhāvyaḥ | sandhyopāsanānuṣṭhāne 'pi kadācit pratyavāyotpattau prāgabhāvaparipālanānupapatteḥ | anutpattau prāgabhāvātvasiddheḥ | na hi vāyau rūpā'nutpattau rūpapragabhāvo vaktum śakyah | atha prāgabhāvapālanagīrā 'tyantābhāvo 'bhīdhīyate | na tarhi tasya nityakarmaphalatvam yuktaḥ kalpayitum | tasya sarvadā vidyamānatvena sandhyopāsanāder vaiyyarthīyāpatteḥ | [...] nāpy aphaḥlavattvam nityānām vaktum śakyam | [...] jñānā'jñānakṛtānām sarvapāpānām puruṣeṣu sattvāt tatṣayasya ca sarvadā sarvā'bhīpsitatvād duḥkhavat pāpasyāpi dveṣyatayā tannivṛtteḥ kāmyatvāt | [...] siddhe ca pāpakṣayaphalalpane yadi nāma tadakaraṇe pratyavāyāḥ smṛtīvaśāt pratīyate astu nāma tathā iti |

For the use of the term *āstika*, see Āpadeva's *Bālabodhinī*, 22, ll.16-17: pāpakṣayas tu sarvadā āstikānām abhīpsita iti tasya yuktaḥ phalatvam |

⁴⁶⁶ See McCrea, “Playing with the System,” 577-578. McCrea calls this the “scholastic turn” in Mīmāṃsā, and cites Āpadeva's MNP as an example. Āpadeva is generally held to support Pārthasārathi's position when it gets down to brass tacks. See Edgerton, *The Mīmāṃsā Nyāya Prakāśa*, 7.

⁴⁶⁷ See *Mīmāṃsākośaḥ, Part IV*, ed. Kevalānanda Sarasvatī (Wai: Prajña Pāṭhashālā Maṇḍala Grantha Mālā, 1956), 2338, col. 1: nityakarmaṇaḥ vihitākaraṇapratyavāyayapragabhāvaparipālanārthatvam nirasya vidhibalāt pāpakṣaya eva phalam kalpyate iti vyavasthāpitam sarvaśaktyadhikaraṇe (MS 6.3.2) **tuṣṭīkātantrarātna**yoḥ | **nyāyasudhā**kṛtas tu nityakarmaṇaḥ pāpakṣayo na phalam, kintu vihitākaraṇapratyavāyapragabhāvaparipālanam eva phalam ity āhuḥ | (*Nyāyasudhā* 2.4.1).

and Āpadeva, while the latter represented the prima facie argument.⁴⁶⁸

What did the Devas achieve by embedding this Mīmāṃsā debate in their ostensibly Advaita Vedānta works? Cummins and McCrea might argue that this is another instance of Mīmāṃsā as a discursive language, but the social consequences of the *nityakarmas* raises a red flag. Neither Pārthasārathi nor Someśvara disowns the *nityakarmas* altogether, as would the Advaita Vedāntin at his most uncompromising, for that implies monastic renunciation. Renunciation must of necessity be eschewed by the Mīmāṃsaka, inasmuch as the *nityakarmas* are by definition “eternal” or “lifelong.” Pārthasārathi, as we will remember from the previous chapter, singled out Advaita Vedāntins for their supercessionist attitude toward Mīmāṃsā and the majority of the Vedic corpus, as well as what he considered their faulty reading practices. Yet both Āpadeva and his father accept, as a rule, that renunciation is a *sine qua non* for the eligibility to Vedāntic study, even though there was significant disagreement on this matter among early modern Advaitins.⁴⁶⁹ If anything, it is Vedānta that is a “language” here, as much an academic as a soteriological discipline, while it is properly Mīmāṃsā topics that occupy the Devas' attention. Were they, then, so thoroughly “committed” to Advaita Vedānta? What was the

⁴⁶⁸ Anantadeva concludes his reconstruction by referring to Pārthasārathi. See *Siddhāntatattva*, 26: iti **tantraratnā** nityānāṃ pāpakṣayahetutvam abhihitam | Cf. *Tantraratna*, Vol. 3, ed. T.V. Ramachandra Dikshita (Varanasi: Vārāṇaseya Saṃskṛta Viśvavidyālaya, 1963), 495-510.

⁴⁶⁹ See *Bālabodhinī*, 25-26: na grhasthasya śravaṇe 'dhikāraḥ adhikāriviśeṣaṇasya saṃnyāsasya abhāvāt | Cf. *Siddhāntatattva*, 33ff.

This is a much-contested principle in Advaita Vedānta history, which hinges largely on the disparate interpretations of the word *uparati* (withdrawal) as one of the qualifications of a student of Vedānta. Cf. Roger Marcaurelle, *Freedom Through Inner Renunciation: Śaṅkara's Philosophy in a New Light* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 165-208. The contemporary South Indian Advaitin Rāmakṛṣṇa Adhvarī came out with a “most virulent and personal denunciation of those who hold physical renunciation as a sine qua non” (*Ibid.*, 208). His criticism was directed toward renunciates themselves, whom he accused of extorting prostrations from their followers. The Devas, however, were married householders who did not renounce, as far as we can tell, and seem to have had no such agonistic relationship with the renunciate Rāmatīrtha.

nature of such commitment? To which side did their eternal obligations draw them?

This apparent struggle for reconciliation between two historically adversarial intellectual identities can be most clearly witnessed in the conclusion to the *Bhāṭṭālaṅkāra*, the junior Anantadeva (II)'s commentary on his father's MNP. Āpadeva, as we have seen, offered a Vedānticized reading of the work of *dharma* at the end of his Mīmāṃsā primer. But Anantadeva II turns out to be a very different Vedāntin from his father. Classical Advaita Vedānta exalted jñāna—the immediate apprehension of one's identity with Brahman—as the sole method of liberation, independent of all association with karma, ritual activity. But in a long excursus on that *arpana* passage in the MNP, Anantadeva II appears to deviate radically from a purely Advaitic, hierarchical interpretation of karma in relation to jñāna:

None of this is contradictory to the citations from the Upaniṣads which say “By performing karma [one goes to the world of the ancestors]” (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.5.16) or “Knowing him alone [does one reach beyond death]” (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 3.8; 6.15). The first citation is a general statement, and it makes sense to circumscribe its subject matter to action which is performed *without* the attitude of offering being described above. As for the second, we accept that self-knowledge accompanied by the performance of ritual action has the capacity to produce liberation. As the *Bṛhaddīpikā* says:

“Surely the highest good arises from knowledge, not from action, that cause of bondage.”
 “No. It arises not from one [of these two], but from a synthesis of knowledge and action.”
 [...]

 “One who is destroying sin by obligatory and occasional rites (*nityanaimittika*), purifying his knowledge, and bringing it to fruition by means of practice—such a person, whose knowledge is ripened as a result of detachment, experiences liberation.”⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁷⁰ See *Mīmāṃsā Nyāya Prakāsa* by Āpadeva with a commentary called *Bhāṭṭālaṅkāra* by Pandit Ananta Deva, ed. M.M. Sri Lakshmana Sastri (Benares: Vidya Vilas Press, 1921), 490 (henceforth cited as *Bhāṭṭālaṅkāra*): na ca “karmaṇā” ityādi śrutivirodhaḥ | sāmānyapravṛttāyās tasyās tādr̥ṣārpanabuddhiśūnyakarmaviṣayatvopapatteḥ | nāpi “tameva viditvā” iti śrutivirodhaḥ | karmānuṣṭhānasahitasya ātmajñānasya asmābhir mokṣajanakatvābhyupagamāt | yathoktaṃ bṛhaddīpikāyām:

nanu niḥśreyasaṃ jñānād bandhahetor na karmaṇaḥ |
 naikasmād api tatkiṃ tu jñānakarmasamuccayāt || [...]

 nityanaimittikair eva kurvāṇo duritakṣayam |
 jñānaṃ ca vimalīkurvann abhyāsenā ca pācayan |
 vairāgyāt pakvavijñānaḥ kaivalyaṃ bhajate naraḥ ||

The verses above, which Anantadeva II attributes to the *Bṛhaddīpikā*, are in fact fragments from the (now-lost) *Bṛhaṭṭīkā* of the famous seventh-century Mīmāṃsaka Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa, as discussed by John Taber and Roque Mesquita.⁴⁷¹ Mesquita has argued that there was a progression in Kumāriḷa's thought toward a position more favorable to Vedānta, but Taber suggests that such a thesis remains to be proven, inasmuch as this promulgation of a *jñānakarmasamuccayavāda*—the doctrine that liberation can be achieved through a synthesis between knowledge and ritual action—is not only far removed from Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, but even from that of his contemporary Maṅḍana Mīśra in the *Brahmasiddhi*, which favors the position.⁴⁷² This doctrine is usually presented as belonging to Bhedābheda Vedānta, a tradition of interpretation that comes up for stringent critique in the writings of Śaṅkara and his disciples, and that survives residually in different schools of Vedānta until its sudden renaissance in the work of the sixteenth-century polymath Vijñānabhikṣu.⁴⁷³ Anantadeva II connected his support for the *jñānakarmasamuccaya* directly to the study of Mīmāṃsā itself:

What I'm trying to say is this: Whether jñāna and karma share an equal role in bringing about liberation, or whether karma leads to liberation by way of jñāna, the fact remains that, because karma does give rise to liberation, the intellectual system dedicated to analyzing karma (i.e., Mīmāṃsā) can culminate in liberation.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷¹ See John Taber, “Kumāriḷa the Vedāntin?” in *Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta: Interaction and Continuity*, ed. Johannes Bronkhorst (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007), 159-184. Cf. Roque Mesquita, “Die Idee der Erlösung bei Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa [The Concept of Liberation According to Kumāriḷabhaṭṭa],” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 38 (1994): 451-484. The alternate title given by Anantadeva II here may simply be a scribal error, but it is possible that he knew the verses only from their citation in the *Nyāyasudhā* of Someśvara Bhaṭṭa, a text to which he refers often later in the excursus. Mesquita (“Die Idee der Erlösung,” 465) translates the first half of the first verse as follows: “doch die Erlösung auf Grund der Erkenntnis von der Ursache der Bindung entsteht (und nicht auf Grund der Ritualwerke,” which I think is erroneous. *bandhahetor* should construe as a *tatpuruṣa* compound in apposition with *karmanah*, both in the ablative, rather than as the genitive object of *jñāna*.

⁴⁷² Taber, “Kumāriḷa the Vedāntin?”, 162.

⁴⁷³ See Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 24-38.

⁴⁷⁴ *Bhāṭṭālaṅkāra*, 497: tasmāt samaprādhānyenaiva jñānakarmaṅor muktihetutvam, yadi vā jñānavārā karmanām

The fact that Anantadeva II explicitly adheres to this position, one that had been summarily rejected by the Advaita tradition that his forefathers support, should give us pause in our consideration of intellectual identity and the anxiety of influence.⁴⁷⁵ One way to address this issue is to take account of the strategies used by early modern scholars to “disagree without disrespect,” as Madhav Deshpande has recently shown in the case of Sanskrit grammarians.⁴⁷⁶ Patrick Cummins demonstrates the presence of this strategy in the writings of the Deva family. Āpadeva uses metatextual markers (e.g., “so says my father”) in some cases precisely to gloss over those places he departs from his father's positions.⁴⁷⁷ This simultaneously gives his work authority and originality; Āpadeva establishes a teaching lineage and his family name, while at the same time staking out his own positions. In doing so, he and his Banarasi contemporaries look very much like scholars of the present, at once trained by mentors in a particular discipline and obligated to produce new and unique research. Can we contextualize this desire to strike out,

muktihetutvam, sarvathā 'pi karmanām muktiphalatvāt karmavicārthasya śāstrasya sambhavati muktau paryavasānam ity āśayaḥ |

⁴⁷⁵ Anantadeva proceeds to quote from the precise section of Kumārila's *Ślokavārttika* (*Sambandhākṣepaparihāra*, vv. 95-96, 105-108) that forms the subject of Mesquita's and Taber's articles. (Incidentally, I am inclined to agree with Taber's assessment regarding Kumārila, especially after seeing Anantadeva employ the verses in a sustained argument against the self-sufficiency of jñāna as a means to liberation). But a more elaborate defense of the *jñānakarmasamuccaya* was made by Anantadeva II's contemporary Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa in his *Mīmāṃsākutūhala*, 33-44. It appears immediately prior to the section I have cited above, where Kamalākara, like Khaṇḍadeva, fends off the critique that Mīmāṃsakas should not talk about bhakti. The phenomenon of Mīmāṃsakas incorporating Vedānta into their writings thus stretched beyond the Devas. It was clearly a point of contention *between* Advaita Vedāntins, as Kamalākara cites Advaita authorities from Vācaspati Miśra to Prakāśātman, author of the *Pañcapādikāvivarāṇa*. Developing a more thorough understanding of the place of Vedānta in early modern Mīmāṃsā could be helped by procuring Kamalākara's unpublished work of Vedānta, the *Vedāntakautūhala*, which he mentions at the end of his *Śāntiratna*. See K. Madhava Krishna Sarma, “The Vedāntakautūhala of Kamalākaraḥṭṭa,” *Poona Orientalist* 9.1-2 (1944): 70-72. A comparative study of these three close contemporaries and their works—Kamalākara's *Mīmāṃsākutūhala*, Anantadeva's *Bhāṭṭālaṅkāra*, and Khaṇḍadeva's *Bhāṭṭadīpikā*—awaits further research.

⁴⁷⁶ Madhav Deshpande, “Disagreement without disrespect': transitions in a lineage from Bhaṭṭoji to Nāgeśa,” *South Asian History and Culture* 6.1 (2015): 32-49.

⁴⁷⁷ Cummins, “Āpadeva the Family Man,” 4-6.

figuratively and literally (if their polemics were any indication), in the social history of early modern intellectual life?

A Social History of Intellectual Change?

One is compelled to envision the Devas among the scholarly intelligentsia of early modern Banaras, holding debates on just such topics in the Muktimaṇḍapa, the “Liberation Pavilion” of the Viśveśvara temple that figured so prominently in that city's religious and intellectual self-representation. Rosalind O'Hanlon and others have noted that the Muktimaṇḍapa was famed for being the site of a cosmopolitan assembly of *paṇḍits*, who engaged in public disputations and issued significant adjudications of social and religious law, on topics ranging from political intervention with the Mughal imperial order to the entitlements of upwardly mobile caste communities.⁴⁷⁸ In particular, these scholars of Banaras were pre-occupied with determining the nature of Brahmin identity, in response to the claims of various regional plaintiffs, especially from the Deccan. Their attempts at normative deliberation, however, were not always met with unanimous accord. As O'Hanlon and Minkowski have noted, the disputes speak of “parties” within the Banaras assembly of southern pandits, precisely the ones who contributed substantially to Sanskrit traditions of learning in this period.⁴⁷⁹

How might we read these internal family debates against the backdrop of this broader social contestation? The Devas were, after all, Brahmins from the south, at once revered for their scholarly acumen and suspected of partisan motivations. Moreover, Anantadeva II was conspicuously present among the signatories of several momentous letters of judgment

⁴⁷⁸ O'Hanlon, “Letters Home,” 219ff.

⁴⁷⁹ O'Hanlon and Minkowski, “What makes people who they are?,” 410.

(*nirṇayapatras*) to emerge from the Mukti Pavilion.⁴⁸⁰ It is not difficult to imagine a sense of continuity between the senior and junior Anantadevas' concerns with deliberation, determination, *nirṇaya*. The very word summons up the whole world of public-facing *paṇḍit* assemblies, who were, perhaps, reacting to the influence of the Islamic *fatwa* and the desirability of being able to produce definitive decisions. We may also see in the *nirṇaya* a greater public demand for unequivocal, authoritative information in matters of religious dispute for wider regional audiences, that were not only interested in the outcomes of these debates, but expected to see paper documents setting them out.⁴⁸¹ The Devas' vigorous defense and propagation of an intellectually savvy bhakti tradition may thus reflect their particular geographical sensibilities, given their invocation of the Brahmin *bhakta* Eknāth, as well as their contribution to those percolating debates on what it meant to be a Brahmin in the sixteenth century and beyond.

But the question persists: To what extent do these intellectual shifts have identifiable social contexts? As I mentioned previously, the historical evidence linking the Devas to Eknāth is questionable, though the ideological connections may not be so farfetched. The *Eknāthī Bhāgavat*, Eknāth's Marathi commentary on the eleventh chapter of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, demonstrates familiarity with Sanskrit intellectual disciplines, draws heavily from the work of the exegete Śrīdhara Svāmin, and was completed in—where else?—Banaras in 1573 CE.⁴⁸² Moreover, judging by Eknāth's hagiographies, the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat* was met with rumblings of discontent from the city's establishment Brahmins, who, much like the Devas' intellectual

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 395.

⁴⁸¹ See, e.g., Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Performance in a World of Paper: Puranic Histories and Social Communication in Early Modern India," *Past and Present* 219 (2013): 87-126. I thank Rosalind O'Hanlon for her very helpful comments here on the social implications of the *nirṇaya* as a genre.

⁴⁸² See Justin Abbott, *The Life of Eknāth* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), xvii-xxii.

opponents, were upset that the saint profaned Vyāsa's sacred teaching by transmitting it in the “polluted” vernacular.⁴⁸³ While it seems as though none of the Devas wrote a word of Marathi, the space for vernacular communication among *paṇḍit* families was probably wider, and with greater intellectual as well as devotional content, than the extant written record may reveal.⁴⁸⁴ For more concrete evidence of the Devas' local connections, instead of turning to Eknāth, we might consider another Maharashtrian saint figure: Rāmdās.

Although Anantadeva II spent his life in Banaras and was patronized by Baj Bahadur Chandra of Almora, all the way out in Uttarkhand,⁴⁸⁵ he was also the preceptor of one Raghunātha Navahasta, a protégé of Queen Dīpābāi of Thanjavur who composed in both Sanskrit and Marathi.⁴⁸⁶ Raghunātha studied with Anantadeva II in Banaras, but returned to Maharashtra and, later, Thanjavur in various capacities. He expressed considerable gratitude to his teacher, frequently referring to himself in colophons as “Anantadeva's own” (*anantadevīya*) and “blessed by Anantadeva” (*anantadevānuḡrḥīta*).⁴⁸⁷ Raghunātha appears to have been on equally intimate terms with the influential saint Rāmdās, famous for his relationship with the

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, xx.

⁴⁸⁴ See, e.g., Madhav Deshpande, “On Vernacular Sanskrit,” in *Sanskrit and Prakrit: Sociolinguistic Issues* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), 33-51.

⁴⁸⁵ See Pollock, “New Intellectuals,” 18.

⁴⁸⁶ P.K. Gode, “Raghunātha, a Protégé of Queen Dīpābāi of Tanjore, and his Works—Between A.D. 1675-1712,” in *Studies in Indian Literary History*, Vol. II (Bombay: Singhi Jain Śāstra Śikshāpīth, 1954), 391-403; P.K. Gode, “The Identification of Raghunātha, the Protégé of Queen Dīpābāi of Tanjore and his Contact with Saint Rāmadāsa—Between A.D. 1648 and 1682,” in *Studies in Indian Literary History*, Vol. II (Bombay: Singhi Jain Śāstra Śikshāpīth, 1954), 404-415; P.K. Gode, “A Rare Manuscript of Janārdana-Mahodaya by Raghunātha Gaṇeśa Navahasta, Friend of Saint Rāmadāsa—Between A.D. 1640 & 1682,” in *Studies in Indian Literary History*, Vol. II (Bombay: Singhi Jain Śāstra Śikshāpīth, 1954), 416-424; K.V. Sarma, “Raghunātha Navahasta and his Contribution to Sanskrit and Marathi Literature,” *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal* 7.1 (1969): 69-82.

⁴⁸⁷ Gode, “A Rare Manuscript of Janārdana-Mahodaya,” 421.

Maratha king Shivaji. Rāmdās wrote an autographed letter to Raghunātha in 1674 CE describing him as “all-knowing” (*sarvajña*), and went so far as to say that all the knowledge Raghunātha possessed was equivalent to Rāmdās' own (*tumce je kāhī āhe te sakal mājheci āhe*).⁴⁸⁸ If this seems an oddly lofty compliment for a saint to pay to a layman, we should remember that Raghunātha was described elsewhere as Rāmdās' personal instructor (*śrīce upādhye*) and specialist in ancient lore (*purāṇik*).⁴⁸⁹ In addition to these roles as scholar and storyteller, Raghunātha was appointed priest at the Raghupati temple of Chāfaḷ, in Satara district, where Rāmdās set up a large seminary (*maṭha*).⁴⁹⁰ According to P.K. Gode, this was a position Raghunātha occupied until 1683 CE, after which the political turmoil following Rāmdās' and Shivaji's deaths prompted him to settle in Thanjavur under the patronage of Queen Dīpābāi.⁴⁹¹

The Raghunātha-Rāmdās nexus sheds light on precisely the antinomies we find in the Devas: language use (Sanskrit/vernacular), discursive modes (local/cosmopolitan), public identities (scholar/sermonizer), and intellectual domains (bhakti and jñāna/karma). Raghunātha appears to have moved easily between the world of “high” Brahmanical learning in Banaras and the very local responsibilities of a relatively small-town priest affiliated with a celebrated saint. Moreover, as a *purāṇik*, a scholar versed in the *purāṇa* tradition, Raghunātha would have been able to mediate between elite and popular worlds as part of his very profession.⁴⁹² As P.K. Gode

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 423.

⁴⁸⁹ Gode, “The Identification of Raghunātha,” 409.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 412. The *terminus post quem* for this appointment is 1679 CE (*Ibid.*, 408).

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 413-4.

⁴⁹² See V. Narayana Rao, “Purāṇa,” in *The Hindu World*, ed. Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby (New York: Routledge, 2004), 114: “A typical *purāṇika*...chooses a section of a Purāṇa for a discourse, reads out a portion of the text in Sanskrit or the regional language, and comments on it, incorporating material from other similar texts and expanding on their relevance to that specific place and point in time.”

observes, Raghunātha's *Janārdana-Mahodaya*, a Sanskrit manual of Vaiṣṇava ritual, may owe its sections on Rāma and Hanumān worship to the influence of the saint's popular activities, and vice versa.⁴⁹³ In this connection, we should note that Raghunātha's revered teacher, Anantadeva II, also composed Vaiṣṇava ritual manuals, often for a particular localized audience. In the opening to his *Mathurāsetu*, Anantadeva II names his audience directly, by proposing to demonstrate the greatness of the environs of Mathurā “for those of who you are living there itself, singing the glories of and taking as your sole refuge the God who goes by the names Hari, Keśava, and Govinda.”⁴⁹⁴ The *Mathurāsetu*, perhaps modeled on the *Tristhalīsetu* of Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa,⁴⁹⁵ provides a Brahmin pilgrim's guide to the city, detailing the glory of various holy sites and the appropriate rites to observe. It draws heavily upon a Tantric manual of Rāma worship, the *Rāmārcanacandrikā* by Ānandavana, even reproducing in the manuscript a diagram of syllables to be used for esoteric recitation by Vaiṣṇava initiates.⁴⁹⁶ Anantadeva II was also familiar with the discourse of bhaktirasa, thus blending together inspiration from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the world of Rāma devotion.⁴⁹⁷

That Rāma was central to the ritual life of the *Mathurāsetu*, the overwhelming presence

⁴⁹³ Gode, “A Rare Manuscript of Janārdana-Mahodaya,” 423-4.

