

Advaita Vedanta

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(Redirected from Advaita Vedānta)

Advaita Vedanta (IAST *Advaita Vedānta*; Sanskrit: अद्वैत वेदान्त [əḍḍʋaiṭə ʋeːɖɑːn̪t̪ə]) is a philosophical concept where followers seek liberation/release by recognizing identity of the Self (Atman) and the Whole (Brahman) through long preparation and training, usually under the guidance of a guru, that involves efforts such as knowledge of scriptures, renunciation of worldly activities, and inducement of direct identity experiences. Originating in India before 788 AD, Advaita Vedanta is widely considered the most influential^[1] and most dominant^{[2][3]} sub-school of the Vedānta (literally, *end or the goal of the Vedas*, Sanskrit) school of Hindu philosophy.^[4] Other major sub-schools of Vedānta are *Viśiṣṭādvaita* and *Dvaita*; while the minor ones include Suddhadvaita, Dvaitadvaita and Achintya Bhedabheda.

Advaita (literally, *non-duality*) is a system of thought where "Advaita" refers to the identity of the Self (*Atman*) and the Whole (Brahman).^[a] Recognition of this identity leads to liberation. Attaining this liberation takes a long preparation and training under the guidance of a guru.

The key source texts for all schools of Vedānta are the Prasthanatrayi—the canonical texts consisting of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras. The first person to explicitly consolidate the principles of Advaita Vedanta was Shankara Bhagavadpada,^[5] while the first historical proponent was Gaudapada, the guru of Shankara's guru Govinda Bhagavatpada.



Adi Guru Shri Gaudapādāchārya, the grand guru of Shri Adi Shankaracharya and the first historical proponent of Advaita Vedanta, also believed to be the founder of Shri Gaudapadacharya Math

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History of Advaita Vedanta

Advaita Vedanta existed prior to Shankara, but found its conclusive and greatest expounder in Shankara.^[6]

Lineage of Gurus

In the Indian religious and philosophical traditions, all knowledge is traced back to the Gods and to the Rishi who "saw" the Vedas.

The Advaita guru-paramparā (*Lineage of Gurus in Non-dualism*) begins with the mythological time of the **Daiva-paramparā**, followed by the vedic seers of the **Ṛṣi-paramparā**, and the **Mānava-paramparā** of historical times and personalities.^{[web 1][b]}

Daiva-paramparā

- Nārāyaṇa
- Padmabhuva (Brahmā)

Ṛṣi-paramparā

- Vaśiṣṭha
- Śakti
- Parāśara
- Vyāsa^[c]
- Śuka

Mānava-paramparā

- Gauḍapāda
- Govinda bhagavatpāda
- Śankara bhagavatpāda, and then Sankara's four disciples
 - Padmapāda
 - Hastāmalaka
 - Toṭaka
 - Vārtikakāra (Sureśvara) and others

Gaudapada

Main article: Gaudapada

Gaudapada (6th century)^[8] was the teacher of Govinda bhagavatpāda and the grandteacher of Shankara. Gaudapada took over the Buddhist doctrines that ultimate reality is pure consciousness (*viññapti-mātra*)^{[8][d]} and "that the nature of the world is the four-cornered negation".^{[8][e]} Gaudapada "wove [both doctrines] into a philosophy of the *Mandukaya Upanisad*, which was further developed by Shankara.^{[12][f]}

Adi Shankara

Main article: Adi Shankara

Adi Shankara (788 - 820), also known as Śankara Bhagavatpādācārya and Ādi Śankarācārya, expounded the doctrine of Advaita — a nondualistic reality. He consolidated the Advaita Vedanta, an interpretation of the Vedic scriptures that continued the line of thought of some of the Upanishadic teachers, Shankara's teacher Govinda Bhagavatpada, Govinda's teacher Gaudapada, and Gaudapada's teacher Ajativada.

Philosophical system

Shankara systematized the works of preceding philosophers.^[14] His system of Vedanta introduced the method of scholarly exegesis on the accepted metaphysics of the Upanishads. This style was adopted by all the later Vedanta schools.^[citation needed]

Shankara's synthesis of Advaita Vedanta is summarized in this quote from the Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, one of his Prakaraṇa gr̥n̥thas (philosophical treatises):^[g]

In half a couplet I state, what has been stated by crores of texts;
that is Brahman alone is real, the world is mithyā (not independently existent),
and the individual self is nondifferent from Brahman.^{[15][h]}

Writings

Main article: Adi Shankara bibliography

Adi Shankara wrote commentaries on the Prasthanā Trayī. His main works are the commentaries on the *Prasthanatrayī* (*Brahma Sūtras*, *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Upanishads*) and the *Gaudapadiya Karikas*. He also wrote a major independent treatise, called "Upadeśa Sāhasrī", expounding his philosophy.

