DIVISION 01 • THE ENGLISH TEXT

BHĀMATĪ

ADHYĀSA

The Problem of Superimposition

Vācaspati Miśra on Śaṅkara’s Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya

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THE OPENING QUESTION

Why is inquiry necessary?

- An undisputed object need not be investigated; an inquiry must remove doubt or have a purpose.
- The opponent contends that the immediate “I” is already known.
- If the Self is already evident and liberation unchangeable, what remains to be learned?

KEY INSIGHT

The commentary begins by making the possibility of Brahma-inquiry itself a problem.

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THE INVOCATION

Seven verses frame the undertaking

- Brahman is saluted as immeasurable bliss and knowledge.
- The Veda, sacred powers, Vyāsa and Śaṅkara are honoured.
- The commentator compares his own words, sanctified through the Bhāṣya, to water entering the Gaṅgā.

KEY INSIGHT

The invocations situate the inquiry within a lineage and an account of ultimate reality.

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THE PURVAPAKSHA

The Self seems self-evident

- Immediate “I”-experience is invoked as evidence that the Self is already known.
- Recognition through youth, old age and changes of body is presented as continuity.
- Memory across dreams and waking is also used to distinguish Self from bodily states.

KEY INSIGHT

The opponent initially treats uninterrupted self-recognition as a reason to deny further inquiry.

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THE PURVAPAKSHA

The Self and its use

- The body and senses vary, yet the speaker says “I am the same one.”
- Expressions such as “I am thin” or “I am blind” are argued to be figurative.
- If true Self-knowledge is already present, the promised removal of bondage needs explanation.

KEY INSIGHT

A distinction between grammatical self-reference and knowledge of the Self is at stake.

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SUBJECT AND OBJECT

The opposition of “I” and “you”

- Consciousness is the subject; body, senses, intellect and external things are objects.
- The object and subject are contrasted as light and darkness.
- Yet ordinary experience mixes what belongs to the two sides.

KEY INSIGHT

Adhyāsa begins where subject and object are wrongly made to share one another’s nature.

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THE BASIC ERROR

Mutual transfer, not genuine identity

- Agency, suffering and physical qualities seem to belong to the conscious Self.
- Consciousness itself is attributed to the inert body–mind complex.
- The discussion rejects a literal change in either underlying substratum.

KEY INSIGHT

Superimposition explains experience without making its misidentification ultimately true.

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THE “I” AS EVIDENCE

Why ordinary self-experience is insufficient

- The experienced “I” is entangled with limitation, pain and the body.
- The alleged primary reference of “I” to a pure Self cannot simply be assumed.
- Recognition through changing bodies does not settle the metaphysical question.

KEY INSIGHT

A persistent first-person judgment does not, by itself, certify the nature of the Self.

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KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION

Śruti and the world of experience

- The text examines whether scriptural teaching contradicts perception.
- An appearance may sustain practical dealings without determining ultimate truth.
- Knowledge can sublate error without eliminating the occasion for ordinary perception.

KEY INSIGHT

The argument distinguishes practical validity from the cognition of reality.

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LANGUAGE AND MISIDENTIFICATION

Literal versus secondary meaning

- The commentary tests whether bodily “I”-statements can merely be figurative.
- Secondary usage presupposes a known primary referent and a suitable transfer.
- Because the primary Self is obscured, the issue cannot be solved by naming all such usages metaphors.

KEY INSIGHT

The semantic defense of everyday ego-claims is itself subjected to scrutiny.

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CONTINUITY AND COMPOSITES

The same “I” across changing parts

- A bodily aggregate is composed of changing parts.
- If each part were independently conscious, multiple cognizers would follow.
- If cognition itself were the enduring “I,” its transience would resist that identification.

KEY INSIGHT

Continuity of recognition is not proof that a changing aggregate is the true Self.

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THE DEFINITION

Adhyāsa as misplaced appearance

- The account defines superimposition through an appearance resembling memory.
- What was encountered elsewhere appears here, in another locus.
- Mistaking shell for silver illustrates a cognition that is manifest but not veridical.

KEY INSIGHT

Misplacement, prior appearance and present cognition structure the definition of adhyāsa.