⁴⁹⁴ *Mathurāsetu*, MS SAN 2638, India Office Library (British Library), 1r, ll. 3-4: tatraiva satām harikeśavagovindanāmānam ananyaśaraṇatayā bhajatām tatrabhavatām [...]

⁴⁹⁵ See Richard Salomon, ed., trans., *The Bridge to the Three Holy Cities: The Sāmānya-praghaṭṭaka of Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa's Tristhalīsetu* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985).

⁴⁹⁶ For the diagram, see *ibid.*, 30v, in the lower right corner. It appears immediately after Anantadeva's discussion of the appropriate times and customs of initiation (*dīkṣākālaḥ*). The *Rāmārcanacandrikā* probably belonged to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. See Hans Bakker, “Reflections on the Evolution of Rāma Devotion in the Light of Textual and Archeological Evidence,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 31 (1987): 24, and n.77.

⁴⁹⁷ Anantadeva details the foundational, stimulant, and aesthetic factors (*vibhāvas*) of bhaktirasa at the end of the *Mathurāsetu*, from ff.43v-46r.

of Kṛṣṇa notwithstanding, dovetails nicely with the Devas' possible connection to Rāmdās. Hans Bakker has shown that Rāma devotion in the Banaras region dates from pre-Islamic times, and especially flourished in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when Sanskrit texts such as the *Agastyasamhitā* and *Rāmapūrvatāpanīya Upaniṣad* described a Rāma at once equated with an impersonal transcendent reality (*nirguṇa*), and the object of personal worship (*saguṇa*).⁴⁹⁸ The combination of Advaita Vedānta philosophy with bhakti was well-established in the Rāma devotional tradition. Subsequent texts like the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* represented the culmination of these efforts, combining narrative and philosophy to offer a Vedānticized Rāma that would exert significant influence on the North Indian Rāmānandī order and, most famously, Tulsīdās' Hindi-language *Rāmcaritmānas*.⁴⁹⁹ Ānandavana, author of the *Rāmārcanacandrikā*, claimed a direct lineage to Advaita authors from Gauḍapāda to Śaṅkara and Sureśvara.⁵⁰⁰ And as we have seen in the previous chapter, these Rāma texts also proclaimed the salvific power of reciting the mantra of Rāma's name, in the process appropriating Śaiva formulas and overlapping with their Bhāgavata counterparts.⁵⁰¹

The extent to which Rāmdās was aware of this literature is uncertain, since he did not

⁴⁹⁸ Hans Bakker, *Ayodhyā, Part I* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1986), 67-181. Cf. Hans Bakker, "An Old Text of the Rāma Devotion: The *Agastyasamhitā*," in *Navonmeṣaḥ: Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj Commemoration Volume* (Varanasi: M.M. Gopinath Kaviraj Centenary Celebration Committee, 1987), 300-306; Bakker, "Reflections on the Evolution of Rāma Devotion," 9-42.

⁴⁹⁹ Bakker, *Ayodhyā*, 122-124. Cf. Michael Allen, "Sītā's Shadow: Vedāntic Symbolism in the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa*," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 20.1 (2011): 81-102.

⁵⁰⁰ Bakker, *Ayodhyā*, 123, n.10.

⁵⁰¹ Bakker, *Ayodhyā*, 119-124; Bakker, "An Old Text of the Rāma Devotion," 302-303. Cf. Hans Bakker, "Rāma Devotion in a Śaiva Holy Place," in *Patronage and Popularisation, Pilgrimage and Procession: Channels of Transcultural Translation and Transmission in Early Modern South Asia*, ed. Heidi Rika Maria Pauwels (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 67-79. It is possible that Anantadeva's guru Rāmāfirtha emerged from just such a devotional milieu.

draw significantly from sources outside Maharashtra, but he certainly did know Sanskrit.⁵⁰² For our purposes, Rāmdās represents the Devas' inverse: a charismatic preacher first, and a scriptural exegete second. His most famous Marathi composition, the *Dāsbodh*, mirrors many of the Rāmaite texts described above, in that it espouses a broadly Advaita Vedānta philosophy while foregrounding popular practices of bhakti, *kīrtan* in particular.⁵⁰³ It also provides a fascinating example of the local-cosmopolitan encounters we have attempted to study in the writings of the Devas. At the beginning of the eighth chapter, “A Description of the Audience” (*sabhāvarṇana*), Rāmdās first cites a famous Sanskrit verse on singing the name of God, and subsequently translates it into Marathi.⁵⁰⁴ He then recounts the reasons why the public assembly (*sabhā*) is a wonderful place, the very abode of God:

⁵⁰² Wilbur S. Deming, *Rāmdās and the Rāmdāsīs* (New Delhi: Vintage Books, 1990 [Calcutta, 1928]), 31-32.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 90-100, 120: “Like his predecessors, Rāmdās used the musical service (*kīrtan* or *bhajan*) in giving religious instruction to the people. He taught that the *kīrtan*-singer should be an attractive individual...dressed in clean clothes. His singing should be devotional, bringing peace and quiet to minds disturbed by quarrelling. The singer should be expert in composing metrical verses which would attract the attention of all listeners. Sincere *kīrtan*-singers do not attempt to amuse their hearers, but confine their efforts to teaching the difference between reality and unreality. Concerning *kīrtan* subjects Rāmdās says, 'Each successive *kīrtan* should have a new subject, the singer prostrating himself before the idol and proclaiming God's name by the clapping of hands. The fame of one idol should not be sung in front of another idol, and if there be no idol present, then Vedānta truths may be expounded.”

⁵⁰⁴ *Dāsbodh* 1.8.1-2. See *Śrīdāsbodh* (Pune: Bhaṭ ṅṅi Maṅḍalī, 1915), 13:

Sanskrit

nāhaṃ vasāmi vaikuṅṭhe yogināṃ hṛdaye ravau |
madbhaktā yatra gāyanti tatra tiṣṭhāmi nārada ||

Marathi

nāhīṃ vaikuṅṭhīcyā ṭhāyī |
nāhīṃ yogiyāṃce hṛdayīm |
māḷhe bhakta gāṭī je ṭhāīm |
tetheṃ mī tiṣṭhata nārada ||

English

I do not dwell in Vaikuṅṭha,
or in the sun that is the yogis' heart.
O Nārada, I stay where my devotees sing.

where there is the love-filled singing of *bhaktas*; God's sacred utterances; songs about God (*harikīrtanem*); exegesis of the Vedas; stories from the Purāṇas; where God's glories are recounted; there are dialogues on all sorts of interpretive problems (*nirūpaṇāṃce samvād*); the science of the inner self (*adhyātmavidyā*) [is studied]; and debates rage over difference and non-difference (*bhedābhed mathan*).⁵⁰⁵

Not only is there a prominent place here for bhakti, but jñāna and karma also find a welcome home, just as the Devas would have wanted. The chapter goes on to list the motley crew that comprises the *sabhā*, ranging from “staff-wielders, dreadlocked ascetics, and Nāth yogis wearing earrings” (*daṇḍadhārī jaṭādhārī nāthpanthī mudrādhārī*) to “scholars and storytellers, virtuosos and Vedicists” (*paṇḍit āṇi purāṇik vidvāṃs āṇi vaidik*).⁵⁰⁶ If we juxtapose this vignette from the *Dāsbodh* alongside the “assemblies” we have seen so far, the *dharmasabhā* and *paṇḍitasabhā*, we find yet another non-courtly public space for intellectual and religious activity. This *sabhā* claims to have invited many different participants with different interests and capabilities, and at first blush its description may appear hyperreal, a mere literary exaggeration. Yet it could very well resemble the Devas' own multipurpose milieu of early modern Banaras. Far from being restricted to the self-professedly elite assembly of the Muktimaṇḍapa, the Devas' *sabhā* covered much more ground than that of top-down Brahmanical jurisprudence. At once public and provincial, didactic and devotional, it moved between social hierarchies, linguistic registers, intellectual disciplines, and religious worldviews.

I do not intend to overplay the Devas' “universality” here. When I referred to the “demotic” character of bhakti, I meant not that the Devas promoted the abolition of caste hierarchies (quite the opposite), but that their intellectual interests were sparked by texts and

⁵⁰⁵ *Dāsbodh* 1.8.4-5. *Ibid.*, 13: premaḥa bhaktāṃcī gāyaṇe | bhagavadvākyeṃ harikīrtanem | vedavyākhyāna purāṇaśravaṇa | jethe nīrantara || parameśvarāce guṇānuvād | nānā nirūpaṇāṃce saṃvād | adhyātmavidyā bhedābhed - | mathan jethe ||

⁵⁰⁶ *Dāsbodh* 1.8.10, 1.8.16. See *Ibid.*, 14.

traditions from a wider range than generally comprised the *śāstric* scope of the Brahmin elite of Banaras. I have tried to argue that in the writings of the Devas, the Sanskrit intellectual traditions of Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta, often considered impervious to anything around them, underwent a change that reflected the Devas' attention to popular bhakti practices. In particular, I think that their interest in *saṃkīrtana*, public devotional singing, and the power of God's name, derived both from Sanskrit text-traditions as well as the vernacular-language religious movements dedicated to the same practice. This does not mean, however, that they danced in the streets, like Caitanya, or ate communally with members of caste backgrounds they considered beneath them; “Sanskrit” and “vernacular” do not so readily map onto “elite” and “everyday.” Theirs was a fundamentally Brahmin-dominated *sabhā*.

In this sense, the connection between Rāmdās and the Devas is quite easy to understand. Rāmdās is primarily remembered for his disputed role in the regime of the Maratha king Shivaji, a relationship that has been interpreted variously at different historical junctures by those with different political sensibilities.⁵⁰⁷ In terms of his basic social views, however, even sympathetic commentators acknowledge that “Rāmdās...was not a social reformer. He accepted the Hindu social system as he found it [...] While the Svāmī was friendly with low castes, he did not make a definite place for them in the movement; and the low-caste element has never held the place of

⁵⁰⁷ For an early twentieth-century valorization of the Shivaji-Rāmdās relationship, see M.G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power* (Bombay: Punalekar & Co., 1900), 143-144. The famous Marathi nationalist historiographer V.K. Rajwade (1864-1926) was also fascinated with Rāmdās, and drew from his writings “a specific political program that placed the ousting of Muslim invaders and the spread of Maharashtra dharma *across all of India* at the heart of the Maratha struggle.” See Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 131-132. Non-Brahmin contemporaries of Rajwade, however, reacted strongly to the Brahmin interpretation of Rāmdās, and not only criticized Brahmin political leaders for their narrowly casteist appropriation but also tried to distance Shivaji from any Brahmin influence (*Ibid.*, 183-188). In more recent years, the notion of a Brahmin-led, militant Hindu community pitted against Muslim oppressors has made Rāmdās an important of the Shiv Sena’s political ideology. See Naregal, “Language and Power,” 264, n.15.

honour among Rāmdāsīs that it has at Paṇḍharpūr.”⁵⁰⁸ As Anna Schultz notes in her work on Marathi devotional performance and Hindu nationalism, Rāmdās broke from the egalitarian *vārkarī* tradition, upheld Brahmanical hierarchies, encouraged involvement in politics, and laid “the musical and political foundations for *rāṣṭrīya* (nationalist) *kīrtan* in the seventeenth century.”⁵⁰⁹ If the Devas had given up their scholarly careers to become full-time musical performers, they would no doubt have found kindred spirits among the followers of Rāmdās. Maybe they already had. After all, Raghunātha Navahasta migrated to Thanjavur with the Marathas in the late seventeenth century, and likely took the Devas' writings with him, if they had not already passed through the Rāmdāsī *maṭhas* of the region, where Marathi *kīrtan* was performed.⁵¹⁰

What should we make, then, of the Devas' self-proclaimed connection to Eknāth, a much more troublesome social figure, albeit no less Brahmin? Answers await further comparative study between their works, to see if there is indeed any overlap in their ideas. A provocative thesis by Christian Novetzke suggests a non-intellectual motive.⁵¹¹ Novetzke attempts to unearth

⁵⁰⁸ Deming, *Rāmdās and the Rāmdāsīs*, 212. Much less sympathetic were those non-Brahmin writers of the early twentieth century who viewed Rāmdās as representative of the very Brahmin hegemony they were trying to dismantle. See Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, 186-187. For some, Rāmdās remains the exemplary case of bhakti's inability to maintain a critical edge in early modernity, stamping out, perhaps, the possibility of Reformation. See Naregal, “Language and Power,” 264: “[Rāmdās'] prolific compositions reveal that by the late seventeenth century vernacular devotional expression was patently less anti-hierarchical and more inclined to uphold the benefits of institutional structures in the religious and political spheres.”

⁵⁰⁹ Anna Schultz, *Singing A Hindu Nation: Marathi Devotional Performance and Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 26. Italics mine.

⁵¹⁰ See T. N. Bhima Rao, “Samartha Ramdasi Maths in Tanjore,” *The Journal of the Tanjore Maharaja Serfoji's Sarasvati Mahal Library* 17.3 (1964): 1-4. Cf. Davesh Soneji, “The Powers of Polyglossia: Marathi Kīrtan, Multilingualism, and the Making of a South Indian Devotional Tradition,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 17.3 (2013): 344-349. Several manuscripts of the Devas' works are available in the Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Library, Anantadeva I's *Siddhāntatattva*, for example. See P.P.S. Sastri, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Tanjore Mahārāja Serfoji's Sarasvatī Mahāl Library, Vol. XIII* (Srirangam: Vani Vilas Press, 1931), 5621-5625, 5796-5799.

⁵¹¹ Christian Novetzke, “The Brahmin double: the Brahminical construction of anti-Brahminism and anti-caste

a genealogy of modern anti-Brahmin critique in precolonial negotiations of Brahmin identity in non-Brahmin contexts. By presenting a caricature of the greedy, foolish, orthodox Brahmin, Novetzke suggests, Brahmin performers of Marathi *kīrtan* tried to create a “Brahmin double” for their non-Brahmin audience, discursively separating “bad Brahmins” from “Brahminism” in general.⁵¹² It is debatable whether the rhetorical strategies of nineteenth-century Brahmin social reformers can be linked to the performative contexts of the seventeenth century, or whether discursive power operates the same way in each. Here I simply note that the Devas, too, spent quite a bit of time criticizing Brahmin intellectuals for their haughtiness, many of whom were probably their colleagues. Of course, that critique belonged to a very different social context; they were writing both against and to their Brahmin contemporaries, and probably did not (want to) interact much with non-Brahmins in Banaras. But given that Banaras, in so much Marathi bhakti literature, was painted as the stronghold of oppressive Brahmanical orthodoxy, perhaps the Devas were trying to refract the notion of the “Brahmin double” in a social world where upper-caste identity was being constantly threatened, renegotiated, and—that perennial Brahmin anxiety—corrupted. To be a “good” Brahmin, it was not enough to master a scholarly discipline. One had to show the appropriate comportments of humility and worship, and offer up (*arpaṇa*) one's accomplishments to God. Perhaps invoking Eknāth was the Devas' way of reminding themselves.⁵¹³

sentiment in the religious cultures of precolonial Maharashtra,” *South Asian History and Culture* 2.2 (2011): 232-252.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 235.

⁵¹³ Cf. Adheesh Sathaye, *Crossing the Lines of Caste: Viśvāmītra and the Construction of Brahmin Power in Hindu Mythology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 143-144: “As Kunal Chakrabarti explains, purāṇic literature served as a 'cultural resource which enabled little communities to transform themselves into a regional community which could be culturally identified and territorially demarcated.' [...] Brahmin *paurāṇikas* engaged in similar modes of identification, albeit in the elite register of Sanskrit, but nevertheless based on regionalized evaluations of the binary opposition between being Brahmin and becoming the Other kind of Brahmin.”

The account I have attempted here of the Devas' intellectual innovations is a necessarily limited one, albeit richly suggestive. More sustained attention to developments on the periphery of the Devas' intellectual activity will elucidate the extent to which the Devas owed their religious and intellectual identities to the places of their emigration and immigration respectively. An even larger question, however, is how we should study the permeable boundaries between intellectual disciplines and religious motivations in early modern India. Perhaps the point is not to search for “systemwide change” (*pace* Pollock), but to note the gradual yet unmistakable shifts in an intellectual tradition's discursive registers. These do not take place at the level of doctrine, but are rather present in new hermeneutical concerns. In the case of the Devas, it is clear that the majority of their pedagogical activity was conducted in the realm of Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, but their personal religious commitments had an equally significant effect on their scholarly careers. Only a further intellectual history and prosopographical study of the Devas and other major families of the period will reveal the extent to which their “formal and technical concerns,” as O'Hanlon and Minkowski suggest, “can be mapped onto the social changes of the early modern world.”⁵¹⁴ One thing, however, is certain: bhakti was on the move in early modern India, and it moved scholars to think in new ways about their multiple intellectual inheritances.

⁵¹⁴ O'Hanlon and Minkowski, “What makes people who they are?”, 410.

Chapter 5: Bhakti in the Moonlight

Among all things that lead to liberation, bhakti holds most weight.

-“Śaṅkara,” *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 31ab⁵¹⁵

Theists, Non-Theists, and Intellectual Historians

Accounts of the intersection between bhakti and Advaita Vedānta have tended to concentrate on their philosophical compatibility. Such accounts tend to fall along two major lines. One is that bhakti and Advaita are fundamentally opposed. In this account, a theology of religious devotion to an embodied god cannot be squared with a monist philosophy that does away with distinctions between the individual and God. Bhakti and the realist ontology it requires can only hold a subordinate place in such a system, as a preparatory stage for nondual knowledge. Theologies of bhakti, primarily Vaiṣṇava in character, are viewed as responses or challenges to the forbidding fortress of Advaita Vedānta in the history of Indian philosophy.⁵¹⁶ Another line of interpretation prefers to see no essential break between the two. Bhakti either exists primordially in Advaita Vedānta,⁵¹⁷ or it is successfully reconciled in the work of certain major figures of the tradition.⁵¹⁸ Proponents of this narrative also point to vernacular-language

⁵¹⁵ This was probably not a work of the historical Śaṅkara, but was popularly attached to him. The next half of the verse, interestingly, says that “bhakti is inquiry into one's own true nature.” *Vivekachudamani of Sri Sankaracharya*, ed. tr. Swami Madhavananda (Mayavati: The Advaita Ashrama, 1921), 12:

mokṣakāraṇasāmagryāṃ bhaktir eva garīyasī |
svasvarūpānusandhānaṃ bhaktir ity abhidhīyate ||

⁵¹⁶ See, e.g., Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy, Volume IV: Indian Pluralism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961).

⁵¹⁷ See Adya Prasad Mishra, *The Development and Place of Bhakti in Śāṅkara Vedānta* (Allahabad: The University of Allahabad, 1967).

⁵¹⁸ See Sanjukta Gupta, *Advaita Vedānta and Vaiṣṇavism: The Philosophy of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī* (London: Routledge, 2006). See also Shoun Hino, “The beginnings of bhakti's influence on Advaita doctrine in the teachings of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī,” in *Indian Philosophy and Text Science*, ed. Toshihiro Wada (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010), 101-114.

poetry of the *nirguṇa* variety, that refers to God “without attributes,” as being seamlessly co-referential with Advaita Vedānta philosophy.⁵¹⁹ While the history of these narratives would require another chapter to detail, suffice it to say here that for many modern commentators, discerning the proper relationship between bhakti and Advaita Vedānta involves questions of philosophical and political ethics.⁵²⁰

Among the most detailed and historically conscientious representatives of these two accounts are Adya Prasad Mishra's *The Development and Place of Bhakti in Śāṅkara Vedānta* and Lance Nelson's several publications on the Advaitin renunciate Madhusūdana Sarasvatī.⁵²¹ Mishra attempts to trace each discussion of the term bhakti in Vedānta intellectual history, as well as its incipient formulations in the Vedic corpus. Although he devotes significant attention to Śāṅkara's own writings, he periodizes the history of bhakti into pre- and post-Śāṅkara Vedānta, assigning a distinct place in the latter to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Advaitins Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha. These two alone, Mishra claims, represented the final stage of the post-Śāṅkara “Neo-Bhakti,”⁵²² since they accorded bhakti a space alongside

⁵¹⁹ See Krishna Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement: A New Perspective* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1987).

⁵²⁰ See Paul Hacker, “Schopenhauer and Hindu Ethics,” in *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedānta*, ed. Wilhelm Halbfass (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 273-318; Andrew Nicholson, “Vivekananda's Non Dual Ethics in the History of Vedānta,” in *Swami Vivekananda: New Reflections on His Life, Legacy, and Influence*, eds. Rita D. Sherma and James McHugh (Dordrecht: Springer, 2016), forthcoming.

⁵²¹ Lance Nelson, “Bhakti in Advaita Vedānta: a translation and study of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's Bhaktirasāyana” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 1986); Lance Nelson, “Madhusūdana Sarasvatī on the 'hidden meaning' of the *Bhagavadgītā*: bhakti for the Advaitin renunciate,” *Journal of South Asian Literature* 23.2 (1988): 73-89; Lance Nelson, “Bhakti Rasa for the Advaitin renunciate: Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's theory of devotional sentiment,” *Religious Traditions* 12.1 (1989): 1-16; Lance Nelson, “Bhakti preempted: Madhusūdana Sarasvatī on devotion for the Advaitin renouncer,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 7.2 (1998): 53-74; Lance Nelson, “The Ontology of *Bhakti*: Devotion as *Paramapuruṣārtha* in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32.4 (2004): 345-392; Lance Nelson, “Theological politics and paradoxical spirituality in the life of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī,” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 15.2 (2007): 19-34.