Advaita Mathas

Adi Sankara founded four Maṭhas (Sanskrit: मठ) (monasteries) to preserve and develop his philosophies. One each in the north, south, east and west of the Indian subcontinent, each headed by one of his direct disciples.

According to Nakamura, these mathas contributed to the influence of Shankara, which was "due to institutional factors".^[14] The mathas which he build exist until today, and preserve the teachings and influence of Shankara, "while the writings of other scholars before him came to be forgotten with the passage of time".^[16]

The table below gives an overview of the four *Amnaya Mathas* founded by Adi Shankara, and their details.^[web 4]



(Vidyashankara temple) at Sringeri Sharada Peetham, Shringeri

Shishya	Direction	Maṭha	Mahāvākya	Veda	Sampradaya
Padmapāda	East	Govardhana Pīṭham	Prajñānam brahma (<i>Brahman is Knowledge</i>)	Rig Veda	Bhogavala
Sureśvara	South	Śārada Pīṭham	Aham brahmāsmi (<i>I am Brahman</i>)	Yajur Veda	Bhūrivala
Hastāmalakācārya	West	Dvāraka Pīṭham	Tattvamasi (<i>That thou art</i>)	Sama Veda	Kitavala
Toṭakācārya	North	Jyotirmaṭha Pīṭham	Ayamātmā brahma (<i>This Atman is Brahman</i>)	Atharva Veda	Nandavala

The current heads of the mathas trace their authority back to these figures, and each of the heads of these four mathas takes the title of Shankaracharya ("the learned Shankara") after Adi Sankara.^[citation needed]

According to the tradition in Kerala, after Sankara's *samadhi* at Vadakkunnathan Temple, his disciples founded four mathas in Thrissur, namely Naduvil Madhom, Thekke Madhom, Idayil Madhom and Vadakke Madhom.

Advaita Vedanta sub-schools

After Shankara's death several subschools developed. Two of them still exist today, the Bhāmatī and the Vivarana.^{[web 5][17]} Perished schools are the *Pancapadika* and *Istasiddhi*.^[18]

These schools worked out the logical implications of various Advaita doctrines. Two of the problems they encountered were the further interpretations to the concepts of maya and avidhya.^[web 5]

Bhamati

Main article: Bhamati

The name of the Bhamati-subschool is derived from Vachaspati Misra's commentary on Adi Shankara's

Brahmasutra Bhashya.^{[web 5][web 6]} According to legend, Misra's commentary was named after his wife to praise, since he neglected her during the writing of his commentary.^[web 6]

Vachaspati Misra Bhamati attempts to harmonize Sankara's thought with that of Mandana Misra. The Bhamati-school takes an ontological approach. It sees the Jiva as the source of avidya.^[web 5]

Vivarana

The name of the Vivarana-school is derived from Prakasatman's *Pancapadika-Vivarana*, a commentary on the *Pancapadika* by Padmapadacharya.^[18]

Prakasatman was the first to propound the theory of *mulavidhya* or *maya* as being of "positive beginningless nature".^[19]

The Vivarana-school takes an epistemological approach. It sees Brahman as the source of avidhya. Critics object that Brahman is pure consciousness, so it can't be the source of avidya. Another problem is that contradictory qualities, namely knowledge and ignorance, are attributed to Brahman.^[web 5]

Neo-Vedanta

Main articles: Hindu reform movements, Swami Vivekananda, and Ramakrishna Mission

In the 19th century Vivekananda played a major role in the revival of Hinduism^[20], and the spread of Advaita Vedanta to the west via the Ramakrishna Mission. His interpretation of Advaita Vedanta has been called "Neo-Vedanta".^[21]

In a talk on "The absolute and manifestation" given in at London in 1896 Swami Vivekananda said,

I may make bold to say that the only religion which agrees with, and even goes a little further than modern researchers, both on physical and moral lines is the Advaita, and that is why it appeals to modern scientists so much. They find that the old dualistic theories are not enough for them, do not satisfy their necessities. A man must have not only faith, but intellectual faith too".^[web 7]

Vivekananda emphasized samadhi as a means to attain liberation.^[22] Yet this emphasis is not to be found in the Upanishads nor with Shankara.^[23] For Shankara, meditation and Nirvikalpa Samadhi are means to gain knowledge of the already existing unity of Brahman and Atman,^[22] not the highest goal itself:

