

**PHILOSOPHICAL PERCEPTS OF 'SELF' AND 'OTHERS'  
IN CLASSICAL INDIAN TEXTS**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN  
PHILOSOPHY**

**SUBMITTED BY  
NARMADA POOJARI**

**PROF. RAGHURAMA RAJU  
(SUPERVISOR)**



**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES  
UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD  
HYDERABAD-500 046  
MARCH, 2018**

Dedicated To My Parents

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**A Thesis Submitted to the University of Hyderabad in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN  
PHILOSOPHY**

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SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES  
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**MARCH, 2018**



## DECLARATION

I, **NARMADA POOJARI**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**The Philosophical Percepts of Self and Others**”, submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Prof. Raghurama Raju is my bonafide research work and is free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University of Institution for the award or any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis has been deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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This is to certify that the thesis entitled “The Philosophical Precepts of Self and Others in Classical Indian Texts” submitted by Ms. Narmada Poojari, bearing registration number 12HPPH05. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Humanities is a bonafide work carried out by her under my guidance and supervision.

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Aspects of the Thesis has been:

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Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfillment of coursework requirement for Ph.D., on the basis of the following courses passed during his M.Phil. Programme and the M.Phil. Degree was awarded.

Course Code	Name	Credit	Pass/Fail
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PH.D. 1<sup>st</sup> Semester

1. PH-801	Topics in Metaphysics	4	PASS
2. PH-802	Topics in Epistemology	4	PASS
3. PH-803	Research Methodology	4	PASS

PH.D- II Semester

4. PH-804	Topics in Ethics	4	PASS
5. PH-805	Thesis Related Study	4	PASS

Supervisor

Head of Dept.

Dean of School

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Narmada Poojari,

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## **Abbreviations**

<i>AU</i>	<i>Aitareya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>BṛhU</i>	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</i>
<i>BS</i>	<i>Brahmasūtra of Bādarāyaṇa</i>
<i>BSB</i>	<i>Bodhisattvabhūmi</i>
<i>BSBh.</i>	<i>Brahmasūtra bhāṣya of Śaṅkarācārya</i>
<i>CU</i>	<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>GK</i>	<i>Gauḍapādīyakārikā of Gauḍapāda</i>
<i>KaU</i>	<i>Kaṭha Upaniṣad</i>
<i>KṣU</i>	<i>Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad</i>
<i>MaU</i>	<i>Maitri Upaniṣad</i>
<i>MHK</i>	<i>Madhyamakahr̥dayakārikā of Bhāviveka</i>
<i>MMK</i>	<i>Mūlamadhyamakakārikā of Nāgārjuna</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Milindapañha</i>
<i>MU</i>	<i>Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>PS</i>	<i>Pramāṇa Samuccaya</i>
<i>PU</i>	<i>Praśna Upaniṣad</i>
<i>ṚV</i>	<i>Ṛgveda</i>
<i>ŚB</i>	<i>Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>SDS</i>	<i>Sarvadarśanasamgraha of Mādhava</i>
<i>SSS</i>	<i>Sarvasiddhāntasamgraha of Śaṅkara</i>
<i>ŚU</i>	<i>Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad</i>
<i>TU</i>	<i>Taittirīya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>VP</i>	<i>Vākyapadīya</i>
<i>VTV</i>	<i>Vedāntattvaviniścaya of Bhāviveka</i>

# Chapter - 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 The Postmodern Condition:

The Paradox of the postmodernist, postindustrial world is that while on one hand, the world is becoming closer than ever, with greater integration, interaction among cultures and peoples of the world, with the greater transmission of ideas, values and a shared sense of history there is also, on the other hand, significant fragmentation, differences, disintegration, uncertainty, and disillusionment. A condition which is referred to as the 'Postmodern condition', a phrase first coined by Jean-François Lyotard in his classic book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report of Knowledge* published in 1979. Critiquing the monotonization<sup>1</sup> of the world, he states that "In contemporary society and culture—postindustrial society, postmodern culture—the question of legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation." (1984, 37) Here the grand narrative also called a 'master narrative' or 'metanarrative' is an abstract idea which gives a comprehensive explanation of historical experience or knowledge, it is the story about the story. A grand narrative<sup>2</sup> is "the global or totalizing narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience." (Stephens and Mc Cullum 1998, 6). It is the great, big story of our society, examples of such narratives would be Enlightenment, Democracy, Hegelian notion of integrated moral state, Marxism, Globalization etc. Here 'narrative' as we know is a story and narrative knowledge is acquired through storytelling. These narratives when applied to social relations of societies, the myths legitimize existing power relations and customs legitimizing narrative knowledge, many religious traditions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam etc, religion itself is a metanarrative. The postmodern society which is characterized by the collapse, denial or rejection of grand narratives, it is not the totality, unity, the centralized enlightened subject, the large narratives but the 'differences', the plurality of small narratives, the decentralized subject which replaces the grand narratives. The 'difference', the plurality, and the 'fragmentation' are thought to be both inevitable but also desirable in a postmodern society because they are opposed to any kind of totalitarianism or authoritarianism.

In the Indian context, Indian modernity is a product of colonialism, modernity is in a sense not a finished project in India, postmodernism in India in that sense is not a critique of modernism but its encounter with the pre-modern philosophical and religious themes. In India, unlike the West, the traditional co-exists with the modern, the past with the present, traditional philosophical and religious discourses are very much alive today as they were many centuries earlier. Of course, the conditions and context were different, so a postmodern engagement with Indian philosophy would mean problematizing the pre-modern themes but which have contemporary relevance. Hence, a postmodern engagement with Indian philosophy would include problematizing those grand narratives of the pre-modern period and their various interpretations and reinterpretations in the modern period.

If one were to consider one such grand narrative in the pre-modern period it would be the conceptualization of the notion of Brahman in the Upaniṣads, starting with the simplest definition and moving higher to a more subtle definition or greater level of abstraction. Brahman is abstracted from the gross and the physical to subtler level like ether (*ākāśa*) and to breath (*prāṇa*). Brahman is beyond any kind of division, multiplicity, identities, contradictions, it is beyond language, inexpressible (*anirvacanīya*) and even beyond concepts. Brahman is also beyond time, it suppresses temporality, because time or temporality signifies change and modification, and since Brahman does not undergo change it does apply to it. Brahman, therefore, becomes this grand narrative in the pre-modern and continues as well into the modern period.

A challenge to this grand narrative of Brahman the absolute, universal is the notions of particularity *viśeṣa* and *anekāntavāda* (theory of relativity, many-sidedness) of the Vaiśeṣika and Jaina schools. *Anekāntavāda*, the theory of multiplicity, which argues that truth and reality have multiple aspects and denies the notion of a single absolute truth and absolutism and in that sense is closer to the postmodernist notion of truth and reality, each one perceives the world and hence the truth from one's own perspective. Similarly, the notion of *viśeṣa* denoting 'particularity' and 'individuality' entails 'multiplicity' and 'differences', it is the identity of the thing, the thing which distinguishes itself from other things.

These notions provide a counter to the hierarchy and supremacy of Brahman. Brahman is the unifying grand narrative that recurs and reinvents itself throughout the history of Indian thought,

particularly the Vedānta philosophy. The Vedānta philosophy became the basis for various movements in the modern period particularly the nationalist movement, this one concept dominated all other concepts because of its supposed ultimate nature of essentialism and transcendence. The Buddhist notion of impermanence (*anicca* or *anitya*), the anti-essentialist position, the belief in the indeterminate nature of the self, belief in the historicity of things, and relativity with regards to moral and ethical principles perfectly fits the postmodern condition and the postmodern world. Buddhism, therefore, offers a radical counter to the grand narrative of Brahman. The notion of ‘truth’ in the postmodern world is also something apart from ‘existence’ that has been extensively debated, postmodernism argues that there is no such thing as absolute truth, objective reality, or reason they are all just social constructions.

Nietzsche who is also regarded as the father of postmodernism states that “there are no facts only interpretations” (Nietzsche (1888) 1968, 481), which argues that there is nothing ‘true’ about facts other than that they just fit into particular interpretations and therefore, there cannot be anyone correct interpretation or truth about the world. The Postmodern notion of no truth is similar to the Mādhyamaka philosopher Nāgārjuna (4<sup>th</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> Century AD) who states that there is no ultimate truth which describes things as they really are by virtue of existing on its own without being dependent on any other thing. The only truth that exists is the conventional truth (*saṃvṛti*) of the phenomenal world which is dependent on our conceptual and linguistic framework which is prone to logical, epistemological and other errors. Contemporary thinkers have often found parallels or similarities between Indian and Western thought.

This thesis works with the received history<sup>3</sup> as is presented to us through texts on the history of Indian philosophy, in an effort to identify constituent moments in Indian thought<sup>4</sup> characterized by intensive debates and disputes among different traditions. The traditional history of Indian philosophy is based on schools of Indian philosophy also called *darśanasāstra*. The different constituent moments in the pre-modern period resulted in the creation of different genres of texts whether it is the *Sūtras*, *Bhāṣyas*, *Kārikas*, or *Sammuccayas* at different historical periods giving rise to different kind of subjectivities. In the modern period, with the advent of English and under the influence of European forms of thought and inquiry modern Indian thinkers began to reconceptualize their own tradition. With regards to periodization<sup>5</sup>, this thesis divides the history of Indian thought into the pre-systematic period, the systematic period, the post-systematic period

and the modern period, foregrounding systematization following from the standard historiography of Indian philosophy. This systematization period gave rise to the new genre of texts called the *sūtras* or aphorisms and this led to the creation of classical schools in Indian philosophy or *darśanas*. The idea that systematization was the greatest achievement of Indian thinkers has been critiqued by postcolonial scholars who argue that systematization has led to imposition of uniformity and dogmatism, arguing that systematization does not reflect historical change.

This study takes into account recent trends in Indian philosophy such as comparative philosophy, intellectual history, cosmopolitanism which mirror philosophical movements in the West. Beginning with the *R̥gveda*, the Upaniṣads, *Milinda Pāñha*, the *Nikāyas*, the Mahābhārata, debate, and dialogue are the predominant compositional feature of the Indian philosophical tradition (Black and Patton 2015). This long history of debates and disputes has led to the creation of certain images about Indian philosophy and also of the creation of different kinds of subjectivities. There is the textual production of both *selfhood* and of *otherness*. While in the earlier works like the Upaniṣads, the *selfhood* is narratively constructed having both temporal and social dimensions, later texts such as the *sūtras*, *bhāṣyas*, *kārikas*, *samuccayas* the selfhood, agency, identity is constructed through the process of othering (Nicholson 2010).

Classical Indian thinkers adopted a variety of methods in engaging with others. The notion of ‘difference’ interpreted variedly by different traditions is closely connected with the discourse of the ‘Other’. Prior to colonialism, the categories used to define ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ were *āstika* and *nāstika*, roughly translated as ‘orthodox’ and ‘heterodox’, or as Nicholson suggests these can be further reduced to ‘Hindu’ and the ‘non-Hindu’ Others (Nicholson 2010, 185). For the modern Indian thinker determined by colonialism and recent trends in Indian history, the pre-modern debates and themes still play an important role in the conceptualization of modern Indian thought. Constructing the historiography of Indian philosophy would include attempting to understand the range of problematics that these thinkers were involved with at a given period of time. Clearly, the ontological and metaphysical questions of ‘identity’ (*bhedā*), ‘difference’ (*abhedā*), the relation between ‘one’ and ‘many’ or of ‘part’ (*aṃśa*) and the ‘whole’ (*aṃśin*), the relationship between Self and other, seem to dominate many of the debates in premodern India across traditions and also continued to be dominant themes in the modern period.

The standard approach by Indian thinkers to classical Indian philosophy is to view these problems as context-independent and to ignore the context in which the philosophical problems were engendered. A postcolonial study of Indian philosophy would involve the recovery of these contexts whether socio-political or religious and the problematizing of the pre-modern themes. Any study which involves the historical reconstruction or of Intellectual history involves projecting contemporary issues on to the past to find either a continuity or discontinuity in the tradition under study. After having introduced the background and briefly the purpose of this study, the next sections deal with the issues and interrelated themes in the construction of a historiography of Indian philosophy.

## **1.2. The problem of History in Indian philosophy:**

Traditional Indian philosophy as already discussed portrays a certain image of philosophy as lacking historical knowledge or history. There may be various reasons for choosing ahistoricity over historicity, it is important to note that this is not a problem of just traditional Indian philosophy but even in the modern period. There are two accounts of reasoning with regards to the lack of historicity in the Indian context, one which attributes the timeless, eternal, ahistoric portrayal to that of the Western scholarship particularly the Indologists, and the Orientalists, the second which attributes it to the Indian thinkers themselves who promoted a certain image of Indian philosophy which privileged ahistoricity over historicity. The question whether India has history is a nonsensical question because there can be no society or tradition which has no history or is lacking in historical consciousness. Historicity is closely connected with human experience and existence, historicity as David Carr argues “exists even before we thematize it” (Carr 1986, 3), it is therefore fundamental to human existence. If we assume that Indian thought has historicity then the question that follows is what then is the nature of this temporality or historicity? The notion of history in the Indian context is closely connected with the narrativity that is found in Sanskrit literary texts (Pollock 1989, 604).

The narrations in the Upaniṣads or the Buddhists *Nikāyas* or the *Milinda Pañha* provides a whole new notion of historicity, where the notion of history is identified with narration, temporality and human experience. The narrative structure also provides insights into the social life and the political context (Black 2012). These developments in the history of philosophy and intellectual

history have caused one to reconsider the earlier ahistoricity of Indian philosophical and religious tradition. There is evidence that some *darśanas*, particularly the Vedānta tradition made a conscious effort to promote the timeless, ahistoric character of Indian philosophy. The Mīmāṃsā tradition which is a ritual based exegetical system was primarily responsible for the non-referential ahistorical and timeless dimension of traditional philosophy by making all Vedas and other canonical texts as devoid of referential intention. With regards to the absence of a referential intentionality, Pollock argues, that just like the Vedas which were emptied of referential intentionality, all “other sorts of Brahmanical practices seeking to legitimate their truth-claims has perforce to conform to this special model of what counts as knowledge, and so to suppress the evidence of their own historical existence - a suppression that took place in the case of *itihāsa* “history” itself” (Pollock 1989, 609). Therefore, the reconstruction of Indian thought would require problematizing the notion of ‘history’ as it emerges in the classical Indian texts. The reconstruction of history is closely connected with the problematics of the ‘Self’ and ‘Other’.

### **1.3. The problematic of ‘Self’ and ‘Others’:**

Metaphysics and metaphysical questions have dominated much of Western philosophical tradition for at least a couple of thousand years ever since the beginnings of philosophy or of thinking itself. Metaphysical thinking has also dominated much of religious and philosophical thinking in classical India especially notions of Being, Self, Other, relationship between self and the world etc. Even within the metaphysical thinking the discourse on ‘Self’ and ‘Self-knowledge’ dominated much of the philosophical discourse up until the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was only towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the discourse shifted to the ‘Other’. However, in classical India with its rich, varied traditions and philosophical thinking, the notions of ‘Self’ has coexisted with that of the ‘Other’, while the former has been privileged over the latter. As debate and dialogical method engendered in the classical Indian texts show that the ‘Self’ is logically, notionally, and conceptually linked to the ‘Other’, but this does not prove that the ‘Other’ is privileged in a manner similar to the ‘Self’. Many modern Indian theories of the ‘Self’ are but a reinterpretation of the classical theories of the ‘Self’ but within the framework of comparative philosophy where the Indian theories are held in comparison with the Western theories of the ‘Self’.

As Halbfass points out in the context of cross-cultural comparison modern Hindu thought especially Neo-Vedānta does not take into consideration the relativistic implications of cross-cultural comparison and that it “remains covered in inclusivistic absolutism; it tries to reconcile or identify different religions and philosophies by extrapolating and universalizing traditional, and fundamentally metaphysical, Vedānta schemes of “concordance” (*samanvaya*)” (Halbfass 1985, 13). Texts like Bādarāyaṇas *Uttaramīmāṃsāsūtra* also referred to as the *Brahmasūtra*, have a separate section called the *samanvaya*, meaning "coherence" to show that Brahman is the central purport of all the Upaniṣads, “coherence” and “concordance” refer to the same thing. Later it is this *samanvaya* which Paul Hacker refers to as ‘*inclusivism*’, as a process where the one religion or worldview includes within itself that which does not belong to it, which may be an opponent or a competing system. He argues that this technique is used as a tool to maintain some fictional unity or identity of Hinduism (Hacker 1978, 599).

The term and notion ‘Hinduism’ is a contested term associated with the larger notions of ‘identity’ and ‘nationalism’, recent works in intellectual History have problematized the notion of “Hindu identity” or “Hinduism”, by reconstructing a pre-modern historiography of Vedānta prior to colonialism (Nicholson 2010). A reconstruction of Vedānta tradition provides an alternative to those who argue that Hinduism is a colonial construct, it traces the process of identity formation to the medieval period (16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century). Identity formation in the medieval period is evidenced from the kinds of texts produced by thinkers of the time which clearly delineates those that belong (*āstika*) from those who do not (*nāstikas*) to the Hindu tradition. The dialogues and debates in premodern thought give rise to the dialectic between the individual self and the identity of the self in relation with the Other, what Ricoeur would call the *la memete* (identity with itself overtime) and *l’ipsete* (distinction from other identities). This dialectic between individuality and identity is marked by *ambivalence* and *negation*, *dialogism* and *alterity*, *reflexivity*, *narrativity* and *identity construction* (Zima 2015). The narrations of the Upaniṣads, the polemics of the *sūtras*, *bhāṣyas* and *kārikas*, the hierarchical, inclusive model of the *samuccayas* and *saṃgrahas* reflect the dialectic and the tension between the self and the other.

In this thesis I would like to argue that even though India has a long history of engaging with the other through debates and dialogues, where it considers the other to be part of the self while this may be true from a transcendental perspective but from the perspective of an embodied, empirical

world the self can never be the other. In other words, the self can never be reduced to the other. What is done through the textual construction of selfhood and of otherness is the representation of the other which is problematic at several levels. The problem of representation of 'the Other' is what led to the formulation of the Orientalist discourse based on Edward Said's 1978 magnum opus *Orientalism*. Post colonialism questioned many of the presuppositions and intentions of the orientalists

#### **1.4. Research Questions:**

A study of the historiography of the Indian philosophical tradition causes one to ask questions based on methodology, to questions on the historical approaches, to philosophical questions. The questions are primarily related to notions of 'texts' in classical Indian tradition, for instance, what is a philosophical text? What is the notion of 'selfhood' that emerges from the text? How is this 'selfhood' connected with the notion of the 'other'? What is the notion of 'history' in the Indian context? Is there a notion of 'history' specific to the Indian context that is distinct from the Western notion? Is it possible to recover not just the intellectual or literary context but also the socio-political-religious context? How the different genres of texts produced reflective of the different gradients of philosophical thinking? These questions are not just restricted to intellectual history but extend to conceptualization the notion of philosophy itself as a discipline. Here an attempt to made through a reading of texts across genres like literary texts, commentaries, compendiums and modern texts on history of Indian philosophy to address some of these issues within the larger context of intellectual history. The following sections explores the relation between texts, genres, history, self and identity which are overlapping areas within the domain of intellectual history.

#### **1.5. Texts and history:**

Texts play a predominant role in historical and philosophical reconstruction and even deconstruction. Texts are sources of history and also of philosophy not being able to go beyond texts can also be viewed as a constraint or limitation for the historiographers and philosophers as well. Intellectual history is also called the history of texts. Many postmodernist thinkers work with texts, texts are the site of debate, analysis, conflict or contestation. One of the most famous axioms characterizing postmodernism is "there is nothing outside of a text" [*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*] (Derrida 1967). According to Derrida, there is nothing which is extra-textual meaning that the

world, the reality, history are all but interpretations, but this interpretative undertaking is determined by several socio-political and institutional frameworks. What is 'inside' or 'outside' of a text is often related to the relationship between language and the world. The relationship between texts and genres is a necessary one, because texts cannot exist without any genre, every text may be constitutive of more than one genre (Derrida and Ronell 1980, 61). To interpret the meaning of a text requires knowledge of history, the language in which the text was produced, its grammar and vocabulary and also knowledge of the entire corpus of texts produced by the author which is also the purpose of intellectual history. Texts can also be restrictive in the sense of excluding certain other texts from other traditions such as in the context of creation of canons, so one of the tasks of intellectual history is also to examine the notion of 'canon' and to investigate why certain texts become part of the canon while others remain outside of it. In classical India, if one were to look at the commentarial tradition of Vedānta whether Śaṅkara, Ramānuja, or Mādhva, they very clearly defined the boundaries between what or who belong to their tradition and those who do not, and one way was through creating canons which excluded texts that do not belong to their respective traditions.

#### **1.6. Philosophy and historical context:**

Contemporary period has seen different kinds of historical writings from various perspectives the Nationalist, Marxist, subaltern and post-modern mirroring similar developments in the West. Most of these writings have their basis in the modern nineteenth century, where there is rupture between the pre-colonial and the colonial. The pre-colonial was completely isolated from the colonial period. Indian philosophy, on the other hand, has for long kept itself out of historical concern concentrating more on formulation of conceptual problems rather than locating itself within historical context. Colonialism is a historical context which has philosophical significance. Those concerned with historical knowledge and problematic are considered as questions that concern philosophy proper unlike the Western philosophical tradition which places a lot of importance on historicity and philosophical reflection. Colonialism was not just a historical event but something that radically changed the philosophical thinking. Some argue that colonialism destroyed traditional forms of thinking replacing it with something alien while others argue that colonialism was a movement that marked the beginning of modernity which also marked the beginning of academic philosophy. The degree to which Indian thinking was influenced by this historical event

caused reconceptualization of traditional Indian philosophy. While to some extent Indian thinkers were successful in establishing intercultural dialogue, they failed in establishing dialogue within the Indian philosophical discipline, although Daya Krishna attempted to bring the traditional scholars in dialogue with academic scholars (Krishna 1991). The central problem is the problem of incommensurability of bringing together traditional forms of thinking in dialogue with modern forms of thinking. In the past, Indian thought was significantly influenced by its historical and political context in which it found itself particularly in its encounter with ‘Others’, whether be it the Mughals or the Islamic rulers in the medieval period or the Christian missionaries or Orientalists of the early colonial period. Prior to the medieval period the Buddhists, Jains, and Cārvaka represented the ‘others’ particularly the Buddhist was the quintessential other. While the Buddhists, Jains and the Cārvaka were depicted in the classical Hindu texts, the outsiders or the ‘Others’ like Muslims did not find any mention in their texts. Modern Indian thinkers engaged in dialogue with Christianity and Christian thought but did not engage with Islam, while the Islamic scholars of the medieval period were the first to translate the classical Hindu texts into Persian (Lorenzen 1999).

### **1.7. Texts, self and identity:**

This study is as much about the ‘Self’ as it is about the history of Indian philosophy. The relation between the ‘Self’ and the ‘text’ is a variable one. The long tradition of debates and dialogues in Indian philosophy across time frames constitutes a system of discursive practices. ‘Discourse’ or ‘discursive practices’ lead to production of meanings, based on the premise that social realities are linguistically or discursively constructed, they are context bound, and the meanings negotiated through interaction (Young 2009, 2). Interpretation is a discursive practice of the self and ‘identity’ is the experience of the ‘self’ and ‘identity’ is the ‘unity’ of the ‘self’. The notion of ‘selfhood’ according to Ricoeur is a task accomplished through interpretation, and by identifying the speaker or the agent of the speech act, it is possible to recover the selfhood which is in dialogue with *others*. The notions of ‘self’, ‘selfhood’, ‘subjectivity’ are all connected to the notions of ‘identity’ and ‘unity’ which are concepts that are not fixed, they are fluid and unstable depending on how the ‘self’ is positioned. For instance, the kind of subjectivity and selfhood that arises in the Upaniṣads is very different from that of the commentaries with its disembodied self. This study examines the self-constructedness through discursive practices. Following the different formulations of the Self

in the Upaniṣads, every philosophical school whether Cārvāka, Mādhyamaka, or Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika has its own conception and theory of the Self, leading to its own self-constructedness in relation to the other. After having laid out the background by introducing the topic, the purpose of the thesis, and highlighting the central issues in this study, the next sections discuss the methodological framework used to undertake the study.

### **1.8. Methodology and conceptual framework:**

This study is based on the textual reading of the history of Indian philosophy. Any postmodernist or postcolonial reading of texts involves the use of a combination of methods of thinkers those who are collectively labeled as ‘continental philosophers’. It includes a combination of the comparative method, text-historical method, philology and contextualism based on the works of thinkers like Paul Ricoeur (1992, 2004), Gadamer (2004), Derrida (1967), Wilhelm Halbfass (1985, 1990), Sheldon Pollock (1985, 1989, 2002, 2008), Jonardon Ganeri (2008, 2010). All of these thinkers provide the necessary methodological framework which enable one to carry out a textual based historical analysis of Indian philosophy, Ricoeur for studying texts which are religious or mythological texts such as Upaniṣads, Gadamer, Derrida for deconstructing meanings of texts and method, Halbfass for the comparative method, Pollock for hermeneutics and philology, and Jonardon Ganeri for contextualism and analytical method. This thesis also takes into account the recent trends in intellectual history based on the works of Nicholson (2010, 2012) and Brian Black (2007, 2015) whose works have helped reconstruct the history of Indian intellectual traditions like Vedānta from a completely different perspective, recovery of the socio-historical context of texts like the Upaniṣads. With regards to the classical Indian texts mentioned earlier, the primary sources are the translations of the original Sanskrit texts, the original texts on history of philosophy written in the modern period by Indologists and Indian thinkers and the secondary texts are the encyclopedias of the different schools (*darśanas*) written in English, the translations of the different compendiums.

### **1.9. Limitations of the study:**

Like any study that is involved in reconstruction of the past that extends several centuries and across genres there are problems ranging from linguistic, methodological, to theoretical problems. Another important problem is the sources which in this case are classical texts some primary,

majority secondary and also tertiary sources. While the primary sources are available in the original language which in this case is Sanskrit, there are translations of these texts in English which are also labeled as primary sources. The secondary sources would be commentary on commentary, with Classical Indian texts the major textual sources are mostly commentaries, so one is not essentially dealing with the root (*mūla*) texts which are primary texts but commentaries on those texts. Another problem particularly in the Indian context is the problem of chronology, and the lack of historical information makes it impossible to determine which texts comes prior and which comes later particularly when texts are related and the same also applies to thinkers. This thesis looks at both the conceptual content and the textual organization in terms of identifying the central stakeholders in the text such as the invisibilized author or the speaker or interlocutor, the generic opponent or audiences. There are methodological, historical and philosophical issues raised through the course of the study not for the purpose of finding solutions but as a part of contributing to the larger ongoing debate surrounding historiography and intellectual history of Indian philosophy.

The chapters in this thesis are organized based on historical periodization of Indian thought in to four periods: the pre-systematic, systematic, post-systematic and the modern period. Traditionally, the periodization begins with the pre-Vedic period, Vedic and post-Vedic period, with Vedas central to their classification. According to Erich Frauwallner (1953, 1956), the history of Indian philosophy divided into two major periods. He identifies the first period as beginning with the first millennium A.D. also referred to as the Vedic period which ends with the development of philosophical systems followed by a decline. The second period is the period beginning with Śaṅkara that is the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. culminating toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century marking the beginning of colonialism. The other kinds of periodizations are based on the constructed dichotomies between Aryan and non-Aryan (Frauwallner 1969), or Brahmanism and Buddhism etc. But the problem with these periodizations is that they are not uniform or continuous, there are intermediate periods in between of which nothing is known. Here, the standard periodization is used based on the philosophical developments in Indian philosophy starting with the pre-systematization period, systematization, post-systematization and the modern period, with 'systematization' being basis for classification. This method of categorization would be something that Indologists like Paul Deussen endorse since he considers the development of classical

philosophical schools as one of the important achievements of Indian philosophical thought, however, there are those that would disagree with kind of periodization. Eli Franco's offers a slightly different periodization using Buddhism as the basis of periodization, the first period is the period till Dignāga, the next from Dignāga to Udayana, and lastly, the Navya-Nyāya period. Clearly, Franco does not consider the Upaniṣadic period, or the Sūtra period to be of any great philosophical importance (Franco 2013).

The thesis consists of five chapters excluding the introduction and conclusion based on the periodization mentioned earlier. Chapter 2 is a chapter addressing the methodological problems with regards to theory and method and the various approaches to history, it deals with the methodological issues and approaches to the history of Indian philosophy. It explicates the problems in undertaking a historical study of Indian philosophy especially with regards to textual analysis whether be it a problem of interpretation, of lack of historical context, intertextuality etc.

Having discussed the methodological issues, the following chapters attempt a study of different kinds of texts across genres that allow for one to engage with them not just conceptually or thematically but also contextually.

Chapter 3 is an exploration of the dialogues and debates in terms of the narration, narrator and the narrative. These early literatures are unique in the sense that they provide insight into the socio-political structure and religious terrain of the time. The socio-political structure that emerge from these texts at least some aspects of it like caste, gender are prevalent even today and so the need to explore them. The Upaniṣads and *Milinda Pañhā*, are similar texts in the sense of belonging to the same kind of literary genre and also sharing similar discursive practices in terms of debate and the dialogical method. Chapter 4, is an investigation into the systematization period, the two thinkers studied here are Śaṅkara and Nāgārjuna whose works were fundamental to the formation of diverse schools of thought within their respective traditions.

The dialogue and debate method of the earlier literary genre continues through the systematization period but the central interlocutors including the speaker, the listener and the audience are now invisibilized, and the opponent becomes a generic one. The arguments become more complex and the central purpose is not just to make claims but to demonstrate claims as being true through logic

and argumentation. Here, the Self or the speaker is pushed to the periphery and their doctrine, or viewpoint is brought to the forefront and a strict doctrinal boundary is maintained with the 'Other'. The polemics in these works reveal the nature of relation between Self and the Other, the Self here representative of not an individual, a social or political group as in the Upaniṣads but of an ideology, a philosophical position. This disembodied feature of Indian philosophical commentary is argued to be reason for the perennialist interpretation of these texts in the modern period.

Chapter 5, discusses the genre of text referred to as compendiums or doxographies (*samuccayas* and *saṃgrahas*), these texts are not philosophical texts and even their authenticity is sometimes doubted. These texts have parallels in the Western philosophical tradition, but unlike in the West where these texts only served a secondary role, in the Indian context particularly the medieval period these texts became very popular and played a primary role in conceptualization of a certain view of Indian philosophy which became dominant in the modern period. Nicholson argues that the notion of 'Hindu identity' can be traced to these texts which contributed in creating a unified Hindu identity in the modern period. The Sanskrit doxographies were mostly written by the Advaitins and the Jains and were considered important sources for knowledge about the history of Indian philosophy, these texts suppressed change, presented a picture of Indian philosophy as centered on schools which were considered as something closed, final and complete. The Buddhist doxographies on the other hand, while not so popular or contributing to construction of 'Hindu identity' or selfhood, instead played a different role. The Buddhist doxographies like Bhāvaviveka's (490-570 A.D) *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* were not written to construct some unified identity but rather to remove contradictions among various sects within the Buddhist tradition. The problematic of 'identity' in the Hindu context is different from that of the Buddhist context, Buddhists are not a homogeneous group but are made up of several sects and sub-sects who all show their allegiance to the Buddha and his teachings. The two categories of the *āstika* and the *nāstika* mark the boundary between the Hindu 'Self' and the non-Hindu 'Others'. As far as the method goes different philosophical viewpoints are presented as engaging with one another through the dialectical process.

Chapter six titled "On Conceptualization of Modern Indian Philosophy" investigates how modern Indian thinkers inherited the dialogue and dialectical structure of the pre-modern thinkers and also many of their characterizations of Indian philosophy. Modern Indian philosophy is a product of

colonialism, and the thinkers of this period also called Anglophone thinkers because they wrote in the English language, mostly educated abroad and exposed to the concepts and vocabulary of the Western philosophical tradition. The predominant method of this period was the “comparative method” which later became “comparative philosophy”. Many texts of this time were on the History of Indian philosophy implying that history became a serious concern for the Indian thinkers only post-colonialism. Post-colonialism in the Indian context involved problematizing of the pre-modern themes but which have contemporary relevance like the construction of ‘identity’, of ‘difference’ etc. The historiography of modern Indian philosophy follows historical moments like colonialism, Orientalism, post-Orientalism and post-colonialism. Indian thinkers particularly academic thinkers throughout have attempted reconceptualization of the Indian philosophical tradition by highlighting various aspects of Indian tradition in comparison with that of the West. But the problem with “comparative philosophy” is that it is still largely carried out within the framework of Western philosophical tradition. The search for identity not just local but global identity became the central problem in the colonial period and for the Indian thinker his own ‘identity’ in relation to the world at large. This chapter engages with the works of Radhakrishnan, P.T.Raju, Hiriyanna, Matilal, and Daya Krishna in order to determine how these thinkers were involved in their own conceptualization of Indian tradition which were clearly influenced by philosophical movements and developments in the West.

## Chapter - 2

# Methodological approaches and issues in the study of classical Indian texts

### 2.1 Background of study

Developments in Indian philosophy today, offer possibilities for a completely new conceptualization of Indian philosophical tradition. Indian philosophy in comparison with its Western counterpart has not seen the kind of development or progress and there are many reasons for it some of which have been discussed through the chapter. Earlier engagements with Indian philosophy were interpretations around themes, exegesis, linguistic analysis or just translations of significant works from Sanskrit or Pāli into English, Persian and other languages, these were carried out by the Sanskritists, Indologists and Orientalists. Many Indian scholars<sup>6</sup> too in the colonial period (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century), faced with the challenge of demonstrating to the World and the colonizers that India did indeed have a philosophy, developed a modern philosophy using the traditions of the past, these were developed through cross cultural encounter between the local indigenous traditions and the West, encounter with Christianity and other monotheistic religions of the West including Islam. The challenge was enormous to not just show that India had a glorious philosophical tradition in the past but also to posit a world religion which was both unique and modern at the same time, and this they believed was to be found in the Vedānta more specifically Advaita Vedānta. All of them used a comparative method.

Recent intervention of Andrew Nicholson in *Unifying Hinduism* is an attempt to show how this project of equating Indian philosophy with Advaita has led to the subordination and negligence of other traditions particularly the realist traditions much older and prior to advaita. Nicholson project should be seen in the context of post-colonial discourse and post-orientalism. Many of the concerns regarding Indian Philosophy had been voiced earlier by historian and philosopher Daya Krishna (1991). Daya Krishna was particularly interested in historicism and contextualizing of Indian thought. While thinkers of the colonial period were concerned with positing a philosophy they could call their own, the post-colonial, post-orientalist thinkers were more concerned with how to make Indian philosophy relevant today, how to make a presumed ancient civilization modern.

In order, to make Indian philosophy relevant today, it was important not just that Indian philosophy could answer eternal, perennial questions but also address contemporary issues, which required a whole different conception of Indian philosophy and tradition. It is in this context that the issues raised in this chapter should be located. Present research in Indology and Indian philosophy uses a combination of methods comparative, exegetical, linguistic analysis, hermeneutical and philological methods. This has led to new developments in Indian Philosophy one consequence of that is the new field of 'Indian Intellectual History'. Indian Intellectual History follows from Western Intellectual history which is also a fairly new area, attempting to trace the history of ideas within a tradition or across traditions, it is counter to the a-historical, non-contextual approaches of earlier scholarship of Indologists, Orientalists, of Indians writing in English also called the Anglophone thinkers.

The methodological issues raised in this thesis should be seen in the context of both Intellectual history and textual criticism. The philosophical method used in classical Indian philosophy of debate and dialogue is the dialectic between the 'Self' and the 'Other', the Self-Other relation underlies all methods, arguments, presupposition, and conceptions of tradition in Indian philosophy right from the Upaniṣads, the commentaries, sub-commentaries, the doxographies to modern texts on Indian philosophy. The representation of the 'Other' in Sanskrit texts through different historical periods and historical thinking seem to produce a view of the 'Other' as being distinct from the 'Self'. This tension between Self-Other is explored through the course of this study.

## **2.2 Method in Indian Philosophy:**

In the philosophy of the Upaniṣads, there are mystical utterances, claims, insights, debates, arguments, multiple views about god, world, human being, about practices in many ways a heterogeneous , discontinuous text with no one dominant thought running uniformly throughout<sup>7</sup>. The feature of the public debates in the Upaniṣads involving arguments, counter arguments with participants ranging from wondering monks, women, sages, ascetics etc is what characterizes it as 'philosophy'. In the dialogues and the debates there is a becoming of thought, and not thought itself since, there is lack of organization of thought and processes. The dialectic that emerges from debate between two or more people or interlocutors who may not be in agreement with a position,

a definition may result in positing of a view or a revision of a view, implying that no position or view is fixed rather it is variable. In the *Sūtra* or the systematic period, these varied, non-coherent views are organized in to a coherent, unified philosophical view, here too philosophical criticism and dialectical reasoning is used but in a more structured way. There are no individual speakers or audience located in a social setting, but a decontextualized setting where the speaker is invisibilized, unnamed and the school he represents is visibilized and brought to the forefront, the opponent becomes a generic opponent. The philosophical commentaries also follow the systematized method of the *Sūtras*, where the thinker is again pushed to the periphery and his position, school, system he represents is brought to the center. According to Nicholson, the philosophical commentaries follow from the argumentative structure specified in the Mīmāṃsā school of Vedic exegesis, the formalized structure consists of five parts 1. Topic (*viśaya*) 2. Doubt (*saṃśaya*) 3. Prima facie view (*pūrvapakṣa*) 4. Response (*uttarapakṣa*) and 5. The final decision (*siddhānta*). This is the formalized structure of a dialogue or debate with an opponent which follows from the narrative structure of the Upaniṣads which again is the written representation of the original oral tradition of debate and dialogue.

### **2.3 Problems in Indian Philosophy**

The Indian academic thinkers like Radhakrishnan, K.C. Bhattacharyya, J.N.Mohanty and others have articulated concerns regarding key issues and problems with the conception, method and engagement with Indian philosophy. They use comparative philosophy, and Western methods to understand and interpret Indian philosophy, while they may argue that it was not them but western culture which was imposed upon them and therefore they had to use it<sup>8</sup>. Similarly, too the Western scholarship uses the comparative method to interpret Indian tradition and philosophy from a perspective of Christianity or of Western culture. Both kinds of approaches have had problems. A comparative project between two very different traditions is not a mere comparison between us-them, self-other, but requires a positing of a third objective standpoint through a dialogical approach. Comparative philosophy on its own has no particular method, or means and cannot stand on its own as a discipline. These challenges are not just restricted to cross-cultural differences but also within cultures or traditions e.g. between *Brahmanism* and *Buddhism*, between *Vedānta* and *Cārvāka*, or between *Advaita* and *Bhedābheda* etc, because the challenge is also reconciliation of ‘differences’.

According to P.T. Raju (1952), the task of comparative philosophy is threesome

1. It is interested in treating a system, school or tradition as a function of its environment.
2. It treats a concept as a function of a system.
3. The main purpose of coordinating and synthesizing the basic value of life of India and the West.

Of these three, the third task is familiar because it is obvious that a comparative method or philosophy as we have already seen allows two traditions, cultures to interact, coordinate with one another based on common universal values and Radhakrishnan in the Indian context is an example of the third type. The first type argues for a contextual, historical reading of traditions, systems or schools since these are products of the environment in which they are conceptualized. The second type for a philosophical approach which looks at concepts as functions of the system, it organizes 'concepts' within the larger framework of the system. Any concept in a philosophical system gets its significance from a place it occupies in that system, comparative philosophy assumes the form of the study of comparative significance of concepts with reference to various philosophical systems (Raju 1952, 526-27). In of all these types there is a coming together, a reconciliation between two traditions, systems and schools, which is an outcome of the East-West binary or the differences within traditions. Halbfass on the other hand, argues that comparative philosophy is not just about comparing philosophies cross culturally or a comparative investigation of historical, anthropological, or doxographical data, but is aimed at self-understanding. He then goes on to say that there is possibility that one is comparing traditions which may not be philosophical, ultimately it all depends on how one defines philosophy itself. (Halbfass 1988, p.433)

The succeeding sections seeks to review some key issues in Indian philosophy mostly concerned with methods of engagement and standard approaches to Indian philosophy

#### **2.4 Key differences between Indian and Western philosophy:**

Many studies tend to take for granted or ignore the differences and directly move towards reconciliation or absorption, but here I would like revisit some of these major differences across tradition and within traditions.

1. Indian philosophy as rooted in classical Indian texts is not distinct from religion. Western history shows a severing of ties between religion (Church) and philosophy, leading to the development of philosophy as a distinct academic enterprise, with its own structure, systems and formulations. Most philosophy practiced and taught across regions, countries takes from this already existent established Western academic framework and structure. This in itself is problematic because it leads to imposing of Western standards on other non-Western philosophies and cultures. Only with the coming of colonialism or modernity, were classical Indian texts made while earlier their accessibility and availability was limited to only the elite Sanskritist or the Pundits. With coming of the colonizers and the English language these books were made available to the public, of course one could argue about the motivations of the colonizers in promoting classical Indian texts.

Also at the time there was nothing like academic philosophy, it became a discipline only during the colonial period (late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century). Even after philosophy became an academic discipline taught in Indian universities, the philosophical aspects could not be separated from the religious aspects of Indian thought. When one asks what is Indian philosophy the answer would be Hinduism, Buddhism, or Jainism etc...these are also religions unlike Western philosophy with clearly defined philosophic schools of thought like *Platonism*, *Idealism*, *Scepticism* etc. Although there were texts such as *Nyāya Bhāṣya* of Gotama, *Tarka Sastra*, Dignāga's *Pramāṇa-sammuccaya*, are works on logic, argumentation etc and have very limited religious elements in them but all classical Indian texts, at least, the way that modern scholars have interpreted draw their basis from the foundational texts (*Prasthānatrāyī*) which are also religious texts. Hence, even today the idea of 'Hinduism' is debated upon, is it a philosophy, a religion, theology etc. often times these notions are conflated with another.

2. Early Indian thought like early Greek thought were asking perennial questions about life, god, death etc, but in addition, classical Indian philosophy was also an attempt to provide justifications to claims made in those foundational religious texts. For instance, the exegetical tradition of the Mīmāṃṣā, was particularly involved in trying to prove the intrinsic validity of the Vedas. While there have been other traditions which have made classical Indian thought a rational enterprise like for instance, Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, is a text based on logic and

argumentation which defends Buddhists epistemological claims. Majority of so-called philosophical works in Indian philosophy are about providing justification and validity to foundational texts considered *canons* of their respective traditions. The mythical elements, the rational elements, the religious elements are intertwined and hence it give rise to the problem of methods when dealing with classical Indian texts.

3. Indian philosophy is not a succession of traditions one after the other, but of traditions that existed simultaneously at the same point of time or at a prior time. This makes a detailed outlining and description of the various developments in Indian philosophy difficult in terms of tracing the roots of a particular tradition, or of authors of a tradition, or in terms of assigning dates to specific works and authors. This also is one of the reason for the a-historical, static characterization of Indian philosophy. The static characterization refers to the lack of presumed progress in Indian philosophy. But of course, idea of ‘philosophical progress’ itself can be contested, what is deemed ‘progress’ in Western context is not the same in the Indian context, so then is progress also culture specific? These and many such questions arise if one is to engage with these texts historically and contextually.

4. The ultimate goal or purpose of Indian and Western philosophy is different. In classical Indian tradition the purpose is not knowledge or acquiring knowledge but liberation or salvation which is the ultimate goal. No distinction is made between the ultimate aim of philosophy and that of religion, because understanding, knowledge, logic which are essential philosophical elements are considered in the Indian context as only means to an end. The purpose of religion and philosophy in the Indian context converge. Mohanty (1992) argues that as long as schools of Indian thought like Advaita Vedānta and Yoga promote the attainment of meditative and non-conceptual (*nirvikalpa*) forms of ‘mystical’ insights (*jñāna*), they move beyond philosophy. It would mean that these schools are not just philosophical but also religious and mystical, their ultimate purpose being soteriological. But this conception is rejected by Daya Krishna (1991) and others who argue that Indian philosophy is not just about soteriological concerns or liberation (*mokṣa*). What is clear is that these modern Indian thinkers were in constantly evaluating their tradition against developments in the Western philosophy at the time, be it the analytical tradition

of Quine, Russell or the philosophy of language of Wittgenstein. Modern Indian academic thinkers were constantly devising new ways of doing Indian philosophy.

5. Contemporary Indian philosophy of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was a rediscovery, retrieval and rewriting of the past tradition. In order, to make it relevant in the contemporary they had to bring in modern elements into past tradition some old formulations were modified, others ignored and some others discarded, for this a comparative method also called East-West philosophy was used. Kantian *transcendental idealism* with Śaṅkara's *Idealistic monism* (Bhushan and Garfield 2011), Hegelian *dialectic* and *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Phenomenology in Indian Philosophy (J. N. Mohanty 1953) , or Derrida and Indian philosophy and so on the list goes on and on where comparisons are drawn between various contemporary theories of Western philosophers with Indian thinkers and theories of the past. This methodology has its limitations, beyond a certain point to draw such drastic comparisons between two very unequal traditions both in terms of the socio-historic-cultural context, linguistic differences, and in terms of content and issues.

6. Unlike Western philosophy, Indian philosophy revolves around schools and not individual thinkers. As philosopher and historian Daya Krishna argues, “The schools of Indian philosophy are treated as something finished and final. No distinction, therefore, is ever made between the thought of an individual thinker and the thought of a school”, this is because he further adds that “this is due to a confusion between the thought of an individual thinker and the style of thought he exemplifies and to which he contributes in some manner. All that Śaṅkara’s written is not Advaita Vedānta. Nor all that Īśvarakṛṣṇa has written, Sāṃkhya.” (1991, 14). In this argument, Daya Krishna, summarises and highlights all of the basic assumptions and issues of Indian philosophy written/presented in textbooks on the same. Mohanty, on the other hand, makes an argument for Indian philosophy centering on schools of thought, he says, “In a *Darśana*, the Individual thinkers plays a subordinate role. He does not found a system but carries an explication forward. The *Darśana* is a perception which antedates any individual thinker or expositor.” (1992, 8). Here, *Darśana* is equated with schools of thought or systems which then later becomes synonymous with ‘philosophy’ itself. Since ‘philosophy’ cannot have unitary description or meaning in either traditions (East or West), it could mean many things, so also, there are many terms for philosophy in the Indian context the most popular are *darśana* (sight,

vision), *Ānviṣikī* (logic or reason), *Tarkavidya* (Science of debate) and in earlier times particularly in the Upaniṣads it was called *Ātmavidya* (science of the soul).

7. The diversified kinds of writing in classical India do not allow for a uniform or universalizable description or idea of the Indian philosophical tradition. Diversity in terms of the kinds of writings, textual productions, and the different genres of texts produced across traditions. Therefore, two strands into which Indian philosophy can be conceptualized: one as being pluralistic and having originated from various sources, and traditions; the second as originating from a particular tradition for instance, Indian philosophical having originated from the Vedas, or the Vedas being the source of all Indian thought.

It is obvious from the descriptions above that, the differences whether in terms of methodology, metaphysics, theory and practice between East-West, some of which are incommensurable, and some are contradictory. But within the larger sphere of comparative philosophy these differences are taken to be complementary. Continuing with the theme of differences, the following section discusses the various methodological approaches to Indian philosophy. An investigation into methodological approaches to Indian philosophy is also central to constructing an Indian Intellectual History.

## **2.5 Methodological problems and approaches of Classical Indian Texts:**

The methodological approaches to Indian philosophy in the contemporary period can be broadly classified into two kinds, one the de-contextualized, exegetical, interpretative, a-historical method and second the contextual, critical, text-historical method. The former followed by the *Sanskritist*, *Indian Scholars*<sup>9</sup> and the latter used by *Indologists* (German)<sup>10</sup> and *Orientalists*. Of course, these approaches also have their basis in comparative philosophy. These two kinds of scholarships remain distinct and do not interact with one another mostly because the *Pundit* scholarship has kept to itself, working within their specified traditions and with specific texts. The Indological scholarship has to some extent tried to bridge the gap between the a-historical, exegetical approach with the philological-historical approach, but neither of these approaches can be completely termed as philosophical, it is essentially a combination of methods. For a study of *texts* in Indian philosophy text-historical method<sup>11</sup> is a preferred method, it helps locate the text within a historical

context and also to understand a text when taken out of its time, it involves a combination of methods such as textual analysis, literary criticism, etc. The text-historical method, the historical-critical method all work within the field of what is called 'hermeneutics'.

These methods are critical methods used particularly in the analysis of religious texts. Within the poststructuralist discourse the texts or textual data is used as evidence to study notions of subjectivity, identity, selfhood, and otherness because it works on the premise that the self and the world are socially constructed through discourse. Classical Indian texts offers themselves for interpretation and engagement from varied perspectives and thereby varied methods. It is important to draw the distinction between philosophical methods developed in the texts, and methods used to engage with the texts. Using modern methods to understand Classical Indian texts requires one to firstly understand the problems associated with textual analysis and interpretation. The following section lists out the problems in textual analysis of classical texts.

## **2.6 Problem of multiple meaning and Polysemic nature of texts:**

Contemporary engagements with classical texts can be problematic at multiple levels but not impossible and requires a combination of methods and approaches. The most fundamental problem is related to language, and meaning. How does one interpret a classical text coming from a very different location, context and culture? What happens to the meaning when approached from a different location or context or from a different historical period? When dealing with canonical texts or scriptures the meaning plays a central role for exegesis as well as for understanding. Ideally, it would enormously help if each word conveyed a single, fixed meaning but that is not the case. Since there is the problem of multiple meanings, for instance, any given Sanskrit term has multiple meaning and symbolizes multiple things, for instance, the term *Brahman* has multiple connotations and meanings, *Brahman* as *Īśvara*, *prāṇa*, *akṣara*, *nirguṇa*/ *sagūṇa* all referring to the same entity but representing very different things. The problem of multiple meaning was a problem in the past as much as it is a contemporary problem and therefore, there are multiple commentaries and interpretation for a given basic text. In Indian philosophy meaning is the relation between the word and the thing that it stands for. The Sanskrit term used for meaning is *artha*, the notion of meaning is argued differently by different philosophical schools *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Mīmāṃsā*. The meaning of the meaning (*artha*) has a wide semantic range and can

mean anything from an object, prosperity, life as in the *puruṣārthas*, loosely put standing for some kind materiality.

The *Mīmāṃsā* School essentially deals with interpreting Vedic scriptures and provides justification for Vedic statements and claims, they regard the Vedic scriptures as eternal, uncreated and meaningful. Another important distinction with regards to meaning is the distinction between the literal (*śakti*) and the non-literal or sometimes also referred to as the derived meaning (*lakṣana*). Meanings can be applied to word, sentences, but the different ways in which they relate to each other is debated variously by different schools. Hence, the varied semantic range of Sanskrit terms and the problem of multiple meanings has been one of the main reason for multiple interpretations and commentaries of the root (*mūla*) texts.

In the present day also the problem of multiple meaning poses problem for textual analysis. The problem of multiple meanings works well with post-structuralism. In a poststructuralist discourse there are no fixed meanings, and everything is opened to interpretations and critical analysis, so it is possible to use poststructuralist approaches to interpretation and meaning which would be a counter to that of *fixed* meanings in *canonical* texts.

## **2.7 Vagueness and obscureness of the philosophical texts (*Sūtras*):**

In the history of Indian thought, the *Sūtra* period coincides with the phase of development of individual schools, it marks the beginning of the systematization period. The systematic period begins with the collections of *Sūtras* which are regarded as the foundation of several systems (Agrawal, 2010). This systematization period, of course, is restricted to the so-called *āstika* (orthodox) schools of Indian philosophy, while for the ‘others’ (*nāstikas*) it is not certain when they began systematization. These *Sūtras* were created for a specific purpose, but their style and structure makes it difficult to understand and interpret them. The complexity of the philosophical *sūtras* results from the fact that they served a specific purpose, they acted as handouts and served as memory aids for students, since the *sūtras* originated from oral traditions they were committed to writing. The history of the *sūtras* like its style of composition is very complex, it is believed to have been composed over a long period of time, and written by several authors through a period

of more than a millennia. It is argued that there has always existed parallel versions of any particular *sūtra*, and different meanings have existed at different points of time (Ruzsa 2013).

In Buddhism the *sūtras* are referred to as the *suttas*. *Suttas* are translated as discourses, discourses on Buddha's teachings. They form the core of the Pāli canon and the *Sutta Piṭika* which is believed to contain more than 10,000 *suttas* containing the teachings of the Buddha. In terms of obscurity and vagueness these texts are believed to be less difficult texts than the Sanskrit *sūtras* like the *Brahma sūtras*. Owing to the very clear difference between classical Indian texts and those of the Western philosophical texts the problem of interpretation is further enhanced leading to reinterpretation and also of misinterpretation.

## **2.8 Problem of conceptualization of philosophy, reinterpretation, misinterpretation:**

Western philosophy depends on notions of originality, original texts, contextual reading and meaning etc., but Indian philosophy is conceptualized, presented in a way that original authors, historical context, original texts etc., plays only a subordinate role or none at all to 'tradition'. Here 'Tradition' is used synonymously with 'Indian philosophy', each thinker is thought of as extending or following from a given tradition. That actually leads to the belief that every author of the past wrote only for his particular tradition which is not always the case. Like Daya Krishna argues, "All that Śaṅkara's written is not Advaita Vedānta. Nor all that Īśvarakṛṣṇa has written, Sāṃkhya" (Dayakrishna 1991, 14).

One is given to believe that each thinker of each tradition is only continuing that tradition and being faithful to it, so nothing new is added by successive thinkers within the tradition. The Individual thinker is left at the periphery, even rationality, knowledge, experience is subordinated to tradition, which as Ruzsa explains is because the individual is not at the center of enquiry or knowledge rather the tradition, or the group that he represents plays a more fundamental dominant role. This also explains the over-emphasis and over-engagement of commentaries over that of root (*mūlā*) texts. This also contributes to the idea that Indian philosophy lacks progress, because every commentator is being bound by the root text and the commentators become biased leading to either the reinterpretation or misinterpretation of facts at the cost of maintaining tradition and original intent. These are two opposing, contradictory ideas being 'original' and that of maintaining

‘tradition’. These contradictions play out throughout the way texts on Indian philosophy have been written, presented and practiced.

The problem with reinterpretation is that some of the key doctrines and themes can be reinterpreted completely changing the meaning and the discourse in the process. Even the most central notions and doctrines such as *Brahman* cannot escape the possibility of being wrongly interpreted. The multiplicity of textual meanings in classical Indian texts although a problem for modern interpreters represents an essential characteristic of Sanskrit texts. This feature, where a single word has multiple meanings or can be used variedly for instance, the term *śabda* can mean anything from sound, to word, to scripture is called polysemy and is the essential feature of natural languages. With regards to polysemy Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*, he makes a distinction between *ekaśabdadarśana* roughly translated as "single word view" and *anekaśabdadarśana* or "multi word view". Those who hold the view of *anekaśabdadarśana*, which is that a single word can have multiple meanings, need to know the difference between primary and the secondary meaning<sup>12</sup> suggesting that not every word can have multiple meanings and can mean several things. The primary meaning cannot change but the secondary meaning can change. Ricouer addresses this problem of multiple meanings as a hermeneutic problem and in that context he defines a notion of a ‘symbol’ which is “*any structure of meaning in which a direct primary literal sense designates in addition another sense which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first*” (2004, xiv). So, if one were to consider terms like *Brahman*, *ātman*, *ākaśa*, and *śabda* all of these have both a primary sense and a literal sense, sense is more primary than the referent to the object. The next section discusses the theoretical framework within which this study is carried out.

## **2.9 Theoretical Framework:**

After having laid out clearly the conceptual, methodological and interpretative difficulties in studying classical Indian texts the one Western thinker who comes closest to discussing and addressing similar issues is Paul Ricouer. Ricouer offers a theoretical framework with which to engage with classical Indian texts, unfortunately he himself did not study Sanskrit, but the kinds of linguistical and interpretative problems he raises allows one to use his framework. Another thinker who has been used to study Classical Indian texts is Derrida and his method of

deconstruction. The polysemic, uneven, heterogeneous nature of classical Indian texts fits perfectly the themes of postmodernism and post-structuralism. Ricoeur may be regarded as a structuralist, while Derrida a post-structuralist and no contemporary study of *texts* is possible without considering the theories put forth by them. Ricoeur distinguishes between ‘explanation’ and ‘interpretation’ and the purposes they serve. For Derrida, “there is no outside-text” (1967), he offers a deconstructive method exploring the relationship between *texts*, meaning and of language itself. But here, I would like to argue that Ricoeur offers a more robust method than Derrida for approaching and engaging with classical texts, be it religio-mythical texts or philosophical texts. Ricoeur offers a middle path of reconciliation between faith and reason in a way similar to that of pre-modern Indian thinkers.

Recent trends in Indian Intellectual History particularly those concerned with premodern India have focused on the classical commentarial traditions such as Preisandanz (2008), Pollock (1985), Ganeri and Miri (2010). These studies are investigations into specific commentaries, their distinguishing features, classification of commentarial literatures, and the kinds of approaches and methods to standard philosophical commentaries. Pre-modern Indian Intellectual History which is a fairly new domain, at present has restricted itself to the period between the middle to the late medieval period (14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century) also referred to as the ‘eve of colonialism’. This period has been argued by scholars and historians as a period of remarkable innovation and transition influenced by its historical context and period also marks real modernity before colonialism argues Pollock (2001). Here an attempt is made to ask some fundamental questions such as what is a text in Indian philosophy, how does one define it and how is it different from a philosophical text in the Western context, how are texts interrelated within a specific tradition. Many of these questions are interrelated, they throw light on for instance, the reason for the production of certain texts, the representation of ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ in the texts, and related questions of *agency, identity* etc. These questions are not just questions of method, textual analysis, but about the intellectual history with regards to knowledge production, culture studies with emphasis on specific cultures and traditions, area studies for instance focusing on *South Asia* as a region. Indian philosophy as presented and practiced today has largely ignored these aspects and questions which requires an interdisciplinary approach in addressing these questions enlarging the scope of Indian philosophical tradition.

## 2.10 Texts in Indian philosophy:

It would be difficult to find an equivalent term in Sanskrit or in Indian philosophy for a 'text'. But a term that has been suggested and seems closer to the Western idea of a 'text' in the classical period is a *Śāstra*. *Śāstra* also is translated variously, it is equated with 'theory' and contrasted with *prayoga* (action or practical activity) (1985, 499), it has also been equated with meaning "Knowledge systems". Just like how language is governed by rules so also *śāstras* are governed by rules and its functions/behavior regulated or as Pollock argues these *śāstras* serve to codify behavior and cultural practices and so the function of a text in the Western context and in the Indian is different. In the West the texts strictly serve theoretical purpose and is completely separated from the practical activity and that tension between theory and practice still continues. Some examples of *śāstras* or theoretical textbooks on varied subjects are the *dharmaśāstra* (the religious law book), the *arthaśāstra* (texts on economic and military affairs), *mokshaśāstra* (texts on liberation), *kamaśāstra* (texts on love and sensuality), *alaṅkāraśāstra* (texts on poetics), *nāṭyaśāstra* (texts on dance and drama) etc. These *śāstras* are contrasted with another genre of texts called the *sūtras*, which serve a totally different purpose, it served as a *mnemonic* and used for the purpose of memorization and hence written in a cryptic, compact style. One of the central purpose of a *Śāstra* is "the production and re-production of culture in traditional India" (Pollock 1985, 500). Of course one could stretch it to even contemporary India where many of those codified practices still exists, such as the *varṇāśramadharmā* which is the basis of the Hindu society, hence that which was codified through the process of textualization became subsequently normative.

According to Ricoeur, a text is one in which 'every utterance or set of utterances is fixed by writing' and that 'all writing first in a potential way, is speech' and then explicates the nature of relation between text and speech. A 'discourse' is a term which refers to 'that which is fixed by writing which one could have spoken but one writes precisely because one does not speak' (Ricoeur 1971, 135-36). Since all writing is firstly speech, when writing replaces speech, the reader replaces the listener. There would be no conflict with this definition it can be applied to all texts irrespective of the specific socio-cultural locations. The purposes of the ancient texts of the *śāstras*, and *sūtras*, seem to be different, it is true that writing replaces speech because prior to writing classical India had a long tradition of oral history but the listener or the reader has very different roles, because

these texts are essentially manuals containing rules which need to be followed or verses which need to be committed to memory, so there's very less for the reader or audience in terms of interpretation.

## 2.11 Definition of a *Śāstra* (a theoretical text):

A text in classical Indian can be equated to a *Śāstra*, what then is a *Śāstra*? The earliest occurrence of the term is found in the Ṛgveda (8.33.16) in which it is defined as a rule or instruction, Patanjāli defines "*śāstra* as that from which there derives regulation" (*śāstrasto hi nāma vyavasthā*). *Śāstra* therefore can be summarized to mean "a verbal codification of rules, whether of divine or human provenance, for the positive or negative regulation of some given human practices" (Pollock 1985, 501). *Śāstra* also refers to the sum total of literature called the *Vedas*, Pollock points out that in the *Brahmasūtra*, 'Brahman' is also referred to by the name *śāstrayoni* translated as "the source of knowledge" (including the *Vedas* and the Upaniṣads. *Śāstra* therefore includes the whole gamut or sum total of all knowledge derived from both divine and human origin, the written, spoken, and the unspoken. The *Sūtras* are a sub-division of the *Śāstras*, just like others such as *Bhāṣyas*, *Vartikas*, and *Karikas* etc. A *Śāstra*, therefore is foremost a text, covering finite "topics of knowledge" across every sphere of human activity or practice.

Many Indian texts are not entirely philosophical. They are a combination of myth, ritual instructions, metaphysics and ontology like for instance, the Upaniṣads written in a dialogue (narrative) form, there is a speaker, an audience or a narrative, narrator, and audience. A parallel in the West would be *Plato's Dialogue*. Every utterance of the speaker is committed to writing or the written word. The Upaniṣads are not *Śāstras* or *Sūtras* (aphorisms), they are distinct, but they do serve the purpose of just a theoretical text, an instruction manual of rituals, they contain rules and also myths. Going by the strict definition of a text in philosophy many of these early works would be dismissed as being non-philosophical, but Ricoeur provides us a method to reconcile faith and reason, to interpret myth from a philosophical viewpoint.

One significant difference between text and speech is that in a speech one cannot separate the speaker from his speech and the speech exists in context. However, with writing once it has been

written the reader has no connection with the writer, the written text exists independent of the writer, therefore, it necessitates explanation and interpretation.

Ricoeur posits the notion of explanation and interpretation as the essential attitudes of a text. He says that these are two possibilities that belong to the act of reading, one the reader can consider the text as being authorless, world less, in which case we have to explain the text in terms of its internal relations and its structure. The second case is one in which the text's suspense is removed and there is communication between the writer and reader, between text and the reader, in which case there is 'interpretation'. Both these possibilities belong to the act of reading, and reading consists in a dialectical interplay between these two attitudes (1971, 138-39). Given this definition of a text, what then would be philosophical text, is the next obvious question. A philosophical text is different from ordinary text, it is more dense, consists of arguments and abstractions, it could be explanatory but it could also require interpretation. Now how does one apply ideas of explanation, interpretation to understand works like the Upaniṣads? How does one approach such a text, a non-philosophical text from a philosophical perspective? It is a methodological issue that one is faced with. So from a philosophical perspective one engages with a text looking for claims, arguments, presuppositions, consistency and so on, this would as Ricoeur terms require 'demythologizing' of texts which are of a religious nature which are in addition to arguments, consists of metaphysical claims filled with myths and storytelling. Just because something may be a myth, it need not be a false story or dismissed as having no significance. A '*Myth*' is

a connection between our essential reality and our actual historical existence almost in terms of a concrete universal truth whose narrative form cannot be reduced to a concept, it has an ontological bearing. Viewed in this way myths are revelatory, disclosing the human condition we all share. (Pallauer 2007, 39)

This definition of a *myth* perfectly fits when approaching a work like the Upaniṣads (3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> BC) which are considered revelatory text or a revelation much like the Bible or other religious texts. The Upaniṣads are full of narratives about the *self*, there are characters who discuss about the *self* and these narrations cannot be reduced to the one concept of *Brahman* or *Ātman*, they are revelatory and contain numerous myths like the Puruṣa myth (cosmic man) to describe the

beginning of the world, or comparing the world to the parts of a sacrificial horse etc. Here one needs to go back to Ricoeur's distinction between the primary or literal sense and the secondary or figurative sense of a term.

The term *ātman* of the upaniṣads or the *Brahman*, its meaning cannot be arrived through literal translation in the primary sense, but through a secondary sense which is figurative, metaphoric but which can be arrived at only through the primary sense. So, there is a symbolic meaning in addition to the literal meaning. One cannot therefore look at a text like Upaniṣads as being purely revelatory, mythological text nor as a purely philosophical text, here one needs to approach the text both immanently and contextually. There is a meaning that is obvious and a hidden meaning of the text. In such revelatory texts, the object of *analysis* is not the text like Ricoeur argues but the human *subject*, "subject becomes, under a hermeneutical analysis, "like" a text ", therefore, the 'subject as a text' is symbolic, therefore, calls for a work of deciphering (2004, xv).

Like in the Biblical texts, the revelatory texts like the Upaniṣads or the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the tension between reason and faith needs to be reconciled, and that is why Ricoeur's *Phenomenological Methodology*, is crucial to understand texts like the Upaniṣads, to uncover the hidden meaning the symbol. In dealing with religious texts having philosophical significance or even just religious texts, where each term or symbol has multiple meanings, if one approaches them in terms of faith, the meaning of the text is restored but if one approaches through doubt or suspicion or reason, then the meaning is hidden or disguised, Ricoeur offers a methodology to reconcile these approaches. When an equation is made between *ātman* and *breath (prāṇa)*, it's not a straight forward relation whose meaning can be understood literally, but the relation needs to be uncovered. There are methods used in the Upaniṣads to arrive at meanings of terms like *Brahman*, *ātman*, for instance, the method of negation or negative attribution called *neti-neti*, where no definitive definition is possible. *Brahman* for example is beyond all characterizations, all modes of human perception and beyond language. In the history of Indian philosophy in terms of methodology is essentially a movement toward establishing a philosophical position through a clash of ideas or through confrontation between a thesis (*siddhanta*) and an antithesis (*pūrvapakṣa*). The foremost method developed in the early texts like the Upaniṣads is the dialectical method as with most other philosophical traditions. But the methods used is not the concern here, rather with issues in terms of approaching texts like the Upaniṣads, and from what perspective.