⁵²² The term can be found in Kshitimohan Sen, *Medieval Mysticism of India* (London: Luzac & Co, 1936), 46, 48,

jñāna as an independent path to liberation. Mishra concludes that “the monistic ideal of Śāṅkara Vedānta is not only not against Bhakti, but, on the contrary, it preaches it in positive and assertive terms.”⁵²³ Nelson's assessment of the situation is rather less sanguine. In his studies of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's *Bhaktirasāyana*, the “Elixir of Bhakti,” Nelson finds an irreconcilable tension between Madhusūdana's orthodox non-dualism and devotional spirituality. For Madhusūdana to say that bhakti could be the highest goal of human life (*paramapurūṣārtha*) leaves a number of unresolved theoretical difficulties.⁵²⁴ The metaphysical paradox of being a simultaneous devotee of God and of nondual knowledge makes such a claim simply not

50, to refer to the “cult” or “movement” connecting the *ālvārs*, Śrīvaiṣṇavas, and Caitanyaites. J.S. Hawley remarks that the popularity of the term owed to R.G. Bhandarkar's *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, and Minor Religious Systems* (1913), but the book does not mention the term, and Sen only cites Bhandarkar's work in a general sense. See John Stratton Hawley, *A Storm of Songs: India and the Idea of the Bhakti Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 248. It is possible that “neo-bhakti” was a term floating around prior to Sen's work, but I have yet to trace it.

⁵²³ Mishra, *The Development and Place*, ii. Mishra's own intellectual history is worth a brief remark. His dissertation advisor in the Sanskrit Department at Allahabad University was the extremely prolific (and extremely conservative) Umesh Mishra. A Maithili Brahmin who received both a traditional Sanskrit and modern English education, Umesh Mishra studied in Varanasi with leading figures in Indology including Arthur Venis and Gopinath Kaviraj. He joined his contemporary Ganganath Jha at Allahabad in 1923, and over the next forty years produced scholarship on several traditions of Sanskrit philosophy. His magnum opus was the monumental and learned *History of Indian Philosophy*, of which he published two volumes, leaving the third in manuscript form. See Govinda Jha, *Umesh Mishra*, tr. Jayakanta Mishra (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1995).

In the first volume of the set, Umesh Mishra felt it was clear that bhakti was metaphysically and practically incompatible with “the Highest Aim of philosophy, that is, Absolute Monism which alone aims at Perfect Unity amid diversity.” Bhakti could only make one fit for the discipline of knowledge, or jñāna, and required that one maintain a degree of individuality in one's relationship with God. Therefore, “Dualism cannot be removed and Absolute Monism is never possible with Bhakti as the direct means of realizing the Ultimate Reality.” See Umesh Mishra, *History of Indian Philosophy: Volume One* (Allahabad: Tirabhukti Publications, 1957), 31-33. In writing a thesis that explicitly tried to contradict such statements, Adya Prasad Mishra must no doubt have clashed with his advisor. Indeed, in his otherwise encouraging foreword to *The Development and Place*, Umesh Mishra remarked that “The subject sounded to many apparently contradictory,” but signed off on the topic with the caveat that “*Bhakti* is really for the lower stage [...]”

⁵²⁴ Nelson, “The Ontology of *Bhakti*,” 363: “[W]hile giving *bhakti* a central role, the author makes great efforts to remain within the doctrinal boundaries of classical Advaita. He stretches the limits here and there, but only oversteps them in limited, well-defined ways, especially...in the area of soteriology [...] Even as he does so, however, one would hesitate to judge that he has ceased to be an Advaitin, because his ontological and epistemological framework remains orthodox. The consequence is that Madhusūdana winds up trying to fit an elevated view of *bhakti* into the confines of a system not designed to support it. His endeavor becomes to that extent more problematic than that of the Gosvāmīs.”

“justifiable in terms of Śaṅkara's Advaita.”⁵²⁵

Although sophisticated and thorough, and superb contributions to the history of ideas, both Mishra's and Nelson's works are open to methodological critique. Each is susceptible, respectively, to what Quentin Skinner calls the “mythology of doctrines” and the “mythology of coherence.”⁵²⁶ The mythology of doctrines assumes that each classic writer in a particular system—in this case, of Advaita Vedānta philosophy—must articulate some doctrine constitutive of that system. “Besides the crude possibility of crediting a writer with a meaning they could not have intended to convey,” writes Skinner, “there is the more insidious danger of too readily finding expected doctrines in classic texts.”⁵²⁷ For all his impressive textual breadth, Mishra falls prey to precisely this fallacy: once he has held bhakti to be constitutive of Advaita Vedānta discourse, it is a small step to hold that the classic texts of the discipline proleptically gesture toward its full elaboration later within the tradition. This is, of course, what premodern scholars themselves did, an act that is historically interesting in its own right, but deserves greater scrutiny in the present.

Nelson points out this very difficulty with Mishra's work,⁵²⁸ but his own study is also informed by a search for consistency, albeit negatively defined. In pronouncing judgment on Madhusūdana's inability to account philosophically for his multiple affiliations, Nelson holds to the “mythology of coherence,” the idea that there is some inner coherence to a certain author's

⁵²⁵ Nelson, “Bhakti in Advaita Vedānta,” 308. Cf. Nelson, “The Ontology of *Bhakti*,” 386: “Still, the question of how all this can be justified in terms of Advaita remains. Indeed it is here, precisely where Madhusūdana's glorification of *bhakti* reaches its zenith, that the conceptual problems of supporting *bhakti* as *parama-puruṣārtha* within a nondualist horizon become most apparent... What Madhusūdana in the end completely fails to explain is how *bhakti* can, for the erstwhile *jīvanmukta-bhakta*, continue beyond death, in a state in which the mind, melted or otherwise, must have been left behind.”

⁵²⁶ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics Vol. 1: On Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 59-72.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁵²⁸ Nelson, “Bhakti in Advaita Vedānta,” 325ff.

writing that it is the duty of the interpreter to reveal, despite the presence of contradictions and ambivalences.⁵²⁹ An author's failure in the matter of “resolving antinomies” requires the interpreter to do so on his behalf.⁵³⁰ Nelson's criticism, then, is prompted by a line of thinking in the history of ideas in which “writers are first classified according to a model to which they are then expected to aspire.”⁵³¹ Since “bhakti” and “Advaita Vedānta” are fundamentally at odds in metaphysical terms, Madhusūdana must be a bad Advaitin, or a bad bhakta, or a conflicted soul in search of philosophical clarity.

These are not so much methodological “errors” as they are incomplete approaches to a historical problematic. Neither Mishra nor Nelson is quite off-base. The history of bhakti in Advaita Vedānta does take a turn with Madhusūdana, and he does present many philosophical problems that can and should be evaluated as to their success or failure. But what if, instead of searching for philosophical consistency, we attempted to understand what Advaitic bhaktas were doing in writing as they did? What if the context for their sometimes radical shifts in the history of ideas lay outside the “classic” texts of the genre—say, in minor commentaries or performance poetry? What if they called into question the very coherence of the philosophical tradition in which they operated? What if we did not assume the coherence of that tradition to begin with?

In this chapter, I explore these issues in four parts. First, I review Madhusūdana

⁵²⁹ This is admittedly uncharitable; Nelson's own view is more nuanced. See Nelson, “The Ontology of *Bhakti*,” 390: “Certainly both the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and Madhusūdana were seeking some kind of ontological certification of *bhakti*. And so were at least some elements of the Vallabha tradition. To be sure, Madhusūdana's attempt is made much more complicated by his commitment to advaitic presuppositions, so much so that it is difficult to decide whether or not he was successful, even in his own terms. I would not presume to have worked out a final estimate in so short a compass; much depends on one's guess as to what exactly Madhusūdana was trying to accomplish in the *BhR*. But I think I have at least demonstrated how even one considered among the greatest of Advaitin polemicists was caught up in this movement.”

⁵³⁰ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 71.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

Sarasvatī's later writings on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (BhP) for what it may tell us about the intellectual world into which he was moving toward the end of his career. Second, I discuss the intellectual history of Śāṅḍilya's *Bhakti Sūtras* (SBS), or the "Aphorisms on Bhakti." In modern times, this text is frequently cited in support of the view that bhakti, as an object of theoretical inquiry, is set in opposition to jñāna and karma, represented by the disciplines of Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā respectively. Although it is quite plain that the SBS model themselves on their Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta predecessors, there have been surprisingly few studies of their intellectual history. In order to understand better the relationship of the SBS to the disciplines they seemingly recover and resist, however, we must look not merely to philosophical but also to historical context, which may reveal what the author was doing in composing the aphorisms. I recapitulate that context, and question the accepted chronology of the SBS.

Third, in the bulk of this chapter, I propose to study the links between Advaita Vedānta and bhakti with greater historical specificity through a commentary on the SBS by Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, a protégé of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. In his *Bhakticandrikā*, or "Moonlight of Bhakti," Nārāyaṇa appears to have gone farther than his predecessor in following the SBS' argument that Vedānta study should be subordinate to attaining bhakti. While this radical departure from classical Advaita Vedānta doctrine has been noticed previously,⁵³² the mechanics of the shift remain to be addressed. I will discuss the logic of Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha's exegesis, and the ways in which it complicates a straightforward account of the compatibility or incompatibility of bhakti with Advaita Vedānta. Fourth, I situate Nārāyaṇa's interest in bhakti in the intellectual context of his broader writings, and in the social worlds of which he was a part. I will explore how

⁵³² Mishra, *The Development and Place*, 235-254.

Nārāyaṇa drew bhakti into becoming a constitutive part of Yoga traditions, and how the idea of bhakti as an independent sphere of theological inquiry made a surprising cameo in the writings of a Śākta Śrīvidyā practitioner in the Tamil South. Ultimately, I suggest that, as historians of Indian philosophy, we can better understand the relationship between bhakti and Advaita by paying attention not only to a wider range of texts, but to the historical interventions they attempted to make.

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and the BhP

In her study of Madhusūdana's philosophy, Sanjukta Gupta offers a tentative chronology of his total oeuvre, which she divides into “philosophical” and “devotional” works.⁵³³ The list of devotional works is as follows: a commentary on the *Mahimnastotra* of Puṣpadanta, the *Bhaktirasāyana*, the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā, a commentary on the first verse of the BhP, and a commentary on the *Harilīlāmṛta* of Vopadeva.⁵³⁴ While the first three

⁵³³ Gupta, *Advaita Vedānta and Vaiṣṇavism*, 11.

⁵³⁴ The *Harilīlāvyaḅhyā* is difficult to pin down, chronologically or conceptually, being more or less a list of the chapter contents of the BhP. Gupta voices concern over Madhusūdana's authorship of the text, saying that “[t]he editors of this book...declare it to be the work of the author of the *Advaita-siddhi* without putting forward any evidence whatsoever to confirm this statement” (*Ibid.*, 9). However, she accepts his authorship on the grounds that he points to his own commentary on the first verse of the BhP (*Paramahamsapriyā*), and that certain features presuppose the understanding of bhakti developed in the *Bhaktirasāyana*. Another possible clue that could locate the author of this commentary is his citation of the *Puruṣottama Stuti*, that perhaps refers to an unpublished praise-poem by Balabhadra Miśra, father of one Godāvara Miśra of Puri. See P.K. Gode, “Godāvaramiśra, the Rājaguru and Mantri of Gajapati Pratāparudradeva of Orissa and his Works—Between A.D. 1497-1539,” in *Studies in Indian Literary History, Vol. 1* (Bombay: Bhāratīya Vidyā Bhavan, 1953), 470-478.

Unfortunately, none of this either confirms nor denies the possibility that Madhusūdana could be the author. I, for my part, do not see the symmetry between Madhusūdana's comments on bhakti here and those elsewhere, except for stray references to *rati*, the aesthetic emotion corresponding to the *rasa* of bhakti. References to the *Paramahamsapriyā* point not to his own work, but rather to a much earlier (now-lost) text that belonged to the world of Vopadeva himself; his contemporary Hemādri cites the text in his commentary on the *Muktāphala*. In fact, the sole reason that we call Madhusūdana's commentary on the first verse of the BhP the *Paramahamsapriyā* is that the editors gave it this appellation while appending it to the *Harilīlāmṛtavyaḅhyā*. Moreover, Madhusūdana was eager to import Advaita Vedānta discussions into his bhakti works, and that is only marginally true here. In his commentary on verses 12-13 of the twelfth chapter, he briefly mentions the concept of *māyā* as inexplicable (*anirvācyā*), definitions of *jīva* and *īśvara* as constrained by limiting adjuncts (*upādhi*), and as different kinds of reflected consciousness (*pratibimba*). While all these were classic Advaita topics, they are not imports, but follow the logic of Vopadeva's verses. It says that our author was an Advaitin—possibly even

are reasonably well-known, the last two have mostly slipped under the radar. Whether or not this is an appropriate conceptual bifurcation, I believe that his “devotional” works form an incipient project that, in the wake of his *Bhaktirasāyana*, sought to foreground the BhP as a source-text for Advaita Vedāntins. Indeed, Gupta's organization suggests a progression that mirrors that of the Devas in the previous chapter—namely, career Advaitins who later took up bhakti topics.⁵³⁵ The major difference, of course, is that while the Devas were married householders, Madhusūdana belonged to and wrote for a renunciate audience.⁵³⁶ To be sure, Madhusūdana was a rising star in the intellectual scene of sixteenth-century Banaras, possibly even to the point of being recognized at the Mughal court by Akbar's own advisors.⁵³⁷ But he belonged to a different constellation than his contemporaries, showing surprisingly little overlap with the Devas' concerns, as I have discussed in the previous chapter.

This curious disjuncture points to the diversity of Advaita Vedāntins in early modern India, even within a close radius. Some of the differences between them revolved precisely

Hemādri himself—but not much more.

⁵³⁵ We hear echoes of Anantadeva's frustration with academic quibbling in the second verse of Madhusūdana's commentary on the BhP: “Day after day, this life is frittered away without reason, in the constant company of no-good people, and with one affliction after another. But when it is sprinkled with the nectar of God's stories, even a moment is worth living. That's why I have made this effort.”

anudinam idam āyuh sarvadāsatprasaṅgair
 bahuvīdharitāpaiḥ kṣīyate vyartham eva |
 haricaritasudhābhiḥ sicyamānaṃ tad etat
 kṣaṇam api saphalaṃ syād ity ayaṃ me śramo 'tra || 2 ||

See *The Harilīlāmṛtam* by Śrī Bopadeva with a commentary by Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and *Śrīmad Bhāgavata (First Śloka) with the Paramahansaṣapriyā commentary by the same commentator*, ed. Parajuli Pandit Devī Datta Upadhyaya (Benares: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1933), 58.

⁵³⁶ On Madhusūdana's assumption that physical renunciation was a *sine qua non* for liberating Self-knowledge, see Roger Marcaurelle, *Freedom Through Inner Renunciation: Śāṅkara's Philosophy in a New Light* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 194-202.

⁵³⁷ Gupta, *Advaita Vedānta and Vaiṣṇavism*, 6.

around the authority of the BhP. As Christopher Minkowski has shown, the canonicity of the Vaiṣṇava BhP was a contested topic in early modern Banaras.⁵³⁸ Polemical texts with colorful titles (e.g., *Smack on the Mouth of the Wicked*) were hurled back and forth between scholars about whether the BhP “should be considered to belong in the same category with the other Purāṇas; to be more specific, whether it should be considered to be, as it claimed, a work composed by Vyāsa.”⁵³⁹ Arguments for and against the inclusion of this text, Minkowski shows, were made in properly philological mode, appealing to available citations, the reliability of wording, and the possibility of historical change.⁵⁴⁰ Some participants in these debates invoked the authority of their learned contemporaries and recent predecessors, including but not limited to Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, who belonged to “a decidedly Advaitin” scholarly public sphere.⁵⁴¹

Madhusūdana's commentary on the first three verses of the BhP, which has mostly eluded scholarly attention, offers some indication of the variety of interpretive communities jockeying for position.⁵⁴² He begins by reconstructing three different lines of interpretations of the first

⁵³⁸ Christopher Minkowski, “I’ll Wash Out Your Mouth With My Boot: A Guide to Philological Argument in Mughal-era Banaras,” in *Epic and Argument in Sanskrit Literary History: Essays in honor of Robert P. Goldman* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010), 117-141.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁵⁴² Until recently only his commentary on the first verse had existed in printed form. See P.M. Modi, *Translation of Siddhānta Bindu, being Madhusūdana's commentary on the Daśaśloki of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya* (Allahabad: Vohra Publishers & Distributors, 1985), 43-45; *Śrīmadbhāgavatam anekavyākhyāsamalaṅkṛtam*, ed. Krishna Shankar Shastri (Ahmedabad: Śrībhāgavatavidyāpīṭha, 1965); *The Harilīlāmṛtam by Śrī Bopadeva with a commentary by Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and Śrīmad Bhāgavata (First Śloka) with the Paramahaṃsapriyā commentary by the same commentator*, ed. Parajuli Pandit Devi Datta Upadhyaya (Benares: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1933). Recent manuscript evidence has brought to light his commentary on an additional two verses:

J = Ms. 4186, Pothikhana, Jaipur.

V = Ms. 72743, Sarasvatībhavana, Varanasi.

L2 = <http://sanskrit.lalitaalaalita.com/2014/07/paramahaMsapriyA-25.html>.

L3 = <http://sanskrit.lalitaalaalita.com/2014/07/paramahaMsapriyA-26.html>.

verse, which he calls the *aupaniṣada*, the *sātvata*, and the *kevalabhaktirasika*. He spends the most time on the interpretation that appeals to the first of these (*aupaniṣadāya rocate*), which turns out to be a more or less mainstream Advaita Vedāntin. According to the *aupaniṣada*, not only does the first verse encode several references to the *Brahma Sūtras*,⁵⁴³ but each word offers an opportunity to expostulate on Vedāntic concepts. The word “supreme” (*para*) is taken to refer to the nondual Brahman that underlies all illusions (*sarvabhramādhiṣṭhāna*); the word “let us meditate” (*dhīmahi*) refers to the process of Vedāntic meditation (*nididhyāsana*); the word “imbrication [of elements]” (*vinimaya*) leads to a debate over theories of creation (*pariṇāma*- vs. *vivarta-vāda*); and a casual mention of “confounding the learned” (*muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ*) allows the Vedāntin to rail against his classic philosophical opponents: logicians (*tārkika*), atomists (*vaiśeṣika*), yogins (*pātañjala*), Śaivas (*pāśupata*), Mīmāṃsakas, and Sāṃkhyas.⁵⁴⁴ Most striking is this interpreter's ability to read into the verse a reference to the great statement (*mahāvākya*) of Vedānta, *tat tvam asi*. He uses the skills of bitextual reading (*śleṣālaṅkāra*) to construe the compounds in such a way that the verse could either refer to *tat*, Brahman, the infinite reality, or *tvam*, the limited individual (*jīva*), and ultimately communicate their identity (*aikya*), which is the final subject of the scripture.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴³ BhP 1.1.1:

janmādyasya yato 'nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñāḥ svarāt
tene brahma hṛdā ya ādikavaye muhyanti yatsūrayaḥ |
tejavārimṛdāṃ yathā vinimayo yatra trisargo 'mṛṣā
dhāmnā svena sadā nirastakuhakaṃ satyaṃ paraṃ dhīmahi ||

The *aupaniṣada* believes that the verse adumbrates the first four aphorisms of the *Brahma Sūtra*, its first four chapters, and the twelve chapters of the BhP.

⁵⁴⁴ Madhusūdana's doxographical efforts have been discussed in Andrew Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 163-165.

⁵⁴⁵ *The Hariḷilāmṛtam...and Śrīmad Bhāgavata (First Śloka) with the Paramahaṃsapriyā commentary by the same commentator*, 67: etad eva tatpadārthatvampadārthatadaikyakathanadvāreṇa śāstrasya viṣayo darśitaḥ | (henceforth cited as *Paramahaṃsapriyā*)

The *sātvatas*, on the other hand, put forth a modified form of Pāñcarātra, the Āgamic scriptural tradition that provided the source texts for several Vaiṣṇava schools of Vedānta. Pāñcarātra was very close to early Advaita, for some a little too close. Śāṅkara himself probably belonged to a Vaiṣṇava milieu, and in his commentary on the heresiological section of the *Brahma Sūtras* (2.2.42), reserved his mildest criticism for the Pāñcarātra tradition. In this interpretation, the four emanations of the supreme Lord Viṣṇu—Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha—are mapped onto sections of the BhP's first verse. However, the *sātvata* insists that this not be taken for a mere Pāñcarātra theory of creation (*prakriyā*), according to which they represent four distinct principles (God, soul, mind, ego). Rather, in a Vedāntic twist, it is the very same Supreme Self who is called Vāsudeva when unfettered by limiting adjuncts (*anupahita*), and the other three when mixed with gross, subtle, and causal elements (*sthūla-*, *sūkṣma-*, *kāraṇa-bhutopahita*). The *sātvata* thus circumvents the Āgamic tradition and goes straight to the epic sources of Pāñcarātra, which appeal to *purāṇic* interpreters, perhaps even storytellers (*paurāṇika*).⁵⁴⁶

If he were following the practice of his scholarly contemporaries, Madhusūdana may have thought that he was saving the best for last, the *kevalabhaktirasikas*, “those who take delight in pure bhakti,” or “those who exclusively take delight in bhakti.” Here the subject of the entire BhP is Kṛṣṇa alone, the beloved of all, the most compassionate, the locus of bhaktirasa.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 71: vistaraś cāsyāḥ prakriyāyā mokṣadharme nārāyaṇīyopākhyāna iti | tad etad vyākhyānaṃ paurāṇikāya rocate | Cf. Vishwa Adluri, “Philosophical Aspects of Bhakti in the Nārāyaṇīya,” in *Papers of the 15th World Sanskrit Conference*, ed. Adam Bowles et al. (Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, 2014), 127-154. The *sātvata* also refers to the “latter part” (*uttarabhāga*) of the *Nṛsiṃhatāpanīya Upaniṣad*, which, as I suggested in Chapter 3, was important to the Vaiṣṇava Vedānta milieu of Lakṣmīdhara.