[Y]oga is a meditative exercise of withdrawal from the particular and identification with the universal, leading to contemplation of oneself as the most universal, namely, Consciousness. This approach is different from the classical Yoga of complete thought suppression.^[22]

Vivekananda's modernisation has been criticized:

Without calling into question the right of any philosopher to interpret Advaita according to his own understanding of it, [...] the process of Westernization has obscured the core of this school of thought. The basic correlation of renunciation and Bliss has been lost sight of in the attempts to underscore the cognitive structure and the realistic structure which according to Samkaracarya

should both belong to, and indeed constitute the realm of māyā.^[21]

Texts

See also: Works of Adi Shankara

Advaita Vedanta is based on the inquiry into the sacred texts of the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Brahma Sutras. Adi Shankara gave a systematization and philosophical underpinning of this inquiry in his commentaries. The subsequent Advaita-tradition has further elaborated on these sruti and commentaries.

Textual authority

The order of precedence regarding authority of Vedic Scriptures is as follows,

- **Śruti**, literally "hearing, listening", are the sacred texts comprising the central canon of Hinduism and is one of the three main sources of dharma and therefore is also influential within Hindu Law.^[24]
- **Smṛti**, literally "that which is remembered (or recollected)", refers to a specific body of Hindu religious scripture, and is a codified component of Hindu customary law. Post Vedic scriptures such as Ramayana, Mahabharata and traditions of the rules on dharma such as Manu Smriti, Yaagnyavalkya Smriti etc. Smṛti also denotes tradition in the sense that it portrays the traditions of the rules on dharma, especially those of lawful virtuous persons.)
- **Purāṇa**, literally "of ancient times", are post-vedic scriptures notably consisting of narratives of the history of the universe from creation to destruction, genealogies of kings, heroes, sages, and demigods, and descriptions of Hindu cosmology, philosophy, and geography.^[web 8]
- **Śiṣṭāchāra**, literally "that which is followed by good (in recent times)".
- **Atmatuṣṭi**, literally "that which satisfies oneself (or self validation)", according to which one has to decide whether or not to do with *bona fide*. Initially this was not considered in the order of precedence but Manu and Yājñavalkya considered it as last one.

If anyone of them contradicts the preceding one, then it is disqualified as an authority to judge. There is a well known Indian saying that **Smṛti follows Śruti**. So it was considered that in order to establish any Theistic Philosophical theory (Astika Siddhanta) one ought not contradict Śruti (Vedas).

Prasthānatrayī - Three standards

Main article: Prasthanatrayi

Adi Sankara has chosen three standards, called **Prasthānatrayī**, literally, *three points of departure (three standards)*. Later these were referred to as the three canonical texts of reference of Hindu philosophy by other Vedanta schools.

They are:

1. The **Upanishads**, known as *Upadesha prasthāna* (injunctive texts), (part of *Śruti*)
2. The **Bhagavad Gīta**, known as *Sādhana prasthāna* (practical text), (part of *Smṛti*)
3. The **Brahma Sutras**, known as *Nyāya prasthāna* or *Yukti prasthana* (part of *darśana of Uttarā Mīmāṃsā*)

The Upanishads consist of twelve or thirteen major texts, with many minor texts. The Bhagavad Gītā is part of

the Mahabhārata. The Brahma Sūtras (also known as the *Vedānta Sūtras*), systematise the doctrines taught in the Upanishads and the Gītā.

Bhashyas - Commentaries by Shankara

Sankara Bhagavadpāda has written *Bhāshyas* (commentaries) on the Prasthānatrayī. These texts are thus considered to be the basic texts of the Advaita tradition.

Siddhi-grathas

Additionally there are four Siddhi-grathas that are taught in the Advaita-parampara, after study of the Prasthanatrayi:

1. Brahmasiddhi by Mandana Mishra (750-850),
2. Naishkarmasiddhi by Sureswara (8th century, disciple of Sankara),
3. Ishtasiddhi by Vimuktananda (1200),
4. Advaita Siddhi,^[web 9] written by Madhusudana Saraswati - 1565-1665.