The Upaniṣads offers itself to multiple interpretations through hermeneutical analysis, and also allows itself for a historical, contextual reading and engagement and this is the uniqueness of the work unlike later Indian texts where such an engagement is not possible, there is no narrative, no characters, no context, and no authors this is also a repeated motif in subsequent texts. Similarly, a text like the *Brahma Sūtra*, belonging to the systematization period is a dense, condensed text, containing aphorisms whose meaning cannot be understood without the help of a commentary (*Bhāṣya*). In the presence of multiple commentaries how does one arrive at the actual meaning or are questions of authorship, original meaning not of significance or the wrong questions to be posed in the Indian context.

## 2.12 The idea of an original text:

A commentary presupposes an original text, an original author, an intended authorial meaning. A bulk of Indian philosophical literature is written in the form of commentaries, while a lot of work goes into studying commentaries, but the idea of an original text prior to the commentary is ignored. In the Western tradition, the idea of an original text is central to Biblical interpretations and also of literary criticism. In the Indian context there is no tradition of literary criticism of religious texts while there is a tradition of literary criticism in Indian aesthetics. It is widely accepted that many of the earlier texts are interpolated, with parts of the texts added later. Recent research shows that the *Sūtras* of the systematization period (1100-500 BCE) were not texts proper but memory aid for students, it was purely oral at the beginning, there were different additions, deletions, and interpretations by different teachers at different places and times. Therefore, there is no fixed order, and the edited form that has come down came much later. This is the reason why most classical Indian literatures, there is no data regarding the actual author, time of the writing or their relative priority given.

The Upaniṣads written by many authors over a long, long period of time contains many interpolations, many of the dialogues and characters have repeated, there have been modifications many later parts added to the earlier ones and vice versa for e.g. the debate between Dṛiptabālāki Gārgya and Ajātaśatru in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (2.1) and the same appearing in the later *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* (4) are two versions of the same conversations between the same characters. All these and other evidences point to the fact that the Upaniṣads like other Indian texts *Brahma*

*Sūtra*, or *Samkhya Kārika* are not homogeneous texts, different parts of it have been added at different point of times, by different teachers making it difficult to assign some sort of originality to the texts, or the authors or their time frames or even arrive at a uniform meaning intended in those texts and this is seen across most Indian classical texts.

Given these methodological, heuristic, logistic, temporal issues what then is the status of an 'original text' in Indian philosophy? By focusing excessively on 'commentaries' the Indian scholarship as well as the Indologists have neglected or never really questioned about the importance of the 'original texts'. For instance, the *Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara on the *Brahma Sūtra* is taken as the quintessential text of Vedānta, while the original text by Bādarāyaṇa on which the commentary is based is ignored or neglected, similarly, Gauḍapāda's *Māṇḍūkya Karika* also called *Gauḍapāda Karika* on which the *Brahmasūtra* is based is completely ignored, this text is crucial for all the later developments in Vedānta philosophy. It is important to note here that Gauḍapāda is the *paramaguru* (great guru) of Śaṅkara, and Gauḍapāda was also a Buddhist first and he tried to reconcile Buddhism and Vedānta. These important pieces of information are of relevance both historically and philosophically, and if ignored, one fails to see the context and the intent of individual thinkers in order to understand what is it that these thinkers were trying to achieve and therefore, to interpret them correctly.

### **2.13 Intertextuality<sup>13</sup>:**

After having defined a philosophical text in the Indian classical tradition, the next question is to explore the nature and characteristic of classical texts across genres. The nature of classical Indian commentaries is that it follows from the *Sūtras*, the *Sūtras* follow from older materials, hence the commentaries follows from an already existent body of literature. As already explained it is not the original texts but the commentaries which play a significant role in the Indian tradition, commentaries presuppose the intertextuality in the sense that they are based on some other texts. Intertextuality is opposed to the notion of originality in the sense that it considers no text to be isolated, every text is connected to every other text. Intertextuality, asks some very specific questions about why an author would chose a specific literary text? Are there references to other texts? Can two texts of similar form or context be compared? What is the nature of relation between the commentary and the original text on which it is based? Can there be a dialogue between two

texts? These arguments are based on the premise that these texts can never be seen in isolation, nor as a completely independent entity but often seen in relation to other literary texts from other traditions who may follow similar conventions.

With regards to the Upaniṣads many of the characters named in the dialogues whether Yājñavalkya, Uddālaka Āruṇi or Śāṅḍilya appear in earlier works like the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* suggesting that the narrations of the Upaniṣads are based on earlier texts. Olivelle, speaking about intertextuality in the *śāstras*, argues that an individual thinker belonging to a particular tradition compares, contrasts his views to other exponents belonging to his tradition. Across traditions classical Indian thinkers often quoted, presented, critiqued others views (*pūrvapakṣa*), a point in case is the relation between the Manu's *Dharmaśāstra* and the *Arthaśāstra* (Olivelle 2004). Intertextuality, therefore, is not just a modern notion but one which premodern thinkers used extensively. The next sections propose for text, historical critical method for the study of classical Indian texts.

#### **2.14 Need for textual historical and critical method in studying Indian philosophy:**

The text historical critical method works on the premise that classical texts can only be interpreted when they are set within a historical background or context. It argues that the writings of individual thinkers were products of the times in which they lived and reflected their particular historical situation. As we have seen classical Indian texts are predominantly ahistorical in the sense that nothing is known about their historical context, so how does one then apply a historical critical method? While one may argue that there are no basic historical facts such as about the author, the date of composition of text, the historical background leading to the composition of the text, what is available is the intellectual context. Recovery of the intellectual context need not be without reference to other contexts such as the political, social or cultural context. Works such as *The Character of Self in Ancient India*, *The Social Background Caste and Gender in the Upaniṣads*, *Gender in Janaka's Court* are all instances of recovery of the socio-political context of classical texts which are constitutive of the larger historical context. Recovery of these contexts is an important aspect of intellectual history.

Going back to the historical critical method, the Indian textual tradition has for long kept itself out of the strict critical evaluation and application of historical knowledge on ancient texts. While the historical-critical method has been applied in disciplines such as sociology, literature and history, philosophy has been strictly kept out of this kind of an engagement. But again it is possible to argue that the notion of 'history' itself is a Western notion, it is something which cultures which possess it impose upon those cultures they rule this is particularly true in the post-colonial context (Pocock 2006). It is true that a concern for constructing a historiography of the Indian tradition and philosophy is a modern concern and a postcolonial one. To make Indian philosophy particularly the pre-modern Indian philosophy relevant in the contemporary period we need to engage with the past in a constructive way. Constructing the past is not just a matter of history but also of philosophy, Indian philosophy can no longer ignore its historical context. There is a need to conceptualize Indian philosophical tradition within the larger domain of comparative philosophy and intellectual history. Indian philosophical tradition needs to widen its scope, be more interdisciplinary and inclusive. Continuing with this line of argument the next section argues for locating of Indian philosophical thought in historical context.

### **2.15 Locating Indian philosophy in historical context:**

It is a well-documented fact that Indian tradition or more especially Hindu view or philosophy is hostile or opposed to the historical approach. While there are a large oeuvre of texts and textual materials, it is surprising for all the availability of texts basic information regarding authorship, geography, time of composition of text and the circumstances leading to the creation of the texts are completely absent. The notion of time in the Hindu context is very different from Western notion it is not linear but cyclical<sup>14</sup>. This notion of time is opposed to the notion of time on which history is based as linear, abstract, concrete, measurable time (Sarkar 1998). Interestingly, the first phase of early modern Indian writings were essentially regarding texts on history of Indian philosophy and none of these early writers questioned the reasons or intention of the ahistorical representations of Indian philosophy or the lack of history. These early texts on the history of Indian philosophy were hardly based on history. The only account of any history in classical texts whether the Upaniṣads or *Brāhmaṇas* are the list of genealogies of teachers or priestly families (Perrett 2000, 100).

But a recent movement in Indian philosophy is Intellectual history which makes a case for Historiography and History in Indian philosophy in the realm of Ideas and not in a physical or the socio-political realm. Indian Intellectual History, particularly the Sanskrit Intellectual History of the medieval period 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards is attributed to the works of Sheldon Pollock (2005, 2009) and others most recently his student Andrew Nicholson (2010). The question whether a particular society or tradition has historical consciousness for Pollock is an irrelevant question because it cannot be that there is a culture, society, tradition which has not undergone change. So there is no disagreement whether Indian philosophy has history but the question is “Is the pre-colonial Indian world comparatively different from other worlds and practices as to require different methods of historical analysis and different theories to explain them?” (Pollock 2008, 536). One unique feature of Indian classical texts is the notion of ‘prolepsis’ which is essentially associated with rhetoric, which is the anticipation and answering of possible objections in the present or the representation of the thing as existing before it actually does. Ganeri argues that “when an Indian author situates himself as a writer within a *śāstra*, he locates himself in a scholarly practice that has both a history and a future” (2008, 555). He further argues that there is a proleptic speech interventions which is intentionally directed toward future audience whose social, political and intellectual context is unknown. It is this idea of ‘anticipation’ which prevents an ancient text, doctrine from becoming obsolete. But isn’t it the case with all texts that the writer or the author is writing not just for present audiences but also for a future audience, the author is always anticipating, this clearly is evident because many of the classics are very popular and widely read even today they point to the timelessness of certain works of literature of art etc. The debate and the polemical aspects of classical Indian texts always anticipate the position of the ‘other’, and the possible responses to one’s own position.

So there is of course history in classical Indian texts, perhaps not the same way as in Western philosophical tradition. Even within the Western philosophical tradition the analytical tradition does not consider historiography and the historical context as important to philosophy, it considers it as secondary, it the continental tradition which considers history to be important for philosophy. Colonialism which marked the beginning of modernity in India transformed traditional ways of thinking and being, and in that sense, colonialism which is a historical context is connected to thought. Hence, the colonialism is considered as a rupture. Indigenous ways of thinking were

changed to rational modes of thinking which marked the beginning of philosophy. Without locating Indian thought in its historical context we do not really understand how philosophy was produced in the classical period or for that matter even in the modern period. The history of philosophy is both history and also philosophy, this has already been discussed in the introductory chapter. Now we move on to a theme which is central to historical reconstruction and intellectual history which is contextualism.

## **2.16 Contextualism in Indian philosophy:**

Contextualism is a philosophical notion which refers to a collection of views supporting or emphasizing the context in which a particular utterance, expression, action, dialogue, argument occurs. Contextualism plays an important role in the history of political thought, history of ideas, epistemology and ethics. According to Skinner, the recovery of context is a key to understanding a text (2002, 143), the context could include the general social circumstances, the political environment, the literary culture in which that text was produced etc essentially situating the act of writing in a context. To make an utterance is to make an “Intervention” (2002, 115). According to Skinner’s historical method it is possible to recover the illocutionary force of past linguistic acts (of past societies and cultures), or the act performed via communicative force of an utterance and through it unravel the intention of the author or the motive for the act or the nature of his intervention. One example of an oft repeated utterance in the Upaniṣads is the “head shattering” utterance which is often used in debates between Brahmins called *Brahmodya*<sup>15</sup> which can be understood both in a literal sense and as an illocutionary act. The head shattering could mean either as a mortal threat or to lose one’s presence of mind (Insler 1989-90, 113-14). If indeed one’s head is shattered then the utterance is a performance of an illocutionary act.

Since the Upaniṣads is full of such utterances, metaphors contextualism plays an important role in the recovery of meaning and understanding of the text. In a literary context the particular genre becomes important and the context is derived from the genre. Another literary context in the case of classical Indian texts is the “intertextual” contexts which is characteristic of the commentarial genre. Reconstructing the original context of a verse, scripture or meaning is the task of hermeneutics, while reconstructing the historical and intellectual context is the task of an Intellectual Historian. So, context plays an important role for interpretation, reconstructing History

and also enhances philosophical understanding of meaning of classical texts. In the discipline of ‘comparative philosophy’ which recognizes that philosophy is also culture specific along with being a logical, rationalism discipline which transcends cultures and boundaries. Contextualism plays an important role in ‘comparative philosophy’, when modern Indian thinkers engage with intercultural dialogue, context plays an important role. When someone like Radhakrishnan, or Matilal is writing using Western concepts in Indian context, their context of utterance as pointed out by Ganeri is Western it is analytical philosophical tradition in the context of Matilal and German Idealism in the case of Radhakrishnan but their context of evaluation is the Classical Indian tradition, so the question is which are these thinkers representing. One would argue that Radhakrishnan, Matilal and others still represent the classical Indian context even though they use Western concepts because they inherited that culture due to colonialism, but someone like Daya Krishna would say “Indian philosophy written in English is not Indian philosophy, Indian philosophy is not written in English but Sanskrit” (Bhushan and Garfield 2011) because English was a language inherited by the colonizers, we did not just inherit a language but an entire cognitive, intellectual structure which altered our thought processes. Daya Krishna here seems to suggest that all Indian philosophy written in English either by a Western scholar or an Indian thinker is not philosophy, this would seem a little harsh. Nobody can deny the importance of English language, and whether we like it or not academic philosophy works within the Western philosophical framework. It is inevitable that Indian philosophical tradition work with the Western tradition by establishing a constructive dialogue in which both benefit from each other, this is what comparative philosophy seeks to achieve. The following section discusses the role of texts in the construction of selfhood.

### **2.17 Role of texts in construction of selfhood:**

It has been argued and noticed that texts serve as sources for interpretation of *selfhood* and for understanding the construction of the Self. The narrations in the Upaniṣads are a classical example of the construction of the *selfhood*, they bind together theory and practices (rituals), the texts represents the search for an ideal Brahmanical self. From posing ontological questions of the self, to the constitution of the self to the practices of the self, the Upaniṣads deal with all kinds of notions of self, the philosophical, the social, the narrative self, the conceptual self, the interpersonal self, and the dialogical self. The Upaniṣadic narrations unlike later works in Indian literature and

philosophy offers itself for varied analysis of the self. The form of the Upaniṣads and its narrative style helps form a link between the past and the present. The narrations according to Ricouer “in the form of mythic tales –offers an understanding of human reality as a whole” (Ricouer 1969, 6). Language forms the basis for any sort of construction of the *self* at least in the written traditions, with the word comes the *self*, it is as Ricouer suggests language is an attestation of the *Selfhood*. *Selfhood*, sameness, identity, difference are concepts which are interrelated. Ricouer’s philosophy is called ‘reflexive philosophy’ which comes under phenomenology. According to his philosophy most complex philosophical problems are those that concern the possibility of self-understanding as the subject. Ricouer’s philosophy attempts to bridge the gap between modernism, which centers the subject or self and postmodernism which dislodges or decenters the subject. Any contemporary attempt to study classical texts from a postmodern perspective would need to take in to account Ricouer’s hermeneutical method. Ricouer offers a philosophy and a methodology by which a text either scripture, mythical text etc. can be effectively engaged with, and it’s multiple meanings and various symbols uncovered, the self can be recovered through those multiple meanings.

Writing itself, any kind or any genre is an affirmation of the self and interpretation plays a significant role in unravelling the *selfhood*. The task of hermeneutics is

the recovery of the Self from the vast diversity of signs, symbols and texts which consciousness is intentionally oriented toward. What is recovered, however, is not supposed to be a transparent unifying principle behind the operation of consciousness which only bold methodological precision could reveal, but a self received through the interpretations of various forms of semiotic meaning (Venema 1996, 4).

So as the passage suggests the task of hermeneutics is essentially the recovery of the self through the vast diversity of symbols, signs and texts and this self is not some kind of a unifying absolute principle but one that arises out of the multiplicity of meanings and interpretations. For instance, the meaning of the terms *ātman* or *Brahman* is not to be found in the Upaniṣads but something which needs to be revealed through interpretation. Ricouer’s, rich corpus of work on philosophy of language, religion, hermeneutics, and literary criticism suggests that the notions of Self, Selfhood, identity which constitute human subjectivity is based on the dialectic between the same

and the other. He rejects the idea that the self is some kind of a metaphysical entity or that it is an entity at all but there is only the notion of selfhood and is intersubjectively constituted. One needs to move away from epistemological, metaphysical concerns and questions toward questions of agency, subjectivity etc. move away from questions of ‘How?’ to questions of ‘Who?’, “Who is speaking?”, “Who is acting?” etc. Many of the problems in methodology or the lack of methods in terms of contemporary engagement with classical Indian texts can be understood using Ricouer’s hermeneutic philosophy. Ricouer’s notion of selfhood is founded on the basis that hermeneutical inquiry is the attestation of the being of selfhood. The various characters located in specific socio-religious context in the Upaniṣads and their dialogues with the others indicates that the selfhood is textually constructed.

## **2.18 Discourses of *Othering*:**

‘Discourse’ is a term used in post-structuralism and postcolonial studies, in its simplest sense it refers or stands for extended conversations between *self*, *other* or *others*. Another meaning of ‘Discourse’ which fits with the sense in which it is used in this thesis is that a discourse means “societal meaning-making systems such as institutional power, social differentiation of groups, and cultural beliefs that create identities for individuals and position them in social relationships” (Young, What is Discursive Practice? 2009, 2) and the ‘discourse’ is connected with ‘discursive practices’ which are based on the following assumptions 1. That social realities are linguistically and discursively constructed 2. The context bound nature of discourse 3. The idea of discourse as social action and 4. The understanding that meaning is negotiated in interaction rather than being present once-for-all in utterances (Young, What is Discursive Practice? 2009, 3-4). The discursive practices explains how meanings are constructed within a social setting within texts through words and utterances.

Classical Indian texts such as the Upaniṣads, *Dharmaśāstra*, *Brahmasūtra s*, and *Bhagavadgīta* are examples of discourses, specifying certain discursive practices through which identities and boundaries are created between self and others. ‘Othering’ is a process of constructing the ‘other’ and this happens simultaneously along with construction of selfhood. The “other” is opposed to “the self”, it is a notion against which one defines oneself. One needs to keep in mind that in the Indian tradition, the “the self” and the “other” need not be in an oppositional relationship, in fact

in many Eastern traditions the other is a part of the self. Because “the other” is part of the “self” does not mean that there is no ‘othering’, in fact in many of the classical Indian texts there is a conscious exclusion of others in production of knowledge and performance of rituals and practices. From a transcendental, metaphysical perspective in the notions of *ātman* and *brahman*, there may not be a distinction between self-other but at the empirical, phenomenal level there is the distinction between the self- other and also the process of othering. To achieve the transcendental also there is a hierarchy. One could explore the self-other relation from the transcendental perspective of the relationship between *ātman-brahman* or from a phenomenological, sociological perspective, by discussing issues such as *varṇa* (caste), *jāti* (sub-caste), gender, *dharma* (duties moral or religious). The process of ‘othering’ happens at multiple levels, at the level of caste, gender, and at the level of practice. From a Buddhist perspective the relation between self-other works very differently, because there is no self-other. The Buddhists central doctrine of no-self (*annatā, anātma*) which argues that there is no permanent enduring self, that what we call a human being is nothing but an aggregation of the five *skhandas*. Since there is no self which can refer to or stand for anything either metaphysical or phenomenal, there is no ‘other’. The self-other which is such a major problem in the Western and Hindu tradition is not at all a problem in Buddhism. From an ethical perspective the other who like the self needs to be taken care of with love and compassion. The Buddhists do not privilege the metaphysical aspect more than either the psychological or the ethical aspects of personhood. The solution to the problem of self-other in other traditions can be solved through the Buddhist concept of *anātma* and the primacy of the other. Going back to the Hindu tradition, the distinction between self-other only keeps getting stronger from the period of the Upaniṣads and into the medieval period. The medieval doxographies played a crucial role in doctrinal boundary creation and formation of identities. In Hindu tradition there is a long history for discourses on othering whether be it the *Bhagavadgīta*, the *Dharmaśāstra*, the *Brahmasūtra s* and their commentaries, the *Sarvadarśana Saṃgrahas* etc. With creation of each genre of texts the hierarchies become sharper, so also the differences, inclusion and exclusion also happens simultaneously.

## **2.19 Conclusions:**

In this chapter titled “*Methodological issues and approaches to studying classical Indian texts*”, an attempt is made to outline some of the central issues in reading and understanding of classical

texts and the conceptual differences with their Western counterpart. It discusses contemporary approaches to Indian philosophy such as comparative philosophy, Intellectual history, textual analysis and criticism etc, it also discusses some of the inadequacies of earlier methods. At the core of these conflicting binaries, methods lies the conceptualization of Indian philosophy, is it *darśana* or school, *anvisiki* or rational mode of thought, or tradition etc. Finally, this chapter argues for a poststructuralist theoretical framework for understanding notions such as selfhood, self and the other. It locates the construction of selfhood, identity and difference through the textual production across traditions, which includes creation of different genres of texts such as the *Śāstras*, the *Sūtras* or *Suttas*, *Kārikas*, *Samuccayas*, and *Samgrahas* etc.

## Chapter – 3

### **Proto-philosophical literatures: The Upaniṣads and the *Milindapañha***

In this chapter comparison is drawn between two early independent texts of different styles (verse and prose) belonging to two opposing traditions, Vedism or Brahmanism<sup>16</sup> on one hand and Buddhism on the other, both texts were counted as foundational by each of these major traditions. These early texts are unique because of their narrative styles in addition to also being the first known proto-philosophical texts of the classical period. Both of these were first handed down orally before they were committed to writing which was several hundred years later. Both these texts provide narrative accounts of the ‘self’ expressed through various characters, one making an epistemological claim for an unifying principle (*ātman*) underlying all phenomena and equating it with the transcendental *Brahman*, the other making an argument for non-self (*anātman* or *annata*) through non-essentialism, the idea that there is no underlying or fixed essence of things. Both these texts offer exciting ways of understanding ‘self’, its construction of the selfhood, the various layers of the ‘self’, the ‘other’, or ‘others’ or the lack of the ‘other’. The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate how these narratives are used to construct the idea of a ‘self’, the ways in which metaphysical and epistemological claims are made about the ‘self’ by the self and how the ‘others’ facilitate this process.

This chapter is divided into two parts, the first part is about the Upaniṣads and the second part deals with the Buddhist text *Milindapañha*. The Upaniṣads are treated separately because they are larger in size and more varied and they are not one homogenous text or literature but rather several independent individual texts written over several centuries (600-700 yrs.) by different authors and then put together (Roebuck 2003, xxiv). They are classified as *śrutis* or ‘heard’ and are regarded as ‘revelation’, revealed to or heard by *ṛṣis* or seers.

In comparison the *Milindapañha*, provides an interesting counter narrative, firstly, because it belongs to the non-Vedic or *śramaṇa* tradition and rejects many of the Vedic presuppositions and has a very different view of the ‘self’ and the way it’s selfhood is constructed. The Upaniṣads and the *Milindapañha*, are both characterized by debates and discourse held in a public domain such as a King’s court between two or more people (Staal 2008, 162). These dialogues or conversations

between characters are constructed but reflect the real conversations or dialogues that were orally happening at that time or happened earlier across different sects and traditions. These texts are interesting in terms of the similarities as also of their fundamental doctrinal differences. I would like to argue in this chapter that the 'self' in the Upaniṣads is a social construction arising out of an inter-subjective context. The entire purpose of the Upaniṣads is to arrive at a metaphysical notion of the 'self' (*ātman*) which also has material reality embodied in the form an ideal *Brahmin* male subjectivity such as Yajñavalkya, or Uddālaka Āruṇi, or Śāṅḍilya.

### Part-1

The Upaniṣads are a separate genre of texts which are essentially scriptures or revelations rather than strict philosophical texts. The Upaniṣads are distinct from other prior classical literature because it moves away from the explanation and meaning of ritual actions to philosophy<sup>17</sup> whose primary focus is the conception of the 'Self'. Unlike most other Indian philosophical texts, in the Upaniṣads there is an intermingling of the theoretical (philosophical) and the experiential or everyday life, along with the mystical, connections are made between the conceptual, religious, political and the everyday social life-world of the being. Since, the texts are dialogical by nature, with named characters, one way to interpret these texts is by identifying the speakers, the audience/spectators or those who are spoken to, the topic of the speaker or what is being spoken about, to whom is it being spoken etc. because the dialogues are spoken in specific context by characters who make certain specific claims.

The Upaniṣads occupy an important place in Indian philosophy and literature and was viewed by many Indologists and Western scholars like Arthur Schopenhauer, Max Mueller etc. as unique to the world and an unparalleled literature, it was also used by the Hindu reformers and nationalists like Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy etc. as the basis for Hindu identity and religion, this narrative was also supported by thinkers like Radhakrishnan and others. The orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy owe their origins to the Upaniṣads, and base their claims on the Upaniṣadic statements giving it scriptural authority and also different schools interpreted the Upaniṣads differently. Śaṅkaracarya (eighth century CE) interpreted the Upaniṣads, wrote commentaries on it which led to the conception of the non-dual school of Vedānta called Advaita, similarly, Rāmānujā (twelfth century CE) interpreted the Upaniṣads as 'qualified non-dualism' or

Vīśiṣṭādvaita and Madhvācārya (thirteenth century CE) also interpreted the Upaniṣads as dualist philosophy or Dvaita and in addition almost all later orthodox (*āstika*) Indian philosophies more specifically the Vedāntins invoke the Upaniṣads.

Traditionally, scholars of the Upaniṣads both in the medieval period like the great Śaṅkarācārya, to contemporary thinkers like Radhakrishnan, Hiriyanna and others have engaged with the abstract teachings and metaphysical content of the Upaniṣads and tried to unravel what each thought was the true intent of the various authors of the Upaniṣads rather than focusing on the narrative sections of the Upaniṣads, which are crucial to understanding why certain claims were made, by whom and for whom. The approach of traditional thinkers was an ahistorical approach more of a philological analysis placing emphasis on knowledge (*vidyā*) rather than story (*ākhyāna*)<sup>18</sup>. But recent approaches [Bodewitz (1973), Patrick Olivelle (1999), Brian Black (2012) etc.] have been historical, placing the Upaniṣadic debates within a socio-historical context.

The Upaniṣads are like *Plato's Dialogues*, but, there are some distinct differences and in terms of composition and complexity. The Platonic Dialogues are attributed to Plato and refer to a distinct genre of literary prose composed during approximately around the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The Upaniṣads, on the other hand, cannot be attributed to anyone person they have been written by several authors over a period of several hundred years and there is far greater complexity in terms of internal conflict and contradictions resulting from a variety of factors. But like Plato, the dialogues in the Upaniṣads tell us who is speaking, to whom, where, and under what conditions etc. Black argues that these narratives not only contextualize the teachings, but also characterize the knowledge, and outline by whom, and how these teachings should be practiced in the social world (Black 2012, 2-3). The Upaniṣads presents a canvas of different subjectivities, their interrelations in terms of creation of particular 'selfhood' or 'agency' and how this 'selfhood' is regulated and controlled by the performance of certain practices and rituals which constitute a certain mode of being. While, the ultimate aim of the Upaniṣads is knowledge about the 'self' (*Brahmajñāna*) its other purpose is the creation of conception of an ideal being an ideal *Brahmin* male. Some of the dialogues between the King and the Brahmins suggest that in the pre-modern times for the King to be successful he also needed to be a philosopher and have knowledge about the 'soul', 'self' similar to Plato's Philosopher King. The King also sometime played the role of a student and sometimes as teacher. There are also the 'others' wandering sages, women, ascetics,

children who are either just spectators or audience their roles often subordinated to the dominant male protagonists. The Kings and the women are two most important social groups that the *Brahmins* in the Upaniṣads engage with.

### 3.1 Dates of the composition of the Upaniṣads and geographical location:

As with most ancient Sanskrit literature there is confusion about the exact date of the composition of the Upaniṣads, but studies have shown that the composition of the early Upaniṣads is between seventh century and the early centuries of the Common Era. These include the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Chāndogya*, *Taittiriya*, *Aitareya*, *Kauṣītāki*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha*, *Īśā*, *Śvetāśvatara*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Praśna*, *Māṇḍūkya*, and *Maitrāyaṇī* also called the primary Upaniṣad. Of the primary Upaniṣads the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Chāndogya*, are pre-Buddhist, while the *Īśā*, *Taittirīya*, *Aitareya*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha*, *Muṇḍaka* and *Praśna* were composed later and there are also others which are minor Upaniṣads and dated as post-Buddhists (Phillips 2009, 25-29). But again these dates are not exact because the Upaniṣads were orally transmitted long before they were committed to writing which is several centuries later. The historians and scholars of Indology and religion agree that the Upaniṣads were not composed in one place and at one time. The geography of the Upaniṣads was essentially the northern part of India, it is believed that it ranged from the Gandhāra region of the Northwest (would be Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh etc. in present day India) to the Videha region of the Southeast (Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal etc.) and this represents a vast area, so there were movement of people and also exchange of ideas (Olivelle 1998, 6-7). The center for ancient Ved-ism or *Brahmanism* were spread across the regions of *Kuru-Pañcāla* and *Kosala-Videha*, however, scholars and historians have found it difficult to attribute a specific region for each individual Upaniṣad (Olivelle 1998, 13).

Another important social indicator about the originators of the Upaniṣads is that they were essentially written by those who occupied a higher position in the socio-economic hierarchy, they were mostly craftsmen, potters, textiles traders basically traders, people who travelled well and not those who were engaged in agriculture, labor etc (Olivelle 1998, 6). This also suggests that they had access to resources which provided with the tools necessary for making a transition from the oral to the written tradition, they had access to the written word and from that came power. The language in which they were transmitted and later written down was the language spoken by

the Āryans<sup>19</sup>. The language spoken by them came to be known as Sanskrit which is a combination of various European languages including Greek, Iranian, and Latin. The āryans (meaning ‘noble’ or ‘honorable’) are supposed to be the originators of the Vedic literature and culture, these people migrated from a pastoral life, then owning land, horses to being militarily powerful (Olivelle 1998, 28). But how did they make a transition from pastoral wandering community to land, owning, militarily powerful ones and the conversion of settlements in to cities and then to states is problematic which historians and archeologists have been trying to solve. Urbanization had already started at the time of compositions of the Upaniṣads (Erdosy 1988, 101).

### 3.2 Social structure in the Upaniṣads:

There is a distinct division of society which characterizes the Upaniṣads. This can be seen in terms of the characters and their roles that appear in the different Upaniṣads, most characters either belong to the priestly class (*Brahmins*) or the Kṣatriyas, elite scholars of the time debating with one another within a courtly setting. For instance, in the *Bṛihad Āraṇyaka* upaniṣad, we can see king Janaka of Videha debating with Yājñavalkya<sup>20</sup> the learned brāhmana and vice versa, he also appears in most of the other Upaniṣads as well. In the *Chāndogya* Upaniṣad, it is the debate between the father and son duo of *Uddālaka Āruṇi* and *Śvetaketu*. The *Kaṭha* Upaniṣad, revolves round the dialogue between Naciketa the young Brahmin boy, and the Lord of death Yama. A reading of the major Upaniṣads shows that most of the originators or teachers as well as the target audience were mostly Brahmins, who followed the line of tradition or *vaṁśa*. Each family of *Brahmins* followed and specialized in the performance of specific rituals and sacrifices leading up to the creation of separate branches (*śākhā's*) within the Vedic tradition (Olivelle 1998, 8). Also, the caste system is a very prevalent feature of the Upaniṣads, there are several passages which uphold the caste system and there is almost a hatred and dislike towards those of the last two *varṇas* the *Vaiśya* and the *Shudras*. The tenth khaṇḍa of the *Chāndogya* Upaniṣad (5.10.8), speaks of reincarnation into different castes based on previous karma or present conduct, it says:

Accordingly. Those who are of pleasant conduct here---the prospect is, indeed, that they will enter a pleasant womb, either of a womb of a Brahman, or the womb of a Kshatriya, or the womb of a Vaiśya. But those who are of stinking conduct here—the prospect is, indeed,

that they will enter a stinking womb, either the womb of a dog, or the womb of a swine, or the womb of an outcast (*caṇḍāla*) (Trans. Hume 2003).

This passage upholds the high positions assigned to the upper three *varṇas* in the social structure the *Brahmins*, *Ksatriyas*, *Vaiśyas* and also attributes to them qualities of good karma and pleasant conduct while the lowest cast the *caṇḍāla* is almost compared and equated with that of an animal such as a dog or a swine and attributes to them a stinking conduct. This actually follows from earlier references to the caste structure as seen in the *Ṛgveda*, the *Puruṣasūkta* and other early literatures. The *Ṛgvedic Puruṣasūkta* (10.90.11-12) envisages the creation and the hierarchical ordering of the society and comparing it to a self-creating sacrifice *yajña*, in which the cosmic man *puruṣa*, the four *varṇas* are compared to the various parts of the cosmic man *puruṣa*, the *Brahmin* from the mouth, the *Ksatriya* from the arms, *Vaiśya* from the thighs and *Shudras* from the feet of the primordial *puruṣa*.

Black identifies four different social situations that arise in the Upaniṣads which represents the fundamental aspects of *Brahmin* life, they are, Brahmins and students, Brahmins and Brahmins, Brahmins and Kings, and Brahmins and women (Black 2012, 17). These are also linked to the four stages of life (*āśrama dharma*) student, householder, retired and the renunciate. Each of the social situations represents a particular aspect of the *Brahmin* life for instance, education representing the teacher student relation sets a stage for entry into a *Brahmin* life, second features debate and addresses how a Brahmin establishes his reputation among other Brahmins, third about patronage how Brahmins earn wealth, accommodation and share political power with the *Ksatriyas*, fourth speaks about how Brahmins set up a household and secures immortality through progeny (Black 2012, 17). So, they almost cover aspect of the everyday *Brahmin* life.

### **3.3 Different Upaniṣads and their relation to the Vedas.**

Each upaniṣad is associated with a specific *Samhitā* or Veda and can be identified as corresponding to a particular branch of the Veda. Each branch of the Veda has its own *Brāhmaṇa*, the *brāhmaṇas* were the prose text. The Upaniṣads are said to have emerged from the *Brāhmaṇas*. The Upaniṣads attached to the *Brāhmaṇas* of the *Aitareya* and *Kauṣītaki* are called *Aitareya* and *Kauṣītaki* Upaniṣads, the *Tāṇḍins* and the *Talavakāras* of the *Sāma-veda* are called *Chāndogya* and

Talavakāra (or *Kena*) Upaniṣad. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Upaniṣad forms a part of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* of the Vājasaneyi School, the *Taittirīya* School of the Yajurveda form the *Taittirīya*, the *Kaṭha* upaniṣad of the Kāṭhaka Brāhmaṇa (Dasgupta 1975, 30-31). The later Upaniṣads like *Muṇḍaka*, *Praśna*, and *Māṇḍūkya* were associated with the Atharva-Veda.

### **The Upaniṣads and their associated Vedas.**

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Ṛgveda	<i>Aitareya, Kauṣītaki</i>
Yajurveda	<i>Taittirīya, Śvetāśvara, Kaṭha, Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Īśa</i>
Sāmaveda	<i>Chāndogya, Kena</i>
Atharva	<i>Muṇḍaka, Praśna, Māṇḍūkya.</i>

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The Yajurveda is again divided in to two *Samhitās* the “black” or ‘krishna’ and the “white” or ‘shukla’ *Samhitā*. The “black” is the older, unrevised, version which consists of rituals to be performed, beliefs and practices of the religious group and the “white” is the explanation of those rituals and why they need to be performed. The *Taittirīya, Śvetāśvara, Kaṭha Upaniṣads* form the “black” *Samhitā* and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Īśa* to the “white” *Samhitā*.

### **3.4 Major themes in the Upaniṣads:**

The three central aspects in the Upaniṣads are the ritual, cosmological and the human physiological and psychological aspects (Olivelle 1998). The ritual aspects explore the connection between ritual actions and works to reveal the hidden meaning. The cosmological aspects explore the tripartite cosmology of the earth, the sky and the intermediate space between them. The human physiological and psychological aspects posit the human being at the center of human inquiry and speculation. These are not separate but are interconnected, the objective of the ancient seers was to find these hidden connections between the ritual, cosmological and the physiological aspects. There is a gradual progression from the inanimate or non-being towards the being, from the material to the spiritual. This ‘hidden’ or ‘secretive teaching’ is either passed on through strict lineages between teachers and students within the community or it makes an exception to those

who have a sincere desire and high morals to achieve self-realization. The next sections discuss the philosophical themes in more detail.

### **3.5 Vedic Rituals – Hidden meaning and connection between ritual actions and words uttered**

A large part of the Upaniṣads like the *Brāhmaṇas* is dedicated to explaining an expansive set of rituals, the method of performing those rituals etc. also there are few sections which are a critique of these Vedic rituals. All rituals could not be performed by everyone, special rituals required specialist trained Brahmins. Special rituals and sacrifices were performed for different purposes, and were carried out mostly by the rich, who were often the *Kṣatriyas*, the ruling classes. The kings or *Kṣatriyas* approached the Brahmins or the priestly classes for performing certain rituals for a variety of purposes ranging from victory in wars, protection of their kingdoms from enemies, for rainfall and overall prosperity of their region and so on, and the Brahmins in turn for their services were richly compensated and rewarded. In this sense, the relation between the *Kṣatriyas* and the Brahmins was a symbiotic relationship, in which one depended on the other, but it is not the case with the others (*Vaiśya*, *Shudras*) in the *varṇa* system in relation to Brahmins. The two most significant sacrifices in the Upaniṣads are the horse sacrifice and the Soma Yajña, along with the rituals to be performed for ordaining a new king and building of a fire altar.

The Sanskrit term used for the person who is going to perform the ritual or the sacrifice, the *Kṣatriya* is *yajamāna*, and the priest performing the sacrifice is the *Hotṛ*. The conditions for performing the sacrifice are that “He should be married man belonging to one of the three twice-born classes of the Brahmin, Kṣatriya, and Vaiśya.” (Olivelle 1998, 16). The person reciting the mantra is the *Hotṛ* of the Ṛgveda, the *adhvaryu* is the priest of the Yajur veda and is the one who performs the actual rituals, sets the ritual pyre, builds the fire, sacrifices the animal and also cooks, and offers oblations into the ritual fire and the third is the *Udgātṛ* of the Sāmaveda who sings the songs associated with the rituals. The fire (*agni*) is the most important component of all Vedic rituals and sacrifices, all offerings are made to the fire, the fire consumes the offerings and Gods themselves are believed to join in.

The horse sacrifice (*aśvamedhā*) was performed by the King to prove his sovereignty, and is discussed in great detail in the *Brāhmaṇas*. The story goes that a fine bred horse is selected,

possessing great speed, having special bodily marks and color, it is looked after well, guarded by the court guards till about a year and allowed to wander freely. During this period there is a possibility that the horse could be killed or captured by an enemy in case it wanders off into enemy territory, but if it hasn't then it is brought back to the king and killed (Olivelle 1998, 19-20). An illustration of the Ramayana by Sahib Din in 1652, depicts *Kausalya*, the eldest of the three wives of King Dasaratha is shown slaying the horse and lying beside it. Following this the animal was dismembered and portions offered to Prajāpati and others. It is believed that the horse possessed divine power and fertility which was channeled to the queen and then passed to the king and his kingdom.

During the creation of the altar, soma pressings accompanied by sacrificing of a goat is carried out. Soma is the juice extracted from a certain plant of Indo-Iranian origin and finds extensive mention in the Ṛgveda (9.4, 9.5, 9.8, 9.10 and 9.45). The juice is strained mixed with milk offered to the gods in the fire and drunk by the priests. The chief of this is the *agniṣṭoma*, performed during the spring and lasts for just a day. Soma is associated with the *Indra*, the lord of light. The ninth book of the Ṛgveda is entirely consists of the *Soma* hymns, is the drink of the Gods, it's the one that makes the gods and the mortal immortal. The Soma sacrifice and the setting of the fire altar is also described in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. The earliest criticisms of the *aśvamedhā* yajña comes from the Cārvakās, the first skeptical, materialist school of Indian philosophy. A quote by the Cārvakās criticizing the Vedic rituals and the Vedic pundits from the *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha* of Mādhvācharya reads

The Agnihotra, the three Vedas, the ascetic's three staves,  
and smearing oneself with ashes, -- Bṛihaspati says, these  
are but means of livelihood for those who have no manliness nor  
sense (Mādhava 1996, 10).

The Cārvakās clearly reject and refute the performance of the sacrifices, where the wealthy perform them and the ones performing them the Pundits do it not for anything else than as a means of livelihood, the Veda is tainted by the three faults of untruth, self-contradiction, and tautology. These ceremonies, sacrifices are nothing but untruth propagated by the Pundits for the benefit of themselves; the three Vedas is only incoherent Rhapsodies of Knaves.

### 3.6 Cosmology in the Upaniṣads:

As already mentioned the āryans conceived of a tripartite universe the earth, sky and the intermediate region. The rain, clouds, lightning, thunder and storm were attributed to this region. The tripartite universe was under the control of the gods. Every heavenly body such as the sun, moon, stars, etc. is associated with a god e.g. *Sūrya* as Sun and *Agni* as Fire, *Indra* with thunder and releasing of waters. There are gods of the earth, gods of the sky and gods of the intermediate region, the Sanskrit term used for the gods of the three spheres are *bhūr*, *bhuvah*, *sva* these sounds are sacred and contain within them the totality of the entire universe (refer *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 2.23.2(3)) (Olivelle 1998, 20). The next *śloka* speaks of that syllable which describes the totality of the universe the embedded in the *Om* syllable. Most of the effort in the upaniṣad is directed towards finding the hidden meaning of these sounds, and the effects of their invocation or utterance. There is also the term *svarga loka* used to refer to the Milky Way. The later Vedic period saw more layers added to the earlier tripartite cosmology, in addition, to the earth, sky, intermediate region, *svarga loka*, further regions beyond the sky, called *Mahas*, *Janas*, *Tapas*, and the farthest region called *satya loka* ('world of truth') or *Brahma loka* ('world of Brahman') were added. The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.5.16) talks about the truth of the three worlds- the world of men, the world of the fathers, and the world of gods. The world of men is obtained by the son only, the world of fathers after performing sacrifices and the world of god obtained by knowledge and hence, the world of gods is the best of all the three because knowledge was privileged by the Upaniṣadic seers.

The notion of 'rebirth' is also discussed in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 6.2 and *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (5.10.7). In *BṛhU* 6.2.7 the verses describe the enclosed universe, between earth and sky. They also describe how after death, when the person is cremated, the human being destined to be reborn goes up the moon in the form of smoke or vapor and returns back to the earth in the form of rain, enters the plants and when eaten by man become semen. They then take the form of a new life in the womb of a woman. Thus, it is an enclosed universe with walls above and earth below where the process of birth, death, and rebirth continues until one gain's the knowledge of liberation and eventually breaks this cycle. The other significant theme is that of 'creation' and its 'beginnings'. There are various stories of creation in the Upaniṣads for instance, Prajāpati is considered the principal creator of the *Brāhmaṇas*, and all *Brahmanas* as descendents of Prajāpati.

Of course, the most important of all concepts discussed across the Upaniṣads is that of *Brahman* and *Ātman*. The classical Sāṃkhya's conception of the primal matter *prakṛti* or *pradhāna*, the three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas* is said to have emerged from the upaniṣadic cosmology. After positing the primal matter, god, cosmology the next is the conception of individual souls or beings. This also is a movement from the external to the internal which also marks a movement away from rituals, the world towards thought, and philosophy.

### **3.7 Positing of the Individual Human being as the center of inquiry and philosophical speculation:**

Some of the earliest Vedic hymns describe the creation of the universe through the sacrifice resulting in dismemberment of the body of the first primitive man (*puruṣa*) Ṛgveda (10.90). From the dismembered body parts of the *puruṣa* not only did the four *varnas* come in to being, but also the moon, sun, wind, Indra, Agni. The moon was born from his mind, the sun was born from the eye, Indra and Agni from the mouth, the wind from his breath, and heaven was formed from his head, the Earth from his feet, the four directions from his ear. These early hymns make a connection between the human and the divine, between human and nature the hidden connection between things. Also, the bodily parts and their physical functioning and also the psychological aspects of the mind are spoken about at length. It is in the context of explaining and understanding of the body that the notion of *ātman* is conceptualized as the spiritual self or the innermost core of the human being. A study of the Upaniṣads and other ancient Indian texts reveals that the ancient were greatly interested in the human body and how this body is connected with and fitted with other creatures, nature etc within the larger universe. The human body is central to understanding the working of the world and the universe; it is where the physiology, psychology, metaphysics and religion come together. The human body is the vehicle for not just self-understanding but also understanding the world outside of the self. This body is often the male body although the female body is discussed but in the context of male sexual activity.

The understanding and interest in human physiology in the Vedic period resulted from the sacrificial rituals performed during which the sacrificial animal was dissected which would have given the ancients an understanding of the internal physiology of the animal. For instance, the first *adhyāya*, first *brāhmaṇa* of the Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, the different parts of the sacrificial horse is equated with different aspects of the cosmos, the dawn to the head of the sacrificial horse, the

sun his eyes, the wind his breath, universal fire (*Agni Vaiśvānara*) his open mouth (Trans. Hume 2003, 73). The five sense organs and their vital functions such as breathing, thinking, hearing, speech, sight etc. are important topics of inquiry in the Upaniṣads. ‘Breathing’ or ‘breath’ is considered the single most vital function and directly equated with ‘life’ and ‘being alive’. It is also sometimes equated with the person’s self or *atmān*. The Upaniṣads speak of different kinds of breath the in-breath, out-breath, diffused breath, up-breath, the middle-breath (*BṛhU* 1.5.3). The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (5.24.3) describes the various oblations offered during the Agnihotra sacrifice which include offerings to the various types of breath *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *udāna*, *vyāna*, *samāna*, these are equivalent to the ones mentioned above i.e. in-breath, out-breath, diffused breath, up-breath and the middle-breath. The most commonly used term of ‘breath’ is *prāṇa*.

The Upaniṣads also talk of two kinds of spaces one outside like *ākāṣa* and the one inside, *Brahman* is said to reside in both. The space inside is also the center of the human body the heart or the sacred space (*CU* 3.12.7-9). This space or the heart is also crucial to explaining the different states of awareness waking state, dream state, deep sleep state and death.

In identifying the central themes and concerns of the Upaniṣads, one can say that these texts are unique in the sense that their purposes are different unlike later texts whose primary purpose is systematization and conceptual analysis. In a sense, Upaniṣads are pre-conceptual and also pre-philosophical, their purpose is to find or unravel the hidden connections and meanings between the human, spirit and the cosmic world which also includes the gods and underlying connections which holds all these together.

### **3.8 Narratives about the Self in the Upaniṣads:**

The ‘Self’ as already discussed is the core metaphysical concept of the Upaniṣads and it is also what makes them philosophical texts rather than just scriptures or revelations. The questions regarding the Self and the problems of the ‘self’ in relation to the ‘other’ are not just contemporary but something which the ancients also grappled with. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, conversation between Naciketas and the lord of death Yama concerning the three boons being offered to Naciketas, Naciketas requests to know about the soul’s destiny after death, Yama perturbed by this declares, in *KaU* 1.16.21 declares

Even the gods had doubt as to this of yore  
for truly it is not easily understood. Subtile is this matter (*dharma*) another boon  
O Naciketas, choose!

Press me not! Give up this one for me! (Trans. Hume 2003, 344)

Similarly, in the *Maitri Upaniṣad*, King Bṛihadratha when asked to choose a boon by Śākāyanya, asks “Sir, I am no knower of the Soul, you are the one who knows about it so can you tell us”, Śākāyanya replies that “It is a very difficult question to answer! Choose other desires!” This desire to know about the ‘self’ is the turning point in Vedic literature, where there is a movement away from rituals and meaning of rituals to knowing or knowledge. The Kings who in the *Brāhmaṇas* and Ṛgveda performed only sacrifices and rituals were now presented as being interested in *Brāhmajñāna* or knowledge of *Brahman*. The *Brahmins* themselves attempt new ways of defining themselves by moving away from their old ways a movement away from practices to theoretically defining themselves. The great Nārada too well versed in all arts, grammar, Vedas etc. in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* in conversation with Sanatkumāra requests him to teach about the ‘Self’. So the hidden teaching in the Upaniṣads was of the ‘Self’ which later became the unifying principal behind all phenomena ‘*Brahman*’. As discussed this hidden knowledge is not revealed in isolation under a tree or in a forest but within a public setting like a court. The idea of the ‘self’ arises out of discursive practices such as debates/dialogues with ‘other’ or the ‘others’. When one considers the various narratives in the Upaniṣads, one can identify different aspects of the construction of the ‘self’ or ‘selfhood’ chiefly of the *Brahmin*. The dominant feature of these ancient literatures is the ability to tell a story, a story of the ‘Self’. Story telling is the basis of narrative construction of the ‘Self’; this is precisely what is happening in the Upaniṣads. The ability to tell stories is as ancient as the ‘Self’ itself, we all tell stories about ourselves, about others, and also to ourselves and this is how we connect with the world around us and to ourselves. Self-understanding is crucial to understanding the ‘Self’ which in turn is achieved through the narratives. The various characters in the Upaniṣads speak about the self; they seek the knowledge of the self. But the kind of ‘self-knowledge’ that the upaniṣadic seers seek is not just ‘self-knowledge’ but also knowledge that is eternal leading to liberation. The knowledge of the Self was something which could not be easily understood or even taught examples of which we have seen earlier. It is something which is

incomprehensible and cannot be easily compared with any other thing, and that is why the ancients thought this knowledge to be mystical, intriguing and even elusive.

Recent study in Philosophy of Mind and phenomenology has identified two kinds of selves the 'narrative self'<sup>21</sup> and the 'experiential self', the narrative self being more complex than the experiential self. The narrative self requires language to express itself whereas the experiential self is a more primordial notion which does not require language, memory or other cognitive faculties. Dan Zahavi, argues that "being a self is an achievement rather than a given" (Zahavi 2007). This argument substantiates or justifies why the characters in the Upaniṣads thought and perceived the knowledge of the self as the greatest boon which could be arrived at through discussions and debates. The knowledge of the self according to the narrative account is not a pre-given but needs to be arrived at either through experience or revelation. Narratives can be purely individual or subjective where one tells stories of one's own life. Here the narrator and the protagonists of the story are one and the same, much like an autobiography. Another kind of narrative in an intersubjective narrative it is a story that is constructed by 'oneself' to understand 'others' and their actions. In both these kinds of narrations, whether it is 'one' telling about 'oneself' to 'others' or about an 'other' talking of 'yourself' to 'others', essentially narration happens as a social process, within a social setting, like the court setting of the Upaniṣads. Therefore, the narrative 'self' (excluding the 'autobiographical self' which is a first person perspective) is not a pre-given and its conception is depended on the interaction of the 'self' with the 'others', intersubjectivity is important while constructing the notion of a narrative 'self'. One's story is not one's own, but is dependent on several social relations and context of which the 'self' is or has been a part of.

According to Husserl, one should understand oneself as a continuer or inheritor of a tradition, and this is also how the central characters in the Upaniṣads also thought themselves to be. 'Yājñavalkya' the great protagonist in the Upaniṣads is not representative of just the character 'Yājñavalkya', but representative of a tradition or community or an inheritor of a community, who has inherited his great qualities and knowledge of the 'self' from his lineage of teachers (*vaṁśa*) or tradition, also being born in a particular community etc. The particular lineage gives him his authority on the subject and is an important constituent of his selfhood and this is also true of other characters as well such as Śāṅḍilya, Uddālaka Āruṇi. For a narrative, language or linguistics is important to be able to present the narratives so also is concepts in addition to other cognitive

capacities like memory, imagination etc. Hence, in the Upaniṣads too language plays a crucial role, the way claims are presented, arguments constructed, analogies, metaphors used etc. much like a present day novel but more complex. The next sections look at specific Upaniṣads in not any specific order but in order of some recessing themes like creation, sacrifice, theories of ‘self’ etc. and discuss some important dialogues in them between various characters and analyze as to how these dialogues aid in the construction of the ‘selfhood’ of the *Brahmin*, and the role played by ‘others’ in this conception.

### 3.9 Conceptions of narrative ‘Self’ in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (BrhU)*:

The *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* is the oldest, largest upaniṣad and constitutes the concluding section of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. It is called the *Great Forest Upaniṣad*, and serves both as a *Āraṇyaka* and an *Upaniṣad*, therefore, the emphasis is not just at arriving at or the conception of the ‘self’ or ‘*ātman*’ it is also deciphering the meaning of ritual actions and unraveling the hidden connections between the ‘Self’ and other cosmological entities and the world. It is divided into three sections 1. *Adhyāyas* 1-2 called the *Madhukāṇḍa* (honey section) 2. *adhyāyas* 2-3 called *Yājñavalkyakāṇḍa* (dedicated to Sage Yājñavalkya, who is the central character) 3. *adhyāyas* 5-6 called *Khilakāṇḍa* (supplementary section) (Olivelle 1998, 29). Each division is treated as complete in itself and a genealogy of the doctrine is presented at the end of each section specifying a list of doctrine of teachers through whom the doctrine was taught and handed down through the generations (*vaṁśa*).

The Upaniṣads are heterogeneous collections, which use different styles, there are dialogues, anecdotes, parables, poetic/sexual metaphors, and they also offer advice. Unlike most philosophical texts which are completely cut off from social reality these early texts provide an insight into the lived world and reality of the early Brahmin society and their organization. There is as much emphasis on performance or practices of ritual actions as much as there is on developing a philosophical consciousness, both of which are considered equally important to attaining *Brahmajñāna*.

### 3.10 The range of philosophical and ritualistic themes that appear in the Bṛhadāranyaka

- The various sections (*adhyāyas*) are attempts to find the interconnections between the material, spiritual and the cosmic world which are unseen. The knowledge of the ‘self’ (*Brahmodya/ Brahmajñāna*) reveals to those who seek to find those connections.
- The structure of the world is similar to those of a sacrificial horse (*aśvamedhā*) or object. The conducting of rituals and sacrifices was important to the ancients to understanding the external world and the cosmos and by following or performing certain rites one can even restructure the world. Parts of the cosmos have a one on one relation with the object of the ritual or sacrifice. Creation is also spoken of in terms of the various aspects of the sacrifice, explains how *Prajāpati*, the lord of the sacrifice teaches about creation, knowledge about *ātman* to even the *devas* such as Indra and Virocana.
- Creation of the world from *Ātman*.
- The human body too is presented as a cosmological map, where speech (*vac*) is compared to fire (*agni*), sight to sun (*Sūrya*), breath (*prāṇa*) to wind, mind to moon. Prayers during rituals or chanting (*sāman*) is also considered a form of speech. *Sāman* comes from the root word *sā* meaning ‘she’ and *ama* ‘he’.
- The superiority of breath over all other bodily functions.
- The father’s transmission of knowledge to the son, before he departs, the son being the rightful candidate for the reception of this knowledge.
- Life after death is also a theme that the early Upaniṣadic thinkers were curious about; they were interested in the journey of the soul after death (*BṛhU* 5.10). This theme is repeated in other Upaniṣads as well such as *Chāndogya*, *Kauṣītaki*.

The two central sections of the *BṛhU* are the ‘Honey Section’ (*Madhu Vidya*)<sup>22</sup>, containing the dialogue between ‘Yājñavalkya’ and ‘Maitreyi’ and this is repeated in the next section called the ‘Yājñavalkya section’. Hume argues that there is a possibility that these sections could not have been part of one continuous writing, but they were separate works which were later put together and connected with a third section called the ‘Supplementary Section’ and these characteristics contribute to the Upaniṣads heterogeneous nature. Hume, further adds that not only are they heterogeneous in character but they contain passages which set forth the dualistic Sāṃkhya philosophy which is the opposed to the monistic Vedānta (Trans. Hume 2003, 7-8). Therefore, the

Upaniṣads offer the possibility of being variedly interpreted and be understood differently and hence its numerous commentaries have led to the development of various schools of thought within the dominant Vedānta tradition.

### 3.11 Creations theories and myths (Non-being to ‘Being’):

The Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad begins with a sort of creation myth wherein the primordial *ātman* exists in the beginning. According to *BṛhU* 1.1.1,

Verily, the dawn is the head of the sacrificial horse; the sun, his eye; the wind, his breath; universal fire (Agni Vaiśvānara), his open mouth. The year is the body (*ātman*) of the sacrificial horse; the sky, his back; the atmosphere, his belly; the quarters, his flanks; the intermediate quarters, his ribs; the seasons, his limbs; the months and half-months, his joints; days and nights, his feet; the stars, his bones; the clouds, his flesh. Sand is the food in his stomach; rivers are his entrails. His liver and lungs are the mountain; plants and trees, his hair. (Müller 1879, 70)

The various bodily parts of the *Aśva-medā*<sup>23</sup> is likened to different aspects of time and duration such as year, month, half-months, quarter year, day, nights etc. The creation begins with the performance of the sacrifice (*yajña*) along with the ritual chanting. The next sections go on to describe how in the beginning there was nothing and then from ‘nothing’ something came into being because the creator (*Prajāpati*) desired that something come into being, he also desired that he perform the sacrifice, practice austerity . The performance of ritual sacrifices forms the part of early orthopraxy, which eventually led to the creation of orthodoxy. The gods and the demons were his (*Prajāpati*) offspring’s, the gods being the younger of the offspring’s while the demons the older; they were both fighting each other so the gods attempt to get rid of them through the performance of ritual sacrifice and chanting. From him (*Prajāpati*) came breath, and from breath speech and from speech the chant. A similar story of creation appears in *Aitareya Upaniṣad* 1.1.1, it speaks about how the four worlds of the cosmic person and cosmic of cosmic powers was created by the primeval Self. It says,

In the beginning, Ātman (Self, Soul), verily, one only,  
was here- no other winking thing whatever.  
He bethought himself: 'Let me now create worlds.'<sup>24</sup>

Similar stories of creation appear in other Upaniṣads as well, ultimately behind of idea of creation, and the world is one ultimate principal. Both '*Brahman*' and '*Ātman*' came to represent what we call as the ultimate unifying principle. '*Brahman*' is used more as an outward expression or reality whereas '*Ātman*' is an internal expression or reality; some have also called it two different methods to arriving at the universal principle one from the outside inwards and the second from the inwards outside. In the first we understand 'creation' as an expression of the universal external reality *Brahman* and then understand how the Individual selves form a part of this reality and in the second it is through the understanding of the Individual self or through gaining a knowledge about the self we understand the outward reality (*Brahman*) that underlies all things (Brereton 1990, 115-135).

In the earlier Upaniṣads, there is *ātman*, discussions surrounding nature and characteristics of *ātman* it is only in the later Upaniṣads that an identification is made with *Brahman* although it is not explicitly stated anywhere. Many scholars in recent times like Brereton (1990, 1991, 1997, 2006), Edgerton (1929, 1965), Olivelle have argued against this tendency to reduce the Upaniṣads as essentially centering round the *ātman*, *Brahman* identity while ignoring all other aspects. Large portion of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Upaniṣad, like the earlier Brāhmaṇas is dedicated to performance of rituals, the method of chanting mantras, invoking the cosmic *Prajāpati*, the chant of the *Prastoti* (praiser) and the *Udgītha*. The creation presumes an existence of a primordial self, the 'I'. The verse *BṛhU* 1.4.5, describes how this manifold world came into existence from a unitary Soul. It says, "In the beginning this world was Soul (*Ātman*) alone in the form of a Person (*puruṣ-a*), he looks around and finds nothing other than himself, and so he declares 'I am' and from that came the 'I'" (Trans. Hume 2003, 81). So this 'I' the person presupposes all of existence, the world etc, and comes before everything else even before the Gods making the Upaniṣads anthropocentric.

The verse in *Chāndogya* Upaniṣad (4.0) explains the process of creation as a ‘cosmic egg’. It says:

In the beginning this word was merely non-being. It was existent. It developed. It turned into an egg. It lay for a period of a year. It was split asunder. One of the two eggshell parts became silver, one gold (Trans. Hume 2003, 214).

It is interesting to note the differences in the creation theories one describes the world as being born out of the sacrificial ritual, another as being out of the primordial cosmic person and another describes the world as being born out of a non-being compares it to a cosmic egg these examples are woven into more fundamental distinction and the problematic between ‘Non-being’ and ‘Being’. In Khaṇḍa 6.2 of *Chāndogya* Upaniṣad, the idea that the world came into being from a ‘non-being’ is rejected, Śvataketu instructs Uddālaka that

In the beginning, my dear, this world was just Being (*sat*), one only, without a second. To be sure, some people say: “In the beginning this world was just Non-being (*a-sat*), one only, without a second; from that Non-being Being was produced. (Trans. Hume 2003, 6.2.1)

He then goes on to deny the idea that the world or Being came into existence from the ‘non-being’ instead he says:

How come from Non-Being could Being be produced? On the contrary, my dear, in the beginning this world was just a Being, one only, without a second. (Trans. Hume 2003, 6.2.2)

It is therefore, from the Being, that the Non-Being comes into existence. The Being is the unmanifest and the Non-Being the manifest that which manifests, undergoes changes and modifications, and is referred to by name. That which is the Being is unmanifest and the ‘one without a second’ (*eko dvitīya*). This one without the second is the central doctrine of monism the one on which the philosophy of *Advaita Vedānta* is based. The relationship between the Being and

the Non-Being is the relationship between the Whole and the part and is explained in detail later in the chapter

### 3.12 Definition of *Brahman* in *Bṛhadāranya Upaniṣad*.

This narration is a conversation between a learned Brahmin (Gārgya) and King Ajātaśatru, and falls under the social relation of a *Brahmin* and *Kṣatriya*. The relation between *kṣatriya-brāhmaṇa* alliances, argues Staal “is not merely a political alliance between knowledge and power; it signals the emergence of rulers who became famous as intellectual leaders” (Staal 2008, 162). Dṛiptabālāki was a learned Gārgya. ‘Dṛipta’ meaning ‘proud’, ‘Gārgya’ a term used to denote the lineage of teachers (*vaṃśa*) specialized in grammar and liturgy the line to which Bālaki belonged. On the other hand, King Ajātaśatru (492-460 B.C.E) was the ruler of Haryanka dynasty of Magadha. Some believe he was the ruler of now Kāśi, and a contemporary of Mahavira and Buddha, the son of Bimbisara, who was the greatest patron of the Buddha also King Janaka another King who appears prominently in the *Bṛhadāranyaka* is said to be his political rival. These historical details are important to show that the Brahmins, Buddhists and the Jains shared or were part of the same historical conversation and these groups or traditions were very well aware of the doctrines and the positions of the others. It is in these socio-historical and political contexts that these debates originated providing clues as to why certain thinkers and characters in the texts made certain claims.

### 3.13 Bālaki and Ajātaśatru

In *BṛhU* 2.1.1, Bālaki tells Ajātaśatru, that he would tell him about *Brahman*, for which Ajātaśatru declares would give a thousand cows for anybody who would tell his about *Brahman*. Then Bālaki uses various analogies of the cosmos and the five elements to equate with ‘*Brahma*’ for instance, comparing *Brahma* with the Sun, moon, lightning space, wind, fire, water, mirror and sound<sup>25</sup>. It is interesting that the only odd entity in the list is that of a ‘mirror’, but the analogy of a ‘mirror’ is used to denote the ‘self-reflecting’ attribute of the ‘Self’ (*ātman*) just like all other heavenly bodies and the elements, sun, moon, fire, water, etc. All of them have this characteristic of reflecting back an image of ‘oneself’. After having enumerated the various manifestations of *Brahman* then Bālaki stops and remains silent. Ajātaśatru rejects each one of these comparisons as an inadequate comparison to *Brahman* demands if that is all he has to say? For which Bālaki

replies it is all. Upon which Ajātaśatru says it is rare that a *Brahmin* has to come to a *Kṣatriya* for knowledge about *Brahman*, nevertheless “I shall cause you to know him clearly” (*BrhU* 2.1.15). After this Bālaki offers to become a pupil of Ajātaśatru. Ajātaśatru takes Bālaki by his hands to a man lying asleep whom he refers to as the great white robed King Soma. He asks of the sleeping man several questions to Bālaki. He first wakes up the sleeping man, the white robed Soma and asks Bālaki series of questions regarding the self of both the person who was asleep earlier and the person who is now awake. Ajātaśatru then goes on to explain the various states of the conscious self, the awake state, the dream state, and a state he refers to as the dreamless sleep state and it is in this third states that one feels the highest bliss and that state is when you experience *Brahma*. There is an analogy of a ‘spider’ which is used by Ajātaśatru to explain the nature of *Brahman*, *BrhU* 2.1.20, it says

As a spider might come out with his thread, as small sparks come forth from the fire, even so from this Soul come vital energies (*prāṇa*), all worlds, all gods, all beings. The mystical meaning (*upaniṣad*) thereof is ‘the Real of the real (*satyasya satya*). Vital energies, verily, are the real. He is their Real. (Müller 1879, 100)<sup>26</sup>

This definition of Upaniṣads as ‘The Real of real’ is also repeated in Maitri (6.32). A very similar conversation occurs between the same characters Bālaki Gārgya and King Ajātaśatru in Kaushītaki Upaniṣad (*KṣU* 4). Here too Bālaki first offers to declare the Knowledge of *Brahma* to King Ajātaśatru, Ajātaśatru then offers to present one thousand cows to anyone who would reveal the knowledge about *Brahma*. The same examples are used by Bālaki to explain *Brahma* for instance, the sun, moon, lightning, thunder, wind, space, fire, water, mirror, shadow, echo, sound, sleep, body, right eye and left eye are referred to as *Brahma* with each example Ajātaśatru converts them into their equivalent associative terms such as the ‘Great’, ‘food’, ‘Truth’, ‘sound’, ‘Indra’ the plenum, the vanquisher, brilliance (*tejas*), the counterpart, the double, life(*asu*), death, Yama, Prajāpati, Speech and Truth. Ultimately they converge with *Brahma* being equivalent to same as ‘Truth’. In addition in *KṣU* 4.20, the ‘self’ is identified with spirit (*prāṇa*), even the intelligent self (*prajñātman*) enters the bodily self (*śarīra-ātman*), upto the hairs and the fingernail tips. Upon this ‘self’ depend ‘other selves’, similar to a chief depending on his men<sup>27</sup>. It is not very clear what these ‘other selves’ refer to but in the present context it refers to the vital bodily functions (*prāṇa*)

and how they connect with the Self (*ātman*). Here, also the term *śarīra-ātman* replaces *vijñānamayaḥ puruṣaḥ* emphasizing on the embodied self, this ‘bodily self’ is directly equated with *prāṇa*. Hume, identifies these examples, comparisons, analogies as belonging to two groups one with the divinity or cosmology (*adhi-daivata*) and second with reference to the self (*adhy-ātma*) (Trans. Hume 2003, 328-29) indicating the two fold classification of *mind* (*adhy-ātma*) and *matter* (*adhi-daivata*), here the movement is not from *mind* to *matter* but from *matter* to *mind* an inward movement. But unlike Western philosophy mind and matter are not separate (*Cartesian dualism*), here ‘mind’ and ‘matter’ are connected through a unifying principal of the supreme spirit *Brahma*. Therefore, the chief episteme of the Upaniṣads is to unravel that unifying principal albeit through varied interpretations.