⁵⁴⁷ *Paramahamsapriyā*, 73: evaṃ ca sarvapriyatvena paramānandarūpaḥ sarvajñaḥ sarvaśaktiḥ sarvamohanaḥ sarvasukhapradaḥ sarvāparādhasahiṣṇuḥ sarvātmā paramakāruṇiko vidagdhataraś ca śrīkṛṣṇo bhaktirasālambanatvena sampūrṇagranthapratipādyā iti dhvanitam |

Madhusūdana briefly mentions that he has delved into this topic in more detail in the *Bhaktirasāyana*, and claims that he will have more to say later on (although he does not in the fragments of the commentary we possess).⁵⁴⁸ The *kevalabhaktirasikas* foreground the literary style of the BhP. Even if Kṛṣṇa is not directly mentioned, being a secret subject that escapes ordinary understanding, describing him by way of his attributes would appeal to those of aesthetic sensibility (*ālaṅkārika*).⁵⁴⁹ In a creative misreading of the verse's first words, it is Kṛṣṇa from whom (or in whom) the primary aesthetic emotion, love, comes into being for everyone.⁵⁵⁰ Much has been made of the relationship between Madhusūdana's concept of bhaktirasa and that developed by his Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava contemporaries, Rūpa and Jīva Gosvāmin, but without firm conclusions as to the extent of their mutual influence.⁵⁵¹ Here I will only note that by giving the *kevalabhaktirasikas* their own interpretive space, in a commentary on the BhP itself and not just in an independent treatise, Madhusūdana seems to have recognized the importance and scope of this line of thinking. This suggests to me that he belonged to a wider community of Advaitin commentators, rather than being a singular exception, as most histories of Indian philosophy would portray him.⁵⁵²

That there was a complex genealogy for Advaitin interpreters of the BhP, and not a seamless continuity from Śrīdhara and Lakṣmīdhara, is borne out in Madhusūdana's commentary

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 73: bhaktirasānubhavaprakāraś ca sarvo 'py asmābhir **bhaktirasāyana** abhīhitaḥ | atrāpi kiyān vakṣyate |

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 73: viśeṣanadvārā viśeṣyopasthitiś cālaṅkārikāya rocatetarām | sāksād anabhidhānaṃ cātiraḥasyatvāt |

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 71: **janmādyasya yata** iti | **yataḥ** śrīkṛṣṇāt yasmin śrīkṛṣṇe vā **adyasya** ratibhāvasya premākhyasya **janma** bhavati sarveṣāṃ iti śeṣaḥ |

⁵⁵¹ See Nelson, “Bhakti in Advaita Vedānta,” 115-194; Nelson, “*Bhakti Rasa* for the Advaitin Renunciate”; Gupta, *Advaita Vedānta and Vaiṣṇavism*, 119-144.

⁵⁵² Recall the abbreviated discussion of bhaktirasa at the conclusion of Anantadeva II's *Mathurāsetu*, which I noted in Chapter 4. See note 497 above.

on the second and third verses.⁵⁵³ This section has only recently made available from manuscript evidence; the following is the first critical reading I know of on that material. He begins by asking the classic question of *śāstrāmbha*,⁵⁵⁴ the problem of whether it makes sense at all for the BhP to exist *qua* scripture, if its subject matter—be it knowledge of *dharma*, knowledge of the self, or devotional worship—has been dealt with previously in such texts as the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Brahma Sūtras*, and *Nārada Pāñcarātra*.⁵⁵⁵ It is in order to answer this doubt, Madhusūdana says, that the second verse begins by explaining that the BhP communicates the best of all *dharmas*, stripped of any intent to deceive (*projjhitakaitava*).⁵⁵⁶ For example, even if the Mahābhārata lays claim to being a repository of the goals of human life, it is full of deception and trickery, unlike the BhP, which is primarily devoted to the “*bhāgavata dharma*.”⁵⁵⁷ This *dharma*, says Madhusūdana, is very different from *varṇāśrama dharma*, the Brahmanical codes of conduct appropriate to caste-classes and stages of life. Texts like the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* (3.8.8) would still make such codes incumbent on a devotee, while the BhP does away with all

⁵⁵³ In other ways, however, Madhusūdana was demonstrably influenced by Śrīdhara. See Nelson, “The Ontology of *Bhakti*,” 383, n.114: “It appears that Madhusūdana’s system of eleven stages represents an expansion of a scheme found in *BhP* 1.5, as interpreted by Śrīdhara in his commentary, the *Bhāvārthabodhinī* (*BhAB*). Under *BhP* 1.5.34, Śrīdhara lists nine stages of *bhakti*, of which 1–8 correspond almost exactly to the first eight of Madhusūdana’s eleven.”

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. Walter Slaje, ed., *Śāstrāmbha: Inquiries into the Preamble in Sanskrit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008).

⁵⁵⁵ See L2, 1; J fl. 10r; V 12r: nanv idaṃ purāṇaṃ nārambhaṇīyaṃ, gatārthatvāt | taddhi dharmajñānārthaṃ vā ātmatattvajñārthaṃ vā upāsanārthaṃ vā syāt | tatra na prathamah kalpaḥ viṣṇupurāṇādinā gatārthatvāt | na dviṭīyaḥ caturlakṣaṇamīmāṃsayā siddheḥ | na tṛtīyaḥ nāradapāñcarātrādinā gatārthatvāt |

⁵⁵⁶ BhP 1.1.2:

dharmah projjhitakaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarāṇāṃ satāṃ
vedyaṃ vāstavam atra vastu śivadaṃ tāpatrayonmūlanam |
śrīmadbhāgavate mahāmuniḥ kim vā parair īśvaraḥ
sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tatkṣaṇāt ||

⁵⁵⁷ L2, 2: ata āha **projjhitakaitava** iti | kaitavaṃ kapaṭaṃ yudhiṣṭhirādicaritavyājah | tad bhāgavatatātparyakatve 'pi mahābhārata 'sti | na ca atra kaścīd vyājo 'sti |

restrictions.⁵⁵⁸ Curiously, though, Madhusūdana then states that this section of the text has an alternative title, the *Paramahaṃsa Saṃhitā* or “Liturgy of the Renunciate.” This is because compassion for all beings, the most important *bhāgavata dharma*, is an essential characteristic of the renunciate—precisely also the person who could, in the words of the verse, be “unenvious” and “saintly” (*nirmatsarāṇām satām*).⁵⁵⁹ This suggests, once again, a renunciate readership, different from but overlapping with the Devas. Whatever the possibility of that relationship, no such questions were raised by Śrīdhara or Lakṣmīdhara, the Devas' primary source of inspiration.

Nevertheless, like the Devas, Madhusūdana was clear that the reason the BhP was superlative among scriptures was its accessibility to everyday people:

The Pure Brahman called Vāsudeva, the highest goal of human life, can somehow be understood only by renunciates of the highest order from the three (upper) caste-classes, in search of liberation, by means of their study of the *Brahma Sūtras*. That [Brahman] can also be known by women, Śūdras, etc., in and through this text—hence its extraordinary excellence. This is so because they are disqualified from studying the *Brahma Sūtras* by the *sūtras* themselves. Moreover, the less bright among the three caste-classes cannot enter into the difficult logical tangles therein. Here [in the BhP], however, that [Brahman] is described over and over again in lovely language, with words that make evident its joyous relish (*rasa*). Therefore, it is appropriate [for the BhP] to say that knowledge of Brahman is available to everyone: slow-witted, average, and highly qualified.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3: **praśabdena** viṣṇupurāṇādibhir agatārthatvaṃ sūcayati | tatra hi sarvātmanā na kaitavaṃ projjhitam “varṇāśramācāravatā puruṣeṇa paraḥ pumān | viṣṇur ārādhyate panthāḥ nānyat tattoṣakāraṇam ||” ityādinā bhāgavatadharmāṇām api varṇāśramasāpekṣatvakathanāt | atra tu...bhāgavatadharmāṇām anyanirapekṣatvapratipādanāt **prakarṣeṇa kaitavam ujjhitam** iti |

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4: **nirmatsarāṇām** ity anena sarvabhūtānukampāyā bhāgavatadharmeṣv atīśayatvaṃ darśayati | [...] ata evāyaṃ granthaḥ paramahaṃsasamhitā iti samākhyāyate, sarvabhūtābhayadānaṃ vinā paramahaṃsatvābhāvāt | Madhusūdana was probably referring to BhP 1.4.31, in which Vyāsa wonders if he is depressed because he has failed to describe those *bhāgavata dharmas* that are so dear to *paramahaṃsas*, who are themselves dear to God:

kiṃ vā bhāgavatā dharmā na prāyeṇa nirūpitāḥ |
priyāḥ paramahaṃsānām ta eva hy acyutapriyāḥ ||

⁵⁶⁰ L2, 5: evaṃ ca, yat paramapurūṣārthabhūtaṃ śuddham brahma vāsudevākhyam caturlakṣaṇamīmāṃsayā vicārya mumukṣubhis traivarṇikāiḥ paramahaṃsaparivrājakair eva kathamcit vedanīyam, tad atra strīśūdrādibhir api vedituṃ śakyam iti mahān atīśayaḥ | strīśūdrādīnām caturlakṣaṇamīmāṃsāśravaṇe 'nadhikārasya tatraiva vyutpāditatvāt | mandamatīnām ca traivarṇikānām tādrśadurūhatarkeṣv apraveśāt | iha tu tat tādrśarasavyaṅjakair eva śabdaiḥ komaloktyā bhūyobhūyaḥ pratipādanāt mandamadhyamottamānām sarveṣāṃ brahmavedanaṃ

Immediately after this concession, however, Madhusūdana raises a revealing problem:

One may doubt that if this were the case, then [the BhP] could be considered just the same as those works by modern-day poets (*abhinavakavi*) which talk about Brahman, since women, Śūdras, and the like, are able to listen to them. In response, the verse clarifies that [the BhP] was “composed by the great sage (Vyāsa).”⁵⁶¹

The reader is compelled to wonder who these “newfangled poets” might be, if anything more than the generic straw-men that pepper Sanskrit intellectual writing. If their compositions were available to “women and Śūdras,” the classic formula for those outside the pale of Brahmanical discourse, it is unlikely that they would have been in Sanskrit, at least according to the language ideology that underpins the use of the term. Could they be the vernacular *nirguṇi* poet-saints of early modern Banaras, uttering absolute truths in direct, unmediated, confrontational style? Does Madhusūdana's re-centering of the BhP suggest an upper-caste anxiety about the proliferation of subaltern song? Or was it a more general resistance to vernacular versions of the BhP?⁵⁶² Does the language of religion, at least in this case, bear directly on the problem of caste and gender? Perhaps it is farfetched to consider the motive counter-revolutionary, or even directly related to issues on the ground, but attempts to reassert caste hierarchy will resurface in Sanskrit scholastic writing on bhakti further on in this study.

My aim here has been to show the diversity of opinions in early modern Advaitic circles

yuktam iti bhāvah |

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 5: nanv evaṃ saty abhinavakavikāvyaśyāpi brahmapratipādakasya strīśūdrādiśraṇayogyatvena etattulyatā syād ity āsaṅkya āha **mahāmuniḥ** ite |

⁵⁶² Cf. Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, 71-2: “I can well imagine how this remarkable profusion of *Bhāgavatas* by the late seventeenth century in north India—and the performative mêlée that it implies—might have produced a certain anxiety in groups of Brahmins who understood the *Bhāgavata Purāna* to be their own special domain. And then there is the social component....A Gujarati named Keśav Kāyasth had composed a *Kṛṣṇakṛīḍākāvya* in the late fifteenth century....Against this polyglot, poly-caste backdrop, did certain Brahmins want to reassert their own particular capacities and training—and thereby reassert the power of the original text?”

regarding the BhP, as exemplified by some little-studied writings of a famous Advaitin philosopher. But the “great man” version of Indian philosophy often obscures more than it reveals. To see Madhusūdana Sarasvatī as the best and last Advaitic devotee is to prioritize philosophical popularity over historical understanding. For that we must turn not to the canonical works of major figures, but to those on the margins of the classical.

Śāṅḍilya's *Bhakti Sūtras*

In his essay attempting to prove the influence of Christianity on Hindu bhakti, the British scholar-administrator G.A. Grierson thought that the *Śāṅḍilya Bhakti Sūtras* (SBS) were important enough to merit an appendix with a summary of their contents.⁵⁶³ He brought up the SBS immediately after his famous turn of phrase regarding bhakti as the “flash of lightning” that came upon the darkness of Indian religion, that, when translated into Hindi by Hazariprasad Dvivedi, contributed to the idea of the “bhakti movement.”⁵⁶⁴ Grierson called this “official textbook” of bhakti a “modern Sanskrit treatise.” What he meant by “modern,” however, was anything that exhibited what he believed to be “decisively Christian” influences, such as the writings of Rāmānuja and Viṣṇusvāmī, which belonged to “the more modern phases of the doctrine.”⁵⁶⁵ To be sure, the SBS, together with the later *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras*, did become canonical—that is, representative of the doctrine of bhakti, just like the Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta Sūtras before them—at a particular “modern” historical moment. But this was by and large a colonial modern, part of the interaction between Orientalist scholars, Christian missionaries, and

⁵⁶³ G.A. Grierson, “Modern Hinduism and its Debt to the Nestorians,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 39.2 (1907): 311-335.

⁵⁶⁴ See Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, 51-52.

⁵⁶⁵ Grierson, “Modern Hinduism and its Debt to the Nestorians,” 314-317.

Hindu apologists in British India.⁵⁶⁶ Understanding their full impact on Indian intellectual history, however, requires attention to their precolonial life. How popular were the SBS among Sanskrit exegetes? Who were they? In what context were the aphorisms composed, and what was their relationship with the *sūtra* traditions they invoked? And first and foremost, how old were the SBS, really?

Historians of Indian philosophy, whether writing in English, Hindi, or Sanskrit, have tended to place them around the turn of the first millennium CE.⁵⁶⁷ This claim, or rather, this guess, is largely based on three correlations: First, the SBS' conceptual proximity to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa; second, the name of Śāṅḍilya as a recognized authority on devotional worship (*upāsanā*) from the early Upaniṣads; and third, a supposed commentary on the aphorisms attributed to the eleventh-century Śrīvaiṣṇava theologian Rāmānuja. Let us consider them one by

⁵⁶⁶ Grierson himself relied on the edition of the *sūtras* produced by James Ballantyne (1861) and subsequent translation by E.B. Cowell (1878). Ballantyne's edition of the text was prompted by an earlier series of essays on Christianity contrasted with Hindu philosophy, in the preface to which he remarked: "There are some Sanskrit works, yet untranslated, which the writer must study before deciding upon his theological terminology for India. Among these works is the *Aphorisms of Śāṅḍilya*. Śāṅḍilya rejects the Hindū (gnostic) theory that *knowledge* is the one thing needful, and contends that knowledge is only the handmaiden of *faith*. Hence, however defective his views may be in other respects, his work seems to provide *phraseology* of which a Christian missionary may advantageously avail himself. This remark might form the text for an extended dissertation on the Christian's right to the theological language and the theological conceptions of his opponents." See James Ballantyne, *Christianity Contrasted with Hindu Philosophy* (London: James Madden, 1858), iii-iv.

On Ballantyne's pedagogical attempts to employ Sanskrit-based education as a tool for the propagation of Christianity among the learned Hindu elite, see Michael Dodson, "Re-Presented for the Pandits: James Ballantyne, 'Useful Knowledge,' and Sanskrit Scholarship in Benares College during the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Modern Asian Studies* 36.2 (2002): 257-298.

⁵⁶⁷ See, e.g., Suvīrā Rainā, *Nārādīya evaṃ Śāṅḍilya-bhaktisūtram kā tulanātmaka adhyayana: bhakti ke ādyapravartaka ācāryom ke bhakti-sūtram tathā unase prabhāvita bhakti sampradāyom kā prāmāṇika vivecana* (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1989); *Śāṅḍilya Bhakti-Sūtra with Bhakticandrikā by Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha*, ed. Baldev Upadhyaya (Varanasi: Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1967), 1-23.

However, cf. Gupta, *Advaita Vedānta and Vaiṣṇavism*, 121: "There are two famous *Bhakti-sūtras* - the *Śāṅḍilya-bhakti-sūtra* (*ŚBhS*) and the *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* (*NBhS*). We can infer that the *ŚBhS* preceded the *NBhS* because while the latter refers to the former with some reverence a number of times, there is no mention of *NBhS* in the *ŚBhS*. Like the *BhP* and *BhG*, these two are sometimes taken as authoritative works on *bhakti*. I take up these two *Bhakti-sūtras*, not because of their antiquity, (they are obviously late and certainly later than *BhP*), but because they have made an attempt to introduce *bhakti* as a *Śāstra* in the model of the six *Darśana*."

one. The first is the easiest to substantiate; the *sūtras* do indeed exhibit significant inspiration from the BhP.⁵⁶⁸ But this does not make them co-eval. Śāṅḍilya, for his part, lives what Steven Lindquist calls a “literary life,”⁵⁶⁹ devotional worship being his leitmotif across different contexts. Even leaving aside the fact that Vedic *upāsanā* looks very different from Bhāgavata bhakti, it appears that attributing authorship of the *Bhakti Sūtras* to Śāṅḍilya fulfilled a narrative agenda. In other words, marshaling a figure known to be associated with devotional worship invested the concepts of the SBS with both antiquity and authority. This was a common practice of historical memory in premodern South Asia, and was likely employed here. As for Rāmānuja, the only evidence for his purported commentary comes courtesy of an indirect citation from a seventeenth century commentary on the text. I will discuss the relevant passage further on, but simply note here that it is not at all clear that an actual text is being cited, nor can the lack of historical memory of such a work as the SBS within Śrīvaiṣṇava circles be attributed to sheer negligence.

In fact, one is hard-pressed to find *any knowledge at all* of the aphorisms for much of Sanskrit intellectual history. Even the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, probably the most significant proponents of bhakti as a sphere of independent theological inquiry, seem to have made no mention of the *sūtras* in any of their works.⁵⁷⁰ The most well-known commentator on the SBS,

⁵⁶⁸ In his impressive précis of Indian religious literature, J.N. Farquhar suggested that the SBS may be of Nimbārkitite origin, but provided hardly any evidence to back this up. See J.N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), 233-234, 240.

⁵⁶⁹ Steven Lindquist, “Literary Lives and a Literal Death: Yājñavalkya, Śākalya, and an Upaniṣadic Death Sentence,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79.1 (2011): 33-57.

⁵⁷⁰ See S.K. De, *Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1961), 111-165 (on the six Gosvāmins of Brindavan), 201-203 (on the works cited in Rūpa Gosvāmin's *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*), 220-221 (works cited in Rūpa's *Ujjvalanīlamanī*), and 413-421 (works cited in Jīva Gosvāmin's *Ṣaṣṣandarbhā*).

the seventeenth-century scholar Svapneśvara, may have had a faint, if oblique, connection to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. He presents himself as the grandson of Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma, a famous scholar whom Gauḍīya hagiographers claimed as a convert to Caitanya's movement. But Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma's writings are limited to the subjects of Navya Nyāya and Advaita Vedānta, and Svapneśvara's commentary betrays no affinity to Caitanya's theology whatsoever.⁵⁷¹ In fact, it is more probable that he belonged to an Advaita Vedānta milieu, though he departs significantly from Advaita doctrines in the course of his commentary.⁵⁷²

As far as I can tell, the first public appearance of the SBS coincides with their first extant commentaries in the seventeenth century—perhaps when the *sūtras* themselves were composed. In previous chapters, I have demonstrated the increasing influence of the BhP on writing in the disciplines of Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries CE. From Mīmāṃsaka arguments that the genre of *purāṇa* possessed Vedic scriptural authority to internecine polemic between theistic and non-theistic Advaitins, scholars in this period debated the appropriate scope of the BhP in the realm of hermeneutics and philosophical theology. They also made use of other theistic scriptures that accorded to themselves the

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 89, n.1.

⁵⁷² Svapneśvara is difficult to place in more ways than one. His father's name, Jaleśvara, suggests a Śaiva background, but he comments on a text that later became important to Vaiṣṇavas. He seems to be an Advaitin, referring in his commentary on SBS 1.2.14 to *jñāna* as “the unity between Ātman and Brahman” (*brahmātmaikya*), but never identifies himself as such and often runs contrary to Advaita orthodoxy. For example, he begins his commentary by saying that liberation is achieved when individuals (*jīvāḥ*) achieve Brahman, from whom they are totally non-different (*atyantam abhinnā*). The everyday experience of *saṃsāra*, therefore, is not inherent (*sāhajika*), but is created by the conditioning adjunct (*upādhi*) that is the inner faculties made of the three *guṇas*, just like a crystal is seen as “red” when a flower is placed next to it. So far, the account sounds Advaitin, to the point of referring to a simile used famously by Vācaspati Miśra in his *Bhāmatī* on Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* (1.1.1). However, he follows with some rather un-Advaitin claims. Since *saṃsāra* is conditional, it cannot be removed by *ātmajñāna*, but instead only by either removing the conditioning itself, the object of conditioning, or the relationship between them. That requires something else—something called bhakti for God. After all, *saṃsāra* is quite real (*satya*), and cannot be wished away. How Svapneśvara fits into the larger history of the SBS is a topic that requires further research. See *The Aphorisms of Śāṅḍilya with the Commentary of Swapneśvara*, ed. J.R. Ballantyne (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1861), 1-3.

authority and the sobriquet of Upaniṣad, the *Gopāla-*, *Rāma-*, and *Nṛsiṃha-Tāpanīya*, as well as the *Bṛhannārādīya Purāṇa*. Taken together, these trends seem to have eventuated in the SBS: a new set of ancient aphorisms to rival the old guard, intrusive entrants into a scholastic field that bristled at the thought of bhakti occupying a theoretical space alongside jñāna and karma.

The SBS do more than simply find bhakti a seat at the table; they herald its supremacy. After having defined bhakti as “supreme love for God” (*parānuraktir īśvare*), SBS 1.1.3-5 claim that one who is absorbed (*saṁstha*) in love for God finds immortality; that absorption cannot mean jñāna, since one can know God's glory and still hate him; and finally, in no uncertain terms, that jñāna pales before bhakti.⁵⁷³ It does not even allow, like Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, that jñāna and bhakti could be independent paths to liberation undertaken by differentially qualified people. According to SBS 1.2.7, there is simply no contest, no open option (*vikalpa*) between the two. Svapneśvara comments, without a trace of discomfort, that

Because it has been determined that jñāna is a subordinate element (*aṅga*), there is no scope for the position that there is an option between jñāna and bhakti. After all, there is no equal choice between two elements in hierarchical relation. The word “also” (*api*) indicates that a synthesis, too, [is inappropriate].⁵⁷⁴

But what seemed straightforward to Svapneśvara was not nearly so clear-cut to his rough contemporary, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha. He reconstructed a salient objection, supported by several textual sources, that two routes (*mārgadvaya*) should be open to two different kinds of aspirants. His response suggests that he found it troubling that the author of the *sūtras* could dismiss the entirety of Vedānta study: “Even if it makes good sense to propose this option (*vikalpa*), the

⁵⁷³ SBS 1.1.3-1.1.5: tatsaṁsthasyāmṛtopadeśatvāt. jñānam iti cen na dviṣato 'pi jñānasya tad asaṁstHITEḥ. tayopakṣayāc ca.