Introductory texts

Introductory texts from the Advaita Vedanta tradition include:

- Ashtavakra Samhita (pre-Sankara), with traces of Advaitism.^[i]
- Tattvabodha (Shankara), an introductory text explaining the terminologies used in Advaita Vedanta.^[j]
- Atmabodha, *A Treatise on the knowledge of Atma* (Shankara).^[k]
- Vedantasara of Sadanada (Bhagavad Ramanuja, 1017 to 1137 A.D.^[web 16])^[l]
- Vakyavrtti
- Laghu-Vakyavrtti
- Drg-Drśya-Viveka
- Panchikaranam
- Vedanta-Paribhasha (of Dharmaraja Adhvarindra)
- Advaita-Makaranda (of Lakshmidhara Kavi)
- Aparoksha-Anubhuti
- Dakshinamurti-Stotram
- Panchadasi (of Vidyaranya)
- Kaupina-pancakam
- Sadhana-panchakam
- Manisha-pancakam
- Dasasloki

Modern texts

Treatises on Advaita Vedanta are still being written. The works of Swami Vivekananda, such as his writings on Jnana yoga, have been influential in the spread of Advaita Vedanta in the west.

Philosophy

Main article: Hindu philosophy

The philosophy of Advaita Vedanta is based on the sacred texts of the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Brahma Sutras. Adi Shankara gave a systematization and philosophical underpinning of this inquiry in his commentaries.

Puruṣārtha

Indian philosophy emphasizes that "every acceptable philosophy should aid man in realizing the Purusarthas, the chief aims of human life."^[25]

- Dharma: the right way to life, the "duties and obligations of the individual toward himself and the society as well as those of the society toward the individual";^[26]
- Artha: the means to support and sustain one's life;
- Kāma: pleasure and enjoyment;
- Mokṣa: liberation, release.

According to Puligandla:

Any philosophy worthy of its title should not be a mere intellectual exercise but should have practical application in enabling man to live an enlightened life. A philosophy which makes no difference to the quality and style of our life is no philosophy, but an empty intellectual construction.^[27]

Advaita Vedanta gives an elaborate path to attain moksha. It entails more than self-inquiry or bare insight into one's real nature. Practice, especially Jnana Yoga, is needed to "destroy one's tendencies (vAasanA-s)" before real insight can be attained.^[web 21]

Soteriology - Liberation

Main article: Moksha

The aim of Advaita Vedanta is liberation, by knowledge of the identity of atman and Brahman. According to Adi Śankara, knowledge of Brahman springs from inquiry into the sacred texts of the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Brahma Sutras. It is obtained by following the four stages of *samanyasa* (self-cultivation), *sravana*, listening to the teachings of the sages, *Manana*, reflection on the teachings, and *Dhyana*, contemplation of the truth "that art Thou".

Georg Feuerstein summarizes the Advaita Vedanta-realization as follows:

The manifold universe is, in truth, a Single Reality. There is only one Great Being, which the sages call Brahman, in which all the countless forms of existence reside. That Great Being is utter Consciousness, and It is the very Essence, or Self (Atman) of all beings."^[web 22]

Mahavakya - The Great Sentences

Mahavakya, or "the great sentences", state the unity of Brahman and Atman. There are many such sentences in the Vedas, however only one such sentence from each of the four Vedas is usually chosen. They are shown below

Sr. No.	Vakya	Meaning	Upanishad	Veda
1	प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म (pragñānam brahma)	<i>Consciousness is Brahman</i>	Aitareya V.3	Rgveda
2.	अहं ब्रह्मास्मि (aham brahmāsmi)	<i>I am Brahman</i>	Brhadāranyaka I.4.10	Shukla Yajurveda
3.	तत्त्वमसि (tat tvam asi)	<i>That thou art</i>	Chandogya VI.8.7	Samaveda
4.	अयमात्मा ब्रह्म (ayamātmā brahma)	<i>This Atman is Brahman</i>	Mandukya II	Atharvaveda

Advaita practice

Practice, especially Jnana Yoga, is needed to "destroy one's tendencies (vAasanA-s)" before real insight can be attained.^[web 21]

Jnana Yoga - Four stages of practice

Main article: Jnana Yoga

Classical Advaita Vedanta emphasises the path of Jnana Yoga, a progression of study and training to attain moksha. It consists of four stages:^{[28][web 23]}