These narratives portray the King as originators of the theory of *Brahma* or self unlike the earlier literature like the *Śatapatha Brāhṃana* and the Ṛgveda and later Upaniṣads where the *Brahmins* are the originators and propagators of the knowledge of *Brahma* (*Brahmavīdya*). Scholars like Duessen have argued that the theory of *ātman*, emerged as a direct response to the ritualism in the earlier Vedic traditions and the knowledge which was kept secretly among the *Brahmins*, now belonged to the *Kṣatriyas*. Deussen uses the example of King Pravāhaṇa Jaibali’s statement in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāṇḍogya* in claiming that “the *ātman* teaching was taken up and cultivated primarily not in Brahman but Kṣatriya circles” (Duessen 1906, 19). Richard Garbe too commenting on this says,

The significance of these stories is evident . . . It shows that the authors of the elder Upanishads did not try, or did not dare, to veil the situation that was patent in their time, and claim the monistic doctrine of the Brahman-Ātman as an inheritance of their caste . . . To [the ksatriya] caste belongs the credit of clearly recognizing the hollowness of the sacrificial system and the absurdity of its symbolism, and, by opening a new world of ideas, of effecting the great revolution in the intellectual life of ancient India’ (Garbe 1897, 77-78).

This is therefore indicative of the changing political situation of the time, a time when ‘other’ non-Vedic schools (Buddhism, Jainism, Carvaka etc.) were also thriving and developed in opposition to the Vedic ritualism and hence the writers of the Upaniṣads thought it necessary to incorporate this changed political and intellectual climate. Some scholars argue that the teaching of the Ātman, Karma, rebirth etc. is of non-Vedic origin. Killingley, for instance, substantiating this point says “It is commonly asserted that belief in rebirth is not of Āryan origin, it is often attributed to non-Āryan more specifically Dravidian sources” (Killingley 1997, 1). This requires substantial evidence to support the claim about the *āryan*, *non-āryan* influence, but however, what is certain is that the ‘others’ or non-Vedic schools did have tremendous influence on the conception of the ‘self’ in the upaniṣadic and the Brahmanic tradition. Whether in the case of King Ajātaśatru or King Pravāhaṇa, the Kṣatriyas seem to yield not just power but also intellectual influence on the Brahmins. But again these influences only happen through the presence of the Brahmin. Another instance is that of the common occurrence of the Brahmin yielding power over the kṣatriya as is seen in the dialogue between King Janaka and Yajñavalkya.

‘Yajñavalkya’ is the most featured character across the Upaniṣads, he is the most authoritative character in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Upaniṣad. He is also said to be founder of the Yajurveda School<sup>28</sup> and is also said to be the author of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, his school is called the Vājasaneyi<sup>29</sup>. There are doubts regarding the historical veracity of ‘Yajñavalkya’ as a historical person and his authorship of the oeuvre of works attributed to this one person<sup>30</sup>. That apart what is known about ‘Yajñavalkya’ and his personality is that he is male *Brahmin* priest, married, well versed in the Vedas, follows from a line of tradition of teachers (*vaṁśa*) and also is considered an authority on several ritual and philosophical matters, he is as Witzel argues at some places an authority on rituals or ritual specialist, others he is an upaniṣadic thinker and at other places he is a mystic. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* consists of a section called the Yajñavalkyakāṇḍa, in which ‘Yajñavalkya’ debates with eight other interlocutors such as Jāratkārava Ārtabhāga, Bhujyu Lāhyāyani, Ushasta Cākrāyaṇa, Kahola Kaushītakeya, Gārgi Vācakanvī, Uddālaka Āruṇi, and Vidagda Śākalya (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* chapter 3). Chapter 4 is again a debate between king Janaka and Yajñavalkya, which unlike the *Brahmodya* is a private debate with the King, where he discusses about self, and *Brahman*.

King Janaka is the ideal upaniṣadic king and Yajñavalkya is the ideal Brahmin intellectual householder. Black argues how “Yajñavalkya’s presence in Janaka’s court, establishes Janaka as a legitimate rival to the Kings of Kuru-Pañcāla, indicating that Janaka’s relationship with Yajñavalkya is an integral aspect of his power as king” (Black 2012, 121). In continuing with the theme of debate between King (*Kṣatrīyas*) and Priest (*Brahmins*), we now look at the debate between Janaka, the king of Videha and Yajñavalkya. King Janaka is portrayed as an ideal philosopher king, organizing debates between learned *Brahmin* priests, and between himself and the wise learned teacher Yajñavalkya. The two appear together in most debates in the Upaniṣads, this also shows that they shared a mutual respect and friendship for one another. Also the presence of Yajñavalkya in Janaka court, establishes his own authority. The earlier instances (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*) involving debate between the two, shows that Janaka teaches Yajñavalkya and also defeats him in debate (*Brahmodya*) (Black 2012, 106). Even though one gets the impression that both Janaka and Yajñavalkya are equals in debate but as far as philosophical knowledge is concerned Yajñavalkya certainly takes the lead. In fact, in verse 4.4.23 he not only offers his kingdom Videha but also offers himself to and his services to Yajñavalkya. He also makes generous offers every time (one thousand cows, even bulls) Yajñavalkya defeats someone in debate. Black points out that “the major innovation in the Upaniṣadic teaching is that knowledge is increasingly framed for a *Kṣatrīya* audience” (Black 2012, 107).

The dialogue *Bṛhadāranya Upaniṣad* (4.1.1), unlike the earlier verses 3.1.1-3.9.28, Yajñavalkya approaches Janaka, for which the king of Videha asks “What have you come for? Do you desire cattle or do you wish to engage in disputation? He replies “I have come for both, your Majesty”. Again unlike the previous debate, Janaka asks Yajñavalkya to “what others may have told him regarding *Brahman*”, ‘others’ here refer to the other *Brahmins* with whom Yajñavalkya engaged with in debates such as Jitvan Śailini, Udaṅka Śaulbāyana, Barku Vārshṇa, Gardabhīvipīta Bhāradvāja, Satyakāma Jābāla, Vidagdha Śākalya each one giving a partial definition of *Brahma*. For Śailini, “*Brahma*, verily, is speech (*vāc*)”, for Śaulbāyana, “*Brahma* is breath of life (*prāṇa*)”, for Vārshṇa “It is verily sight”, for Bhāradvāja “It is hearing”, for Jābāla, “*Brahma*, verily, is mind” and for Śākalya, “*Brahma*, verily, is heart”. Each of these definitions is dismissed as being only partial definitions and not the complete definition. Every time a Brahmin confronts Yajñavalkya, and their definitions are proved to be inaccurate descriptions of *Brahman* the King Janaka offers

Yajñavalkya one thousands cows, with a bull which is as large as the elephant, but each time Yajñavalkya declines the offer.

In the Second Brāhmaṇa (4.2.1), king Janaka, comes down from his seat and requests Yajñavalkya to instruct him. Yajñavalkya replies: “Just as a king, who undertakes a great expedition would equip himself with a chariot or ship, have you equipped yourself with the hidden teachings. You are so eminent, rich, well versed in the Upaniṣads, so can you tell me where you will go when you leave this world?” For which the king replies that “he does not know”, and asks Yajñavalkya to tell him. In the subsequent verses, Yajñavalkya goes on to explain how this “person” is the one who connects the various body parts (the right eye, the left eye, the heart, the veins (*hīta*)), vital functions such as breath (*prāṇa*), the flow of blood to the heart, etc. to the four directions east, south, west and northern quarters of the cosmos. He then goes on to say about the ‘self’ (*ātman*), that the only thing that can be said is ‘not--, not--’, since the ‘self’ is ungraspable and cannot be grasped, it is unbound, unattached, and indestructible for it cannot be bound, attached or destroyed. Now Janaka says Yajñavalkya, with this you have now reached fearlessness. Janaka satisfied with Yajñavalkya for having made known fearlessness offers both his kingdom (*Videha*) and his services to him. This *Brāhmaṇa* ends here.

The next *Brāhmaṇa* (4.3.1 -4.5.15) is again a debate between king Janaka and Yajñavalkya. When once Janaka and Yajñavalkya were discussing about the Agnihotra<sup>31</sup>, Yajñavalkya granted Janaka a wish, the wish was the freedom to ask any question to him at will and it was granted to Janaka. So this time, King Janaka begins by asking Yajñavalkya a series of question ranging from simple to complex such as “What is the source of light for a person, what is the source of light at sunset, to what is the source of light when there’s no sun, the sun has set, and the fire has gone out etc. Accordingly the answer follows such as sun, moon, fire, speech and finally ends with soul (*ātman*). The next sections then predictably engage with discussing soul, its nature and the conditions of the soul. The section 4.3.17 discuss two conditions of the soul, one of ‘being in this world’ and the second of ‘being in the other world’, and it also describes an intermediate world ‘that of being in sleep’. He explains what happens in sleep and the dream state, how the person becomes the ‘creator’ in the dream state where he re-creates all that of the ‘waking state’, he says, some people say,

That is just his waking state, for whatever things he sees when awake, those too he sees when asleep. [this is not so, for] there [i.e. in sleep] the person is self-illuminated. (Trans. Hume 2003, 4.3.17)

Janaka replies: Noble Sir, I will give you a thousand cows, declare to me what is higher than this for release [from re-incarnation]. Yajñavalkya then explains what happens to a person in deep sleep, he uses several analogies from the natural world to explain the state of the soul in deep sleep, verse 4.3.19 states,

As a falcon, or an eagle, having flown around here in space, becomes wary, folds its wings, and is borne down to its nest, just so this person hastens to that state where, asleep, he desires no desires and sees no dream. (Trans. Hume 2003, 4.3.19)

Continuing in the following manner, he explains how in the deep sleep state there are no desires, no evil and no fear. Desire like they say is the root of all evil, when one has no desires, one has no attachments and one sees no dreams in sleep. The notion of desire and the need to overcome is a universal concern across both Brahmanism and Buddhism. In attempting to define this state of the dreamless sleep Yajñavalkya, argues that this state is like a state where

a father is not a father, a mother is not a mother, the world is not the worlds, the god are not the gods, the Vedas are not the Vedas and the thief is not the thief, a Cāṇḍāla [born to a Śūdra father and Brahmin mother] is not a Cāṇḍāla, a Paulkasa [born to a Śūdra father and a Kṣatriya mother] is not a Paulkasa<sup>32</sup>; a mendicant is not a mendicant; an ascetic not an ascetic...for he is beyond good and evil, beyond all sorrows of the heart (Trans. Hume 2003, 4.3.22).

This passage explains how in a state of deep sleep one is completely devoid of any desires, attachments, relations, identifications etc. Even if there are no vital functions such as seeing, hearing, smelling, speaking, thinking etc. during deep sleep, this does not mean that there is no seer, hearer, smeller, speaker, thinker etc. in this state because of the imperishability of the seer,

smeller, hearer, speaker and thinker. As one can infer these arguments are in support of the permanence of the soul (*ātman*) which exists when a person is in deep sleep, it in fact persists in all states of consciousness (waking, dream, deep sleep etc.).

Therefore, the ultimate principle *Brahman* is like

An ocean, a seer alone without duality, becomes he whose world is  
Brahma, O King! (Trans. Hume 2003, 4.3.32)

Yajñavalkya, hence, proposing the concept of ‘non-duality’ which is the central theme on which the *Advaita Vedānta* school associated with *Śaṅkarācārya* was based. As one moves towards higher levels of abstractions, the notion of an ideal Brahminical selfhood as represented through characters like Yajñavalkya, Uddālaka Āruṇī now becomes equated with universal metaphysical notion such as *Brahman*.

The next sections speak of the soul at death and the process of its release, verse 4.4.7 says

When are liberated all  
The desires that lodge in one’s heart,  
Then a mortal becomes immortal!  
Therein he reaches Brahma! (Trans. Hume 2003, 4.4.7)

Just as a snake which is dead on an anthill, dead cast off, even so lies the body of a dead person, but the immortal *prāṇa* of the dead person is Brahma indeed, is light indeed. This section ends with king Janaka offering both his kingdom Videha and himself as a slave to Yajñavalkya after having listened to how the ‘soul’ which is released becomes one with *Brahman*. There certain common motifs or recurring themes underlying these discussions between Yajñavalkya and King Janaka, whether be it a public debate between Yajñavalkya and other *Brahmins* in the court of Janaka or the private debate with King Janaka. A few of these motifs are listed below:

- The portrayal of Yajñavalkya as the most learned *Brahmin* in the court of Janaka, he is the undefeated hero of the upanisads. Even between him and King Janaka an equally competent opponent it is he who always wins. There are also passages where it states explicitly that “*Brahmahood* is the source of *ksatrahood* and therefore even if the king attains supremacy, he finally rests on Brahminhood as his own source”.

- These verses from the *Bṛhadāranya* and others show how religion, politics came together serving well those involved in it. The kings in the upanisads offers generously to the *Brahmins*, king Janaka throughout the debates with Yajñavalkya is seen to offer a “thousand cows” in turn for his knowledge and method of performance of various rituals, such as *mitrāvindā*, a kind of vegetal oblation, and for instructing about the *agnihotra* (twice daily milk offering) (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.3.1.2). He offers one thousand cows in addition to hundred horses, he also offers one thousand cows in another instance every time he beats another *Brahmin* opponent in the debate. In return he blesses the king with boons. Even when the roles are reversed, where the king is the one who is the teacher, he still pays the *Brahmin* for being the student.
- Also, in these debates we find a *Kṣatriya* audience, *Brahmin* speaker or speakers.
- Unlike later texts which prescribe a monistic (*sannyasa*) life for those who seek to follow a spiritual path or are in search of knowledge of the ultimate reality (a person from *Brahmacarya* (student life) can enter directly into *sannyasa*), in the upanisads specially the early upanisads a person in the householder (*Grihasta*) stage of life is allowed to follow the spiritual path and seek *Brahmajñāna* and is also considered an ideal candidate for the knowledge of *Brahman*. For instance, Yajñavalkya himself is married with two wives (*Maitreyī* and *Kātyāyanī*) and is presented as the most prominent character in the Upaniṣads, he is not only an authority on how to conduct rituals but also an expert on esoteric notions. Upaniṣads speak about the importance of being married, procreation, having children specially a male child along with seeking spiritual wisdom.

### 3.14 Neti-Neti a method of defining *ātman*:

Most of the definitions of *ātman* in the *Bṛhadāranya* Upaniṣad as well as the other Upaniṣads define *Brahman* primarily through a method of negative attribution. *Ātman* is defined as, “This self (*ātman*) is not this, not this (*neti neti*). It is ungraspable, as it cannot be grasped. It is indestructible, as it cannot be destroyed. It cannot be clung to, for it does not cling. It is unbound, not trembling, not able to be harmed” (*BṛhU* 4.2.4)<sup>33</sup>. Similarly, in dialogue *BṛhU* 4.5 with wife *Maitreyī*, Yajñavalkya imparts a similar definition where he defines *ātman* in the negative. This method of negation (*Neti-neti*) became the central method in Advaita Vedanta, Yoga and other schools for defining metaphysical notions more specifically of *ātman* and *Brahman* also a method used in

Greek philosophy called *apophatic theology* to define notions of God, Good etc. The *aphophasis* or negative doctrine is often associated with mysticism, and mysticism focuses on individual experience of the divine reality a kind of an extra perceptual unmediated experience. *Ātman*, *Brahman*, Divine etc are considered notions which are beyond description and if attempted to describe that might be false and they are essentially pre-conceptual, a more primary kind of experience, which is both inexpressible and undefinable. This also reflects the limits of language in describing these divine experiences and metaphysical entities, but unlike Wittgenstein, who argues that “what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence”, these early Indian thinkers did not pass over in silence that which could not be described instead used negative logic (*neti neti*) and attributions to define metaphysical notions such as *Ātman* and *Brahman*. Śāṅkarācārya uses the method of negation extensively not only to describe *Brahman*, but also to eliminate contradictions, it is believed that most of the *Mahāvākyas* such as

*Aham Brahmāsmi* - I am *Brahman* (*Bṛhadāranya Upaniṣad*,1.4.10)

*Ayam ātmā Brahma* – this very self is *Brahman* (*Mandukya Upaniṣad*, 1.2)

*Prajñānam Brahma* – Knowledge is *Brahman* (*Aitreya Upaniṣad*, 3.3)

*Tat Tvam Asi* – That thou art (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.8.7)

All are arrived at through the method of negation or elimination. The uncovering or discovering of reality requires a negation of this world of *appearance*, the search for ultimate reality begins with the method of negating things of the physical world (Sweet 2006, 151). This method has its roots in the early Upaniṣads and as already mentioned is not unique to Indian philosophy but used in the other older traditions like the Greek etc. It is important to note that this method (*neti neti*) presupposes an ‘experiential self’, which is more primary and is not a completely abstract notion but its basis is ‘experience’ (*anubhāva*). Indian philosophy is reason rooted in experience. This experience should be distinguished from ordinary conscious experience, this is based on the experience of the Divine or mystical experience which are essentially religious experiences. In statements like ‘*Prajñānam Brahma*’, ‘knowledge’ is equated with ‘experience’, both ‘reason’ and ‘experience’ are used synonymously, unlike Western Philosophy, which privileges either ‘reason’ or ‘experience’ but never both.

In continuing with the various social contexts in the early Upaniṣads, the next significant relation between ‘self’ and ‘others’ is the social relation is the one between ‘teachers’ and ‘students’. Śāṅḍilya, Uddālaka Āruṇi are the prototypical teachers and students are Naciketas, Śvetaketu etc. The purpose of the teacher-student connection in the Upaniṣads is twofold, one is to link each teacher with a specific doctrine or teaching and second, from the student’s perspective to indicate the continuation of the tradition (*vamśa*) with regards to a specific teacher. According to Black, many of these characters are not specific to the Upaniṣads but appear earlier in the Brāhmaṇas, in the Brāhmaṇas begins

the idea of linking specific teachings or ideas to individual students or teachers, indicating that sacrificial knowledge begins to be authorized through a connection to specific individuals. By the time of the Upaniṣads these individuals not only appear as authoritative names but are also represented as literary characters in extended narrative scenes. (Black 2012, 44).

Students and teachers engage in discourses on the self and different teachers offer different explanations about the theory of self. Śāṅḍilya identifies *ātman* with *Brahman*, Uddālaka Āruṇi identifies *ātman* with the fundamental essence of life etc.

### **3.15 Śāṅḍilya -Vidyā: Individual Soul identical with infinite Brahma**

Śāṅḍilya is an important figure in many of the early Brāhmaṇas and is said to be the composer of Brāhmaṇas six to ten. He is also the first teacher in the Upaniṣads and not a ritualist. In the earlier Upaniṣads he appears three or four times but does not feature in any dialogue. He is mentioned in the genealogical lists of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, he is mentioned as the teacher who is connected with the discourse of *ātman*, *Brahman* doctrine. The fourteenth khaṇḍa of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, which also occurs in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (10.6.3) constitutes what is called the ‘doctrine’ or the doctrine of Śāṅḍilya. This doctrine establishing an equivalence relation between the individual soul and the infinite Brahma became the basis for the dominant monistic philosophy of the later medieval and modern period. It is

important to remember that this is only one of the many interpretations of the *ātman-Brahman* doctrine.

According to the Śāṅḍilya-Vidyā, in *Chāndogya* 3.14.1

Verily, this whole world is Brahma. Tranquil, let one worship it as that from which he came forth, as to that into which he will be dissolved, as that in which he breathes. <sup>34</sup> (Trans. Hume 2003, 208)

This thought is subsequently developed by Śāṅkarācārya in his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtra* and his advaita philosophy<sup>35</sup>. The Soul is then compared in the subsequent verses to various entities starting from the smallest i.e. a grain of rice, or a mustard seed to the largest such as the earth, the atmosphere, and the sky and even greater than all the three worlds. Brereton, explains how Śāṅḍilya uses extremities to define reality through the use of paradox, he says,

The self is the most intimate part of a person, the very center of one's being, and therefore it is the smallest of the small. Yet, at the same time, it surpasses everything. The paradox thus undercuts any exclusion or any separation of an individual from the rest of the world, for there is nothing beyond the self (1990, 130).

From external entities, Śāṅḍilya then moves to the internal, comparing the Soul which lies within the heart to Brahma, and further says it is this Brahma into which one departs into<sup>36</sup>. The underlying idea of equating *ātman* and *Brahman* is that through knowledge of the universe one can come to know one's self. Although this (equating *ātman* with *Brahman*) is presented as the central teaching of the Upaniṣads, as repeatedly mentioned earlier this just one interpretation, Uddālaka Āruṇi for instance, who speaks at length about the 'self' (*ātman*) never mentions Brahma, or as we have seen sections in *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (1.6.3) where *ātman* is equated with *uktha* (verses of the Ṛgveda), with *sāman* (chants of the Sāmaveda), to speech (*BrhU* 4.1-2), to breath (*prāṇa*) etc. Therefore, there are verses where there is no direct correlation between *ātman* and *Brahman*, '*Brahman*' is like any other subject being discussed but the *ātman* theory is more fundamental. This suggests that the *Brahman* notion was a later development than the '*ātman*' theory it was probably added to construct an idea of the universal or as Hume (Trans. Hume 2003,

19) describes the 'universal ground of all beings' was the development in upaniṣadic thought from *ātman* to the *Brahman* theory. To highlight or privilege a particular interpretation could be as Black suggests, “a way of bestowing a particular teaching with specific significance” (Black 2012, 32). Brereton argues that in the Upaniṣads, “*Brahman* remains an open concept”, he further states that “*Brahman* is the designation given to whatever principle or power a sage believes to be behind the world, to make it explicable” (1990, 118). Not just Śaṅkara, but many later scholars, like Deussen, Radhakrishnan and others believed this *ātman-Brahman* equivalence to be the most important idea issuing forth from the Upaniṣads. Black, argues that the *ātman-Brahman* equivalence has been overemphasized which has taken away from other sections of the texts (Black 2012, 33) . Olivelle also echoes these concerns about overemphasizing the *ātman-Brahman* doctrine and that it is incorrect to assume that all of the purpose of the Upaniṣads is enunciate this simple truth. In the Upaniṣads adds Olivelle there’s a diversity of goals pursued by various authors for a variety of reasons some for food, power, fame, a happy after life, etc. (Olivelle 1998, lvi) and therefore it would be unjust to treat the Upaniṣads as some monolithic text where everyone is talking about the same thing.

Another important teacher in the Upaniṣads is Uddālaka Āruni, and his instruction to his son Śvetaketu Āruṇeya speaks about *ātman* as the common essence of all things. Uddālaka makes use of a number of metaphors of the natural world and the natural processes to show that the *ātman* is the essence of all things. He compares the *ātman*, which is the essence of all things to nectar, which despite being gathered from different trees and flowers is combined into a homogenous whole. The most important teaching of Uddālaka to his son is *Tat Tvam Asi*, which again is interpreted differently by different authors. Śaṅkara takes *Tat Tvam Asi* (translated as ‘You are that’) to refer to the identity between *ātman* and *Brahman*. But modern scholars like Brereton (1986) have argued that *Tat* (that) is neuter and therefore cannot correspond to *tvam* (which is a masculine pronoun). Rather ‘*tat*’ should be read as “that is how you are”, this meaning is understood when read within the context of the dialogue between Son and Father. Uddālaka uses *Tat Tvam Asi* to explain to Śvetaketu that he is made of the same essence as this entire natural world. Another famous analogy which Uddālaka uses to teach his son how *ātman* permeates everything is to “ask Śvetaketu to put a chunk of salt into water” and observe its effects. The next day Śvetaketu could not find salt in the water, because the salt had completely permeated the water and the water had turned salty.

From this he learns that the ‘self’ or ‘*ātman*’ is of the same nature from his father, that it permeates the entire body although it is not immediately observable to the senses.

The method used by Uddālaka Āruni and Śāṅḍilya are totally different in the enquiry into the nature and definition of ‘self’ (*ātman*) and their results are also different. Uddālaka Āruni uses the method of abstraction and paradox to arrive at an equation for the ‘self’, while Śāṅḍilya uses natural observable phenomena to teach the doctrine of the ‘*ātman*’ not equation is made to *Brahman*. Romila Thapar further illustrates this point when she argues that in the Upaniṣads, knowledge was established in different ways and this she argues can be seen in the shift from revelation based on ritualism to the possibility of knowledge derived through intuition, observation and knowledge (Thapar 1994, 307). Here, I would like to argue that the shift was on account of the influence of the ‘other’ Śramanic traditions such as Buddhism, Jainism, ājīvīkas, Carvākas etc. who had already questioned the idea of revelation, scriptural authority (*śabda pramāṇa*) and the predominance of Vedic ritualism. The shift from ritualism towards rationality was not a complete transition, the importance of ritualism was maintained although search for knowledge of absolute truth (*Brahman*) was the ultimate purpose through the Upaniṣads.

The student-teacher relation not just characterizes specific teachings which particular teachers pass on to their students in order of their respective lineages but are representative of important social relations. These relations characterized by practices such as *upanayana*, an initiation ceremony where one mostly *Brahmin*, enters the life of a Vedic student (*Brahmacārin*). A description of this ceremony is featured in the dialogues between students and teachers in the early Upaniṣads. In the ceremony the student approaches the teacher by asking “I have come for *Brahmacārya*”, the teacher then asks the student his name, and then after some prayers he is initiated into the world of a *Brahmacārin*. Another feature already discussed is to assign specific doctrines to specific teachers and students to make them as authoritative agents possessing that particular knowledge. Possessing Knowledge and passing it on is connected to authority giving rise to power. The dialogues connect with specific modes of conduct and behavior between teacher and student, in some cases, the teacher’s unwillingness to impart knowledge to even the initiated students or sometimes giving only half answers. A case in point is that of the dialogue between Indra and Virocana in the *Chāndogya* Upaniṣad (8.7.12). In most cases the initiation into a Vedic student life is essentially for a *Brahmin* i.e. a *brahmin* by birth, but in some cases one may be a *Brahmin* not

because of his birth but because of possessing knowledge. Uddālaka Āruni makes a distinction between those who are *Brahmins* merely by birth and those who have earned their status by means of their knowledge (*Brahmabandhu*) (*Chāndogya* 6.1.1).

These distinctions suggests that in the Upaniṣads as already argued is a conception of a true *Brahman* or an ideal and one of the characters of a true Brahmana is to not just be one by birth but by possessing knowledge, so both being born brahmin by birth and possessing knowledge of the Vedas are both necessary conditions for a true brahmin, also this ideal person is not a ritualist as seen in *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Ṛgveda* instead he is a possessor and transmitter of knowledge. There are several verses where the knowledge obtained by the student through Vedic education is deemed as incomplete for instance, Śvetaketu is a *Brahmacārin* for twelve years, learned in all three Vedas but ignorant in the type of knowledge that is characteristic of the upaniṣadic teaching and which he learns from his father Uddālaka Āruni. Similarly, Nārada in his dialogue with Sanatkumāra also similarly declares that he has learned all three Vedas, has knowledge of the arts, politics etc. but nothing matters because he has no knowledge of the doctrine of *ātman*. Just like how there's an idea of a true *Brahman*, so also is an idea of a true teacher and student. The traditional Vedic knowledge is not completely rejected but rather modified by taking into account the critiques of the 'others' as well as their own criticisms against standard Vedic practices and knowledge of the time. The idea of the *Brahmin* 'self' is not fixed but constantly evolving or rather in the process of becoming. This process cannot be separated from the conception of the metaphysical and ontological notions of the 'self'. The metaphysical and the material aspects of the 'self' are connected. So, to ignore the material aspects of the Brahmin selfhood while over emphasizing on the metaphysical notions of 'self' would be to disregard an essential aspect of the Brahmin selfhood.

The next social group in the Upaniṣads is the Brahmins vs. the Brahmins. The idea of having a *Brahmodya* between the Brahmins is to establish authority, status among their own social group. These debates are often competitive and aggressive unlike the dialogues between student and teachers, these debates had a lot at stake for the competitors involved and exposed the political rivalry among the competitors. The Kings and *Kṣatriyas*, were not isolated from these events *Brahmodya*, in fact they organized these very events and there was a lot at stake for the Kings too. A King who had in his court an unbeatable debater or competitor or a court priest was that much

more powerful like King Janaka and Yajñavalkya both presented as an ideal King and an Ideal *Brahmin*. In the Upaniṣads we see two types of *Brahmodya* 1. Private debates that are competition between two Priests 2. Public debates held among several Priests and held in the presence of the King in his court. These competitions in addition to having a lot at stake, also promised a lot to be gained in terms of material gains. If these events were real is speculative but what is established is that debates or competition formed an essential aspect or practice associated with upaniṣadic teaching. These debates *Brahmodya*, outline the rules and tactics and as Black argues is an indispensable activity for *Brahmins* to use their knowledge in the social world (Black 2012, 61). The Upaniṣadic debates are considered “unrehearsed” and “improvised”, in it evolves the process of proper debating, the methods etc. and these nothing are not fixed but happens through the process of debate itself.

An example of a private debate is between Uddālaka Āruṇi and Śauceya Prācīnayogya in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (ŚB 11.5.3.1-13) regarding the *agnihotra* (twice-daily milk offering). Śauceya goes on to ask Uddālaka, a number of questions regarding specific ritual actions. But in the Upaniṣads, the question is not about the method of conducting rituals but acquiring knowledge of the ‘self’. Yajñavalkya unlike Uddālaka Āruṇi, is mostly associated with public debates in front of an audience and in the presence of a King. Yajñavalkya is known for his debating tactics which he uses skillfully depending on the kind of opponent he is dealing with in the *brahmodya* and this way he establishes his superiority. ‘Yajñavalkya’ is the most featured character across the Upaniṣads, he is the most authoritative character in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Upaniṣad and he is also said to be founder of the Yajurveda School<sup>37</sup> and the author of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, his school is called the *Vājasaneyi*<sup>38</sup>. There are doubts regarding the historical veracity of ‘Yajñavalkya’ as a historical person and his authorship of the oeuvre of works attributed to this one person<sup>39</sup>. According to Witzel, at some places Yajñavalkya is an authority on rituals or ritual specialist, others he is an upaniṣadic thinker and at other places he is a mystic. In the *BṛhU*, he is featured in two *Brahmodaya*’s both of which are carried out in the court of King Janaka. Here, we look at the debate between Yajñavalkya and seven other *Brahmins* of Kurupañcāla in the court of King Janaka. Yajñavalkya does not debate with his opponents directly, but rather offers counter arguments to the claims made by the others through a retelling of their arguments by King Janaka. Black, draws attention to a similar kind of debate in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (DN2) where King

Ajātasattu presents to the Buddha the views of six of his rival (Black 2012, 70). In Bṛhadāranyaka, the views of the six Brahmins are summarized by King Janaka and then each one refuted by Yajñavalkya.

### 3.16 Yajñavalkya and his six interlocutors: *Brahmodya* in King Janaka's court

Yajñavalkya's philosophical tournament is not just between specific individuals, but also between individuals representing a specific school. Yajñavalkya's opponents are all from the same region the western Kurupañcāla region and belong to either the Ṛgvedic or Black Yajurvedic School, while he himself belonged to the *Vājasaneyi* or the White Yajurveda School. This debate is important for the following reasons: firstly, it is representative of a typical *Brahmodya*, secondly it has social and political implications, thirdly, the rules and tactics of the debate emerge and fourthly it represents a movement away from traditional Vedic ritualism towards philosophizing. Yajñavalkya's first opponent is the hotṛ priest Aśvala, who is a court priest of king Janaka. He is from the Āśvalāyana family which is credited with composing a number of Vedic texts such as Āśvalāyana Gṛyasūtra and Āśvalāyana Śrautasūtra. Another opponent is Kahola Kauṣītakeya, who is believed to be the author of *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* and *Kauṣītaki Āraṇyaka* and his last opponent Vidagdha Śākalya is said to authored *Padāpaṭha* which is the *Ṛgveda* edited in its final form as we have today (Black 2012, 71). Hence, many of Yajñavalkya's opponents were well known in their own rights and were representing an older Vedic ritualist tradition and were composers of Vedic texts. So, the idea of establishing Yajñavalkya as the undefeated, upaniṣadic sage, priest and householder should be seen as a break away from older Vedic tradition and customs. These same characters appears in the *Ṛgveda* and the older *Brāhmaṇas*, but presented differently in the Upaniṣads in different contexts, some characters given more authority and status while others authority has been reduced or taken away because of their ignorance about the hidden teaching of the Upaniṣads.

Uddālaka Āruṇi interestingly another major opponent, who is also a formidable teacher, often seen debating Yajñavalkya in various contexts across the Upaniṣads. In fact, in the genealogy of teachers in the *BṛhU*, Uddālaka Āruṇi is shown to be the teacher of Yajñavalkya. The six *Brahmin* interlocutors of Yajñavalkya are Jitvan Śailini, Udañka Śaulbāyana, Barku Vārshṇa, Gardabhīvipīta Bhāradvāja, Satyakāma Jābāla, and lastly, Vidagdha Śākalya. Yajñavalkya

counters each interlocutor's definition of *Brahman*, whom he does not confront directly but whose views are echoed by Janaka. For Jitvan Śailini, *Brahman* is speech, Udañka Śaulbāyana *Brahman* is breath of life (*prāṇa*), for Barku Vārshṇa *Brahman* is sight, for Gardabhīvipīta Bhāradvāja *Brahman* is hearing, for Satyakāma Jābāla *Brahman* is mind, and for Vidagdha Śākalya *Brahman* is heart. For each one of the definitions Yajñavalkya asks what is its seat and support, for instance, if *Brahman* is speech, then what is its basis. The tactic used is to answer a question by asking another question this is a repeated motif in the Upaniṣads. For each response dismissing the earlier definitions, Janaka offers "one thousand cows with a bull as large as an elephant", Yajñavalkya, replies "My father thought that without having instructed one should not accept". After dismissing each of the interlocutor's definition as insufficient, then Yajñavalkya gives instructions on the true definition of *Brahman*, for which the King again makes his generous offering and is accepted by Yajñavalkya (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 4.2.1-4.2.2).

Scholars have argued that Yajñavalkya's views in the Upaniṣads are as diverse as the Upaniṣads themselves, although he's been portrayed as famous, his authority conclusive, but at many places his views are doubted, challenged and even rebuked (Fiser 1984, 56-87). Some of the debates are inconclusive and Yajñavalkya does not always win, but rather claims his authority on how he makes his arguments, how he employs other means such as humor, insult and intimidation to silence his opponents (Black 2012, 76). There are instances when Yajñavalkya even refuses to answer questions and is almost reluctant. For instance, in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 3.2.13, Yajñavalkya in a conversation with Ārtabhāga, throughout Yajñavalkya is reluctant to answer him, as a final question Ārtabhāga asks Yajñavalkya

when a man dies, when his voice goes into fire, his breath into wind, his eye into the sun, his mind into the moon, his hearing into the quarters of heaven, his body into the earth, his soul (*ātman*) into space, the hairs of his head into the plants, the hairs of his body into the trees, and his blood and semen are placed in water, what then becomes of this person (*puruṣa*)?<sup>40</sup> (Trans. Hume 2003, 110) .

Yajñavalkya to this does not answer but says "Ārtabhāga my dear, take my hand. We two only will know of this. This is not for us two [to speak of] in public"<sup>41</sup> (Trans. Hume 2003, 110). There

could be several reasons behind this gesture by Yajñavalkya, it could be that he himself is unsure and does not want to discuss this matter in public instead to prefer a private conversation, or that by taking his hand would imply that he would want to initiate Ārtabhāga as a student or is the answer so secretive that it cannot be discussed in public. Although, most of these debates (*Brahmodya*) happen in public there upaniṣadic teachings are not for everybody, it is secretive in its content it is elite knowledge not for everybody. There is this contradiction or paradox as to why this very secretive, mystical knowledge should be discussed within a public space such as a king's court in front of others in the first place isn't it contradicting its own purpose. Is it that there are certain doctrines which can be revealed in public while others only in private? These questions require more in depth analysis.

Another recurring motif also discussed briefly in the previous chapter during the *Brahmodya* is the head shattering episode. In some cases when the opponent loses he becomes the victor's student while at other times he even loses his life. This normally occurs in exchanges between *Brahmins* and rival *Brahmins* and not in the other two cases between teachers and students or between *Kṣatriyas* and *Brahmins*. The 'head shattering' is used to silence one's opponents, sometimes it's just used as warning and at others a person could in reality lose his life as happened with Vidagdha Śākalya (Inslar 1989-90, 114-15). Another common occurrence in these philosophical tournaments is acquiring material gains through debates where the king offers large amounts of cattle, gold and other luxuries including even his entire kingdom in exchange for acquiring knowledge of *Brahman*. In every *Brahmodya* there's material gains and also the risk of losing everything even your life.

The final social group is the 'women' in the Upaniṣads and their relation with the *Brahmin* males. Unlike later Sanskrit literature and texts, 'women' play an important role in the Upaniṣads. Gender is an important aspect of the Upaniṣads, it effects why certain characters make certain kinds of claims and their relation with the others. Women are used for specific purposes and in specific contexts in the Upaniṣads. Although the Upaniṣadic knowledge is universal making it available for everyone, but it is not the case, there are specific criteria and conditions need to be fulfilled for acquiring this knowledge and as Black argues "many of the teachings present an explicitly male construction of *ātman* and offer a soteriology that links a man's ability to achieve immortality to securing male children" (Black 2012, 133). The description and portrayal of women in the

Upaniṣads has an impact on the construction of the male subjectivity. The representation of women as wives and procreative bodies' serves to reinforce the ideal male Brahmin householder (Black 2012, 134) . Below are some dialogues featuring women and *Brahmin* males and representing the fourth important social group in the Upaniṣads.

### 3.17 Gārgī Vācakovā and Yajñavalkya

This is another court scene (*Brahmodya*) that takes place in the court of king Janaka, Gārgī Vācakovā is one of the several opponents of Yajñavalkya. She is the most prominent not only because she is the only women among several competing *Brahmin* men, and also because she is shown to challenge Yajñavalkya, not once but twice. Janaka promises one thousand cows, with ten pieces of gold coins tied to its horn to whichever Kuru Pañcala *Brahmins* that had come to his kingdom to participate in the philosophical tournament. Many scholars believe that the idea of putting a female protagonist such as Gārgī Vācakovā was a deliberate literary device.<sup>42</sup> Gārgī is one of the eight competitors of Yajñavalkya. In *Bṛhadāranyaka* 3.6.1, Gārgī unlike earlier interlocutors, begins by opening the debate by asking the first question, displaying her knowledge and confidence in comparison with the other *Brahmins*. She asks: Yajñavalkya since all the world is woven back and forth on water, then on what is water woven?<sup>43</sup> The first half of the question is not a question and is based on what the ancients believed that all of creation began from water (*Ṛgveda* Book 10:29), but the second half is.

Yajñavalkya replies: “water is woven on air”

Gārgī Vācakovā asks: then what is air woven on?

As one can notice, the method of questioning follows a regressive pattern resulting in an indefinite loop. Is it that Gārgī, was well aware of this method leading to infinite regression and was just provoking Yajñavalkya, and if then was she honest seeker or was she intent on defeating Yajñavalkya is open for debate. It is also the first time this method is used. Continuing with the debate,

Yajñavalkya replies: “on the atmosphere-worlds”

Gārgī Vācakovā asks: then what is the atmosphere-world woven?

Yajñavalkya replies: “on the worlds of the *Gandharvas*”

This pattern continues and Yajñavalkya teachings follow a sequence, there is a transition from the cosmological elements used in the earlier debates (sun, moon etc.) to the divine worlds such as world of the Gandharvas<sup>44</sup> (*Gandharvalokāḥ*), world of the sun (*ādityalokāḥ*), world of the moon (*candralokāḥ*), world of the stars (*nakṣatralokāḥ*), world of Indra (*indralokāḥ*), world of Prajāpati (*Prajāpatilokāḥ*) and then finally the world of *Brahman* (*Brahmalokāḥ*). This does not end here, since, Gārgī again questions as to “on what is the world of *Brahma* woven?” for which Yajñavalkya either does not have an answer or does not want to answer. Yajñavalkya responds: “Gārgī do not question too much, lest your head will be shattered”, upon which she becomes silent and Uddālaka Āruṇi takes up the challenge from there. ‘Shattering of the head’ could mean two things one where one opponent accuses the other of not knowing answers to their own questions and second when one concedes to the superiority of the other, and offers firewood requesting to be the student of the opponent (Fiser 1984, 97-98). But in this instance between Yajñavalkya and Gārgī, it seems to be the first case where Yajñavalkya accuses Gārgī, of asking too many questions for which she herself has no answer. Now a debate begins between Uddālaka Āruṇi and Yajñavalkya, Āruṇi questions him about the inner controller. Yajñavalkya then explains how the inner controller is the person who resides in the earth, the waters, the fire, the atmosphere, the wind, sky, sun, heaven, moon, star, space etc. then he moves on from the cosmological aspects to explaining the inner controller in terms of material existence (*adhi-bhūta*) such as breath, speech, eyes, ears, mind, skin etc.. He ultimately arrives at the following explanation. In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (3.8.23), Yajñavalkya declares

He is the unseen Seer, the unheard Hearer, the unthought thinker, the ununderstood understander. Other than He there is no seer. Other than He there is no hearer. Other than He there is no thinker. Other than He there is no understander. He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. (Trans. Hume 2003, 3.8.23)

At this point Uddālaka Āruṇi becomes silent and the stage is set for a second round of conversation between Gārgī and Yajñavalkya. Gārgī this time too initiates the debate, but this time instead of directly addressing Yajñavalkya, she addresses the audience gathered there. She says: ‘Oh venerable Brahmins, I will ask Yajñavalkya two questions and if he answers me then there will be no one who here will surpass him in discussions about *Brahman* (Olivelle 1998, 89).’ Olivelle

notes that Gārgī uses the metaphor “much like a fierce warrior, stringing his unstrung bow, taking two deadly arrows would rise to the challenge; give me answers for my questions” (1998, 91). She then asks the same question twice: “The things above the sky, as well as those things people here refer to as past, present, future – on what are all these things woven back and forth?” (1998, 91) The first time Yajñavalkya replies that they are all woven into space, for which Gārgī, without being directly dismissive very sarcastically says, you have answered this question for me, but now get ready for the second. She then repeats the same question, for which she gets the same reply, now she uses the method she used earlier and asks “so what then is this space woven to?” (Olivelle 1998, 91) Yajñavalkya’s answer is the *imperishable* (*akśara*), he then goes on to explain the *imperishable*, its qualities (*BrhU* 3.8.9). Yajñavalkya says: Is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker, the ununderstood understander. Other than it is naught that sees. Other than it is the naught that hears. Other than it is the naught than thinks. Other than it is the naught that understands. Across this imperishable is the space woven. This response is similar to the one that Yajñavalkya offers to Uddālaka Āruṇi while describing the inner controller, after having given an explanation about the *Imperishable*, Gārgī, is satisfied and proclaims that nobody can defeat him in discussions about *Brahman*.

But the debate does not end here, even after Gārgī declares Yajñavalkya to be unbeatable, one another Brahmin Vidagda Śākalya comes forward to challenge him, which results in Śākalya losing his life, with his head cut off. Here ‘head shattered’ meant that his head would actually be cut off and it was not just a warning and it also says that the robbers carried away his bones thinking it was something else. This shows there was a lot at stake for the participants in these debates, they even risked losing their life.

In the first debate between *Yajñavalkya* and *Gārgī*, the debate stops abruptly when *Gārgī* questions what is beyond *Brahman*, and in the second there is no mention of *Brahman*, but instead the term “imperishable” (*akśara*) is used. In the first mode of questioning it leads to a kind of infinite regress and therefore, to prevent it from leading to nowhere, it is stopped abruptly. Also, with each one of these attempted definitions of the Soul (*ātman*) or *Brahman* it is shown that it is something which is beyond description or definition. It is something which is unspeakable but it not very clear whether it is something which can only be experienced (*anubhāva*) a kind of a spiritual experience. It is this aspect which later developed by the Vedāntins. Going back to the characters, even though

*Gārgī* seems to be worthy opponent in comparison to even the other male counterparts, she is still subordinated to the ideal *Brahmin* male who is represented in the character of Yajñavalkya. On one hand, there is the metaphysical, absolute, universal notion of the *ātman* and *brahman*, on the other, there are these individual selves located in particular social context speaking about the universal self to others. I would like to argue that the particular ideal Brahmin male subjectivity which emerges in the Upaniṣads is not separate from the universal that is being posited.

### 3.18 Yajñavalkya and Maitreyī

In another context, Yajñavalkya sets off for the next stage (*sannyasa*) in life leaving behind his wives Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī. Maitreyī is portrayed as the more philosophical one; she is called the *Brahmā vādinī*, or seeker of sacred knowledge of *Brahman*, while Kātyāyanī is just a wife and has just women’s knowledge (*tarhi*). There are several debates between Yajñavalkya and Maitreyī (*Brhadāranyaka* Upaniṣad 2.4.1-14, 4.5.1-15). Yajñavalkya before commencing onto the next stage of his life, asks Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī, what is that they would want as settlement before I leave? Maitreyī being the more intellectual, and philosophical wife says: “If Sir, this whole world filled with wealth were mine, would I now thereby be immortal? Yajñavalkya replies “no no, as the life of the rich so will be yours too but immortality cannot be gained through wealth” (Trans. Hume 2003, 98). Maitreyī then asks, for what then is this wealth of use to me, tell me what you know sir about immortality? This endears her to him, he thereupon says, ‘oh dear (*priyā*), come, sit down, I’ll explain it to you’, he then goes to explain how nothing is more dear than the Soul (*Ātman*), not even wealth, *Brahmanhood*, *Kṣatrahood*, not the love of worlds, or Gods, or beings none of the things in this world are if it were not for the *Soul*. He declares, “Just as when a drum is being beaten, it is not possible to grasp the external sounds, but by grasping the drum or the beater of the drum the sound is grasped”<sup>45</sup> (Trans. Hume 2003, 2.4.7). The most important description of this section is that of the analogy of a lump of salt dissolving in water and wherever one takes that water is salty, so also this Being is infinite, limitless, a mass of knowledge (*vijñāna-ghana*)<sup>46</sup>. There is slight variation here between this *Brāhmaṇa* and the fifth, the context is the same and its contents also similar. While explaining about the Soul to Maitreyī, Yajñavalkya states that “after death there is no consciousness”<sup>47</sup> (Trans. Hume 2003, 2.4.13), after this *Maitreyī* remarks, “you have bewildered me, after death there is no consciousness?”<sup>48</sup> This section ends

here, with Yajñavalkya not providing a direct answer to Maitreyī choosing instead to talk about non-duality claiming that it is “duality” (*dvaita*) that sees differences.

In section 4.5, Yajñavalkya takes the explanation a little further, he says “that the Soul (*Ātman*) is ‘not this, not that’ (*neti, neti*), it is unseizable, indestructible for it cannot be seized, destructed etc with this he says Maitreyī, ‘I have instructed you on *immortality*’ and then departs” (Trans. Hume 2003, 2.4.13). It is important to note here that unlike elsewhere where the son is the ideal candidate for transmission of knowledge from the father, Yajñavalkya chooses a female instead of a male because he does not have a son, which is a departure from tradition and slightly unorthodox. Choosing of a female instead of a male for transmission of knowledge should be seen in the context of arguments and criticisms raised by unorthodox schools such as *Buddhism* with regards to inclusion of women in spiritual pursuits and attaining liberation. Since the early Buddhists and the upaniṣadic seers shared more or less the same time frame (4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC)<sup>49</sup>, the composers of the Upaniṣads could have incorporated some of those concerns into their own traditions, Yajñavalkya himself in the Upaniṣads makes a lot of claims which goes against the earlier Vedic ritualist tradition, chooses a women instead of a man for transmission of knowledge of *Brahman* all these make him a kind of rebel or unorthodox breaking away from tradition, yet he is portrayed as the ideal *Brahmin* male. The reasons as been repeatedly suggested is that the upaniṣadic composers were well aware of the current debates and criticisms at the time within their traditions as well as were influenced by developments in other *Śramanic* traditions such as Buddhism, Jainism etc. Going back to the dialogue between Yajñavalkya and his wife Maitreyī, there is no attention paid to the other wife Kātyāyanī. There is no mention of a conversation with her, the other wife it is believed that when asked about what she wanted, she chose wealth over *Brahmajñāna* and immortality. But she is an ideal wife who performs her everyday duties, arranges for the prayers to be performed by her husband etc. In all these stories there are two oppositional characters such as Yajñavalkya (enigmatic, innovative) and Satyakāma (typical Brahmin male householder), and that is true even among women characters between Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī, one being a typical housewife while another is an atypical, almost oppositional in character or rather exceptional case where one’s interest is not in worldly pursuits but in spirituality and philosophical enquiry.

These above narratives are the most important in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka, but there are several others which cannot be called either a debate or a conversation but are rather instructions. There are instructions about the performance of *Yajñā, agnihotr*, instruction about the father's transmission to his son before his death (*BṛhU* 1.5.17), and instructions on ceremonies for procreation. These instructions serve almost as a manual for a typical *Brahmin*, his everyday practices, what are those practices that makes an ideal *Brahmin* in addition to his pursuit of knowledge, it covers the entire landscape of his everyday life and also his afterlife. All this should be seen in the context of construction of a *Brahmin* selfhood, where the women only plays a complementary but necessary role.

### 3.19 Satyakāma and Jabālā (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 4.4.1-5)

Another narrative involving a women, is the story of a mother (Jabālā) and son (Satyakāma), where the son asks his mother for his lineage so that he could live a life of a student under the guidance of a teacher. Jabālā says; 'I do not know my son, what is your lineage. In my youth, when I was a maid and had worked in several houses I had you. So, I do not know what family you are. But my name is Jabālā and you are Satyakāma, so you may speak of yourself as Satyakāma Jabālā.' (Trans. Hume 2003, 4.4.2)

Satyakāma then went to the teacher, Hāridrumata Gautama, and asked the teacher to take him as his pupil. The teacher then enquired 'Of what family, pray, are you, my dear?' Jabālā then repeated what his mother had told him 'I do not know this sir, of what family I am. I asked my mother and she said, "In my youth, when I was a maid I got you. So, I do not know, of what family you are. However, I am Jabālā by name and you are Satyakāma by name." So I am Satyakāma Jabālā.' The teacher then replied 'A non-Brahman (*a-brāhmana*) would not be able to explain this. Bring the fuel my dear, I will receive you as my pupil. You have spoken the truth.'<sup>50</sup> (Trans. Hume 2003, 4.4.5)

In this story, the female character Jabālā is unlike the other female characters we have discussed thus far be it Gārgī, Maitreyī, or Kātyāyani. Gārgī, Maitreyī, or Kātyāyani are all *Brahmin* women, one a famous philosopher, the other a house wife but also a Brahmvādin, while Kātyāyani just a house wife. Jabālā, on the other hand, is a maid, whose lineage is not known and who may or may not be a *Brahmin*, and one does not even know if she was married or not. So, given the standard portrayal of women characters, Jabālā's appears to be the least desirable and also kind of

suspicious. But when the son repeats to the teacher exactly what Jabālā told him, he is accepted as a *Brahmin*, because only a *Brahmin* can speak the truth. But, like Black has points out, one may ask, if Jabālā herself had spoken directly to the teacher and explained it, would she have been treated similarly, because she clearly is an exceptional case and stands in contradiction to other female characters (Black 2012, 134-36). Also, unlike earlier stories which emphasis on family lineages (*gotra*) this story is a deviation. There are several loose ends to this story, it is unclear if Satyakāma was already a brahmin or if he earned it, here the emphasis is on ‘truthfulness’. So from this can we presume that one does not need family lineage, because it is sufficient that one is ‘truthful’ for one to be a *Brahmin*, but again there is a contradiction within the upanisads as we have elsewhere that family lineage, caste are crucial and significant precondition for anyone who seeks the knowledge of ‘Self’. Another point about ‘truthfulness’ and ‘being Brahmin’ is that this story shows how it is possible for a non-*Brahmin* to be truthful and thereby become one, so while by default a *Brahmin* is always presumed to be truthful, there may be others (few) who are not *Brahmins* but are truthful, but they’ll have to prove it. This story while being a deviant case and slightly modern in terms of not insisting on lineage (caste), it nevertheless re-enforces the idea of a *Brahmin* as an ideal.

One also at this point needs to discuss the gender dimensions of the notion of the ‘self’ or *ātman* itself. In many of the creation stories and myths as we have seen in the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* (1.1), the *ātman* creates the universe by sacrificing, dismembering, and reconstructing the body assuming the characteristics of the cosmic being Puruṣa and Prakṛti. In the *Bṛhadāranyaka* (1.4.1-6), the self (*ātman*) is depicted as a primordial man from which the first women was created out of his own body. In the beginning there is only a man, the wife is created to complement him, to assist him in procreation. The *ātman* is constructed in a way that it prioritizes male over the female, and as Black argues the female is created for, by and from man (Black 2012, 137) . Despite the important role played by the female in the process creation, the myths tend to reduce her body to a sexual body. In the *Bṛhadāranyaka*, Prajāpati creates the first women, whose body is compared to the *soma* sacrifice, there are comparisons made to her body, “Her lap is the *vedi* (area between the sacrificial fires), her hair the sacrificial grass. Her skin is the *soma* press, her labia the fire in the middle” (Black 2012, 137) <sup>51</sup> The women’s significance is reduced to procreative role while the man’s body represents entire universe, from it come the sun and the moon, Indra and agni, and the

social categories (*varṇa*) etc. Having discussed some of the key social groups in the Upaniṣads (Kings, Priests and women) their internal dynamics, politics etc. we then move towards later Upaniṣads where again there's a move away from the narrative accounts of the 'self' towards some kind of construction of the 'self' as an abstraction separated from the context.

### **3.20 Later Upaniṣads and their movement away from narrative style towards abstraction:**

Here we look at some later Upaniṣads (1000-500 BC), where there is not only a change of style, but they are shorter in length, there's a tendency towards a monotheistic conception of 'self'. The earlier diversity, narrative style, varied characters, and multiple conceptions of 'self' give way to a more abstract, singular notions of 'self' devoid of contexts and situations in the later Upaniṣads. The earlier Upaniṣads as we have seen the Bṛhadāraṇyaka, *Chāndogya* and the *Aitareya* were expressed in a prose and narrative style which changes with the later ones. The three later Upaniṣads, considered here are the *Praśna* Upaniṣad, *Śvetāśvara* Upaniṣad and the *Māṇḍūkya* Upaniṣad.

### **3.21 Six questioners seek answer from teacher (Pippalāda) (*Praśna Upaniṣad* 1.1-6.8)**

The *Praśna* Upaniṣad consists of sage Pippalāda's answers to the six questions put forward by the six learned *Brahmins*, Sukeśan Bhāradvāja, Śaibya Satyakāma, Sauryāyaṇin Gārgya, Kauśalya Āśvalāyana, Bhārgava Vaidarbhi and Kabandhin Kātyāyana – all these men intent about learning about Brahman, approached Pippalāda, with firewood in hand. To them he said, “dwell with me (*samvasyatha*) for a year (*samatsara*) more, with austerity (*tapas*), chastity (*Brahmacarya*) and faith (*śraddhā*). After performing this come to me if you still have questions and I will answer them” (Trans. Hume 2003, 1.2).

#### ***Praśna* 1:**

Kabandhin Kātyāyana comes and asks: “Sir, from where do these creatures come?”  
Pippalāda replies:

The Lord of creatures (*Prajāpati*), has a desire for creatures. So he heated himself through exertion and having heated himself produced

a pair – substance and life-breath – These two will turn out creatures  
for me in different ways. (Olivelle 1998, 1.4)

Life-breath is clearly the Sun, while the moon is the substance. The whole world  
that which has form and that which does not have is all substance. Substance or  
matter therefore is a form (*murti*). (Olivelle 1998, 1.5)

The sun, when it rises, enters the eastern quarter. It collects all the beings (*prāṇa*) from the east in  
its rays. Likewise when it illumines the Northern, Southern, Western quarters, the intermediate  
region, when it illuminates the whole world, it gathers all life-breaths in to its rays. Here rises the  
fire that is common to all life forms, this is declared in the Ṛgvedic verse.

Further the Lord of Creation (*Prajāpati*) is identified with the year. This has two paths the Southern  
and the Northern.<sup>52</sup> This verse in *Praśna* 1.9 also speaks about incarnation and re-incarnation. It  
says, those who worship thinking “sacrifice and merit are our work (*krta*)” (Trans. Hume 2003,  
1.9) - they will win only the lunar-world and indeed will return again (refers to re-incarnation).  
Those seers who are desirous of offspring go to the Southern course. This course leads to the  
fathers (*pitṛyāna*). But those who seek the Soul (*Ātman*) by austerity, chastity, faith and  
knowledge- they by the Northern course win the sun. That is the immortal, fearless and supports  
life-breaths. That is the final goal. From that they do not return (refers to non-reincarnation).  
Similarly, the twofold month, day and night are identified with the Lord of Creation (*Prajāpati*),  
and how food is a direct source of all these creatures. From this is produced semen and from semen  
creatures are born. Those who follow *Prajāpati*, performing austerities, chastity etc produce a pair  
just like him, in them the truth is established they belong to the Brahma-world.

### ***Praśna 2:***

Next Bhārgava Vaidarbhi, approaches Pippalāda:

Lord, just how many deities are there who support a creature?  
Which of them manifest and which is the most important of them?  
(Olivelle 1998, 2.1)

Pippalāda says:

Space is one such deity, so are wind, fire, water, earth, speech, mind, sight and hearing, as they manifest they say: we are the ones who shore up this reed and support it. (Olivelle 1998, 2.2)

Life-breath (*prāṇa*) is the most important of them all. Then he speaks the role of life-breath, for instance, he says,

Just as all the bees set off, when the queen bee sets off, and settle down when she settles down, so did speech, mind, sight and hearing. Delighted then, they praised the life-breath. (Olivelle 1998, 2.3)

### ***Praśna 3:***

Next Kausalya Āśvalāyana, approaches Pippalāda and asks a series of questions:

Lord from what does this life-breath arise? How does it enter this body? How does it divide itself and settle down? By what path does it set off? How it is designated outside the body (*ātman*) and how is it within the body? (Olivelle 1998, 3.12)

Pippalāda replies: “You ask many questions, but since you are an eminent Brahmin, I’ll answer you”.

The life-breath here arises from the self (*ātman*).

As this shadow here, upon a man,  
So this mind is stretched upon life-breath;  
And it enters by a path created by the mind. (Olivelle 1998, 3.3)

The next verses, draw comparison between a king who issues instructions to his administrators to govern this and that villages, so also the life-breath assigns other breaths (in-breath, link breath, up-breath, out-breath) to their respective places. This verse describes how these different breaths are connected with different bodily functions. The next verse speaks about the self (*ātman*) which

resides within every heart and how the numerous veins are connected through this link-breath to the heart. The rising sun is the external life-breath. In addition, to the breaths already mentioned, another is the inter-breath, which is the space between the link-breath (*samāna*) and wind (*vāyu*). The up-breath (*udāna*) is compared with fire. This verse also speaks about immortality. As to this is given in the verse 3.11:

The origin, entrance, position,  
the fivefold expansion of life-breath;  
how it relates to what's in the body---

A man who knows this becomes immortal. (Olivelle 1998, 3.11)

***Praśna 4:***

Now, Sauryāyaṇin Gārgya approaches Pippalāda and asks: Lord which are the ones that sleep in the person here? Which are the ones that keep awake in him? Which of these deities sees dreams? Who experience bliss? And which is the one in which all these are established?

Pippalāda goes onto explain how a person in sleep is one who is devoid of performing any of these bodily functions hearing, smelling, seeing, tasting, speaking, grasping, experiencing sexual pleasures, moving, excreting etc. The only thing that is awake in him is the breath (*prāṇa*). This verse *Praśna* Upaniṣad (4.3) speak of the five life functions like sacrificial fires, the out-breath (*apāna*) is the Gārhapatya's (householders) fire, the diffused breath (*vyāna*) is the Ānvāhāryapacana (Southern sacrificial) fire, the in-breath (*prāṇa*) is the Āhavanīya (oblation) fire etc. So these three life-breaths are compared with the three sacrificial fires. The fruit of the sacrifice is compared with the up-breath (*udāna*) and it is this breath which leads the sacrifice to Brahman day by day. For the question which deities see dreams, Pippalāda explains that it is the Universal mind which is the beholder of dreams. He explains that in dreams we experience both the real (*sat*) and the un-real (*a-sat*) – he sees all. When one is overcome with brilliance (*tejas*), then that God sees no dreams; then in that body arises happiness or bliss. For the final question, as to the one in which all this is establishes, Pippalāda uses the following analogy, “as birds resort to a tree for a resting-place, it is to the supreme soul (*Ātman*) that all beings resort to” (Trans. Hume 2003, 4.7). He then goes on to explain how the manifold of the world in here in that supreme soul and finally the verse ends with a description of the Imperishable.

### ***Praśna 5:***

Next Śaibya Satyakāma, approaches Pippalāda with his set of questions, he asks: “Lord, if someone were to meditate on the syllable OM [=AUM] until his death, what is the world that he would win through that meditation?” (Olivelle 1998, 5.1)

He told Śaibya: “Satyakāma, the syllable OM is both the higher and lower Brahman. Either of these two can be attained through the same medium by the man” (Olivelle 1998, 5.2). He then goes on to explain how each syllable or phenome first [A], then [AU] and finally [AUM] when uttered results in a movement from the lower to the higher states till one enters the world of Brahman by the Samān chants and beholds the fort dwelling person. This verse ends with a sloka describing the same.

### ***Praśna 6:***

Finally the last *Brahmin*, Sukeśan Bhāradvāja approaches Pippalāda, with his questions, he asks: “Lord, once Hiraṇyanābha, a prince of the Kośalas approached me and asked “Do you know the person with sixteen parts?” (Olivelle 1998, 6.1) I told him that I did not know else I would have told you. I did not want to speak untruth. So he mounted on his chariot and left. Now I ask you, “Where, is that person?” Pippalāda told Sukeśan: ‘That person with sixteen parts also is present now in this body’.

He thought for a while as said: “Who is the one that when he sets off, I will set off and when he settles down, I will settle down (Olivelle 1998, 6.3) He then created life-breath and from that came faith, space, wind, fire, water, earth, senses, mind and food; from food comes strength, austerity, Vedic formula, rites and worlds. In the next verse Pippalāda gives an analogy of a river or rivers and how they flow towards the ocean and merge into it so also these sixteen parts of the person who is the perceiver proceeds towards the person and upon reaching him, merge into that person, losing their appearances, names, one simply call it the ‘person’. He then becomes part less and immortal. A verse about immortality is spoken of and then Pippalāda proclaims “that is everything I know about the highest *Brahman*, higher than which there is nothing”. (Olivelle 1998, 6.7) The six *Brahmins* then praised him for answering their questions and said “You are, indeed our father, for you have taken us to the farthest shore beyond ignorance.” (Olivelle 1998, 6.8) One can see from these verses from the *Praśna Upaniṣad* are similar to those from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 10.6.1

and the *Chāndogya* 5.11. They also speak about the centrality of the breath (*Prāṇa*) within the cosmology, and the soteriology such as about immortality, imperishability etc. in the text. As far as the characters are concerned, nothing much is known about them excepting that they are learned *Brahmin* priests, Pippalāda, on the other hand, was the founder of the Pippalāda school of thought, which taught Atharva Veda. He is believed to be the avatar of Lord Shiva and the son of Dadhichi.

The *Praśna* Upaniṣad is related to the *Muṇḍaka* upaniṣad, because it provides explanations to the mantras contained in the *Muṇḍaka* upaniṣad. The first three questions are related to the various aspects of rituals and the purpose of meditation, the relation between life-breath and Soul. The fourth question elaborates about *Brahma* also called *Brahma Tattva*, the fifth question deals with fruits of achievement through meditation and sixth question with immortality. Of course, the styles are different, more of poetic hymns rather than verses, the method of questioning is different it is not a contest or a public display rather provide information on specific rituals, specific deities, the methods of meditation and breathing etc. Similarly, too the *Śvetāśvara* Upaniṣad (*ŚU*), the *ātman-Brahman* doctrine, takes the form of worshipping the deity *Rudra* (Shiva). The *ŚU* seems to be influenced by the *Samkhya* philosophy, as is indicated by its use of the term *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti*, to make a distinction between person and nature. The world is conceived of as an illusion (*maya*), the method of *Bhakti* or devotion is presented. The rules and results of yoga are given. Liberation, according to *ŚU*, is achieved through discrimination (*samkhya*) and union (*yoga*). Unlike earlier Upaniṣads the later ones seem to be moving away from the narrative styles of the earlier ones towards a more decontextualized universal philosophy shifting focus from conception of the 'self' toward a universal notion of identifying this 'self' with a transcendental Brahman. The later ones also seem to be influenced by the non-theistic philosophies of *Sāṃkhya* and *Yoga* (the spiritual practice).

