

CHAPTER XV

THE BHASKARA SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY

Date of Bhāskara.

Udayana, in his Nyāya-kusumāñjali, speaks of Bhāskara as a commentator on the Vedanta in accordance with the traditions of the tridanda school of Vedanta and as holding the view that Brahman suffers evolutionary changes1. Bhattoiī Dīkṣita also, in his Tattva-viveka-tīkā-vivarana, speaks of Bhatta Bhāskara as holding the doctrine of difference and non-difference (bhedābheda)². It is certain, however, that he flourished after Śankara, for, though he does not mention him by name, yet the way in which he refers to him makes it almost certain that he wrote his commentary with the express purpose of refuting some of the cardinal doctrines of Śankara's commentary on the Brahma-sūtra. Thus, at the very beginning of his commentary, he says that it aims at refuting those who, hiding the real sense of the sūtra, have only expressed their own opinions, and in other places also he speaks in very strong terms against the commentator who holds the māyā doctrine and is a Buddhist in his views3. But, though he was opposed to Sankara, it was only so far as Sankara had introduced the māyā doctrine, and only so far as he thought the world had sprung forth not as a real modification of Brahman, but only through māyā. For

¹ Tridanda means "three sticks." According to Manu it was customary among some Brahmins to use one stick, and among others, three sticks.

Paṇḍita Vindhyeśvarī Prasāda Dvivedin, in his Sanskrit introduction to Bhāskara's commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, says that the Vaiṣṇava commentators on the *Brahma-sūtra* prior to Rāmānuja, Tanka, Guhadeva, Bhāruci and Yāmunācarya, the teacher of Rāmānuja, were all *tridaṇḍins*. Such a statement is indeed very interesting, but unfortunately he does not give us the authority from which he drew this information.

² "Bhaţṭabhāskaras tu bhedā-bheda-vedānta-siddhānta-vādī"; Bhaţṭojī Dikṣita's Vedānta-tattva-ṭīkā-vivarana, as quoted by Pandita Vindhyeśvarī Prasāda in his Introduction to Bhāskara's commentary.

sūtrā-bhiprāya-saṃvṛtyā svābhiprāyā-prakāśanāt

vyākhyātam yair idam śāstram vyākhyeyam tan-nivṛttaye.

Bhāskara's Commentary, p. 1.
Also "ye tu bauddha-matāvalambino māyā-vādinas te' pi anena nyāyena sūtra-

kāreņai' va nirastāḥ." Ibid. II. 2. 29.
In another place Śańkara is referred to as explaining views which were really propounded by the Mahāyāna Buddhists—vigītam vicchinna-mūlam māhāyānikabauddha-gāthitam māyā-vādam vyāvarnayanto lokān vyāmohayanti. Ibid. I. 4. 25.

D III



The Bhāskara School of Philosophy [CH.

both Śankara and Bhaskara would agree in holding that the Brahman was both the material cause and the instrumental cause (upādāna and nimitta). Sankara would maintain that this was so only because there was no other real category which existed; but he would strongly urge, as has been explained before, that māvā, the category of the indefinite and the unreal, was associated with Brahman in such a transformation, and that, though the Brahman was substantially the same identical entity as the world, yet the world as it appears was a māvā transformation with Brahman inside as the kernel of truth. But Bhāskara maintained that there was no māyā, and that it was the Brahman which, by its own powers, underwent a real modification; and, as the Pañcarātras also held the same doctrine in so far as they believed that Vasudeva was both the material and the instrumental cause of the world, he was in agreement with the Bhagavatas, and he says that he does not find anything to be refuted in the Pancaratra doctrine. But he differs from them in regard to their doctrine of the individual souls having been produced from Brahman².

Again, though one cannot assert anything very positively, it is possible that Bhāskara himself belonged to that particular sect of Brahmins who used three sticks as their Brahminic insignia in preference to one stick, used more generally by other Brahmins; and so his explanation of the *Vedānta-sūtra* may rightly be taken as the view of the *tridaṇḍī* Brahmins. For in discussing the point that fitness for Brahma-knowledge does not mean the giving up of the religious stages of life (āśrama), with their customs and rituals, he speaks of the maintenance of three sticks as being enjoined by the Vedas³.