⁵⁷⁴ See *The Aphorisms of Śāṅḍilya with the Commentary of Svapneśvara*, 17: **etena vikalpo 'pi pratyuktaḥ** || etena jñānasyāṅgatvanirṇayena jñānabhaktyor atra vikalpapakṣo 'pi pratyuktaḥ, nirākṛta iti mantavyam | na hy aṅgāṅginor ekatra vikalpo bhavātīti | apīśabdāt samuccayo 'pīti |

author of the *sūtras* doesn't see it that way [...] He will demonstrate everywhere that jñāna is totally unnecessary.”⁵⁷⁵ Here and elsewhere, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha brings his own unique concerns into his commentary on the SBS, which sometimes depart from the text, and sometimes refashion the very hermeneutical traditions in which he worked. In the following section, I explore what happens when a self-proclaimed Advaita Vedāntin reads the SBS, and what more it may reveal about the complex, shifting terrain of Advaita in early modern India.

Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha and the Moonlight of Bhakti

There are a number of Nārāyaṇa Tīrthas in the seventeenth century. Ko Endo has attempted to distinguish at least two, based on the evidence of manuscript colophons and their teaching lineages.⁵⁷⁶ The first Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, pupil of Vāsudeva Tīrtha and Rāmagovinda Tīrtha, and author of the *Bhakticandrikā* commentary on the SBS, boasts an impressive scholastic resume and variety of disciplinary expertise, including the *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā* on the *Yoga Sūtras*, the *Nyāyacandrikā* on Viśvanātha Nyāyapañcānana's *Bhāṣāpariccheda*, and the *Sāṃkhyacandrikā* on Īśvara Kṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. The other Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, pupil of Śivarāmatīrtha, composed the famous *Kṛṣṇalīlātaraṅgiṇī*, a Sanskrit dance-drama popular in the Tamil South, where he is supposed to have settled after moving from Andhra.⁵⁷⁷ While the two

⁵⁷⁵ *Śāṅḍilya Bhakti-Sūtra with Bhakticandrikā by Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha*, ed. Baladeva Upādhyāya (Varanasi: Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1967), 84 (henceforth cited as *Bhakticandrikā*): yadyapi vikalpa ucitas tathā 'pi sūtrakṛtā nādrtaḥ [...] sarvatra jñānānāvaśyakatām vakṣyati sūtrakāraḥ |

He repeats this uncomfortable relationship to the author of the *sūtras* in his commentary on SBS 2.2.29, where he reiterates his support for the “two paths to liberation” theory, but concedes that the SBS exclusively prefers bhakti to jñāna, its subordinate (*Ibid.*, 234-5): tasmāt siddham mokṣe mārgadvayam evety asmākīnaḥ panthāḥ | [...] sūtrakṛtmate tu bhaktiyoga evaiko mokṣamārgaḥ, jñānaṃ tu mokṣasādhanam eva, na mārgāntaram | He also spends a fair bit of time trying to reconcile the rather realist *sūtras* in SBS 2.1.5-16 with Advaita Vedānta doctrine. (*Ibid.*, 124-9).

⁵⁷⁶ Ko Endo, “The works and flourishing period of Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, the author of the *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā*.” *Sambhāṣā* 14 (1993): 41-60.

⁵⁷⁷ See V. Raghavan, *The Power of the Sacred Name* (Bloomington: World Wisdom Press, 2011), 75-82; B. Natarajan, *Sri Krishna Leela Tarangini by Narayana Tirtha, Volume I* (Madras: Mudgala Trust, 1988), 56-169. It

seem to have been different, there remain some suspicious overlaps. First, and most obvious, both composed Sanskrit bhakti works, if in different genres. Second, both were Advaita Vedāntins with Śaiva ties. And third, both can be connected with the Sanskrit intellectual life of the Banaras region. Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, pupil of Śivarāmatīrtha, wrote a primer on Mīmāṃsā, the *Bhāṭṭabhāṣāprakāśikā*, and is supposed to have been the Mīmāṃsā teacher of Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara, the Banaras-based commentator on the Mahābhārata. Moreover, manuscripts of the *Kṛṣṇalīlātaraṅgiṇī*, with Sanskrit commentaries in Grantha script, have also been found in Banaras.⁵⁷⁸ Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, pupil of Rāmagovinda Tīrtha, had a close relationship to none other than Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. He quoted liberally from Madhusūdana's *Bhaktirasāyana* in his *Bhakticandrikā*, referring to him fondly as “the old man” (*vṛddha*) and “the teacher” (*ācārya*). This Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha also wrote a commentary (*Laghuvyākhyā*) on Madhusūdana's *Siddhāntabindu*, which was expanded upon by his student Gauḍa Brahmānanda, who also commented on Madhusūdana's *Advaitasiddhi*, suggesting a kind of teaching lineage. None of this necessarily means that either Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha was based in Banaras. We know of the

is also likely that he was the composer of a Telugu drama called the *Pārijātaḥaraṇa Nāṭaka*, since the *Kṛṣṇalīlātaraṅgiṇī* was especially popular among performance traditions centered around *pārijāta* narratives. See Davesh Soneji, “Performing Satyabhāmā: Text, Context, Memory and Mimesis in Telugu-speaking South India” (PhD diss., McGill University, 2004), 54-55. It is possible that this Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha also composed one or two Advaita works: the *Pañcīkaraṇavārtikavivaraṇa* (with the autocommentary *Dīpikā*), and the *Subodhinī* commentary on Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* on the first four aphorisms of the *Brahma Sūtras*. According to Guruswamy Sastrigal's Tamil commentary on the *Kṛṣṇalīlātaraṅgiṇī*, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha invoked his preceptor Śivarāmatīrtha in the *Subodhinī* by each word in his name: “Śiva” signifying nonduality (*advaitam śivam*), the sublation of difference; “Rāma” being the consciousness-self in which the liberated revel (*ramante*); and “Tīrtha” being the holy place/person to which others belonging to the monastic community attend (*tīrthāgraṇīsevitam*). See Natarajan, *Sri Krishna Leela Tarangini*, 105:

advaitam śivam ity atas śivapadam samsāntabhedam tu yat
yasmin rāmapade cidātmani sukhe siddhā ramante 'niśam |
tat tīrtham paramārthatas suviditam tīrthāgraṇīsevitam
seve śrīśivarāmatīrtham atulaṃ kaivalyam asmadgurum ||

⁵⁷⁸ See Raghavan, *The Power of the Sacred Name*, 81.

Kṛṣṇalīlātarāṅgiṇī's southern popularity, and by the time of the seventeenth century, Madhusūdana was well-known in the south for his *Advaitasiddhi*, written in riposte to the Mādhva Vyāsātīrtha's *Nyāyāmṛta*.⁵⁷⁹ Moreover, as I will demonstrate, the author of the *Bhakticandrikā* was very interested in responding to the challenge of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, but whether this was a particularly southern or northern problem is a debate I open up further on.

Whatever the final identity of this Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, it is his relationship with Madhusūdana Sarasvatī that concerns me in this section, given their interests in the intersection of bhakti and Advaita Vedānta. At first blush it seems that Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha (henceforth, NT) simply rebroadcasts his predecessor's unique thinking on the subject, but the differences are enough to warrant further investigation. In the course of his *Bhakticandrikā*, or “Moonlight of Bhakti” commentary on SBS 1.1.2, NT raises a direct objection to the whole idea that bhakti is possible for Advaitins at all. If God is no different from the individual, says this opponent, it makes no sense for him to have bhakti towards himself. This is a common enough problem, but NT's response veers into uncharted territory:

Reply: You are confused. Advaitic knowledge offers no obstruction to the particular kind of love that is bhakti.

Objection: But isn't knowledge of [God's] grandeur (*māhātmya*) the cause of bhakti? If we cannot differentiate God, who always achieves his purpose, from the individual, who

⁵⁷⁹ Recall Bodhendra's mention of “Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, author of the *Advaitasiddhi*,” in Chapter 3. In his *Nyāyaratnāvalī*, Gauḍa Brahmānanda also refers to the famous South Indian Advaitin Appayya Dīkṣita's *Vedāntakalpataruparimala*. See T.M.P. Mahadevan, ed., *Preceptors of Advaita* (Secunderabad: Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Mandir, 1968), 323. However, this is not conclusive evidence that Brahmānanda himself was a southerner, since Appayya was known in Banaras by the late seventeenth century, when Brahmānanda was writing. Cf. Minkowski, “I'll Wash Out Your Mouth With My Boot,” 124-125; Yigal Bronner, “South meets North: Banaras from the perspective of Appayya Dīkṣita,” *South Asian History and Culture* 6.1 (2015): 10-31. That there was a rapid circulation of manuscripts and communication between Sanskrit intellectuals north and south by this time has been amply demonstrated by Elaine Fisher, who points out that the Banarasi Mīmāṃsaka Ananta Bhaṭṭa personally sent a copy of his *Śāstramālāvyaḅhyāna* to Nīlakaṅṭha Dīkṣita in Madurai. See Elaine Fisher, “A New Public Theology: Sanskrit and Society in Seventeenth-century South India” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013), 48-49.

consistently misses the mark and possesses innumerable flaws, then to deny God's grandeur is to vitiate the possibility of bhakti predicated on one's understanding of it.

Reply: You've completely misunderstood the point. "Grandeur" means a weight of qualities, which in turn means truth, knowledge and bliss (as we understand from *Brahma Sūtra* 3.3.12). Advaita does not simply constitute the plenitude that is one's own nature. Therefore, Advaitic knowledge, by way of the knowledge of grandeur, is itself the cause of complete love for that undifferentiated object. So how can it obstruct bhakti? Even if these qualities are conceived of as empirical...knowledge of [God's] grandeur is still not annulled for Advaitins. Instead, that love which, assisted by the unseen traces [of previous lives], begins with desolation (*hāni*) and culminates in dissolution (*galita*),⁵⁸⁰ causes one to forget every creation of the phenomenal world. The only qualitative difference between pure awakening and bhakti is that in the former, the distractions of hunger and so forth remain, while in the latter, they too disappear.⁵⁸¹

Until this point in his commentary, NT has been reconstructing almost verbatim a passage from Madhusūdana's *Bhaktirasāyana* (1.7). Here, however, he appears to import a completely different discussion, absent from Madhusūdana's treatise, about the knowledge of God's grandeur (*māhātmya*), a definition of bhakti found in the works of Vallabhācārya and in stray Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava references.⁵⁸² Most striking, he rereads Advaitic knowledge as being totally subordinate

⁵⁸⁰ NT refers here to his previous breakdown of *prema*, or love, into fifteen stages: *upta*, *patta*, *lalita*, *milita*, *kalita*, *chalita*, *calita*, *krānta*, *vikrānta*, *saṁkrānta*, *vihṛta*, [*saṁhṛta*, which he inexplicably fails to discuss], *galita*, and *saṁtṛpta*. As far as I can tell this typology is unprecedented, and bears no resemblance to any other.

⁵⁸¹ *Bhakticandrikā*, 27: nanv asmin mate katham paramātmāni bhaktiḥ sambhavati ? jīvābhinne tasmin svasminn eva bhaktyayogāt | na hi svasminn eva bhaktir upapadyata iti cet | bhrānto 'si; snehaviśeṣarūpāyām bhaktāv advaitajñānasyāpratibandhakatvāt | nanu māhātmyajñānam bhaktāu kāraṇam asatyasaṅkalpādyanekadoṣāśrayajīvābhede ca paramātmānas tatprasaktyā satyasaṅkalpatvādimāhātmyasya bādhenā tadbhānapūrvā bhaktiḥ pratibadhyeta eva iti cet | abhiprāyam ajñātavān asi | yato māhātmyam guṇagarimā guṇās ca "ānandādayaḥ pradhānasya" iti nyāyena satyajñānānandāḥ, na tu pūrṇatvādayaḥ svarūpātmakā evādvaitaghatitā ity advaitajñānam māhātmyajñānavidhaya'khaṇḍārthe saṁtṛptapremṇi kāraṇam eva iti tat katham bhaktāu pratibandham syāt | satyasaṅkalpādayas tu guṇāḥ sātṛtikaprakṛtimūlatayā vyāvahārikā apy upādhinā jīvād bhinnā eva īśe abhimatā iti, tatrāpi māhātmyasya bādho na sambhavaty advaitinām | api tu hānipūrvikā galitāntā prītiḥ saṁskārādṛṣṭasacivā yā punaḥ prapañcajātam eva vismārayati | iyāms tu viśeṣaḥ kevalabodhe 'śanādivikṣepo na nivartate, bhaktāu so 'pi nivartata iti |

⁵⁸² See Vallabha's *Tattvārthadīpa*, quoted in Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. IV, 347, n.1:

māhātmyajñānapūrvas tu sudṛḍhaḥ sarvato 'dhikāḥ |
sneho bhaktir iti proktaḥ tayā muktir na cānyathā ||

In his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (BRS), Rūpa Gosvāmin attributes this verse to the *Nārada Pāñcarātra*. See BRS 1.4.12: a) for *-pūrva* read *-yukta*; d) for *muktir na cānyathā* read *sārṣṭyādi nānyathā*. Gianni Pellegrino claims that, based on his commentary on the *Samkṣepasārīraka* of Sarvajñātman (II.51, I.62, and I.220), Madhusūdana

to bhakti. Even Madhusūdana does not go this far, instead according analogous, non-intersecting spaces to jñāna and bhakti. There are those who prefer (and are capable of) attaining liberation through knowledge, while others prefer absorption in divine love. In this respect Madhusūdana is unorthodox and innovative, no doubt, but not as radical as some previous commentators have suggested.⁵⁸³ The source of this objection is also important. NT directs his response at “the

knew of Vallabha's works. See Gianni Pellegrino, “Old is Gold! Madhusūdana's Way of Referring to Earlier Textual Tradition,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 43.2-3 (2015): 283, n.15. However, a brief perusal of the verses in question yields no evidence whatsoever to support this claim. In fact, that NT quoted this definition at all exemplifies his departure from Madhusūdana, who eschewed discussion of God's *māhātmya* entirely. See Nelson, “The Ontology of *Bhakti*,” 382: “He must of course specify what he means here by ‘knowledge of the Lord’. Is it reverent awareness of God’s greatness (*māhātmya-jñāna*), as in Vallabha’s definition of *bhakti*? Although such an understanding of knowledge might be expected in a devotional treatise, it is not what Madhusūdana has in mind.”

⁵⁸³ See Nelson, “Bhakti in Advaita Vedānta,” 185-198, 504-506; Nelson, “The Ontology of *Bhakti*,” 383-384. In my view, Nelson reads a little too much into Madhusūdana's valorizations of bhakti over jñāna. The first instance is Madhusūdana's commentary on *Bhaktirasāyana* 1.32-4, in the course of which Madhusūdana claims that bhakti is predicated on knowledge followed by disenchantment (*jñānavairāgyapūrvikā*). Nelson (“Bhakti in Advaita Vedānta,” 190) believes that his definition of jñāna is “clearly the Advaitins' direct realization of Brahman.” He adduces further proof from Madhusūdana's typology of the eleven “grounds” (*bhūmikās*) of bhakti, of which the “understanding of one's true nature” (*svarūpādhigati*) forms only the sixth (*Ibid.*, 192ff.). Finally, he asserts that Madhusūdana's definition of the “knowledge of the Lord” that precedes the highest levels of devotion “retains all the characteristics of the Advaitins' realization of the Supreme” (Nelson, “The Ontology of *Bhakti*,” 383).

However, it is not clear that what Madhusūdana means by jñāna, or “knowledge,” in these contexts is the immediate realization of the nondual Self that results in liberation. As for the first instance, his descriptions suggest that jñāna is an intellectual (or perhaps existential) understanding of the transient illusoriness of the phenomenal world, and the truth of God's nondual reality. This understanding in turn gives rise to disenchantment, and thereupon bhakti.

On a closer reading of Nelson's second point, the *svarūpādhigati* of the eleven stages of bhakti need not be “practically the same as the *Brahma-vidyā* of the Advaita school” (Cf. Gupta, *Advaita Vedānta and Vaiṣṇavism*, 132). Madhusūdana does use the word *sākṣātkāra*, the “direct apprehension” of the inner Self, in referring to this stage, but the term is qualified with the clause “as distinct from the gross and subtle bodies” (*sthūlasūkṣmadehadvayātirikatvena*). This could very well be a propaedeutic technique, preparing the groundwork for, but not actually culminating in, nondual knowledge (*abhedajñāna*). His language is ambiguous enough to allow for a similar distinction between the existential understanding and phenomenological experience of nondual knowledge.

Third and finally, Madhusūdana defines “knowledge of the Lord” (*bhagavatprabodha*), the realization that must come prior to the highest levels of devotion, as follows (Trans. Nelson, “The Ontology of *Bhakti*,” 383): “Everything other than Bhagavān, because it is transient, is false (*māyika*) like a dream. It is devoid of true significance, painful, and to be shunned. Bhagavān alone is real; He is the supreme Bliss, self-luminous, eternal, the one to be sought after. This is the kind of knowledge spoken of.” Once again, nothing in this definition necessitates that such *prabodha* is anything more than an intellectual awareness, that allows the devotee to attain true bhakti. This is not to say that it cannot be interpreted as an experiential awareness, but Madhusūdana seems

ideological claims of dualists and the rash judgments of *certain Advaitins* who say that bhakti is incompatible with Advaita.”⁵⁸⁴ According to NT, the challenge of bhakti was not only external, but internal to the Advaitin interpretive community. Notwithstanding the development of Advaita Vedānta as a “large-tent” system of philosophical theology in early modern India,⁵⁸⁵ the example of NT questions how coherent that community might have been.

NT continues to challenge orthodoxies further on. In his commentary on SBS 1.1.5, which asserts that jñāna is subordinate to bhakti, NT redefines the very character of liberation:

In truth (*vastutas tu*),⁵⁸⁶ even though ignorance is only destroyed by means of knowledge, that is not liberation, for insofar as [in Vedānta] it is a state other than the absence of joy and sorrow, it is not in and of itself the goal of human life. Rather, only love for God is, for it arrives at the very form of joy, inasmuch as it holds tightly to the self-luminous, blissful consciousness....[A]ttainment of Brahman defined by the destruction of ignorance is not human fulfillment, but rather only [when] characterized by a distinct type of love.⁵⁸⁷

Here NT argues that only the joyous consciousness of God—that is to say, love—is the final goal of human life, and moreover, that such love is the only thing that makes knowledge of nondual truth meaningful. Once again, NT differs from his predecessor. As Lance Nelson has shown, Madhusūdana is ready to argue the first—that bhakti is the highest goal of human life

to describe it as a propositional truth.

Cf. *Śrībhagavadbhaktirasāyanam*, ed. Gosvami Damodar Shastri (Kāśī: Acyutagrāhamālā, 1927), 41-60.

⁵⁸⁴ *Bhakticandrikā*, 28: tasmād advaite bhaktir na sambhavatīti dvaitinām abhiprayojaneti cādvaitinām keṣāṃcid vacanam sāhasamātram | Emphasis mine.

⁵⁸⁵ Minkowski, “Advaita Vedānta in Early Modern India,” 223.

⁵⁸⁶ Cf. Yigal Bronner and Gary Tubb, “*Vastutas Tu*: Methodology and the New School of Sanskrit Poetics,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36.5 (2008): 619-632.

⁵⁸⁷ *Bhakticandrikā*, 57: vastutas tu jñānād evājñānanāśo yadyapi bhavati, tathāpi na sa mokṣaḥ, sukhaduḥkḥābhāvānyatvena svato 'puruṣārthatvāt, kintu bhagavatprītir eva tasyāḥ svaprakāśanijasukhasamvidālīṅgitatvena sukhārūpatvābhyupagamād [...] vastuto brahmāvāptir api nā'jñānanāśopalakṣitā pumarthaḥ, kintu vijātyapremopalakṣitaiva |

(*paramapuruṣārtha*), independent from the Advaitic search for liberation. But he is clear that though they may be equivalent, they are by no means the same thing, and do not intersect.⁵⁸⁸

Moreover, equivalence is not hierarchy, which is precisely the force of NT's (and the *Bhakti Sūtras*) claim. He sums up his argument with a worldly comparison:

So it is proven that love alone—enveloped in God, a joyous consciousness, achieved through the knowledge of truth—represents human fulfillment, since it does not dissipate even at the time of liberation. For it even surpasses knowledge. For example, take a lover in the pangs of separation. Even when he experiences the thrill of his beloved's touch, it is only because he has longed for it that his joy becomes fulfillment. Joy does not become fulfillment simply by being “known.” That is why God became everything to the *gopīs*, but not to wicked people like Duryodhana.⁵⁸⁹

Needless to say, Śāṅkara would *not* be happy, nor hardly anyone else in the history of Advaita Vedānta. In fact, for someone who explicitly wants to defend the relationship between Advaita and bhakti, NT seems quite willing to import other Vedānta traditions into his commentary. In his commentary on SBS 2.1.7, NT introduces an interpretation that he attributes

⁵⁸⁸ Bhakti is not simply “*brahmavidyā* by any other name,” argues Madhusūdana in the *Bhaktirasāyana* (1.1). They are totally different with respect to the form they take (*svarūpa*), their respective means (*sādhana*), their results (*phala*), and their eligible aspirants (*adhikārin*). The result of bhakti is total love for God, while the result of *brahmavidyā* is the total removal of ignorance, the root of all evil. This does not mean, however, that the former *supersedes* the latter, as NT seems to suggest in redefining liberation.

See *Śrībhagavadbhaktirasāyanam*, 10-11: nanu tarhi nāmāntareṇa brahmavidyaiva bhagavadbhaktir ity uktam [...] iti cen na, svarūpasāadhanaphalādhikārivailakṣaṇyād bhaktibrahmavidyayoh | [...] bhagavadviṣayakapremaprakarṣo bhaktiphalam | sarvānarthamūlājñānanivṛttir brahmavidyāphalam |

See Nelson, “The Ontology of *Bhakti*,” 379: “What Madhusūdana seems to be suggesting here is a homology, but not an identity, between the mental states associated with *bhakti* and *brahma-vidyā*. In orthodox Advaita, we have the *akhaṇḍākāracittavṛtti*, the ‘mental mode taking on the form of the Undivided’, that leads to realization of Brahman and destruction of ignorance (and of itself). There is, Madhusūdana wants us to understand, a parallel structure in *bhakti*....[B]oth *brahma-vidyā* and *bhakti* are evoked by scripture, Brahman-knowledge arising through the wellknown practice of the *śravaṇa* (‘hearing’) of the great sayings of the Upaniṣads, *bhakti* through the ‘hearing of the glories of the Blessed Lord’ (*bhagavad-guṇa-śravaṇa*) from the scriptures of *bhakti*, preeminently the *BhP*.”