- **Samanyasa** or *Sampattis*,^[29] the "fourfold discipline" (*sādhana-catustaya*), cultivating the following four qualities:^{[28][web 24]}
 - *Nityānitya vastu viveka* (नित्यानित्य वस्तु विवेकम्) — The ability (viveka) to correctly discriminate between the eternal (*nitya*) substance (*Brahman*) and the substance that is transitory existence (*anitya*).
 - *Ihāmutrārtha phala bhoga virāga* (इहाऽमृत्रार्थ फल भोगविरागम्) — The renunciation (*virāga*) of enjoyments of objects (*artha phala bhoga*) in this world (*iha*) and the other worlds (*amutra*) like heaven etc.
 - *Śamādi ṣatka sampatti* (शमादि षट्क सम्पत्ति) — the sixfold qualities,
 - *Śama* (control of the antahkaraṇa).^[web 25]
 - *Dama* (the control of external sense organs).
 - *Uparati* (the cessation of these external organs so restrained, from the pursuit of objects other than that, or it may mean the abandonment of the prescribed works according to scriptural injunctions).^[m]
 - *Titikṣa* (the tolerating of tāpatraya).
 - *Śraddha* (the faith in Guru and Vedas).
 - *Samādhāna* (the concentrating of the mind on God and Guru).
 - *Mumukṣutva* (मुमुक्षुत्वम्) — The firm conviction that the nature of the world is misery and the intense longing for *moksha* (*release from the cycle of births and deaths*).
- **Sravana**, listening to the teachings of the sages on the Upanishads and Advaita Vedanta, and studying the Vedantic texts, such as the Brahma Sutras. In this stage the student learns about the reality of

Brahman and the identity of atman;

- **Manana**, the stage of reflection on the teachings;
- **Dhyana**, the stage of meditation on the truth "that art Thou".

Bhakti Yoga

Main article: Bhakti

The paths of Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga are subsidiary.

In Bhakti Yoga, practice centers on the worship of God in any way and in any form, like Krishna or Ayyappa. Adi Shankara himself was a proponent of devotional worship or *Bhakti*. But Adi Shankara taught that while Vedic sacrifices, *puja* and devotional worship can lead one in the direction of *jnana* (true knowledge), they cannot lead one directly to *moksha*. At best, they can serve as means to obtain moksha via *shukla gati*.^[*citation needed*]

Karma Yoga

Main article: Karma yoga

Karma yoga is the way of doing our duties, in disregard of personal gains or losses. According to Sri Swami Sivananda,

Karma Yoga is consecration of all actions and their fruits unto the Lord. Karma Yoga is performance of actions dwelling in union with the Divine, removing attachment and remaining balanced ever in success and failure.

Karma Yoga is selfless service unto humanity. Karma Yoga is the Yoga of action which purifies the heart and prepares the Antahkarana (the heart and the mind) for the reception of Divine Light or attainment of Knowledge of the Self. The important point is that you will have to serve humanity without any attachment or egoism.^[web 26]

Jivanmukta - Liberation

Advaitins believe that suffering is due to Maya (also known as Mithya or Vaitathya). Only knowledge of Brahman can destroy Maya. At the relative plane Jiva and Isvara "are regarded as different from and of a lower order of reality than the original consciousness that is the absolutely real (paaramaarthika)

Brahman".^[web 27] When Maya is removed, the truth of "Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya Jivo Brahmaiva Na Aparah" is realized:^[web 28]

Brahman (the Absolute) is alone real; this world is unreal; the Jiva or the individual soul is non-different from Brahman.^[web 28]

Such a state of bliss when achieved while living is called *Jivanmukta*.^[30]

Necessity of a Guru

See also: Guru-shishya tradition

Guidance of a Guru

According to Śankara and others, anyone seeking to follow the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta must do so under the guidance of a Guru (*teacher*).^[31] It is the teacher who through exegesis of Sruti and skillful handling of words generates a hitherto unknown knowledge in the disciple. The teacher does not merely provide stimulus or suggestion.^[32]

Qualities of the Guru

The Guru must have the following qualities (see Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.12):

1. Śrotriya — must be learned in the Vedic scriptures and *Sampradaya*
2. Brahmaniṣṭhā — literally meaning 'established in Brahman'; must have realised the oneness of Brahman in everything, and in himself/herself.

The seeker must serve the Guru, and submit questions with all humility in order to remove all doubts (see Bhagavad Gita 4.34). By doing so, Advaita says, the seeker will attain Moksha ('liberation from the cycle of births and deaths').

Epistemology - Ways of knowing

See also: Epistemology

Epistemology (from Greek *ἐπιστήμη* (*epistēmē*), meaning "knowledge, understanding", and *λόγος* (*logos*), meaning "study of") is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and scope (limitations) of knowledge.

Pramāṇas - Correct knowledge

Main article: Pramana

Pramāna, (*sources of knowledge*, Sanskrit प्रमाण), refers to the correct knowledge, arrived at by thorough reasoning, of any object.