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CASES OF ERROR

The range of misleading appearances

- The discussion tests examples from recognition, dreams and sense-perception.
- A shell appearing yellow, sugar tasting bitter, reflections and mirages receive attention.
- The point is to distinguish appearance from independently established reality.

KEY INSIGHT

The same theoretical problem recurs across different sensory and memory-based errors.

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THE MIRAGE

Appearance is not an existence-test

- Apparent water need not be water in order to appear.
- Neither the force of an experience nor its clarity is by itself sufficient for truth.
- The argument examines whether knowledge can take an unreal object as its content.

KEY INSIGHT

Manifestation and reality must be kept conceptually distinct.

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THE KHYĀTI DEBATE

Competing accounts of error

- Some theories locate the mistaken feature in cognition.
- Others analyse the relation between remembered silver and the presently perceived “this.”
- The commentary compares these accounts before defending an indefinable superimposition.

KEY INSIGHT

The disagreement concerns what exactly is mistakenly presented and how it can be cognized.

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PROOF AND EXPLANATION

How does an error become knowable?

- The text considers inference and the relation between locus and apparent attribute.
- It distinguishes the validity of cognition from mere causal regularity.
- A theory must explain both the experienced error and its later correction.

KEY INSIGHT

The account of false appearance must survive logical as well as phenomenological tests.

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THE NON-OBJECTIFIABLE SELF

Can adhyāsa occur upon the subject?

- The objector argues that a non-objectifiable Self cannot serve as a locus.
- The answer separates self-manifestation from objecthood.
- The Self can appear under a misdescription without becoming an ordinary external object.

KEY INSIGHT

The fact that awareness is not an object does not end the superimposition argument.

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THE ANALOGY OF SPACE

Apparent properties need not truly inhere

- Space appears blue or limited although those properties do not intrinsically belong to it.
- So too the unattached Self appears to be agent, enjoyer and limited experiencer.
- Bodily and mental adjuncts shape the Jīva’s apparent condition.

KEY INSIGHT

The analogy makes room for experience without attributing empirical limits to the Self.

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AVIDYĀ AND VIDYĀ

The error and its reversal

> The wise call mistaken superimposition avidyā.

> Knowledge determines a thing in its own nature, instead of an alien form.

> The defects of the mind are not thereby converted into intrinsic attributes of pure consciousness.

KEY INSIGHT

The contrast is between misapprehension and discrimination, not two manufactured selves.

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PRAMĀṆA AND THE EGO

Who uses the means of knowledge?

- Perception and inference presuppose a subject engaged through body and senses.
- That ordinary subject operates within the initial condition of “I” and “mine.”
- Even scriptural inquiry begins with the distinction of knower, knowledge and known.

KEY INSIGHT

Means of knowledge begin in empirical experience, even when one of them corrects its premise.

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THE ANIMAL COMPARISON

Practical cognition and learned behaviour

- Animals and humans respond to perceived danger and opportunity.
- Such reactions presuppose the same practical identification of body with subject.
- The analogy explains the everyday operation of cognition, not the final truth of identity.

KEY INSIGHT

Adhyāsa underwrites ordinary conduct before any philosophical investigation begins.

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SCRIPTURE AND ELIGIBILITY

Why instruction addresses a seeker

- Scriptural instructions speak to a person not yet free of superimposition.
- The reflective seeker and the knower do not occupy the same epistemic condition.
- The teaching operates while distinctions still appear, to remove their misunderstanding.

KEY INSIGHT

The text explains how a teaching about nonduality can address someone living in duality.

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THE CULMINATION

Superimposition and its cessation

- Beginningless habitual error produces agency, enjoyership and bondage.
- Knowing the Self as it is removes misidentification, not the Self’s true nature.
- A rope mistaken for a snake remains a rope throughout the error and its sublation.

KEY INSIGHT

Liberation is described by correcting false cognition rather than altering Brahman.