⁵⁸⁹ *Bhakticandrikā*, 59: tasmāt siddham - muktikāle 'py abādhāt tattvajñānasādhyaḥ sukhasaṃvidbhagavadāliṅgitaḥ premaiva pumartha iti | jñānād apy adhikatvāt | kāmukasya iva viraktasya api kāmīnīsaṃsparśajasukhānubhave 'pi iṣyamānatayā tatsukhasya kāmukaṃ praty eva puruṣārthatvāt | jñāyamānatvamātreṇa sukhasya puruṣārthatvānabhyupagamāt | ata eva bhagavān api gopīnām pumartha āsīt, na duṣṭaduryodhanādīnām |

to *śrīmadrāmānujācāryāḥ*, referring to the Śrīvaiṣṇava philosopher Rāmānuja with both the customary honorific plural and an honorable appellation. As previously mentioned, this is the first historical mention of Rāmānuja in connection with the SBS. This passage focuses on the Viśiṣṭādvaita doctrinal defense of the plurality of individual souls (*jīvas*) and the singularity of God (*īśvara*). NT reconstructs the doctrine in great detail, complete with responses to objections, and concludes his own Advaita response with an interesting conciliatory note:

In reality (*vastutaḥ*), the Supreme Self defined as eternal knowledge, etc., i.e., the Lord, forever singular, abundantly furnished with characteristics such as compassion for his devotees, referred to by terms such as Brahma, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, etc., is the controller of all beings. The individual soul, for his part, who is part of Him as a son is part of his father, is bound by the fetters of beginningless ignorance. Somehow, due to the merits he accrued by performing all sorts of good deeds in past lives, with the desire to know truth, he takes refuge in a true teacher; and by worshipping the teacher as God Himself, through his grace he directly apprehends himself. Once the bonds of ignorance have been removed, he attains unity with him. In that state, there is not even a trace of phenomenal existence.

Nobody disputes any of this. All of these debates over the imbrication of *bheda* and *abheda*, and the relative reality of the phenomenal world, only serve to sow discord. All knowledgeable people should at least acknowledge that according to every school of thought, the world is not eternal, since it does not exist for the liberated one.⁵⁹⁰

This conclusion raises several questions beyond the immediate problem of whether the opponent in question is really Rāmānuja—an unlikely interlocutor, given the virtual absence of engagement with the SBS among his Śrīvaiṣṇava followers. Why does NT spend so much time on this issue?⁵⁹¹ Why would he make appeal to the *mukta*, the liberated soul, in trying to

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 119: vastutaḥ paramātmā nityajñānādilakṣaṇo bhagavān sadaikarūpo bhaktavātsalyādyanekaguṇolbaṇaḥ brahmaviṣṇuśivanārāyaṇarāmākṛṣṇnādiśabdaiś ca vyapadeśyaḥ sarvajīvanīyantā, jīvas tu pituḥ putra iva tadamśo'nādyajñānapāśanibaddhaḥ kathañcit prāktanā'nekaśubhādrīṣṭaphalād vividiṣayā sadgurvā"śrayaneśabuddhyā tadbhajanena tatkrpayā svasya sāksātkārād ajñānapāśanīvṛtṭyā tatsāyujyam āpnoti, na tatra prapañcagandho 'pīty atra na kasyāpi vivāda iti bhedābhedānyatarāvalambanavādah prapañcasatyatvamithyātāvavādaś ca saṃjñākalahamātram | sarvamate 'pi prapañcasyānīyatā muktasya prapañcābhāvād iti sudhībhir vibhāvanīyam |

⁵⁹¹ In a brief aside in his commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtra* 1.24, “God is a particular kind of person, untouched by suffering, actions, their results, and intentions” (*kleśakarmavipākāśayair aparāmṛṣṭaḥ puruṣaviśeṣa īśvaraḥ*), NT also engages with Viśiṣṭādvaita opposition to the Advaitic theory that the difference between the individual

reconcile Advaita with Viśiṣṭādvaita, when the very experience of liberation was a contested concept between the two schools?⁵⁹² Does it reveal concerns stemming from a particular South Indian geography? Or did the new prominence of Śrīvaiṣṇavas in the bhakti traditions of the north compel NT to respond with his form of Vaiṣṇava Advaita?⁵⁹³

Whatever the answers to these questions, NT was clearly aware of the other Vedānta options around him. Although he derives most of his rhetoric on *bhaktirasa* from Madhusūdana,⁵⁹⁴ he elaborates on the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava distinction between *vaidhī* and *rāgānugā* bhakti, and even quotes passages from Rūpa Gosvāmin's *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (BRS), referring to him as yet another ancient authority (*vṛddha*).⁵⁹⁵ And in a stunning rejection of classical Advaita teaching, couched in his commentary on SBS 2.1.4, he argues that it is possible to have bhakti toward a God without attributes (*nirguṇa*), “because it is taught in the

and God is only conditional, not essential. “These followers of Rāmānuja,” he says, “misunderstand the intention [of the author] as I have described it, simply latching on to the most obvious sense of words like 'particular' and giving it a completely different spin.” See *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā of Srinarayanatirtha*, ed. Vimala Karnatak (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 2000), 32: *kecit tu rāmānujānusāriṇa ittham abhiprāyam ajānanto viśeṣāśabdādisvārasyamātreṇānyathābhāvam upavarṇayanti* | I revisit the *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā* in more detail below.

⁵⁹² See Christopher Framarin, “The Problem with Pretending: Rāmānuja's Arguments Against *Jīvanmukti*,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37.4 (2009): 399-414.

⁵⁹³ See Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, 99-147, 224-225.

⁵⁹⁴ See his long extracts from the *Bhaktirasāyana* in *Bhakticandrikā*, 30-52, and his account of the aesthetic elements of bhaktirasa paired with his own illustrative verses on 63-68.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 235-240. Cf. BRS 1.2.74-118. See *The Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu of Rūpa Gosvāmin*, trans. David L. Haberman (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2003), 34-45. These verses detail the *aṅgas*, or elements, of bhakti. Not all of them match between the two texts, but most interesting is the replacement of *kṛṣṇa* in the *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* with the more neutral word *īśa* in the *Bhakticandrikā*. E.g., BRS 1.2.82ab: “Inability to bear hatred or slander of Kṛṣṇa/īśa or his devotees.”

One wonders if both, like the Devas and Gosvāmins in Chapter 3, were drawing from a similar set of sources. The degree of overlap suggests a continuity between text traditions and perhaps even interpretive communities. NT certainly knew of Lakṣmīdhara's *Bhagavannāmakaumudī*, as borne out by a long section in his commentary on SBS 2.2.20 that recaps many of the arguments therein. See *Bhakticandrikā*, 180ff.

Vedānta that even the undivided can be identified as both the attributes and the possessor of attributes, just like a snake and its coils.⁵⁹⁶ The herpetological simile refers to *Brahma Sūtra* 3.2.27, *ubhayavyapadeśāt tv ahikuṇḍalavat*. But of all prior Vedānta commentators, only Madhva takes this to refer to Brahman as both the qualities and possessor of qualities.⁵⁹⁷ For an ostensible Advaitin, this is simply not cricket.

NT saves his most drastic departure from Advaita tradition for the moment when he comments on SBS 3.1.7: “The fruits [of action] come from God, according to Bādarāyaṇa, because they are visible.”⁵⁹⁸ An opponent argues that only karma in the form of *dharma* and *adharma* gives people results; putting God into the equation is just explicative excess. A third party interjects, saying that it is actually karma from a previous birth that gives people their present results. Consider the disparity between Yudhiṣṭhira's and Duryodhana's experiences in the Mahābhārata, he urges, bad things happen to good people and vice versa. NT rejects each of these objections and asserts that God, independently, of his own volition, gives rise to all things. And in an extraordinary departure from virtually all classical Vedānta thought, he follows by saying that one need not even avoid the classic accusation that God may be regarded as partial or cruel (*vaiṣamyanairghṛṇye syātām*).⁵⁹⁹ In fact, says NT, imputing partiality to God is a desirable

⁵⁹⁶ *Bhakticandrikā*, 78-79: abhede 'py ahikuṇḍalādivad guṇaguṇibhāvasya vedānte vyutpādanāt |

⁵⁹⁷ See Kiyokazu Okita, *Hindu Theology in Early Modern South Asia: The Rise of Devotionalism and the Politics of Genealogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 234-236.

⁵⁹⁸ Cf. *Brahma Sūtra* 3.2.37: phalam ata upapatteḥ

⁵⁹⁹ Cf. *Brahma Sūtra* 2.1.34. Madhva does make a case for God's partiality, but only in order to assert the hierarchy among devotees (*tāratamya*) that underpins his doctrine of the elect. This claim is later developed by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava commentators such as Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, but with very different justifications than NT's above. See David Buchta, “Dependent Agency and Hierarchical Determinism in the Theology of Madhva,” in *Free Will, Agency, and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy*, eds. M.R. Dasti and E. F. Bryant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 264-275.

consequence of this debate (*iṣṭāpatti*), because difference is the natural state of affairs. After all, individuals are not the same; some are independent and others are not. And a king who is partial does not stop being a king, unlike us, who presumably lose something of ourselves in the process. Nor does this mean that karma is meaningless, either a) because it operates within particular limits or b) because it prompts God either to be angry or pleased. NT concludes his argument for God's partiality by citing Draupadi's famous speech to Yudhiṣṭhira in the *Vana Parvan* of the Mahābhārata: "The arranger does not act towards beings, O king, like a mother or father. He is prompted as if by anger, just like everyone else."⁶⁰⁰ Draupadi's withering, almost heretical critique of an absurd, fickle god is firmly shut down in the epic, even if it leaves unsettling questions.⁶⁰¹ But here, it actually provides scriptural sanction for NT's radical re-envisioning of Advaita Vedānta.⁶⁰²

⁶⁰⁰ MBh 3.31.37:

na mātrpitrivad rājan dhātā bhūteṣu vartate |
roṣād iva pravṛtto 'yaṃ yathā 'yaṃ itaro janaḥ ||

⁶⁰¹ See Angelika Malinar, "Arguments of a queen: Draupadi's views on kingship," in *Gender and Narrative in the Mahābhārata*, eds. Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black (London: Routledge, 2007), 86-88.

⁶⁰² The previous paragraph paraphrases *Bhakticandrikā*, 252-255. For NT, the Mahābhārata was contested territory in more than one way. SBS 2.2.23, "All qualify [for bhakti] including the despised, on account of it being passed down, just like universal [*dharmā*]," brings up the issue of low-caste participation in bhakti. In NT's commentary, this raises questions regarding the very definition of caste. An opponent argues that the very notion of *brāhmaṇatva*, Brahmin-ness, cannot be determined based on birth (*jāti*), but rather is defined by one's qualities (*guṇa*). In support of this definition, he cites a dialogue between Yudhiṣṭhira and Nahuṣa in the same section of the MBh quoted above. In this dialogue, Yudhiṣṭhira tells Nahuṣa that caste (*jāti*) is very difficult to figure out, given the total intermixture of caste-classes (*varṇasaṃkara*); one had to foreground character (*śīla*) rather than birth. NT vehemently rejects this "empty claim" (*riktaṃ vacanam*), and mobilizes several normative Brahmanical texts to reassert that *brāhmaṇatva* is based on birth alone. (*Ibid.*, 196-198).

The opponent's claim, of course, was not quite anti-essentialist. The MBh itself was obsessed with the problem of *varṇasaṃkara*, and with delimiting the boundaries of an ideal social order. But in the seventeenth century, when NT was writing, *varṇasaṃkara* seems to have provoked a different kind of anxiety. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the question "Who was a Brahmin?" could now be situated against the rise of subaltern castes in political orders under the Mughal aegis, their visibility in certain urban publics (such as Banaras), and the new social mobility afforded to heterogeneous scholarly and scribal communities that claimed upper-caste status. Cf. Rosalind O'Hanlon and Christopher Minkowski, "What makes people who they are? Pandit networks and the problem of livelihoods in early modern Western India," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 45.3 (2008): 381-416.

What are we to make of NT's repeated “transgressions”? One possibility is that he is taking his predecessor Madhusūdana to a logical extreme, opening the floodgates to submerge nondual philosophy in religious devotion. But beyond the writings of his student Gauḍa Brahmānanda, we find little more extant work by Advaitins in this vein, unless we have not looked hard enough. Such an interpretation also focuses exclusively on the philosophical issues at stake, instead of understanding their historical context. A more likely explanation is that NT belonged to a spectrum of early modern Vedāntins who lay claim to a history of scholastic engagement with the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and other Vaiṣṇava scriptures. This spectrum ranged between the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, who possessed an ambivalent relationship to Advaita Vedānta; the Vallabha Vedānta community, which called its Kṛṣṇaite theology a “pure Advaita” (*śuddhādvaita*); and, of course, Madhusūdana and his associates.⁶⁰³ We have already seen evidence from Madhusūdana's commentary on the BhP that there were many parties involved at this time in revisiting the relationship between bhakti and Advaita, and it is precisely this diversity that I have emphasized in this chapter.

NT was at once indebted to and distinct from that broader Advaita world. He was one of a number of early modern Advaitins who adopted creative exegetical tactics to read bhakti practices from the BhP back into canonical texts like the Veda.⁶⁰⁴ Like Anantadeva I, he took on

⁶⁰³ Cf. Nelson, “The Ontology of Bhakti,” 390.

⁶⁰⁴ In his commentary on SBS 1.2.9 (missing from Svapneśvara's commentary), NT finds Ṛg Vedic precedents for each element of the “nine-fold devotion” (*navavidhā bhakti*). See *Bhakticandrikā*, 86-91. In doing so, he reflects similar previous efforts by Anantadeva in the *Bhaktinirṇaya*, ed. Ananta Shastri Phadke (Benares: Sanskrit College, 1937), 19-22. On the creative etymological approach adopted by NT's later contemporary and Advaitin Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara, to elucidate the “hidden meaning” (*rahasya*) of Vedic mantras and find in them stories from the epics and *purāṇas*, see Christopher Minkowski, “Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara's *Mantrakāśīkhaṇḍa*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122.2 (2002): 329-344, and Christopher Minkowski, “Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara and the Genre of Mantrarahasyaprakāśikā,” in *Proceedings of the Second International Vedic Workshop*, ed. Y. Ikari (Kyoto, forthcoming). Nīlakaṇṭha also owed his creative Advaitic readings of the Vedastuti, embedded in BhP 10.87, to prior commentaries by Madhusūdana and NT. See Christopher Minkowski, “The Vedastuti and

the Mīmāṃsā orthodoxy of his day, quoting and dismissing a famous passage from Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's *Śloka-vārttika* that denies the existence of a creator God.⁶⁰⁵ And in his commentary on SBS 2.2.25, he even paraphrased Anantadeva's *Bhaktinirṇaya*, and used the language of Mīmāṃsā option-theory (*vikalpa*) to claim that either study of Vedānta or devotion to God could bring about the knowledge of truth, which would lead to liberation.⁶⁰⁶ NT was thus fully a participant in the theistic Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta of his day, while making his own unique intervention into that discursive array.

Bhakti, Yoga, and the Beautiful Goddess

Was NT's *Bhakticandrikā* simply an intellectual sidetrack, or did it reappear across his writings? What was the broader intellectual context in which such ideas may have circulated? And was he alone in giving the SBS such importance? As we saw in the previous chapter, a

Vedic Studies: Nīlakaṇṭha on Bhāgavata Purāṇa X.87," in *The Vedas: Texts, Language, Ritual*, eds. Arlo Griffiths and Jan E.M. Houben (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2004), 125-142.

⁶⁰⁵ To support SBS 1.2.22-3 and *Brahma Sūtra* 2.1.33, on God's compassion and creative potential, NT argues that God, as a grand magician (*māyāvī*) is capable of inhabiting his own illusion, and need not have a purpose for his activities. Even intelligent people in everyday life, he says, engage in play without reason—undercutting the *Śloka-vārttika*'s insistence that no one does anything without some purpose in mind (*prayojanam anuddiśya*). See *Bhakticandrikā*, 139-140: etena...mīmāṃsāvārttikakṛduktam nirastam | prayojanam anuddiśyaiva buddhimatām api līlādau pravṛttidarśanāt |

⁶⁰⁶ See *Ibid.*, 215-217. Cf. *Bhaktinirṇaya*, 38-46. Here are some examples of the overlap:

tattvajñānam prati sādhanabhaktivedāntavicārayor vaikalpikaheturvāna vedāntavicāram vinā 'pi sādhanabhaktyaiva tattvajñānavāra tat[mokṣa]prāptisambhavāt | (*Bhakticandrikā*, 215).

tad evam mokṣaheturvattvajñāne janayitavye vedāntavicārabhaktiyogayor dvārabhedaḥ siddhaḥ | (*Bhaktinirṇaya*, 39).

nanv athāpi vikalpo na sambhavati, vicārya iva bhaktes tātparyāvadhāraṇaheturvābhāvena dvāraikyābhāvāt | vrīhiyavayor dvāraikyād eva vikalpābhyupagamād iti cet, satyam | yady apy atra dvārabheda eva [...] tathā 'py atra haribhaktivedāntavicārayor ekaprayogavidhipariḡhītāvābhāvād dvārabhede 'py udbhīdabalabhidyāgayor iva vikalpo 'bhyupeyata ity āstām vistarāḥ | (*Bhakticandrikā*, 215-217).

katham tarhi dvārabhede vikalpaḥ | yathā jyotiṣtomodbhīdādiyāgayoḥ paśuphalakayoḥ | [...] prayājāvaghātayos tv ekaprayogavidhipariḡhītāvād avikalpaḥ | vrīhiyavayor tu saty apy ekavidhipariḡhītave dvāraikyād vikalpaḥ | haribhaktivedāntavicārayor tu naikaprayogavidhipariḡrahaḥ, tasmād vikalpa eva | (*Bhaktinirṇaya*, 39-40).

significant feature of early modern Sanskrit intellectual history was the blurring of disciplinary boundaries. While Sanskrit intellectuals had always written widely across knowledge-systems, without seeming preference for one over another, it was the very reinscription of disciplinary boundaries that characterized early modern doxographical writing that made their mutual imbrication distinctive.⁶⁰⁷ A scholar like Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita, for example, found his penchant for Advaita Vedānta filtering into his works on grammar, and vice versa.⁶⁰⁸ The Deva family wrote on Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, at once recognizing and muting the different soteriological commitments of each discipline. Moreover, the sixteenth-century Bhedābheda Vedāntin Vijñānabhikṣu urged in his writing that Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta constituted a single teaching.⁶⁰⁹ It is in this context that we should understand NT's incorporation of bhakti into his commentary on the *Yoga Sūtras*, called the *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā* (YSC).

NT's main project in the YSC is to reread the discipline of Patañjali's eight-limbed Yoga as indispensable and subordinate to the teaching of Advaita Vedānta. Drawing on a long history of the Advaitic intersection with Yoga, NT identifies *samādhi*, or yogic absorption, with the Advaitic principle of *nididhyāsana*, repeated meditation on one's unity with Brahman. He then offers a set of fourteen “yogas” that sequentially enable the realization of the Self, beginning with Śaiva practices of ritual homologization and culminating in a Vaiṣṇava theology of loving devotion (*premabhaktiyoga*).⁶¹⁰ The YSC as a whole clearly shows that NT was attuned to a

⁶⁰⁷ See Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 144-164.

⁶⁰⁸ See Madhav Deshpande, “Appayya Dīkṣita and the Lineage of Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, online first (2014): 2-3.

⁶⁰⁹ See Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 108-123.

⁶¹⁰ See Jason Schwartz, “Parabrahman among the Yogins,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, forthcoming, 41, and n.79. The full list is: *kriyāyoga*, *caryāyoga*, *karmayoga*, *haṭhayoga*, *mantrayoga*, *jñānayoga*, *advaitayoga*, *lakṣyayoga*, *brahmayoga*, *śivayoga*, *siddhiyoga*, *vāsanāyoga*, *layayoga*, *dhyānayoga*, and *premabhaktiyoga*. The manuscript from Mysore (labeled *gha*) contains glosses, perhaps added by a later copyist, that clarify what some

broader Yoga world that ranged from Śākta Tantric practitioners to Nāth yogis.⁶¹¹ But what concerns me here is how NT incorporates the theology of the *Bhakticandrikā* into the YSC, since it demonstrates that his attention to bhakti was not restricted to the genre of texts in which one may expect its appearance.

In YSC 1.23-32, NT offers several indications that the bhakti of the BhP impacts his understanding of the *Yoga Sūtras*' prescriptions. Commenting on *Yoga Sūtra* 1.23, which famously prescribes “devotion to God” (*īśvarapraṇidhāna*), NT says that the idea here is that “*samādhi* is available most effortlessly through *bhaktiyoga*, to be described further on: namely, the understanding that one should worship with mantras, recitation, etc., leading to that repeated process by which the heart is intensely fixed on him alone—in other words, love.”⁶¹² A long excursus in YSC 1.26, on a *sūtra* that says God was the teacher of the ancients (*pūrveṣām api guruḥ*), defends the concept of *avatāras*, accounting for the single Supreme God's manifestations on earth, and mirrors a discussion in his *Bhakticandrikā* on SBS 2.2.29.⁶¹³ But NT's crucial

of these yogas constitute: *advaitayoga* is understanding the purport of Vedāntic utterances regarding the nondual Supreme Self; *brahmayoga* is attention to the *nāda*, the Brahman-as-sound; *śivayoga* is the general feeling that one is one with God; *siddhiyoga* is purifying one's veinal channels, etc.; *vāsanāyoga* is the desire for liberation, to know the truth of the Self; *layayoga* is the *samprajñāta samādhi* described in *Yoga Sūtra* 1.17-18; *dhyānayoga* is reflecting on the embodied form of Śiva, Viṣṇu, and other gods; and *premabhaktiyoga* is the uninterrupted flow of love, an exclusive consciousness of God's lotus feet. See *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā*, 2.

⁶¹¹ Schwartz, “Parabrahman among the Yogins,” 43-45.