Mādhavācārya, in his Śańkara-vijaya, speaks of a meeting of Śańkara with Bhatta Bhāskara, but it is difficult to say how far this statement is reliable⁴. From the fact that Bhāskara refuted Śańkara and was himself referred to by Udayana, it is certain that he flourished some time between the eighth and the tenth centuries. Paṇḍita Vindhyeśvarī Prasāda refers to a copper-plate found by the

¹ Vāsudeva eva upādāna-kāraņam jagato nimitta-kāraņam ceti te manyante... tad etat sarvam śruti-prasiddham eva tasmān nātra nirākarantyam paśyāmah. Bhāskara-bhāṣya, II. 2. 41.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. III. 4. 26, p. 208; see also Pandita Vindhyeśvari's Introduction.

Šankara-vijaya, xv. 80.



xv] Bhāskara and Sankara

late Dr Bhāwdājī in the Mārāṭhā country, near Nasik, in which it is stated that one Bhāskara Bhaṭṭa of the lineage (gotra) of Sāṇḍilya, son of Kavicakravartī Trivikrama, who was given the title of Vidyāpati, was the sixth ancestor of Bhāskarācārya of Sāṇḍilya lineage, the astronomer and writer of the Siddhānta-śiromaṇi; and he maintains that this senior Vidyāpati Bhāskara Bhaṭṭa was the commentator on the Brahma-sūtra¹. But, though this may be possible, yet we have no evidence that it is certain; for, apart from the similarity of names², it is not definitely known whether this Vidyāpati Bhāskara Bhaṭṭa ever wrote any commentary on the Brahma-sūtra. All that we can say, therefore, with any degree of definiteness, is that Bhāskara flourished at some period between the middle of the eighth century and the middle of the tenth century, and most probably in the ninth century, since he does not know Rāmānuja³.

Bhāskara and Śańkara.

There is a text of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, VI. 1. 1, which is treated from two different points of view by Śaṅkara and Bhāskara in connection with the interpretation of Brahma-sūtra, II. 1. 14. Śaṅkara's interpretation of this, as Vācaspati explains it, is that, when clay is known, all clay-materials are known, not because the clay-materials are really clay, for they are indeed different. But, if so, how can we, by knowing one, know the other? Because the clay-materials do not really exist; they are all, and so indeed are all that pass as modifications (vikāra), but mere expressions of speech (vācārambhaṇam), mere names (nāmdheyam) having no real

¹ Paṇḍita Vindhyesvarī Prasāda's Introduction.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press

² We hear of several Bhāskaras in Sanskrit literature, such as Lokabhāskara, Srāntabhāskara, Haribhāskara, Bhadantabhāskara, Bhāskaramiśra, Bhāskara-śāstrī, Bhāskaradīkṣita, Bhaṭṭabhāskara, Pandita Bhāskaracārya, Bhaṭṭabhāskaramiśra, Trikāndamandana, Laugākṣibhāskara, Sāndilyabhāskara, Vatsabhāskara, Bhāskaradeva, Bhāskaranṛsimba, Bhāskarānandanātha, Bhāskarasena.

³ He makes very scanty references to other writers. He speaks of Sāṇḍilya as a great author of the Bhāgavata school. He refers to the four classes of Māheśvaras, Pāśupata, Śaiva, Kāpālika and Kāṭhaka-siddhāntin, and their principal work Pañcādhyāyi-śāstra; he also refers to the Pāñcarātrikas, with whom he is often largely in agreement.

⁴ tad-ananyatvam ärambhaṇa-śabdādibhyah. Brahma-sūtra, II. 1. 14. yathā saumya ekena mṛt-piṇḍen asarvam mṛṇmayaṃ vijñātaṃ syādvācāram-bhaṇaṃ vikāro nāmadheyaṃ mṛttike'ty'eva satyaṃ (Ch. VI. 1. 1).



The Bhāskara School of Philosophy [сн.

entities or objects to which they refer, having in fact no existence at all¹.