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DIVISION SYNTHESIS

Argument map

01 Self-experience is challenged as evidence of ultimate self-knowledge.

02 Subject and object become confused through mutual superimposition.

03 Illusion and theories of error clarify how a false appearance is possible.

04 The empirical ego remains the starting point for pramāṇa and instruction.

05 Discrimination removes avidyā without changing the Self.

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DIVISION 02 • THE ENGLISH TEXT

BHĀMATĪ

ATHĀTO BRAHMAJIJÑĀSĀ



Therefore, Now, the Desire to Know Brahman

Vācaspati Miśra on Śaṅkara’s Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya

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THE FIRST SŪTRA

Inquiry becomes an intelligible undertaking

- “Jijñāsā” means a desire to know: it implies an issue to resolve and a worthwhile result.
- The subject is Brahman rather than an action to be newly produced.
- The text asks which conditions make such inquiry arise.

KEY INSIGHT

Brahman-inquiry begins from disciplined uncertainty, not a command to manufacture Brahman.

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GRAMMAR OF ATHA

“Now” indicates succession

- The text examines “atha” as beginning, auspiciousness and immediate succession.
- A purely auspicious reading does not adequately explain its syntactic role.
- The preferred reading points to an antecedent qualification or condition.

KEY INSIGHT

“Now” is not merely a ceremonial opening; its place in the argument matters.

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WHICH PRIOR CONDITION?

Study is not automatically the whole answer

- Brahma-inquiry is compared with the inquiry into dharma.
- The author tests whether Vedic study by itself mandates a fixed sequence.
- Knowledge of Brahman and knowledge of obligatory action differ in object.

KEY INSIGHT

Identical-looking sequences of study do not imply identical purposes.

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ACTION AND KNOWLEDGE

Can ritual practice produce realization?

- One view makes sacrificial action necessary for purifying the mind.
- Another imagines contemplation producing a special experience of Brahman.
- The response distinguishes auxiliary preparation from the direct cause of liberating knowledge.

KEY INSIGHT

Ritual action may prepare the seeker but cannot change an eternal Brahman into a product.

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HEARING AND REFLECTION

From śravaṇa to discrimination

- Scriptural hearing conveys the identity to be investigated.
- Reasoned reflection removes doubt and obstacles to understanding.
- Repeated contemplation is examined in relation to clarity and direct realization.

KEY INSIGHT

The stages are relevant because error persists, not because Brahman needs to be created.

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PRACTICE AND INJUNCTION

What remains of conduct after insight?

- The text tests whether someone free of agent–action–fruit distinctions remains a ritual agent.
- Scriptural prohibitions are not treated as permission for wrongful conduct.
- Practical discipline and metaphysical freedom are kept analytically distinct.

KEY INSIGHT

The account does not equate nonduality with freedom to disregard ethical restraint.

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REMOTE AUXILIARIES

Purification and readiness

- Daily rites and disciplined life are treated as indirect aids in purifying the mind.
- The text rejects identifying austerity with mere starvation.
- A prepared person may become fit for inquiry even without a rigid ritual sequence in the present life.

KEY INSIGHT

The capacity to inquire matters more than mechanical adherence to a universal order of acts.

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NO FIXED ORDER

Testing the alleged karma-first rule

- Arguments from verbal order, proximity and principal–subordinate relations are examined.
- The inquiry into dharma concerns something to be done.
- Brahman is an existent reality to be known, not a rite to be performed.

KEY INSIGHT

Different objects of inquiry require different models of precedence.

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WHY “ATAḤ”?

The causal force of “therefore”

- The commentary treats “ataḥ” as marking a cause.
- Reflection on the exhaustion of temporary results fosters dispassion.
- Dissatisfaction with unstable ends prepares the desire for lasting knowledge.

KEY INSIGHT

The transition to Brahman-inquiry is a change in the seeker’s conception of value.

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THE FOUR QUALIFICATIONS

Discrimination, detachment and steadiness

- The inquiry presupposes discrimination between eternal and non-eternal ends.
- Dispassion weakens the hold of sense-pleasures and their promised fruits.
- The discipline of mind and desire, together with longing for liberation, forms a basis for inquiry.

KEY INSIGHT

Preparation is internal and discriminative, not merely chronological.

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THE OBJECT OF DESIRE

Brahman and brahmajijñāsā

- The compound is carefully analysed to identify Brahman as the principal object.
- Subsidiary inquiries—means, nature, arguments and fruit—follow from that central object.
- Knowledge is desired because it culminates in the end of avidyā.

KEY INSIGHT

The grammatical problem clarifies the philosophical purpose of the investigation.