⁶¹² *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā*, 26: **praṇidhānāt** praṇidhīyate tadekamātraniṣṭhaṃ manaḥ kriyate 'neneti punaḥpunārūpaṃ prema tatsādhanamantraajapārādhyatvajñānādirūpād vaksyamāṇād bhaktiyogād anāyāsena āsannatamaḥ samādhilābho bhavatītyarthaḥ |

⁶¹³ See *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā*, 35-40. Cf. *Bhakticandrikā*, 143-151. With liberal use of late sectarian scriptures like the *Rāma-*, *Gopāla-*, and *Nṛsimha-Tāpinīya Upaniṣad*, NT argues at length that figures like Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are not simply exalted individuals (*jīvaviśeṣāḥ*), but rather the playful incarnations of the one supreme God (*parameśvarasya līlāvatārāḥ*). Interestingly, and perhaps pointing to his association with charismatic gurus, NT also says that “great souls of the present-day should also be regarded as such.” See *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā*, 38: evam [...] ādhunikā api mahānubhāvā mantavyāḥ | He goes on to taxonomize the *avatāras* according to the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, but unlike other Vaiṣṇavas who adopt the same system, does not commit to the supremacy of Viṣṇu.

discussion of *bhaktiyoga*, of bhakti as yoga, comes in his preface to *Yoga Sūtra* 1.32: “For the prevention of obstacles, practice [concentrating on] a single truth” (*tatpratiṣedhārtham ekatattvābhyāsaḥ*). I translate the passage in full:

Now ritual actions (karma) cannot be given a superlative status. They are extremely difficult to carry out, like agriculture and other activities. They only provide the appropriate result when done with the right auxiliary elements, and if done haphazardly, they only result in a litany of difficulties and wasted effort. Moreover, they prevent access to the highest good, since they originate within the strictures of *varṇa* and *āśrama*. Nor is it right that they should be accepted by the wise. Rather, it is only devotion to God (*bhajana*), “even a little bit of which,” in his own words (Bhagavad Gītā 2.40), “releases one from great fear,” that provides the greatest result. Just as a spark of fire, however tiny, becomes a blaze when fed by a clump of grass, and accomplishes every necessary [ritual] action, so too the acts of devotion (*praṇidhāna*), even such minor ones as inadvertently uttering the name of God, are capable of obliterating a host of sins, as they did for Ajāmila. And magnified by that very act of destruction, they become capable of accomplishing the heart's desire, when rounded out by faith and a longing for the object of devotion. Therefore, *praṇidhāna* alone is indispensable.⁶¹⁴

It is of four types: pre-eminent (*paramamukhya*), principal (*mukhya*), subordinate (*mukhyajātīya*), and aspirational (*mukhyakalpa*). The first is love. This is akin to what the *gopīs* experienced: hearing and singing God's glories, their hearts melted like a porous copper pot, transforming into an intense stream that flowed only to him, and conformed to his shape. As the Bhagavad Gītā (12.8) says “Place your heart in me alone; make your mind enter into me.” This describes *premabhaktiyoga*, which we define as the uninterrupted flow of extreme, exclusive love directed to the Supreme Lord's lotus feet. For those unable to achieve that, there is a second option, a practice called *nididhyāsana*. This means repeatedly fixing the mind in God as the Self, by withdrawing it from its natural inclination toward the outside world. As it has been said (BG 12.9): “Say you cannot firmly fix your mind in me, then practice this practice (*abhyāsayoga*) and form a desire to reach me.”

The third is for people incapable of even that practice: actions such as reciting his name, undertaking the eleventh-day fast, and so forth, which result in an awareness of him. As he says (BG 12.10): “If you cannot practice either, then at least do things devoted to me.” The fourth, for one incapable of that, is to abandon any desire for the result of even

⁶¹⁴ Interestingly, NT gives a much wider scope to *praṇidhāna* here than in his *Bhakticandrikā*. SBS 1.2.12-13 say that yoga leads to both bhakti and jñāna, and that only “secondary” (*gaunī*) bhakti contributes to yogic absorption (*samādhi*). In his commentary transitioning from *sūtra* 12 to 13, NT says “You might ask: Doesn't this contradict *Yoga Sūtra* 1.23, '[*Samādhi* is accessible] through devotion to God,' which tells us that bhakti is the predominant means to yoga? In response is SBS 1.2.13, ***Samādhi, however, is attainable through secondary [bhakti]***. There [in the *Yoga Sūtras*], the word 'devotion' signifies secondary bhakti, not the primary kind.”

actions done out of habit, and instead offer them to the Supreme Lord, the great guru. This resolve looks something like: “Whatever I have done, be it good or bad, I have offered it all to you, and do it because of you.” The Bhagavad Gītā has said as much in the twelfth chapter (12.11): “If you are incapable of acting with recourse to my yoga, then act within yourself and leave aside all results.” Here, the word *praṇidhāna* is used to describe this. [...] Therefore, since the pre-eminent *bhaktiyoga* is itself the result of every other method, [the author of the *sūtras*] proceeds to describe the practice called love, which results in both [God's grace and the removal of obstacles].⁶¹⁵

It is an open question how integral God was to the early Yoga tradition. *Yoga Sūtras* 1.23-26 suggest that God could be worshipped, embodied, and perhaps even capable of bestowing grace, having an active role in the world even if he was not its creator. For NT, there is no doubt whatsoever, because his primary sources are the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the *bhaktiyoga* of the Bhagavad Gītā, and several late theistic “Upaniṣads.” By foregrounding the “melted hearts” of the *gopīs* of the BhP, NT once again invokes Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's *Bhaktirasāyana*, which

⁶¹⁵ *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā*, 49-51: atha kṛṣṇādivad bahvāyāsasādhyānām karmanām sāṅgānām eva yathocitaphaladāṛṭtvena yathākathañcit kriyamāṇānām phaladāṛṭtvābhāvāc chramādyanekaduḥkhalakavadarśanād varṇāśramābhīmānādinibandhanatvena paramaśreyo'paghātivāc ca nātiprāśastyam, na vā vidvadupādeyatvaṃ yuktam | kintu bhagavadbhajanasyaivāgnivādapūrṇasyāpy asya “svalpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt” iti vadatā bhagavatā mahāphalapratiṣṭhānāt | yathā 'gnikoṇo 'tisvalpo 'pi tṛṇarāśim jvalayams tenaiva varddhitāḥ pūrṇaḥ sarvāṇi sūcitāni kāryāṇi janayati | tathā bhagavato yathākathañcinnāmoccāraṇādirūpaṃ api praṇidhānam ajāmilāder iva pāparāśim nāśayat tena nāśenavādhikam sampādyamānam śraddhādinā pūrṇam bhajāniya icchāsahakṛtam sarvābhilaṣitam sādhyati | tasmāt praṇidhānam evāvaśyakam |

tac ca caturvidham - paramamukhyaṃ, mukhyaṃ, mukhyajātīyaṃ, mukhyakalpañ ceti | tatṛadyaṃ gopīnām iva tadguṇagaṇaśravaṇādinā drutacetaso drutatāmrasyeva dṛḍhatadākāratātadviśayakavṛttipravāharūpaṃ prema “mayy eva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṃ niveśaya” ityādinoktam | anena premabhaktiyogo darsītaḥ | sa ca parameśvaracaraṇāravindiviśayaikāntikāntikapremapravāho 'navacchinna ityarthāḥ |

dvitīyaṃ tadasāmarthyē bahiḥpravṛttisvabhāvāsya manasaḥ pratyāhāreṇa punaḥ punar bhagavaty ātmani niveśanarūpo 'bhyāso nididhyāsanākhyāḥ “atha cittaṃ samādhātuṃ na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram | abhyāsayogena tato mām icchāptuṃ dhanañjaya ||” ityādyuktam |

tṛtīyan tu tadasāmarthyē 'pi tatpratītiphalakanāmoccāraṇaikādaśyupavāsādirūpaṃ karma “abhyāse 'py asamartho 'si matkarmaparamo bhava” ityādinoktam |

caturthaṃ tatṛ 'py asāmarthyē svabhāvata eva kṛtānām api karmanām phalecchām tyaktvā parameśvare paramagurāv arpaṇam “sādhu vā 'sādhu vā karma yad yad ācaritaṃ mayā | tat sarvaṃ tvayi saṃnyastaṃ tvatprayuktaḥ karomy aham ||” iti saṃkalpaviśeṣarūpaṃ | “athaitad apy aśakto 'si kartuṃ madhyogam āśritaḥ | sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṃ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān ||” ityādinoktam bhagavadgītādvādaśādhyāyē | atra ca praṇidhānaśabdenoktam | [...] tasmāt paramam mukhyaṃ bhaktiyogaṃ sarvopāyaphalabhūtamayaṃ ata eva tadubhayaphalakaṃ premākhyam āha - **tatpratiśedhārtham ekatattvābhīyāsaḥ** || 1.32 ||

defines bhakti as the “transformation of a mind melted by devotion into a constant stream that flows toward the Lord of all.”⁶¹⁶ But instead of according it a separate conceptual or generic space, he places it at the center, the pre-eminent place, of yogic practice, making bhakti constitutive of an entirely different philosophical system.

If NT's religious sensibilities complicate the binary between Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, we may attribute it to his inclination, shared by many of his contemporary Advaitins, to play down sectarian conflict.⁶¹⁷ Curiously, however, the SBS's idea of bhakti as an independent disciplinary sphere was not confined to Vedāntins inspired by Vaiṣṇava scriptures. One of the handful of precolonial scholars to refer to the SBS was Bhāskararāya (ca. 1700-1775 CE), a Śākta intellectual of Maharashtrian extraction who spent much of his life in the Tamil South under the patronage of the Thanjavur Marathas. Bhāskararāya is famous for his writings on the Śrīvidyā Tantric tradition of goddess worship. His main works include the *Saubhāgyabhāskara* commentary on the *Lalitāsahasranāmastotra* (Thousand Names of the Beautiful Goddess), the

⁶¹⁶ *Śrībhagavadbhaktirasāyanam*, 13:

drutasya bhagavaddharmād dharāvāhikatām gatā |
sarveṣe manaso vṛttir bhaktir ity abhidhīyate || 1.3 ||

⁶¹⁷ Even in his note concerning the *avatāras* that follows a Vaiṣṇava Āgamic model, NT is concerned to emphasize that Śiva and Viṣṇu are on the same footing. In this he joined other early modern Smārta Advaitins including Anantadeva I, who expressed the sentiment, continuous across his literary and polemical writing, that “Those who zealously put down either Śiva or Viṣṇu by elevating the other should not be considered devotees at all.” See *Bhaktinirṇaya*, 46: ye tu viṣṇor utkarṣeṇa śivāpakarṣābhiniveśinaḥ, ye ca śivotkarṣeṇa viṣṇor apakarṣābhiniveśinas te ubhaye 'pi na bhaktā iti mantavyam | Also see Christopher Minkowski, “Nīlakaṇṭha's Mahābhārata,” *Seminar* 608 (2010): 32-38, on the contemporary Advaitin Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara's assertion of why “partisan quarreling about the hierarchy of particular forms of the deity was misguided and harmful.”

Such efforts were consistent between northern and southern Advaitins. As we saw in Chapter 3, the one-time head of the Śāṅkara *maṭha* at Kanchipuram, Bodhendra Sarasvatī, wrote a tract that sought to abolish the hierarchy between Śiva and Viṣṇu, the *Harīharādvaitabhūṣaṇa*. And he built on previous work by figures like Appayya Dīkṣita, who composed hymns on multiple deities at the behest of religiously diverse patrons. See Yigal Bronner, “Singing to God, Educating the People: Appayya Dīkṣita and the Function of *Stotras*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 127.2 (2007): 113-130.

Setubandha commentary on the *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava Tantra*, and the *Varivasyā Rahasya*, an important Śrīvidyā ritual manual. In a biography of his teacher, Bhāskararāya's student Umānandanātha describes how he began his career in Gujarat, vanquishing adherents of the Vallabha and Mādhva communities, before moving to the banks of the Kaveri river.⁶¹⁸ Perhaps this claim was motivated by sectarian discontent; Puruṣottama Pītāmbara, a Vallabhite Vedāntin of Surat, had written a tract denouncing the Śaiva ideology of Appayya Dīkṣita's *Śivatattvaviveka*. Whether or not Bhāskararāya actually participated in such debates, he was most certainly in the Śaiva-Śākta camp.

Bhāskararāya mentions the SBS a handful of times across the *Saubhāgyabhāskara* and *Setubandha*.⁶¹⁹ Although many of these references are perfunctory, a few stand out. In the “Thousand Names,” the goddess Lalitā is called a “lover of bhakti, attainable by bhakti, and won over by bhakti” (*bhaktipriyā bhaktigamyā bhaktivaśyā*). Commenting on these names in the *Saubhāgyabhāskara*, Bhāskararāya says:

Bhakti is of two kinds: primary and secondary. Primary bhakti is a particular modification of the mind called “love” that has God as its object. As the *Bhaktisūtra* (1.1.2) says: “That [bhakti] is supreme love for God.” The definite article signifies bhakti, as we understand from the first *sūtra*: “Now, therefore, an inquiry into bhakti.” The adjective “supreme” indicates its most intense form. The idea is that with reference to this supreme, primary type of bhakti, “love” is enjoined as pointing to it. It is for that very reason, say earlier commentators, that “the word 'supreme' excludes the secondary [bhakti].” A later *sūtra* (1.2.13) explains that secondary bhakti consists of service...whose types are many, e.g., remembering God, singing his glories, etc.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁸ See *Varivasyārahasya* by Śrī Bhāskararāya Makhin, ed. S. Subrahmanya Śāstrī (Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1968 [1934]), xxv-xxvii.

⁶¹⁹ See *Śrīlalitāśahasranāmastotram with 'Saubhāgyabhāskara' by Bhāskararāya*, ed. Batukanathashastry Khiste and Shitala Pradasa Upadhyaya (Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, 2003), 10, 88-9, 96, 181, 332. Also see *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇavaḥ with the commentary 'Setubandha' by Bhāskararāya*, ed. Shitala Pradasa Upadhyaya (Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, 2005), 3, 61, 271, 308.

⁶²⁰ See *Saubhāgyabhāskara*, 88: bhaktir dvividhā mukhyā gauṇī ceti | tatresvaraviṣayako 'nurāgākhyas cittavṛttiviśeso mukhyabhaktiḥ | tathā ca bhaktimīmāṃsāsūtram “sā parānuraktir īśvare” iti | “athāto bhaktijijñāsā” iti sūtropāttā bhaktis tatpadārthaḥ | tasyāḥ pareti viśeṣaṇam | parāṃ mukhyāṃ bhaktiviśeṣam

Bhāskararāya is clearly familiar not only with the SBS, but with the practices of bhakti prescribed in the BhP, as well as in other complementary texts. He goes on to explain that apart from the “ninefold” (*navadhā*) bhakti of the BhP that he refers to here, the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* talks about eight kinds, while the *Brhannārādīya Purāṇa*, a darling of the Gosvāmins, discusses ten.⁶²¹ He also refers to the commentarial tradition on the SBS, although at times it appears as though he is cognizant of an alternative source apart from the work of Svapneśvara and Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha.⁶²² It is even possible that he was responding to some of his own Śaiva contemporaries, such as Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita, who defined bhakti a little differently.⁶²³

uddīśyānuraktir lakṣaṇatvena vidhīyata iti tadarthaḥ | ata eva pareti gauṇīm vyāvartayatīti bhāṣyam | “gauṇyā tu samādhisiddhir” iti sūtre gauṇī bhaktiḥ sevārūpā kathitā...tadbhedāḥ smaraṇakīrtanādayo bahavaḥ |

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*, 88: “bhaktir aṣṭavidhā hy eṣā”...ityādityagaruḍapurāṇayor vacanam | “bhaktir navavidhā rājan” ityādi bhāgavatam vacanam | “bhaktir daśavidhā jñeyā pāpāraṇyadavopamā” iti daśavidhatvapatipādakam brhannārādīyavacanam |

⁶²² See, e.g., *Saubhāgyabhāskara*, 332, where Bhāskararāya comments on the half-verse (252cd): “How can someone who does not sing this hymn become a devotee?” He interprets the different ways in which “singing” (*kīrtana*) works for different kinds of devotees, according to the taxonomy provided in Bhagavad Gītā 7.16. He attributes this interpretation to the “commentarial section beginning with SBS 2.2.27,” which says that “great sinners [qualify for bhakti] when in great pain” (*mahāpātakinām tv ārtau*). I do not find this mode of explication, nor even a contextual reference to BG 7.16, in either Svapneśvara's or Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha's commentary.

akīrtayann idaṃ stotraṃ kathaṃ bhakto bhaviṣyati | [...] ayaṃ bhāvaḥ - “caturvidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino 'rjuna | āto jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī ca bhatararṣabha ||” iti smṛtyuktānām caturvidhānām bhaktānām madhye ārtānām pāpanivṛttyartham, jijñāsuhaktānām niṣkāmānām api cittaśuddhyartham, arthārthibhaktānām arthasiddhyartham, jñānibhaktānām lokasaṃgrahārtham, kīrtanasyāvaśyakatvād bhajakatāvachedakaśarīraghaṭakam nāmakīrtanam | tad idaṃ “mahāpātakinām tv ārtāv” ityādyadhikaraṇeṣu bhaktimīmāṃsābhāṣye spaṣṭam iti ||

⁶²³ See Fisher, “A New Public Theology,” 78: “What is called for is the path of devotion, or *bhakti*—but with a twist that sets Nīlakaṇṭha's argument distinctly apart from what the word *bhakti* typically calls to mind: *bhakti*, he tells us, is a synonym of *upāsana*, the esoteric ritual worship of a particular deity. As a result, devotional sentiment alone does not suffice, but must be accompanied by the ritual techniques prescribed by the Āgamas...”

Bhāskararāya seems to critique this definition of bhakti as *upāsana*—or rather, *upāsana* as bhakti—using the SBS to bolster his position: “Some say that worship (*upāsana*) is simply love (*anurāga*) whose object is the deity. That is incorrect. Otherwise, the act of distinguishing bhakti from *upāsana* in such injunctions as 'One infused with bhakti should perform worship' would make no sense. It is only *anurāga* that should be the definition of the word bhakti. As it is said in SBS 1.1.1-2: 'Now, therefore, an inquiry into bhakti. It is supreme love for the Lord.' Therefore, *upāsana* must be defined as an act that is other than *anurāga*.”

See *Setubandha*, 61: devatāviṣayako 'nurāga evopāsaneti kecit | tan na | bhaktimān upāsītetyādividhau bhakter

Undoubtedly, Bhāskararāya's most striking recognition of bhakti as a full-fledged system comes in the introduction to the *Setubandha*. He begins with a taxonomy of the *vidyās*, or knowledge-systems, that God transmitted to people for the purpose of accomplishing the goals of human life. Each of these *vidyās* were intended for differentially qualified people, but were also hierarchically structured. In brief, this educational sequence is as follows: Once a (male, twice-born) child is past the age of play, he should learn to read and recite (*akṣarābhyāsa*). In order to learn grammar (*chandās*), he is taught *belles lettres* (*kāvya*). Then comes the science of logic and epistemology (*nyāya*), which teaches him that the self is distinct from the body, mind, etc. To understand what constitutes his ritual and moral duty, *dharma*, he then studies the “prior” tradition of Vedic hermeneutics (*pūrvamīmāṃsā*). Bhāskararāya calls these knowledge-systems “grounded in non-knowing” (*ajñānabhūmikā*), as opposed to the disciplines that offer realization of Brahman and liberation. For this purpose, says Bhāskararāya, it helps to study the Upaniṣads and the *Brahma Sūtras* (*uttaramīmāṃsā*). According to the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, the latter systems of actual knowledge (*jñānabhūmikā*) are divided into seven: desire to know (*vividiṣā*), rumination (*vicāraṇā*), subtlety (*tanumānasā*), clarity (*sattvāpatti*), detachment (*asaṃsakti*), experiencing the object (*padārthabhāvinī*), and the sublime (*turyag*). Between the second and third, however, and lasting until the fifth stage, appears an extremely important intermediary stage called bhakti, at which time one studies the SBS (*bhaktimīmāṃsā*). Only upon achieving that does one directly experience Brahman (*aparokṣānubhava*), and attain the finality of liberation after leaving the body (*videhakaivalya*). Progressive access to each of these states, however, is only gained after

upāsānāto bhedenā nirdeśānupapatteḥ | anurāgasyaiva bhaktipadavācyatvāt | “athāto bhaktijijñāsā” “sā parānūraktir īśvare” iti śāṅḍilyasūtrāt | tasmāt anurāgavyāvṛttā kriyaivopāsānā |

I am grateful to Eric Steinschneider for drawing my attention to this passage.

several lifetimes.⁶²⁴ Here Bhāskararāya pauses to analyze the system he has termed bhakti:

Thus after serious effort put in over innumerable births, one is well suited to gradually climb up to the stage of understanding the verbal truth of the Supreme Brahman. At this point, one develops a distinct degree of mental purity that takes the shape of being neither excessively attached to nor utterly disdainful of *saṃsāra*. Such a person is qualified for the path of bhakti, as adumbrated in BhP 11.20.8: “Neither disgusted nor extremely attached, he achieves perfection through *bhaktiyoga*.” That bhakti is of two kinds: secondary and primary. The former includes meditation, worship, recitation, and singing the names of the embodied (*saguṇa*) Brahman, practices that can be combined wherever possible. Primary bhakti, however, is a particular kind of love that arises from that. The first (i.e., secondary bhakti) also has several intermediate stages: a kind of identification (*bhāvanā*), enjoined worship (*vihitopāsti*), and worship of God (*īśvaropāsti*). And there are as many different varieties of this worship as there are varieties of gods: e.g., Sūrya, Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Great Śiva, and Śakti (who herself has countless forms). After progressing through each of these stages over several lifetimes, one develops secondary bhakti for the Beautiful Goddess of the Three Cities (*tripurasundarī*), and when well-established therein, finally attains supreme bhakti for her.⁶²⁵

We find here another clear elaboration of the *bhaktimārga* so treasured by the BhP and its interpreters, but repurposed to fit a particular Śākta intellectual and soteriological project. In fact it is this rather uncontroversial, almost universalized discussion of bhakti that immediately leads into Bhāskararāya's defense of the validity and efficacy of more specifically Śrīvidyā scriptural traditions and ritual practices. He goes on to specify the methods of worshipping the goddess (*sundaryupāsti*), in both internal and external formats (*antaryāga* and *bahiryāga*), which constitutes the subject matter of the *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava*. Bhāskararāya also saw an intellectual