Bhāskara says that the passage means that clay alone is real, and the purport of speech depends on two things, the objects and the facts implied and the names which imply them. The effects $(k\bar{a}rya)$ are indeed the basis of all our practical behaviour and conduct, involving the objects and facts implied and the expressions and names which imply them. How can the cause and effect be identical? The answer to this is that it is true that it is to the effects that our speech applies and that these make all practical behaviour possible, but the effects are in reality but stages of manifestation, modification and existence of the cause itself. So, from the point of view that the effects come and go, appear and disappear, whereas the cause remains permanently the same, as the ground of all its real manifestations, it is said that the cause alone is true—the clay alone is true. The effect, therefore, is only a state of the cause, and is hence both identical with it and different from it2. The effect, the name (nāmadheya), is real, and the scriptures also assert this3.

Bhāskara argues against Sankara as follows: the arguments that the upholder of $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ ($m\bar{a}y\bar{a}v\bar{a}din$) could adduce against those who believed in the reality of the many, the world, might be adduced against him also, in so far as he believes in monism (advaita). A person who hears the scriptures and philosophizes is at first under the veil of ignorance ($avidy\bar{a}$); and, if on account of this ignorance his knowledge of duality was false, his knowledge of monism might equally for the same reason be considered as false. All Brahma-knowledge is false, because it is knowledge, like the knowledge of the world. It is argued that, just as from the false knowledge of a dream and of letters there can be true acquisition

¹ Bhāmatī, Brahma-sūtra, II. I. 14. Rāhu is a demon which is merely a living head with no body, its sole body being its head; but still we use, for convenience of language, the expression "Rāhu's head" (Rāhoḥ śiraḥ); similarly clay alone is real, and what we call clay-materials, jugs, plates, etc., are mere expressions of speech having no real objects or entities to which they can apply—they simply do not exist at all—but are mere vikalpa; vācā kevalam ārabhyate vikāra-jātam na tu tatīvato'sti yato nāmadheya-mātram etat;...yathā rāhoḥ śirah...śabda-jñānā'-nupātī vastu-śūnyo vikalpa iti; tathā cā'vastutayā anrtam vikāra-jātam.

² vāg-indriyasya ubhayam ārambhanam vikāro nāmadheyam...ubhayam ālambya vāg-vyavahārah pravartate ghaţena udakam āhare' ti mṛṇmayam ity asya idam vyākhyānam...kāraṇam eva kāryā-tmanā ghaṭavad avatiṣṭhate...kāraṇasyā'vasthā-mātram kāryam vyatiriktā'vyatiriktam śukti-rajatavad āgamāpāyadharmitvāc ca anṛtam anityam iti ca vyapadiśyate. Bhāskara-bhāṣya, II. I. 14.

^{*} atha nāma-dheyam satyasya satyamiti, etc. Ibid.



xv] Bhāskara and Sankara

5

of good and evil or of certain meanings, so from the false knowledge of words and their meanings, as involved in the knowledge of monistic texts of the Upanisads, there may arise right knowledge. But such an argument is based on false analogy. When from certain kinds of dreams someone judges that good or evil will come to him, it is not from nothing that he judges, since he judges from particular dream experiences; and these dream experiences are facts having particular characters and features; they are not mere nothing, like the hare's horn; no one can judge of anything from the hare's horn. The letters also have certain shapes and forms and are definitely by common consent and agreement associated with particular sounds; it is well known that different letters in different countries may be used to denote one kind of sound. Again, if from a mistake someone experiences fear and dies, it is not from nothing or from something false that he dies; for he had a real fear, and the fear was the cause of death and was roused by the memory of a real thing, and the only unreality about it was that the thing was not present there at that time. So no example could be given to show that from false knowledge, or falsehood as such, there could come right knowledge or the truth. Again, how can the scriptures demonstrate the falsehood of the world? If all auditory knowledge were false, all language would be false, and even the scriptural texts would be nonexistent.

Further, what is this "avidyā," if it cannot be described? How can one make anyone understand it? What nonsense it is to say that that which manifests itself as all the visible and tangible world of practical conduct and behaviour cannot itself be described. If it is beginningless, it must be eternal, and there can be no liberation. It cannot be both existent and non-existent; for that would be contradictory. It cannot be mere negation; for, being non-existent, it could not bring bondage. If it brings bondage, it must be an entity, and that means a dual existence with Brahman. So the proposition of the upholder of māyā is false.