### **OM identified with *Brahman*: *Māṇḍūkya* Upaniṣad (*MU*)**

The *Māṇḍūkya* Upaniṣad, is one of the later Upaniṣads, and also the shortest. It is assigned to Atharvaveda, and many teachers are attributed to it, but mainly it is assigned to Māṇḍūkya and is listed in the *Ṛgveda*. Unlike other Upaniṣads there is no debate, or dialogue no participants, no audience or spectators. It is a kind of revelation about the sacred syllable OM and how it identifies with the whole world, *Brahman* and the Self (*Ātman*). The three phenomes (A U M) are identified

with the three states of the self – the waking, the dream and the deep sleep. A famous commentary (*kārika*) on the *Māṇḍūkya* also called *Āgamaśāstra* written by Gauḍapāda, who is the great grand teacher of Śaṅkara, the exponent of Advaita Vedānta. It is also due to this reason that this being the smallest is significant.

Going back to the content, the *Māṇḍūkya* begins by declaring “that this whole world is - OM. The past, present and the future all this is OM and whatever is beyond it is also OM. (Olivelle 1998, 475) OM is *Brahman* and *Brahman* is the self (*Ātman*); that *Brahman* is *Ātman* consists of four quarters, the *Vaiśvānara*, *Taijasa*, *Prājña* and *Ātman* itself. The *Vaiśvānara*, or the Universal one is connected to the waking state (*jāgarita*), the *Taijasa* or the Brilliant one is connected to the dream state (*svapna*), *Prājña* or the Intelligent One is connected to the Deep sleep state (*suṣupti*), and the fourth quarter perceives neither that what is inside nor what is outside, nor even both together, it is unthinkable, ungraspable, and it is one without a second (*a-dvaita*) and that is the self (*Ātman*). The next verses relate the constituent phonemes (A U M) of the syllable OM to the different states of consciousness the waking state, dream state, deep sleep – ‘A’ is *vaiśvānara*, ‘U’ is *taijasa*, M is *prājña* and together they are the very self (*Ātman*) and anyone who knows this enters the self by himself.

Gauḍapāda wrote a commentary on the teachings of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* called *Gauḍapāda Karikā* also called *Āgamaśāstra*, which brought out the essential doctrines of the monistic philosophy of Advaita Vedānta and of Vedānta in general. Gauḍapāda lived at a time when Buddhism was widely prevalent, in fact, he was influenced by the *Vijñānavāda* of *Yogācāras*, and the *Śūnyavāda* of *Mādhyamikas* and also is believed to have trained in the *Mādhyamika* philosophy. In fact it is argued that the Book II and Book III of the *Āgamaśāstra*, begins with *Vedānta* and concludes with Buddhism, showing that the foremost Vedāntin Gauḍapāda was greatly influenced by Buddhism (Murti 2013, 114-15).

The later Upaniṣads whether be it the *Praśna Upaniṣad*, *Śvetāśvara Upaniṣad*, or *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* appear to have been influenced by the other traditions whether be it Sāṃkhya, Yoga or the *Mādhyamika* school of Buddhism. Although the ‘self’ remains the central metaphysical and ontological notion discussed throughout the Upaniṣads, there are drastic difference between the earlier and later Upaniṣads, firstly, there is change in the narrative style, the dialectic form of the

earlier Upaniṣads is replaced by shorter verses, sometimes poetic expressions, and their concern seem to be on the conceptualization of a single creator deity, the earlier polytheism seem to be making way towards a singular conception of a deity be it Rudra in the *Śvetāśvara* Upaniṣad, Puruṣa of the *Praśna* Upaniṣad, symbol and syllable ‘OM’ associated with *Brahman* etc. These Upaniṣads seem to be based on experience or revelation, the social contexts of the earlier Upaniṣads are not present in the later ones the ‘self’ is not any more a narrative construct but rather an abstraction. But whether ‘self’ is narratively constructed or constructed through abstraction, it presupposes a more primitive, experiential self. These experiences (*anubhāva*), are a precondition for any sort of notion of the ‘self’. It is these divine mystical experiences through which the upaniṣadic seers were able to discuss about the ‘self’, although a definition of ‘self’ could not be adequately provided using language because it was not something which could be compared to any objective reality, and that is why in the Upaniṣads different connections were made whether be it ritualistic, natural, psychological, ontological, epistemological or experimental to adequately explain the notion of ‘self’ (*ātman*). But despite all these connections the ‘self’ or ‘consciousness’ remained something inexpressible through language, but something which can only be experienced and it remains the same till today a complete grasp on the ‘self’ is not possible. But through all the varied articulations about the ‘self’ what was intended was the unitary, universal ground for all reality.

In the context of the earlier Upaniṣads like the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāṇḍogya* Upaniṣad, as we have seen the secretive knowledge of the ancient seers is discussed and revealed within a public sphere through the interaction with others, narration itself is a social process, the idea of the ‘self’ is constructed within a social context and is depended on ‘others’. In this context, one can say that the ‘self’ in the Upaniṣads is a narrative construction<sup>53</sup>, whether be it Yajñavalkya, Uddālaka Āruṇi, Śāṅḍilya each one’s notion of the ‘self’ is arrived at through intersubjective<sup>54</sup> context even if the idea of the ‘self’ or ‘selfhood’ may be an individual experience. The moment one speaks or narrates of one’s self to ‘other/s’ the notion of ‘self’ is no more remains an individual experience but becomes part of the public domain becomes part of the shared community consciousness in this case the *Brahmin* community, since most of the speakers or narrators are *Brahmins*. It is not just a construction of an individual ‘self’ or ‘selfhood’ but that of a community ‘self’ or

‘consciousness’ that transcends individual subjective experience. Underlying all this varied accounts of the ‘self’ is the tension between the notion of ‘self’ and ‘other’.

## Part-II

Having looked at various accounts of ‘self’ and claims made in the Upaniṣads, examined the contexts in which these accounts of ‘self’ are made, identified the primary interlocutors (*Brahmins, Kṣatriyas*) and the social groups within the Upaniṣads, the chapter then moves to examine another work comparable in style but from another tradition (Buddhism), called *Milinda Pañha*. *Milinda Pañha* is set in a similar social context (court setting of a King) sharing the same intellectual space, but belonging to an almost opposed belief system and ideology. A study of these two early texts (Upaniṣads and *Milinda Pañha*) and a comparison of its context and content helps us gain an overall understanding of the extent to which these two traditions (Brahminism and Buddhism) influenced one another, how the ‘other’ influenced the ‘self’ to define itself. Most of the concerns raised by the *śramanic* traditions such as Buddhism whether be it about ritual sacrifice, role of women in the domain of spirituality, knowledge production, liberation, caste etc. were to some extent incorporated into the narratives of the Upaniṣads.

### 3.22 *Milinda Pañha*:

A text comparable to the Upaniṣads in style, narration, dialogues and belonging to the early classical period is the *Milinda Pañha*, a Buddhist text dating approximately 100 BC and constitutes a major part of the Pāli cannon. Presenting a series of conversation between King Milinda (150-110 BC) also called Menander, of Greek Origin, the first of the Indo-Greek kings and the Buddhist sage Nāgasena. Milinda is believed to have ruled the Kabul region including the swat valley and also parts of the Indus valley (Narain 1957). Menander, was the most important Greek Kings to have continued ruling Bactria, the dominion founded by Alexander the Great. The two Greek Kings who were responsible for expanding the Greek Kingdom of Bactria much beyond limits were Demetrius and Menander, but the latter had a far greater impact on India and its traditions than the former, some scholars believe that he converted to Buddhism at the end of this debate (Rapson 1922, 446). This early history is significant because it provides us an insight into the early philosophical and cultural interactions between the East and the West, between two very ancient civilizations unlike the Upaniṣads which is essentially interactions between two significant

communities (*Brahmins* and the *kṣatriyas*) with one major tradition (*Vedic*). According to Rhys Davids, the *Milinda Pañha* is one of the earliest works of Indian Classical prose (Davids 1894, xlvi), he argues that it's a best book of its class from a literary point of view that has ever been produced in any country. It is not clear who the author is, whether there was one or many but it is agreed that it might have been the work of Buddhaghōṣa, a 5<sup>th</sup> century Theravada Buddhist commentator.

According to historical evidence it is believed that Menander was born in Bactria, brought up in the Kabul valley and expanded his father's kingdom to Indus valley and beyond, establishing his capital at Sagāla. Sagāla is the city where the dialogues in the *Milinda Pañha* take place. Although brought up in Greek culture he is said to have influenced by Buddhist tradition as well (Pesala 1991). There is a Chinese version of *Milinda Pañha* called *Nāgasena Bhikṣhusūtra* named after the monk instead of the King. The language in which the original work may have written could have been Sanskrit argue historians, and its later versions were in Pāli Sinhalese, and Chinese. The conversations in the *Milinda Pañha* is said to have taken place 500 years after the Mahāparinibbāna of Buddha and sometime later after Menander's death based on the oral tradition of actual conversations that took place between Menander a monk or several monks. The book is divided into 6 divisions 22 chapters containing 262 questions, 42 have not been handed down making 304 in all, but there are discrepancies in the numbers which differ in different text available, but now only 237 questions remain (Pesala 1991, 27-28).

### **3.23 The Debate:**

King Milinda like King Ajātaśatru in the Upaniṣads, was a very learned King, well versed in the arts and sciences and was of an inquiring disposition, skilled in debating. He had a lot of questions on religion, philosophy etc, and no one could satisfy him and he was therefore on the lookout for a learned sage who would clear his doubts and answer his questions. Assagutta, an *arhant*, a wanderer sage who through his supernormal powers knew of the King's doubt's had called upon an assembly and asked if anyone could answer the King's questions and there was none. Then it goes that the whole of the assembly ascended to the heaven and requested God Mahāsenā to take birth on earth and protect the religion (Buddhism). One of the monks Rohaṇa went to Kajangalā, where Mahāsenā was reborn and waited on him to grow up. Nāgasena's father was Soṇuttara, who

was his first teacher and had taught him the three Vedas. Nāgasena on learning the three Vedas, had declared:

Empty are these three Vedas and as chaff  
There is in them neither reality,  
worth nor essential truth. (Pesala 1991, 1)

This is similar to the conversation between Nārada and Sanatkumāra in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (7.0), where Nārada claims to have studied all three Vedas, and is learned in the art and politics and a lot more but is still ignorant about the highest truth. When Nāgasena declares that even after learning the three Vedas, he has not found in them the truth, Rohaṇa, the learned monk realizing that Nāgasena was ready to take on the life of a novice and ascetic, appears before his parents and offers to teach him the philosophy of the Buddha through *Abhidhamma*<sup>55</sup>. After studying the various texts of the *abhidhamma*, Nāgasena is then accepted in the monastic order and Rohaṇa sent him to Vattaniya hermitage to study under Assagutta. This is where Nāgasena learnt the true doctrine of the Buddha and he also began giving sermons about the Dhamma. Assagutta then sends him to another teacher Dhammarakkhita in Pāṭaliputta, where he mastered the remaining *Tipiṭaka* (Pesala 1991, 30). Nāgasena then after having acquired knowledge of the Buddhist cannons was sent for *arhantship*, later he left for the Himalayas to join other monks. Now he was ready to take on anyone in debate. This is the story of Nāgasena. Meanwhile King Milinda continued his quest to find a monk who could clear his doubts and lead in on the spiritual path. The King asks his Bactrian Greeks and the assembled Indians “Is there any learned sage, with whom I can discuss things and dispel my doubts?” His minister Devamantiya then proposes the name of Nāgasena, to take up the challenge. King Milinda then takes his chariot to visit Nāgasena at the Saṃkheyya hermitage.

The debate between King Milinda and Nāgasena, like the debates in *Plato's Dialogue*, and also like that in the Upaniṣads are not real conversations, words are put into the mouth of the characters similar to the debates in the Upaniṣads. The debates are normally held between two people both powerful in their own right, like King Milinda and Nāgasena or King Janaka and Yajñavalkya etc. but in matters of spiritual knowledge, the King was always subordinate to the monk or the priest or the learned householder. It is important at this point to note that in the Upaniṣads, the Brahmin male householder (*Yajamāna*), is the perfect candidate to possess and pass on the secret knowledge

of the *self* and the recipient either the King, or a Brahmin student, or a married women. On the other hand, in *Milinda Pañha*, the wandering ascetic monk is a perfect candidate to learn, possess and pass on the knowledge of the Buddha and his wisdom to not just the King but to all who wish to know and follow the path of the enlightened Buddha. In Upaniṣads there is adherence to the four fold caste system (*cātur-varṇyam*), and also the following of lineages (*vaṃśa*) between student and teachers according to which specific doctrines are passed on from generations to generations. Hence, the social structure within the group or caste and also the familial structure plays an important role in the production and transmission of knowledge in Upaniṣads. In contrast, in Śramaṇic traditions such as Buddhism, it is not the family or the caste which is the dominant social group, but it is the people outside of the social group such as wandering, nomadic monks *Bhikkus*, *Bhikkunīs*, and the *Sanghas* to which they belong that represent the highest in the social order and all others follow from them. The family and the individual come at the last in order of their social hierarchy while the community comes first.

### **3.24 The Soul in the *Milinda Pañha*:**

As with most ancient religions and cultures the central metaphysical theme in the *Milinda Pañha* (MP), is the soul and in the Upaniṣads is the Self, which also initially starts as the soul. The debate between King Milinda and Nāgasena, starts with the enquiry into the nature of the soul and begins by asking if souls exists or not. When the King meets Nāgasena and exchanges greetings he begins by asking “Dear Sir, How is your reverence known? What is your name?”, and so begins the discussion on the soul/self. Nāgasena replies: “Oh King, I am known as Nāgasena and this is only a designation, but no permanent person can be found” (Pesala 1991, 32).

This reply is based on the most important Buddhist doctrine of no permanent self or personhood (*anātmavāda*). King Milinda then calls upon his Bactrian Greeks (*yonakas*), and remarks “This Nāgasena says there is no permanent person implied in his name, is it possible for one to accept it” and then goes on to give examples such as “If there is no permanent person then who is that who gives you robes, food and shelter?” (Pesala 1991, 32-33), who is it who lives the righteous life, who is that who commits crimes, steals, adultery etc. and if what you say is true then there would be no merit or demerit, nor would there be a doer of good or evil deeds, no *kamma* and if someone were to kill you there would be no one who committed the murder, no teacher or masters

in you Order.” You call yourself Nāgasena, but you are not the person, King Milinda then asks if you are not the permanent person are you then the hair, the nails, teeth, bone marrow, kidney, spleen, blood, sweat, tears the skin or other parts of the body else are you the perceptions, feelings etc. or is it all these (*skandhas*) combined or is it something external to you Nāgasena? (Davids 1894, 41-43) Nāgasena answers in the negative for each one of these comparisons. Then King Milinda asks is Nāgasena then just an empty sound, who then is the person we see before us? Are you then speaking untruth or falsehood!

Nāgasena’s reply: “Oh Sire, of noble birth, how did you come here to visit me of course not by foot in this dry weather on the hot, sandy ground, for your foot will hurt”. (Pesala 1991, 33)

King Milinda: I did not come Sir by foot, but in a Chariot.

Nāgasena: If you came by Chariot, can you explain to me what then is a chariot? Is it the wheels, framework, ropes, spokes of the wheels, or the goad etc? For each one of these King Milinda answers no. Then Nāgasena asks, is it then all the different parts that make up the Chariot or is it something outside of it that makes up the chariot. King Milinda continues to answer in the negative. Then in the same manner as the King, Nāgasena, is it then just an empty sound, and hence no chariot exists, are you then speaking untruth! You are the great King of all of this country, a mighty monarch, why then are you afraid to speak the truth? Then turns to the audience, the *yonakas* and the Indians gathered there and declares “Milinda the King came here in a chariot<sup>56</sup>, but when asked what the chariot is, he is unable to answer, he is unable to establish what he averred?” and challenged the King to get out of it.

King Milinda’s reply: ‘I have spoken no untruth, reverend Sir. It is because of having all these things the wheels, framework, ropes, spokes, goad etc. that it comes under the generally understood term, and is designated by word “Chariot”. (Pesala 1991, 34)

Nāgasena, satisfied with King Milinda’s response says “Your Majesty! You have rightly understood the meaning of a “chariot”, so also the thirty two kinds of organic matter and the five constituent elements of being together are generally understood and designated in common use as ‘Nāgasena’” (Pesala 1991, 44). This again refers to an important doctrine of Buddhism called the ‘doctrine of the aggregates’ or *Skandhas* also called *khandas* in Pāli. This is how the Buddhists

analyzed personality and personal experience. The underlying theory is that the body or what we call a self is basically an aggregate of five elements (*rūpa, vedanā, saṃjñā, saṃskāra, vijñāna*) very similar to the Hume's "bundle theory" which states that the self is nothing more than a bundle of properties or characteristics. This very important chariot analogy is also used by later Buddhist philosophers like Candrakīrti, who also uses the aggregate nature of things to demonstrate a lack of essence or rather intrinsic nature.

In his commentary, *Madhyamakāvatāra* on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, he refers to the same carriage analogy, he says:

[The Self] is like a cart, which is not other than its parts, not non-other, and does not possess them. It is not within its parts, and its parts are not within it. It is not the mere collection, and it is not the shape. (Gyatso 2000, 482)

This doctrine of aggregates is linked to the earlier concept of no-self, there is no-self apart from these aggregates. Nāgasena, which regards to personal identity using the earlier chariot analogy, says

Just as it is by the condition precedent of the co-existence of the various parts that the word 'chariot' is used, just so is it that when the Skandhas are there we talk of a 'being'.<sup>57</sup>

In this description by Nāgasena, makes a very important point that is, it is because of the co-existence of the various parts, that the 'chariot' comes in to existence so also if there were no skandhas there would be no being, it is the sum of the parts which makes the whole. There is a similarity between the 'chariot' analogy used here and the one used in *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (3.7-9). Here the connections are made between the Person (self, senses, body) with the charioteer of the chariot pulled by horses. Just like how the sacrificial horse becomes a metaphor for explaining the universe *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (1.1) so also a 'chariot' as a powerful metaphor to explain the nature of the Soul in *Milinda Pañha*.

### 3.25 Personal Identity:

King Milinda asks Nāgasena, if “he who is born Nāgasena, remains the same or does he become another?” Nāgasena replies: “Neither the same nor another”.

“Give an illustration” asks King Milinda.

Nāgasena says: “What do you think O King, you were once a baby, a tender thing, small in size, and lying on your back, are you the same person who is all grown up now?”

King Milinda responds: No Sir, the child was one, I am another.

Nāgasena continues similarly “If you are not that child would it follow that you had neither mother nor father, nor teacher...Is the embryo of the mother in the first stage different from the embryo in the second or the third or the fourth?<sup>58</sup> Is the mother of the child different from the mother of a grown up man etc. King Milinda replies certainly not, but asks Nāgasena to then explain what identity is?

Nāgasena replies I am the same person when I was a baby, when I was crawling or lying on my back as I am now. He gives the following illustration, he asks “Suppose a man, O King, were to light a lamp, would it burn the night through?” The King responds “Yes Sir, it might.” Now Nāgasena using an illustration similar to the one between mother and child, asks, “Is the same flame that burns in the first watch of the night, Sir, and in the second or the second as in the third etc.” King Milinda replies in the negative for each one of these questions. Then Nāgasena enquires if each one of the watch is different, then does it mean that there is one lamp in the first watch, another in the second and another in the third? No replies King Milinda, it is the same light that comes from the one lamp all night through. Upon this Nāgasena, then explains in a similar fashion to the light from the lamp, the continuity of a person or thing is maintained, one comes into being another passes away; and the rebirth is as it were simultaneous. Thus neither as the same nor as another does a man go on to his last phase of his self-consciousness (Davids 1894, 118). Give further illustration demands King Milinda.

Nāgasena replies “It is like milk, which when taken from the cows turns after a while first into curds then from curds to butter and butter to ghee. Now would be right to say the milk was the same thing as a curd, or the butter or the ghee?” King Milinda answers in the negative since the milk is not the same thing as the curd, or the butter, or the ghee.

Nāgasena then says “so also does the continuity of the person maintained. One comes into being, another passes away; and the rebirth is simultaneous. Thus neither as the same or as another does a man go on to his last phase of self-consciousness.” (Davids 1894, 118-19)

These dialogues establish the fact that for the heretical schools such as Buddhism, Jainism etc. the idea of rebirth, personal identity, impermanence of soul were crucial doctrines which shaped their philosophy and these were questions which were raised by them first and later got incorporated into the mainstream orthodox philosophies of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. Even within these heretical schools, they did not consider themselves as being heretic but rather were competing for who constitutes orthodoxy and who doesn't.

The Milinda Pañha also lays emphasis on the ethical aspects like the importance of renunciation, emphasis on monastic life, how to acquire *arhatship*<sup>59</sup>, what is a debate, difference between King and scholar, wisdom and intelligence how they can be distinguished etc. Riddles used to explain concepts, and dilemmas invented for which clarification is given and then the final sections containing questions about the Buddha, his life, and his teachings etc. and what we can learn from that. There are also verses which speak about the importance of a dwelling place of the *Bhikku* rather than living in a forest, so that people may come and visit, instructions on restraint on eating and on the stomach explaining the importance of leading a minimal life. Nāgasena, is both described as a *Brahman* and as a King, in the chapter 12 of Milinda Pañha about solving dilemmas, a question is raised about Nāgasena's dual identity as a *Brahman* and also as a King, in it says that “it is not on account of his birth that he is called a *Brahman* but because he is free from defilements, had attained to a certainty of knowledge and because he was one to maintain the ancient traditions of learning and teaching by heart, self-control and discipline.”<sup>60</sup> It is interesting to note here the differences in the conception of the ‘identity’ of a *Brahman* in Milinda Pañha verses the Upaniṣads, for the former clearly identity through birth is not important as much as someone who acquires it through practice<sup>61</sup>. In the Upaniṣads too there are instances where being a *Brahman* by practice is accepted as in the case of *Jābala Satyakāma*, but the emphasis on lineages (*vaṃśa*) or traditions mainly belonging to the *Brahman* classes indicates that caste or class by birth was a necessary precondition of Vedic knowledge rather than by practice. Both traditions did emphasize on learning or passing knowledge through repetition and committing it to memory which ensured that knowledge was transmitted to successive generations. In the Upaniṣads transmitting knowledge

ensured that it remained within the *Brahmans* while in the *Milinda Pañha* and *Samaññaphala Sutta*, was available for all who seek it and who through the practice of ‘self-restraint’ and meditation qualify themselves for *arhat* or Buddhahood.

The primary purpose of *Milinda Pañha* and the *Samaññaphala Sutta* was to clarify the central Buddhist doctrine and refute the incorrect views propagated by various opponents of Buddhism such as Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalī, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, and Sañjaya Belatṭiputta<sup>62</sup>. Each subscribing to a particular view such as agnosticism, eternalism, materialism, fatalism and restraint. Although the idea of distinct schools were not very well developed at the time of the composition of the *Milinda Pañha* or the *Samaññaphala Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> BC). The protagonists in these texts were very well aware of the positions of the ‘others’, whether be it the materialistic position of Kesakambalī, agnosticism of Belatṭiputta, or the fatalism of Gosala, they engaged not only within, but outside traditions.

### **3.26 The Upaniṣads and the *Milinda Pañha*:**

The Upaniṣads revolve round two major social groups such as the Brahmins and Kṣatriyas and women if we can assign them as belonging to a separate social group since in most cases the voices of these women are either subordinated or negated. In the *Milinda Pañha*, we have the Kings such as Milinda in *Milinda Pañha* and Ajatasattu in *Samaññaphala Sutta* and the monks such as Nāgasena in *Milinda Pañha* and the Buddha himself as in *Samaññaphala Sutta* as representing two groups and apart from them we have a number of varied sects within the *śramaṇic* traditions conversing and arguing with one another. Also *Milinda Pañha* is unique because it is the first known importance of intercultural dialogues and although some have questioned the Greek influence and instead traced it to the Upaniṣads (Hinüber 2000). These narratives in these texts reflect the political climate of the time, the encounter with the ‘Other’ or ‘others’.

The predominant style in both these classical works are the narrative style, but they also use prose and poetry particularly the earlier Upaniṣads, while Upaniṣads uses more of prose. As already mentioned the ‘self’ in the Upaniṣads is narratively constructed, notion of the ‘self’ arising out of an intersubjective context in dialogue with others. But the construction of the ‘selfhood’ happens at a predominantly individual level in both texts since the experience happens at an individual level

but narration happens at a collective or interpersonal level. There are public debates (*Brahmodya*) and there are personal or private debates. The Buddhists are opposed to the notion of an underlying persistent self or essence and hence for them the notion of individual subjectivity is not so important instead they speak of personal identity. They also don't make a distinction between the Self and the other, the does not exist apart from the Self. In Buddhism the selfhood is not so much constructed as it is cultivated.

There are a wide oeuvre of things and issues discussed across the Upaniṣads, but the central ontological and metaphysical concern seems to be to find an underlying principal connecting all phenomena to explain the world and this concern shifts from explaining the world to explaining the 'self' within. The 'self' or '*ātman*' is the central doctrine and theme running across the Upaniṣads and the identification with *Brahman* another aspect of the later Upaniṣads. It is crucial to note at this juncture as already mentioned elsewhere that this metaphysical aspect *Brahman* is not separated from the empirical, worldly everyday aspects, which aid the conception of the selfhood of a *Brahmin* or the *Brahmanical* Self. Hence, notions which are important to the everyday life of a *Brahmin* are discussed in great details such as the performance of rituals, transfer of knowledge to a son, the role of women in helping the male achieve liberation by engaging in sexual activity and their role in procreation, the ability to engage in philosophical debates, their desires to benefit materially etc. all suggesting that their metaphysical , epistemological notions were not separated from their everydayness and conception of their selfhood. The whole quest in the Upaniṣads can be thought of as an exercise into understanding ones selfhood or a process of establishing the essence of an ideal Brahmin male. In the Upaniṣads there is presence of caste, gender and patriarchy and the early Upaniṣads offer an overview of the entire *Brahminical* worldview. The 'Others' such as the not so-ideal Brahmins, the Kṣatriyas, the women etc. are needed in positing and establishing of this ideal Self.

The Milinda Pañha like the *Samaññaphala Sutta* does not seek to establish either a *Brahman* selfhood or a *Buddha* selfhood instead it is a text which through debates between King Milinda and Nāgasena seeks to establish the truth of the Buddha doctrines whether be it of an nonessential 'self', rebirth, karma, *arhatship* etc. It establishes the rules to follow for a Buddhist monk. Since unlike other monotheistic religions Hinduism does not have a founder, a single text on which it is based,

in Upaniṣads as in earlier Vedic literatures, the ancient seers felt a need to posit a universal doctrine *Brahman*, the ground for all existence. This universal *Brahman* for its manifestation required an embodied being or self. Hence, in the Upaniṣads we also see an attempt at construction of an ideal self which is not separated from its socio-political context and location. On the other hand, the Buddhists owing to their metaphysical assertion of a ‘no-self’ did not find it important to posit either a universal notion of the Self or an individual notion, their concerns were not of things that persists but those that undergo changes like the notion of a ‘personal-identity’.

As far as gender is considered both texts are sufficiently male oriented, written primarily for a male audience by male writers. In the Upaniṣads we do find few but important presence of women characters whether be it Gārgi Vācanakvi, Maitreyī, Jabāla etc although their voices were subordinated or even silenced by the men, but there are no women in either the *Milinda Pañha* or the *Samaññaphala Sutta*. But the concerns and roles of women were sufficiently articulated in later Buddhist texts such as *Therīgāthā*<sup>63</sup>, which describe the role of women *Bhikkunis* in the monastic order and their spiritual experiences. According to Buddha, “wives should be obedient to their husbands but in turn the husbands should respect their wives” (Aṅguttara Nikāya 5:33). This view was quiet revolutionary at the time, when in the Upaniṣads and other Vedic texts the role of the women was reduced to the role of a wife or a sexual partner or one had to fight to get their voices heard, the Buddha had permitted women to enter the monastic order.

As far as caste is concerned in the Upaniṣads, we have seen that caste does play an important role in the Upaniṣads not so much at the metaphysical level but at the empirical level. The *Brahmans* and *Kṣatriyas* feature predominantly, while the *Vaiśhya*’s and *Shudras* are absent. The use of lineages is also a repeated motif and a specific feature in them, assigning specific doctrines to specific teachers and in the process providing them authority, and almost always these teachers are from a specific community the *Brahmins*. Although, ‘other’ lower caste are mentioned but in way derogatory manner, in fact there are groups which are forbidden such as those born out a marriage between a *Brahman* and a lower caste such as *shudra* or an untouchable caste. But in the *Milinda Pañha*, the chief protagonist Nāgasena is also a Brahman or Bahman sometimes the term *arya* is also used, but the use of this term as Buddha suggests is not to represent caste but to indicate nobility of character and learning (Dhammapada 388). There are debates in the old Buddhists texts such as

Sutta Nipatā representing Brahmins debating among themselves as to whether one is a Brahmin by birth or by conduct. The different presentations of Brahmins in different contexts reflect on the different subjectivities even within the Brahmin social group. What this reflects is that *Brahmans* themselves as a social group were not homogenous, there was dissent amongst them. This tension is highlighted both in the Brahmin (Sanskrit) and the Buddhist (Pāli) texts, either ways the Brahman placed himself at the top which meant that others (*Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśhya* and *Shudra*) had to occupy positions assigned to them which were much below him.

### 3.27 Conclusions:

This chapter comprehensively looks at two very important literary and philosophical works of two dominant traditions, Brahmanism and Buddhism. The works selected for study are the Upaniṣads and the *Milinda Pañha* which were composed during the first century BC and one of the earliest known texts using a prose style in Indian literature and philosophy, whereas, it are believed that the Upaniṣads were composed around 800-200 BC. Typically, literary classical texts like the Upaniṣads or the *Milinda Pañha* belonging to very different traditions are treated as independent texts isolated from all other texts. As per the notion of intertextuality, no text exists in isolation they are connected to other texts within that tradition and through their particular genres they represent. The reasons for making a comparative study are: Firstly, both texts are individually important early texts of their respective traditions which came to shape much of their later thoughts. Secondly, their styles were similar, narration through dialogues is the dominant style in both works, both texts are comparable to *Plato's Dialogues* of the Greek tradition, these texts are termed as *proto-philosophical* texts, where claims are made but no justification provided which happens with the arrival of philosophical texts. Thirdly, to look at these texts from the perspective of 'Self' and 'Others', and to locate them in historical context to help understand how the 'Others' may have shaped the understanding of the 'Self', because when one debates or discusses in public or private about the 'Self' one is doing in an intersubjective context in front of an 'other' or an 'audience', 'self-understanding' almost never happens in isolation but the experiences are almost always individual. Fourthly, it is not possible to gain a comprehensive understanding of Indian philosophy by just considering one work or one tradition in isolation while not considering the 'other', because it is the 'other' who shapes the conception of ones 'self', both *Brahmanism* and Buddhism it is obvious shared the same intellectual space and were greatly influenced by each other although Buddhism rose in opposition to the

former. Many of the issues raised by the Śramanic traditions such as participation of women in intellectual and spiritual pursuits, criticism of overemphasis on rituals, scriptural authority, caste etc. were incorporated into the Brahmanic discourse. These early unsystematized texts allows one to understand in a socio-historical context, why certain claims were made and by whom and how they fit into historical time. While the later systematized texts completely isolate the ‘other’ or their voices and also in their attempt to systematize remove the diversity of views. This also renders the text ahistorical.

The first part of the chapter, I attempted to show that along with the positing of and conceptualization of the ultimate ground of all things, the creation of the Grand narrative of *Brahman* from which all springs forth what is also happening simultaneously is also a quest for selfhood and identity. There is through the debates and dialogues with ‘others’ a movement towards creation of not just selfhood but an ideal self. Not all dialogues are between equal partners, the ‘other’ in the dialogue is characterized by ‘difference’ which could be in terms of caste, gender, religious affiliations etc. The earlier Upaniṣads, like the Bṛhadāraṇyaka, *Chāṇḍogya* etc. very clearly identifies distinct social groups particularly among the two dominant castes the Kṣatriyas and the Brahmins. The nexus between the Kṣatriyas and the Brahmins is one of power versus knowledge, the Kṣatriyas trade power and material benefits for knowledge and the Brahmins knowledge for material benefits particularly true in public debates held in the King’s court. The other dominant groups are the teachers and students, Brahmins and other Brahmins, and Brahmin and women interlocutors. While the intellectual, learned Brahmanical male self triumphs in all of its encounters with the ‘others’, there are also instances in the Upaniṣads where the ‘other’ becomes the teacher such as the dialogue between Gārgya and Ajātaśatru, where the Kṣatriya Ajātaśatru becomes the teacher Brahmin Gārgya, or when Gārgī Vacanakvi, a women openly challenges Yajñavalkya, the most learned of all Brahmins and the central protagonist in the Upaniṣads etc. The Upaniṣads gives rise to multiple subjectivities and layers of selfhood that are in conversation and continual dialogue with the ‘other’. The early Upaniṣads do not fall into a particular genre but in it is the process of becoming into one, but later Upaniṣads do develop a style of their own and in a sense a distinct genre.

The second part of the chapter looks at *Milinda Pañha*, an old Buddhist text from the Pāli cannon similar in style and context to the Upaniṣads. The central characters in the *Milinda Pañha* are King

Milinda and the monk Nāgasena. There is no one central theme or underlying episteme connecting the various debates, it does discuss a range of issues from questions of personal identity, rebirth, transmigration, soul etc. Not all of these are discussed here the idea is to show that there are neighborhood texts which are comparable in style, context and content with the Upaniṣads but not as well known. With regards to selfhood and subjectivity there is a fundamental differences in the conception of these notions in the Milinda Pañha because it follows from the premise of the Buddhists theory of no-self (*annāta*). The Buddhists are not interested in questions of underlying essence, of substantial self or of transcendence but are more interested in change, and in phenomena. They are interested in questions of personal identity because they are not stable throughout and identity undergoes change, what one was 10 years ago, is not the same person today 10 years later, but they do speak of a sense of self which is consistent. With regards to the issue of ‘others’ the ‘others’ were never really a problem for the Buddhists, their approach to ‘others’ is quite egalitarian. These ‘proto-philosophical’ texts yielded enormous influence on subsequent literature in terms of their dialogical narrative structure and conversational style, they also led to the formation of schools such as the *Śvetāśvatara* and the *Māṇḍūkya* leading to the development of the Sāṃkhya and the Advaita Vedānta schools. Also within the Buddhist tradition the interpretation of the no-self doctrine, rebirth, the theory of causation has led to the development of various sects within Buddhism who were in constant interaction with one another. In conclusion, I would like to argue that many of the views and concerns of the heretical traditions such as Buddhism, Jainism, Ajivika, and Cārvaka have been incorporated into the dominant Vedic Upaniṣadic discourse. One of the reasons for this was because these traditions were part of the “same historical conversation” (Ingalls 1954). Although they were part of the same historical conversation there were limits to understanding the ‘other’, because as Dan Zahavi points out , the ‘other’ is also a ‘self’ having its own first-person perspective (D. Zahavi 2005). For the Brahmans the Buddhists are the ‘other’ and likewise for the Buddhists the Brahmans are the ‘others’, but what these early works point to is that ‘self-understanding’ or conception of the ‘self’ cannot be constructed in isolation it is through the intersubjective context with others that one understands oneself. Also from the perspective of intertextuality these texts are conceptually, historically connected.

The next chapter looks at the next stage of development in Indian philosophy that is the period of systematization or the *Sūtra* period, through the creation of separate genre of texts specially commentaries and through it elucidate the concepts of 'self' and 'other'.

## Chapter – 4

### The Systematic Philosophies of Śaṅkara and Nāgārjuna

#### 4.1 Introduction:

Alfred North Whitehead has famously remarked that “the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it is a series of footnotes to Plato (Whitehead 1979, 39). What Whitehead meant was not that every future philosophical problem was already dealt with by Plato, or that in him all answers were to be found but that he provided a systematic framework, or schema that allowed for future thinkers to draw from its varied ideas and thoughts and work on them. Later thinkers have criticized his thoughts, modified it, extended it or even rejected it. Hence, Plato would be thought of as a foundational thinker in the Western philosophical tradition. Similarly, too other traditions have their foundational thinkers such as Śaṅkara, Nāgārjuna, etc. and several others who have been foundational thinkers of their respective schools Advaita Vedānta, and Mādhyamika of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Plato bases and builds his philosophy on the Socratic thinking and method, using it to build his own framework, in that sense, Socrates is more foundational but since he has no written works ascribed to him, Plato instead keeps Socrates work alive through his writing and hence he becomes foundational. Śaṅkara draws from the philosophy of Upaniṣads, Gauḍapāda, and Bādarāyaṇa to come up with his conceptualization of the monistic, idealistic philosophy of Advaita Vedānta, he therefore, is a foundational thinker and founder of advaita, but not of the *Vedānta* philosophy. Nāgārjuna, on the other hand, is the founder of the Mādhyamika school of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which finds similarities with the monistic philosophy of Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara, although they belong to opposing traditions.

Modern Indian texts on Indian philosophy, not just overemphasize Śaṅkara, but present Indian philosophy proper as having begun with Śaṅkara and also in some sense end it with Śaṅkara. Contemporary thinkers have taken Śaṅkara and his philosophy to be truly representative Indian philosophic thought<sup>64</sup> and he represents its true culmination in the process ignoring the contribution and influences of earlier thinkers and other traditions in his thought as well as the *Advaita* philosophy. Indian philosophy (*āstika*) because it revolves round schools and not thinkers, it is rare that a thinker occupies such a great position and status as Śaṅkara. The idea of what we now know as ‘Hinduism’ can find its roots in the philosophy of Śaṅkara, more than any other thinker

of the past. The distinction between the orthodox conceptions of *Self* and those of the *others* who fall outside tradition becomes very sharp in the philosophy of Śaṅkara. “Hinduism” again is a contested term and a modern term for an ancient religion, ‘Hinduism’ represents what then was the *āstika* traditions.

The previous chapter dealt with two texts, the Upaniṣads and the Milinda Pañhā, of the pre-systematization period, classified under proto-philosophical literatures (pre-philosophical speculations) or beginnings of philosophy or prior. Both these texts had a style and form which was essentially narrative, dialogical and belonging to two opposing traditions. The next period for the sake of convenience is taken to be the systematization period nothing much is known about the intervening period. The systematic period also called the *post-Vedic-period* is characterized by the development of the six orthodox systems the *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Sāṃkhya*, *Yoga* and *Mīmāṃsā* (Agrawal 2001, iv). It is argued that the seeds for these systems were already present in the Upaniṣads. This period is characterized by the collection of *Sūtras* which are regarded as the foundations for various systems. In the previous chapter we used the Sanskrit term *Śāstra* to define a 'text', a *Sūtra* is different from a *Śāstra* and is not just a text but a canon<sup>65</sup>. The *Nyāya Sūtra* (3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC) of Gautam, the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras* (4<sup>th</sup> Century BC) of Kaṇāda, *Śāṃkhya Sūtras* (350-450 C.E) of Kapila, *Yoga Sūtra* (400-500 C.E) of Patañjali and *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras* (2<sup>nd</sup> Century A.D) of Jaimini are the foundational texts for their respective schools. In this chapter the focus is not on the systematization<sup>66</sup> (*Sūtra*) period but the commentarial (*Bhāṣya*) tradition this follows from the usual motif in Indian texts where excessive attention is placed on the commentaries rather than the original texts on which the commentaries are based. The *Bhāṣyas* are explications and exegesis of the *Sūtras*, sometimes the explication follow immediately after a particular *sūtra* has been stated or after a couple. The vagueness of the philosophical *Sūtras* makes it impossible to understand without a *bhāṣya*, there could be several *bhāṣyas* for a single *sūtra*. Ferenz Ruzsa (2010, 427) argues that “there is no point in speaking about the ‘true’ meaning of a given sentence or paragraph - it may have had several interpretations in different historical context, and there is no available standard to establish which interpretation is more fundamental or original”.

Commentaries form a major chunk of Indian philosophical literatures and any kind of study in classical Indian thought requires examining the commentaries. While with the original (*mūla*) texts there is no way of attributing authorship, dates etc, it is kind of possible to organize the varied

commentaries and trace them to particular root texts. Explication and exegesis was required for the philosophical sections of the *sūtras* which dealt with philosophical problems such as the philosophy of the *self*, relation between *self* and the world, mind and the world, issues of language and meaning, importance and efficacy of rituals, and epistemological questions about knowledge, nature and sources of knowledge. In this chapter, we look at the commentaries of Śaṅkara, Nāgārjuna, and Vijñānabhikṣu, each representing different traditions of thought such as Vedānta, Mādhyamaka, and Bhedābheda schools. In the Buddhist tradition to which Nāgārjuna belongs, the original texts are called *suttas* belonging to the Pāli canon, and the varied commentaries serve to explicate the meanings of the scriptures. Before going into the commentarial works of these specific thinkers this chapter tries to explore some of the essential features of classical Indian commentaries.

#### 4.2 Essential features of classical Indian commentaries:

India has a long commentarial tradition. Commentaries serve various purposes and are characterized by specific features. The Indian Intellectual history has essentially been an investigation into the nature, form, and history of these commentaries. Preisendanz argues that the “Commentaries are heterogeneous in nature-from the point of view of form and content of these commentaries themselves, and sometimes even of a single work, that allows for and justifies different evaluations and therefore different kinds of historical, methodological and philosophical investigations based on these sources.” (Preisendanz 2008, 600)

Commentaries sometimes carry with them historical relevant information that may have either been lost because no original text is available or that it is not present in the source text for instance the Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṅkhyakārika* and *Yuktidīpika* are considered to be the only sources through the basic philosophical tenets of classical Sāṅkhya can be reconstructed in absence of the original text. *Yogabhāṣya* assigned to Vyāsa provides explication and supplements the *Yogasūtra* so also the *Śābarabhāṣya* on the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*. Many of the commentaries were written several centuries later than the original texts were composed for instance, Śaṅkara's commentary on Bādarāyana's *Brahma Sūtra* (5<sup>th</sup> Century, B.C.E) was written 2-3 centuries later and so also many of the other commentaries, the commentator and the original author separated by many centuries hence, as already discussed in first chapter there is the problem of interpretation, and no way to arrive at the original authorial intent,

hence, many texts also contain interpolated material. But there are also commentaries, auto-commentaries written by direct disciples of the authors of the *sūtra*, such as Kamalaśīla's commentary on Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasaṅgraha* is an important source of original *Nyāya* thought, even then there may be problem of interpretation for instance, the auto-commentary representing a different point of view than the original *mūla* text. The features required for a commentary to be recognized as an auto-commentary are textual composition, literary style, plausibility, coherence, precision, and unambiguousness of interpretation (Preisendanz 2008, 602). All commentaries belonging to the Vedānta tradition and also the other so-called *āstika* schools are essentially involved in exegetical work as much as philosophical debates, therefore, like the earlier works such as the Upaniṣads, they also contain a variety of elements and hence a strictly philosophical analysis would be inadequate, these texts contain both philosophy and exegesis both play competing roles in these commentaries (Clooney 1992, 47-68).

### 4.3 Śāṅkara and his commentary:

The tradition to which Śāṅkara's owes his allegiance to, the *Vedānta* tradition is as already mentioned a strictly commentarial tradition. The term *samanvaya* means “to bring together (synthesis) by removing contradictions”. Bringing synthesis by removing contradictions is the purpose of the commentary of Śāṅkara on Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahma Sūtra*, which is to explicate the meanings and organize views which were already expressed in the unsystematized Upaniṣads whether it be cosmology, mythology, soteriology etc and this was done by Bādarāyaṇa even before Śāṅkara. Francis Clooney argues that when engaging with Śāṅkara's commentary (*Bhāṣya*) it is important to look at the text that Śāṅkara is commenting on, the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* or the *Brahma Sūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E), further the upaniṣads were themselves culmination of older texts the Brāhmaṇas (Clooney and Tracy 1990, 287-314). Śāṅkara's is considered the first commentary on Bādarāyaṇa's text and therefore significant but was in no time followed by several other commentaries, whose views were divergent to that of Śāṅkara's like Bhāskara (Late 8<sup>th</sup> century) Rāmānuja (11<sup>th</sup> century), Mādhava (13<sup>th</sup> century) each one providing a different interpretation of the Sūtra and in turn the creation of schools within Vedānta. Paul Deussen (1973[1883]), Eliot Deutsch (1969), and recently Francis Clooney have pointed out correctly that the Vedānta project is both at once ‘philosophical’ and ‘commentarial’, and that there is a conscious intersection between the two. The colonial scholarship as well as the Indian academic scholarship has focused more on the

philosophical side while ignoring the exegetical, commentarial aspects. Here, the emphasis is on the exegetical aspects of Śaṅkara's commentary, which includes textual organization, criticism, understanding of the nature of textual processes within the text, how does Śaṅkara think from within the text doing this will put in actual perspective the intention and provide insight to the whole Vedānta enterprise and not just of Śaṅkara but Bādarāyaṇa as well and this could be extended to all Vedāntins. The method is not a verse by verse or individual sūtra by sūtra reading or translation but an attempt to understand the textual structure those portions which are commentary on a particular sūtra and keep separate the philosophical from the exegetical. To do this it is important to know how these texts are organized, identify the parts which are the *bhāṣya*, from arguments and explications.

#### 4.4 The *Sūtra* and *Bhāṣya* organization:

- i. All commentaries are additions to an already existent text, the base (*mūla*) text. Every canonical text begins with a similar kind of statement or aphorism, for instance, the *Brahmasūtra* verse (1.1.1) begins with the statement "*athātho brahma-jijñāsa*" (Hence thereafter, a deliberation on *Brahman*), similarly the Vaiśeṣikasūtra verse (1.1.1) of Kaṇāda begins with "*athāto dharmam vyākhyāsyāmah*" (Hence, thereafter we shall explain Dharma), the Mīmāṃsāsūtra verse (1.1.1) of Jaimini begins with "*athāto dharmajijñāsa*" ("Hence, thereafter an enquiry into Dharma"), the Yogasūtra verse (1.1.1) of Patañjali begins with "*Atha Yogānusāsanam*" (Now, then the exposition of concentration) etc. Therefore, everything begins with an enquiry into something. The term '*jijñāsa*' is symbolic for 'desire' and it literally means the 'desire to know', this immediately sets of asking other similar questions like 'what is that which needs to be known?', 'why is there a desire to know it?', 'how can one know it?', 'Is this thing to be known already known, or is it unknown and therefore an enquiry into it?' etc these are basically epistemological questions. Once the topic for enquiry is laid out, then the actually enquiry begins. Now there is difference between the way that Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahmasūtra* begins and Śaṅkara's *Brahmasūtra* bhāṣya. In the Bhāṣya there is a preamble called *Adhyāsa Bhāṣya*, this is not present in the original text. The purpose of the *Adhyāsa* also translated as 'superimposition' lays out Śaṅkara's project which is to demonstrate that given the multiplicity of views about reality, there is only one reality that is of Brahman. Śaṅkara points out the reasons for the multiplicity of views pointing to error due to superimposition (*adhyāsa*) of two very different things on one another and argues that this has led to obstruction of true knowledge. After this section, the succeeding one's begin with the

enquiry into the central theme of the sūtra is *Brahman*, this addition to the original text is what Preisendanz calls ‘superimposition and promotion of novel ideas in commentaries’, where presuppositions are superimposed on to the *mūla* text (Preisendanz 2008, 603).

- ii. Once the topic for enquiry (which here is *Brahman*) is stated in the first aphorism of the *sūtra*, then in the commentary *bhāṣya* the explication begins, next the opponents imagined position for the following topic is stated called the *Pūrvapakṣa*, for instance, in the *Brahmasūtra bhāṣya* following the first aphorism, the opponent’s position states “A previous understanding of the religious rites can be accepted here as the special factor (leading to the deliberation on *Brahman*)” (trans. Gambhirananda 1977, 35). Given this *pūrvapakṣa* there is a back and forth between opponents and Vedāntin on why the enquiry into Brahman does not require or follow from the deliberation on the religious rites. This ‘religious rites’ is actually a topic of enquiry in the previous *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* and here in the *Brahmasūtra bhāṣya* an effort is made to move away from the earlier discourse on ritualism and performance of religious rites to an enquiry into and means of knowing *Brahman*. The back and forth is the dialectic between the *Self* (Vedāntin) and imagined others (opponents). Then this is finally followed by the *Siddhānta*, which is the final established position often reflecting the position of the original author or of the commentator, it justifies the initial position or statement. There in the back and forth between opponent and Vedāntin lies the commentary, this is where the *bhāṣyakāra* comes in. So a standard commentary consists of the views of the original author (*sūtrakāra*), the commentator (*bhāṣyakāra*) and the imagined views of the *others* (non-Vedāntins), an imaginary opponent’s claim *Pūrvapakṣa*, the response *uttarapakṣa* and the established position *Siddhānta*.
- iii. The *Brahma Sūtra* consists of a total of 555 sūtras, but there are variations with other commentaries such as that of Bhāskara and Rāmānuja. Ruzsa points out that there are eight that do not occur in all three commentaries of Śaṅkara, Bhāskara, Rāmānuja and others. There are also differences in terms of the exact wording of about 70 sūtras, and no agreement on what text a given sūtra refers to and in case of Śaṅkara himself he proposes more than one interpretation to a sūtra (2010, 437). Since the sūtras do not give any information or reference to the text being discussed giving the commentator the freedom to choose from a vast collection of texts, so much so that different commentators select different topics under the same set of sūtras, adding to the difficulty in analysis and interpretation of texts. It is also argued that the part containing the

polemic, the refutations between different schools was a later addition and not part of the original text. All these add to the problem of interpretation, meaning and locating the text and author in historical context.

All of these point to the fact that the Śāṅkara *Bhāṣya* although presented as the first and the only reliable instance of Bādarāyaṇas Sūtras need not be true for reasons discussed above. Hence, the questions and method of engagement also need to shift from attempting to find original authorial intent, whether commentator has been strict with the author's intent, the original meaning etc to textual organization, criticism, understanding the intent of the commentator in the text and hence, a historical-critical cum philological method as already stated. Before this it is important to revisit the interpretative strategy used by Śāṅkara in his commentary.

#### 4.5 Śāṅkaracārya's method of interpretation:

This section seeks to understand the basic presupposition from which Śāṅkara sets out on the task of interpreting which is that there is only one reality and that is the truth and it is *Brahman*, it is what the original text and the central purport of the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtra and the Bhagavad Gītā (*Prasthāna Trayī*) claims the commentator. So all commentators assuming this basic position that there is one doctrine which underlies all the canonical texts (*prasthāna*) begin the process of interpretation or writing commentaries. For instance, all of Śāṅkara's philosophy can be summarized using the following phrase *brahma satyam jagan-mithyā jivo brahmaiva nāparah* || which means that there is only one truth that is Brahman, the whole world is mere appearances and that the individual soul is identical with Brahman. It is this premise from which all interpretation starts. By introducing the *adhyāsa bhāṣya* at the beginning of the commentary Śāṅkara while claiming to be true to tradition has already at the first instance deviated from it. In addition, the two fold classification of knowledge *parā vidyā* and *aparā vidyā*, the doctrine of *māyā* leading to the unreality of the world were things not in Bādarāyaṇa's text. It has been argued that the actual text of Bādarāyaṇa does not talk of the unreality of the world, and also that it is a theistic system which is closer to Ramānuja and Nimbārka than that of Śāṅkara. Śāṅkara wanted to ensure that this doctrine of *māyavāda* can be supported and defended by a strong epistemological theory and so came up with the *adhyāsa bhāṣya*.

The unreality of the phenomenal world was supported by the theory of superimposition, which was taken to be factual and this was supported by examples. Śāṅkara's doctrine of unreality of the

phenomenal world closely follows from Buddhism, Gauḍapāda along with Brhaḍāraṇyaka Upaniṣad and his own interpretations of the Upaniṣads. Modi argues that each interpreter of the Vedānta philosophy belonging to various schools followed precedent from an already existing tradition like Śaṅkara from Buddhism and Gauḍapāda, Ramānujā from the works of Tamil saints (*Āḷwars*) and used it in his interpretation along with the help of the commentary of the *Vṛttikāra* which he found in Kashmir (Modi 1956, v). So by interpreting works which people at the particular time considered to be the canons of religion, each succeeding *Ācārya* of a particular school incorporated in to their own philosophy the social, political and intellectual changes of the time thus making it relevant and creative for that historical time. The task of a *ācārya*, argues Modi, was not just that of a critical interpreter; he was also the religious guide of his time and had to perform his duties. When the teacher becomes a philosopher his primary task becomes that of interpretation, of critiquing others view, of establishing views, and role which he plays is that of a religious guide.

In the Indian context, being religious and being philosophical are not seen as opposing characteristics, in fact one leads to the other. The founders of schools therefore played multiple roles as teachers, as philosophers and as religious guides in pre-modern India. While there was Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle who argued with *others*, established and refuted positions, and headed certain schools they were not religious guides of their communities even at that time. Śaṅkara, for instance, was the *Maṭhādhipati*, meaning leader of a sect establishing *maṭas* in the four corners of the country, while Ramānujācārya did not establish *maṭas* across the country he did lead a sect the Vaishnavite sect and so also most other orthodox Hindu *ācāryas*. This should be seen not just in the context of continuity of tradition but also of exclusion and this has come to inform so much of the contemporary conception of Indian philosophy itself as a discipline.

Going back to Śaṅkara he works on the premise that all the *prasthānas* teach the same truth which is the reality of *Brahman*. This chapter explores the various methods and approaches used by both Western thinkers as well as the interpretative methods used by modern Indian thinkers to engage with classical thinkers like Śaṅkara, Nāgarjunā, and Bhāviveka. Paul Ricoeur provides a comprehensive framework to address issues related to texts and textual interpretation. He argues

Interpretation has a history and this history is a segment of tradition itself. Interpretation does not spring from nowhere; rather one

interprets in order to make explicit, to extend, and so to keep alive the tradition itself, inside which one always remains. (Ricoeur 2005, 27)

This quote from Ricoeur reflects in many ways the purpose and task of the classical Indian interpreters as well, that their interpretation is never separated from the tradition they come from and thereby the history that comes along with it. But again it is difficult to say that these commentators have been true to tradition or at least in case of Śaṅkara it seems to be true<sup>67</sup>. Since it is not possible from the commentaries to know the view of the *Sūtrakāra* and therefore the inability to distinguish between the thoughts of the *Bhāṣyakāra* and that of the *Sūtrakāra* in the different commentaries. The views of Bādarāyaṇa should be considered his own rather than confusing it with the views of Śaṅkara in the commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*. Every author of the systematization<sup>68</sup> period is creating or attempting to create his own system like Bādarāyaṇa's systematization attempt in the *BS* and his alone, when his text is commented upon the various *bhāṣyakāra*'s they are adding something more, explicating meaning and also in the process modifying the meaning or concept but each is declaring their reverence and claiming to be truthful to Bādarāyaṇa's views.

#### 4.6 Method of Śaṅkaracārya:

Classical Indian philosophy central methodology is the dialectical method which helps to establish ones philosophical position through debating opposing views as Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya would describe "a clash of ideas or through a confrontation of a thesis with its antithesis" (Chattopadhyaya 1976, 4). Śaṅkara is also an inheritor of this practice and method. The three components in the art of debate between the 'Self' and 'others' is evidence, argument and fallacious thinking, this is also the 'critical method'. There is a 'final ascertainment' of a philosophical position on the 'critical examination' of the problem. This final ascertainment of one's position also called *nirnaya* and the critical examination is called *pariksa*. Śaṅkara's thesis is to show that all of the *prāsthānas* including the Upaniṣads, *Bhagavad Gītā* and Bādarāyaṇas *Sūtra* speak about one single reality that of Brahman. So if all these texts speak of the same reality why then does there exist conflicts in terms of varied views on the same topic, hence, Śaṅkara deviating from Bādarāyaṇa's *Sūtra* comes up with the epistemological thesis (*ādhyāsa bhāsyā*). The *ādhyāsa bhāsyā* argues that every day cognitions which use experience and reason are bound to fail or lead to error and therefore, the inability to understand

reality particularly that of absolute *Brahman*. This epistemological thesis put forth by Śaṅkara is used in turn to prove other interrelated thesis such as unreality of the phenomenal world, the Idealistic thesis of the oneness of universal self *Brahman* and the individual self *ātman* (*atmaikatva*). These interventions (in terms of interpretation) of Śaṅkara are unique and foreign to Bādarāyaṇas *Sūtra* and in that sense the *bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara should be considered his systematization effort different from that of Bādarāyaṇas, but of course he builds on an earlier system developed by Bādarāyaṇa. Many would argue that ‘Śaṅkara is only a commentator and not a propounder of an independent philosophy of his own’ (S. K. Chattopadhyaya 2012, 8) but of course we know it is not necessarily true because his commentary did help propound an independent philosophy which then came to be called the *Advaita Vedānta*.

The central philosophical divide in the commentary as well as the *Sūtra* and in all of Indian philosophy is essentially the divide between the Idealists and the Realists. Between those who are wanting to show the unreality of the phenomenal world, and providing a secondary status to experience and reason and those that want to show the reality of the material world through sense experience, cognition and reason. Śaṅkara like Nāgārjuna belongs to the first group while their exact theory of nature of reality may differ, while Nyāyāyikas-Vaiśeṣikas, the realist schools of Buddhism belong to the second camp. Therefore, the foremost philosophical problem which forms a connecting thread across all schools in Indian philosophy is the problem of the reality of the material world and in this context the difference between Idealism and its antithesis which is realism. The effort of systematisation among the so-called Idealists has been consistent while it is not been the case with the realists. Even in the *Brahmasūtra bhāṣya* (*BSBh*) there is effort toward bringing different systems (*samanvaya*) toward a conceptualization of an idealist position through establishing a single reality across systems. This is achieved through contradiction of various other positions (*avirodha*).

Śaṅkara on his part states his thesis through the *adhyāsa bhāṣya* (theory of superimposition). In the process to showing that common experience and reason fails which is why we commit errors in understanding reality and establishing the ultimate truth, Śaṅkara makes a distinction between two kinds of reality, ordinary-conventional (*vyavaharika*) and extraordinary transcendental (*paramarthika*), the former grouped under the category “*as it appears*” and the latter “*as it is*” which can be translated in contemporary philosophy as the problem between ‘reality’ and ‘appearance’. Śaṅkara introduces two kinds of illusions or errors that occur one at the epistemic level and second at

the level of metaphysics or being, the former is called *maya* and the latter *adhyāsa* and they both complement each other. All false appearances occur at the level of phenomenal or *vyavaharika* level and reality at transcendental, level and can only be achieved through transcendence, similarly too knowledge occurs at two levels *paravidya* and *aparavidya*. The conventional knowledge leads one to mistakenly identify things of very different nature such as identity of self with body, the senses and this is caused by ignorance (*avidyā*).

So by putting forward an epistemological thesis about what are the obstructions to knowledge, Śāṅkara's project is two-fold one to show that 'Self' is one pure undifferentiated consciousness and second it is the sole-reality (*atma ca brahma*). He disregards the plurality of selves and also of the totality of objective appearances. In this way the Upaniṣadic idea that when the reality of the oneness of the empirical and absolute *self* is known there is nothing else to be known<sup>69</sup>, and the knowledge of the *self* is the foundation of all knowledge (*brahma-vidyām sarva-vidyā-pratiṣṭham*) is established through the *adhyāsa* of Śāṅkara. In conclusion from the *adhyāsa bhāṣya* Śāṅkara establishes the subjective self as the ground of experience which is not separate from the self-conscious principle, which by itself cannot be subject to any kind of distortion. The subject is the witnessing consciousness (*sakshi*) which is also the ground of all proof and knowing, but this consciousness is not directly known. According to the *Adhyāsa bhāṣya*, section 1,

The self is not absolutely beyond apprehension, because it is apprehended as the content of the concept "I", and because the Self, opposed to the non-Self, is well known in the world as an immediately perceived (i.e., self-revealing entity). (trans. Gambhirananda 1977, 3)

This is then followed by the opponent raising the question of the knowability of *Brahman* and so Śāṅkara then explicates the meaning of *Brahman* or what it is to know *Brahman*. In 1.1.1, he says,

Besides, the existence of *Brahman* is well known from the fact of It's being the Self of all; for everyone feels that his Self exists and he never feels, "I do not exist." Had there been no general recognition of the existence of the Self, everyone would have felt, 'I

do not exist. And that Self is *Brahman*. (trans. Gambhirananda 1977, 12)

So if *Brahman* is known why then an inquiry into the words of the Upaniṣads. Here he argues that the knowledge we possess is of a conventional, general nature (*sāmānya jñāna*) and this knowledge is not adequate, prone to error and there is a lack of specific knowledge (*viśeṣa jñāna*) and due to this there is superimposition (*adhyāsa*). Śaṅkara dismisses all modes of knowing and cognition the *pramana*, *prameya* and the *pramata* because all of these are found to be vitiated by falsity and therefore, the demand for proof does not make any sense (trans. Gambhirananda 1977, 26). So going by this view what we call today as Science, which is based on facts of the empirical world would be an invalid source of knowledge.

#### 4.7 The principle of *Samanvaya*

The principle of *samanvaya* is to show the regularization of the Upaniṣads, the ‘homogenization and exploration of the stories and experiments into an informative ‘meta discourse’ about *brahman*. Once it is shown that the *Brahman* is the uniform, coherent topic of the Upaniṣads is *Brahman*, there is the effort to extract a singular meaning, and using texts as starting points for an even more independent consideration of *Brahman* (Clooney 1992, 51). The texts are used for instance the Upaniṣads, Bādarāyaṇas *Sūtra* are used as sources to extrapolate the meaning of *Brahman* this is a philosophical activity and not merely interpretation. For instance, in the sūtra 1.1.4, Śaṅkara argues:

That all-knowing, all-powerful Brahman, which is the cause of the origin, subsistence, and dissolution of the world, is known from the Vedānta part of the Scripture. How? Because in all the Vedānta texts the sentences construe in so far as they have purport, as they intimate that matter. (Trans. Thibaut 1962, 1:22)

This verse clearly states that the purpose, the central theme or topic of the Upaniṣads is *Brahman*. This is Śaṅkara’s response to Sāṃkhya and other schools which argue that the Upaniṣads do not uniformly point to *Brahman* as the highest reality. In the context of description of *Brahman* the two terms which are used are *nirguṇa* and *sagūṇa*. *Brahman* as *sagūṇa* is described by various qualifications (*guṇas*) and *Brahman* as *nirguṇa* is beyond these qualifications. As with other notions

these terms *nirguṇa* and *sagūṇa* are prone to be re-interpreted or mis-interpreted or even the meaning distorted when abstracted. According to Advaita and Śaṅkara, *Brahman* is interpreted as *nirguṇa* so that *brahman* would not be reduced to just textual interpretation and to be easily accessible to any learned person so *brahman* was assigned a special signification which was beyond text, beyond qualifications. The de-contextualized use of *nirguṇa brahman* separated from meditation and exigencies became a topic for extensive philosophical discussions. *Nirguṇa Brahman* was posited as the highest truth, while *sagūṇa* to the level of ignorance and merely religion, while *nirguṇa* was being extensively philosophized.

The *nirguṇa/sagūṇa* distinction is not Bādarāyaṇa's analysis but of Śaṅkara's, in the original text as Modi points out Bādarāyaṇa *puruṣavidha (sākāra)* and *a-puruṣavidha (nirākāra)*, translated as super-personal and impersonal (Modi 1956, vi). Both the *nirākāra* and the *sākāra* are said to have attributes that are of equal status in regards to attainment of *mokṣa*. No one view is preferred over the other, unlike Śaṅkara's *nirguṇa/sagūṇa* distinction where *nirguṇa* is associated with the transcendent while *sagūṇa* relegate to the empirical world, and even *Īśvara* belongs to this realm. So Śaṅkara's endorses hierarchical division, while the original author himself does not support any kind of hierarchy. When one speaks of the notion of 'Self' and 'Other', it is nowhere more obvious than in the kind of dialectics and polemic that the thinkers of the Sūtra and the post-sūtra period were involved in.

The subsequent portions in the chapter discusses the various dialectic and debates among different schools which significantly differ from the Upaniṣadic dialogues. With changes in the narrative form and structure from genre to another there is also change constitution of the selfhood and the intersubjective dynamics with the other. The next section looks at the Vedānta critique of other schools especially Śaṅkara's polemical with others in the *BSBh*.

#### **4.8 Vedānta Critiques of other schools:**

The Vedānta philosophy as developed from the Upaniṣads and the *Prāsthāna* was developed through a clash or contradictions in views between different opponents, similar to the Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The method of practice through which a philosopher understands himself is when his own thesis can carry conviction only in so far as it successfully negates the counter-thesis which would negate his own (D. Chattopadhyaya 1976, 9). So the anti-thesis or *pūrva pakṣa* is the most important element in the dialectic without which there is no establishing of one's

position. All sorts of arguments are offered in favor of the anti-thesis making it a strong thesis and then only the author or commentator proceeds attacking it in favor of his own position.

So having established this thesis or framework in the *Adhyāśabhāṣya* and the Introduction Śāṅkara or rather Bādarāyaṇa moves on to engaging in apologetics, to say something about and to other systems of thought to show not only that Vedānta's position as scripturally correct but also that they are logically and reasonably better than the position or views of the *others*. So the sūtra 2.2 begins with refuting the various heterodox schools and they are arranged in a manner where each preceding school has few errors and more similarity than the succeeding ones. The ordering of schools is as follows, Sāṅkhya (2.2.1-10), Vaiśeṣika (11-17), Buddhism in its Sarvāstivāda (18-27), Vijñānavāda (28-31), and Śūnyavāda (32), Jainism (33-36), Pāśupata (Śaiva) (37-41) and Pāñcarātra (Vaiṣṇava) (42-45). Many of the arguments against the opponents rely on the framework of scriptural authority (*Śabda pramāṇa*) arguing that the scripture says this and that but they do not explicitly state it. But as Clooney argues while the Vedāntins might base their arguments on scriptural authority but the complexity of ongoing debate with the opponent ensures that the scriptural authority is pushed to the background<sup>70</sup>. While it is possible to just consider this section for analysis but without the introduction provided and the previous section which lays out the prerequisite for a proper understanding of the text it would be not right to consider this section independently.