Six pramāṇas

In Advaita Vedānta^[33], as in the Bhāṭṭa school of Mimāṃsā, the following pramāṇas are accepted:

1. **Pratyakṣa** (perception), the knowledge gained by means of the senses. That which is immediately perceived to be so; This knowledge can be corrected, e.g. if one perceives a piece of rope to be a snake.
2. **Anumāna** (inference), the knowledge gained by means of inference. That which is perceived as true through previous knowledge, e.g. to know that it is a fire because smoke can be seen in the sky (the two are related through a universal law)
3. **Śabda** (verbal testimony), the knowledge gained by means of texts such as Vedas (also known as Āptavākya, Śabda pramāṇa)
4. **Upamāna** (comparison), the knowledge gained by means of analogy or comparison. That which is perceived as true since it compares to previous, confirmed, knowledge. To know that something is something, e.g. a cat, because one has seen cats before.
5. **Arthāpatti** (postulation), the knowledge gained by superimposing the known knowledge on an

appearing knowledge that does not concur with the known knowledge. I.e. To see someone gain weight while knowing they are fasting, imposes the knowledge that the person is secretly eating.

6. **Anupaladbhi** (negation), the knowledge gained through the absence of the object. That which is true through a negation. Classic e.g. *karatale ghato nasti* - the pot is not on the palm. The pot could be elsewhere. So the place (on the palm) of its absence is also important.

Perception, inference and verbal testimony have the same meaning as in the Nyaya-school. Regarding comparison, postulation and non-cognition Advaita Vedanta views which somewhat differ from the Nyaya-school.^[33]

Pramāṭṛ, Pramāṇa and Prameya

Pramāṇa forms one part of a tripuṭi (trio), namely,

1. Pramāṭṛ, the subject; the knower of the knowledge
2. Pramāṇa, the cause or the means of the knowledge
3. Prameya, the object of knowledge

Domains of knowledge

Shankara refused, where he considered it appropriate, to take a literal approach to scriptural statements and adoption of symbolic interpretation. In a famous passage in his commentary on the Brahmasutra's of Badarayana, Shankara writes

For each means of knowledge (*PramaNam*) has a valid domain. The domain of the scriptures {Shabda PramaNam} is the knowledge of the Self. If the scriptures say something about another domain - like the world around us - which contradicts what perception {Pratyaksha PramaNam} and inference {Anumana PramaNam} (the appropriate methods of knowledge for this domain) tells us, then, the scriptural statements have to be symbolically interpreted.^[citation needed]

Kāraṇa and kārya - cause and effect

Cause (kāraṇa) and effect (kārya) are an important topic in all schools of Vedanta.

Nimitta kāraṇa and Upādāna kāraṇa

Two sorts of causes are recognised:

1. Nimitta kāraṇa, the instrumental cause. A potter is the instrumental cause when he makes a pot.
2. Upādāna kāraṇa, the material cause. The clay is the material cause of the pot.

Brahman is the instrumental cause of creation:

That Lord has created all the forms and is calling them by their names (Taittiriya Aranyaka 3.12.7)^[n]

He thought, "Let Me create the worlds" (Aitareya Upanishad 1.1.1)^{[web 29][o]}

But Brahman is also the material cause:

Dear boy, just as through a single clod of clay all that is made of clay would become known, for all modifications is but name based upon words and the clay alone is real (Chandogya Upanishad 6.1.4^[web 30])^[p]

(He thought) Let me be many, let me be born (Taittiriya Upanishad 2.6.4)^[web 31]^[q]

Thus, based on these and other statements found in the Vedas, Advaita concludes that Brahman is both the instrumental cause and the material cause.

kārya-kāraṇa ananyatva

Advaita states that effect (*kārya*) is non-different from cause (*kāraṇa*), but the cause is different from the effect:

kārya is not different from kāraṇa; however kāraṇa is different from kārya

This principle is called *kārya-kāraṇa ananyatva*.

Effect is not different from cause

When the cause is destroyed, the effect will no longer exist. For example, cotton cloth is the effect of the cotton threads, which is the material cause. Without threads there will be no cotton cloth. Without cotton there will be no thread.

In the Brahmasūtra-Bhāṣya 2.1.9 Adi Shankara describes this as follows:

Despite the non-difference of cause and effect, the effect has its self in the cause but not the cause in the effect.

The effect is of the nature of the cause and not the cause the nature of the effect.

Therefore the qualities of the effect cannot touch the cause.^[web 32]^[r]

Cause is different from effect

The cause is different from the effect. For example, the reflection of the gold ornament seen in the mirror is only the form of the ornament. It is not the ornament itself, since the reflection itself is not the gold.