What is true, however, is that, just as milk gets curdled, so it is God Himself who by His own will and knowledge and omnipotence transforms Himself into this world. There is no inconsistency in God's transforming Himself into the world, though He is partless;

yasyāh kāryam idam kṛtsnam vyavahārāya kalpate nirvaktum sā na śakye' ti vacanam vacanār-thakam. Bhāskara-bhāşya.



6 The Bhāskara School of Philosophy CH.

for He can do so by various kinds of powers, modifying them according to His own will. He possesses two powers; by one He has become the world of enjoyables (bhogya-śakti), and by the other the individual souls, the enjoyers (bhoktr); but in spite of this modification of Himself He remains unchanged in His own purity; for it is by the manifestation and modification of His powers that the modification of the world as the enjoyable and the enjoyer takes place. It is just as the sun sends out his rays and collects them back into himself, but yet remains in himself the same1.

The Philosophy of Bhāskara's Bhāsya.

From what has been said above it is clear that according to Bhāskara the world of matter and the selves consists only in real modifications or transformations (parināma) of Brahman's own nature through His diverse powers. This naturally brings in the question whether the world and the souls are different from Brahman or identical with him. Bhāskara's answer to such a question is that "difference" (bheda) has in it the characteristic of identity (abhedadharmas ca)—the waves are different from the sea, but are also identical with it. The waves are manifestations of the sea's own powers, and so the same identical sea appears to be different when viewed with reference to the manifestations of its powers, though it is in reality identical with its powers. So the same identical fire is different in its powers as it burns or illuminates. So all that is one is also many, and the one is neither absolute identity nor absolute difference2.

The individual souls are in reality not different from God; they are but His parts, as the sparks of fire are the parts of fire; but it is the peculiarity of these parts of God, the souls, that though one with Him, they have been under the influence of ignorance, desires and deeds from beginningless time3. Just as the ākāśa, which is all the same everywhere; and yet the ākāśa inside a vessel or a house is not just the same ākāśa as the boundless space, but may in some

¹ Bhāskara-bhāṣya, II. 1. 27, also I. 4. 25.

² abheda-dharmas ca bhedo yathā mahodadher abhedah sa eva tarangādyātmanā vartamāno bheda ity ucyate, na hi tarangā-dayah pāṣāṇā-diṣu dṛśyante tasyaiva tāh śaktayah śakti-śaktimatoś ca ananyatvam anyatvam co-palaksyate yatha'gner dahana-prakasana-di-saktayah....tasmat sarvam eka-neka-tmakam nā'tyantam abhinnam bhinnam vā. Ibid. 11. 1. 18.

Ibid. 1. 4. 21.



xv] The Philosophy of Bhāskara's Bhāsya

sense be regarded as a part of it; or just as the same air is seen to serve different life-functions, as the five prānas, so the individual souls also may in some sense be regarded as parts of God. It is just and proper that the scriptures should command the individual souls to seek knowledge so as to attain liberation; for it is the desire for the highest soul (paramātman) or God or Brahman that is the cause of liberation, and it is the desire for objects of the world that is the cause of bondage¹. This soul, in so far as it exists in association with ignorance, desires and deeds, is atomic in nature; and, just as a drop of sandal paste may perfume all the place about it, so does the atomic soul, remaining in one place, animate the whole body. It is by nature endowed with consciousness, and it is only with reference to the knowledge of other objects that it has to depend on the presence of those objects². Its seat is in the heart, and through the skin of the heart it is in touch with the whole body. But, though in a state of bondage, under the influence of ignorance, etc., it is atomic, yet it is not ultimately atomic in nature; for it is one with Brahman. Under the influence of buddhi, ahamkāra, the five senses and the five vāyus it undergoes the cycle of rebirths. But though this atomic form and the association with the buddhi, etc., is not essential to the nature of the soul, yet so long as such a relation exists, the agency of the soul is in every sense real; but the ultimate source of this agency is God Himself; for it is God who makes us perform all actions, and He makes us perform good actions, and it is He who, remaining

In all stages of life a man must perform the deeds enjoined by the scriptures, and he cannot rise at any stage so high that he is beyond the sphere of the duties of work imposed on him by the scriptures³. It is not true, as Sankara says, that those who are fit to

within us, controls all our actions.