The two main opponents are grouped into 1. The inadequate Brahminical doctrines (Vedic) and 2. The non-Vedic world-views (Alston 1989, x.1). Alston interestingly in the Brahminical world-views includes *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*, *Yoga*, *Bhedābheda Vāda*, *Sphoṭa Vāda*, *Pāśupatas* and *Pāñcarātras*. The Non-Vedic world-views include materialism (*Cārvāka*), *Śāṅkhyas*, *Vaiśeṣikas*, *Buddhists* and *Jainas*. The relation between the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*<sup>71</sup> and *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* is an interesting one, the former is historically prior to the latter. *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* is rooted in what is known as Vedic exegesis, has a strong influence on the commentarial tradition of Śāṅkara. The inclusion of *Śāṅkhyas*, *Vaiśeṣikas* under non-Vedic world-views is interesting because these same schools are by later *Vedāntins* post-Śāṅkara appropriated into the Vedic world-view under the collective label of *āstikas*. *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* and the *Śāṅkhya* are the two schools which are extensively dealt with by Śāṅkara while other schools are merely touched upon or their views are generalized and rarely extensively engaged with. Here we look at the polemical with central opponents *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*, *Śāṅkhya* and the Buddhists schools as these were crucial to defining many of Śāṅkara's own positions and with that of *Advaita*.

#### 4.9 Śāṅkara and Pūrva Mīmāṃsā:

Clooney states “the textual, exegetical component of the knowledge of *Brahman* is not some residue of an already existing or older tradition nor is based on the unreflective aspect of Vedānta but through an increasing use of the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* ritual/exegetical system which makes possible and necessary a continuing attention to texts as the proper context for its philosophical thinking” (Clooney 1992, 55). Thereby *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* provides the method used by Śāṅkara and post-Śāṅkara *Vedāntins* to engage in textual exegesis and interpretation of the *mūla* texts. The idea that ‘reason’ itself serves no purpose unless it amplifies and explain what is already revealed in the scriptures comes from *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*. So the Indian Idealists fall back on scriptural authority and tradition whenever it’s not possible to provide an explanation or interpretation and this supported by the exegetical rules provided in the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* tradition with regards to language. While there may seem no major disagreements between *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* and *Vedānta* of Śāṅkara because their basic doctrines are never dismissed but there are some areas of disagreement. The major disagreement regards the ultimate ground of all things according to the *advaitin* should be an existential reality (*parinisthata, bhuta-vastu*) and not *bhavyaviṣaya* of the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*, so it should be accessible to *pramāṇas* other than the *śrutī* texts. Consider this verse in *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* 1.1.4

*na dharma-jijñāsāyām-iva śrutyaḍaya eva pramānam brahajijñāsāyām.*

*kimtu srutyādayo 'nubhavādayaśca yathāsambhavam iha pramāṇam.*

*anubhava-avasānatvāt bhuta-vastu-viṣayatvāt ca brahmajjñānasya. kartavye*

*hi viṣaye na anubhava-apeksā asti iti śrutyaḍīnām eva prāmāṇyam syāt.*

This passage has been translated differently by differently scholars. According to Thibaut, what Śāṅkara is saying is that ‘scriptural texts (*Śrutī*), and the other permitted modes of cognition are not the only means of knowledge as they are in the enquiry in the active duty (*dharma*) as specified by the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*. Scriptural authority on one hand and intuition (*anubhāva*) on the other hand are also modes of cognition which one adopts depending on the context or occasion. Intuition is the final result of an enquiry into Brahman (*brahajijñāsām*). Secondly, the object of enquiry is an existing (accomplished) substance, but if the enquiry of Brahman were something to be accomplished then there would be no reference to intuition and text would be the only means of knowledge (Trans.

Thibaut 1962, 17). From this what one gathers is that Śaṅkara also accepted *anubhavā* as a valid *pramāṇa*, but many others have argued that Śaṅkara does not accept *anubhavā* as a valid *pramāṇa* and have restricted the realization of Brahman as only through scriptures and texts. But Śaṅkara argues that in matters of ‘transcendental grounds of things’ the scriptures (*śruti*) alone will not suffice but experience along with inference is required, but as far as existential grounds of things the scriptures would suffice. In the first *adhyaya*, *padas* 1-4 Śaṅkara argues how the *śruti* texts<sup>72</sup> do not lend any support to the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika formulations in transcendental metaphysics (S. K. Chattopadhyaya 2012, 225). Those systems which do not have any basis in the *śruti* texts are referred to as '*a-śabda*' or '*a-srauta*' (non-vedic and not supported by *Śabdapramāṇa*) and in these context the *Sāṅkhya* and *Vaiśeṣika* are classified as non-vedic. It is this same classification which later acquired a whole new kind of connotation in the medieval period to being classified as '*āstika*' and '*nāstika*' though by that time (12<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> century) *Sāṅkhya* and *Vaiśeṣika* became part of Vedic world-view. This of course will be discussed in later chapters.

The project of Śaṅkara in his commentary on the Bādarāyaṇa's *sūtras* is the systematization of the Upaniṣads. Clooney states that "the project of the interpretation of the Upaniṣads via Bādarāyaṇa's text became increasingly the project of elaborating meaning as discoverable strictly in the words, sentences, and contexts themselves. Like the Mīmāṃsakas, the Advaita commentators at every turn "restrain" extra textual reference within the overarching frame of the text, which is not replaced by knowledge, even if the object of knowledge remains "outside of text" (Clooney 1992, 56). This effort to interpret the text and its content through itself and context is known as '*intertextuality*'. The 'intertextual rules' are laid out by the Mīmāṃsakas by which grammatical and literary connections within the text provide all the information required for interpretation of texts. These 'intertextual' rules are not absolute or fixed but vary according to context leading to varied interpretation and meaning. The 'meaning' can be obtained by the grammar, literary style and context present in the text, this provides the reason for the original authorial intent to be ignored, or the nature of the object of reference, as the primary tools to arriving at meaning. This is similar to the Derrida's deconstruction view that "*There is nothing outside of the text*" (Derrida 1976, 163), which also constitutes a kind of radical idealism where there is nothing external of the text from which meaning can be gathered but the language within the text helps construct 'meaning' and therefore 'reality'.

This method of the Mīmāṃsakas played a crucial role in influencing Śaṅkara in his commentarial project. Even the notion of *apauruṣeyatva* - which is that the Vedas has no authors (*puruṣa*), no expositors, the formulation of the ritual action and scripture did not require an agent or thing; external references to impermanent realities would destroy the idea of eternity and permanence postulated by them was also a contribution of the Mīmāṃsakas to the Vedānta of Śaṅkara and others. Many of the motifs and understanding surrounding Indian philosophy in the contemporary period such as being authorless, a-historical, privileging scriptural authority over reason and experience, eternity etc comes from the Pūrva Mīmāṃsa. So instead of looking at Śaṅkara commentarial project and methods in isolation the Pūrva Mīmāṃsa influence on the conception of *advaita (jñāna khāṇḍa)* needs to be explored and also the politics of ‘othering’ between the ‘vedic’ and the ‘non-vedic’ world-views begins with the Mīmāṃsakas although there are references to this distinction even prior to this in earlier works like the *Manusmṛti* or *Medhātithi's* (ninth century) commentary on *Manu*.

The Vedāntin is very flexible in his rules he sometimes may stick with the Pūrva Mīmāṃsa’s rule of ‘nothing beyond text’ but at other times ‘go beyond text’ to find external references to things mentioned in the texts. There is this conflict between scriptural authority (*Śabdapramāṇa*) versus experience (*anubhavā*) in Śaṅkara, he never explicitly denies experiences but privileges scriptural authority. The Vedāntin in this case Śaṅkara’s position is constantly evolving and there is no definite position excepting the presupposition of adhering to the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* or the *Prāsthānas* and also an assumption that this commentary is the right interpretation of the truths of both the *mūla* text and the *upaniṣads*.

#### 4.10 Śaṅkara and Sāṃkhya:

The next school which occupies an important place and which has been influential in the conception of a Vedānta world-view is Sāṃkhya. Śaṅkara saw this school as different and distinct from his own monistic philosophy and also as an important rival who would later become part of his systematization effort not as ‘rival’ but as a ‘partner’ in the conception of a Vedānta world-view. Śaṅkara argues that the right understanding of the Sāṃkhya concepts is bound to reveal its inner affinity with Vedānta (*BSBh* ii.2.10). It is not clear which works of Sāṃkhya Śaṅkara is referring to, from the various commentaries on the *Sāṃkhya Sūtra* or the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā*, but there are indications that Śaṅkara is referring to Vindhyavāsī’s<sup>73</sup> view. Sāṃkhya being the oldest of the Vedic schools, finds mention in all

major works from the Vedās, the Upaniṣads, to the Mahābhārata and by the time of Śāṅkara, it was no more an existing philosophy or tradition it was already a spent force when it was being attacked. Most Vedāntins including Śāṅkara's guru Gauḍapāda also wrote commentary on the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* called *Sāṃkhya Kārikā Bhāṣya* they knew about the significance of Sāṃkhya and its influence on their own philosophical views and perspectives. Śāṅkara argues that if correctly understood there is no real difference between Vedānta and Sāṃkhya, because ultimately both tried to establish their metaphysical and epistemological claims based on the Upaniṣads. But of course there is fundamental differences between Vedānta and Sāṃkhya. A large portion of the polemic in the *Brahmasūtra bhāṣya* is directed toward Sāṃkhya, the following section discusses some of the major arguments between the two schools.

#### 4.11 Śāṅkara's argument against Sāṃkhya's *Theory of Evolution*:

Evidence would suggest that Sāṃkhya was the first developed system or systematization effort under the Vedic world-view. It offers a complete system enumerating the cosmological, natural, human physiological and psychological aspects and in that sense is closer to the Upaniṣads<sup>74</sup>, which although in an unsystematized way discuss these various aspects. The Sāṃkhya School develops along with Yoga and the Vedāntins took interest in both. Śāṅkara *Brahmasūtra bhāṣya* sections (I.1.5-11 and 18, I.4.1-28, II.1.1-11 and II.2.1-10) are all dedicated to dealing with Sāṃkhya philosophy (which is based on *Sāṃkhya Kārikā*) clearly establishing that Sāṃkhya was an important, crucial rival to Brahmanical (Vedānta) philosophy. Sāṃkhya unlike Advaita is a dualistic system which advocates two ultimate realities *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. The evolution process in Sāṃkhya begins with the unfolding of the *Prakṛti* principle, while *Puruṣa*, the transcendental principle remains unchanged and acts as a witness to the unceasing transformation of *prakṛti* which has the nature of the root (*mūlaprakṛti*). The *Mūlaprakṛti* is unmanifest (*avyakta*), uncreated, uncaused (*avikṛiti*) and the primordial or primary (*pradhāna*). It is the *pradhāna* from which everything else arises. All things and the subsequent evolutes (*tattvas*) are contained in *mūlaprakṛti* in its subtly and unmanifest form. Contrast this with the Vedānta which considers the absolute reality (*brahman*) to be the cause or the beginning of the world.

In Sāṃkhya there is a gradual unfolding of creation (*Mūlaprakṛtī*). The *Mūlaprakṛtī* is described as the unmanifest (*avyakta*) possessing the original primordial root nature, consisting within itself or the

evolutes (*tattvas*) in an unmanifest form and everything arises from it through a gradual unfolding when in proximity with *puruṣa* (consciousness). The *Mūlaprakṛtī* consists of the three *guṇas* (*traiguṇya*) the *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. Initially the unmanifest *mulaprakṛtī* exists in a state of equilibrium, but when the *guṇas* are disturbed and equilibrium is lost the manifestation begins giving rise to the gross and subtle elements. The evolution or creation involves 23 *tattvas*, the newer ones forming from the previous ones. From *prakṛtī* emerges *mahat* or *buddhi*, from *buddhi* emerges *ahaṃkāra* or Ego and from Ego merges the *manas* or mind and from it the five sense capacities (*buddhīndriyas*), the organs of action (*karmendriyas*), the five subtle elements (*tanmātras*) and the five gross elements (*mahābhūtas*) (Larson 1979, 160-61). Therefore, the Sāṃkhya view of evolution arising out of two separate entities both of which are real (*puruṣa* and *prakṛtī*) is termed as dualism as opposed to the non-dual monism proposed by Śaṅkara, where creation is emanated from a single absolute reality and there is no duality between consciousness and the world, between the absolute *Brahman* and the individual selves.

The *Brahmasūtra*s of Bādarāyaṇa were composed to restore the monistic doctrine of the Upaniṣads from the dualistic interpretation of Sāṃkhya, this suggests that Sāṃkhya was probably much older<sup>75</sup>. The Sāṃkhya School of philosophy was the primary, oldest and foremost opponent or rival of Vedānta<sup>76</sup>, who opposed the performance of Vedic ritual which accompanied donations to the priests. Over the course of time Sāṃkhya deteriorated from what could have been an entire worldview or an extension of the Upaniṣads to a mere rationalistic, dualist system. It was important for Śaṅkara and Bādarāyaṇa before him to thoroughly refute it else it would be an obstacle to the formulation of their own monistic position. The Sāṃkhya position is refuted on the grounds 1. Of the concept of *Īśvara* as the designer or creator, 2. The theory of causality *satkāryavāda* 3. *Pradhānā* (*prakṛtī*) as the root cause of creation and 4. The insentient, unmanifest *puruṣa* as the cause of distortion of the state of equilibrium of the three *guṇas*.

According to Sāṃkhya, the *Smṛtis* also called *Tantra*<sup>77</sup>, written by the sage Kapila, the *pradhāna* is the independent cause of creation, for to ignore it would mean that the other *smṛtis* also lose their scope. The teachings are not like the *smṛtis* of Manu who maintain their scope in so far as they prescribe religious duties and rites for the four castes during the four stages of life, while the teachings of Sāṃkhya are based on the true insights of sages like Kapila leading to liberation. Śaṅkara, on the other hand, argues that Sāṃkhya is not a genuine *smṛtis* because it is not in conformity with the *Śruti*<sup>78</sup>,

for Sāṃkhya is an inferential system and based on independent reasoning<sup>79</sup> and not according to the true interpretation of *Śruti*. Even within the *āstika* schools it is not necessary to completely obey the *Śruti*, but they would need to accept its deontological, epistemic authority which would be the precondition for a school to be part of the Vedic orthodoxy (Elisa Freschi, 2012). Therefore, the Vedāntins seek to show that the Sāṃkhya categories are non-Vedic in origin and that there is no confusion in the *śruti* itself regarding the unity and absoluteness of all existence or consciousness. Using verse 1.4.10<sup>80</sup>, they try to show that the *Kāthopanīṣad*, which contains references to the Sāṃkhya categories are actually not indicative of those categories arguing that the words and the expressions are to be interpreted in the light of the context of their use and also the purpose for which they are used.

It is interesting to note that whenever it is suitable the contextual meaning is considered else the context is discarded and read outside context. Similarly, the use of the word *avyakta*, in the *Kathā* verse does not represent the Sāṃkhya doctrine of *Pradhāna*, rather a term used to suggest the ‘subtle’ like the subtle body (*Karana śarīra*). Similarly, the term ‘*aja*’ used in the *Śvetāśvatara Upanīṣad*, pointing to the Sāṃkhya category *Pradhāna*, which is the equilibrium of the three *guṇas rajas, tamas,* and *sattva*. Śāṅkara interprets that the conventional meaning of the term *aja* is a she-goat, it also etymologically means an unborn-female, but when seen from a context of its use, the expression would mean the *māyā sakti* of Brahman, hence, the *māyā* replaces now *prakṛtī*. Therefore, the differences between Sāṃkhya and the Vedāntin is a matter of interpretation. According to the original Sūtrakāra there is no *māyā*, it is a creation of Śāṅkara to refer to the power or principle that conceals the true nature of reality.

Another argument put forward by Śāṅkara categories is that they are not based on experience, especially with regards to notions such as *pradhāna* and *mahat* which are purely based on assumptions and hypothesis hence have no basis either in the *śrutis* or in experience (*anubhavā*) or even in language. But the main criticism against Śāṅkara is that while he is repudiating Sāṃkhya, he does not take into account several inferential statements in the Upanīṣads that actually support the doctrine of *pradhāna* as the material cause of the world and this is supported by the commentary in the *Sāṃkhyakārika*. Therefore, while Śāṅkara admits to the importance of the Sāṃkhya system given its antiquity, its relation with Buddhism and Jainism, and its insistence on logic<sup>81</sup> he still considers Sāṃkhya to be operating at the empirical, lower level of reality (*laukika*). He dismisses its

metaphysics and speaks of it as an inferential system therein he establishes the hierarchy between his own system of *Vedānta* and *Sāṃkhya*.

The next system to be refuted is the Vaiśeṣika system (*Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* 2.2.11 to 2.2.17), whose explanation of the physical world in terms of atoms (*paramāṇu*) coming together and disintegrating, a coming together of simple compounds to make complex compounds and the complex compounds which then break into simple constituents. The combination or conjunction of simple elements into complex compounds is called *samyoga*. The Vaiśeṣika system accepts three kinds of causes, they are, *samavayi* (intimate cause), *asamavayi* (non-intimate) and *nimitta karana* (instrumental) a combination of which explains all creations (S. K. Chattopadhyaya 2012, 244). *Adrṣṭa* which is the universal law, also the unknown, unseen force which makes possible the atoms to come into contact with the soul thus begins the activity of creating the dyads, triads and all the other gross elements (*mahabhūtas*). Here, too Śāṅkara argues that the atomic theory of the Vaiśeṣikas is conceptual, and cannot be used to provide an intelligible account of the world. Also that the Vaiśeṣika's claim of a qualitative difference between atoms is problematic, because if there is a qualitative difference then they cannot be eternal.

The other rival metaphysical systems are shown to be purely logical, conceptual systems based on postulates and hence are unsuitable to properly comprehend the absolute transcendental reality of *Brahman*. These other systems hence, are valid only at the level of empirical reality but invalid at the level of transcendental metaphysics. What strikes one at this point is that even within the *āstika* schools, in the method of Śāṅkara, there is a hierarchy of reality, difference between empirical reality and the metaphysical reality, between knowledge of the world and knowledge of the absolute. Śāṅkara's role in his dialectic with the others is fundamentally as an interpreter and commentator.

#### **4.12 Śāṅkara and Buddhism:**

The relation between Śāṅkara and Buddhism is a curious one, so also the relationship between Hinduism especially between Brahmanism and Buddhism. It is argued that by the 8<sup>th</sup> century which is the time of Śāṅkara, Buddhism had already begun to decline, but its influence particularly of the Mahāyāna Buddhism was significant. In the context of Indian history, Śāṅkara is treated differently by his immediate contemporaries like Bhāskara (750-800 C.E.) or Rāmānūjācārya (10<sup>th</sup> century), and the late medieval thinkers like Vījñānabhikṣu (16<sup>th</sup> century). In the modern times in the writings of

Orientalists, Indian thinkers like Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan etc he is presented in a totally different light. He is critiqued as being a pseudo Vedāntin (*Vedānti-bruva*) and as a “masked Buddhists” (*Pracchana-bāuddha*) (Vijñānabhikṣu and Garbe 1985, xii) to then being portrayed to being a savior of Hinduism, a unifier one who was responsible for the ouster and disappearance of Buddhism from the Indian subcontinent. The treatment of Śaṅkara in the premodern period was very different from Śaṅkara of the modern period, these descriptions of Śaṅkara are starkly opposed and are essentially based on constructions of historical Śaṅkara through texts such as commentaries, biographies and hagiographies. From a philosophical perspective, Śaṅkara’s philosophy largely develops through the dialectic with ‘Others’, especially the Buddhists. In order, to understand the exact extant of the influence of Buddhism, particularly the Mahāyāna Buddhism, on the conceptualization of Advaita and of Vedānta in general it is important to trace the history of thought to the lineage from which Śaṅkara descends.

#### 4.13 Vedānta before Śaṅkara:

Vedānta unlike other schools of thought has a long history and a traceable lineage. As a scholastic tradition, it gained prominence only after Śaṅkara followed by the founders of other Vedānta sub-schools. According to Nakamura, what in the contemporary period was attributed as unique and original to Śaṅkara was in fact already existent in the earlier Vedāntic thinkers (Nakamura 1983, 6). The Vedānta as a systematic philosophy is based on the Upaniṣads, therefore even before Vedānta, the Upaniṣads had already acquired scriptural authority. The period between the Upaniṣads and that of Śaṅkara which is close to a millennia is relatively unknown. Several attempts have been made to trace Śaṅkara’s predecessors. According to one listing from Kapila of Sāṃkhya to Śaṅkara, there are forty six teachers and according to another between Gauḍapāda and Govinda, Śaṅkara's teachers are four (Cenkner 1995, 31). Bhattacharya (1943) argues that Gauḍapāda the grand guru (*paramaguru*) of Śaṅkara the author of *Māṇḍukya Kārikā* (also called *Gauḍapāda-Kārika*, *Āgama-śāstra*) which is considered as a *śruti* by many Vedāntins is argued to be greatly influenced by Buddhist philosophy. Gauḍapāda is said to have borrowed the *illusiveness* of the manifold world activities and perceptions from Buddhism. According to Nāgārjuna's *Mādhyamika Kārika*, verse VII, 34<sup>82</sup> the term *illusiveness* is used to describe the phenomenal world (Isaveya 1993, 52). The term *māyā* can also be found in the *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, IV.10 signifying divine creative power and identified with *prakṛti* or nature. Prior to the systematic period also called the scholastic period in Indian philosophy, there seems to be

greater interaction between different philosophies and beliefs, but with the coming of the scholastic period the distinction between schools becomes sharper. Also as rightly argued by Nicholson,

The achievement of classical Indian philosophers such as Śaṅkara was to systematize the mystical insights of the Upaniṣadic seers, and by the fourteenth century, the ancient insights of the Vedic seers had been almost irrecoverably lost, covered over by the pedantry of medieval scholasticism and the effusive superstitions of devotional Hindu sects. (2010, 26)

Scholasticism in India as scholasticism elsewhere is based on dialectical reasoning<sup>83</sup> to either posit a thesis, to refute, to resolve contradictions etc, it is not much philosophizing as opposed to drawing distinctions between ‘Self’ and ‘other’. In the act of systematizing, organizing, deleting, restating in order to attain unity there is exclusion, negation and loss of meaning. The Buddhists and the Buddha have been placed and often projected in the contemporary texts as the central opponents or the quintessential other of the Vedāntins and of Śaṅkara. Earlier in the classical Hindu texts the Buddhists were the primary opponents distinct from the *āstikas* or the Vedāntins, but some modern texts argue that Buddhism was a product of ancient Vedism or Brahmanism and is not different or alien one opposed to the Vedas (Radhakrishnan 2008, 439). This is further demonstrated in the act of depicting the Buddha as incarnation of Viṣṇu. Dasgupta, on the other hand, in the *History of Indian Philosophy* asserts that

Śaṅkara and his followers borrowed much of their dialectic form and criticism from the Buddhists. His Brahman was very much like the *sūnya* of Nāgārjuna....I am led to think that Śaṅkara's philosophy is largely a compound of Vijñānavāda and Śūnyavāda Buddhism with the Upaniṣad notion of the permanence of self superadded. (Dasgupta 1922, 493-94)

Whatever relationship that Brahmanism had with Buddhism, or Śaṅkara with Buddhism, it is important to note the profound influence that Buddhism had on Śaṅkara, Vedānta and Hinduism in general. Śaṅkara's refutation of the Buddhist metaphysics falls into three sub-schools the *Sarvāstivādin* a school of Theravāda Buddhism who argue in defense of existential reality of all phenomena also called realists,

*Vijñānastitvavādin* school also called the Yogācāra school which argues that only consciousness is real also called idealists and *Sarvaśūnyatatvavādin* which argues that all things are empty of intrinsic nature and existence also called nihilists. Sūtras 2.2.18 to 2.2.32 of the *Brahma Sūtra* is reserved for the refutation of the Buddhist schools. There is a tendency in Śāṅkara to generalize Buddhism without taking into consideration the differences amongst schools within Buddhism. He uses the term *vināśa* which means destruction or annihilation to refer to all schools of Buddhism which subscribe to the non-existence of *ātman* as a separate ontological reality, destruction and nihilism (Isaveya 1993, 147). The exact term used by Śāṅkara is *Sarvavaināśikarāddhānta* which is translated as the doctrine that asserts the nihilism of everything. The central Buddhist doctrines of ‘dependent origination’ (*pratitya-samutpāda*), momentariness (*Kṣaṇikavāda*), the notion of uncomposite elements (*asamṣkṛta-dharma*) and the notion of causality are attacked by Śāṅkara.

Buddhists teachings place equal importance on the physical and the psychological aspects. According to the *Sarvāstivāda* school the empirical world is made up of aggregate (*samudāya*) of elements, these elements are divided into gross elements (*bhūta*) and their derivations and the mental states and their derivations (*citta*), they identify the elements or atom not as a substrate or carrier of some qualities like weight, size, solidity, smell, but rather as a source of a particular sensation which comes about when it comes into contact with the organ of perception (*indriya*). The basis for the conception of the doctrine of aggregate is the denial of any permanent substance, which forms a substratum for the transient and temporary attributes. According to Śāṅkara the aggregate of elements is not possible without a conscious agent, otherwise any activity of unconscious agent coming together out of their own accord would be endless and would essentially depend on the attribute of the elements themselves<sup>84</sup>. The same line of reasoning is used against Sāṃkhya and also Vaiśeṣika. As rightly pointed out by Isayeva, Śāṅkara instead of conceiving it as a psychological and epistemological problem attempts to convert it into an ontological problem and as also mentioned there is a tendency to overlook the differences between the Vaibhāṣika and the Sautrāntika schools and make generalized claims about all Buddhist schools such as Buddhism is a doctrine that asserts total nihilism (Malkovsky 2000, 21-22).

With regards to the doctrine of causation *Pratītyasamutpāda*, in *Sūtra* 2.2.21, the Vedāntins argues that this theory of causation leads to self-contradiction because the Buddhists also prescribed to the doctrine of momentariness of things. If the doctrine of momentariness is to be accepted, then the effect can arise only with the disappearance of the cause since the cause is momentary. Then the effect would appear to

arise without a cause, and if things would arise without a cause then anything could arise from anywhere and this would go contrary to the view that everything that originates dependently originates, so it leads to logical difficulties. The central criticism is that the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda*, the twelve causal links, which explains suffering, desire, birth, death, life etc. arises in dependence from the preceding member and the chain is unending, every successive link is caused by the preceding link, but this does not in any way explain the cause of aggregates or of the chain as a whole.

The sūtras 2.2.28 to 2.2.32 consists of arguments refuting the Idealist schools of Buddhism which would include the Vijñānavāda and the Śūnyavāda schools belonging to the Mahāyāna tradition, the advaita and the Mahāyāna have a lot in common. According to the Vijñānavāda School, the object of perception and perception itself is simultaneous, there is a coming together of content and the act of cognition. At any particular time there is only one moment (*kṣaṇa*), all successive moments are heterogeneous, any coinciding moment will be posited as identical. According to Śāṅkara, there is no distinction between the object and its cognition since they cannot be perceived apart from each other and this would not have been possible if their basic constituent nature was essentially different, so there is no object apart from the cognizer<sup>85</sup>. The one valid means of cognition according to Vijñānavāda is vijñāna (consciousness more specifically subjective consciousness), it refers to either specific states of consciousness or pure consciousness which is devoid of any attributes and all external objects are originated in consciousness.

Śāṅkara uses Bādarāyaṇa's sūtra (II.2.28), *nābhāva upalabdheh*, which when translated means "There is no non-existence of the objects because of their perception", perception is not just of means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), and also constructs the image of the object for consciousness. Śāṅkara argues that only through the applicability or non-applicability of *pramāṇa* can be used to explain the possibility or impossibility of knowledge. Even the *pramāṇas* or valid means of cognition can be explained, verified only in the realm of empirical reality and there is no direct relationship between *pramāṇa* and ontological category *ātman*. According to the Advaitin there is a contradiction when the Buddhists say that "there is no object, because they are perceived", because if the object did not exist at all how can one be familiar, here the Advaitin Śāṅkara argues from the perspective of common sense and worldly (*laukika*) reality, with the idealists Śāṅkara argues from a realist perspective, and with the realist from an idealist perspective. However, these differences between Vijñānavāda and Advaita seem to be minimal in comparison to the commonality in their main tenets. From a Vijñānavāda perspective, all human perceptions are similar to dreams, they are illusory, whereas for an Advaitin, perceptions of objects in

waking state are different from dreams because in dream, the reality is lost once the person comes back into his waking state, whereas the perception of things in the waking state is more real.<sup>86</sup> With regards to the *Śūnyavāda*, the advaitins argue that nihilist position is totally contrary to all means of valid knowledge<sup>87</sup>. Here also one can see a tendency to not critically engage with the opponent's position, which is just dismissed as a position that subscribes to emptiness or *śūnya*, where all things are non-existent or mere absence, but in reality the *śūnyavāda* argues that things exist only conventionally and lack an independent existent. While some argue that Śaṅkara did not understand the context or the motivations for formulating a philosophy of emptiness (Whaling 1979, 13), there are those who argue that the notion of *śūnya* can only be understood within the context of the Buddhist worldview (*Weltanschauung*).

#### 4.14 Refutation of the Jainas:

The second non-Vedic or *Nāstika School* to be refuted but which finds little engagement with Śaṅkara is the Jaina school. Unlike the Buddhists schools, Śaṅkara had little interest in the Jaina school because they did not offer any competition to the Vedānta and they were not unlike other heterodox school critical of either Vedānta or the Brāhmanic schools. The *sūtras* II.ii.33-36 of the *Brahmasūtra* are used to refute the Jaina doctrine. A Jaina is a follower of the “Jina” or Mahāvīra. Frauwallner argues that a pluralistic doctrine such as the Jaina doctrine which does not follow the Vedas is not important either for the author of the *Brahmasūtra* or for Śaṅkara and so it is treated only cursorily (Frauwallner 1969). The two doctrines that the Vedāntins attack are the doctrine of *syādvāda* (doctrine of the seven standpoints) and the doctrine of the soul.

According to *syādvāda*, all judgements are conditional and relative, which holds good only under certain conditions or situations. For instance, it is not right to argue that “S is P”, because “S” could depending on the circumstances, conditions be either 1) P, 2) not P, 3) either P or not P, 4) neither P nor not P, 5) either P or else neither P nor not-P 6) either not-P or else neither P nor not-P 7) either P or not-P or else neither P nor not-P. The same logic is applied to the seven standpoints, which are, 1. From one point of view it exists, 2. From one point of view it does not exist, 3. it both exist and does not exist 4. From one point of view it is indescribable, 5. From another point of view it is existent and indescribable 6. it is non-existent and indescribable 7. It is both existent and non-existent and also indescribable (Alston 1989, 318). These seven standpoints are applied even to universal truths such as unity or oneness. According

to Śaṅkara, this kind of relativism does not provide access to the whole truth and it is possible to apply the same logic to refute all other Jaina doctrines as well. Śaṅkara argues that if each view or judgment is true from its own standpoint, there is no definitive structure or knowledge then how can a Jaina set himself as an authority and give teaching which is neither the means or the object or the knower of knowledge.

From an advaitins perspective or Śaṅkara's there is the tendency to choose a specific aspect of the *other's* philosophy or teachings and ignore the other aspects. Śaṅkara polemic or dialectic with the *other* systems (*darśanas*) is from a metaphysical perspective while he ignores the ethical, epistemological, ontological dimensions of *others* teaching and philosophy and so no school other than the Vedānta is treated as a complete, holistic system by Śaṅkara. In the Indian context, the terms schools and system (*darśana*) are used interchangeably, *darśana* refers to the six so-called orthodox (*āstika*) schools. In classical Indian texts where there is a dialectic, polemic with the *other*, there is as rightly pointed out by Nicholson (2010, 185), a propensity to create a hierarchy of systems where one philosophy promotes itself as superior with regards to all other competing discourses.

In conclusion, Śaṅkara's dialectic with other schools as with Bādarāyaṇa before him is to bring together different rival systems into a conversation, remove contradictions that could be an obstruction to establishing one's own position, viewpoint or philosophy, and construct a hierarchy, in which every other system or philosophy is at a position lower than his own viewpoint, or every other philosophy serves as a ladder towards the establishment of his own position. In the Upaniṣads, there is a self-speaking about the Self to other selves. Although there are these 'others' there is through a process of self-knowledge and self-examination a dissolving of the 'other' into the 'Self.' In the systematic period there is a clear distinction between the 'Self' and the 'other', there is no attempt at self-examination but an attempt to represent the 'other' as someone who is spiritually, philosophically at a level lesser than the 'Self'. There is as already mentioned an attempt to show Vedānta as the only true metaphysical system complete in all sense where the various aspects of Vedānta can be deduced from the one single underlying principle of *Brahman*. Śaṅkara's philosophy is full of binaries, of distinctions between the ordinary, worldly (*laukika*) and extraordinary, transcendent world (*alaukika*), *Parāvidyā* (lower) and *Aparāvidyā* (higher) knowledge, the three levels of non-dual reality *vyāvahārika* (everyday, empirical world), *prāthibhāsika* (unreality, dream world) and *pāramārthika* (absolute reality)<sup>88</sup> underlying all these distinctions is the binary between Self and other. Many of these classifications or distinctions are not part of the original text or of the *sūtrakāra* but are additions by Śaṅkara to the *Brahmasūtra*.

There are several differences between the original *sūtrakāra* and Śaṅkara's interpretation, it is argued that Bādarāyaṇa was more of a balanced thinker than Śaṅkara, who wanted to construct a Vedānta *darśana* that was acceptable to all followers of Upaniṣad, he did not insist that the whole Veda either taught only Dharma or only Brahman (Modi 1956, xxii). Like Bādarāyaṇa, Śaṅkara is also the originator of the *Advaita darśana*, a non-dual philosophy which argued that a single principle which underlined all teachings of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads which is that of *Brahman* but in doing so Śaṅkara subordinated all *other* philosophies as representations of lower level of reality and opposed to his own philosophy which occupied the highest position.

#### 4.15 Buddhist Commentarial traditions:

Like the Vedāntins, the Buddhists have a rich commentarial tradition which forms a part of their textual tradition. The earlier texts were orally handed down in languages such as Prakrits, Gāndhārī, Magadhan Language and Pāli, these transmissions were committed to memory through repetitions, recitations etc. There are the canonical texts and the commentaries, the Pāli canon (*tripiṭaka*) written in the first century BC forms the foundational texts of the Theravāda Buddhism (Doctrine of the Elders) which is also the oldest form of Buddhism, commentaries are called *attakatha* in Pāli, it is also a term used to denote the subcommentaries. Then there are the Sanskrit Buddhist literatures which belonged to the Mahāyāna tradition. The *Sutta* which is often compared with the *Sūtra* in the Brahmanical tradition, serves similar purpose but in the Buddhist tradition the *Sutta* essentially contains the teachings of the Buddha and of his close companions. The *Sutta* serve a variety of purpose from providing background information, provide additional details, clarify arguments, provide definitions, and etymologies of words etc, but not all *Suttas* are foundational texts.

Buddhist textual tradition can be classified under two headings, the Pāli textual tradition belonging to the Theravāda Buddhism (Indian form of Buddhism) and the Sanskrit textual tradition belonging to the Mahāyāna Buddhism. The following section introduces the philosophy of Nāgārjuna and his central doctrine of no-Self (*anātmavāda*) and of commentaries based on his work in *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (henceforth also *MMK*)<sup>89</sup>. Like the Vedānta, in *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* too there is a conscious interaction between philosophy and exegesis (commentary). There are the philosophical aspects to Nāgārjuna's teachings and then there are commentaries which assist the reading of the text, also help in filling gaps in arguments in the main texts and are hence useful. These

texts contain in them philosophical sections and the sections for students or practitioners of that philosophy these are characteristic of the commentaries such as Candrakīrti's commentary on *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* or the middle way titled *Madhyamakāvātāra*, which is an important text for Buddhist meditative schools. But unlike Brahmanism, Buddhism is not a revealed religion, with no founder, it has a founder in the historic Buddha, it is a practicing, living, non-dogmatic tradition that has and is constantly undergoing changes with the changing historical context. Nāgārjuna's philosophy is firmly rooted in the larger context of the Buddhist tradition and in Buddha's teaching.

#### 4.16 Literary sources in Buddhism:

In the Buddhist tradition the *Sūtras* are said to contain the direct teachings of Buddha, the *śāstras* contain the scholarly, philosophical elaborations of the teachings of Buddha (Stcherbatsky.Th., et al. 1968). The *Mahāyāna Sūtras* constitute the largest bulk of literary work, mostly elaborations of some seminal texts. The most important work is the *Prajñāpāramitā*, where 'prajñā' refers to 'wisdom' and 'pāramitā' refers to 'perfected'. It contains in it the theory of 'perfected seeing of reality' and the practice of a 'Bodhisattva'. According to Edward Conze (1978), *Prajñāpāramitā* was composed over a period of several thousand years. The principle theme of the *prajñāpāramitā* is the doctrine of *śūnyatā*, the unsubstantiality of all *dharmas*. *Samsara* and *Nirvāṇa*, the conditioned and the unconditioned are mere thought-constructions and devoid of reality (*śūnyā*). *Śūnyatā* is not something found by studying texts, but by meditating on it. It is a state that is devoid of selfhood, on the absence of substantiality in all *dharmas*, once having meditated on it one has to discard it, because it merely serves as a ladder to the ultimate truth. In short, the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts contains the central elements of the Māhāyana philosophy and the Madhyamaka system.

#### 4.17 Nāgārjuna and Mādhyamaka Philosophy:

Nāgārjuna (2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.) belonged to a very interesting time in the history of Indian thought when both Buddhist and Brahmanical philosophy underwent major changes<sup>90</sup>. The Buddhist tradition witnessed great developments in the field of logic, epistemology leading to the establishment of the first school founded on Logic (*Hetu Vidyā*) by Dignāga (5<sup>th</sup> century A.D) and there were major developments in schools of Brahmanical philosophy too with the composition of major commentaries. This period saw intellectual exchange between the Brahmanical and Buddhists philosophies. Nāgārjuna, a Mahāyāna Buddhist philosopher, was the founder of the Mādhyamika

School or the school of the middle path. The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (MMK) translated as the Fundamental verses on the Middle way is Nāgārjuna's most important work, and is a foundational text for many schools belonging to the Mahāyāna tradition. Many commentaries have been written on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, which have resulted in many different interpretations between different philosophical schools. For instance, the *Svātantrika-Mādhyamika* and *Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika*<sup>91</sup> of the Mahāyāna tradition have their own interpretation of the text and are considered foundational (*canon*) to the followers of the respective schools. Contemporary translations of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* in English have also led to different interpretations each from their own perspectives<sup>92</sup>. The style used in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* makes it difficult to follow and to be interpreted, it is terse, concise demanding interpretation and commentary. It is also observed that the structure of some of argumentation found in the *Brahmasūtra* resembles the Madhyamaka School (Nakamura 1983, 435-36). While in the Vedānta the central topic is the 'Self' (*ātman*) which is identified with the absolute reality *Brahman*, in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* the central topic is emptiness which is translated as *Sūnya*. It does not literally mean emptiness but is a technical term used to denote a lack of independent existence, or inherent existence or inessential (lacking essence). The emptiness (*śūnyatā*) is intricately linked to the concept of *no-self* (*anātma*), the relation between two important ontological notions is discussed in the next sections.

#### **4.18 Textual Organization of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*:**

*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* contains twenty seven chapters divided into four sections, each section performing a particular task. The first seven (I-VII) chapters are about Buddhist ontology (includes notions such as causality, dependent origination, change, impermanence etc.). The next six chapters (VIII-XIII) speak of the nature of the *Self* and subjective experience, the action and the agent, suffering. The next eight chapters (XIV-XXI) discuss the external world, the nature of relation between *Self* and world and the final six chapter (XXII-XXVII)<sup>93</sup> focuses on the ultimate truth about how a comprehension of the emptiness (*śūnya*) of things leads to a cessation from suffering through liberation (*nirvāṇa*). The central idea of emptiness is revealed only towards the end by Nāgārjuna. There is a certain order to the chapters based on the topic of explication or discussion. For instance, the first chapter is on causality or conditions or the relation between phenomena and causal conditions. For these causal conditions to be understood whether conventional or real it can only be understood in the context for impermanence or change. Hence, the topic of the next chapter is

‘change’. Therefore, it is important to notice the organization of the text in terms of explication of concepts and their connectedness to other concepts. But the entire text maintains a consistent engagement with the central notion of emptiness. Before getting into actual notion of emptiness several other related concepts are clarified and explained like *causation*, *doctrine of dependent origination*, etc.

#### 4.19 Nāgārjuna’s Philosophy:

Nāgārjuna was foremost a system builder - a philosopher who presented unified systems of epistemology, metaphysics, logic, and ethics in all of these he tried to present a consistent philosophy that of emptiness, similar to the *Brahman* of Vedānta. But one has to be careful as to how one translates 'emptiness', what does it actually mean. Before getting into Buddhist ontology about reality and the actual topic of emptiness it is important to make clear the meanings of certain terms and concepts. An often used verse to capture the philosophy of emptiness (*Śūnyata*) is

Whatever is dependently co-arisen  
That is explained to be emptiness.  
That being a dependent designation  
Is itself the middle way. (Nāgārjuna and Trans. Garfield 1995,  
XXIV: 18)

The three notions which need explanation and interpretation are ‘dependently co-arisen’, ‘emptiness’ and ‘designation’, all these notions are linked to the larger philosophy of the middle way, so how are they connected? A thing that is dependently arisen or originated cannot independently or inherently exist, lack of an independent existence is what is termed as ‘emptiness’ (*śūnyavāda*). All phenomenal things are dependently originated and therefore they lack inherent existence or essence (*svabhāva*)<sup>94</sup>. *Emptiness* means lacking in independent or inherent existence and not that the objects (*dharmas*) or the world of phenomena is non-existent as is often misinterpreted by *other* schools such as Vedānta. A thing that is dependently co-arisen is often represented or verbally denoted by giving a name (designation) else if a thing had independent exist and did not depend on any other thing for its existence then it would not be required to be verbally denoted. So, *emptiness* is the antithesis of the argument that “things inherently exist”. The term *śūnya* is misinterpreted as complete nihilism, but that seems to be a gross simplification of the complex notion of emptiness, it only means that things

are only conventionally real but have no independent existence of their own or lack essence or intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*).

Nāgārjuna's doctrine of emptiness should be treated as a critique of the realistic attitude which claims that things are ultimately real, they are permanent, independent and self-existing. The assumption that things are ultimately real is neither based on experience nor logic. Nāgārjuna using the “*reductio-ad-absurdum*” (*prāsaṅgika*) method shows that the idea of absolute reality of things leads to consequences which are absurd and contradictory. Contrary to Śāṅkara's claim about *śūnyavāda* as a school which argues for non-existence of all things knowable and of knowledge itself, Nāgārjuna neither argues for complete existence nor non-existence but follows a middle way which transcends and reconciles the duality that characterizes our thinking. In this context Nāgārjuna argues for the unorigination of all phenomena. It is not difficult to see there are similarities between the Māhāyana tradition of Nāgārjuna, his philosophy of *emptiness*, and Śāṅkara's non-dual philosophy, also before him the *Gauḍapādīyakārikā*, which all in some way or the other speak about the illusory nature of the phenomenal world, but there are significant ontological differences between Vedānta and Māhāyana philosophy.

#### 4.20 Nāgārjuna's dialectical method:

The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is used to provide a philosophical basis for the unreality of the phenomenal world. As already pointed out, Nāgārjuna's *śūnyavāda* was influenced by the earlier *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*<sup>95</sup> of the Mahāyāna scriptures. Nāgārjuna is one of the most original thinkers, the dialectic he developed to bring out the metaphysics of Buddhist thought is his most original contributions. His dialectic termed as a negative dialectic is comparable to the *neti-neti* method of the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*<sup>96</sup>, but is more complex. A dialectic as we have seen in the chapter on Upaniṣads is a discourse between two or more people, holding different points of view or it is the use of reason to find antinomies or contradictions present between two beliefs or conclusions both of which on their own seem to be justified. The presupposition for a dialectic is that the participants hold certain meanings and principles of inference in common before they engage in a dialectic with the *other*. But in some instances like the dialectic between Vedāntin and the materialistic school Cārvāka, or some realist schools of Buddhism the dialogue seems to be one-sided where only a specific position of the opponent is taken out of context and engaged with. Typically, a dialectic is systematic

reasoning, exposition, or argument that juxtaposes contradictory ideas in an attempt to resolve conflicts.

#### 4.21 Negative dialectic:

Nāgārjuna uses a four cornered negation called *catuskoṭi*, a tetralemma or quadrilemma. The structure of the dialectic refers to the four alternatives consisting of 1) a positive thesis, 2) a negative counter thesis 3) a conjunctive affirmation of the first two and 4) a disjunction denial of the first two. The method of the dialectic consists in drawing out implications in the opponents view on the basis of the principles accepted by himself and thereby pointing out the self-contradictory nature present in that view. The dialectic is the rejection of the views using the *reductio-ad-absurdum* method and this is what is known as *prasanga*. Nāgārjuna's response to those who criticize him for not offering a position of his own he argues, that if he had put forth his own thesis one could find fault with it, but since no thesis if put forward the question of disproving it does not arise.<sup>97</sup>

Underlying the Mādhyāmaka dialectic is the obvious conflict between the *ātma* and the *anātma* traditions. The *ātma* (*Self*) tradition is based on the teachings of the Upaniṣads, followed by Vedānta and the *anātma* (*not-Self*) tradition referring to that of the Buddhist tradition. The Mādhyāmaka provides a middle position through its criticism of the various points of view within the *Ābhidharma*<sup>98</sup> system. Every affirmation, negation and conjunction of them of the opponent is negated in the Mādhyāmaka dialectic. It is total negation of thought modes that is called *prajñā*. The culmination of *prajñā* is *jñāna* which is absolute, real and non-dual. Many thinkers of the modern and post-modern world such as Hegel, Adorno, and Derrida use the kind of Negative dialectics but in a different context like Nāgārjuna used it in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. According to Hegel,

The understanding determines, and holds the determinations fixed; reason is negative and dialectical, because it resolves the determinations of the understanding into nothing; it is positive because it generates the universal and comprehends the particular therein. (Science of Logic 1999, 28/1:16)

For Hegel, unlike Kant, 'understanding' and 'reason' are not separate faculties but belong to activities of the mind. Also, Hegel argues that reason has both positive and negative roles to play, it can be negative and dialectic and also produce the universal while understanding the particular. Hegel speaks of the 'nothing'

but also of 'being'. Adorno, on the other hand, rejects that positive aspects wherein the result of the whole was greater than the parts that precede it, instead he argues for a dialectic which is essentially negative. Derrida through his Negative Theology, argues that "Considering that every predicative language is inadequate to the essence, in truth to the hyper-essentiality (the being beyond Being) of God; consequently, only a negative (apophatic) attribution can claim to approach God and to prepare for a silent intuition of God" (1989, 70). Nāgārjuna's tetralemma and the *prasāṅgika* method, the *neti neti* of the Upaniṣads, Adorno's negative dialectic, Derrida's Negative theology all point to the limits of language, thought in comprehending metaphysical realities such as God, Being and the world through positive attribution and conceptual categories, although Hegel speaks of positive attribution through the realization of the Universal spirit.

#### 4.22 Nāgārjuna's critique of 'Other' schools:

Only towards the end of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, after completely analyzing and demonstrating the doctrine of emptiness, Nāgārjuna undertakes the task of examination of *other* views. While Śāṅkara offers a refutation of viewpoints of various schools, Nāgārjuna offers a critique of *other* schools and there is substantial difference between the two approaches. Nāgārjuna's critique is a critique of reasoning itself, it is the examination, valuation and limits of claims about reality (Murti 2013). He examines the central concepts of causality, motion and rest, the *ayātanas*, the *skandhas*<sup>99</sup> and *ātman*. Nāgārjuna's critique is mostly the schools within Buddhist tradition such as the *Sarvāstivādins*, *Sautrāntikas* belonging to the Hīnayānist tradition especially with regards to the notion of causality. Nāgārjuna argues against the existence of the causes and for the existence of a variety of conditions. He states that,

Neither from itself nor from another,  
 Nor from both,  
 Nor without a cause,  
 Does anything whatever, anywhere arise. (Nāgārjuna and Trans.  
 Garfield 1995, 1:1)

These beginning verses capture the essence, method of argumentation that Nāgārjuna would be using throughout his exposition and the dialectic with *other* schools. According to this verse, entities are neither self-caused nor do they come into being because of other entities that is there is no causation. Nāgārjuna then posits the fourfold classification of positions or conditions called *catuṣkoṭi*, which offers four

possibilities. In comparison, to the *neti neti* (neither this, nor that) method, the *catuṣkoṭi* offers more nuanced possibilities encompassing the entire range of alternatives. Nāgārjuna's method is to offer a range of possibilities (conditions) and then goes on to deny each one of them. This he claims is definitive of Buddhist philosophy. Nāgārjuna was responding to those within the Buddhist schools, such as *Sautāntrika-Sarvāstivāda* which accept his classification of conditions, but who would then go on to argue that for the conditions to function and be explanatory they themselves must have an inherent independent existence. He is also critiquing non-Buddhist schools such as Sāṃkhya<sup>100</sup> and also the school of logic Nyāya. So when one speaking from a perspective of the middle position, the notion of causality is intricately linked to the notion of emptiness. Technically, the four views of causality (1) *svata utpattiḥ* or theory of self-becoming (2) *parata utpattiḥ* or production from another (3) *dvābhyam utpattiḥ* production from both itself and another and (4) *ahetutta utpattiḥ* or production without any cause. The first view is held by the non-Buddhist school, Sāṃkhya which argues that cause and effect are identical and that the effect is pre-existent in the cause, so there is already an existence prior to its appearance. There is a prior potential existence which accounts for the causal character of the cause, hence, it is said to be self-caused. The typical example would be the relation between the seed and the sprout, the seed already contained in it the potential of the sprout. In a sense the seed and the sprout cannot be separated or distinguished substantially, it is possible to say that they are the two stages of the same entity, and in that context the sprout is said to be self-caused (*svata utpattiḥ*).

#### 4.23 Mādhyamika critique of Sāṃkhya:

Nāgārjuna's critique of the Sāṃkhya view is that, if effect is already present in the cause, then it would serve no purpose in re-producing it. The Sāṃkhya may argue that though the effect may be present in the cause, its manifestation is something new. New not in terms of production of a new substance, but producing a new form of the underlying substance, taking the earlier example of a seed and a sprout, the sprout while it is not the seed, it is non-different from a seed so only its form is different. But the distinction in the form or state of the substance goes against the notion of the identity of the underlying substratum. If one were to argue that cause is partially actual and partially potential then it amounts to accepting the contradictory opposed nature of one and the same thing. If cause is wholly potential then it cannot become actual without external aid, in which case there would be no self-production (*svata utpattiḥ*), this would lead to giving up *satkāryavāda*. *Satkāryavāda* argues that if cause and effect are identical then there would

be no way to distinguish one as the producer of the other. For these various reasons, the *Satkāryavāda* seems to be filled with self-contradictions.

#### 4.24 Critique of Sautāntrika- Sarvāstivāda:

*Parata utpattiḥ*: This view held by the Hīnayānist argues that the cause and effect are different (*asatkāryavāda*). Nāgārjuna's critique of this view of causality is that, if cause is different from the effect then there can be no relation between the two, by virtue of which then anything can be produced by any other thing. The argument that with the production of the effect the cause ceases to exist, goes against the proposed hypothesis (*ex hypothesi*) that there is a relation between cause and effect, and for a relation to exist, they need to co-exist. If they cannot co-exist, then causality as a notion seems meaningless. Hīnayānist's also believe that the effect is a result of a combination of factors, while the Mādhyamika argue that for a combination of factors cannot be possible without introduction some other factors, and for this to come together requires some other additional factors and so on, leading to an *infinite regress*.

The *dvābhyam utpattiḥ*, argues that effect is both identical and different from the cause which is a combination of *Satkāryavāda* and *Asatkāryavāda*, is consistent because something cannot both be identical and different at the same time. The *ahetutta utpattiḥ*, a theory supported by the *Svabhāvavādin* and skeptics argues that things are produced not by cause but by chance. When this view is not supported by any reason then it is mere dogmatism and if it supported by reason, then it has to admit that there has to be a cause.

Having logically exposed the underlying inconsistencies in the various theories and heterogeneous views on causality, Nāgārjuna declares that all theories of causality are essentially mind-constructions, they are concepts which are superimposed on the objective world. Nāgārjuna on *Pratītyasamutpāda*: Nāgārjuna defines the doctrine of dependent origination as

Whatever is dependently co-arisen

That is explained to be emptiness

That, being a dependent designation,

Is itself the middle way. (Nāgārjuna and Trans. Garfield 1995, XXIV: 18)

Something that is not dependently arisen,  
Such a thing does not exist.  
Therefore a nonempty thing  
Does not exist.<sup>101</sup> (Nāgārjuna and Trans. Garfield 1995, XXIV: 19)

According to this verse, there is no thing that is not dependently arisen or which comes into existence without conditions. Therefore, there is no *dharma* which is not *śūnya*. In the earlier verse, *pratītyasamutpāda* is identified with *śūnyata*. The *Śūnyata* or *Śūnyavāda* as already mentioned is not a position or doctrine to be established, not non-existence (*abhāva*), or unreality or illusion as in the concept of *māya* but a total negation of all thought modes which result in concepts. It is important to note here, that Nāgārjuna is subscribing to the non-conceptual, non-philosophical way of understanding the phenomenal world, in this sense, he is closer to the deconstructionist, philosophy of difference project of post-modernist Western theorist and critical theorists like Nietzsche, Derrida and others etc. Using the notion of *catuṣkoṭi*, and the *prāsaṅga* method, Nāgārjuna demonstrates the impossibility of categorizing or conceiving phenomena as either of one kind (independent unity) or the other (as independent of its correlates). With the assumption or classification of anyone thing as either ‘this’ or ‘that’ leads to contradictions and absurdities when subjected to logic or experience. Therefore, Nāgārjuna provides us with an entire range of nuanced alternatives and possibilities and then goes on to negate each one of them displaying their inadequacy. Unlike, Śāṅkara, Nāgārjuna is not interested to disprove anybody’s position or to lay out his thesis<sup>102</sup> but rather to show the inherent conflicts and contradictions which characterize the use of ‘reason’ or ‘thinking’ in general. Nāgārjuna’s view about *Pramāṇa* theorists seems to be much closer to David Hume’s skeptical view about reason, he for instance, questions as to “is there reason to ever be convinced by any argument” and that “all knowledge ultimately resolves itself into probability” (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, I.iv.1). In the Jayarāśi Bhaṭṭa, who in the same period as Śāṅkara 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century, being a representative of the Indian materialistic school *Cārvāka* also called *Lokāyata* in his magnum opus *Tattvopaplavasimha* emphatically claims that there are no sources of knowledge which are valid, all *pramāṇas* accepted in establishing conclusions such as perception, inference and testimony are insufficient for establishing knowledge. Therefore, there can be no knowledge that can be known for certain. This establishes that the tradition of rational skepticism has a long history in Indian thought across traditions and Nāgārjuna is at the forefront of it.

#### 4.25 Nāgārjuna on change and essence:

Since according to the Madhyamaka philosophy, all things lack inherent essence, in the sense that there are no substance exist independently. The question then taken forward by Nāgārjuna is that if the nature or essence (*svabhāva*) of a thing does not exist, what is it then that will undergo change? On the other hand, if nature does exist, what is it that will change? Nāgārjuna in *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, with regards to the above question in response to the Nyāya opponent says: “Emptiness itself is empty”<sup>103</sup>. So what does it mean to say that emptiness itself is empty, it means the ultimate reality for the Buddha’s is *svabhāva* itself, and because it is non-deceptive it is the truth of ultimate reality and it must be known for each one by himself. *Svabhāva* and *Śūnya*, are the only things that can be characterized as changeless, unoriginated, and independent of any other thing<sup>104</sup>. Emptiness is independent because its existence does not depend on some specific object. From a linguistic point of view, the word ‘*Śūnya*’ has a predicative property, when it is said that every *bhāva* is empty it means it is empty of its own nature and this is applicable to all metaphysical statements about reality.

#### 4.26 Levels of truth (inherent vs. conventional)

What does it mean to say that something exists or does not exist? From the Mādhyamika standpoint, to exist would mean either to *exist inherently*, that is, by virtue of being a substance independent of its attributes, in virtue of having an essence or to *exist conventionally*, that is, to exist dependently, to be the conventional referent of a term, but not to have any independent existence of its own. According to Nāgārjuna, all phenomena *exists only conventionally* and have no independent existence of their own that does not entail that all phenomena are non-existent. The doctrine of emptiness resolves this paradox between the two levels of truth. In the history of Buddhist thought the split in the Mādhyamika concerns the status of the conventional reality which is between Candrakīrti’s *Prāsāṅgika* sub-school of Mādhyamika and Bhāviveka’s *Svātantrika* sub-school. Candrakīrti in his *Prasannapāda* defines *svabhāva* as

that property which is not dependent on another, for e.g. heat is called the *svabhāva* of fire, because it is invariable in it, because it is invariable in it. When the same heat is apprehended in water it is not *svabhāva*, because it is contingent and has arisen due to other

causal conditions. Therefore, *svabhāva* refers to the "intrinsic nature" or "inherent nature" (Ames 1982, 161-177).

While Bhāviveka, on the other hand, did not completely reject conventional (*vyavahārika*) reality, he argues that from a relative perspective (*saṃvṛtitaḥ*) entities (*bhāva*) do originate, exist and have an intrinsic nature, for instance, Earth (*pṛthivī*) has solidity (*khara*) as its intrinsic nature, but no entity exists, however *a priori*. From an absolute perspective (*paramāṛthataḥ*) entities do not originate, have a cause, exist or have an intrinsic nature. "Intrinsic nature" therefore refers to that thing which gives something its status as an independent entity or its independent existence.

#### 4.27 Self and no-self:

According to Nāgārjuna,

If the self were aggregates,  
It would have arising and ceasing (as properties).  
If it were different from aggregates,  
It would not have the characteristics of the aggregates. (Nāgārjuna  
and Trans. Garfield 1995, XVIII: 1)

If there is an inherently existent self, it must either be identical to or different from the aggregates. The aggregates (*skandhas*) are the basic components which make up the individual, this argument provides the psychological explanation for comprehending human behavior. These aggregates are themselves empty, they are subjected to further decomposition. If one were to posit the idea that self is inherently existent then it must be either identical to or different from those components.

If self is identical to the aggregates then it is subject to change, of arising and ceasing since the aggregates are constantly arising and ceasing. But if self is distinct from aggregates, the relation between them becomes mysterious; since the self then becomes unknowable, with no relation between self and the aggregates this would lead to a bizarre situation where the mind, body, senses, experience etc. would have nothing to do with what happens to the self (Nāgārjuna and Trans. Garfield 1995, 246). Nāgārjuna is not denying the existence of the aggregates or that there are no persons, agents or subjects etc. For a proponent who believes in an inherently existent self, he asks Nāgārjuna and the Mādhyamaka, "what is the bearer of the self's properties and the thing that possesses those aggregates?"

If there were no-self, Where would the self's (properties) be?  
From the pacification of the self and what belongs to it,  
One abstains from grasping onto "I" and "mine." (Nāgārjuna and  
Trans. Garfield 1995, XVIII: 2)

Nāgārjuna's reply is that one simply gives up the idea of an independently existing self. The problem posed disappears, the question of the possessor of the aggregates and properties of the self occurs only when considers those aggregates and properties as essentially of (belonging) to something. When the need to posit an enduring substratum holding these various aggregates is given up then the problem vanishes then the problem of the possessor also vanishes. These aggregates and properties should be thought of as associated aggregates and properties, and not as *my* aggregates or properties. Nāgārjuna says that when notions of 'I' or 'mine' are dissolved or extinguishes, then only true reality of existence is understood and when that is understood realization happens and one is liberated. He says,

When views of "I" and "mine" are extinguished,  
Whether with respect to the internal or the external,  
The appropriator ceases. This having ceased, birth ceases.  
(Nāgārjuna and Trans. Garfield 1995, XXVIII: 4)

In the next verse, he speaks about liberation from cyclic existence

Action and misery having ceased, there is nirvāṇa.  
Action and misery come from conceptual thought.  
This comes from mental fabrication. Fabrication ceases through  
emptiness. (Nāgārjuna and Trans. Garfield 1995, XVIII: 5)

Applying the tetralemma to the notion of existence' he says,

Everything is conventionally real, everything is ultimately unreal,  
unreal from an ultimate standpoint. Everything has both  
characteristics- that is everything is both conventionally real and  
ultimately unreal. Nothing is completely real or completely

nonexistent. That is, everything is neither real in one sense nor not real in another sense. (Nāgārjuna and Trans. Garfield 1995, 250)

From a purely absolute perspective (*paramārthataḥ*) of emptiness neither ‘Self’ (*ātman*) nor ‘non-Self’ (*anātman*) exists. This understanding of the nature of the self is important for attaining *Buddhahood*.

The existential philosophy developed in Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has a lot in common with the Buddhist philosophy of Nāgārjuna and others. The existential idea that there is no predefined, pre given self, but a self which is always ‘becoming’ or ‘intending’ and moving toward creating meaning is similar to that put forward in the philosophy of the Buddha. Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* says “surpass(ing) this being-and that not toward being but toward emptiness, toward *nothing*” (2012, 222) one can’t help but notice the similarities between the two views. Both Buddhism and Existentialism do not dismiss reason, but use reason to show the inadequacy of reason and of conceptual knowledge to understanding the world, and man’s relationship to the world.

Towards the end of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Nāgārjuna examining various rival views and bringing out the contradictions in each of those views ends with offering a prayer to the Buddha, he says,

I prostrate to Gautama  
Who through compassion  
Taught the true doctrine  
Which leads to the relinquishing of all views. (Nāgārjuna and  
Trans. Garfield 1995, xxvii: 30).

Nāgārjuna here does not take credit for postulating any new position or view but rather reminds us that Gautama taught the true doctrine out of compassion because of which the other views can be relinquished. From the perspective of emptiness, there are no views, because a view has to be a view of something and hence from an ultimate standpoint no view can be maintained.

#### **4.28 Concluding notes and analysis:**

This chapter looked at the systematic philosophies of Śāṅkara and Nāgārjuna belonging to the two great rival traditions of Vedānta and Buddhism. Nāgārjuna predates Śāṅkara, but in terms of propounders of philosophical systems, and their respective positions in their own traditions, these two thinkers are

considered here as creators or system builders. This chapter follows from the previous chapter on the Upaniṣads and *Milindapañha* belonging to the pre-systematized period. This chapter looks at the next phase in the development of Brahmin and Buddhist thought, characterized by the creation of the Sūtra texts, the Sūtra texts represent the systematic period when the various teachings of the Upaniṣads and other Vedic texts were systematized into doctrines and philosophies. The development of thought in the Buddhist and Brahmanical tradition does not happen at the same time or in the same way, they do not follow similar pattern of phases of development. The systematic phase resulted in the creation of schools (*darśanas*) in the Brahmanical tradition and in the Buddhist the phase following the *Ābhidharmic* phase, which was the development of the esoteric phase which provided the ontological soteriological basis for the Buddha's teachings. The history of Buddhist systematic philosophy is a lot more organized because it is possible to recover a large corpus of surviving texts of the systematic period while the same cannot be said of the history of Brahmanical systematic philosophy.

Śaṅkara and Nāgārjuna, are compared here only in terms of their roles as system builders of their respective traditions, but system building can be identified as only one of the roles attributed to them of the many other roles that they play such as commentators, propounders, teachers etc. They are considered system builders because from their works sprang forth a host of commentaries and from them various sub-schools within their respective traditions. 'System' and 'Schools' are used synonymously, although there are differences between the two notions. The dialectic between the 'Self' and the 'other' is central to the process of systematization. Systematization assumes some underlying principle that holds the system together in Śaṅkara's case it is the non-duality principle between Self and the absolute (*Brahman*) and in the case of Nāgārjuna it is *Śūnyavāda* or emptiness referring to the lack of independent, inherent existence or lack of essence. While it is similar to compare the negative dialectic of Śaṅkara and Nāgārjuna, the levels of sophistication and complexity in their comparative methods whether the *Neti-Neti* or the *Prāsaṅgika* are different. Śaṅkara provides metaphysical, epistemological basis to support his monistic philosophy based on the heterogeneous Upaniṣadic teachings, while Nāgārjuna's supplies arguments for the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (perfection of wisdom sutras), consisting the unsystematized core of the Buddhist teachings. The *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* is a commentarial text, but the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* is more than a commentary it is a philosophical explication of the central doctrines in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. The overarching philosophical problem in both traditions seems to be the problem of the *self*, the central debate between *ātman* and *anātman* theory, and all other issues revolve round this central topic. The *self* was also the main

topic of discussion in the Upaniṣads and the *Milindapañha*, and continues throughout the history of Indian thought. In *BSBh*, the (*Brahman*) is the central topic and goal of discussion and in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, the emptiness (*Śūnya*) is the central topic and through it the establishment of a universal absolute as in Śāṅkara and Bādarāyaṇa or the unreality of the *Self* (*anātma*) as in Nāgārjuna and Buddha. The *others* play a crucial role in the development of the *self* in both traditions, the dialectical *self* is in constant conversation with the *other*. All debates and dialogues with *others* in both tradition follow the general argumentation structure of the *pūrvapakṣa*, *uttarapakṣa* and *siddhānta*.