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DIRECT REALIZATION

Why knowledge has a fruit

- A piece of information is not desired simply because it is information.
- The text links knowledge of Brahman to direct realization of the Self.
- Removal of avidyā and its impressions provides the relevant human end.

KEY INSIGHT

Liberation is not an additional reward attached from outside to true knowledge.

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CAN BRAHMAN BE INQUIRED INTO?

Known, unknown or partly understood?

- If Brahman were already fully known, further inquiry would be pointless.
- If absolutely unknown, the desire to know it could not arise.
- A preliminary understanding supports inquiry while leaving decisive uncertainty.

KEY INSIGHT

The text finds a middle epistemic position between complete certainty and utter ignorance.

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THE SELF AND “THAT”

Interpreting tat and tvam

- The text distinguishes what is provisionally understood by “that” and “thou.”
- The Self’s ordinary manifestation is obscured by the attributes of the body.
- Vedic sentences open a question about the identity of Brahman and the self.

KEY INSIGHT

The issue is not whether the word “I” occurs, but what its true referent is.

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COMPETING DOCTRINES

The problem of mutually opposed accounts

- Some identify the Self with body, senses or momentary cognition.
- Others posit an enjoying Self, an acting Self or a distinct supreme Lord.
- The conflicts help explain why an inquiry into the same subject remains necessary.

KEY INSIGHT

Philosophical disagreement is evidence of an unresolved inquiry, not of an absent object.

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REASON AND VEDĀNTA

Inquiry is not mere repetition

- Interpretation compares positions based on reasoning, scripture and inherited teaching.
- The object is to ascertain what the Vedānta statements actually convey.
- Reasoning serves the sentence-meaning without replacing it as an independent source of Brahman.

KEY INSIGHT

Brahmajijñāsā is disciplined interpretation directed toward knowledge of reality.

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DIVISION SYNTHESIS

Argument map

01 “Atha” leads from appropriate qualification to inquiry.

02 The desire to know Brahman is not identical with the desire to perform dharma.

03 Action prepares indirectly; knowledge addresses the ultimate error.

04 Dispassion and discrimination motivate the search for what is eternal.

05 Competing doctrines make the interpretation of Brahman necessary.

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DIVISION 03 • THE ENGLISH TEXT

BHĀMATĪ

JANMĀDYASYA YATAḤ



From Which the World Proceeds

Vācaspati Miśra on Śaṅkara’s Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya

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FROM INQUIRY TO DEFINITION

What is Brahman?

- The first sūtra justified inquiry; the second examines its subject.
- A wholly unknown entity cannot be defined merely by equally unknown attributes.
- The visible world becomes the point of departure for a relational indication.

KEY INSIGHT

The sūtra moves from readiness for inquiry to the identification of its object.

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ORIGINATION AND RETURN

Three aspects of cosmic causation

- The expression “birth and so forth” encompasses origination, continuance and dissolution.
- Origination is named first; the other phases presuppose a world that has arisen.
- Other modifications, such as growth and decay, are discussed within this wider account.

KEY INSIGHT

Brahman is indicated through the entire career of the world, not a momentary origin alone.

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THE ORDERED WORLD

Name, form and causal pattern

- The text describes agents, enjoyers, places, times, causes, actions and fruits.
- Their differentiated arrangement is treated as calling for an adequate cause.
- Its reasoning emphasizes the scale of the ordered world.

KEY INSIGHT

The commentarial argument proceeds from observed complexity toward the nature of the cause.

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INTELLIGENCE AND CAUSE

The potter analogy

- Pots and other artifacts exhibit forms shaped by intelligent makers.
- The analogy is extended to the world differentiated by names and forms.
- The commentary also tests whether a finite maker could account for the totality.

KEY INSIGHT

An analogy with craft initiates, but does not exhaust, the argument about cosmic causation.

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ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNTS

What cannot explain the totality?

- Prakṛti, atoms, time, chance, non-being and limited deities are considered.
- A merely local power cannot order the whole configuration of agents and effects.
- The text argues toward an omniscient and omnipotent cause.

KEY INSIGHT

The conclusion is reached through a structured exclusion of rival causal explanations.