Brahman is different from the world

This reasoning implies that the world is not different from Brahman, but Brahman is different from the world:

All names and forms are real when seen with the *Sat* (Brahman) but are false when seen independent of Brahman.^[s]

Ontology - The nature of being

See also: Ontology and substance ontology

Ontology is the philosophical study of the nature of *being*, *existence*, or *reality*, as well as the basic categories of being and their relations.

Advaita Vedanta is a so-called substance ontology, an ontology "which holds that underlying the seeming change, variety, and multiplicity of existence there are unchanging and permanent entities (the so-called substances)".^[34] In contrast, Buddhism is a process ontology, according to which "there exists nothing permanent and unchanging, within or without man".^{[35][t]}

Criterion of Sublation

See also: Aufheben

Shankara uses sublatibility as the criterion for the ontological status of any content of consciousness:^[37]

Sublition is essentially the mental process of correcting and rectifying errors of judgement. Thus one is said to sublata a previous held judgment when, in the light of a new experience which contradicts it, one either regards the judgment as false or disvalues it in some significant sense [...]. Not only judgment but also concepts, objects, relations, and in general any content of consciousness can be sublated.^[38]

Three Levels of Reality

See also: Two truths doctrine

Shankara uses sublation as the criterion to postulate an ontological hierarchy:^{[39][web 33]}

- Pāramārthika (paramartha, absolute), the absolute level, "which is absolutely real and into which both other reality levels can be resolved".^[web 33] This experience can't be sublated by any other experience.^[39]
- Vyāvahārika (vyavahara, empirical or pragmatical), "our world of experience, the phenomenal world that we handle every day when we are awake".^[web 33] It is the level in which both *jīva* (living creatures or individual souls) and *Iswara* are true; here, the material world is also true.
- Prātibhāsika (pratibhasika, apparent reality, unreality), "reality based on imagination alone".^[web 33] It is the level in which appearances are actually false, like the illusion of a snake over a rope, or a dream.

Supreme Reality

Brahman

Main articles: Brahman and Nirguna Brahman

According to Adi Shankara, God, the Supreme Cosmic Spirit or *Brahman* is the One, the whole and the only reality (Paramartha Satyam).^[citation needed] Other than *Brahman*, everything else, including the universe, material objects and individuals, are maya. Brahman is absolute reality, unborn and unchanging.^[citation needed]

Brahman is the Self-existent, the Absolute and the Imperishable. Brahman is indescribable. It is at best *Satchidananda*, Infinite Truth, Infinite Consciousness and Infinite Bliss.

Brahman is free from any kind of differences or differentiation. It does not have any sa-jātīya (homogeneous) differentiation because there is no second Brahman. It does not have any vi-jātīya (heterogeneous)

differentiation because there is nobody in reality existing other than Brahman. It has neither *svagata* (internal) differences, because Brahman is itself homogeneous.

Brahman is often described as *neti neti*, "not this, not this" since *Brahman* cannot be correctly described as this or that.

Avidyā

Due to ignorance (*avidyā*), Brahman is visible as the material world and its objects (*nama rupa vikara*). The actual Brahman is attributeless and formless. Brahman, the highest truth and all (reality), does not really change; it is only our ignorance that gives the appearance of change.

The notion of *avidyā* and its relationship to Brahman creates a crucial philosophical issue within Advaita Vedanta thought: how can *avidyā* appear in Brahman, since Brahman is pure consciousness?^[40]

Sengaku Mayeda writes, in his commentary and translation of Adi Shankara's *Upadesasahasri*:

Certainly the most crucial problem which Sankara left for his followers is that of *avidyā*. If the concept is logically analyzed, it would lead the Vedanta philosophy toward dualism or nihilism and uproot its fundamental position.^[41]

Logical proofs

Adi Shankara based his teachings of Brahman on various arguments:

- *Shruti* — the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras describe Brahman in almost exact manner as Adi Shankara. This is the testimonial proof of Brahman.
- Psychological — every person experiences his soul, or *atman*. According to Adi Shankara, *Atman = Brahman*. This argument also proves the omniscience of the Brahman.
- Essential — Brahman is the basis of this created world.
- Perceptible feeling — many people, when they achieve the *turīya* state, claim that their soul has become one with everything else.