In the *Brahmasūtra bhāṣya* the others (rivals) consist of both schools within the Brahmanical or Vedic tradition like Sāṅkhya, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and those that are non-Vedic, non-brahmanical, heterodox traditions like the Buddhists, Jains, Carvāka. Śāṅkara's primary role is that of a commentator, but he is not just restricted to that role, his originality comes from his introduction to the *Brahmasūtra* through the *Ādhyāsa Bhāṣya*, to expose that the conventionally accepted truth as inherently false through analysis and then moving on to his role as a commentator of the *sūtra* text.

This chapter explored Śāṅkara's dialectic with *other* schools, and his treatment and examination of rival views. Vedānta and also advaita is characterized by hierarchical distinctions at every level such as *parā* (higher) and *aparā* (lower) *vidyā* (knowledge), *laukika* (this worldly), *alaukika* (other-worldly), levels of reality: *vyavahārika* (everyday/ phenomenal), *prāthibhāsika*, *pāramārthika* (transcendent), similarly, too, with treatment of rival views, the opponents are placed and ordered at different levels depending on their position in relation to the Vedāntins own monistic, non-dual position with regards to ultimate reality. A great deal of effort goes into dealing and refuting the philosophical position held by Sāṅkhya, they are considered the main rival of the Vedāntin, because their position is assumed to be closer to the Vedānta while there is enough evidence to show that they have a non-Vedic origin, they support a dualistic position and also because of the important position Sāṅkhya held in the history of Hindu thought they are the most important rival school to Vedānta. By the time of Śāṅkara, Sāṅkhya ceased to exist as a dominant school and many of its doctrines whether be it of causality or the *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛiti* became gradually incorporated into the Vedānta.

The second school within the *āstika* tradition to be given some importance is the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, the sister school of Uttara Mīmāṃsā or Advaita. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā is the exegetic school of Vedānta, it provides the tools for textual exegesis and interpretation of the source text. Śāṅkara and the Vedāntins seem to have

borrowed from Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, the idea that ‘reason’ itself serves no purpose unless it amplifies and explains what is already in the scriptures. Śaṅkara is not very clear about ‘reason’ vs. ‘scriptural authority’ and as to what is more important in establishing philosophical positions, the insistence on scriptural authority makes it less philosophical and more theological.

All the ‘Other’ schools within the Brahmanical tradition are only cursorily treated, so schools are ordered from the most important to the least important. With the non-Vedic or unorthodox schools, the Buddhists get the maximum attention by the Vedāntins followed by the Jains, the materialist school of Cārvāka, here Cārvāka is given the least importance and their views dismissed as belonging only to the *laukika* realm and consisting of *vyavahārika* (phenomenal) *satya*. This treatment and arrangement of schools in the *Brahmasūtra bhāṣya* becomes a standard model or prototype for later Advaitins in portraying schools in hierarchical manner, ordering them in terms of their truths ultimately all leading towards the absolute.

Śaṅkara, while critiquing and refuting another’s position, is also simultaneously attempting unification to bring uniformity among the diverse viewpoints of his opponents. This movement toward unification of diverse viewpoints leads to systematization. A system transcends and engages with almost all domains of the intellectual activity, the epistemological, the ontological, the ethical, the also in case of Indian systems the religious. The debates in the classical period occur at various levels of abstraction, each level of abstraction gives rise to higher abstractions and the process continues, for instance, the movement from the Upaniṣads to the *sūtras* and then the *bhāṣyas* one can see the movement from one level to abstraction to higher and higher levels of abstraction. Each level provides a space from which new oppositions can be formed, through this movement from one conceptual level to another the ‘Self’ is constantly evolving.

These debates are significant because they speak of a particular period in intellectual history, in this case the scholastic period. The *sūtra* or the scholastic period is characterized by the production of commentaries and sub-commentaries of already existing texts which lead to creation of new philosophical positions. There is the dual task of commentators of the time one to bring about synthesis or *samanvaya* bringing together contradictory doctrines and to reject that which does not support one’s position, and second to ensure that one is true to that which is original to the tradition. In *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* as well as in many Hindu texts, this ‘classificatory model’ is followed, as in the creation of *darśanas* which follow a hierarchical classificatory model. This as Collins points out, follows “the purpose of religious politics, simultaneously maintaining the alliance of the various proponents of the doctrine while asserting superiority of one’s own

sect” (1998, 798). This hierarchical, inclusive classificatory model of the medieval Vedāntins becomes basis on which modern texts on history of Indian philosophy are based.

In *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Nāgārjuna’s main rivals are the other Buddhists and also some non-Buddhist schools like Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, this is because at the time Vedānta did not exist as a separate *darśana* and also the questions and problems posed/dealt with by Sāṃkhya and Nyāya were also the same problems which the Buddhists were dealing with. Unlike Śaṅkara’s *Bhāṣya* only a small section towards the end of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is allotted for examination of views of the *others*, while a significant part is used to provide the ontological, epistemological basis for the doctrine of emptiness (*Śūnyavāda*) within the larger framework of the Buddhist tradition. Nāgārjuna is not commentating on some or any one source text like Śaṅkara but primarily involved in explicating the central doctrines of *Śūnya*, *svabhāva* and doctrine of dependent origination. He maintains that he is not stating any thesis, or defending any thesis, because he himself holds none but pointing out that any kind of knowledge claim about the phenomenal world will lead to contradictions and ultimately will be falsified. There is no hierarchical classification either in terms of the doctrines themselves excepting for the two levels of reality ‘conventional reality’ and ‘absolute reality’ which are used to explicate the notion of *Śūnya*, but from an absolute standpoint none of these realities exist, or of hierarchical classification in terms of schools themselves within the Buddhist tradition, but of course, the Mādhyamaka tradition occupies a higher position in comparison to the Hīnayāna tradition.

Nāgārjuna is a system builder, he tries to bring in uniformity of philosophical methodology and an effort to bring clarity to the central doctrines and visions of the text by spelling out doctrines like *Pratītyasamutpāda* and what they mean within the context of the debate within the larger Buddhist tradition. There is a dialectic structure to the text, and the chapters are arranged in such a way that each subsequent doctrine ultimately leads to the doctrine of emptiness, so there is gradual movement toward establishing emptiness. Here too there is a movement from one level of abstraction to another level. The ultimate purpose of either an Mādhyamaka philosopher or an Advaitin is soteriological, to achieve liberation from the cycle of birth and death, from *saṃsāra* to achieve *mokṣa* or *nirvāṇa*.

From the Upaniṣads, *Milinda Pañhā* to the *Sūtras*, *Bhāṣya* and *Kārikas* there is movement from the pre-philosophical, non-conceptual, and mythical toward the conceptual, abstract philosophical discourse, so also the dialectic of the Self changes from a personalized, experiential narrative self to a non-personalized, abstract self. From a Vedāntins perspective, the Self represents the Vedāntin, and the other represents the

non-Vedāntin, similarly, from a Buddhist perspective, the Self represents the Buddhists and the other, the non-Buddhist. The next chapter, explores the genre of doxography, which standardizes the classificatory model of the systematic period making strict distinctions between ‘Self’ and ‘others’ by drawing doctrinal boundaries. It also looks at the Buddhist doxographies which are distinct and have a much longer history than the late medieval Sanskrit doxographies.

## Chapter - 5

### Doxography and Indian Philosophy

#### 5.1 Introduction:

The systematic (*sūtra*) period discussed in the previous chapter resulted in the Upaniṣadic teachings and insights transform into abstract philosophical doctrines and also creation of doctrinal boundary between 'Self' and 'other'. The hierarchical, inclusive classificatory model which became a standard for classification of schools in the late medieval and the modern period is rooted in the polemics of the *Sūtra* period. This chapter looks at the formalization of the classificatory model through creation of a new genre of texts called *samuccayas* or compendia or doxography. In comparison, the Buddhist doxographies are not a recent invention but have a longer tradition of recording history of their religion soon after the death of its founder the Buddha (Walser 2012).

The dominant approach to Indian philosophy and religion until recently has been an ahistorical, decontextualized approach contributing to the motif that the Indian tradition lacks any historiography of philosophical thought. This non-historical account or perspective is not just something that the Orientalists or the Western scholarship should be held accountable for, but the Indian intellectuals themselves who believed that a ahistorical, decontextualized approach was not to be looked at as a sign of weakness but of self-assertion and completely endorsed the idea of an timeless, eternal tradition whose truth transcended time and space. This view, was of course, held in contrast to the Western tradition which went through historical discontinuities rooted in time and space.

At the heart of this distinction between Indian and Western tradition is the central underlying question, “what is philosophy?” can Indian classical texts be considered philosophical from a purely Western perspective. The recent discovery of doxographies, as a separate genre of Indian literature proves wrong the notion of absence of historiography of philosophy in the Indian context. Although, the term doxography may be a relatively new term, these particular genres of texts have been in existence since long, the Sanskrit doxographical tradition, has been traced to the fifth century grammarian Bhartṛhari (Halbfass 1988, 268), while the Buddhist doxography to Bhāvaviveka's (490-570 A.D) *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā*, the earliest Jain doxography to

Haribhadra Suri (459-529 A.D.) *Ṣaḍḍarśanasamuccaya* (Compendium of Six Philosophies), Tamil doxography by Cāttanār's (500 A.D) *Maṇimēkalai* etc. These texts are also significant because underlying the various classificatory schemes lies the central distinction between 'Self' and the 'other'. They offer significant insights into how 'the other' is conceptualized and how in the final analysis the notion of the 'other' gets assimilated and thereby their identity eliminated as they become part of the 'Self'.

The bulk of Sanskrit doxographical works is distributed among the *Advaita Vedāntins* and the Jains. So although there existed works that can be classified as doxographies as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century the Sanskrit doxography gained attention and prominence in the late medieval period (14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century) (Nicholson 2010), with a majority of works by Advaitins. These texts became the basis for early orientalist and Indologists as a source which provided an objective account of all Indian philosophical tradition, especially Paul Deussen who used the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* ("Summary of all systems") by advaitin Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya to explain all other systems of Indian philosophy. Not just Deussen but a whole range of modern Indian scholars use the doxographical style in their portrayal of Indian philosophy whether be it S.C.Chatterjee, D.M. Datta, Hiriyanna, or even Radhakrishnan. The Indian thinkers quickly adopted and appropriated this non-historical, decontextualized approach to Indian philosophy in an attempt to show how their tradition was distinct from Western philosophy and the doxographies allowed for this kind of timeless portrayal. This strategy politically served well both the Western and the Indian intellectuals, while for the former it allowed to present Indian philosophy as something static, ahistorical, and lacking in progress as opposed to their own tradition as changing, historical, progressive and scientific, the Indian intellectuals on the other hand used this same strategy to show their essential difference with the West and believed it to be a sign of self-assertion and critiqued the changing fabric and rootlessness of Western society as opposed to their own tradition which they argued to be rooted in an ancient tradition which has remained unchanged for centuries. In order to evaluate the role that particularly Sanskrit doxographies played in the conceptualization of modern Indian philosophy and also the crucial role they played in establishing doctrinal boundaries between *self* and *other* contributing to their it is important to go back to the history of the Indian doxographical tradition.

## 5.2 Definition and role of doxography in Indian tradition:

Indian doxographies especially the Sanskrit doxographies provide records of various philosophies and schools their viewpoints prevalent at a particular period. Doxography has been variously translated as ‘tenet-writing’, ‘writings of opinions/ viewpoints’. It is used in either a narrow sense to refer to opinions of philosophers or thinkers arranged in a particular order depending on how the philosophical topics or questions have been dealt with, or in a broader sense, it would refer to all kinds of writing which denotes any descriptions of philosophical viewpoints or doctrines ascribed to a particular philosopher or a particular school. In Western tradition doxographies can be traced to the dialogues of Plato, treatises of Aristotle and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to Hermann Diels in his monumental work published in 1879 *Doxographi Graeci* (Greek doxographers). This term ‘doxography’ which was used to refer to primarily Greek and Roman texts now is adopted in the Indian context to refer to similar texts produced in pre-modern India. The Sanskrit terms used to refer to doxography are ‘compendia’ (*saṃgrahas*) or compilations (*Samuccayas*), the term for ‘six philosophical system’ (*ṣaḍdarśana*) and ‘all philosophical systems’ (*Sarvadarśana*).

## 5.3 Narrative form and the didactic nature of early Indian doxography:

According to Olle Qvarnström and other scholars, who has written extensively on Jaina doxographical tradition, he indicates that the early doxographical form in India could have evolved out of narratives which involve dialogue between a single spiritual seeker and his or her various teachers (Qvarnström 1999). In this context, the 6<sup>th</sup> century Tamil Buddhist poem *Maṇimēkalai* by Cāttaṇār, is said to be one of the earliest, where a court and temple dancer gives up her profession to become a Buddhist monk not before thoroughly engaging with opponents of various philosophical viewpoints. In *Maṇimēkalai*, like in the Upaniṣads the central character is the King, the King who stands for religious and political power. The main interlocutor apart from the King is *Maṇimēkala*, the dancer and later who becomes a philosopher. As a social group the Brahmans at the time were not established as a priestly class in Southern India and this also explains why this very important text was not popular as the Sanskrit doxographies.

*Maṇimēkala* is argued to defy easy genre classification, following most of the Tamil literary conventions excepting the last part which consists of an extensive compendium consisting in the teachings of various philosophical system and ultimately culminating into discussion of Buddhist

doctrines and logic. The schools discussed are Vedism, Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Brahmāvādi, Pramānavādi, Mīmāṃsā, Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika, the materialists Lokāyata, the Ājīvika, Nirgrantha (Jains) and finally the Buddhist teacher Aravaṇa Aḍigal<sup>105</sup>. The chapters 27-29 speak about a number of features which have similarities with many later Sanskrit doxographies. The schools are ordered based on the number of accepted *pramāṇas* and also follow the six school (*darśanas*) classificatory model, but the text does not restrict itself to only these six schools, so the number seems to be conventional. *Maṇimēkalai* predates Haribhadra's *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya*. The doctrines of the Ājīvika and the Lokāyata are treated with much dislike, while the doctrines of Jain and Sāṃkhya are treated with a little more sympathy while Buddhism is depicted as the highest philosophy and all *others* as a leading towards this ultimate Buddhist truth. The structure found in chapters 27-9 seem to predict later doxographies such as Mādhava's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*. In the remainder of the chapter. I look at two significant doxographies of two different traditions the Bhāvaviveka's *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* (from now *MHK*) and Mādhava's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* (*SDS*) in order to understand and evaluate the role of these texts play in the construction of the 'Self' and the elimination or absorption of 'the other' into notion of the 'Self'.

#### **5.4 Limitations of Doxography as a valid philosophical genre:**

Like the Upaniṣads, the doxographies are not proper philosophical texts, but the question then one is bound to ask is what then are proper philosophical texts? Is there a broad consensus across traditions and cultures as to what is 'philosophy'? Is philosophy culture specific? Professional academic philosophy completely works within the framework of Western philosophical tradition. The definition of the term 'philosophy' itself can be broad, varied and ambiguous. In this context, 'doxographies' are texts or records which contain the views or doctrines of various *darśanas* or *śākhā*'s, they are neither completely historical nor philosophical texts. They follow the convention of argumentation and dialogue in Indian tradition but there is no refutation of the views as we have seen earlier in the *Sūtra-Bhāṣya* genres. Although the 'doxography' follows the dialectical method it does not engage with the other in a rational debate or argumentation or even state a thesis or position in that sense it is not a philosophical text, it is not even historical text although it contains information about various philosophies, it does not trace the development of the *darśanas* or even provide an accurate description of all existent schools at any given point of time because the

*darśanas* are presented as static, ahistorical entities. Also, there is an inherent bias in the representation of schools because they are written by specific authors belonging to specific traditions who promote their own school at the cost of all others.

According to Rorty, ‘doxography is the attempt to impose a problematic on a canon drawn up without reference to that problematic, or, conversely, to impose a canon on a problematic constructed without reference to that canon’ (Rorty 1984, 62). Rorty states how doxographers typically worked with a canon which was based on the 19<sup>th</sup> century neo-Kantian notion of the ‘central problems of philosophy’ which resulted in pairs of thinkers like Leibniz-Hegel, Mill-Nietzsche being shown as speaking about common topics. In the Indian context too the classification of schools is based on a certain criteria imposed from outside on to it whether be it the number of *pramānas* as in *Maṇimēkalai* or classification based on differences in deity (*devatā*) and principle (*tattva*) as in Haribhadra’s *Saddarśaṇasamuccaya* (Nicholson 2010, 156).

The canon for the Vedānta school is the *Prasthānatrayī* consisting of the Upaniṣads, *Brahmasūtra*, *Bhagavadgīta* considered to be authoritative, although other schools within the *āstika* tradition have their own canon, but when a doxographer from a particular tradition such as *advaita* writes a doxography he imposes the *Prasthānatrayī* on to other schools as well as drawing their authority from them. A doxography has a dubious distinction,

It is half-hearted attempt to tell a new story of intellectual progress by describing all texts in the light of recent discoveries. It is halfhearted because it lacks the courage to readjust the canon to suit new discoveries. (Rorty 1984, 63).

Hence doxographies in a sense should not be considered as a valid source of information or knowledge. The Advaitins wrote doxographies not for providing a descriptive unbiased presentation of schools but rather to claim superiority, these documents are anything but historical. Nevertheless these texts served as valuable historical resource for the early Indologists and Orientalists who had to make sense of the vast array and volume of Indian literary works they were faced with, the compendiums or doxographies served as a manual which objectively laid out the central doctrines of the most relevant philosophical schools of the time.

## Section-I

### 5.5 Bhāvaviveka's *Madhyamakahr̥dayakārikā* (MHK):

Bhāvaviveka (500-570 A.D.) or Bhāvaviveka lived at a time when both Buddhist and Brahmanical philosophy underwent great changes, it was a period when the Māhāyana tradition emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the centuries following Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva. Until Bhāvaviveka, the earlier traditions within Buddhism especially the Theravāda followed a sixteen school (*Nikāya*) classification model<sup>106</sup> and refused to accept the authority of the Māhāyana and continued to interpret and elaborate the fundamental concept of Buddhist thought. Bhāvaviveka's *Madhyamakahr̥dayakārikā* (MHK) and its autocommentary *Tarkajvālā* (TJ), also called the "Verses on the Heart of the Middle Way" and "The Flame of Reason" provided an important, authoritative account of the various differences that arose at the particular time.

Bhāvaviveka attempted to revise the position and methodology established by Nāgārjuna, because it is argued that at the time the Māhāyana found itself in a position of being overshadowed by the Yogācāra School, and also by other Brahmanical systems. Bhāvaviveka uses the logic formulated by Dignāga in his dialectic with the others (Qvarnström 1999, 14). The consisting of the various Buddhist and non-Buddhist systems is argued to be the earliest doxographical work in the history of Indian philosophy, it is also significant because it is one of the very few Buddhist works which consists of Buddhist response to Vedānta, especially early Vedānta of which there seems to be no or scarce historical knowledge. The intervening period between the compilation of the Upaniṣads and the scholastic period characterized by appearance of Śaṅkara in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. nothing much is known. The period before Śaṅkara, the early Vedānta period is referred to as a period which was a result of the assimilation of two main currents in Indian thought the Buddhist and the Brahmanical, the three important works from this period are the *Brahmasūtra*, the *Vākyapadīya* and the *Gauḍapādīyakārikā*. These three texts as pointed out by scholars such as Bhattacharya (1943), Nakamura (1973, 1983) draw extensively from the Māhāyana philosophy both in terms of doctrinal content and method of argumentation.

In this context *Madhyamakahr̥dayakārikā* happens to be the first non-Vedānta text belonging to the Mādhyamika tradition which presents and criticizes the Vedānta philosophical system. The

portion of the text called the *Vedāntatattvaviniścaya (VTV)*, Bhavya dedicates to explicating and criticizing the Vedānta Philosophy. Apart from the Vedānta, the other schools which are examined are the Śrāvakayāna or Hīnayāna, Yogācāra, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, and Mīmāṃsā the views of these school represent the *pūrvapakṣa* then subjected to critical examination resulting in the *Uttarapakṣa*. Similar to the late Sanskrit doxographies the Buddhist and the non-Buddhist schools are arranged in a hierarchical order representing different levels of understanding as far as the truth of reality is concerned. Bhāvaviveka elaborates on the theory of the two truth established by Nāgārjuna. The *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* is not just a doxography, but also a polemic, it is what one could call a partial doxography and in this sense it resembles the structure of the *Brahmasūtra*. The source material for the *MHK* is a manuscript belonging to the 11<sup>th</sup> century written in *proto-Bengali-cum-Maithili* script on palm leaves was discovered in 1936 by Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana from the Za Lu monastery in Tibet. Later a copy of the manuscript was given to V.V. Gokhale (1985) who then transcribed it. However, recently Tibetan versions of the same manuscript have been found in China, the Tibetan translation of *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* is entitled *dBu ma'i sñiñ po'i tshig le'ur byas pa*. Here the English translation by Olle Qvarnström, Macolm David Eckel and Theodore Stcherbatsky is used.

### **5.6 Textual organization of chapters *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā*:**

The *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* consists of 11 chapters, and roughly about 928 verses (*anuṣṭubh*). The first chapters outline Bhavya's own philosophy unlike other later doxographers were the author own philosophy or tradition is outlined only at the end. The third chapter *Tattvajñānaiṣaṇā*, primarily important because it expounds the Mādhyamaka thought and philosophy while the rest of the chapters consists of criticisms of other systems and schools. Verses 135-256 of the third chapter is called the "the non-production of all dharmas" and is the central topic of Bhavya's doxography. Here the various views of the Mādhyamaka thinkers are discussed starting from Nāgārjuna, the non-production of all dharmas implies the emptiness *śūnyata* of all entities in the world. This doctrine is the crux of all the Mādhyamaka philosophy without which nothing else can be understood. In this chapter is also set Bhāvaviveka own view of reality in terms of the two truth theory. Chapter 4 called *Śrāvakatattvaviniścayāvātāra* refutes the views of the Śrāvakāyana, Chapter 5 *Yogācāratattvaviniścaya* refutes the views of Yogācāra, Chapter 6 *Sāṃkhyatattvāvātāra* of Sāṃkhya, Chapter 7 *Vaiśeṣikatattvaviniścaya* of Vaiśeṣika, Chapter 8 *Vedāntatattvaviniścaya*

refutes the views of Vedānta and Chapter 9 *Mīmāṃsātattvanirṇayāvatarā* of Mīmāṃsa. Bhavya's doxography also adheres to the six school (*saddarśana*) classificatory model in its refutation. This chapter deals with the Bhāvaviveka's engagement and criticism of the Yogācāra, Sāṃkhya and the Vedānta views.

Bhāvya's text is a polemic, a doxography and also a commentary. It establishes dialogue within systems and between systems, in that sense it is a systematic text and Bhāvaviveka can also be referred to as a systematizer along with being one of the first doxographers. Bhāvaviveka's systematic effort can be seen in the light of his effort to bring together the various Mādhyamaka doctrines especially of the two-truths tenet which resulted in a lot of ambiguity prior to Bhāvaviveka resulting in the framing of Mādhyamaka just as a nihilistic philosophy causing the Yogācāra school to be highly critical of them (Hoornaert 1999). In order to understand what Bhāvaviveka was attempting it is important to make a distinction between his own methodology as opposed to the methodology of other important Mādhyamaka thinkers.

### **5.7 Bhāvaviveka's formal Logic vs. Nāgārjuna's Scepticism:**

Among the many thinkers who wrote various commentaries on Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā*, were Buddhapālita (470-550 A.D.), Bhāvaviveka, Candrakīrti etc. all of these thinkers use different approaches and strategies to defend Mādhyamaka ideas. Buddhapālita and Candrakīrti use what is known as the *Prāsaṅgika* strategy which primarily involves identifying errors, unwanted conclusions that are a result of inconsistencies in the opponent's argument, while Bhāvaviveka's strategy is the *Svātantrika* which uses formal independent (*svātantra-anumāna*) syllogistic inference and the qualifier 'ultimately' to Nāgārjuna's negative statements. Bhāvaviveka criticizes Buddhapālita's *prāsaṅga* method as inadequate in proving the intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) of all things. All negations can be converted into positive syllogistic argument according to Bhāvaviveka. He regarded that the syllogism was implicit in Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and the negation of origination is non-implicative and cannot be interpreted as implying an affirmation of non-origination. The difference between Buddhapālita and Bhāvaviveka is said to be essentially methodological (Ames 1986, 2). Bhāvaviveka is argued to be the first thinker to use formal syllogism of Indian logic in expounding the Mādhyamaka philosophy. His work *Prajñāpradīpa* based on the explanation and analysis of

*Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* resulted in the creation of two subschools of Mādhyamaka the *Svātrantrika* and *Prāsaṅgika*. The *Prajñāpradīpa* was not just the first texts to use formal logic in Indian philosophy and religion but also the first to discuss other non-Buddhist text, in this sense as already mentioned it is also the first doxographical text. It is important to note here that logic was not more privileged than other forms of reasoning, here too like the Brahmanical tradition, logic was used to show that it is in agreement with the *āgama* writings and correct reasoning (*yuktī*). Unlike Nāgārjuna who argues that he is not stating or positing any thesis or viewpoint but points to the inconsistency underlying the *pūrvapakṣa*, Bhāvaviveka states that his thesis are not only purely negative, but consisted of the subject matter (*pakṣa*) which is empty or *śūnyata* which implies that it does not lack in content.

Bhāvaviveka argued that each thesis of the Mādhyamaka was true from the point of view of ultimate reality (*paramārtha*), the conditioned things are empty because they are produced by a combination of conditions while the unconditioned things are unreal because they are not produced like that of a heavenly lotus, similarly, the negative propositions of the Mādhyamaka should be interpreted as negation without presupposition (*prasajnapratishedha*) showing that what is negated is derived of its own nature. Negation without presupposition as opposed to relative negation (*paryudāsa*) does not presuppose the contradiction of what is negated. After discussing the distinction between Bhavya's and Nāgārjuna's methodologies in explicating the Mādhyamaka philosophy the next section explores Bhavya's role as a Buddhist doxographers.

### **5.8 Bhavya and doxography:**

The *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* and its autocommentary *Tarkajvālā*, is a fine example of the dialectic between Buddhist and other non-Buddhist schools. Bhavya is easily the first doxographers of the Buddhist tradition to document comprehensively the Buddhist tradition, followed later by texts such as *Tattvasaṃgraha* (8<sup>th</sup> century) by Sāntarakṣita. Bhavya's position in Tibetan Buddhist literature is similar to the position held by Candrakīrti who interpreted Nāgārjuna. It is argued that Bhavya was influenced by Dignāga's *Pramāṇa Samuccaya* which also discusses schools such as Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya and Mīmāṃsā but does not discuss Vedānta. Dignāga does not mention Vedānta because it is argued that at that time Vedānta did not have an independent *pramāṇa* theory, and their central concern was basically metaphysical rather than

epistemological or logical concerns. Bhavya uses the *vāda* tradition in his treatment of various heterodox schools. Bhavya arranges different schools in the order of false (*mithyāsaṃvṛtisatya*) and true (*tatyasaṃvṛtisatya*) relative truth, the Vedāntins fall under the first category while Yogācārins and others would fall under the second category. Bhavya's own system would represent the absolute truth (*paramārthasatya*). The following sections examine Bhavya's criticism and refutation of other schools and also his reconciliation of different sects within the Mādhyamaka tradition.

### 5.9 Bhāvaviveka's criticism of Yogācāra:

The Yogācāra at the time were the main opponents to the Mādhyamaka just like how Sāṃkhya were the main opponents of the Vedāntins in the *Brahmasūtra bhāṣya*. The Chapter 5 of *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* called *Yogācāratattvaviniścaya*, vv.1-113 is devoted to the exposition and refutation of the Yogācāra<sup>107</sup> School. Here, the various Yogācāra views are presented as the *pūrvapakṣa*. Bhāvaviveka's restating of the *pūrvapakṣa* of the Yogācāra School consists of the following interrelated themes regarding the reality and the nature of reality, they are: What is reality (*tattvam*)<sup>108</sup>? What is the knowledge of reality (*tattvajñāna*)? What path should one follow (*mārga*) in order to acquire the knowledge of reality and therefore Buddhahood? There is as one can see a deviation from Nāgārjuna's original position about knowledge that all knowledge is real only from a conventional perspective, from the perspective of absolute reality knowledge is essentially the knowledge of emptiness or *śūnya*, what Bhāvaviveka is attempting is to give an epistemic basis for the notion of emptiness through the explication of the doctrine of two-truths. Bhāvaviveka's main argument against the Yogācāra School is against their conception and understanding of reality, he argues that their path to knowledge of reality is faulty and will not lead to the realization of Buddhahood, hence, Yogācāra soteriology is not Māhāyana Buddhism.

*Pūrvapakṣa*: Our [Yogācāra] doctrine is the only true way to lead people toward the knowledge of Reality or Buddhahood. (v.1)

1. Definition of Reality and its synonyms (vv.2-3)
2. The Path leading to the knowledge of Reality (vv.4-5)
  - 2.1 The path leading to the non-apprehension of imagined realities (v.4)
  - 2.2 From the non-apprehension of imagined realities to the knowledge of Reality (v.5)

3. The Yogācāra doctrine agrees with reason (*Yukti*) and scripture (*āgama*) (vv. 6-7)
  - 3.1 Arguments for the existence of dependent nature (v.6)
  - 3.2 Only the Yogācāra doctrines are in accordance with the *Prajñāparamīta* Sūtra. (v.7)

Bhāvaviveka's reply:

Others, proud of their own doctrine and boasting of their erudition, say:

“The entrance into the nectar of Reality is surely explained by the Yogācārin [only].” (Hoornaert 1999, 14)

By ‘Others’ is meant here earlier Yogācāra teachers like Asaṅga, Vasubhandu, Sthiramati and Dharmapāla teachers of the same Great Vehicle but who have erroneously interpreted (*anyathā*) the Great Vehicle, but which was correctly understood by the great Nāgārjuna whose future enlightenment was predicted by the Tathāgata who entered the first Bodhisattva<sup>109</sup> stage. They know neither shame nor embarrassment. Even if they did not know the true meaning they boast that they are experts who know the true meaning and say that the true nectar of Reality is taught by us [Yogācāra] alone and not by the Mādhyamikas. According to them the definition of Reality is

Emptiness is indeed defined as the nonexistence of the two and as the existence of the nonexistence. It is neither [simply] existence or [simply] nonexistence<sup>110</sup> (cf Yamaguchi 1976, 81).

The two refers to the objects apprehended by the consciousness [*grāhya*] which has a visible form [*rūpa*] etc, and to the apprehending consciousness [*grāhaka*] such as visual perception and so on. ‘Nonexistence’ is the inherent nonexistence of the two, it is absolute inherent nonexistence [*atyantābhāva*] or nonexistence across the three periods of time (*past, present and future*). [Reality] is the inherent existence of the non-existence of the two (*dvayābhāvabhāvasvabhāva*), [Reality] is the object of the mind [that perceives] existence. This is what the Yogācārin claim to be the Ultimate or nature of [Reality]. This, of course, is rejected by Bhāvaviveka, he argues that the Ultimate as defined by the Yogācārin is difficult to be established by means of reasoning. He argues that [Reality] can be realized as follows:

The [non-apprehension] of objects arises as a result of perceiving [everything as phenomenon appearing in the mind. And the non-apprehension [of the mind as the apprehender of objects] arises as a result of the non-apprehension [of objects]<sup>111</sup> (Hoornaert 1999, 142)

Then Bhāvaviveka goes on to explain and engage with the notions of consciousness and its various levels as explained by the Yogācārin. He speaks about how the store consciousness [*ālayavijñāna*] consists of residual impressions [*vāsanā*] of the conceptual and verbal differentiations [*prapañca*] that people have been making. The store consciousness has its own object, and its own unique mode of apprehending that object and in that sense it is a genuine consciousness on its own distinct from the other traditional six consciousnesses. It is this store consciousness or *ālayavijñāna* that people cling to and identify it as their self (*ātman*), because their defiled mind identifies it as ‘I’ (*aham*) and ‘mine’ (*mama*). Then he discusses the different kinds of defilements which affects the self. For an *arhat* it is important to eradicate these defilements which causes the identification of the ego with the consciousness, while the consciousness is independent of the Ego. There is a root consciousness (*mulavijñāna*) from which all other consciousnesses arise depending on certain conditions. The store consciousness is neither separate nor identical from these forth coming consciousnesses. Therefore, it is the basis of everything, it contains the seeds of all instances of the mind, all mental factors but is also the basis for all the material faculties and the world much like the *ātman* (permanent, invariant self) notion and the *prakṛti* (the primordial substratum from which all things mental, physical, emotional evolve), it was also precisely for this reason that the concept of *ālayavijñāna* was attacked by several non-Yogācāra Buddhist schools (Lusthaus 2013, 7). Like the stages of development in the Upaniṣads, the store consciousness was initially considered as the ‘seed of mind’ only, but the identification of it with matter and the corporeal world was a later development (Schmithausen 1987, 62-65).

Bhāvaviveka essentially attacks the notion of the three natures of consciousness proposed by the Yogācāra thinkers like Vasubandhu, the three natures (*trisvabhāva* or *trilakṣaṇa*) that the Yogācārin speak about are the imagined nature (*parikalpitasvabhāva*), dependent nature (*paratantrasvabhāva*) and absolute nature (*pariniṣpannasvabhāva*). According to the Yogācārin the imagined nature does not exist (or not real), while the dependent nature and the absolute nature

exists or are real. Bhāvaviveka analysis these three natures from the perspective of the two-truth doctrine, he asks whether, “if the imagined nature does not exist, then is its negation conventional or absolute?”, if its negation is absolute then it is similar to the older Mādhyamaka viewpoint of Nāgārjuna. If its conventional then argues Bhāvaviveka that it is an abandonment or unjustified denial of real things (*apavāda*) denying that things are conventionally real.

So what does it mean to say that imagined things are conventionally real? What are these imagined things or things of imagined nature? The Sanskrit term for “imagined” is “*parikalpita*”, the term denotes ‘construction of the mind’ and not some fiction but an object constructed due to the operation of the mind. To answer the question ‘Whether imagined things are conventionally real?’ Bhāvaviveka uses the most often repeated analogy in Indian philosophy that of the rope and the snake, for instance, when walking down road on a dark night one mistakes a coiled rope for a snake, the snake is here ‘imagined’ in a place where there is a coiled rope, which does not imply that the snake is nonexistent it is existent elsewhere may be on some other dark road or somewhere else, so in this context snakes exists conventionally. Bhāvaviveka argues that to say no snake exists even conventionally (*vyavahāreṇa*), is contradicted (*viruddha*) by commonsense (or by a point that is generally accepted, *prasiddha*)<sup>112</sup>.

If the Yogācārin’s also argued that even the dependent nature and the absolute nature is intended to be only conventionally real then argues Bhāvaviveka it would not pose any problem, but instead if it is intended as being ultimate, then it would involve a ‘superimposition’ (*samāropa*), which would then go against the very notion of the ‘ultimate reality’ as proposed by the Mādhyamaka’s, it would conflict with the very idea of ‘ultimate’. The Sanskrit term used for ultimate nature is *pariniṣpanna*, it is variedly interpreted as ‘perfect’, ‘perfected’, ‘thoroughly established’ etc<sup>113</sup> and when ‘nature’ is attached to it, it refers to the objective side of an objects nature and on the subjective side it refers to the nature of an individual who is fully accomplished intellectually and meditatively. It is devoid of any imperfections, or superimposition etc, it represents the highest, most complete understanding of the phenomena.

The entire purpose of Bhāvaviveka is to establish through reasoning that phenomenon has no self-nature, and that the true nature of all phenomenon is emptiness, but this idea of emptiness appears in a negative context, for Nāgārjuna on the other hand, emptiness is just way to express the idea

of 'lacking self-nature' or *niḥsvabhāva*. Candrakīrti, on the other hand, defines emptiness as something that does not arise from self-nature or as something that lacks in self-nature.

Bhāvaviveka also strongly critiques the Yogācāra notion of the 'theory of meaning'. One of the important doctrines of the Yogācāra school which is refuted by Bhavya is the 'theory of meaning' also called *apohavāda* also called the "doctrine of exclusion of [*others*]" first advocated by Dignāga (480-540 C.E). *Apoha* literally means 'exclusion' or 'differentiation', for instance, to define a 'cow' one needs to know what are the characteristics that are similar to all cows, but this *sameness* of all cows is based on the negation or exclusion of all those which are non-cows. The argument is that 'words' are a result of mental conceptualization and refer to only mental images and not to external realities, meaning therefore refers to the 'referent', the instrument of the act of reference, distinct from the referent, the object toward which the act of reference is directed. Meaning connects the word and the image of the object but cannot be directly associated with the external objects; hence, meaning cannot denote the object. The word has an existence independent of the external object. Consider the verse 60,

*Sāmānyam abhilāpyam hi sāmānyam ca na kiṃcana/  
nābhilāpyātmaśūnyatvam' evam apy upapadyate//* (Saito 2004, 30)

According to this verse, it states that what is been referred to (*abilāpyam*) is the universal (*sāmānyam*), but this universal is not anything at all. What is referred to is empty of its nature. He then goes on to say that what is expressed (*vācya*) is an entity which possess the universal (*sāmānya*) and is the cause of cognition in which it appears. Since it exists as such, it is untenable that it is not what it is referred to. The universal is the absence of those belonging to different species, it is the cause of the occurrence of the same cognition and it is universal because it is common to all belonging to the same species (k. 60-62).

For something to be conceptualized and expressed it should possess the universal. The universal is not separate from the entity possessing the universal. Bhavya's criticism of *apohavāda* is related to his criticism of the universal (*sāmānyam*) as the meaning of words and the positing of his own theory of meaning (k.61),

*vācyam sāmānyavad vastu tadābhamatihetutaḥ/  
tasya tenātmanā sattvān na yuktānabhilāpyatā//* (Saito  
2004, 30)

which is “that what is expressed (*vācyā*) and what is referred to (*abhilāpyam*) is an entity possessing the universal (*sāmānyavāda vastu*)”. While *apohavāda* is akin to nominalism in the Western sense of the term, Bhavya’s offers a realist critique of the theory of meaning. The general Buddhist view is that there are no universals, which is closely related to their notion of impermanence which believes that only momentary particulars exists. For instance, when uses the term ‘pot’ it does not refer to some universal essence such as ‘potness’ which all pots in the world share but it refers to every individual that is not a non-pot. This exclusion of others (*anyāpoha*) argues Bhavya is not a universal of oneself but is the property of *others* or particulars and there is no distinction in the cognition of the one pot and the particular pots because there are no particulars in a [non-existent] universal.

Akiro Saito summarizes Bhavya’s critique of the Yogācāra theory of meaning through (verses 60-68) as follows:

K.60: Critique of the universal as the referent of the word

K.61: Bhāvaviveka’s theory of meaning: The referent of an expression is an entity possessing the universal.

K.62: Bhāvaviveka’s definition of the universal: The absence of those belonging to other species.

k.63: The universal is not accepted as being separate from its substratum, i.e., the entity possessing the universal

k.64: The universal as one and the same nature occurs in many entities

k.65: Two different universals occur in the same object

K.66-67: Critique of the theory of “Exclusion by *Others*”

k.66: “Exclusion by others” cannot be the universal of oneself

k.67: “Exclusion by others” is not a referent of the word.

K. 68: Conclusion: The referent of a word is an entity having the nature distinguished from those of other entities.

In summary, Bhavya's arguments against the Yogācāra's school whether on the notion of three realities, the theory of meaning or of the notion of Ultimate reality is based on the notion of the two truth's. He takes great pains to explain how phenomena can be understood from a conventional perspective (*Samvṛtisatya*). He distinguishes between two kinds of reality 1. *neyārtha*, theories of Śravāka and the Yogācāra, where the truth is covered in a conventional discourse requiring further unpacking and analysis and 2. *nīthārtha* truths which is the *paramārtha* truth or truth from an absolute perspective again sub-divided into the *saparyāya* and *aparyāya paramārtha*, where 'paryāya' refers to the means or methodology followed.

Bhavya argues that the Mādhyamaka statements are made from a *paramārtha* perspective in the sense of the use of 'paryāya' or method or means that are followed which validates the path laid out by the Buddha. There are *paramārtha* truths and there are *paramārtha* statements, and language falls in the latter group especially the *nīthārtha* Mādhyamaka statements which also includes the syllogistic arguments. The *aparyāya*, on the other hand, is both non-Linguistic and is non-conceptual (Lusthaus 2013). Hence, Bhavya, through his refutation of the *Yogācāra*'s conception of reality provides a new vision of reality by providing a conceptual framework to understanding reality. The next important opponent is the school of Sāṃkhya, it was an important non-Buddhist school whose philosophy the early Madhyamaka thinkers too seriously.

### **5.10 Bhavya on Sāṃkhya:**

Sāṃkhya is another important non-Buddhist school that Bhavya's engages with apart from of course Vedānta, the most important of the non-Buddhist schools. The relationship between Buddhism and Sāṃkhya is an interesting one, Sāṃkhya finds mention in most of the early Buddhist texts. It has been found that in the twelfth canto of the *Buddhacarita*, Aśvagoṣha describes Sage Arāḍa's metaphysical system, consisting of the twenty five principles, its discriminating and liberating knowledge. The Arāḍa's system is often referred to as the form of 'early Sāṃkhya', this not only establishes that Sāṃkhya was an important system but also that it predates Buddhism or that both these traditions shared common roots in the *Śramaṇa* tradition.

In the *Sāṃkhyatattvāvātāra* of *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā*, Bhavya critiques Sāṃkhya epistemology and the theory of reflection. The critique engages with some key notions of Sāṃkhya philosophy such as the doctrine of primordial matter *prakṛti*, the *satkāryavāda* (effect pre-existent in the cause) doctrine, the notion of a passive, inactive self (*puruṣa*) etc. Like the debates in the Upaniṣads, here too there was a lot at stake, the results of the debates were of primary importance to the disputants involved and the omniscient status of their respective founders (Qvarnström 2006). From these debates it is possible to reconstruct at least those aspects of early *Sāṃkhya* which have been lost<sup>14</sup>, and to trace the development of *Sāṃkhya* thought as is presented in the earliest literatures such as the *Mahābhārata* (*Mokṣadharmā*), *Bhagavadgīta*, *Carasamhitā* etc. to the composition of the *Sāṃkhyakārika* (300-350 A.D.) and the *Yogasūtra Bhāṣya* composed probably between (350-400 A.D.). It is observed that within Sāṃkhya there was a great deal of rift regarding the two notions of reality one that of the non-active Self or consciousness and the active non-conscious primordial matter. They believe that the Self is the knower, and the process by which the Self knows is connected to the faculty of mind (*buddhi/citta*). Although, the Self (*puruṣa*) is something which is outside knowledge, beyond conceptions but it is fundamentally interdependent on knowledge, here in lies the contradiction. This goes contradictory to the dualistic position maintained by Sāṃkhya about existence of two distinct ontological realities, and hence classical Sāṃkhya view was criticized by many schools including the Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Buddhist traditions.

### 5.11 Bhavya's criticism of Sāṃkhya theory of knowledge:

*Pūrvapakṣa*: The *MHK/TJ* ascribe two theories of knowledge to Sāṃkhya much the same way as the doctrine of two-truths of Nāgārjuna which was later adopted by the non-Buddhist philosophers particularly the *Advaita Vedāntins*. According to Bhavya, Sāṃkhya follow two theories concerning the process of knowledge much in the same way as the theory of the two-truths proposed by Nāgārjuna and later appropriated by non-Buddhist thinkers specifically the school of *advaita Vedānta*. The enquiry into the process of acquiring knowledge as we have seen begins in the Upaniṣads, for instance, in the dialogues between Yajñāvalkyā and Māitreyī, a very important question is asked by Māitreyī to Yajñāvalkyā regarding whether the Self possesses knowledge in the state of liberation, these were also concerns raised by the schools of Sāṃkhya, the Jains, and the Buddhists. When Bhavya restates the Sāṃkhya position on knowledge, he speaks about the

distinction between possessing knowledge when one is in the cycle of birth and rebirth (*samṣāra*) and when one possesses knowledge when in a liberated state (*mokṣa*) (*Madhyamakahrdayakārikā/Tarkajvālā* VI.2-3, *Tarkajvālā* VI.4-7, and VI.8).

Knowledge of the phenomenal world is a different kind of knowledge as opposed to knowledge of the Self, which is the knowledge of the liberated state. Knowledge of the phenomenal world occurs when the senses (*indriya*) apprehend the object of perception by coming into conformity with it after which it is apprehended by the mind (*manas*). Then the object is ascertained and comprehended by the intellect or *buddhi*. In this process of acquiring knowledge the *puruṣa*, which the inactive, content-less entity is in close proximity or dependent on the faculty of knowledge, the Self comes to understand the object by activity of the faculty of knowledge. The faculty of knowledge (*buddhivṛtti*) is not different from the cognitive process of the Self (*abhijñāvṛtti*). According to the second theory, concerning knowledge in a liberated state the process of acquiring knowledge is similar to the earlier theory excepting that the mind here is elevated to the point where it becomes dominated by the *sattvaguna*. At the *sattvaguna* state the Self acquires object through imitating by reflection (*pratibimba*) by the operations of the faculty of knowledge (*Madhyamakahrdayakārikā/Tarkajvālā* III.53).

Bhavya's reply (*uttarapakṣa*): Bhavya criticizes the view that the Self imitates the operations of the intellect via reflection. He argues that even if the Sāṃkhyaitees are correct that the Self remains unchanged after the process of reflection, then going by their own argument the Self would have to be involved in the process of knowing or knowledge as the cause (*upakārihetu*) which is contradictory to their notion that Self is beyond cause and effect. Similarly, also with the idea that imitation involves a process of transformation and despite that the Self does not undergo any change is contradictory. The Self (*puruṣa*) cannot both be said to undergo change and also at the same time possess an intrinsic nature. Therefore, Bhavya argues that by introducing the notion of change or transformation, the Sāṃkhya thinkers contradict their own position of an unchanging, permanent, uncaused, omnipresent Self. Bhavya's own position is the position maintained by the Mahāyāna thinkers that of a non-existent Self or consciousness. For Bhavya, the consciousness is identical to the knowing of the object, the intellect or *buddhi* is in conformity with the object and if the object did not exist, then consciousness would also not exist. In a state of liberation, there is no cause and effect, understanding or knowing would not exist because there is no Self nor

consciousness in that state. Therefore, the *ava(bodha)* is defined as the knowing of something else that manifests the property of change (*parināma*), but the Self assumed to be eternal and non-changing (*aparināma*) and therefore it cannot also be trying to take on a changing feature of “something else” (*anyarūpa*), this is contradictory to the stated view.

*Siddhānta*: In conclusion, Bhavya argues that the consciousness of the Self (*puruṣacaitanya*) distinct from what is called *ava (bodha)* cannot possibly exist. Further, since the Self or consciousness is devoid of any activity (*kriyā*) it cannot be the “knower”. So Bhavya uses the Buddhist notion of a not-Self to address the problem of duality in Sāṃkhya.

### 5.12 Bhavya on Vedānta:

The *Vedāntattvaviniścaya (VTV)* consists of the Buddhist response to Vedānta, an important non-Buddhist rival school, as already mentioned. It is perhaps one of the very few texts which captures this debate between two significant rivals belonging to two different traditions but who nevertheless have significant similarities. Bhavya claims to present an unbiased view of Vedānta, he speaks of the Vedānta notion of the “Self” (*ātman*) within the framework of his theory of “no-Self” and “intrinsic nature” (*svabhāva*).

*Pūrvapakṣa*: According to the Vedāntins liberation (*mokṣa*) is attained from the knowledge of the Self (*ātman*) or the “person” (*puruṣa*). The Buddhists who deny the notion of the “Self” and who claim that all entities of the phenomenal world are empty (*śūnya*) without intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) cannot attain liberation. Then Bhavya goes on to list the various characteristics of the Self according to Vedānta, such as

1. The liberating knowledge resulting from the perception of the Self (*ātman*).
2. The Self as being the agent (*kartṛ*).
3. The three realms of the universe as being pervaded by this “Person” (*puruṣa*) in time and space.
4. The “Person” remains unchanged and unspent and the one who through the practice of meditation perceives the “Person” and dissolves into Him, he is not reborn.

5. The one who does not perceive the immortal “Person” and does not dissolve in Him, does not attain immortality.
6. There does not exist anything more superior (*param*) or excellent (*jyāyas*) than this “Person” who is the upholder of the entire empirical reality.
7. The one who perceives this “Person” is blessed with supernatural powers (*siddhi*).
8. The Experiencer of Him realizes that all entities as well as the very “Self” of the three realm of the universe are all comprehended within that “Person”.
9. The Self does not have the same nature of the body just as space (*ākāśa*) does not have the same nature as the pot (*ghaṭa*)<sup>115</sup>.
10. The Self is one and not many although it exist in different embodied beings.
11. Self is one although the bodies created out of it are different just as clay is one and the pots created out of it are different.
12. Happiness and sorrow arise when a person does not know the Self (*anātmajñah*).
13. The Self itself is independent of the agent (*kartr*) and the enjoyer (*bhoktr*).
14. The Self (*brahman*) is one and reigns supreme over the whole body, all pervasive (*sarvatraga*), eternal (*nitya*), indestructible, immortal, free from birth and death etc.

It is evident from the *pūrvapakṣa*, that Bhavya is mainly concentrated on the metaphysical and ontological notion of the Self (*ātman/ brahman*) and its varied characteristics. He declares that after critical examination (*parīkṣā*) of the Vedāntins position from an unbiased (*pakṣapātāṇapekṣin*) perspective, he presents his *uttarapakṣa*.

Bhavya’s reply (*uttarapakṣa*):

- a. Refutation of Liberation (*mokṣa*) as a result of perception of Self: The existence (*astitva*) of the Self has already been refuted by me (Bhavya) in the *Tattvajñānaiṣanā*, the

*Sāṃkhyatattvāvatarā* and the *Vaiśeṣikatattvaviniścaya* chapters *MHK/TJ* and also its role as the cause of the world (*jagatkāraṇatā*). Therefore, liberation (*mukti*) that results from seeing (*darśana*) that ‘Self’ is entirely false (*abhūtaiva*), since it is only mentally fabricated (*parikalpitā*). Then Bhavya goes on to list the problem with the *puruṣa* view of reality.

- b. The innate (*sahaja*) belief in personal identity *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*<sup>116</sup> identified with the Self (*ātman*), leads to non-tranquility (*aśānti*) even for the minds of the animals (*Tarkajvālā* 3.297-300). Therefore this is not the right path to liberation, since it is the root of all afflictions (*saṃkleśa*). This belief in personal identity is promoted by you [in the *Vedāntadarśana*].
- c. Those who believe in personal identity and notions such as “I” and “me” (*mamāhaṃkāra*) and identify with it, for them liberation also arises from that from which the world (*saṃsāra*) arises. If the very thing [Self] that increases the *saṃsāra* is the cause of liberation then this is like someone trying to put off fire by heaping fuel on it. [Objection: That which is not the cause of peace can become the cause of peace by some method (*upāya*) just as one is intoxicated becomes free from intoxication due to more liquor. For one that does not know the right method if he relies on a false view of the Self than defilements will arise].
- d. The followers of Vedānta postulate that the Self appears in two forms: the Self attached to the body and the liberated Self which rests in the supreme (*parameṣṭhātman*)<sup>117</sup>.
- e. The cognition (*dhī*) that has its object (*viśaya*) as the Self which rests in the supreme (*parameṣṭhātman*) is not true (*yathārtha*), because in this way there is attachment (*parāmarśa*) to the Self<sup>118</sup> and there is movement (*pracāra*) in relation to the Self, like the idea of the Self occurring in the body.<sup>119</sup> [Objection: The supreme Self is imagined to be the “Self” by the power of the residues (*vāsanā*) of attachment (*abhiniveśa*) to the Self. Answer: Nothing at all is established by imagination (*parikalpa*)].

### 5.13 Refutation of the Self as the Agent (*kartṛ*):

Bhavya refutes the idea that the Self is the agent which makes cognition that has form (*rūpa*) (verses 25-26), speech (*śabda*), sound (*dhvani*) as object, nor an agent or physical or mental activities, such as discernment (*saṃjñā*), recollection (*smarana*), insight (*prajñā*) and feeling (*vedanā*), because origination depends on causal conditions (*pratyaya*) (29).

Objection: The Self does see, hear, smell, feel, remember because it is the agent and the eye, nose and various sense organs are the instruments (*karaṇa*).

Reply: To assert the Self as an agent and attribute instrumental value (*karaṇatva*) to the various sense organs is not logical, since the agent presupposes the arising of the causal condition (31-32). The agent status (*kartṛtva*) is possible to conceive on the basis of verbal expressions like “Devadutta cuts”.

Objection: Devadutta does not cut, the sword does.

Reply: This is not right because the sword on its own cannot cut until there is a person or agent to perform the action. The instrument does not act without an agent and the agent does not act without an instrument. Things are brought about due to the assembled causal conditions and not due to a principal (*pradhāna*) condition else it is just a metaphor (*upacāra*) (33). In reality (*tattvataḥ*) there does not exist a fundamental agent independent of all actions, because they are dependent on many collective causes. Bhavya therefore uses the notion of a non-Self and the doctrine of dependent origination to refute the notion of “Self” as an agent (*kartṛ*). Bhavya does not just attack the conceptual structure but also uses language and linguistic analysis to critique the Vedānta notion of the Self.

#### **5.14 Refutation of a singular (*eka*), all-pervasive (*sarvatraga*), eternal (*nitya*), inexpressible (*avācya*), and inconceivable (*nirvikalpa*) Self:**

Bhavya restates and attacks the Vedānta notion of Self as one without a second (*ekam advitīya*), and independent, unrelated Self. If it is an independent, unrelated Self what is it then related to what? An independent, unrelated Self cannot know itself, just as a finger cannot possibly know or touch its own tip<sup>120</sup>. If the oneness of the Self is established as a result of excluding the conceptualization of it being many, that oneness could not exist in reality, since even the conception of oneness is relative (*sāṃvṛtī*) (74).

Bhavya similarly uses the notion of a non-existent, impermanent “Self” subjected to change as a result of causal conditions (*pratyaya*) to refute other Vedānta notions such as the Self being the basis of bondage, liberation and continuance, the refutation of cognition as the intrinsic nature

(*svabhāva*) of the Self etc. So in conclusion against the system of Vedānta, Bhavya says the following:

*nāto bhāvo na cābhāvo na pṛthag nāpṛthak pumān /*  
*na nityo nāpy anityaś ca na buddhidhvanigocaraḥ //*  
(*Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* 3.287; *Tarkajvālā* 3.111)

The above verse means that “neither existence (*bhāva*) nor non-existence (*abhāva*) and neither difference (*pṛthak*) nor non-difference (*nāpṛthak*) are applicable to the Self (*pumān*), [which is furthermore] neither eternal (*nitya*) nor non-eternal (*anitya*), and it is not an objects of speech or cognition (*buddhidhvanigocara*)” (Bhāvaviveka and Qvarnström 1989, 59). In the next verse Bhavya explains the similarities with those who believe that ultimate reality is that which is beyond speech and cognition. But he also says the dissimilarity with the other lies in the fact that the belief in ultimate reality is not based on the notion of an existing Self, instead it is based on the notion that all entities are devoid of intrinsic nature. Because it is not possible to establish an object of knowledge, it is also not possible to establish it through the domain of cognition and speech.

It is explained by the verse *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* 3.266 as follows:

*jñeyasya sarvathāsiddher nirvikalpāpi yatra dhīḥ /*  
*notpadyate tad atulyaṃ tattvaṃ tattvavido viduḥ //*

Which translates as “no object of cognition is established in any way, so reality (*tattvam*) is that of which even a non-conceptual cognition arises” (Eckel 2016, 146). The object of knowledge, which is the object of the six forms of cognition (*viññāna*) is imagined (*parikalpita*), but in reality what is imagined or conceptually constructed is completely unestablished. One can’t help but notice how the conceptual framework of reality proposed by Nāgārjuna, Bhavya and other Madhyamaka thinkers several centuries earlier was assimilated in Śaṅkara's own conception of the three levels of reality. The next section discusses the similarities between the *Madhyamaka* and the *Vedānta*.

## 5.15 Similarities between Madhyamaka and Vedānta:

### The “Pot-space” simile (*ghaṭākāśadr̥ṣṭānta*):

If there is one simile or metaphor that characterizes the Madhyamaka-Vedānta polemics it is the “pot-space” simile of *Vedāntattvaviniścaya*. The *Ghaṭākāśadr̥ṣṭānta* finds mention in the early *Mahāyānasūtra*, and is often referred to by Bhavya. Gauḍapāda, the author of *Gauḍapādakārikā* (*GK*), a commentary on the *Mandūkya Upaniṣad* similarly uses a similar simile of the “pot-space” and scholars have argued that there are a lot of similarities with Bhavya’s *Madhyamakahr̥daya* (Lindtner 1985). It is argued that both Bhavya and Gauḍapāda are quoting from the same source. Both of whom seem to be quoting from a Yogācāra text ascribed to Asaṅga, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* and also other texts like *Āgamaśāstra*, a principal Buddhist work, the *Prajñāpāramitā*, Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamaka-Kārikā* with a commentary by Candrakīrti. Walleser (1910) argues that the “pot-space” simile used by Bhavya in *Vedāntattvaviniścaya* seems to draw from *Gauḍapādakārikā*, while Lindtner argues that there are other instances like *Gauḍapādakārikā* 4.2 where Gauḍapāda seems to be citing Bhavya’s *Madhyamakahr̥daya*. Gauḍapāda is considered the first to introduce the simile of “pot-space” into Vedānta tradition probably under Buddhist influence.

Bhavya criticizes the notion of *ajātisamatāvāda* ("the doctrine of self-identity of non-origination") of *GK*<sup>121</sup> found in the *Vedāntattvaviniścaya*, which is evidence of the fact the early Vedānta pre-Śaṅkara was highly influenced and based much on its metaphysical conceptions of Buddhist philosophy. Bhattacharya argues that

It is Gauḍapāda, and he alone, who discovered the true relation between the Vedantic and the Buddhistic view. In Books II and III of his *Āgamaśāstra*, Gauḍapāda begins with Vedānta and concludes with Buddhism, showing thereby how the former leads to the latter. (1920, 440)

Gauḍapāda is seen as a synthesizer of both Vedānta and Buddhist views. In the *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā/ Tarkajvālā*, the “pot-space” simile is used in the context of disproving the oneness (*ekatva*) and existence of the Self, since through the “pot-space” simile (*ghaṭākāśadr̥ṣānta*), the oneness and the existence of the space cannot be established. Space<sup>122</sup> is merely the absence of an enduring, underlying substance *sapratighadravyābhāvamātra*, it is not a substance possessing existence (*dravyasat*). Bhavya states the position of the Vaibhāṣikas especially with reference of the notion of space and ‘Self’ when dealing with the Vedāntins.

Bhavya while bringing out the similarities between the two traditions, so takes effort to show that the Vedānta system is misguided and contradictory. He speaks about of the mixed up nature of the Vedānta system, he argues when dealing with the nihilists, existence of Self is taught and in order, to stop the grasping of a Self by the followers of the Self (*ātmavādins*) non-existence of Self is taught. Bhavya clearly criticizing the double standards of the Vedāntins. Ultimately, Bhavya makes an important argument that “in reality, neither the Self nor the non-Self exists”<sup>123</sup>, this is significant because the contemporary simplistic portrayal of Vedānta vs. Buddhism has been depicted as the debate between *Self* (*ātma*) vs. the *non-Self* (*anātma*), but what Bhavya is stating is that in actual reality none of these theories (*ātma/ anātma*) exist, they exist only at the level of conventional reality. Bhavya in his criticism of brahmanical systems like Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya and Vedānta uses the same methodology which presents his ideological affiliation with the larger Buddhist tradition (*āgama*) by applying reason (*yukti*) to counter opposing views. Bhavya lays out his thesis, uses syllogism and logic to counter opposing views, this method is different from Nāgārjuna’s negative dialectic, because Nāgārjuna does not present any thesis, or make any claims but brings out the logical inconsistencies within claims made by others. There is hierarchy even in Bhavya’s treatment of schools in order of their relative truths, ‘others’ views are not dismissed altogether but treated as partial truths although the Madhyamaka position represents the absolute truth. Bhavya’s role is that of a philosopher where he lays out his own philosophy as seen in the chapter 3 called *Tattvajñānaīśanā* (“The search for knowledge of Reality”) which is equivalent to the Greek term ‘philosophia’, as a polemic where he establishes his own position by refuting the opponents viewpoints, and as a doxographer (chapters 4-9) by enumerating various philosophical views which are responsible for propagating false viewpoints and doctrines which are obstruction to true liberation. In terms of the structure and format of the text and method of argumentation

there is a change in the level of complexity and conceptual engagement from Nāgārjuna, Bhāvaviveka to Candrakīrti each of whom tried to systematize, consolidate and make distinctions between the true and relative positions of various competing views sometimes positing their own philosophical positions and at other times finding inconsistencies in *others* positions but all within the larger framework of Buddhist thought. The dialectic in the *Madhyamakahr̥daya* draw our attention to the various schisms within the Buddhist tradition as well as their relation with Brahmanical schools prior to Śaṅkara. Whether a philosophical polemic, a commentary or a doxography underlying all these genres is the dialogue between the ‘self’ and ‘others’, dialogical in nature based on notions of ‘identity’ and ‘difference’. In the Buddhist context as in the Brahmanical the conception of the ‘self’ is dialogical, a ‘self’ in a dialogue with itself or with other/s as we have also seen in the previous chapter, the doxographies represents a genre created specifically to document schools *darśanas* or *tantras* in a hierarchical order.

The *MHK/TJ* is as already mentioned is only a partial doxography similar to the Tamil doxography *Maṇimēkalai* by Cāttaṅār, but in a sense according to the standard broad definition of a ‘doxography’ every Indian text contains a doxographical aspect in terms the conventional *pūrvapakṣa* and *uttarapakṣa* structure specifying the dialectic between the ‘self’ and ‘others’ based on ‘differences’ either with references to differences in doctrines or differences in practice. Buddhism essentially being an ethical religion the notion of the “other” is as important as the “self”, the “other” is a part of “oneself”, Buddhahood” is a quality which is inherent in all beings. In the context where there is no permanent enduring “self”, the “other” also does not exist; for Bhavya the differences would lie only at the level of conventional reality (*saṃvṛti*) only, from an absolute perspective (*paramārtha*) there is neither the “self” nor the “other”, the “subject” nor the “object”, the “self” the “other” and all such things are only conceptual constructions of the mind which are valid only at the level of convention.

## Section: II

### 5.16 Jain and Advaita doxographies:

Among the Sanskrit doxographical tradition, a large volume of work belongs to two religious philosophical groups the Jains and the Advaitins. Whether Haribhadra's *Saḍdarśanasamuccaya*,

Merutuṅga *Saḍḍarśananirnaya* all Jainas and the Advaita doxographies are Mādhava Vidyāraṇya's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, Madhusūdhana Sarasvatī's *Prasthānabhedā*, *Sarvamatasamgraha* and of course *Sarvadarśanakaumudī* and the *Sarvasiddhāntasamgraha* ascribed to Śaṅkaracārya although there is some controversy regarding its authorship<sup>124</sup>. Haribhadra's *Saḍḍarśanasamuccaya* and Mādhava Vidyāraṇya's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* are the most popular of the Jain and Advaita doxographies among the Western scholarship. The terms “*samgraha*” or “*samuccaya*” translates into “collection” or “compendium” of philosophies (*darśana*) or doctrines. It is argued that the doxographies are an outcome of the dialogue narrative form centered round a single spiritual seeker and his teachers (Qvarnström 1999) much like *Maṇimēkalai*, but in later medieval doxographies the purpose of creating doxography especially among the Advaitins seem to be more political to identify and create a stable religion or orthodoxy by delineating from *others* philosophy or religion.

### 5.17 Classificatory schema of Jain and Advaita doxographies:

The Jaina doxographies usually adhere to a six-school classificatory scheme (*saddarśana*) but do not follow any fixed pattern or scheme of presentation of schools while the Advaita Vedānta is based on hierarchical classification in an ascending order with advaita at the end, the materialistic school Cārvāka or Lokāyata placed at the lowest and the highest being Vedānta. In the *Sarvasiddhāntasamgraha*, the schools are arranged starting with Lokāyata, Ārhata (Jainism), Bauddha (divided into the four sub-schools), Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Mīmāṃsa and the two sub-schools of Kumarīla and Prabhākara, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, the doctrine of “Vedāvyaśa” (which basically is the Mahābhārata) and the Advaita Vedānta. The *darśana*s are grouped into two groups the *āstika*<sup>125</sup> (orthodox schools) and *nāstikas* (heterodox schools) depending on either affirmation or the denial of the Vedas.

The *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, on the other hand, includes many more *darśana*s in that sense is considered more inclusive than other compendiums, it lists Cārvāka, Bauddha, Ārhata, Rāmānuja, Pūrṇa Prajña (philosophy of Mādhva), Nakulīśa-Pāśupata, Saiva (followers of *Śaivasiddhānta* of South India), Pratyabhijña (Kashmir Śaivism), Raseśvara, Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Jaiminīya (Mīmāṃsa), Pāṇinīya (grammar and philosophy), Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Advaita Vedānta. In both the *Advaita* doxographies, the ordering starts with the materialistic schools and ends with Advaita as the pinnacle of orthodox Indian philosophy. In the *Sarvasiddhāntasamgraha* the central doctrines of every school is listed without any criticism but a method is followed where when the views of a new school is taken

up, its tenets are used to criticize a preceding systems view for example the materialistic school Cārvāka criticized from a Ārhata or Jain perspective, the Jains criticized from the Buddhist perspective and Buddhists criticized from a Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika standpoint and so on. This way the author progresses up a hierarchy of system until he reaches Advaita Vedānta. The *Sarvamatasamgraha* similarly, begins with the heterodox doctrines Bauddha, Jains, materialists followed by the orthodox schools ranging from the Vaiśeṣika to the Vedānta and it specifically discusses the Purāṇic form of Vedānta (*paurāṇicamata*) (Halbfass 1988, 367).