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MODES OF CHANGE

Growth, transformation and dissolution

- Growth is discussed as addition or origination of parts.
- A bracelet arising from gold illustrates a change of form and characteristic.
- Changes of state and attribute are examined in relation to the main causal triad.

KEY INSIGHT

“Birth and so forth” is deliberately broad, not confined to one mechanical process.

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WHY A SŪTRA?

Connecting statements of the Upaniṣads

- The sūtras are compared to a thread joining flowers into a garland.
- The causal description identifies a teaching found across Vedānta passages.
- Reasoned inquiry helps determine their purport rather than supplying a rival independent revelation.

KEY INSIGHT

The sūtra is an instrument of scriptural interpretation as well as philosophical reasoning.

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ACTION VERSUS EXISTENT REALITY

Why objects are not optional

- A prescribed action can be done, omitted or performed differently.
- Knowledge of a real object depends upon its actual character, not the knower’s preference.
- Brahman, as an existent reality, is approached under the latter principle.

KEY INSIGHT

The text distinguishes person-governed action from object-governed cognition.

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THE ROLE OF EXPERIENCE

Reason without replacing śruti

- Brahman is not available to the senses as an ordinary object.
- Worldly experience and reasoning assist the ascertainment of scriptural meaning.
- The sūtra ultimately directs the reader to the relevant Upaniṣadic declarations.

KEY INSIGHT

The causal mark guides interpretation; it is not offered as a self-sufficient sensory proof.

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DIVISION SYNTHESIS

Argument map

01 The world supplies an intelligible indication of its cause.

02 Birth, continuance and dissolution frame the sūtra’s wording.

03 The ordered whole motivates the account of an omniscient source.

04 Rival causal accounts are tested against the totality.

05 Vedānta establishes Brahman; reasoning assists the understanding.

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DIVISION 04 • THE ENGLISH TEXT

BHĀMATĪ

ŚĀSTRAYONITVĀT



Because It Is the Source of Scripture

Vācaspati Miśra on Śaṅkara’s Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya

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THE THIRD SŪTRA

Scripture and omniscience

- Having discussed the source of the world, the text adds a second characterization.
- Brahman is considered the source of the extensive body of Vedic teaching.
- The argument links the range of scriptural knowledge with a supreme knowing cause.

KEY INSIGHT

The origin of scripture reinforces the conception of Brahman advanced in the preceding sūtra.

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THE RANGE OF ŚĀSTRA

Teaching across human life

- The Veda discusses duties, prohibitions, life-stages and human ends.
- Its subject matter stretches from ritual conduct to the highest knowledge.
- The breadth of such teaching is central to the reasoning.

KEY INSIGHT

The argument relies on the scope and structure of scriptural knowledge.

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ETERNAL PHONEMES?

A Mīmāṃsā challenge

- The commentary considers the doctrine that individual phonemes are eternal.
- Words and sentences nevertheless require ordered arrangements.
- The question of sequence and manifestation complicates a simple claim of unproduced discourse.

KEY INSIGHT

Sound-units and meaningful linguistic ordering are not treated as the same problem.

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COSMIC ORDER

Continuity of meaning across cycles

- The text distinguishes recurring cosmic patterns from arbitrary moral reversals.
- Acts described as meritorious or harmful retain their scriptural significance.
- The argument concerns the reliability and order of what scripture teaches.

KEY INSIGHT

The recurrent manifestation of teaching does not entail random changes of its purport.

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A SECOND READING

Scripture as the means of knowing Brahman

- “Śāstra-yoni” is also explained in terms of the source of valid knowledge.
- Scripture reveals Brahman as the cause of world-origination and dissolution.
- The second and third sūtras are interpreted together.

KEY INSIGHT

The same expression supports both the source of scripture and scripture as a source of knowledge.

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WHY REFLECT?

From testimony to ascertained meaning

- An authoritative sentence may still require interpretation.
- Reflection clarifies the purport of scriptural statements about causation.
- The commentary rejects reading the earlier sūtra as an independent inference alone.

KEY INSIGHT

Inquiry is required to understand scripture, even where scripture is authoritative.

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THE NEXT QUESTION

Does Vedānta have a unified purport?