¹ rāgo hi paramātma-vişayo yaḥ sa mukti-hetuḥ vişaya-vişayo yaḥ sa bandhahetuḥ. Bhāskara-bhāṣya.

² Ibid. 11. 3. 18, 22, 23.

³ Bhāskara-bhāṣya, I. I. I. In holding the view that the Brahma-sūtra is in a sense continuous with the Mīmāṃsā-sūtra, which the former must follow—for it is after the performance of the ritualistic duties that the knowledge of Brahman can arise, and the latter therefore cannot in any stage dispense with the need for the former—and that the Brahma-sūtras are not intended for any superior and different class of persons, Bhāskara seems to have followed Upavarṣa or Upavarṣācārya, to whose commentary on the Mīmāṃsā-sūtra he refers and whom he calls the founder of the school (śāstra-sampradāya-pravartaka). Ibid. 1. I. 1, and II. 2. 27. See also I. I. 4: ātma-jñānā-dhikṛtasya karmabhir vinā apavargā-nupapatter jñānena karma samuccīyate.



8 The Bhāskara School of Philosophy [CH.

have the highest knowledge are beyond the duties of life and courses of ritualistic and other actions enjoined by the scriptures, or that those for whom these are intended are not fit to have the highest knowledge; in other words, the statement of Sankara that there cannot be any combination (samuccaya) of knowledge (jñāna) and necessary ritualistic duties of life (karma) is false. Bhāskara admits that pure karma (ritualistic duties) cannot lead us to the highest perception of the truth, the Brahman; yet knowledge (iñāna) combined with the regular duties, i.e. jñāna-samuccita-karma, can lead us to our highest good, the realization of Brahman. That it is our duty to attain the knowledge of Brahman is also to be accepted, by reason of the injunction of the scriptures; for that also is one of the imperative duties imposed on us by the scriptures—a vidhi—the self is to be known (ātmā vā are drastavyah, etc.). It is therefore not true, as Sankara asserted, that what the ritualistic and other duties imposed on us by the scriptures can do for us is only to make us fit for the study of Vedanta by purifying us and making us as far as possible sinless; Bhāskara urges that performance of the duties imposed on us by the scriptures is as necessary as the attainment of knowledge for our final liberation.

Bhāskara draws a distinction between cognition (jñāna) and consciousness (caitanya), more particularly, self-consciousness (ātma-caitanya). Cognition with him means the knowledge of objective things, and this is a direct experience (anubhava) arising out of the contact of the sense organ, manas, and the object, the presence of light and the internal action of the memory and the sub-conscious impressions (saṃskāra). Cognition is not an active operation by itself, but is rather the result of the active operation of the senses in association with other accessories, such that whenever there is a collocation of those accessories involving the operation of the senses there is cognition. Bhāskara is therefore positively against the contention of Kumārila that knowledge is an entity which is not directly perceived but only inferred as the agent which induces the intellectual operation, but which is not directly known by itself. If an unperceived entity is to be inferred to explain the cause of the per-

¹ jñāna-kriyā-kalpanāyām pramāṇā-bhāvāt....ālokendriya-manaḥ-samskāreṣu hi satsu saṃvedanam utpadyate iti tad-abhāve notpadyate, yadi punar aparaṃ jñānaṃ kalpyate tasyāpy anyat tasyāpy anyad ity anavasthā; na ca jñāna-kriyānumāne lingam asti, samvedanam iti cen na, agṛhīta-sambandhatvāt. Bhāskara-bhāsva, 1.1 1.