In comparison, the Jaina doxographies do not follow the hierarchical order eventually leading upto their own philosophy but randomly arrange schools with no particular order for instance, in Haribhadra's *Saḍdarśanasamuccaya*, the Jaina school appears in the midst of other schools with the materialistic school discussed at the end, excepting for Merutuṅga *Saḍdarśananirnaya* where the Jaina philosophy occupies the last chapter, also in the Jaina doxographies Vedānta is not presented as a separate doctrinal system. Traditionally the Jain doxographies revolves round the six-system classification (*saḍdarśana*), this is also followed in other systems such as the number of six *Vedāṅga* or the six auxillary sciences etc. the school of materialism is added as the seventh school.

### 5.18 Āstika and Nāstika:

The characteristic feature of Hindu doxographies is the categories of *āstika* and *nāstika* which have been variously translated and interpreted which has gained popularity during the late medieval period. In the early medieval period the term used instead was *Vaidika* and *Avaidika* or *non-Vaidika*. *Vaidika* relates to the Vedas, its followers, the Vedic religion complete with all its practices as opposed to the *avaidika* which refers to that which has a non-Vedic origin this includes religions such as Buddhism, Jainism, Cārvāka and several other smaller sects which are classified under the category of *Śramaṇa* traditions, which are various sects which claim to have a non-Vedic origin. The philosophical speculations of the Upaniṣadic period were largely influenced by the *Śramaṇas* who were wandering ascetics and teachers (Belvalkar and Ranade 1927, 400). The ascetic aspect of Hinduism derives from the *Śramaṇic* traditions. This is opposed to the Brahmanic traditions which is synonymous with the Vaidika traditions. All Vaidika traditions owe their allegiance to the primary *Śruti* and the secondary *Smṛti* texts of the Vedic corpus. Medhātithi in his commentary on the *Manusmṛti* states:

So all those outside [the Veda], namely the worshippers of the Sun (*bhojaka*), the followers of the [Vaisnava] Pañcarātra, the Jainas, the [Buddhist] deniers of the self (*anātmavādi-*), the Pāśupatas, and the rest, hold that their doctrines have been authored by exceptional persons or deities who have had direct experience of the truth they teach. They do not claim that their religious practices derive [like ours] from the [eternal and unauthored (*apauruseya-*)] Veda; and indeed their teachings contain doctrines that directly contradict it<sup>126</sup>.

Clearly even at that early time (5<sup>th</sup> century) the boundary between what constitutes “Self” and the “others” has been drawn even before the conceptualization in the late medieval period (16<sup>th</sup> century onwards) about what constitutes *āstika* and *nāstika*, but in the late medieval period many of those non-Vaidika traditions like Vaiṣṇavas became incorporated into the Vedic fold. In a further verse from *Manusmṛti* verse 2.11 states

any twice born who disregards these two roots [*śruti* and *smṛti*] on the basis of science and logic should be excluded by the righteous as *nāstika*, a reviler of the Veda<sup>127</sup>. (Olivelle 2004, 204)

The science of logic here referring to the works of the *nāstikas*, the Buddhists, the Cārvāka in whose work it is argued that the Vedas are contrary to *dharma* (Nicholson 2010). Medhātithi defines *nāstika* as one who says “there is no other world; there is [no purpose] in gift giving; there is [no purpose] in sacrificing”. The seventh century thinker Kumārila Bhaṭṭa in his commentary on the *Manusmṛti* speaks of followers of forbidden religious practices (*pāṣaṇḍinah*) who he says should not be even honoured with speech (*Manu* 4.30). As one can see while who should constitute the orthodoxy or *self* or *āstika* is agreed upon as those who adhere to the Vedic worldview who or what should constitute the *other*, the *nāstika*, the reviler of the Vedas is not fixed, its meaning and scope keeps changing.

The Buddhists and Jainas on the other hand, use these terms differently. According to Jain doxographers Haribhadra and his commentator Maṇibhadra, *āstika* are those that affirm the existence of another world (*paraloka*), transmigration (*gati*), virtue (*punya*) and vice (*pāpa*). In the context of the Jainas the notion of *āstika* and *nāstika* is based on the differences in ritual and action, the differences arise when

each school categorizes various action according to the results. For Haribhadra and Mañibhadra, their philosophy and they represent the *āstikas* while the only school that they consider *nāstika* is the materialistic school of Lokāyata. The Buddhists on the other hand, do not themselves use the words *āstika* and *nāstika*, but consider the use of the term *nāstika* to depict them as pejorative and refuse to be associated with it. The Buddhists doxographies are of two kinds, one classification of schools based on doctrine and second classification of schools based on ritual practices (*tantra*). As has been already mentioned one of the primary reasons for the Buddhists recording their histories was to document and explain the differences, controversies that led to the creation of diverse Buddhist sects which numbered close of eighteenth different sects (Walser 2012, 44). The reason that these differences between sects had to be documented was also to find some kind of a stable, authoritative Buddhist religion from among diverse sects within the tradition. The use of the term *nāstika* in the Buddhist context occurs when a particular schools doctrine is considered to be propagating false views which goes contrary to the central Buddha teachings, for instance, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* attributed to Yogācāra philosopher Asaṅga (4<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) is a compendium of the Mahāyāna tradition also which is part of larger work called the *Yogācarabhūmi* (stages of spiritual practice). The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* not only consists of all the instructions regarding ritual performances and practices in the Mahāyāna tradition but also about who or what constitutes the right practitioner or follower of the particular tradition leading to liberation (*nirvāṇa*). The chapter *Tattvārthapaṭalam* (Knowing Reality) of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* identifies and critiques to kinds of Buddhist who distort the Buddha's teachings, especially with reference to the Yogācāra mind-only doctrine as the middle way between two extreme Buddhist viewpoints, one that of undernegation and other that of total negation of existence or reality of the phenomenal world. In a verse from the *Tattvārthapaṭalam*, the author defines who is a 'denier' (*nāstika*) as follows:

When some people hear the difficult and profound Mahāyāna sūtras that deal with emptiness and convey a meaning that needs to be interpreted, they do not discern the correct meaning, they develop false concepts, they have reasonable views based on Logic (*tarka*), and they say: "All of reality is nothing but a designation; whoever sees it this way, sees correctly." For these people there is no real thing to serve the basis of designation. This means that there cannot be any designation at all. How can reality be anything but

designation? By saying this they deny both designation and reality. Someone who denies designation and reality should be known as the worst kind of *nāstika*. He causes himself to fall, and those who agree with his false views fall as well. (Nicholson 2010, 174)

Nicholson goes on to compare how this verse is similar to the *Manusmṛti* where it criticizes the use of logic alone, but he does not take into account the context in which the term *nāstika* is used in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, a *nāstika* as someone who clearly does not understand the notion of Reality, and that Reality cannot be understood by means of reason and logic alone. So, clearly for a true follower of Yogācāra path, a person who could not properly comprehend or who misinterpreted the notion of Reality as proposed by the Asaṅga and his teacher Maitreya is a reviler or *nāstika*. Unlike the Hindu tradition where a very general broad definition is used to define a *nāstika* as someone who is a reviler of the Vedas as opposed to a follower of the *Vaidika* tradition, in the Buddhist context a *nāstika* is used within the tradition to distinguish one sect from another based on their understanding and interpretation of specific doctrines and practices within the overall framework of the Buddhist path and tradition. While the Buddhists were also interested in drawing boundary between Self-other, they were more interested in resolving their internal differences and conflicts within their tradition as we have also seen in Bhavya's *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā/ Tarkajvālā* rather than portrayal of their (Buddhist) philosophy as a homogeneous whole as opposed to an external outsider as is done in Hindu doxographical texts, treating internal differences (other) was more important than that of external differences with Others.

In Bhavya's *MHK*, the most important internal opponent was the Yogācāra School, which was considered more dangerous to the propagation of the false notion of the 'Self' than other schools. On the other hand, Śāntarakṣita's (8<sup>th</sup> century) *Tattvasaṃgraha* (Compendium of Reality) which is an encyclopedia various Buddhist and non-Buddhist views especially related to various theories of Self (*puruṣa / ātman*) such as Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, Sāṅkhya, Digambara-Jaina, Advaitin, Vātsīputrīya<sup>128</sup> and towards the end Lokāyata. The *Tattvasaṃgraha* like the *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* functions both as a polemic and as a doxography, like Bhavya, Śāntarakṣita and his commentator Kamalaśīla, begin with establishing their own doctrines at the beginning and then go on to discuss the doctrines of other philosophies, which is distinct from the

Hindu Sanskrit doxographies which inevitably begin with discussing ‘others’ philosophy starting with the lowest and moving towards the highest truth which is their own philosophy. This strategy as pointed out by Clayton “is to claim that whatever portion of truth is found in any other philosophical system is taken up by and also embraced by Advaita (or Jaina). But, paradoxically, this is also precisely the difference between Advaita Vedānta (or Jaina) and the other perspectives: the ‘Other’ has aspects of truth, whereas, we alone possess the truth in its fullness” (Clayton 1987, 50).

So, the doxography uses a ‘inclusivist’ strategy or gives the appearance of including the ‘others’ while all the time assimilating the ‘other’ into the ‘Self’ and also excluding those who cannot be assimilated because of the fundamental difference in their foundational beliefs/views. In the absence of any one particular founder or one foundational text, the basis for categorization between the ‘Hindu’ (*āstika*) and ‘non-Hindu’ (*nāstika*) schools is between those who follow the *Vaidika* tradition versus those that reject it *avaidika*. The categories (*āstika*, *nāstika*) and the distinctions between them although were rigid in the beginning over the course of time they became more flexible being more accommodative of the differences for instance, in commentary on *Brahmasūtra bhāṣya*, Śaṅkara’s attitude toward the Sāṃkhya school is one of an extremely important rival, which had major differences with the Vedānta school with very little similarities but this changes in the medieval period in texts such as Mādhava's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, Sāṃkhya was seen more of ally sharing the same intellectual space and orthodoxy as Vedānta.

In the Buddhist context, the notion of school or *darśanas* is differently construed, where schools are not necessarily separate belief systems or philosophies but distinct sects. Sa-skya Paṇḍita, well-known as Sa-pan (1182-1251) in his treatise *Mkhasjug*, similar to *Nyāyamañjari* of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa states the rules, conduct of philosophical debate and disputation between the Buddhists and the non-Buddhists. Sa-pan speaking of different opponents (Others) with regard to philosophical debate argues that the people who essentially engage in a debate are either Buddhists or adherents of one of the five non-Buddhist sects : Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Jaina or Cārvāka, because they were considered to be worthy opponents trained properly in epistemology, logic and the act of dialectic. Sa-pan further states that the basis for binding together all 'non-Buddhist' sectarians and distinguishing them from Buddhists is their belief in the existence of 'self' or '*ātman*'. Whether it be Hindu texts or Buddhists or Jains, the authors were well aware that there

were many schools which were existent at the time but would not find mention in the doxographical texts because they did not satisfy certain external conditions or rules laid out by individual author belonging to specific traditions and their loyalties or fulfilling certain conventions laid out by the tradition.

Although the term ‘doxography’ may be a modern coinage, the pre-modern Indian thinkers across traditions whether Brahmanical (Hindu), Buddhist, Jains have had doxographic concerns, the need to document their histories, to organize, to classify different schools in order of their truth. If one were to go by the broad definition of a ‘doxography’ given by Hermann Diels every classical Indian text is a doxography, since it follows the convention of a *pūrvapakṣa* (opponents viewpoint) and *uttarapakṣa*, and any text containing multiple *pūrvapakṣas* qualifies as a doxography (Nicholson 2010, 148). The dialogues and the dialogical method are the predominant form across all genres of classical Indian texts whether the Upaniṣads, the *Sūtras*, the *Bhāṣyas*, the *Kārikas*, the *Samuccayas* or the *Samgrahas*. A dialogue can occur either between two or more named characters such as in the Upaniṣads, or between unnamed characters with a generic opponent as in the *Sūtras* or *Bhāṣyas*, or as a dialogue between a seeker, a teacher and different generic opponents belonging to various schools as in the case of a *Samgraha* or *Samuccaya*. The fundamental basis for these dialogues is the notion of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’, the ‘Other’ have always played a significant role in the discourses of the *Self* in the Indian context, since they do not exist apart from the *Self* that is also precisely why the opponent’s position or *pūrvapakṣa* is stated first. Many contemporary texts on Indian philosophy inherit the same method and form of the representation of schools followed in the medieval doxographies. In the next chapter on contemporary Indian texts, I would like to draw parallels between these medieval doxographical texts with representation of philosophical schools, and through the process examine how the notion of *Self* and *other* changes from the pre-modern to the modern.

### **5.19 Conclusions:**

Although the term ‘doxography’ and its application in the Indian context may be new, the documenting of existing schools or doctrine at a point of time in history has a long history. The underlying notion of doctrinal classification is the problematic between ‘Self’ and ‘other’. If one were to look at Indian philosophical tradition particularly the Sanskrit doxographical tradition it is

varied and diverse. The Sanskrit doxographical tradition is constitutive of three main traditions the Jains, Buddhists and the Advaitins. The ultimate purpose of the doxographies across traditions seem to be to assert and establish one's own philosophical position as superior and dominant to all other schools or systems. Whether be it *Madhyamakahṛdayakārikā*, the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, the *Saḍdarśanasamuccaya*, there is arranging of systems in a hierarchical yet inclusive order. The inclusion of the 'others' is done for the purpose of one's own self-understanding and refinement of one's philosophical position in terms of engaging in a dialectic with the 'other'.

From a historical perspective, a text like *Madhyamakahṛdayakārikā*, is an important resource is attempting to understand Vedānta notions from a Mādhyamaka perspective and it also helps understand the debates of the time which Bhavya was engaged with. The *Saḍdarśanasamuccaya* shows how the different schools function as steps on a ladder which ultimately lead to truth, the 'others' are representations of partial truths and the 'self' the absolute truth. Although one can question the authenticity and validity of doxography as a relevant historical source, one cannot deny the importance that doxography as a genre plays in self-construction and selfhood.

## Chapter – 6

### On Conceptualization of Modern Indian Philosophy

In the previous chapter on doxography, we have seen how the notions of ‘orthodoxy’ (*āstika*) and ‘heterodoxy’ (*nāstika*), of ‘self’ and ‘other’ became standardized and formalized through classificatory schemes. In this chapter, I look at how the dialogical, dialectical method but devoid of the ‘narrative’ structure of the early classical text continues to be a dominant feature of the modern Indian Texts within the larger context of ‘Self’ and ‘others’. This chapter also attempts to identify different movements within the modern Indian writing and their efforts to reconcile the ‘traditional’ with the ‘modern’. ‘Modern’<sup>129</sup> Indian philosophical writing in English begins with what is called as Anglophone writing referring to those writers in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century who wrote in English and were educated at universities. The Anglophone turn in Indian philosophy was contrasted with the traditional Indian philosophy revolving round schools or *darśanas*. Many recent works<sup>130</sup> have concentrated on philosophy in colonial India and how the thinkers of that period creatively engaged with the West, and were successful in not just initiating a dialogue with their Western counterparts but also stating their own position. Through the process of cross cultural debate and dialogue many key Western ideas, world-views were assimilated into the Indian tradition resulting in the reinterpretation of indigenous religio-philosophical concepts and doctrines in light of this new knowledge acquired from the West.

The Vedānta philosophy became the foundation on which this cross-cultural debate/dialogue was initiated and established. Vedānta philosophy was at the same time both ancient and modern, it became the basis for the construction of the modern Indian consciousness. A lot has been written about regarding how Vedānta became synonymous with philosophy, how it helped construct a modern Indian identity however, this is not the concern here. The purpose of this chapter is to seek to trace either the continuity or dis-continuity of the notions of ‘Self’ and ‘others’ from the classical texts to the modern texts, to look at how certain notions have persisted while others have ceased or evolved in to different forms. This chapter attempts to especially examine how the dialogical-dialectic method between ‘Self’ and ‘others’ of the classical texts translates or transforms in the modern writings on Indian philosophy particularly those texts which document the history of Indian philosophical schools (systems) as can be seen through the writings of Radhakrishnan, Hiriyanana, and others.

## 6.1 Introduction:

As we have already seen the problem of the ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ is not just a contemporary problem but a problem that Indian thinkers have been engaged with for more than a millennia. In the Western context excluding the Greek philosophy, the period signifying Renaissance, Enlightenment to the Modern period, placed the ‘Self’ at the center of enquiry or reason or truth, the individual self was predominant, with man being the measure of all things, and there was an increasing separation between reason and faith. The ‘other’ was not even problem in the Western context until post World War II (WWII), when the attention shifted from the ‘Self’ to the ‘Other’, and from ‘unity’ to ‘difference’. Although the philosophy of ‘difference’ has its roots in the ancient Greek philosophy of Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle, it did not gain prominence until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century specifically the period post WWII. The philosophy of ‘difference’ essentially is centered round the writings of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Deleuze and Derrida who all belong to tradition which is now known as ‘Continental philosophy’<sup>131</sup>. There are two primary views about ‘difference’ one view is that ‘difference’ is opposed to ‘identity’ which is the view endorsed by analytical thinkers and the other view is that ‘difference’ is constitutive of ‘identity’ and ‘meaning’, this is the view endorsed by the continental philosophers. ‘Difference’ and ‘identity’ also plays a crucial role in dialogue and debate. Debates and dialogues help overcome ‘differences’ with the ‘other’ either by accepting or rejecting the ‘differences’ or ‘assimilating’ those differences as being part of the ‘Self’.

With regards to Eastern traditions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, as we have seen whether in the dialogues of the Upaniṣads, or the dialectics of Śāṅkara and Nāgārjuna or the method followed by the early doxographers like Bhāvaviveka where every other position is said to be a level of truth relative to one’s own position and ultimately culminates into one’s own viewpoint. In a dialogue, the ‘other’ (either real or imagined) is represented in the form of an opponent’s viewpoint (*pūrvapakṣa*), while the establishment of one’s own position is *uttarapakṣa* or *siddhanta*. In most cases, this *pūrvapakṣa* may not reflect the true position of the rival school, many times these views are imposed by the ‘Self’ on to the ‘Other’, but they do represent the others position. All *darśanas* emerged and evolved from this dialectic process of *pūrvapakṣa-khandana-uttarapakṣa (siddhānta)* (Chatterjee and Datta 1986, 23). The argumentative structure of *pūrvapakṣa-khandana-uttarapakṣa* became the dominant mode of engagement with the ‘Others’ across genres whether *Bhāṣyas*, *Kārikas*, *Vārttikas*, also of compendiums like the *samuccayas*, *saṃgrahas* excepting the *khandana* or the refutation aspect the

structure of dialogue is the same. No *darśana* begins by stating its position at the beginning itself but their process is shown to evolve through a continuous engagement with the ‘other’ or in other words the ‘Self’ is not a pre-given in the dialectic it constantly evolves while the ‘other’ is fixed. The dialectical between ‘Self’ and ‘Others’ reflect on the nature of subjectivity in the pre-modern period.

As we have seen the early Upaniṣadic dialogues set in particular social context between named characters belonging to different social groups and representing various positions can be contextualized. While the decontextualized, ahistoricized, disembodied dialectics of the (*sūtras* and *Bhāṣyas*) and *samuccayas* are not representative of an individual or a social group but of a particular doctrinal and philosophical position.

In this chapter, I would like to argue how this decontextualized, ahistoricized, disembodied dialectic is followed in the contemporary writings on Indian philosophy. Even in the context of Anglophone philosophy, which is philosophy borne out of particular historical context (colonial period) characterized by comparative philosophy through intercultural dialogues with the aim of creating a national consciousness, I would like to argue that the ahistorical, decontextualized notions of schools of Indian philosophy were privileged over the historicized, contextualized approach to Indian *darśanas*. The contemporary thinkers while constantly trying to be modern, innovative accepted and followed many of the traditional notions and motifs about Indian philosophy as truth. The project of the modern Indian thinkers can be termed essentially as a project of recovery and reconstruction similar to the commentators of the *sūtra* period. But Indian philosophy is “all text and no context” (Ganeri 2008, 553), there is no way one can accurately determine the correct authorship, time, physical location, socio-political context of composition of texts despite recent effort in Intellectual history<sup>132</sup> to look and engage with ‘Indian texts in context’.

In the context of classical Indian texts which were dealt with in the previous chapters it can be seen whether it is the dialectics of Śaṅkara, Nāgārjuna etc when dealing with ‘others’ (rival schools) who are imagined, the author becomes simultaneously becomes both the speaker representing the ‘Self’ and the ‘other’ (opponent), anticipating both responses and the counter arguments or claims (*pūrvapakṣas*) to his own position (*uttarapakṣa*). The author or commentator takes on multiple roles while shifting, clarifying and modifying his own viewpoint as opposed to the ‘others’. In the case of the doxographers such as Bhāvaviveka, Haribhadra, Mādhava their purpose is to present others

viewpoints as objectively as possible while not engaging in polemic and disputation but ordering of schools in such a way that every other school is placed at a level lower than one's own, starting from the simplest and culminating into the highest (considered most subtle) which is one's own (Self) position. The idea in the doxography being that every other position is a part of one's own viewpoint ultimately culminating into the 'Self' which is also the final subject and the most authoritative. The ahistorical, decontextualized approach is the dominant approach of the doxographies and also of many early texts on the history of the Indian philosophy in the colonial period written by thinkers like Radhakrishnan, Hiriyantha, Surendranath Dasgupta, C. D. Sharma and others.

This chapter explores some of their works of modern thinkers to examine why a particular approach to Indian philosophy was preferred, and how the notion of 'Self' and its relation to 'others' changed in the modern period. But of course this dominant ahistorical, decontextualized approach which led to homogenizing schools of Indian philosophy as being static and lacking in progress was contested by thinkers like Daya Krishna, Mohanty, Wilhelm Halbfass who proposed a different way of conceptualizing tradition by making it relevant to the present context. There is in the modern period the conception of *darśanas* as a closed concept within the tradition but an open-ended one in cross-cultural dialogue. Across genres whether commentary, doxography, texts on Indian philosophy which employ a dialogical, dialectic method between 'Self' and the 'other', there is continual effort at self-construction, the 'Self' is not a closed concept but one which is continually evolving.

## **6.2 The comparative method: cross-cultural dialogue**

Radhakrishnan's concerns were similar to those of the other Anglophone writers of his time, and the foremost concern was to forge a collective identity which was at once both local and global which could only be carried out through a process of intercultural dialogue. Radhakrishnan, like most writers of his time educated in modern Western universities were greatly influenced by the scientific temper, culture, tradition of the West, they attempted to incorporate many of the dominant Western ideas of their time especially the Idealist philosophies of Kant, Hegel etc. into conceptualization and reconstruction of their own tradition. Philosophy played a crucial role in this process of reconstruction and recovery. Vedānta became the philosophy that would be the basis for this intercultural dialogue between the East and the West. Radhakrishnan, like Vivekananda, Aurobindo etc conceived of a universal religion of which all other religions would be different expression of that single truth. He

wanted to bring Christianity in conversation with Vedānta (Brahmanism) and to some extent Buddhism, while Islam is completely untouched probably because he considered Islam to be the 'Other', with whom no conversation could be established. It is not just the case with Radhakrishnan but as clearly pointed out by Nicholson (2010) it is the case with most medieval Hindu texts on histories of philosophies (doxographies) where there is a complete absence of Islam given the fact that Islam was an important dominating force at the time.

So, the orthodox Brahminical tradition which reflected Radhakrishnan's upbringing and the Christian tradition in which he was instructed at university and abroad informed his conception of philosophy and religion, clearly privileging the former as the highest form of expression of truth as opposed to the latter. Vedānta as we know is not a single tradition it contains within it different strands, the kind of Vedantic worldview that Radhakrishnan propagates is the absolute monism of Śaṅkara while rejecting other forms of Vedānta such as that of Ramānujā, Mādhava and others. It is evident that in drawing parallel between Christianity and Vedānta, Radhakrishnan is supporting the monotheistic conception of God to pluralistic conceptions. Clearly Radhakrishnan's conception of one God, one religion, one philosophy through the method of comparative religion fails in face of these various exclusions resulting in one-sided presentation of religion and philosophy (Joachim, Kitagawa and Alles 1988).

Radhakrishnan in his attempt to posit a universal religion based on the monistic conception of Vedānta, speaks of Buddhism as an offshoot of Hinduism (Radhakrishnan 1966) regarding Buddha as an innovator rather than an inventor, by that same logic isn't Śaṅkara, Ramānujā and he too an innovator, this seems to be an unfair assessment of Buddha the founder of one of the largest religions and philosophies of the world. Making a case for the lack of a founder, a central authoritative book as in the case of other organized religions, Radhakrishnan states in *Eastern Religion Western Thoughts*:

Real religions can exist without a definite conception of deity but not without a distinction between the spiritual and the profane, the sacred and the secular. Even in primitive religion with its characteristic phenomena of magic, we have religion, though not a belief in God. In theistic systems the essential thing is not an existence of deity, but its power to transform man. There are systems

of Hindu thought like the Sāṃkhya and the Jaina which do not admit God but affirm reality of the spiritual consciousness, there are theists like Ramanuja for whom the spiritual consciousness, though not God Himself, is the only way in which God can be known. (1951, 41)

Radhakrishnan seems to be drawing a distinction between religions which are secular and those that are religious or sacred, and between the Western notions of God versus the Eastern conception of spiritual consciousness. He speaks of the importance of spiritual experience and intuition as opposed to reason of proof which characterize so much of Western culture and also proposes the subordination of the latter to the former.

Not just Radhakrishnan but many other scholars such as P.T. Raju (1962)<sup>133</sup> contributed to the notion that spiritual inwardness and realization of the spirit was the central feature of Indian philosophy and Vedānta the ultimate culmination of Indian thought. Hence, it is not completely fair to only blame the orientalist for their depiction of Indian philosophy as spiritual, static, etc as opposed to the Western tradition which is material, changing, scientific etc while the Indian writers at a time also played an important role in the conceptualization of Indian tradition. By only promoting spiritualism and Vedānta as ultimate expression of Indian tradition, there is a reduction of other traditions like Jainism and Buddhism to the Vedānta consciousness. In promoting so kind of a universal consciousness every other tradition is assimilated into the Brahmanic worldview and their fundamental differences absolutely overlooked. The hierarchical, inclusivist structure followed for the purpose of philosophical dominance of the medieval Advaita doxographers like Mādhava, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī is visible in the works of colonial thinkers like Radhakrishnan and others.

In his *Indian Philosophy*, on the discussion of the six Brahmanical schools (*āstika darśanas*), Radhakrishnan attempts to portray various schools within the orthodox tradition as a continuation of philosophy of the Ṛgveda, the Upaniṣads, Bhagavadgīta and so on, to show Hindu philosophy as a single, unbroken tradition having its roots in the Vedas (Radhakrishnan 1966). He too organizes schools similarly to the Vedānta doxographers of the medieval period, J.N.Mohanty in his introduction to *Indian Philosophy* states that

*Indian Philosophy* followed the footsteps of Mādhava's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*. Expositions of the 'six systems' followed by a chapter in Śaiva, Śākta, and later Vaiṣṇava theistic schools. As in the case of Mādhava Āchārya's doxography, they all, that is all other systems, pointed towards culmination in Advaita Vedānta. (2008, xi)

A very similar method of organization of schools is followed by other thinkers of the time who wrote on the history of Indian philosophy, such as Hiriyanna (1932), Surendranath Dasgupta (1922) which start with the materialistic school, then Buddhism, Jainism and ultimately lead towards the culmination into Advaita.

It is interesting that these early colonial writers wrote extensively about the history of Indian philosophy while promoting ahistorical, decontextualized accounts of schools. From this one can conclude that the concerns of the late medieval thinkers and that of colonial thinkers like Radhakrishnan seem to be to '*syncretize*' to bring unity among various opposing pluralistic views, they were involved in the process of 'unification' to provide a unified view of Indian thought. Advaita was the philosophy which would help achieve that syncretism within tradition while at the same time be used to engage in a dialogue with the West. These thinkers were responsible for depicting Indian philosophy as essentially 'spiritual' in character allowing for the Western thinkers to characterize Indian philosophy as 'spiritual' devoid of 'reason', 'logic' which are central to any conceptualization of 'philosophy' and also of 'science'. While these thinkers attempted to present Indian thought as universal applicable across traditions they were also keen to highlight its 'differences' with the West for which they used the comparative method.

A second group of thinkers at the time who belonged to the Anglophone tradition but who explored other aspects of Indian philosophy were the renowned Daya Krishna and Matilal. Daya Krishna (1966) questions the intent for those writers who call an entire philosophical tradition as 'spiritual' which he says is spurious and based on myths. Most other traditions other than Advaita are realistic schools whether be it Sāṃkhya, Jaina, Vaiśeṣika all believe in the ultimate reality of things and are hardly 'spiritual' in the real sense of the term. Another realistic schools are the Cārvākas, the first materialistic school and the most criticized across all traditions Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Jains are

also considered ‘spiritual’ in the same sense as Vedānta or Advaita. This categorizing of an entire tradition as essentially ‘spiritual’ privileging the mind or spirit over matter is to homogenize and misrepresent the plurality of Indian thought.

The second myth propagated by the earlier thinkers that Daya Krishna debunks is the notion of authority, he explains that most thinkers writing on Indian philosophy distinguish between the orthodox (*āstika*) and the unorthodox (*nāstika*) schools and the basis for that distinction is based on the acceptance or unacceptance of the authority of the Vedas. So what does it mean to say that somebody accepts the Vedas as an authoritative for one’s philosophical system? The correct response would be that the differences among different *āstika* schools would be in their interpretation of the Vedic texts, but that not being the case because each school deals with a specific problem and posits its own thesis and justification so would be right to classify schools or systems or sects concerned with very different philosophical, religious problems and using different methods as deriving their authority from the Vedas. The classical texts as rightly pointed out by Daya Krishna are not commentaries on the Vedic texts for the exception of the Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, the former representing the school of Vedic exegesis and the latter a school of interpretation of the Upaniṣads. The Mīmāṃsākas consider any utterance which is not an injunction as not Veda also the Mīmāṃsākas do not offer that kind of authority to the Upaniṣads like the Vedāntins. The Vedāntins also do not support the non-Upaniṣadic portions of the Vedas. Even amongst the Vedānta schools there is no agreement on what should constitute Vedic authority. In a recent intervention, Nicholson (2010) traces how the meaning of pairs of terms (*āstika-nāstika*) occur in various texts such as *Manusmṛti*, *Sāṃkhyakārika* etc. He argues that until the late medieval period there was no single uniform understanding or meaning of the terms or even a universally agreed upon list of *āstika* and *nāstika* schools. So this assumption that all orthodox schools derive their authority from the Vedas is again a myth.

The third myth is the myth about the schools of Indian philosophy. The concept of schools (*darśanas*) is also closely connected with the notion of authority. If the ‘authority’ of the Upaniṣad, the Veda and the *Sūtra* are final, then what is specified in them as philosophy is also fixed and final. So there arises a notion of school that is final, fixed. How can then one account for changes within schools or how can there be any history in Indian philosophy if some primal authority is assigned right at the beginning of thought? Schools cannot be fixed or final in any complete sense. In a “cross-cultural”

context can one compare these so-called schools with the schools in the Western philosophical tradition like “Idealism”, “rationalism”, “empiricism” schools? If this is the case then it is not a problem because each school reflects its own distinctness, identity and should represents its continuous development, but this is not the case with traditional schools of philosophy which are considered as complete and final, and their development is not linear.

Daya Krishna further argues “that no distinction is drawn between the thought of an individual thinker and the thought of the school” (Krishna 1991, 14). So is a *darśana* a logical abstraction arrived at through the writings of various thinkers who shared a similar viewpoint in dealing with similar kinds of problems or is schools a kind of an ideal such as an Platonic form which is representative of one thinker rather than the other. Daya Krishna says that writers on Indian philosophy do not make a distinction between thought of an individual thinker and his style of thought that characterizes his works. He substantiates it saying “that all Śāṅkara is written is not Advaita Vedānta. Nor that all Īśvarakṛṣṇa is written is Sāṃkhya” (1991, 14). The solution he offers is that the history of Indian philosophy will either be have to be the history of individual thinkers in relation to one another or the history of styles of thought that they exemplified.

Hence quite contrary of the earlier thinkers like Radhakrishnan, Hiriyanna, proposes a historical, contextualized presentation and engagement with Indian philosophy where the individual thinker plays a more dominant role than the school that he represents. Daya Krishna is not clearly interested in having a dialogue with the West, or making a case for Indian philosophy in the Western world but a restructuring of the modes of presentation or representation of Indian philosophy through a reconceptualization of Indian philosophy. Although, he does not use a comparative method, he is clearly trying to articulate problems with Indian philosophy as was presented at the time through the lens of the larger context of Western philosophy, because he says, to make Indian philosophy relevant in contemporary times, it has to be first deemed as ‘Philosophy proper’. So what then is ‘Philosophy proper’? His response is that ‘Indian tradition is philosophical in the same sense that Western philosophical tradition’ is supposed to be as a living stream of thinkers who have grappled with difficult problems which are relevant even today as they were in the past (Krishna 1966).

In Daya Krishna there is a discontinuity both with the earlier colonial thinkers and also with traditional Indian philosophy or *darśana-śāstra*. In Daya Krishna’s works there is self-evaluation or self-

reflection not seen in the thoughts of earlier thinkers. In a different way, K. C. Bhattacharyya (1984), in the context of colonialism and the influence of Western tradition on Indian minds also articulates his concerns in the *Svaraj of ideas*. He speaks of the ‘slavery of the spirit’ where the identity of a modern Indian is called into question, because he argues that we, the modern Indians are living in two minds which are in conflict, and this conflict needs to be overcome (Raghuramaraju 2018). Hence, post-colonialism under a newly constructed nation, questions of identity (national and global) of an individual thinker and his role in the World dominated the thinking of modern Indian thinkers.

### 6.3 From ‘spirituality’ towards logic and rationality:

Another influential Anglophone thinker who engaged in this intercultural debate was Matilal (1935-1991) whose contribution is said to be significant in popularizing Indian philosophy in the West. He like Daya Krishna did not think of the ‘spirituality’ as the predominant aspect of Indian philosophy but rather logic, reason and rationality (*Ānviṣikī*) as the predominant aspect. His central strategy combines the historical method which involves reconstruction of classical views and the critical examination of similar modern views (Matilal 2002). He was trained in Western analytical tradition brings into Indian philosophy this training. Matilal analyzing the central problems that classical Indian thinkers were engaged in says they were predominantly issues of knowledge and perception, variety of meaning and reference, the theory of inference, or problems of psychologism etc. as can be seen in classical Nyāya or the Buddhist traditions.

He makes a distinction between skeptical theories and *pramāṇa* theories. The skeptical theories are based on the premise that no knowledge is possible while the *pramāṇa* theories are based on the premise of possibility of knowledge. Like pre-modern Indian thinkers, the so-called Anglophone thinkers concerns were as varied as their predecessors, the scope of the problems keeps getting broader. He is not interested in promoting Indian philosophy as essentially about metaphysics and their concerns ontological as was done by the previous thinkers but instead that their concerns were more epistemological based on logical analysis. Making comparisons between contemporary analytical philosophy<sup>134</sup> and the philosophies of classical Nyāya and Buddhist traditions, he argues:

...this gesture is needed to correct the persisting misconceptions and perhaps to and sometimes to remove ignorance. Too often the ‘soft-

mindedness' and the tender nature of Indian 'philosophy' or Oriental wisdom have been emphasized. Too often the term 'Indian Philosophy has been identified with a subject that is presented as mystical and non-argumentative, that is at best poetic and at worst dogmatic. A corrective to this view is long overdue (Matilal 2002, 4-5).

Like Daya Krishna, Matilal is interested in the reconceptualization of the Indian philosophical tradition, he too criticizes the homogenized, monolithic, spiritual, mystical presentation of Indian philosophy as is done in all the Orientalist depictions which are in opposition to depictions of the West. He stresses on the "cross-cultural" similarities and to respect cultural "differences". He speaks of the importance of pluralism and cultural relativism. He argues that "each ethical system is unique to its own culture and there cannot be any real confrontation between one such culture and another, and hence one cannot be a real option for the other" (Deutsche and MacIntyre 1991, 145). Speaking against singularized depictions where one's purpose seems to be to establish one's superiority over another's culture or way of life, he argues that such a view cannot be considered tolerant and sincere as far as another's way of life is concerned.

Matilal suggests an evaluation of criticism of one's cultural values within an across traditions. While making a case for cultural relativism based on incommensurability, Matilal also argues for a universal, context-neutral rational standard for judging the relative merit or demerit of values across cultures. Even while accepting pluralism there has to be a minimal moral fabric that is universal and context transcendent. In many ways the problems articulated by these thinkers seem to arise from a clash of the 'old' with the 'new', of 'tradition' and 'modernity', the next section discusses this in more detail.

#### **6.4 Tradition, Modernity and Dialogue:**

Mohanty is another important thinker who played an important role in this intercultural debate between East and the West. He too like the other Anglophone thinkers of the time was greatly influenced by Western thought especially the German Idealistic tradition and later phenomenology particularly Husserl's thought. In the context of Indian philosophy he takes on the criticisms and observations made by Daya Krishna seriously by attempting to reconceptualize Indian philosophical

tradition to establish a unique place for it outside of the dominant European framework. The Indian thinkers had to think beyond the homogenized static descriptions and binaries which characterized much of modern Indian philosophical writing. While critiquing the ahistorical, static, closed systems of thought, Mohanty argues for an underlying essence which is knowable. He goes a step further than Daya Krishna in looking even beyond individual thinkers and arguing that in a *darśana*, the individual thinker only plays a sub-ordinate role, he does not found a system but carries its explication forward (Mohanty 1992, 20). He goes on to state that a *darśana* is a perception of truth or a possibility of perception and exists prior to any individual thinker or expositor. Therefore, a *darśana* in that sense is a ‘supra-individual’.

With regards to tradition, Mohanty insists of continuation of the ‘core tradition’? So what does he mean by ‘core tradition’? By core tradition he means the themes, issues, problems formulating in and arising out of a tradition irrespective of the language, geography and socio-political loyalty of the author. Mohanty also explicates the problems in restricting our understanding of the Indian philosophical traditions to those of the *darśanas* or even to just the themes, issues or problems which a particular tradition dealt with. In the modern context or even in the case of the Mādhyamaka in the pre-modern period, the notion of static traditional schools do not have much significance, to make the *darśanas* relevant in the contemporary period we need to stop considering them as closed self-justifying systems. Mohanty privileges engaging with the issues, themes and problems that each system dealt with rather than engaging with the *darśanas* themselves.

In the Indian context there is often a tension between tradition and modernity, one cannot let go of either one, but it is important to strike a balance. In this context, Mohanty (1992, 23) makes a distinction between ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘tradition’ because in the Indian context we tend to confuse the two notions, while ‘orthodoxy’ is based on preserving a tradition into a lifeless unchanging structure, while a ‘tradition’ is something living, subject to change, when this tradition is no longer alive than it requires an ‘orthodoxy’ to preserve its purity against possible distortions and de-sanctifications. Modernity need not be in opposition to tradition, modernity does not refer to the most recent or the newest but something which is challenged by the ongoing contemporary dialogue and that’s what makes it philosophical. He argues how modernity is in dialogue with tradition, the Indian tradition co-existing with modernity, but modern Indian thinkers have failed to properly interpret the role of tradition in Indian context to the West. It is not just important to show that Indian tradition employs

critical thinking which characterizes philosophy but also that there exists universal norms of criticism whether logical, epistemological or axiological that can be applied to any mode of thinking. But the central problem of applying any universal logical framework within the tradition is that its framework is rooted in scriptural texts, the logical is subordinated to the perceptual and the scriptural. With the subordination of the logical and perceptual to the scriptural disallows any kind of empirical, logical criticism from within the tradition.

For a tradition to be living and active isn't it required that a tradition subject itself to all kinds of critical enquiry? The purpose of subjecting a tradition to critical enquiry is because it would yield a theoretical account of itself especially if a tradition of thought consists of inconsistencies or vagueness (Pocock 2009, 3). For a tradition which is based on debate and dialogue it is important to also subject itself to critical enquiry. The problem for such an enquiry is the basic framework on which the tradition is constructed which does not account for any historical change, because tradition is taken as a self-sufficient, closed system where no growth is possible. Any future question or philosophical problem was already anticipated within the tradition and contains within it solutions for any or all possible questions that may arise in the future. But in reality the systems (*darśanas*) did undergo changes as has been shown in the earlier chapters. The *anātmavāda* of the Buddhists was a counter to the *ātman* theory propagated by the Brahmanical tradition. Nāgārjuna was the first skeptical thinker who challenged the basic epistemological framework through which knowledge is acquired, and there are many such examples which go against the standard conception of a *darśana*. The ability to question the presuppositions on which a thought or belief system or tradition is based on is as Mohanty argues fundamental to the act of philosophizing. If the basic framework of a tradition does not allow for that kind of criticism then not only is it not a living tradition but also not a philosophical tradition which assumes some kind of universality.

Halbfass, on the other hand, with regards to the lack of historicity in the Indian tradition raises some important questions, he says:

What possibility does the non-historical self-understanding of classical Indian philosophy, with the apparent rejection of the ideas of progress and innovation, leave for the self-assessment of the Individual thinker? What importance does it attach to the addition

of the new works to the old, whose validity is beyond dispute?  
(Halbfass 1991, 361).

Halbfass is asking these questions in the context of Mohanty's conception of the 'supra-individual' tradition combined with a lack of historical consciousness, he asks, what role then does an individual thinker play within a tradition? Both Mohanty and Halbfass agree that the individual thinker's role is subordination to that of the tradition. Halbfass uses hermeneutics to classical texts to show that Indian philosophy is a heterogeneous phenomenon, unlike Mohanty and other Indian thinkers discussed above who are in search of some kind a universal essence which characterizes Indian tradition. Halbfass, discusses the genre of doxographies in Indian tradition to show how the various *darśanas* are presented as closed systems, which have remained unchanged and where all problems are already dealt with within the particular tradition. This notion of an unchanged closed system is completely contrary to the notion of philosophy in the West which is characterized by change, autonomy, critique and separation from soteriology (Sjödin 2011, 538). Halbfass arguing in support of comparative method says:

Comparative philosophy is philosophy insofar as it aims at self-understanding. It has to be ready to bring its own standpoint, and the conditions and the horizon of comparison itself, into the process of comparison which thus assumes the reflexive, self-referring dimension which constitutes philosophy. (1988, 446).

Each of these thinkers whether be it Daya Krishna, Matilal, Mohanty, or even Halbfass were involved in a process of reconceptualization and recovery of Indian tradition from various perspectives. In the early Anglophone thinkers like Radhakrishnan, Raju, Hirianna there is a tendency to characterize 'spirituality' as the central essence of Indian tradition, while in the later thinkers like Daya Krishna, Matilal, Mohanty argue for a conceptualization of Indian tradition based on reason, argument and rationality. In Halbfass one can see a movement away from homogenizing, essentialist conception as seen in Mohanty and others towards a more heterogeneous conception of Indian tradition. But there is a greater emphasis on methodology when Western scholars study Indian tradition, while Indian scholars studying Indian traditions tend to focus more on those aspects of the tradition that make it distinct from the Western tradition.

## 6.5 The *Self* and *Other* in Intercultural dialogue:

The Upaniṣads as we have seen consists of narratives about the Self. The ultimate purpose of the different characters in the Upaniṣads is attainment of knowledge of the Self (*Brahmajñāna*). The characters are named, socio-politically located and have an intellectual context. The idea of the Self arises out of the discursive practices such as debates and dialogues with the ‘others’. The Self is narratively constructed, there is a speaker or narrator who is also the ‘self’ speaking about the Self (*Ātman* or *Brahman*) to an audience or listener. The notion of the ‘Self’ is arrived at or revealed through an intersubjective context. The individual thinker or speaker plays a dominant role, but with systematization in the *Sūtra* period all this changes.

The orthodox philosophical schools or *darśanas* derive from the varied interpretations of the theories of ‘Self’ in the Upaniṣads. The *darśanas* attempt to portray singular notions about the Self as derived from the Upaniṣads, whether be it the monistic interpretations of the philosophy of Śaṅkara or the dualistic interpretation of Sāṃkhya, Rāmānuja and others. Unlike the Upaniṣads which opens itself for varied interpretation through its many characters and dialogues, the *darśanas* are closed, fixed, decontextualized, disembodied accounts where the individual thinker is pushed to the periphery while the school or system that he represents is pushed to the forefront. The *darśanas* are systematic philosophies unlike the Upaniṣadic dialogues. The *darśanas* evolve through intersystemic dialogues and interactions with generic opponents as can be seen through their polemics.

All dialogues follow a *pūrvapakṣa-uttarapakṣa-siddhānta* structure. The *pūrvapakṣa* is the restatement of the opponents (imagined) argument or position, the *uttarapakṣa* is the reply or response to the opponent’s position and *siddhānta* the established final position, the counter arguments of the opponents (*others*) are anticipated and critiqued. The dialogical and narrative structure of the *darśanas* and the Upaniṣads follow from the structure of dialogue and debate of the original oral tradition, the dialogues in the texts are representations of those actual debates which took place within a particular social context and location.

With each genre of texts, these debates become more sophisticated, complex and nuanced so also the boundary between ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’. In the contemporary period these debates continued but no more intersystemic but across boundaries through “cross-cultural” debates. This cross or intercultural

debate is located in the colonial context where the central issue was the search for a pan-Indian identity which was at once both Indian and also global. From a philosophical perspective the Vedānta became the basis for creation of pan-Indian identity because it was both ancient and modern at the same time, this process of creation of a modern Indian consciousness was an elite enterprise. Many Indian thinkers of this period educated in the West, trained within the Western philosophical tradition exposed to the current trends there incorporated and assimilated many of their ideas and concepts and reinterpreted it to fit the Indian context this was especially true for academic Indian philosophers writing in English.

When Western intellectuals write about Indian traditions (Others) they applied Western doctrines and notions to the India context. In this debate between East and West, there is always a tension between reconciling notions such as tradition vs. modernity, religion vs. science etc with modernity and science being the *pūrvapakṣa*. Comparative philosophy takes into account both the similarities and the differences. From an Indian perspective the ‘West’ is the *pūrvapakṣa*, the basis for the dialogue is not just the distinction between itself representing the Self with the Other (West) but also the similarities between them which makes possible a dialogue. By engaging in this dialogue there is self-understanding, self-evaluation and finally a movement toward a universal understanding which transcends this difference between ‘Self’ and the ‘other’. Therefore in the writings of Mohanty, Matilal and others engaged in this intercultural debate there is reinterpretation or reconceptualization of Indian tradition whether be it as essentially spiritual (*dharmic*), or centered round schools (*darśanas*) or based on reason and logic (*ānvīkṣikī*) all within the larger framework of the Western philosophical tradition.

To engage with an alien culture it is essential that one be familiar with the language or vocabulary of the ‘other’ which is a precondition for any kind of dialogue. The problem of ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ in the modern period particularly the colonial period was essentially the search for ‘identity’, ‘identity’ in relation to the ‘oneself’, ‘identity’ in relation to the ‘Other’, an identity which is not a pre-given but one which continually evolves and is re-established. But as we have seen the search for ‘identity’ is not just a contemporary problem but goes way back right to the beginnings of philosophy itself with the Upaniṣadic narrations about the ‘Self’ which seeks to establish ‘selfhood’, ‘agency’ etc.

While the modern Indian thinkers have been reasonably successful in establishing a dialogue with the West, where they had failed is in establishing a dialogue within their own tradition. They have not taken into account the internal ‘differences’ and ‘diversity’ that exists within the tradition resulting in a notion of internal ‘others’ and their contribution in creation of the *selfhood*. Instead they have focused on the establishment of a uniform, essentialist identity beyond boundaries privileging an idealistic, non-dualist philosophy which eliminates the notion of ‘the other’ and of the plural self. The notions of ‘Universal Religion’, ‘unity of gods’, ‘universal brotherhood’ a product of “cross-cultural” debate propagated by Vivekananda, Aurobindo and others is directed toward creating this universalized, essentialized, homogeneous conceptions of Indian tradition while ignoring internal differences within the tradition. Since the ultimate purpose of both Hinduism and Buddhism the two major Indian traditions is enlightenment (*mokṣa* or *nirvāṇa* or *nibbāna*) and realization of the absolute.

‘The Other’ does not exist in this absolute reality because it is a part of the ‘Self’, while this may be true at the level of transcendence (*paramārtha*) it is not so at the level of empirical reality (*vyavahārika*) where the ‘other’ is different from the ‘Self’. In a post-war, post-colonial, post-structuralist world plagued with ‘differences’ how does one negotiate, reconcile with ‘differences’, while the age old traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism seem to be having the answers with regard to dealing with ‘differences’ because of their long history of engagement with others. In attempting to be inclusive what is happening is the subsuming, assimilating and appropriating the ‘differences’ into the ‘Self’ thereby negating the identity (existence) of ‘the other’ and that is the problem. In an intercultural debate across traditions and in-between traditions it is important to negotiate ‘differences’ within and across then moving toward some kind of unity or universal principle which cuts across boundaries, the ultimate purpose of which would be to move beyond subject-object distinction and ultimately that of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’.

## **6.6 Negotiating ‘differences’ in a modern world:**

‘Identity’ and ‘difference’ are the two foundational philosophical notions that the classical Indian thinkers have been dealing with since the beginning of philosophy itself as can be seen through the Upaniṣadic dialogues, or the *Milinda Pañha* etc. Both ‘identity’ and ‘difference’ is related to the larger metaphysical and ontological notion of the ‘Being’ or the ‘Self’. One of the predominant methods that the ancients employed in understanding ‘difference’ or ‘the other’ was through debate and dialogue.

This method continued even in the medieval and later the modern period. When the pre-moderns spoke of *identity* they did not only speak of ‘personal identity’, ‘cultural identity’, ‘religious identity’ but of a more fundamental identity between a ‘human being’ and all other beings in the world. Therefore the Upaniṣadic world-view (*weltanschauung*) would include a cosmology, physiology, psychology, philosophy, and also mythology. ‘Self’ and ‘identity’ are complementary terms but are distinct. The ‘Self’ subsumes ‘identity’, the ‘identity’ helps distinguish oneself from ‘the other’ and is a constituent of *selfhood*. The Upaniṣadic dialogues shows how the ‘Self’ is narratively constructed through named individual characters in debate with *other selves* discussing about the universal notion of the ‘Self’. The idea that ‘Self’ as narratively constructed is popular today among contemporary thinkers such as Daniel Dennett (1991), Velleman (2006) and others. A narrative not only helps understand ourselves but also others through the stories we say about ourselves to others and also what others say about themselves.

The narratively constructed ‘Self’ is that of an ideal brahmanical self. An ideal Brahmanical Self in the Upaniṣads is exemplified by the character of Yajñavalkya. The identity of Yajñavalkya who also appears in other ancient texts like the Purāṇas, the Brāhmaṇas etc is that of an ideal Brahmin well versed in all the Vedas, possessing the knowledge of the absolute (*Brahmajñāna*), respected by the King, unbeatable in debates, following from a respectable lineage of teachers these are the characteristics that constitute Yajñavalkya’s selfhood. While these characteristics may be idealized representations they nevertheless constitute the construction of the Brahmanical self and there are many such examples. The negotiation with ‘others’ happens through dialogues but only to a certain point beyond which there can be no conversation with the ‘other’. But the narrative self is flexible and not fixed it changes as the context changes. The distinction between ‘self’ and ‘other’ or between ‘identity’ and ‘difference’ becomes sharper with systematization. Systematization led to the creation of systems in the *sūtra* period.

The dialogue and debate in the *sūtra* period gave rise to a different kind of subjectivity, where it was no longer the individual but the school or belief system or ideology that he represents shaping his identity and selfhood. The heterogeneous texts of the Upaniṣads allowed the thinkers and commentators of the *sūtra* period for varied interpretation about the *Self* (*Brahman*) and its relationship with the world resulting in the creation of the six orthodox (*āstika*) systems. The socio-cultural self of the Upaniṣads is elevated from its location to a higher level of abstraction where the

‘Self’ now is identified with a particular philosophical viewpoint. The polemics of the systematic period whether of Śaṅkaracārya, Nāgarjunā, Bhāvaviveka are about negotiating ‘differences’ with ‘others’ in order to establish one’s own philosophical position as representative of the ultimate truth. The idea that these debates of the classical period are essentially a search for truth is misleading because the purpose is for dominance either philosophical or religious. This is not to say that for instance, for an Advaitin, the Buddhists or the Jaina position do not represent truth but that they only possess aspects of it and that only the Advaitin has access and is in possession of the complete truth. Conversely, whatever is present in another’s philosophy is also present in one’s own. But there is also the problem of incommensurability<sup>135</sup> between two schools making identical claims for instance, between the Jainas and the Advaitins but these differences in positions are worked out through debate with the opponent (cf. Clayton 1987).

As we have seen in the colonial period these debates get transformed, so also the speakers, the audience, or the listeners and the terms of the debate also changes. The debates of the early modern period centered round nationalism, creation of pan-Indian identity, of global identity, debates surrounding nation-state etc. The identity debates were not divorced from the philosophical debates. Modern Indian thinkers were concerned with the reconceptualization of Indian philosophy within the larger domain of Western philosophical tradition. Modern Indian thinkers attempted to reformulate traditional Indian philosophy, their central problem was to attribute philosophical content to traditional Indian philosophy also known as *darśanaśāstras*. This task of reconceptualization largely took place within the academic spaces where philosophy was practiced as an academic discipline.

The central question was ‘How to make Indian traditional philosophy as derived from the classical Indian texts of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, and *Brahmasūtra* s into ‘philosophy proper’? Also ‘How to make Indian philosophy relevant to the modern period?’ This process of conceptualization was also linked to the question of ‘identity’ of a modern Indian thinker and his relationship to the world at large. Indian philosophy to be modern needed to assimilate and incorporate values and ideas which characterize modern societies such as individualism, subjectivity, agency, progress, justice, equality and also of science and the scientific temper which characterizes Western traditions.

There are three identifiable movements in Modern Indian writing, they are:

1. The first characterized by the works of Radhakrishnan, P T Raju, Hiriyanna who claimed that Indian tradition is different from the West because its ultimate goal is not to arrive at truth but of self-knowledge and self-realization, its 'spirituality' is its central character. These thinkers were mostly Advaita Vedāntins who privileged that philosophy over other philosophical traditions. This was also common among the Indological and Oriental scholarship which privileged the philosophy of Śaṅkara. These early thinkers did not move away too much from the tradition philosophy of *darśanaśāstras* and propagated the notion of perennial philosophy which could deal with not only present problems and also of any future problems that could arise. Also, since these early thinkers represent the first phase of intercultural dialogue, they believed that many of problems of modern progressive societies like the West were essentially because they lacked the 'spiritual' essence.
2. The second wave of thinkers in the cross-cultural dialogue, were Daya Krishna, and Matilal. These thinkers influenced by 20<sup>th</sup> century developments in the Western philosophical traditions such as the analytical and the linguistic turns. They put forward different sets of questions with regard to the conceptualization of Indian philosophical tradition. Their engagement with past thinkers was characterized by recovering of the rational, logical aspects of the classical Indian tradition. For this they chose the Nyāya philosophy also called *Tarkaśāstra*. The metaphysical questions of the early colonial thinkers were replaced by epistemological questions about the nature of Indian philosophical thinking. As far as the methodology was concerned these thinkers had to bring in the analytical rigor into Indian philosophical tradition. Matilal blames not just early colonial Indian thinkers like Radhakrishnan but also the Western Indologists who presented a certain reading of Indian philosophy to the world according to which Indian philosophy has been predominantly identified with mysticism and thought to be inseparable from religion (B. K. Matilal 1971, 11). Mohanty's conceptualization of Indian philosophy tends to move away from the notion of philosophy as an autonomous spiritual activity or even philosophy as dialogue or debate but the purpose of philosophy as a process of overcoming 'otherness' when the 'other'

becomes part of the 'Self'. These second wave of Indian thinkers therefore, use modern science as a *pūrvapakṣa* to Indian tradition.

3. The third wave of Indian thinkers were influenced by the continental philosophy of the West particularly the phenomenology, hermeneutics, structuralism and deconstruction. The thinkers who introduced continental philosophy into studying Indian tradition included Mohanty, Wilhelm Halbfass, Sheldon Pollock and others. Mohanty uses phenomenology especially the philosophy of Hegel in his conception of philosophy as a means of transcending oneself and also the other (2000, 36). Mohanty argues that although philosophy is an autonomous activity, it is not free from either an existential presupposition, or historical-cultural-presuppositions of either of a particular tradition or a voluntaristic-methodological presupposition<sup>136</sup> which allows the will to think radically or rationally. Mohanty combines the historical method with the rational or the scientific. Halbfass and later Pollock use the hermeneutical analysis and philology to understand classical Indian texts. Pollock's *Sanskrit Knowledge System* is an attempt to reconstruct the historiography of the Sanskrit Intellectual traditions of the middle to the late medieval period. Nicholson (2010) following closely the footsteps of Pollock, attempts a reconstruction of the Vedānta from a realist perspective.

So, as one can see that developments in modern Indian Philosophical writing follow closely from developments within the Western philosophical traditions.

### **6.7 Limitations of Comparative philosophy:**

Comparative philosophy as we have seen attempts to be more inclusive than other approaches focusing not just on the 'similarities' but also the 'differences'. Comparative philosophy is not just about finding and explaining similarities and differences, but also locating itself between these differences (Burik 2010). Although comparative philosophy is said to be an alternative to Orientalism and Indology, it seems to still working on a predominantly Western intellectual framework where Western ideas, thought structures are superimposed on to other cultures. The language of comparison is predominantly English and no matter how close a rendition or presentation or representation it is of another's culture whose language is different it can never be a truthful representation and would led to misrepresentation of another's culture (Burik 2010, 3). Although comparing Nāgarjunā with a Derrida, Śaṅkara with a Kant can be termed as a

philosophical exercise, it does not contribute anything of significant to the study of these individual thinkers.

Even at a purely conceptual level, for instance the comparison of the universal notion of ‘Self’ with the different theories of ‘Self’ in the classical period, or the comparison between ‘*Being*’ as used in the Western sense of the term with the notion of ‘*Brahman*’ is problematic at various levels. There is always this cultural baggage that every tradition carries within itself so a Heideggerian notion of ‘Being’ in the form of ‘Dasein’ which is firmly embedded in the German Language, when identified with the *Brahman* rooted in the Sanskrit Language would result in misinterpretation of both ontological notions. However, this is not to say that a comparative philosophical engagement between two traditions is not possible, but it is important to keep in mind that concepts are deeply rooted in the language in which they are conceived. A comparative engagement should take into account the various conceptual scheme of the tradition under study or investigation. In an intercultural dialogue, the idea is not to overcome differences but to find a middle ground between the two cultures by acknowledging and appreciating differences. Modern Indian writers in their dialogue with the West as interlocutors should find a middle ground and not just passively appropriate Western concepts and doctrines in Indian context.

## **6.8 Concluding notes:**

Modern Indian writing on philosophy is as diverse as that of the pre-modern period. As already shown dialogue and debate is the predominant mode of engagement in the Indian tradition across genres. Postcolonialism saw an emergence of different kinds of identities. To address problems of identity, nation-state, and nationalism the early colonial thinkers used ‘comparative philosophy’ to establish an intercultural dialogue with the West and to engage with all aspects of modernity. It is possible to identify three different kinds of movements within academic writing which are comparable to the movements in the West such as German Idealism, Linguistic turn, Analytical philosophy, or Phenomenology. The three phases are:

1. Those which are characterized by the writings of nationalist leaders, thinkers who had to show to the world that they have a philosophical tradition that runs back several centuries which is no less than the traditions of the West and they especially highlighted the ‘spiritual’ characteristics of Indian religion and philosophy. Their purpose was also to show to the West that they were

philosophically superior as can be seen through the works of Radhakrishnan, P.T.Raju and others. These thinkers are greatly influenced by the German Idealistic tradition characterized by the writings of Kant, Schelling, and Hegel.

2. The second one, characterized by the writings of thinkers who opposed the view that Indian philosophy is essentially spiritual or mystical and inseparable from religion. These thinkers highlighted other aspects of Indian tradition such as reason, rationality and logic (*ānvīkṣikī*) in a manner similar to Western philosophical traditions. These thinkers brought in analytical philosophy in to the reading of Indian tradition, to show that India did not lack theoretical vigor these included the likes of Matilal, Mohanty and others who were influenced by thinkers such as Russell, Quine, and Wittgenstein.
3. Finally, the third group of Indian writers belonging to the so-called post-colonial period who essentially focused on ‘differences’ rather than ‘similarities’. These thinkers were clearly influenced by their continental philosophy counterparts in Europe, used many of their notions about ‘identity’, ‘difference’, ‘historicity/ historicism’ , ‘freedom’ etc in the Indian context. These thinkers argued for a more historical, contextualized, embodied reading of Indian philosophical tradition.

In the end, I would like to argue that there is no one method of engagement with the ‘other’ just as there is no one way of thinking or doing philosophy. It is important to identify and recover constituent movements in the history of Indian thought that have been largely ignored by both Indian and Western scholars and then bring them together. It is important to look at how for instance, the heterodox traditions such as Buddhism and Jainism may have contributed to the construction of the Brahmanical orthodoxy, the significance of the materialist philosophy in the Indian tradition, or recover the realist philosophies and to reconstruct their history. It is important to concentrate on the particularities just as it is important to move towards universalization. We need to move beyond generalization, identity and unity toward difference and change and that is where Intellectual history and comparative philosophy can play an important role.

## *Conclusions*

This thesis is another attempt to explicate the nature of relationship between Indian philosophy and its historical context. The lack of historicism in Indian philosophy has been a central issue in intellectual history for long but recent scholarship has caused us to rethink the way the history of Indian philosophy has been written and presented to us, it has changed the notion of ‘history’ and also of ‘philosophy’ as a discipline and practice. This study is based on the reception of history of Indian philosophy as presented to us through texts, also called the ‘received history’. Historiography, intellectual history in the Indian context is predominantly text based. The majority of texts written during the modern period (post-independence) on the history of Indian philosophy are anything but historical, apart from absence of basic historical information, also a lack of use of historical method or approach to depict changes in Indian thought through the ages, it was presented as something fixed, closed, and finished. But recent scholarship in the Sanskrit Intellectual traditions based on the works of Pollock, Franco, Nicholson, Ganeri, and Black, argue that Sanskrit literary works do not lack historical consciousness or historical knowledge because they have an intellectual context even if the other similar contexts are absent. Indian Intellectual history particularly the Sanskrit knowledge systems over the last two decades has concentrated extensively on the period between 1550 and 1750, also termed as the pre-colonial period, the period immediately before colonialism set in.

This thesis uses a slightly different periodization rather than the one most frequently used in texts on history of Indian philosophy with ‘Vedism’ or the ‘Vedic period’ as the basis for the classification. The periodization used here is the pre-systematization, systematization, post-systematization and the modern period, foregrounding the ‘systematization’ as the basis for classification. Of course, this periodization follows from the standard argument by scholars of the early modern period that ‘systematization’ is the most important development in Indian thought. This argument has been criticized by recent scholarship like Nicholson who argue that the systematization of the medieval period characterized by scholasticism and polemic has forever led to the disappearance of mystical insights and teachings of the Upaniṣadic seers of the pre-philosophical or the pre-systematization period. This thesis is not concerned with whether systematization has affected the previous classical period, but it just goes with the standard historiography of Indian philosophy as is presented to us through texts.

Each period is represented by works belonging to a particular genre which characterize that period. The Upaniṣads and *Milinda Pañha*, characterize the pre-philosophical or pre-systematization period, the *Sūtras-Bhāṣyas* characterizing the systematization period, the *Kārikas*, *Samuccayas*, *Samgrahas* characterizing the post systematization period and the modern period consisting of texts on history of Indian Philosophy. The Buddhist systematization period follows from the earlier pre-sectarian period. It is characterized by creation of various schools each representing different doctrinal positions, this period is also characterized by the creation of *canons (pitaka)* and systematizing of the *nikāyas*.

The systematization period of both the Brahmanical and Buddhist traditions marks the conceptualization of philosophical schools or *darśanas*, ahistoricism begins here. The genre of texts that characterize this period are the commentaries or *bhāṣyas* and the various level within the commentaries the *Kārikās* and so on. While some may argue that writing a commentary on a root (*mūla*) text is not philosophy, philosophy arises in commentaries. There are different kinds of commentaries depending on what exactly the commentary does, whether it is just explicating or just doxographical or whether its purpose is to add something new and innovative through interpretation and elucidation. The *Brahmasūtra bhāṣya* for instance, is not just a commentary but a commentary which adds to the original text, but providing its own interpretation and in that sense moving away from the original authorial intent or Nāgārjuna who formalized the philosophy of the middle path through the systematization of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*.

The next phase in the development of Indian thought is the post-systematization period which further resulted in the creation of new literary genres such as poetics (*Kavya*), grammar (*vyākaraṇa*) or of doxographies (*Sammucayas* and *samgrahas*) etc along with new methods of philosophical analysis and this period marks the end of traditional Indian thought before colonialism caused major disruption in the Indian way of thinking and self-understanding. This periodization is not strictly chronological but based on general philosophical moments (pre-philosophical, philosophical through systematization and post-systematization) in Indian thought.

Colonialism marks the beginning of modernity and with modernity the search for historical dynamism and knowledge. The need to create a historiography of Indian philosophy in the modern period is closely linked to the problem of 'identity' and of 'difference' connected to ideological

movements such as colonialism, nationalism, globalization etc all of which are inspired by similar movements in the West. Orientalism was a part of the colonial project leading to the colonial construction of the East, post-Orientalism is a post-colonial critique of Orientalism. Post-colonialism attempts to problematize pre-modern themes such as ‘identity’, ‘difference’ and the underlying notions of ‘self’ and ‘other’, themes which have contemporary significance. Post-colonialism is also a critique of the metaphysical, epistemological, ontological basis of the traditional disciplines, but Indian philosophy kept itself out of this kind of an engagement because it was unable to overcome the problematic between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’. Tradition continued to inform modernity in the India context. The central topics of discussion or issues in this study are the textual construction of the ‘self’, its relation to the ‘other’, and how it transforms across various genres, the discourses. The questions raised here are not just metaphysical or ontological but also questions about methods.