- The text turns toward whether the teaching of Brahman is independent.
- The issue is whether Vedānta sentences are subordinated to prescribed action.
- This prepares the fourth sūtra’s extended argument about samanvaya.

KEY INSIGHT

Śāstrayonitvāt makes the question of scriptural meaning unavoidable.

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DIVISION SYNTHESIS

Argument map

01 The range of scripture is linked to the supreme knowing source.

02 The status of meaningful sequences complicates eternal-sound doctrines.

03 Śāstrayonitvāt also presents scripture as a source of Brahma-knowledge.

04 The second and third sūtras are interpreted in connection.

05 Reflection prepares the inquiry into the unified purport of Vedānta.

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DIVISION 05 • THE ENGLISH TEXT

BHĀMATĪ

TAT TU SAMANVAYĀT

But That, Because of the Harmonious Purport

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THE CENTRAL CLAIM

All the Vedānta statements converge

- The sūtra argues that the Vedānta passages have Brahman as their consistent purport.
- The connective “tu” rejects a competing action-centered interpretation.
- Their authority is not exhausted by a connection to ritual injunctions.

KEY INSIGHT

The fourth sūtra is an argument about the autonomous meaningfulness of Brahman-teaching.

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THE OPPOSING VIEW

Must every Vedic statement prescribe action?

- The Pūrvapakṣa holds that an informative sentence is useful only as an aid to duty.
- Mīmāṃsā categories of injunction, subsidiary matter and result frame the debate.
- The status of Upaniṣadic statements about an existent reality is disputed.

KEY INSIGHT

The philosophical question is also a theory of language and scriptural authority.

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KNOWING AND DOING

Two different kinds of result

- Action brings about, obtains, transforms or purifies something.
- Knowledge of an existent thing does not depend on the wish to change it.
- The Self is presented as already real rather than an artifact of injunction.

KEY INSIGHT

What has always been so cannot become so by an ordered performance.

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WHAT LIBERATION MEANS

Gaining the already gained

- A person may fail to recognize something already possessed.
- An error may make what was never lost appear absent.
- Knowledge removes the misunderstanding without producing a new entity.

KEY INSIGHT

Liberation is illuminated through the distinction between production and recognition.

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THE SNAKE AND ROPE

Correction, not destruction

- Knowledge that a supposed snake is a rope cancels misplaced fear.
- The rope does not require an act of production or purification.
- Likewise, knowledge removes ignorance concerning the Self.

KEY INSIGHT

The analogy displays why the removal of error is not itself a transformation of Brahman.

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MEDITATION AND REALITY

Why contemplation is not the whole teaching

- Meditation retains distinctions of meditator, act and intended object.
- The nondual Self is not a separate item to be worshipped into existence.
- The argument does not deny meditation but refuses to make Brahman a mere ritual accessory.

KEY INSIGHT

A meditation-injunction and a statement of reality perform different functions.

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FRUITFUL TESTIMONY

Does a statement need to command?

- Some independent informative statements can produce understanding.
- Knowledge of the Self brings a distinctive benefit without prompting further action.
- The text contrasts mere purposeless description with knowledge that ends fundamental error.

KEY INSIGHT

A sentence can be philosophically fruitful without being an injunction.

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THE LIMITS OF INFERENCE

Why Brahman is not an ordinary object

- Perception and inference operate within their particular domains.
- The text denies that Brahman is available as an object of the senses.
- Vedānta functions as the distinctive source of the identity it teaches.

KEY INSIGHT

Not every object of valid knowledge is reducible to perception or inference.

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THE OPPONENT RETURNS

Is Brahman only an object for worship?

- A revised view grants scripture’s authority but ties it to prescribed contemplation.
- The commentary tests whether this matches ordinary linguistic usage.
- Its response makes the meaning of statements—not simply their imperative form—decisive.

KEY INSIGHT

Samanvaya depends on what the statements say together.

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INJUNCTION AND SEMANTICS

Meaning is wider than command

- Words can convey substances, attributes, relations and established facts.
- Learning another person’s meaning may be inferred from understanding and response.
- A sentence about an existing state of affairs is not automatically pointless.

KEY INSIGHT

The argument resists reducing all meaningful language to an instruction to act.