xv] The Philosophy of Bhāskara's Bhāsya

ceived intellectual operation, then another entity might be inferred as the cause of that unperceived entity, and another to explain that and so on, and we have a vicious infinite (anavasthā). Moreover, no unperceived entity can be inferred as the cause of the perceived intellectual operation; for, if it is unperceived, then its relation with intellectual operation is also unperceived, and how can there be any inference at all? Thus, cognition is what we directly experience (anubhava) and there is no unperceived entity which causes it, but it is the direct result of the joint operation of many accessories. This objective cognition is entirely different from the subjective consciousness or self-consciousness; for the latter is eternal and always present, whereas the former is only occasioned by the collocating circumstances. It is easy to see that Bhāskara has a very distinct epistemological position, which, though similar to Nyāya so far as the objective cognition is concerned, is yet different therefrom on account of his admission of the ever-present self-consciousness of the soul. It is at the same time different from the Sankarite epistemology, for objective cognition is considered by him not as mere limitation of self-consciousness, but as entirely different therefrom1. It may also be noted that, unlike Dharmarājādhvarīndra, the writer of the Sanskrit epistemological work, Vedānta-paribhāṣā, Bhāskara considers manas as a sense-organ². On the subject of the self-validity of knowledge Bhāskara thinks that the knowledge of truth is always self-valid (svatah-pramāṇa), whereas the knowledge of the false is always attested from outside (paratah pramāna)3.

As has already been said, Bhāskara does not think that liberation can be attained through knowledge alone; the duties imposed by the scriptures must always be done along with our attempts to know Brahman; for there is no contradiction or opposition between knowledge and performance of the duties enjoined by the scriptures. There will be no liberation if the duties are forsaken⁴. The state of salvation is one in which there is a continuous and unbroken consciousness of happiness⁵. A liberated soul may associate or not associate itself with any body or sense as it likes⁶. It is as omniscient,

¹ kecid āhuḥ ātmā pramāyām indriya-dvāropādhi-nirgama-vişayeşu vartate... tad idam asamyag daršanam;...ālokendriyādibhyo jñānam utpadyamānam... cānyad iti yuktam. Bhāskara-bhāṣya. ² Ibid. II. 4. 17.

³ Ibid. 1. 4. 21.

⁴ Ibid. 111. 4. 26.

⁵ Ibid. iv. 4. 8.

⁶ Ibid. IV. 4. 12.



10

Cambridge University Press 978-0-521-11636-7 - A History of Indian Philosophy, Volume III Surendranath Dasgupta Excerpt More information

The Bhāskara School of Philosophy

CH.

omnipotent and as one with all souls as God Himself¹. The attachment (rāga) to Brahman, which is said to be an essential condition for attaining liberation, is further defined to be worship (samārādhana) or devotion (bhakti), while bhakti is said to be attendance on God by meditation (dhyānādinā paricaryā). Bhakti is conceived, not as any feeling, affection or love of God, as in later Vaisnava literature, but as dhyāna or meditation². A question may arise as to what, if Brahman has transformed Himself into the world, is meant by meditation on Brahman? Does it mean that we are to meditate on the world? To this Bhāskara's answer is that Brahman is not exhausted by His transformation into the world, and that what is really meant by Brahman's being transformed into the world is that the nature of the world is spiritual. The world is a spiritual manifestation and a spiritual transformation, and what passes as matter is in reality spiritual. Apart from Brahman as manifested in the world, the Brahman with diverse forms, there is also the formless Brahman (nisprapañca brahman), the Brahman which is transcendent and beyond its own immanent forms, and it is this Brahman which is to be worshipped. The world with its diverse forms also will, in the end, return to its spiritual source, the formless Brahman, and nothing of it will be left as the remainder. The material world is dissolved in the spirit and lost therein, just as a lump of salt is lost in water³. This transcendent Brahman that is to be worshipped is of the nature of pure being and intelligence (sal-laksana and bodha-laksana)4. He is also infinite and unlimited. But, though He is thus characterized as being, intelligence, and infinite, yet these terms do not refer to three distinct entities; they are the qualities of Brahman, the substance, and, like all qualities, they cannot remain different from their substance; for neither can any substance remain without its qualities, nor can any qualities remain without their substance. A substance does not become different by virtue of its qualities5.

Bhāskara denies the possibility of liberation during lifetime (jīvan-mukti); for so long as the body remains as a result of the

¹ muktaḥ kāraṇā-tmānaṃ prāptaḥ tadvad eva sarva-jñaḥ sarva-śaktiḥ. Bhāskara-bhāṣya, 1V. 4. 7.

² Ibid. III. 2. 24.

⁸ Ibid. II. 2. 11, 13, 17.
⁴ Ibid. III. 2. 23.

⁵ na dharma-dharmi-bhedena svarūpa-bheda iti; na hi guṇa-rahitām dravyam asti na dravya-rahito guṇaḥ. Ibid. 111. 2. 23.