Indian Intellectual History is in its nascent stages, and still works predominantly within the Western academic conceptual framework. Although it’s a sub-discipline of history it is a rich, a more diffuse discipline or genre that works with and has implications to others disciplines such as philosophy, politics, sociology, economics etc is not restricted by disciplinary boundaries. It is as much as an effort in historical reconstruction as it is of a search for theory and methods. It is a quest for methods that transcend boundaries such as ‘comparative philosophy’, ‘philology’, ‘rational reconstruction’, ‘hermeneutics’ etc. Intellectual history is as much about theory as it is about method. Intellectual history has no limits, it breaks the limit that context imposes on ideas and thoughts. Findings based on the historicity of Indian thought has shown that Indian thought during different historical moments prior to colonialism across traditions whether Brahmanical or Buddhist have had a complex history which is anything but static, continuously evolving, flourishing then declining or declining and then flourishing.

Sheldon Pollock speaks about the death of Sanskrit, although there was a decline, the period between 15<sup>th</sup> Century till the 18<sup>th</sup> argues Pollock was the last creative period before colonialism which was characterized by the production of new genres and reformulating the old with the new (*navya*) set in. It was this period whose history had to be reconstructed which was the purpose of the Sanskrit Intellectual project. The task which one needs to undertake the recovery and reconstruction of the classical Indian tradition which also includes the heterodox traditions outside

the Western academic framework. That is as Nicholson suggests to use a language of “difference” in engaging with medieval thinkers who may be different or the philosophical ‘other’ but who have something important to teach us in the contemporary period.

Although the central problematic of this thesis is that of ‘self’ and ‘other’ in classical Indian texts, this thesis attempts to bring together notions of ‘texts’, ‘genres’, ‘historicism’, ‘Self’ and ‘others’ which are all interrelated overlapping concepts. A study of the classical Indian literary texts such as the Upaniṣads would show how the notion of history develops through the narratives in the texts, it helps one identify and locate the ‘speaker’, ‘the audience’ and that which is ‘spoken’, and how the notion of ‘Self’ and ‘selfhood’ develops in the narratives and in relation to its dialogue with ‘others’ (*intersubjectivity*). The narratives of the classical period also shows how philosophical thinking develops, the movement of ideas from the most simple to higher, complex and abstract mode of thought. Across the various genres of text whether commentary, disputation, polemic, biography, hagiography, doxography developed at various historical times a certain notion of history, philosophy develops which has metaphysical foundations and is closely linked to the notion of the ‘self’ and of ‘being’. Genres are open, they are dynamic and dependent on the particular historical context as can be seen through the kinds of texts that were produced during particular period, they also suggests how a tradition reinvents and restructures itself according to the socio-political and historical conditions of the time.

In conclusion, Indian intellectual history has led to a re-conceptualization of the Indian philosophical tradition and broadened its scope, it is still limited largely to Sanskrit Knowledge systems which does not exhaust all of Indian philosophy. Here an attempt is made to include some selected texts from both the Brahmanical and the Buddhist traditions, while it’s not possible to go through the whole bulk of literary and textual material, texts are chosen which are similar in terms of genres, or share the same conceptual vocabulary or framework which made possible the debate and dialectic across traditions. This debate and dialectic of the pre-modern thinkers gave rise to different kinds of subjectivities which then carried on to the modern period, but this period was something of a rupture to the traditional way of thinking because of colonialism, which brought with it a completely different conceptual framework, vocabulary and thinking. This rupture in the traditional mode of thinking resulted in the creation of a new kind of subjectivity. This thesis is not a critique of received history of Indian philosophy or Intellectual history, although it can be

considered as one. I would like to highlight based on recent debates surrounding Intellectual history that firstly, in the Indian context, intellectual history is still largely Eurocentric centered round Western scholarship and a similar engagement in the Indian context particularly of pre-modern India only extends the already dominant Eurocentric framework; secondly, that since intellectual history has no set disciplinary boundary or framework its discussions tend to constantly revolve round its epistemological foundations and objectives as a field of study or discipline rather than actual historical issues or of philosophical problems. Despite the problems, Indian intellectual history opens avenues and ways to explore and creatively engage with the varied gradients of philosophical thinking available across different genres of classical Indian texts.

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## Notes

### Chapter 1. Introduction

<sup>1</sup> ‘Monotonization of the world’ is a phrase coined by Stefan Zweig (1925) which is also the title of his book. Monotonization of the world is used to depict the world becoming uniform, where everything is fitted into a uniform cultural schema, individual people’s customs and traditions are fading away, customs are becoming international. Countries are slipping into each other, cities are increasingly growing and are similar in appearance, there is mechanization of existence, dominance of technology etc. Globalization is a manifestation of this kind of monotonization. The Existential thinkers like Heidegger, Sartre have explicated the relationship between uniformity, or monotonization with being-in-the-world and the existential crises that ensues an account of it.

<sup>2</sup> Grand Narratives which characterize modernity and also the ‘pre-modern’ in the Indian context are essentially based on large unificatory models which ignores ‘differences’, ‘multiplicities’, ‘identities’ and are essentially abstractions which do not reflect the actual reality. Many of the ‘isms’ of the modern period are grand narratives. Hayden White, American Historian, identifies four Western master narratives beginning with Greek fatalism, Christian redemptionism, bourgeois progressivism and Marxist utopianism. Postmodernism results in the collapse of these narratives into smaller ‘micronarratives’ which cannot claim any absolute status.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Received History’ is a term used in the ‘*The Democratic Leviathan*’ by Hans-Hermann Hoppe. ‘Received history’ as the name suggests is a standard account of history that is written in texts, taught in schools and universities and is generally acceptable account. But “Received History” argues Hoppes, is also full of misinterpretations, and theory helps us remove distortions, inaccuracies which are incompatible with the nature of things. In the Indian context received history is characterized by the notion that Indian philosophy centers round schools or *darśanas*, which are a historical, static, closed and finished representations of Indian philosophy. The *saddarśanas* (six schools of orthodox (*āstika*)) traditions include the Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta and the unorthodox (*nāstika*) include the Bauddha, Jaina, and Cārvāka. This classification characterizes most modern Indian texts on Indian philosophy. The ahistoricity is not just characteristic of Indian tradition, Jacob Brucker in his *Critical History of Philosophy* (1742-67), organizes his work in terms of schools ahistorically, implying that the history of philosophy in the West did not arise until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *History of Philosophy* gained prominence and became established after

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Hegel's introduced the historical approach into philosophy through his lectures on the history of philosophy. Hegel envisioned the history of philosophy as a single developing whole, where each stage is a reflection of its age and each stage contributed to the internal dialectic of the whole.

<sup>4</sup> Here constituent moments would refer to for instance, in the pre-modern period Vedānta's responses to Buddhism as in Śāṅkara's arguments against Buddhism in the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* or Buddhist responses to Vedānta as in Bhāvaviveka's arguments in *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* and so on. The consequence of constituent moments resulted in the production of various genres of texts such as commentaries, sub-commentaries, hagiographies, compendiums or doxographies etc. Similar observations can be made of modern thinkers like Radhakrishnan, Matilal and others. These thinkers were responding to philosophical movements in the West and attempting to reconceptualize traditional Indian philosophy within the larger domain of Western academic philosophical tradition.

## **Chapter -2: Methodological Approaches and Issues in the study of Classical Indian Texts**

<sup>6</sup> These include S.Radhakrishnan, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others. Majority of them belonged to what is now known as the Bengali Renaissance Movement which formed the basis for later nationalism.

<sup>7</sup> The later Upaniṣad, the Māṇḍūkya, Muṇḍaka and Śvetāśvataropaniṣad which were added much later have a consistent monistic thought running through them in fact they are called the Vedāntic Upaniṣad unlike the older Upaniṣads which offers the possibility of being interpreted multiple ways leading to different conceptions such as monism, dualism, pluralism etc. Refer to Dr. Walleser (1910) on Early Vedānta philosophy.

<sup>8</sup> K.C. Bhattacharyya argues that Western culture with its whole set of ideas, belief systems and thought was imposed upon the Indians by the West. He goes on to say that it was imposed upon unwilling minds and they had no way but to passively accept the new culture (*Swaraj in Ideas*, 1954). While others like Radhakrishnan did not have a problem with assimilating Western culture and tradition and did not in anyways critique it but used it to show the superiority of the Indian culture more specifically the Brahmanical culture.

<sup>9</sup> Also called the traditional Pundit scholarship (*Śāstrīs*), these essentially refer to the traditionally trained scholar whose main task was the interpretation, translation of classical texts from Sanskrit

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to other languages. They essentially engage with themes and doctrines completely cut off from socio-historic realities. These scholars follow from a lineage and traditions associated with specific regions like the Benaras, Poona, and Nagpur etc. Bāpudeva Śāstri, Sudhākara Dvivedi etc. (refer to Sastri and Wilkinson 1861).

<sup>10</sup> The German Indology is based on the works of Kant, Hegel, and the Biblical critical tradition. The German Indology grew in the nineteenth century when there was a great interest in the Indian tradition, it takes from the German term *Indologie* and is used here as a broad term to refer to a number of disciplines which is concerned with the study of the literary culture of Ancient India. This discipline includes a long list of scholars like Paul Hacker, Paul Deussen, Wilhelm Halbfass, and in recent times Sheldon Pollock and others. The method employed by them is also called the *scientific* method. Refer to Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), Sheldon Pollock, “Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power beyond the Raj”, in *Orientalism and the Post-Colonial predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. Peter van der Veer and Carol A. Breckenridge (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993) 76-133.

<sup>11</sup> *Text historical method* is a method which is a combination of the historical method along with textual analysis, where the ‘text’ serves as the primary source for analysis, a text is used to reconstruct the texts original or primitive meaning, reconstruction of the historical situation of the author and the original recipients of the text. Accordingly the various methods used are the source criticism, form criticism, canon criticism etc. Many Indologists starting with Paul Deussen, Thibaut, Halbfass, Pollock and some Indian scholars like P.M. Modi have used the philologico-historical-cum-critical method for studying Indian texts.

<sup>12</sup> *anekārthatvam ekasya yaiḥ śabdasyānugamyatī //*  
*siddhya siddhi kṛtā teṣāṃ gauṇamukprakalpanā // VK ii. 263*

<sup>13</sup> Intertextuality is a term coined by Julia Christeva in 1966. Christeva speaks of two kinds of relationships with regards to texts, one the relationship between the author and the reader and the other one between one text and another text. The latter relationship is a vertical relation and the former a horizontal relationship. Intertextuality is central to postmodernism, and follows from the premise that no text exists in isolation. Roland Barthes (1977) writes that a text “is a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash”.

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<sup>14</sup> Cyclical Time is opposed to the notion of linear time which characterizes many of the Western religious traditions such as Judaism, Christianity etc. In the Eastern traditions, time is cyclical, represented by a wheel of time or *Kalācakra*, which is also worshipped as a deity. In Brahmanical literature time is represented by the four-yuga cycle Satya, Treta, Dwapar and Kaliguya each endlessly repeating itself. The cyclical time consists of repeating ages, this time mimics the occurrence of events in the natural world, like sun rising and sun setting and the pattern repeating every day, or summer followed by winter, birth followed by death and vice versa etc. It is argued that cyclical time is characteristic of ancient, pre-literate societies as opposed to modern, literate societies which follow linear time in which the past is different from the present and present different from the future.

<sup>15</sup> Refer to the dialogue between Yajñavalkya and Śākalya in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (3.9.19) or the debate between Uddālaka Āruṇi and Śauceya in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (11.5.3.13), the “your head will be shattered” is an often repeated motif to the questioner by the Sage or the intellectual who has attained the knowledge of Brahman. Both Śākalya and Śauceya are ordered to be killed by their interlocutors, or questioners.

### **Chapter- 3: Proto-philosophical literatures: The Upaniṣads and Milinda Pañha**

<sup>16</sup> Brahminism here used as a derivative of Vedism. Vedism represents not just a religion but a particular worldview based on the doctrines and ideas contained in the Vedic texts and derives its authority from the Vedas. Johannes Bronkhorst defines Brahmanism as a movement that arose out of the Vedic religion going against the standard argument that Brahmanism was not invented but had always existed.

<sup>17</sup> The orientation in the Upaniṣadic thought away from ritual actions to knowledge of the ‘self’ is considered a major shift in the Brahminical tradition a movement away from *karmakāṇḍa* to *Jñānakāṇḍa*. The *Samhītas* and the *Brāhmaṇas* are classified under *Karmakāṇḍa* sections of the Vedas dealing with rituals and the Upaniṣads as well as the *Āraṇyakas* under *Jñānakāṇḍa* dealing with more philosophical subjects.

<sup>18</sup> According to Yohanan Grinshpon, traditional commentators like “ Śaṅkara look at all stories in the upaniṣads as alike, in the sense that they provide an occasion for the transmission of the Upaniṣadic teaching” this while ignoring the narrative content. Refer to Grinshpon, Yohanan. "The

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Upaniṣadic and the hidden" Vidyā"; personality and the possession in the Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (1998): 373-385.

<sup>19</sup> Ārya(n) denotes a people whose language is Sanskrit and whose culture Vedic, the dominated northern India from the middle of the second millennium BC, slowly spreading their influence and establishing a some degree of cultural hegemony over South India by around 6th century C.E. There have been a lot of controversies regarding their origins and pre-history Some believing that they entered India from the North West sometime around 1750-1200 BC. But the Indian scholars have rejected the theory of outside origin and argue that the Āryans are indigenous people of the subcontinent. Ṛgveda texts define Āryans as those who belong to the three highest classes (*varṇas*); they are also known as twice-born because they have initiated into the Vedas which makes them eligible to participate in sacrificial rituals. The *śūdras* in contrast are considered to be non-Āryan.

<sup>20</sup> Characters such as Śāṅḍilya, Uddālaka Āruni and Yājñavalkya were already known as famous priest in the Ṛgveda, *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. But in the Upaniṣads, they are further elevated almost to the position of legends. The *Upaniṣads* speak of the personality of these characters, their confidence, their intelligence and an almost perfect, superhuman being. These portrayals also led one to believe in the supremacists tendencies of the Brahminical literature.

<sup>21</sup> Ricoeur is said to be the main proponent of the narrative approach to the self. He presents his notion of narrative identity as an alternative to the traditional notion of the Cartesian notion of the self, where the self is fixed and the principal identity of the person remains fixed throughout. There are also others such as Hume and Nietzsche who argued that the identical subject is an illusion. The narrative approach provides an alternative view of the 'self against these extreme positions. Another proponent of the 'narrative self' account is Daniel Dennett (1996). According Dennett the 'narrative self is an abstraction'.

<sup>22</sup> Honey section (Madhu khaṇḍa): Is the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of the 14<sup>th</sup> khaṇḍa of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. According to Ṛgveda 1.116.12 the honey doctrine originally possessed by Indra was declared by Dadhyañc Ātharvaṇa to the two Aśvins. Dadhyañc was too scared to impart it to anybody for he was threatened by Indra that if he ever did he would cut his head off. To avoid this the Aśvins replaced Dadhyañc head with a horse's head. After Dadhyañc declared the doctrine to them, and Indra had carried out his threat, the Aśvins replaced his own head. This episode shows the significance of this doctrine that even the ~~200~~ gods had to fight a great deal to obtain it. The

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Yajñavalkya Khaṇḍa is a part of it. Later, it became the foundation of the Vedanta school and also other Āstika schools.

<sup>23</sup> The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (13.5.4.1-22) contains a list of kings who had sponsored *aśvamedā* sacrifices and describes a great *aśvamedā* hosted by Bharata Duṣṭanti where seventy eight horses are bound near the Yamunā and fifty five near Gaṅgā. Bharata's descended was King Bharata who is believed to have conquered the earth and brought more than one thousand horses for Indra. It is also believed that there is in the Brāhmaṇas a mythology where the King is compared with Prajāpati indicating the divinity of the King. The performance of the sacrifice was an act of displaying his divine power.

<sup>24</sup> *Ātmā vā idam eka evāgra āsīt...sa aikṣata lokān nu sṛjā iti.* (BṛhU 3.7.23).

<sup>25</sup> Refer to Bṛhadāranya Upaniṣad 2.1.1-13.

<sup>26</sup> *Sa yathorṇanānhiṣtantunocaret yathāgneḥ kṣudrā visphulingā vyuccaranti evam evāsmād ātmanaḥ sarve prāṇāḥ sarve lokāḥ sarve devāḥ sarvāni bhūtāni vyuccaranti.* ( BṛhU 2.1.20)

<sup>27</sup> *.../tam etam ātmānam eta ātmano 'nvavasyante yathā śreṣṭīnam svāḥ / tad yathā śreṣṭhī svair bhūṅkte.../ Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad (4.20)*

<sup>28</sup> Yajurveda consists of Vedic knowledge pertaining to sacrifices and mantras. It is second of the Vedic Saṃhitās which most written in prose style, they contain the *mantras* and also the instructions to carry them out (*Brāhmaṇas*), these are uttered by the *adhyaryu* priests during the performance of the yajña. There are two major recensions under this the *Black Yajurveda* and the *White Yajurveda*.

<sup>29</sup> Vājasaneyi Saṃhita is the collective name given to the White Yajurveda, there are two schools (śākhās) under this *Vājasaneyi Mādhyamdina Saṃhitā* and *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*.

<sup>30</sup> Refer to Fiser, Ivo. "Yajnavalkya in the Sruti Tradition of the Veda." *Acta Orientalia Kobenhavn* 45 (1984): 55-87. Fiser has argued that there is a disconnect between the early historical Yajnavalkya of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and the later legendary one in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*. But the opposite view is suggested by Witzel (2003) who argues that *Yajñavalkya's* portrayal across the texts is indicative of a single historical individual.

<sup>31</sup> Agnihotra – is a special offering of milk, oil and sour gruel offered twice during the day between dawn and dusk. It is added to the sacrificer's (yajamāna's) fire. It is said to be the simplest of the śrauta tradition accompanied by recitation of *mantras*. It is believed that the purpose of the ritual was to ensure that the sun survives the night.

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<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to note how caste is played out in the upanisads like in other classical Indian texts, caste structure is central to its narrative. ‘*Cāṇḍāla*’ and ‘*Paulkasa*’ are the product of an intercaste marriage between the lower (*Śūdra*) and the upper castes (*Brahmins*, *Kṣatrīyas*). These categories are presented as the forbidden ‘others’ (*untouchables*) who are denied access to receiving the universal knowledge of the *Brahman* and also seen as lowly, unethical etc. Even within the Brahmin castes who are the main protagonists of the Vedic knowledge and the central producers, propagators and recipients of this knowledge, there are those who are more qualified and authoritative than others to receiving and propagating the teachings of the upanisads. There are higher *Brahmins*, lower *Brahmins* and there are also the outsiders or those *Brahmins* who have failed to uphold the caste structure by marrying outside the caste and thereby prohibited.

<sup>33</sup> .../ *sa eṣa neti nety ātmā / agr̥hyo na hi gr̥hyate / aśīryo na hi śīryate / asaṅgo na hi sajyate / asito na vyathate / na riṣyati / Br̥hU 4.2.4*

<sup>34</sup> *Sarvam khaludam brahman tajjalān iti shānta upāsita// CU 3.14.1*

<sup>35</sup> Śaṅkara uses this verse to develop a meaning of Tajjalān summarizing the three attributes (creator, preserver, and destroyer) of Brahman. From the 'tad' Brahman has arisen 'ja' on dissolution, it disappears "li" into this identical with Brahman. It is in this Brahman that the universe breathes and lives after it is created *tat-ja-li-an*.

<sup>36</sup> .../ *esa ma ātmāntar hṛdaye/ etad brahma / etam itah pretābhisam - bhavitāsmi.../ Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.14.4*

<sup>37</sup> The Yajurveda *mantras* instructions are carried out by the *Brāhmaṇas*, the words are uttered by the *adhyaryu* priests during the performance of the yajña. There are two major recensions under this the *Black Yajurveda* and the *White Yajurveda*.

<sup>38</sup> Vājasaneyi Saṃhita is the collective name given to the White Yajurveda, there are two schools (*śākhās*) under this *Vājasaneyi Mādhyamdina Saṃhitā* and *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*. It is a continuous text consisting of the hymns of the sage Yajñavalkya. The Isa Upaniṣad is said to be based on the Vājasaneyi Saṃhita.

<sup>39</sup> Refer to Fiser, Ivo. "Yajnavalkya in the Sruti Tradition of the Veda." *Acta Orientalia Kobenhavn* 45 (1984): 55-87. Fiser has argued that there is a disconnect between the early historical Yajnavalkya of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and the later legendary one in the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*. But the opposite view is suggested by Witzel (2003) who argues that *Yajñavalkya*'s portrayal across the texts is indicative of a single historical individual.

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<sup>40</sup> .../yatṛāsya puruṣasya mṛṣasyāgniṃ vāg apyeti vātaṃ prānaś cakṣur  
ādityaṃ manas candram diśaḥ pṛthivīm śarīram ākāśam ātmā...kvāyam  
tadā puruṣo bhavati/ BṛhU 3.2.13

<sup>41</sup> .../āhara somya hastam ārthabhāga/ āvām evaitasya vediṣyāvo na nāv  
etat sajana .../ BṛhU 3.2.13

<sup>42</sup> See Findly 1985, Black 2007: 150-158, Lindquist 2008.

<sup>43</sup> atha hainaṃ gārgī vācaknavī papraccha /

yājñavalkyayeti hovāca /

yad idaṃ sarvam apsv otaṃ ca protaṃ ca kasim nu khalv āpa otāś ca protāś ceti /

vāyau gārgīti /

kasmin nu khalu vāyur otaś ca protāś ceti /

antarikṣa lokeṣu gārgīti / BṛhU 3.6.1

<sup>44</sup> Gandharva is used in the Rigveda, it is a name given to an atmospheric deity called *Viśvāvasu* and associated with the rain. Also in the *atharva Veda* they are the physician of the Gods, sometimes also characterized as heavenly musicians. In the Purāṇas and the Epics, they are considered supernatural beings with power and paired with *apsarases*.

<sup>45</sup> sa yathā dundubherhanyamānasya na bāhyāñchabdāñchaknuyādgrahaṇāya, dundubhestu  
grahaṇena—dundubhyāghātasya vā—śabdō grhītaḥ // Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.7

<sup>46</sup> This same analogy of a lump of salt dissolved in water appears in the debate between father and son Uddālaka Āruni and Śvetaketu Āruṇeya while discussing the common essence of things in *chāṇdogya* upaniṣad 6.13.1-3.

<sup>47</sup> na pretya samjñā ' sti// (Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.13)

<sup>48</sup> This is bewildering to Maitreyī because it goes contradictory to what Yajñavalkya has been saying all this while about the common essence of things, indicating that after death there is also an essence which is enduring which is the Soul or ātman which is beyond death. All of a sudden for Yajñavalkya to say that “after death there is no consciousness” therefore goes contradictory to the essentialist argument.

<sup>49</sup> According to Dr. Hajime Nakamura, “The appearance [in Buddhism] of an order of nuns was an astonishing development in world religious history. No such female religious order existed in Europe, North Africa, West Asia or East Asia at the time. Buddhism was the first tradition to

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produce one.” The women *Bhikshuni Sangha* was the first order of Buddhist nuns but this was not without conflict with the existent male counterparts and their *sanghas*.

<sup>50</sup> Earlier we have seen that Uddālaka Āruṇi makes two distinctions within *Brahmins*, one *Brahmin* by birth and those who are *Brahmins* because they have acquired knowledge (*Brahmabandhu*) CU 6.1.1. A true, ideal *Brahmin* is both, but sometimes exceptions are made when is not *Brahmin* by birth but has acquired knowledge, such as when Satyakāma is taken into the *Brahmin* fold as a Vedic student even though his lineage is not known.

<sup>51</sup> *tasyā vedirupasthaḥ, lomāni barhiḥ, carmādhiṣavaṇe—samiddho madhyataḥ—tau muṣkau; sa yāvānha vai vājapeyena yajamānasya loko bhavati, tāvānasya loko bhavati ya evaṃ vidvānadhopathāsaṃ carati; āsāṃ strīṇāṃ sukṛtaṃ vṛṅkte; atha ya idamavidvānadhopathāsaṃ carati, āsya striyaḥ sukṛtaṃ vṛṅjate // Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 6.4.3*

<sup>52</sup> This stanza is also repeated in *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 6.2.15-16, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 4.15.5; 5.10 as the half –year of the sun’s southward course and as the half-year of the sun’s northward course.

<sup>53</sup> One view in the Philosophy of Mind is that the ‘self’ is a narrative construction, a view supported by Daniel Dennett (1996), Velleman (2006), Ricoeur (1985), Bruner (2002) etc. According to this view, the idea of a person or identity is constructed through narration which links together different events and experiences occurring at different points of time into a single narrative.

<sup>54</sup> Intersubjectivity argues that each thought community shares social experiences that are different from the social experiences of other thought communities. These experiences transcend our subjectivity which explains why they can be shared by the entire thought community. The underlying idea behind intersubjectivity is that individual beliefs about oneself or another are a result of thought community beliefs not just personal experiences or universal and objective human beliefs. Edmund Husserl wrote extensively about intersubjectivity, in *Cartesian Meditation*, he grapples with the problem of intersubjectivity and comes up with the notion of transcendental monodological intersubjectivity.

<sup>55</sup> *Abhidhamma* are ancient Buddhist texts written in Sanskrit, Pāli, composed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* contains the moral psychology and philosophy of the Buddha’s teaching and it is contrasted with the *Sutta Pitaka*. It is believed that Buddha taught *Abhidhamma* soon after his enlightenment, therefore it contains knowledge about *nibbana*, doctrine of dependent origination, notion of *svabhava*, the doctrine of momentariness, ethical manual for the monks. The

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*Abhidhamma* consists of seven books *Dhammasangani*, *Vibhanga*, *Dhatukatha*, *Puggalapannati*, *Kathavatthu*, *Yamaka*, *Patthana*.

<sup>56</sup> The use of a 'chariot' or the analogy of a chariot is used across Indian religious and philosophical traditions. It is used in the Kaṭha Upaniṣads, in the Bhagavadgīta, where Lord Krishna is the charioteer of Arjuna's chariot. The Chariot is representative of the Human body and an oft used analogy to describe the relation between the 'whole' and the 'part'. The chariot drawn by the five horses in the Bhagavadgīta represents the five senses, the charioteer himself represents the Intellect or *Buddhi* and the reins stand for the mind or *manas*. When a person loses control of his mind the chariot also becomes uncontrollable. In Buddhism the chariot is used to illustrate the nature of the Soul and the body, the Chariot is the sum of its parts, when the parts are removed there is no chariot, so also the body.

<sup>57</sup> Refer to Saṃyutta Nikāya V.10.6.

<sup>58</sup> Refer to the four stages in the Gāṭaka IV, 496 and Saṃyutta X, 1.3.

<sup>59</sup> *Arhat*: The Theravāda Buddhists, define *arhat* (Sanskrit) or *arahant* (Pālī) as one who has attained Nirvana or enlightenment or are on the path to achieving Buddhahood. Different schools have different understanding of what constitutes *arhantship*. Many schools of Buddhism have argued against the imperfection of *arhatship* and instead suggested the path of the *Bodhisattva*. Refer to Baruah, Bibhuti. *Buddhist Sects and Sectarianism*. Svarup and Sons, 2000.

<sup>60</sup> See Dhṛ. Brāhmaṇavagga.

<sup>61</sup> The Buddhists texts Vāseṭṭa Sutta of Sutta Nipatā talks about a conversation between two Brahmins Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja arguing about "How does one become a Brahmin? By birth or by actions?" Should the Brahmins consider themselves a closed hereditary group? In their dilemma they approach the Blessed one, the Buddha. Finally, the Blessed one explains that it is not by birth but by conduct that one becomes a Brahman.

<sup>62</sup> Pūraṇa Kassapa (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> BCE) was a contemporary of the Mahavira and the Buddha. He along with Makkhali Gosala in the Pālī cannon are identified as *ahetuvadin* (denier of cause or merit). The *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, another important text of the Pālī cannon, talks of Kassapa as being a *Ājīvika*. In the *Milinda Pañha*, he is the contemporary of Milinda.

<sup>63</sup> *Therīgāthā* translated as the Verses of the Elder Nuns a Buddhist scripture consisting of the works of the early nuns of the Buddhist monastic life composed around 600 BC, these texts are

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the first kind from women anywhere in the world across traditions, they also contain in them passages that women are equal to men in terms of spiritual attainment and liberation.

#### **Chapter - 4. The Systematic philosophies of Śaṅkara and Nāgārjuna**

<sup>64</sup> Here Indian philosophic thought is used in the sense of Brahmanic thought or Vedānta and not inclusive of Buddhism, Jainism and Carvāka. Also Indian philosophy as revolving around schools is another feature of specifically the *āstikas* or orthodox traditions.

<sup>65</sup> The difference between a ‘text’ and ‘canon’ is that a ‘text’ is an individual work and a ‘canon’ used mostly for scriptures and sacred texts containing many individual texts or set of texts written by individual or many authors. These ‘canons’ are the foundational texts for many traditions.

<sup>66</sup> Systematization or the process of creating ‘a system of philosophy’ is characterized by the following features 1. It is autonomous with regards of other non-philosophical discourse 2. There is one underlying principle which runs through all doctrines within the system 3. As an autonomous system it comprises of all branches of philosophy 4. The doctrines stated within these various branches are internally coherent. Refer to Leo Catana, The Concept “System of Philosophy”: The case of Jacob Brucker’s Historiography of Philosophy. *History and Theory*. 44, 1 (2005), pp. 72-90.

<sup>67</sup> Thibaut in his English translation *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkarācārya raises important questions regarding raises some important questions whether the original author of the *Brahma Sūtra*, can be seen to have views similar to Śaṅkarā views of the advaita philosophy of *māyā* or whether Bādarāyaṇas views are more consistent with Vishishṭādvaita system of Ramānuja or the doctrines of the *Bhagāvātās*. (Refer to V.M.Apte (Trans) *Brahma Sūtra Shankara Bhāṣya*, also Thibaut, George. "*The Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyana*." (1964).

<sup>68</sup> Here systematization refers to the post-sūtra period, when different schools were being formulated under various *ācāryas* who were also founders of these schools. Systematization is the process of bringing together various conflicting, incompatible systems under a single framework of an all-embracing system. Bādarāyaṇas work should be seen as the first attempt at systematization within Vedānta, also the position of *prāsthāna* accorded to it gives it authority as scripture.

<sup>69</sup> Refer *Mundaka Upaniṣad* 1.1.1, *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 4.5.15 and *Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad* 6.0.

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<sup>70</sup> Here along with scriptural authority the ritualistic or Vedic injunction is also invoked by Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara did consider the metaphysical doctrine of the *self* (*ātman*) and the absolute as constituting a separate body of text and not subordinated to the main body of Vedic rituals or injunctions. He states that the knowledge of the Absolute is not something that is a result of performance of Vedic injunctions or rituals but is acquired as a result of self-enquiry, it is already known but only needs to be fully known and “therefore, the desire to know the Absolute” (*athātho brahma-jigñāsa*) (Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya 1.1.1).

<sup>71</sup> Pūrva Mīmāṃsā a school of Vedic exegesis is one of the six *darśana* or schools of philosophy. The foundational text is Jaimini Mīmāṃsā Sūtra (200 BCE - 200 CE), the first commentary on the text was by Śabara known as *Śabarabhāṣya* (3rd -6th century CE) and the subcommentaries by Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and Prabhākara (7th century CE). Their essential presupposition is that the "Veda is self-existent-uncreated and unauthored (*apauruṣeya*) revelation (*śruti*) the truth and authority of which is incontrovertible and infallible and it is synonymous with Dharma.

<sup>72</sup> Here when Śruti texts are used they increasingly refer to the Upaniṣads more specifically the *Brhadāranyaka* and the *Chāṇḍogya* Upaniṣad on which Śaṅkara himself wrote commentaries.

<sup>73</sup> Vindhyavāsī (425 AD) is believed to have introduced certain changes to the work of Īśvara Kṛṣṇa which was to defend Sāṃkhya views from attack by schools like Vaiśeṣikas and the Buddhists (refer Alston 2004, p.171). Vindhyavāsī is said to have debated Vasubandhu's teacher Buddhamitra and he along with Mādhava are the last of the Sāṃkhya teachers.

<sup>74</sup> Some of the oldest Upaniṣads contain the doctrines of the Classical Sāṃkhya philosophy. The 25 principles or evolutes, the concept of *Ahaṃkāra* can be traced to the *Chāṇḍogya* Upaniṣads (7.25), the *Brhadāranyaka* Upaniṣad (1.2,1.4), the notion that the three *guṇas* (*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*) influence creation is also taken from the *Chāṇḍogya* and *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*. The idea of pure consciousness as the essence of all beings is also something that develops in the conversations of Yajñavalkya and Uddālaka Āruṇī in the *Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad* is also similar to Sāṃkhya's notion of *puruṣa* the pure, transcendental consciousness.

<sup>75</sup> According to Erich Frauwallner it is possible to trace some kind of a thread connecting the teachings of Yajñavalkya in the early Upaniṣadic period through till the summary of the Sāṃkhya teaching of Īśvara Kṛṣṇa. The theistic Sāṃkhya is described in the Mahābharata, Pūraṇa and *Bhagavadgīta*. This goes contrary to what is thought about Sāṃkhya that it is essentially a non-theistic system. This view is also supported by Vijñānabhikṣu the 14<sup>th</sup> century thinker who argues

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that Sāṃkhya is an atheistic system. Refer to Frauwallner, Erich's *Die Philosophie des Buddhismus* published in 1958.

<sup>76</sup> Sāṃkhya is the only school whose doctrines are elaborately dealt with because it is argued that it is closed to the Vedānta doctrine also considered as a *smṛti* by some. So Sāṃkhya is the most important opponent within the *āstika* tradition, if its doctrine could be refuted then all other doctrines automatically get refuted. Essentially any pluralistic system gets repudiated.

<sup>77</sup> Tantra in the Hindu tradition is often associated with the tradition of the Goddess (*Śāktism*) along with traditions of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism along with even Buddhism and Jaina tradition. Their rituals and doctrines have non-Vedic origin. They are associated with the *Āgama* and *Samhitā* texts but are most non-textual. It is argued that tantrism and Vedism are of opposite polarity, the tantra tradition popular among the non-elite groups gradually became incorporated into mainstream Hinduism or Brahmanism.

<sup>78</sup> *Smṛtyanavakāśadoṣaprasaṅga iti cennānyasmṛtyanavakāśadoṣaprasaṅgāt*// (Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya 2.1.1)

<sup>79</sup> *Īkṣaternāśabdaṃ*// (Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya 1.1.5)

<sup>80</sup> *Kalpanopadeśacca madhvādivadavirodhaḥ*// (Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya 1.4.10)

<sup>81</sup> (i) *sāṃkhya-yogau hi --- śiṣaiśca pariḡhitau*, *BSBh* 2.1.3

(ii) *mahājanapariḡhīta ----- yuktigādha ----*, *BSBh*. 2.1.1

<sup>82</sup> *Yathā māya yathā svapno gandharvanagaram yathā*

*yathotpādas tathā sthānaṃ tathā bhaṅga udiritaḥ* // *Mādhyamika Kārika* 34//

<sup>83</sup> It is argued that Advaita adopted the method of dialectic from the Mādhyāmikās as far as the refutation of opposed views is concerned. The renowned Advaitin Śrīharsa's *Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍa Khāḍya* follows from the radical skepticism of the famous Mādhyāmika philosopher Nāgārjuna. Refer to Surendranath Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*.

<sup>84</sup> *te 'pyadhyātmaṃ sarvavyahārāspadabhāvena saṃhanyanta iti manyate* / *BSBh*, II.2.18: "and because an assumption of independent activity would lead to/ the conclusion/ about ceaseless/uninterrupted/activity " (...*nirapekṣapravṛtṭyabhyupagame ca pravṛtṭyanuparamaprasaṅgāt*) / *BSBh*, II.2.18

<sup>85</sup> Śāṅkara's commentary on Brahmasūtra, II.2.28: *apica sahopalambhaniyamānabhedo viṣayavijñānāyor āpatati/ nahyanayore kasyānupalambhe 'nyasyopalambho 'sti/ ... tasmādapyarthābhāvaḥ*

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<sup>86</sup>S. Dasgupta notes that there is a shift in Śāṅkara position from his initial absolute idealism to realism, an evolution of his views. In his early commentary Gauḍapāda's *Māṇḍūkya-Kārikā*, where he shares the opinion with Gauḍapāda that ordinary perception as well as everything concerned with daily life is nothing but an illusion or dream, similar to the Vijñānavāda philosophy, but in his commentary on the Brahmasūtra, Śāṅkara it seems increasingly is moving toward a realist position. While Chattopadhyay argues that Śāṅkara supports the realist metaphysics only at the level of empirical (*vyavahārika*) reality, but at the level of transcendental reality it is not supported. Refer S.Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol.2, p.29, also Chattopadhyaya. S.K.'s *The Philosophy of Sankar's Advaita Vedanta*.

<sup>87</sup> *śūnyavādi pakṣastu sarvapramāṇavipratīṣiddha iti tannirākaranāya nādaraḥ kriyate /*

Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya II.2.31

<sup>88</sup> Post- Śāṅkara many of the claims and arguments made by him or attributed to him were attacked from the theistic schools within Vedānta. The idea that world is an illusion was fiercely refuted especially by Rāmānujācārya (11<sup>th</sup> century), he brought out the pluralistic tendencies present within monism, he rejected the difference between appearance and ultimately and argued that all knowledge was real and all arguments are qualified. He argued that inner experience, dreams, illusions are all self-valid.

<sup>89</sup> In addition to *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, at least five other texts are attributed to Nāgārjuna which all expound the philosophy of the middle way. The other works attributed to him are The "Sixty Stanzas on Reasoning" (*Yuktiṣaṣṭikā*), The "Seventy stanzas on Emptiness" (*Śūnyatāsaptati*), The "Dispeller of Objections" (*Vigrahavyāvartanī*), The "Treatise on Pulverization" (*Vaidalyaprakaraṇa*), and The Precious Garland (*Ratnāvalī*). All these texts expound a single coherent philosophical system of the middle way. These texts along with MMK are referred to as the texts of the 'Yukti' corpus.

<sup>90</sup> The Second century A.D. belongs to a period following the *Abhidhārmic* period, this period was characterized by the development of the esoteric teaching of the Buddha. This period lasted between the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and 500 A.D. This phase of Buddhist thought involved the development of the philosophy of Madhyamaka system, especially the ontological-soteriological aspects, Nāgārjuna belonged to this period.

<sup>91</sup> Svātantrika is a school that is attributed to the 6th century Bhāviveka, and is used in contrast with Prāsaṅgika. Buddhapālita is the founder of the Prāsaṅgika School, also the famous Candrakīrti

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belongs to the Prāsaṅgika. The two differ in their interpretations of Nāgārjuna's *Śūnyāta* philosophy, one asserts the nature of ultimate reality of things while the other refrains from doing so, one uses a syllogistic structured form while asserting through argumentation while the other makes assertion, uses lesser reasoning and point out errors which occur when argument is stretched through logical extremes.

<sup>92</sup> The most popular translations in English on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* have been Inada, Kenneth. K (1970), Kalupahana, David. J (1986), and Jay.L.Garfield (1995). In this chapter, the translations of Kalupahana, Garfield and Jan Westerhoff are considered. Kalupahana's translations are carried out from the perspective of Theravāda Buddhism specifically the *Kaccāyānagotta-sūtra*, while Jay Garfield from the Indo-Tibetan Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamaka perspective, and Westerhoff from Nāgārjuna's philosophical perspective and his position.

<sup>93</sup> It is to be noted here that the title of each chapter of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is not the title provided by Nāgārjuna in the original text but by the later commentators particularly Candrakīrti, whose chapter organization are usually followed.

<sup>94</sup> *Svabhāva* translated as (*sva*) existence and (*bhāva*) being or nature is the central doctrine of the Mādhyamika philosophy. It is linked to the notion of the two truths and the problem of existent and nature of the absolute. *Svabhāva* is also linked with the ultimate goal of liberation (*nirvāṇa*).

<sup>95</sup> *Prajñāpāramitā* are texts which were composed around 100 BC to 600 AD, essentially a collection of forty texts. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* or "Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines" is the earliest written sūtra. According to Chinese scholar, Guang Xing, in his *Concept of the Buddha: It's Evolution from Early Buddhism to the Trikaya Theory*, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* originated among the southern Mahāsāṃghika schools of the Andhra region along the Kṛṣṇa river written in the language of the Gāndhārī and Prakrit.

<sup>96</sup> In the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* (1.4.8), Yajñavalkya uses the *neti neti* method in his discourse about the Soul with his wife Maitreyī to expound the true nature of the universal *Ātman*. In western tradition this method of negative attribution refers to the mystical approach which forms part of the apophatic theology, it is opposed to the cataphatic theology which approaches the God or divine by affirmations, instead of the negation.

<sup>97</sup> *Yadi kācana pratigñā syān me tata eva me bhaved doṣaḥ. Nāsti ca mama pratijñā tasmān naivāsti me doṣaḥ//*

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<sup>98</sup> The *Ābhidharma* or *abhidhamma* (3rd century BC) are the central Buddhist canonical texts. They are like the Upaniṣads unsystematized summaries of the Buddhist sūtras. There is the *Thervāda* Abhidharma and there is the *Sarvāstivāda* abhidharma, while the former is written in Pāli, the latter is written in Chinese probably translated from the earlier written Sanskrit text. There are various *abhidhamma* philosophies and *abhidhamma* traditions, they cover the entire corpus of the Buddhadharma.

<sup>99</sup> The *Skandhas* (literally meaning “heaps” and “piles”, but often translated as “aggregates”) are the basic constituents of the personality and related to the personhood of the person. They include form (really matter-the physical body), sensation, perception, disposition (behavioral and cognitive), and consciousness. The *skandhas* do not relate to the ontological or the metaphysical realm but connected with the psychological makeup of the person.

<sup>100</sup> This probably indicates that Sāṃkhya was well-known to the Buddhists as a philosophy more than any other so called *saddarśana* or six systems of thought. The Sāṃkhya philosophy is also present in the Upaniṣads and the Mahābhārata indicating its antiquity and important position it holds in the history of Indian thought. In comparison the Vedānta is relatively new and probably Nāgārjuna was not aware of it. Bhavya's (500-570 A.D.) chapter *Vedāntatattvaviniścaya* in the *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* and its auto commentary *Tarkajvāla* is the first known Buddhist texts to distinguish between the Madhyamaka philosophy from the purely Vedānta notions.

<sup>101</sup> *Apratītya samutpānno dharmah kaścinna vidyate.*

*Yasmāt tasmāt aśūnyohi dharmah kaścinna vidyate. (MMK 24:19)*

<sup>102</sup> In the *Yuktiṣaṣṭhikakāri* of Nāgārjuna, with Candrakīrti's commentary, verse 50, says, "The magnanimous have neither thesis nor contention. How can there be any opposing thesis to those who have no thesis", in a sense Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti's enterprise is to arrive at a non-methodological, non-conceptual position, but not without complete abandonment of reason or justification of reason, but to use reason as a methodological tool to arrive at a middle position, which brings out the inherent conflicts in using reason.

<sup>103</sup> Also referred to as the Emptiness of emptiness is to identify emptiness with the property of being dependently arisen together with the property of having an identity which is solely based on conventional, verbal designation. Emptiness is the designation of a thing being empty of lacking independent existence. Refer to *MMK* 2.18.

<sup>104</sup> Refer to Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatarabhāṣya* 108: 16-19.

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## Chapter – 5: Doxography and Indian Philosophy

<sup>105</sup> Aravaṇa Aḍigal is the teacher who preached the Buddhist doctrine to *Maṇimēkalai*. Some scholars like Alain Danielou argue that Aravana Aḍigal could be none other than the third century philosopher Nāgārjuna. It is also said that Aḍigal in the poem *Maṇimēkalai* remarks to her that the Buddhist logic is itself based on the teachings on the Jain teacher Jinendra who was the first to establish the two means of knowledge perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*). Refer Cāttanār, and Daniélou Alain. *Manimekhalai -The dancer with the magic bowl*. New Delhi, Penguin, 1993.p.152.

<sup>106</sup> It is argued that up until the fifth century, Māhāyana did not feature as a distinct school or movement. Nāgārjuna's philosophy did not become popular until several centuries later till Bhāviveka came onto the scene to rescue the philosophy of *śūnyavāda* from being appropriated by the various sects dominant at the time. From the sūtra period or the *Abhidhārmic phase* of Nāgārjuna to the doxographic phase of Bhāviveka there is a movement from unification or systematization toward sectarianism.

<sup>107</sup> Yogacāra is an influential school of Buddhism which argues that the objective world, the world before us is a creation of our own mind. All things that are objectively real are nothing more than the mind's projection directed outward. Nothing exists independent of the mind, all external objects are nothing but appearances. There are parallels to this kind of idealism in the West in the philosophies of George Berkeley, Schelling, Hegel and others. In Berkeley's *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), he argues that what we perceive consists only of ideas and the existence of a mind-independent material world is just a fiction.

<sup>108</sup> *Tattvam* here translated as 'Reality' literally means 'being just that', 'that' is translated as 'tat'. The being (*bhāva*) of '(just) that' is 'being just that' (*tattvam*). According to Candrakīrti, *tattvam* is *thatness* or 'the way things really are' and *tattvam* is synonymous with *śūnyata*.

<sup>109</sup> *Bodhisattva* is someone who has a compassionate heart, mind who has himself delayed attaining liberation and Buddhahood because of his concern for the suffering beings. According to the *Lankāvatārasūtra* (v.165-166), Nāgārjuna entered the first Bodhisattva stage called the 'stage of joy' (*mudītabhūmi*).

<sup>110</sup> *dvayābhāvo' hy abhāvasya bhāvaḥ śūnyasya lakṣaṇam/ na bhāvo nāpt abhāvaḥ* (MHK I 13abc)

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<sup>111</sup> It is found that the Yogācārā views presented in the *TJ* on the verses 4 and 5 regarding the eight kinds of consciousness, the ultimate nature of the mind as free from apprehending-apprehending duality, the three natures, the absences of intrinsic nature etc of Bhāvaviveka are drawn from the Dignāga, Dharmapāla line of thought (Yamaguchi pp.132-34). The Yogācārā thought which was popular during Bhāvaviveka's day was based on Vasubhandu's text *Triṃśikā*, many commentaries were written on the *Triṃśikā* two of which were written by Bhāvaviveka's contemporary Dharmapāla and Sthiramati.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Yamaguchi, P.159.

<sup>113</sup> Kochumuttom 1982, Thurman 1984, Wood 1991, Nagao 1991 respectively.

<sup>114</sup> K.C. Bhattacharya in his *Studies in Samkhya philosophy* argues that "Most of the Samkhya literature appears to have been lost, and there seems to be no continuity of tradition from the ancient times to the age of the commentators...in Samkhya the construction at many places involves supplying of missing links from one's imagination" (p.127). Bhavya's text such as *MHK* and its autocommentary *TJ* throw much needed light on those links allowing for one to reconstruct Sāṃkhya philosophy. (Yamaguchi 1976)

<sup>115</sup> *ghaṭākāśavad ekasya nānātvaṃ ced abhedataḥ /  
ghaṭabhedena caikatvaṃ sāmyaṃ sarvasya yan matam //*

<sup>116</sup> *Satkāyadr̥ṣṭi* is defined as the belief in a destructive body, it is also the attachment to a personal identity (*satkayā*) which is described as holding onto the five aggregates of grasping (*upādānaskandha*), this holding onto happens when there is a Self which identifies with the body. In Palī it is referred to as the *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*.

<sup>117</sup> The term *parameṣṭhātman* is found in the Upaniṣads, hence, Bhavya's sources of Vedānta seem to be the Upaniṣads.

<sup>118</sup> *na pareṣṭhātmaviṣayā yathārthātmēti dhīr matā /  
ātmany evaṃ parāmarśad dehādāv ātmadhīr yathā // MHK 11.*

<sup>119</sup> *TJ* 8.24 states "Why the idea that the Individual mortal Self has its object as the supreme Self is not correct? Because movement in relation to that occurs, as in saying the Self is like this. Like the idea of the Self occurring in relation to the body, sense-organs and objects. While the idea of a body, sense-organs is correct with respect to conventional reality, because it is apprehended by perception (*pratyakṣa*), but the idea of resting in the supreme is not conventional because it is not apprehended". (Trans. Qvarnström).

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<sup>120</sup> *na caikatādvitīyasya yuktā bāhyānapekṣaṇāt/*

*ekatvayogād ekaś ced yogas tasyaiva netaraḥ // MHK 73*

<sup>121</sup> *ātmā hy ākāśavaj jivair ghaṭāsair ivoditaḥ/*

*ghaṭādivac ca saṅghātair jātāv etan nidarśanam // Gauḍapādīyakārikā (3.3).*

<sup>122</sup> Space (*ākāśa*) in Brahmanical philosophy/literature such as the Upaniṣads, *Vākyapadīya* of Bhartṛhari, *Brahma Sūtra*, the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* by Śaṅkara etc consider it to be positive entity and used as symbolic representation of their supreme reality. But Bhavya denies it and argues that space was only given as an example for the Self, it is not a substance, eternal, all-pervasive as the Vedāntins claim. In Bhavya space can only be established at the conventional level in relation to a substance, just as unorigination (*ajāti*) is represented in relation to origination (*jāti*).

<sup>123</sup> *deśanāyās tu vaicitryād ihaivaṃ syād ayaṃ nayaḥ/*

*ākarṣanārtham ekeṣāṃ śeṣagrāhanivṛttaye// Vedāntattvaviniścaya 88*

<sup>124</sup> The *Sarvasiddhāntasaṃgraha* is traditionally ascribed to Śaṅkara but scholars like Moriz Winternitz (1922) argue that the text was only written in the twelfth century by an unknown advaitin. On the other hand, M.Rangacarya who translated the text in 1902 into English argues that it was written by Śaṅkara himself.

<sup>125</sup> The *āstikas* various translated essentially refer to those schools that can be traced back to the traditional authors of the *sūtra* texts in which the Vedic authority is accepted. The authors include Aksapada (Gotama), Kanada, Kapila, Jaimini, Vyasa, Patanjali of the Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Mīmāṃsā, Yoga and Vyasa here is used as the author of the Mahābhārata.

<sup>126</sup> *Manubhāṣya*, Vol 1, p.57, II.5-6.

<sup>127</sup> *yo 'vamanyeta te mūle hetuśāstrāśrayād dvijaḥ /*

*sa sādhubir bahiṣkāryo nāstiko vedanindakaḥ // Manu, 2.11 (trans. Olivelle 2004, p.204).*

<sup>128</sup> Vātsīputrīya, one of the original Pudgalavādin (*person*) school, they believed in the existence of an inexpressible *Self*, which is neither same as or different from the five aggregates, or as permanent or impermanent. This view was refuted by others especially Dignāga, who was once a follower of this school. The Vātsīputrīya rejected the notion of an eternal soul, they also rejected the idea that the *person* is an aggregate of the five aggregates.

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## Chapter – 6: On Conceptualization of Modern Indian Philosophy

<sup>129</sup> ‘Modernism’ is not a temporal or chronological concept but a philosophy or a philosophical movement, a point of view. It is characterized by creation of modern cities and industrial societies, it rejected religious belief and also the enlightenment thinking of the medieval period. It is referred to as a mode of thinking, Heidegger refers to it as mode of being. Man becomes the subject, the world as the object, he understand himself as the subject, knowledge and morality are founded on subjectivity, the subject also becomes the will, the will to power, this is in opposition to the post-modern thinking which is essentially based on notions of ‘difference’.

<sup>130</sup> Refer to Garfield, Jay L., and Nalini Bhushan. *Indian philosophy in English: from renaissance to independence*. Oxford University Press, 2011; Deshpande, Sharad, editor. *Philosophy in Colonial India*. Vol. 11, Springer, 2015.

<sup>131</sup> Continental philosophy which began during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century refers to the philosophical traditions which originated in Europe especially in Germany and France. It is contrasted with the analytical tradition. It includes within it movements such as German Idealism, phenomenology, structuralism, post-structuralism, hermeneutics, critical theory of Frankfurt school and so on. Unlike analytical philosophy, continental philosophers reject that the natural sciences as the only way of understanding natural phenomena, the lay emphasis on existence rather than essence, no experience rather than reason alone, support contextualism and historicism and argue that philosophical arguments cannot be divorced from textual and contextual conditions of its historical emergence.

<sup>132</sup> Works such as “The Sanskrit Knowledge systems on the Eve on the Colonialism” project of Columbia University, “Is there an Indian Intellectual History” (Pollock 2008), and the recent “*Unifying Hinduism : Philosophy and identity in Indian Intellectual History*” (Nicholson 2010) are efforts to formalize the discipline of Indian Intellectual History.

<sup>133</sup> P.T.Raju (1904-1992) was a student of Radhakrishnan. Like Radhakrishnan, P.T.Raju also used the method of comparative philosophy to study various religions. He was greatly influenced by Hegelian thought and tried to bring synthesis between Advaita and Hegelian thought as can be seen in his work *Thought and Reality: Hegelianism and Advaita*. He like many thinkers of the time were historians who wrote on the history of Indian thought.

<sup>134</sup> Matilal’s works are greatly influenced by English analytic philosophers such as W.V.O.Quine, Russell, Richard Rorty, physicist Thomas Kuhn etc. Analytic philosophers consider philosophy to

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be science and propose that philosophy should move towards becoming science, they consider philosophical enquiries as continuation of science while others subordinate it to science or scientific enquiry. Matilal argued that it is important to bring in more logical vigor and rationality into Indian philosophy, which is why he primarily chose Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika philosophies and certain schools of Buddhist philosophy which emphasized on the rational and logical aspects.

<sup>135</sup> The term ‘incommensurable’ refers to a lack of common measure. It is particularly used in Philosophy of Science and Ethics to refer to rival theories or paradigms and the inability to bring them together or use any common measure to evaluate them, or the inability to express or comprehend one conceptual scheme. It is term which was popularized by Paul Feyerabend (1978, 1981) and Thomas Kuhn (1977, 1983).

<sup>136</sup> Voluntaristic Methodological presupposition is a term used in the Philosophy of science especially in the context of methodological dualism. Methodological dualism is based on the presupposition that humans differ radically from other objects in the external world and they purposefully chose methods or aims which are different from other objects and therefore a distinction is made between the methods used in the Human or behavioral sciences and the natural sciences. Voluntarism is the will to think radically. Mohanty argues that philosophy can be defended as an autonomous activity without denying its existential, historical-cultural and voluntaristic methodological presuppositions.

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play of weakness but greatest strength because only the strong can hold on to their truth in the face of persecution. The real Buddhist therefore ventures into the realm of discontinuity where everything transforms all the time. Nothing is expected to stay the same not even his earlier perceptions of the teachings of Buddha. This fact does not frighten him but brings out the courage in him to face the revealing nature of truth. Buddhism, if at all it has an essence is that of continual re-interpretations of preconceived ideas and beliefs. In practice it comes closest to post-modernism but unlike postmodernism it does blatantly deny the existence of metanarratives. It is itself truly the middle path between eternalism and nihilism. In issues where Buddha chose to remain silent display not just his unwillingness to indoctrinate others for his own glory but also his humility in thought. He realised that there was an eternal principle that governed the universe and the balanced life was learning how much to hold on to and how much to let go. We need to learn from him this attitude to life because in Buddhism, the doctrines are not the destination but the vehicles, and Buddha would have welcomed other kinds of vehicles that led to the same destination. His identity did not come from anything of this world, neither should ours. Therefore, one can neither be possessive about the goal nor about the vehicles to the goal.

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## Contemporary Relevance of Early women Buddhist writings to Women's Emancipation

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### Abstract

This paper is dedicated to the Buddhist women pioneers who posed, articulated and fought for individual women's rights and freedom to express, and follow a path of spiritual enlightenment, by breaking free of traditional roles assigned to them. This paper looks at some of the contributions made by women to early Buddhist literature, specifically the Therigatha (composed in 600 BC) which is the first ever text written by women, about women for women. In today's world when women's rights and freedom are still being debated these early Buddhist women nuns (ther's) stand as role models for every generation of women till today. What they stood for freedom, liberty, equality still remains relevant today, because that dream of complete women empowerment is yet to be realized and hence their work and all they stood for continues to be important.

### Buddhism and Women Empowerment

The question of gender and the role of women in religion was first articulated in Buddhism much before any other religion or philosophy, the 2,500-year-old tradition of the female sangha (monk/nun community) is proof of it and quiet revolutionary and unprecedented of the time. It is particularly significant since all the other traditions both organized and others are still today debating the role of women in religion and of society at large. But the image of women as equal to a man in terms of spiritual attainment and Buddhahood is not something which came easily it had to be fought for also in modern times Buddhist women teachers who are also feminists are still continuing that fight. Early Buddhism carried with it much of the misogynist, patriarchal attitude of most other institutional traditions, her role was limited and even denied, she had to fight for acceptance in the sangha order, but in



comparison to other traditions, Buddhism has been the least discriminatory in terms of gender. The Therigatha, translated as the verses of the elder nuns (Bhikkunis) is a collection of poems which speak of the trials and hardships faced by them on their path to attaining arhantship. There have been very few texts in the past written by women (thers) about women, and the Therigatha can be explored from several dimensions philosophical, gender, ethical, spiritual etc. This work is unique and the first of its kind in world literature and not just Buddhism because it is the first of its kind to articulate the viewpoints, experiences, thought patterns from a feminist perspective. The texts depict the women's desire for emancipation. The Sanghas opened up opportunities to women in public life, and enhanced their role in the cultural and spiritual sphere for the first time, when the role of women across traditions was doomed to the four walls of her house and responsibilities within the family, further education being denied and her agency overlooked.

#### **Women in early Buddhist canonical Literature:**

The appearance, presence of women in Buddhist literature is evidence to the fact that it is the women who are the upholders of tradition, religion, faith and movement. There are several important women who figure in the canonical literatures of Sutta Pitaka (SP) and Vinaya Pi?aka (VP). There is a separate section in the VP dedicated to women and their conduct in the Sa?gha, the Bhikkun? Vibhang? (the Buddhist monastic code of discipline) and Bhikkun? Khandhaka (the tenth section of the Cullavagga of the Vinaya Pitaka). The Therigatha is a part of the SP, then there is bhikkhun?-Samyutta which is a part of the Samyutta-Nikaya consisting of a collection of verses which are ascribed to the ten elder nuns, there are then apadana biographies which consists of biographies of some forty nuns along with biographies of large number of monks. Indian philosophy is essentially described as a dialogue between the Brahmins and the Buddhists, in comparison to the Buddhist canonical literature the Brahmanical literature has very few instances where whole sections of texts are dedicated to or are written by women. The Upanisads, for in-

stance, has women characters like Garga Vacanakv? who challenge men in philosophical debate (Bahada ranyaka (B?U) 3.6-3.9), or Yaj?avalkya's wife Maitrey? who requests that she be taught the path of immortality which is knowledge of Brahman (B?U 2.4.1-14) but these are few and rare and they were never really equal competitors to the central Brahmin male protagonist. There are also women characters in the mythic tales of Mahabharata and Ramayana, although they play significant roles, their roles are often subjugated to that of the men, there is no women character who is completely liberated in any of these texts, also because they were mostly composed by men. The women in these mythical texts are not real women they are constructions by men and depicted in a certain fashion, in contrast to Elder nuns in the therigatha, who through their eloquent poems and verses depicted the real experiences and life struggles and finally of freedom and liberation from suffering. These texts written by women during early Buddhism are not only of interest to current feminism and their discourse on women's rights and freedom but they also transcend those roles and were committed to spreading the Buddha's Dhamma and its soteriological endeavors. The early texts describe many conversations between Buddha and his lay-women followers, in the Anguttara Nikaya (Ai2) there is mention of Vishaka a generous supporter and benefactor of the Order of the nuns, to whom the Buddha grants eight boons, such as for as long as she lived she would provide robes to the members of the order for the rainy season, food for the monks coming to town, food for the monks going out, food for the sick, food for those that wait on the sick, medicines for the sick, constant supply of rice gruel and bathing robes for the nuns. So as one can see there institutions were built not by elite women, but by all kinds of women from the most humble backgrounds to the most elite ones. There is a lot to learn for the modern feminists from these early pioneers because feminism today seems to be an elite enterprise both in the West and in countries like India leaving out large sections of other deprived women living at the margins.

#### **Ordination of the First woman into the**



### Sangha:

Mahapajapati Gotama was the first woman to request the ordination into the Saṅgha, she, along with 500 Bhikkhū's achieved parinirvā and this is noted in the various texts of the Pali Canon also consisting of the Sarvastivāda and Mulasarvastivāda versions. Mahapajapati Gotama was also Buddha's foster mother. The story goes that Mahapajapati Gotama was married to the King Suddhodhana and when he died she went to the Buddha and asked to be ordained into the Sangha. Initially, Buddha refused and went to Vesali, unmoved Mahapajapati cut off her hair and dressed in yellow robes and she along with a large number of other śākyan women followed the Buddha to Vesali and requested again that she be ordained. At this instance, Ananda a principal devotee of Buddha intercedes on her behalf and asks Buddha whether it is possible for women to realise the various stages in sainthood for which the Buddha replies indeed it is possible, so Ananda then asks would it be good for women to be ordained as Nuns, Buddha then declares that it would be possible if Mahapajapati agreed to the eight conditions prescribed in the Garudhammas.

Mahapajapati agrees and she is then ordained as the first Bhikkhū. Subsequently, all women had to undergo full ordination to become nuns. The nuns although lived separately from the monks they did not live segregated lives, the early nuns lived along with the male monks around the Buddha their goals were similar the attainment of the highest Dhamma, there was a sense of community of belonging. This was in stark contrast to the women in the Brahmanic tradition of the time, at the time of the death of the Husband the woman has no existence apart from her husband and she had to go through the most horrific act of being immolated along with her dead husband's body on a pyre (Sati system). Mahapajapati boldly demands she be ordained as a nun after the death of her Husband demanding an altogether different life carving her own path, a path that would lead to freedom and liberation while at the same time not losing the essential femininity as can be seen through the poems of the Theris. On poem about freedom

titled Sumangala's Mother reads  
 So freed! So freed!  
 So thoroughly freed am I -  
 From my pestle,  
 My shameless husband  
 And his sun-shade making,  
 My mouldy old pot  
 With its water-snake smell.  
 Aversion and passion  
 I cut with a chop.  
 Having come to the foot of a tree,  
 I meditate, absorbed in the bliss:  
 "What bliss!" (th?g.2.3)

It is not difficult to understand the great relief felt by these women to be finally free from domestic chores and familial responsibilities which to say the least took away their true spirit and freedom. There are many poems and verses where similar emotions are depicted. In another verse, Dhamma another Therī declares  
 Wandering for alms -  
 weak, leaning on a staff,  
 with trembling limbs -  
 I fell down right there on the ground.  
 Seeing the drawbacks of the body  
 my mind was then - Set free (th?g.1.11)  
 The philosophy in the Therī's and of Buddhism, in general, leaving the gender considerations aside is most akin to the Existentialist philosophy of the West. The Existential categories of freedom, the meaning of life, individual existence, choice etc. are also notions which figure prominently in the Buddhist literature and works. Many Therīs embarked on a journey of spiritual attainment by having to make some very difficult choices for themselves. There is a desire for overcoming the mundane existence and achieving the ultimate calm, peace, and serenity through arhant hood. The other core ideas of Buddhism such as impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha) and insubstantiality (anatta) are also concepts which are connected with existence also discussed in the Therīs. The central premise on which Buddhist philosophy is based on an existential fact "that there is birth, aging, dying, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation, and despair here and now". So given this basic fact how then does one begin to overcome suffering, despair, death



etc is the whole explication given by Buddha and philosophy. And that according to the dhamma is the dispassioned detachment from space-time world.

### Conclusions:

In conclusion, it is important to recognize the contributions of these early women to literature, philosophy, and religion. They tackled head on issues of gender, inequality, individual rights at the time when women hardly ventured out or were completely silenced. Their journey was not smooth, they had to confront discrimination by their male counterpart yet they prevailed. They stood for the three modern values of equality, freedom, and liberty and those values are still relevant today. Complete women emancipation is still a concern in the 21st century and there are issues which still confront us but these early women should be looked at as role models in guiding us toward a just, equal, less violent and ultimately a more humane society.

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## The Relevance of Buddha's teaching methods in Modern Pedagogy

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Dist- Bhandara. 441912.

“One is one's own refuge, who else could be the refuge?”

### Lord Buddha

It was as early as 2500 years ago that a man of Light was born in India, the world knew him later as the 'Buddha', to dispel the age-old prevalent darkness over the world. We know Buddha as 'Tathagata' or an 'Enlightened One'; one who renounced the inheritance of throne and kingdom in order to embark upon the exploration of the Universal Truth of happiness and became the prince of ascetic world. How he achieved his enlightenment is a matter of grave interest for the scholars across the world! Attempts have been made in every era by the eminent research scholars to dig deep into Buddha's profound philosophy to give new interpretations and to find out the new relevances of his teachings. Attempts have also been made to draw attention to the dimensions of myth that have been largely ignored by the Western scholarship. To say that Buddha was a Godlike figure that tread the ascetic path of self-mortification and achieved his liberation from all miseries of the corporal world, would be to ignore the fact that he was a breath-inhaling man, and what he achieved in his life is possible for any human being to achieve. Lord Buddha's liberal rule was 'Ehipassiko', that is, come and examine. He himself invites the humanity from all corners of the world to come and investigate and examine the authenticity of the Truth He preaches. As a Buddhist monk opines, "Among the founders of religion, the Buddha.....was the only teacher who did not claim to be other than a human being, pure and simple. A man and only a man can become Buddha.' Hence, there is such a close relevance of his teachings with human life, for he based his doctrine on human happiness. He was concerned

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