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THE VALUE OF A FACT

Why a truth may matter

- Information can cause joy, relief or a change in understanding.
- The commentary gives ordinary communication as a counterexample to the rule of action-only speech.
- Knowledge of Brahman is assigned a transformative epistemic effect: removal of avidyā.

KEY INSIGHT

Revelation may change a person’s understanding without prescribing an external deed.

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UPANIṢAD AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The Self is not a subordinate means

- The derivation of “Upaniṣad” is related to destroying ignorance.
- The Self is neither a tool for another end nor an item to be set aside.
- The text treats knowledge of Brahman as the highest human purpose.

KEY INSIGHT

The teaching about the Self is complete in its own purport.

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THE ORDINARY “I”

The empirical agent is not the final Self

- The familiar “I” identifies an agent and enjoyer within worldly experience.
- The Upaniṣadic Self is not exhausted by that empirical cognition.
- The text separates the witnessing consciousness from embodied self-identification.

KEY INSIGHT

The contrast explains how the Self can be intimately present yet not rightly understood.

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MIMĀṂSĀ RECONSIDERED

Limits of the action-oriented maxim

- Rules about the Veda’s teaching of action apply directly to the inquiry into dharma.
- They do not exclude a separate inquiry into Brahman as an existent reality.
- The sentence-meaning of Vedānta must be read on its own terms.

KEY INSIGHT

A hermeneutic suited to ritual cannot automatically govern every Upaniṣadic sentence.

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COMPONENTS OF AN ACTION

Curd, sacrifice and subsidiary elements

- Ritual expressions connect substances and qualities with an enjoined activity.
- The commentary analyses how components help specify a performance.
- This grammar cannot simply be transferred to descriptions of Brahman.

KEY INSIGHT

The role of an auxiliary in ritual syntax does not define all possible sentence meanings.

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PROHIBITIONS

The force of “do not”

- Prohibitory sentences are analysed through restraint and cognition of harm.
- The meaning of negation is not the production of a new positive action.
- The discussion treats withdrawal as the effect of understanding what is to be avoided.

KEY INSIGHT

Even practical instructions reveal a more complex relation between knowledge and action.

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INDIFFERENCE THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

When an impulse ceases

A person may act because an object is taken as desirable or beneficial.

Learning that a course of action leads to harm can end the desire to perform it.

The image of a fire exhausting its fuel describes cessation without a new activity.

KEY INSIGHT

Knowledge can end a practice through insight rather than an opposing performance.

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THE ETERNALITY OF MOKṢA

Why liberation cannot be produced

- If liberation arose from an act it would depend on the act and therefore not be eternal.
- The commentary distinguishes immutable eternality from continuity through change.
- The Self’s true nature is not a temporary achievement.

KEY INSIGHT

A produced liberation would contradict the very permanence attributed to it.

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KŪṬASTHA NITYATĀ

The unchanging and the transforming

- The text discusses whether an enduring series of transformations counts as eternal.
- Examples of gold and ornaments clarify identity and difference.
- It defends immutable, non-transformational eternality for Brahman.

KEY INSIGHT

Change continuing without an end is not the same as changeless reality.

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BHEDĀBHEDA IN QUESTION

Can difference and non-difference coexist?

- The gold–ornament examples are used to test a difference-and-non-difference doctrine.
- The alleged dependence of the two relations raises logical difficulties.
- The commentary argues that knowledge of one form does not establish all distinct forms.

KEY INSIGHT

The argument pushes beyond a compromise between identity and diversity.

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THE END OF DOUBT

Knowledge and the cessation of bondage

- Scripture speaks of the knot of the heart being cut and doubts destroyed.
- Avidyā gives rise to attachment, aversion and the sequence of worldly bondage.
- True knowledge is presented as the contrary of that root cause.

KEY INSIGHT

Liberation is linked to the removal of the cause of saṃsāra.

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NOT IMAGINED IDENTITY

“Tat tvam asi” is not make-believe

- Meditative substitutions, such as viewing mind or sun as Brahman, retain different bases.
- The claim that Ātman is Brahman is defended as an assertion of reality.
- Its effect differs from an imaginative identification imposed for worship.

KEY INSIGHT

The text keeps factual nonduality separate from a deliberate symbolic meditation.