⁶²⁴ See *Setubandha*, 2-3.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-4: tad evam aparimitair janmabhir mahatā prayatnena parabrahmaṇaḥ śābdatattvaniścayabhūmikāparyantaṃ krameṇa samyagarūḍhasya saṃsāre nātyantam āsaktir nāpi dṛḍho nirveda ityākārikā vilakṣaṇā cittaśuddhiḥ sampadyate | so 'yaṃ bhaktimārgē 'dhikārī | “na nirviṇṇo na cā”saktō bhaktiyogo 'sya siddhidah” iti vacanāt | sā ca bhaktir dvividhā - gauṇī parā ceti | tatrādyā saguṇasya brahmaṇo dhyānārcanajapanāmakīrtanādirūpā sambhavatsamuccayikā | parabhaktis tv etajjanyānurāgaviśeṣarūpā | ādyāyā api bahavo 'vāntarabhūmikāḥ | tāsu prathamā...bhāvanāśiddhiḥ | dvitīyā...vihitopāstiḥ | tṛtīyā tv īśvaropāstiḥ | īśvarasyāpi sūryagaṇeśaviṣṇurudraparaśivaśaktibhedena bahuvīdhatvāt tattadupāstāyo 'pi bhinnā eva bhūmikāḥ | śaktir api chāyāvallabhākṣmyādibhedenānantavidhaiva | anena krameṇaitā bhūmikā anantair janmabhir ārūḍhasya paścāt tripurasundaryāṃ gauṇabhaktyudayas tatra samyānnirūḍhasya tasyāṃ parabhaktyudayā iti sthitiḥ |

continuity between his works; he refers often to the *Saubhāgyabhāskara* in his *Setubandha*. If not the culmination of all religious activity, bhakti was nevertheless integral to Bhāskararāya's Tantric worldview. Far away from the northern obsession with the beauty of Kṛṣṇa, Bhāskararāya was captivated by a different dazzling deity, the beautiful goddess of the South, Lalitā Tripurasundarī. So did bhakti find its way back south, and like A.K. Ramanujan's famous story about Aristotle's knife, it had changed hands and points a few times, but, at least to itself, stayed more or less the same.⁶²⁶

Conclusion

The intersections between bhakti and Advaita in early modern India, at least in the Sanskrit scholastic world, were much more complex than mainstream histories of Indian philosophy and religion suggest. Beginning with the little-known writings of a well-known scholar, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, I trace the contours of an Advaitin reading community that offered competing interpretations of an increasingly canonical scripture in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. I then focus on a text only recently made canonical, the *Bhakti Sūtras* of Śāṅḍilya, and show that its hostility to Advaitic soteriology notwithstanding, the SBS became the object of study primarily among Advaitins themselves. I follow the career of one such commentator, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, and situate his often radical claims about the primacy of bhakti in the context of both the broader Advaita world, and across his other intellectual writings. Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha appears to show affinity in turn for Advaita Vedānta, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, and Śaiva Yoga—or maybe these

⁶²⁶ See A.K. Ramanujan, “Three Hundred *Rāmāyaṇas*: Five Example and Three Thoughts on Translation,” in *The Collected Essays of A.K. Ramanujan*, ed. Vinay Dharwadker (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 156: “Now, is there a common core to the Rāma stories, except the most skeletal set of relations like that of Rāma, his brother, his wife and the antagonist Rāvaṇa who abducts her? Are the stories bound together only by certain family resemblances, at Wittgenstein might say? Or is it like Aristotle's jack-knife? When the philosopher asked an old carpenter how long he had had his knife, the latter said, 'Oh, I've had it for thirty years. I've changed the blade a few times and the handle a few times, but it's the same knife.'”

labels themselves have led us astray.⁶²⁷ Finally, I demonstrate that these very same discourses on bhakti became central to the South Indian Śrīvidyā practitioner Bhāskararāya. Here was another Advaita that, as Elaine Fisher has shown, was embedded and embodied in the Śākta intellectual and ritual world of the Tamil South.⁶²⁸ Bhāskararāya presents yet another genealogy of Advaita and bhakti that has escaped historiographical attention.

Thus there were many Advaitas, many Advaitins, and many bhaktas even within the Sanskrit scholastic sphere in the seventeenth century and beyond. How their deliberations may have impacted or even been influenced by vernacular cultural and intellectual production is a question that deserves further investigation. Although it is difficult to substantiate hagiographical narratives about the relationship between Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and Tulsīdās, author of the *Avadhī Rāmcaritmānas*, it seems that at least a prominent member of the Rām Rasik vernacular devotional community, Mahant Rāmcarandās (1760-1831 CE), was well-acquainted with these Sanskrit discussions about bhakti. As Vasudha Paramasivan has shown, this early nineteenth-century exegete, with the help of Ayodhya's *paṇḍits*, offered a theology of bhakti in his *Ānand Laharī*, a Hindi commentary on the *Rāmcaritmānas*, that bears close resemblance to the concerns of Madhusūdana and Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha.⁶²⁹ He recapitulated a distinction we find in their and

⁶²⁷ Cf. Lawrence McCrea, "Playing with the System: Fragmentation and Individualization in Late Pre-colonial Mīmāṃsā," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36.5 (2008): 576-577: "[T]he nature of the disciplinary and doctrinal commitments entailed by the choice to write within a particular 'system', the range of variation in these commitments, and the way they changed over time, need to be seriously explored. It is really not at all clear, for our period or any other, what it means...to 'be' a Naiyāyika or a Mīmāṃsaka—what it implies about one's beliefs, one's writing and reading practices, and one's social, religious, and intellectual affiliations."

⁶²⁸ See Fisher, "A New Public Theology"; Elaine Fisher, "Just Like Kālidāsa': The Śākta Intellectuals of Seventeenth-century South India," *Journal of Hindu Studies* 5.2 (2012): 172-192; Elaine Fisher, "Public philology: text criticism and the sectarianization of Hinduism in early modern South India," *South Asian History and Culture* 6.1 (2015): 50-69; Elaine Fisher, "A Śākta in the Heart': Śrīvidyā and Advaita Vedānta in the Theology of Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita," *Journal of Hindu Studies* 8.1 (2015): 124-138.

⁶²⁹ See Vasudha Paramasivan, "Between Text and Sect: Early Nineteenth Century Shifts in the Theology of Ram" (PhD diss., University of California Berkeley, 2010), 93-125.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava works between the BhP's "ninefold" bhakti and the more particular bhakti of supreme love (*premalakṣaṇā* or *premāparā*). Like his Sanskrit predecessors, he distinguished this latter bhakti from those that were "mixed with action" (*karmamiśra*) and "mixed with knowledge and action" (*karmajñānamiśra*).⁶³⁰ And although he used the familiar pejorative "illusionist" (*māyāvādī*) to refer to certain Advaita factions, he referenced many Sanskrit Advaita texts and may have even considered Advaita to be a Vaiṣṇava school of philosophy.⁶³¹ Writing on the cusp of a time when other Vaiṣṇava intellectuals tried to exclude Advaita from among the representatives of a big-tent Hinduism, by pointing to bhakti as "the only real religion of the Hindus," Rāmcaraṇḍās occupies an interesting place indeed in the history of ideas both religious and political.⁶³²

This brief exploration of intellectual history on the margins of the classical returns us to our initial questions about historical method itself. My reading too has been philosophical, like those of my predecessors, inasmuch as it focuses on the content of these intellectuals' unique and often unprecedented arguments. However, my aim is not to account for either their consistency or inconsistency, but to understand their writing in context. That context proves to be more complex and wide-ranging than the frame of philosophical "schools" allows us to comprehend.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, 119. Cf. *Bhakticandrikā*, 162-163. This typology is first articulated in the *Bhāgavatamuktāphala* by Vopadeva in the thirteenth century.

⁶³¹ Paramasivan, "Between Text and Sect," 116. Similarly, the *Bhaktamāl* of Nābhādās (1600 CE) a text which by the late nineteenth century, as James Hare writes, "had become a key ingredient in the nationalist-tinged Hindu devotionalism that would come to define modern Hinduism," pays obeisance not only to vernacular bhakti saints, but also to famous exegetes of the Advaita Vedānta tradition: Śaṅkara, Citsukha, Nṛsiṃhāraṇya, and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, among others. See James Hare, "Contested communities and the re-imagining of Nābhādās' *Bhaktamāl*," in *Time, History and the Religious Imaginary in South Asia*, ed. Anne Murphy (London: Routledge: 2011), 162. Cf. Mishra, *The Development and Place of Bhakti in Śāṅkara Vedānta*, 6-7.

⁶³² See Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bhāratendu Hariśchandra and Nineteenth-century Banaras* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 338ff.

Perhaps a more genealogical approach to the history of Advaita would require us to revisit the very systematicity of the system. Instead of assuming the coherence of Advaita Vedānta as a school of philosophy, and singling out individual authors for their deviations from a norm, we might instead consider the tradition itself fragmented and fractured. Whether this means paying closer attention to premodern schisms between “Smārta” and “Bhāgavata” Advaitins,⁶³³ understanding the relationship, or lack thereof, between Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva Advaitins north and south, or offering our own analytical distinctions between “classical” and “greater” Advaita Vedānta, we need to become more expansive with the kinds of texts we are reading, and the ways in which we read them. “In a splintered world,” to invoke Clifford Geertz, “we must address the splinters.”⁶³⁴

⁶³³ See Nelson, “Bhakti in Advaita Vedānta,” 119, 422-423, n.15. In his eighteenth-century commentary on Jīva Gosvāmin’s *Tattvasandarbhā*, Rādhāmohana claims that there arose a split early on in Śaṅkara’s school between those who did or did not follow his teachings on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. It is this purported split that Friedhelm Hardy explored in a tantalizing article on the ascetic Mādhavendra Purī, which I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

⁶³⁴ Clifford Geertz, *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 221.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

History can never be free from a mixture, an undecided tension between what happened and what ought to have happened.

-Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness*⁶³⁵

In nineteenth-century Bengal, polemical exchanges between Christian missionaries and Hindu religious intellectuals frequently featured criticisms and defenses of Vedānta, transforming it from one scholastic tradition among several into a representative of modern Hinduism.⁶³⁶

While the Bhagavad Gītā and the Upaniṣads attracted the most attention, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa also emerged as a contested text, at once revered by the Vaiṣṇava traditions of Bengal and incompatible with the attempt to remake Hinduism in the image of rational religion.⁶³⁷ The famous writer Bankimchandra Chatterjee, for example, was troubled by the BhP, and in his *Kṛṣṇacaritra* (1886) sought to recuperate Kṛṣṇa as an exemplar of the divine life from the erotic and fantastic accretions of later poetic and devotional texts.⁶³⁸ At the same time, he did not go to the other extreme and adopt the Unitarian Advaita Vedānta of his earlier Bengali bourgeois contemporaries, such as Rammohan Roy.⁶³⁹ Both Bankimchandra and his famous contemporary

Swami Vivekananda continued to negotiate the terms of jñāna, bhakti, and karma, at once

⁶³⁵ Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 104.

⁶³⁶ See Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and the 'Mystic East'* (London: Routledge, 1999), 119-142; Brian A. Hatcher, *Bourgeois Hinduism, or the Faith of the Modern Vedantists: Rare Discourses from Early Colonial Bengal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Amiya P. Sen, *Explorations in Modern Bengal, c. 1800-1900: Essays on Religion, History and Culture* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010).

⁶³⁷ Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness*, 72-106.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*, 77ff.

⁶³⁹ See Sen, *Explorations in Modern Bengal*, 74: “Between 1886 when the work was first published as a book and the time it was reprinted (1892), Bankimchandra may have come to realize that the search for a sanitized God, when taken too far, obliterated poetic talent and imagination. In a larger sense, Bankimchandra's greater willingness to admit the *Bhagavata*, is also an indication of his distinct leaning towards *bhakti*.”

continuing the old controversies and refashioning the very meaning of the terms.⁶⁴⁰ In doing so, they created the discursive space for a recognizably modernist, middle-class Hinduism.⁶⁴¹

Whether one interprets these discourses as representative of a total rupture with premodern hermeneutics, influenced by “a disenchanting view of the world constructed by science,”⁶⁴² or as evidence of a methodological continuity with regard to traditional sources of authority,⁶⁴³ largely depends on one's understanding of agency, colonized consciousness, and

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 96-97: “In the context of Vivekananda's religious and philosophical thought, it is important not to lose sight of two significant developments. First, there is the change from an initial rejection of Vedanta to a constructive acceptance....It is reasonable to assume that Vivekananda's interest in Vedanta, more specifically in *Advaita Vedanta*, intensified only after the passing away of the Master. [...] In the aforesaid letter, Vivekananda appears to put faith before argument, enthralled by Mitra's ability to reconcile the paths of *gyan* and *bhakti*.”

Cf. *Ibid.*, 152-153: “In the *Dharmatattwa*, *gyan* is expected to dispel *agyan* (ignorance) and the meaning which Bankimchandra attaches to the latter term comes very close to what the Advaita school would associate with *Maya*....[W]e have to allow for the fact that he did not comprehend the term *karma* in the way *vedantins* did. And *gyan* in Bankimchandra's lexicon, was not confined to esoteric knowledge that a typical non-dualist would take it to be. If at all, Bankimchandra attempted the revival that we have spoken of, it would have been with a considerable extension of the meaning of both terms *gyan* and *karma*.”

Cf. *Ibid.*, 208: “Vivekananda rejected political praxis but also often admitted that patriotic considerations had determined his choice of strategies and paths: 'I am always trying to keep down the rush of *bhakti* welling within me...trying to bind myself with the iron chain of *jnan* for still my work for my motherland is unfinished and my message to the world not yet fully delivered....' Here, it is difficult to exactly recapture Vivekananda's thoughts and intentions for surely, *bhakti*, in this instance, is not simply the adoration of a personal god. Perhaps *gyan* and *bhakti* in Vivekananda's lexicon also represented the universal and the local.”

⁶⁴¹ See Hatcher, *Bourgeois Hinduism*, 83: “[W]e do well to consider how this moment of theological reflection contributed to the emergence of what might today be called middle-class Hinduism. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, this bourgeois ethic would reappear in a variety of modernist guises, whether it be Swami Vivekananda's 'Practical Vedanta' or Bankim Chatterjee's vision of a Hindu humanism. This quest to harmonize the spiritual truths of Vedānta with modes of worldly activity, even worldly success, remains a vital factor even in today's manifold expressions of postcolonial and diasporic Hinduism.”

⁶⁴² Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness*, 92. Cf. Jyotirmaya Sharma, *A Restatement of Religion: Swami Vivekananda and the Making of Hindu Nationalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

⁶⁴³ See Sen, *Explorations in Modern Bengal*, 143: “In the *Dharmatattwa* itself, there is a repeated use of the *Bhagavat Gita*, *Bhagavat Purana*, *Vishnu Purana*, *Vajseniyasamhitapanishad (Isopanishad)*, *Chandogya Upanishad*, *Sandilya Bhakti Sutra* (and Swapneswar's commentary on the same), the *Mahabharata*, *Vrihadgautamiya Samhita*, Kulluk Bhatt's commentary on Manu and a Vedantic text, *Vedantasara* by the fifteenth century scholar, Sadananda....Under the circumstances, it would be more accurate to say that what Bankimchandra's hermeneutics represented is not an outright rejection of traditional sources of authority but their selective use.”

epistemic shifts. Either way, it is clear that the problems internal to Advaita Vedānta that we have studied in this thesis were themselves continuous in a later period, for those intellectuals confronted with the new systems of Western education and Christian political theology. The Vedānta of precolonial India, however drastically re-engineered, survived well beyond colonial modernity into the neo-liberal postmodern. One might argue that, like other Sanskrit knowledge-systems confronted with the order of colonial power-knowledge, Vedānta no longer had the capacity to make theory, to speak in a living language, to be anything but, in short, an inauthentic shadow of its precolonial self.⁶⁴⁴ But the problem, if we even acknowledge it as such, is only especially acute if we study Vedānta as a primarily philosophical tradition, instead of a fundamentally hermeneutical one that consistently responded to new historical situations. Vedānta *qua* philosophy after Indian independence was primarily the prerogative of academics trained in Western philosophy and philology, and of popular gurus, who attempted to re-present “religion” both to an (upper-caste) Hindu middle-class fed on a steady diet of Nehruvian secularism, and to a Western audience in the thrall of the New Age.⁶⁴⁵ Vedānta as a tradition of historical memory, however, regarded the old scholastic controversies as current and vital; in this world, new challenges elicited new responses, and jñāna, karma, and bhakti were reconciled time and again, in different ways. For Bankimchandra and Vivekananda, they were instrumental to anticolonial nationalism; for many in the middle-class diaspora, they are spiritual guides in a material world.

What I have emphasized here, however, is that it was not at all inevitable that Advaita

⁶⁴⁴ Cf. Wilhelm Halbfass, *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedānta* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 229-252.

⁶⁴⁵ Cf. Brian A. Hatcher, *Eclecticism and Modern Hindu Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Vedānta would come to dominate colonial encounters with and constructions of Hinduism. On the eve of colonialism, Advaita Vedānta was in competition both with other philosophical schools and with itself. Its rise to modern prominence was no doubt a result of older processes, but that history was plural, fragmented, and contingent. It is perhaps the singular burden of premodernists to have to situate their work with reference to a modern *telos*, as though being historically rigorous simply meant that one tell a single story in more detail. The history of Advaita Vedānta, however, is not only not linear, but far from complete. A more comprehensive conclusion—indeed, another book-length project—would go on to address Advaita's social life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and how its transformations refracted the debates of the precolonial past. But there are enough questions about that past that punctuate the present thesis: What should we make of the fraternal yet fractured relationship between Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and their Advaita contemporaries, given the common set of intellectual resources upon which they drew? How might these Sanskrit intellectual debates have been recast in, or perhaps themselves formed by, their vernacular counterparts? Of what sort were the links between Advaitins north and south of the Vindhyas? And what more might we say about the regional variations of Advaita Vedānta, even as it aspired to universality?

In this dissertation, I have called upon the insights of intellectual and social historians to provincialize the self-professed universality of premodern Sanskrit intellectuals, while at the same time attending to the reach of their ideas across regions and time periods. In Chapter 2, I investigated some fragmentary clues as to the whereabouts of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa between the time of its composition and its emergence into the world of Sanskrit exegesis and poetry. I suggested that the text was especially influential for a scattered community of scholars affiliated

with Advaita Vedānta—some more loosely than others. On the evidence of both material and literary culture, I located these scholars at the nexus of a number of religious and philosophical currents often at odds in the historiography of Indian religion and philosophy. I suggested that the flimsy connection between these individuals pointed to the diverse transmission of the BhP, at once complicating and confirming its later self-presentation as a text that migrated from south to north.

In Chapter 3, I explored the BhP's entry into the world of *śāstra*, of Sanskrit intellectuality. Although the BhP presented itself as the culmination of all Brahmanical scripture, this claim was not elaborated in scholastic fashion until the fifteenth century, in a text called the *Bhagavannāmakāumudī* (BNK), or the “Moonlight of God's Name.” I discussed the early history of how Mīmāṃsā, the arbiter of scriptural canonicity *par excellence*, determined the relative degrees of authority distributed between the Veda (*śruti*) and the set of “remembered” traditional texts (*smṛti*). I showed how the BNK posed a challenge to this discourse of scriptural orthodoxy by using the language of Mīmāṃsā not only to legitimize the independent authority of the *purāṇa*, but also to rank it above the genre of *smṛti*. In particular, the BNK critiqued the normative practices of expiation prescribed by *dharmaśāstra*, replacing them with the singular act of uttering God's name. I argued that the BNK's attempt to expand and, in fact, supplant parts of the Sanskrit scriptural canon reflected a scholastic elaboration of the BhP's own claims to Vedic status. I further contextualized the BNK in the world of Vedānta, and demonstrated that it served as the inspiration for different schools of Vedānta in later centuries. I also connected the BNK to traditions of musical performance in the early modern Tamil South, raising still further questions about the circles through which the text may have passed. Ultimately, I suggested that

these plural histories of the BNK pointed to the fragmentary character of a bhakti practice—singing God's name, which some called the *Nāmasiddhānta*—often valorized for its universality.

In Chapter 4, I focused on the social and intellectual history of a family of Maharashtrian Brahmin migrants to Banaras, the Devas, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I attempted to discern the tensions between their philosophical interest in scriptural study (jñāna), their pedagogical commitment to ritual hermeneutics (karma), and their religious devotion to an embodied god (bhakti). I showed that in both their polemical and literary writings, the Devas not only championed the public expression of personal devotion, but made their commitments to bhakti constitutive of the Sanskrit intellectual disciplines within which they worked. I situated these shifting registers of intellectual discourse against the social changes of the early modern world, paying particular attention to the reconstitution of Brahmin identity in a world that challenged its hegemony. By exploring the connections that the Devas had with popular Marathi saints, I emphasized the participation of the margins in the center, and the local context of the universality that Sanskrit systems of knowledge accorded to themselves.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I questioned the coherence of Advaita Vedānta as a “system” in its early modern incarnations, by exploring several writings that attempted to reconcile bhakti with Advaita in philosophical fashion. First, I looked at some understudied writings of the famous Advaitin Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, in order to understand the diversity of interpretive options around the BhP, all of which may have been contained within Advaitic circles. I studied the identification of bhakti as an object of theoretical inquiry in the *Bhakti Sūtras* of Śāṅḍilya, and, through Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha's commentary on the text, showed that Advaitic interpreters were themselves divided over its meaning. I then followed the ways in which bhakti became

constitutive of entirely different religious and philosophical disciplines: first, in Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha's commentary on the *Yoga Sūtras*, and second, in the Śākta Tantric writings of Bhāskaraṛāya. In the end, I suggested that understanding the relationship between bhakti and Advaita might be better served by a focus on their multiple and varied historical intersections rather than simply the metaphysical issues at stake.

Throughout these chapters, I have tried both to contribute original research to the history of Indian religion and philosophy, and to examine some of the historiographical narratives of that field itself. In doing so, I hoped to show that the work of intellectual history itself questions the binary between philosophy and history.⁶⁴⁶ How we have come to understand Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, and the “bhakti movement” is as much a part of their meaning as is the content of these subjects. In this practical way, at least, academics who study these topics are continuous with the scholars studied in this dissertation. They, too, consistently re-assessed the value of their intellectual inheritances, sometimes to criticize and sometimes to celebrate them. They offered historical (if not historicist) explanations for the rise and fall of religious and philosophical trends. And they participated in a wide-ranging discursive sphere, constrained on the one hand by technical scholarly language and boundaries of caste and class, and on the other hand aspiring to reach a broader, less initiated public. Thus, instead of speculating on the alternative modernities of a different historical world, or wondering how history might (should) have been, I simply state that the past, neither a foreign country nor a comfortable home, remains constitutive of our present.

⁶⁴⁶ See Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Vol. I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 125: “[S]uch investigations enable us to question the appropriateness of any strong distinction between matters of ‘merely historical’ and of ‘genuinely philosophical’ interest, since they enable us to recognise that our own descriptions and conceptualisations are in no way uniquely privileged.”

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