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KNOWLEDGE IS OBJECT-GOVERNED

Pramā and human choice

- One can perform a ritual, refrain or perform it differently.
- True knowledge arises in conformity with what is known, not the knower’s will.
- Even when mental, cognition is distinct from an enjoined action.

KEY INSIGHT

Knowledge is governed by its object; action is governed by the agent’s undertaking.

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THE SELF BEYOND OBJECTHOOD

How can scripture reveal Brahman?

- The Self is not one more object set before a separate knowing subject.
- The function of Upaniṣadic language is to undo an imagined separation.
- The end of knower–known distinctions is not a failure of cognition.

KEY INSIGHT

Scripture discloses reality by removing false difference rather than depicting an object.

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FOUR POSSIBLE ACTS

Production, acquisition, change, purification

- The commentary enumerates four possible ways an act might serve a desired end.
- An eternal Self cannot be produced or acquired as an external good.
- Nor can Brahman be transformed or purified by a bodily or mental act.

KEY INSIGHT

No fifth kind of action is supplied to make liberation an effect.

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ACQUISITION REFUTED

There is nowhere to travel for the Self

- Travel and acquisition change the relation between an agent and a place or object.
- The Self is already one’s own reality.
- Illustrations involving movement and apparent separation do not imply Brahman moves.

KEY INSIGHT

A spatial model of attainment fails for an all-pervading Self.

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PURIFICATION REFUTED

A pure Self cannot be cleansed

- Purification may add a quality or remove an impurity from a substrate.
- The commentary rejects either process as applicable to Brahman.
- Actions affecting body or mind do not cleanse a distinct, immutable consciousness.

KEY INSIGHT

Removing false attribution is not the same as washing an intrinsically stained Self.

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AVIDYĀ AND THE JĪVA

Where is ignorance located?

- The text discusses the Jīva as consciousness limited by indefinable avidyā.
- Body, senses and mind shape the empirical field of “I” and “mine.”
- The witnessing Self remains untouched by properties of that field.

KEY INSIGHT

An empirical locus of ignorance does not mean the absolute Self has become impure.

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THE TWO BIRDS

Enjoyer and witness

- The metaphor of two birds distinguishes the one that eats fruit from the one that merely witnesses.
- The Jīva is represented through agency and enjoyment.
- The witness is not thereby reduced to the doer or consumer of results.

KEY INSIGHT

The metaphor crystallizes the distinction between empirical identification and consciousness.

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BODILESS EVEN WHILE LIVING

The force of jīvanmukti

- Embodiment is tied to false identification of Self and body.
- A knower may continue to appear in a body without taking the body as the Self.
- The snake’s cast-off slough is offered as an image of this distinction.

KEY INSIGHT

Bodilessness is an epistemic realization, not necessarily a physical disappearance.

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THE LAST OBJECTION

How can dualistic teaching yield nonduality?

- Hearing and reflection begin with a teacher, a seeker and a teaching.
- The objector asks how a nondual truth can emerge from such apparent distinctions.
- The response appeals to the capacity of a provisional cognition to sublate error.

KEY INSIGHT

The teaching can use an empirical distinction to show why that distinction is not ultimate.

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VIDYĀ AND AVIDYĀ

The instrument is left behind

- A mistaken snake can be removed by another cognition within the same empirical setting.
- Likewise, the text allows provisional means to end a deeper misunderstanding.
- The conclusion does not convert the teaching-process into an eternal duality.

KEY INSIGHT

What removes ignorance need not remain as a second reality beside Brahman.

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CLOSING SYNTHESIS

The convergent purport

- Vedānta statements teach Brahman as the Self, not solely as ritual preparation.
- Liberation is eternal, and knowledge removes avidyā rather than producing Brahman.
- The distinctions needed for inquiry terminate in the realization of nonduality.

KEY INSIGHT

Samanvaya joins epistemology, language and liberation into one coherent reading.

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DIVISION SYNTHESIS

Argument map

01 The independent purport of Vedānta is Brahman as the Self.

02 Knowledge differs from ritual, meditation and agent-governed performance.

03 Liberation cannot be produced, attained, transformed or purified.

04 Avidyā accounts for the empirical Jīva without staining Brahman.

05 Samanvaya culminates when provisional distinctions are sublated.

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