Empirical reality

Māyā

Main articles: Maya (Hinduism) and Māyā

According to Adi Shankara, *Māyā* (/mɑːjɑː/) is the complex illusionary power of Brahman which causes the Brahman to be seen as the material world of separate forms. Its shelter is Brahman, but Brahman itself is untouched by the illusion of *Māyā*, just as a magician is not tricked by his own magic.

All sense data entering ones awareness via the five senses are *Māyā*. *Māyā* is neither completely real nor completely unreal, hence indescribable. *Māyā* is temporary and is transcended with "true knowledge", or perception of the more fundamental reality which permeates *Māyā*.

Maya has two main functions:

1. To "hide" Brahman from ordinary human perception,
2. To present the material world in its (Brahmam) place.

Swami Vivekananda explains the concept of *Māyā* as follows:

Maya of the Vedanta, in its last developed form, is neither Idealism nor Realism, nor is it a theory. It is a simple statement of facts—what we are and what we see around us [...]
 What does the statement of existence of the world mean then? [...] It means that it has no absolute existence. It exists only in relation to my mind, to your mind and to the mind of everyone else [...]
 We have to work in and through it. It is a mixture of existence and non-existence [...] There is neither how nor why in fact; we only know it is and that we can not help it [...] The very basis of our being is contradiction.^[42]

The world is unreal and real

The world is both unreal and real. but something can't be both true and false at the same time; hence Adi Shankara has classified the world as indescribable.

Adi Sankara says that the world is not real (true), it is an illusion. Adi Sankara gives the following reasoning:^[citation needed]

- Whatever thing remains eternal is true, and whatever is non-eternal is untrue. Since the world is created and destroyed, it is not real (true).
- Truth is the thing which is unchanging. Since the world is changing, it is not real (false).
- Whatever is independent of space and time is real (true), and whatever has space and time in itself is not real (false).
- Just as one sees dreams in sleep, he sees a kind of super-dream when he is waking. The world is compared to this conscious dream.
- The world is believed to be a superimposition of the Brahman. Superimposition cannot be real (true).

Adi Sankara also claims that the world is not absolutely unreal (false). It appears unreal (false) only when compared to Brahman. At the empirical or pragmatic level, the world is completely real:^[43]

- If the world were unreal (false), then with the liberation of the first living being, the world would have been annihilated. However, the world continues to exist even if a living being attains liberation.(but it is possible that no living being attained the ultimate knowledge (liberation) till now.
- Adi Sankara believes in *karma*, or good actions. This is a feature of this world. So the world cannot be unreal (false).
- The Supreme Reality Brahman is the basis of this world. The world is like its reflection. Hence the world cannot be totally unreal (false).
- False is something which is ascribed to nonexistent things, like Sky-lotus. The world is a logical thing, a fact which is perceived by our senses and exists but is not the truth.

The world being both unreal and real is explained by the following. A pen is placed in front of a mirror. One can see its reflection. To one's eyes, the image of the pen is perceived. Now, what should the image be called? It cannot be true, because it is an image. The truth is the pen. It cannot be false, because it is seen by our eyes.

Īsvara - The Supreme Lord

Īsvara (pronounced [ˈiːʃvərə], literally, the Lord) Parama Īshvara means "The Supreme Lord".

According to Advaita Vedanta, when man tries to know the attributeless Brahman with his mind, under the influence of Maya, Brahman becomes the Lord. Isvara is Brahman with Maya — the manifested form of Brahman. Adi Shankara uses a metaphor that when the "reflection" of the Cosmic Spirit falls upon the mirror of Maya, it appears as the Ishvara or Supreme Lord. The Ishvara is true only in the pragmatic level. God's actual form in the transcendental level is the Cosmic Spirit.

Ishvara is false and true

Ishvara is, in an ultimate sense, described as "false" because Brahman appears as Ishvara only due to the curtain of Maya. However, just as the world is true in the pragmatic level, similarly, Ishvara is also pragmatically true. Just as the world is not absolutely false, Ishvara is also not absolutely false.

Saguna Brahman

Ishvara can be described as Saguna Brahman or Brahman with attributes that may be regarded to have a personality with human and Godly attributes. This concept of Ishvara is also used to visualize and worship in anthropomorphic form deities such as Shiva, Vishnu or Devi by the dvaitins which leads to immense confusion in the understanding of a monistic concept of God apart from polytheistic worship of Vishnu, Shiva and Shakti in Hinduism.

Karma

Main article: Karma in Hinduism

Ishvara is the distributor of the fruits of one's Karma. Whenever referencing Brahman, is referencing God. God is the highest knowledge theoretically possible. Devotion (*Bhakti*) will cancel the effects of bad Karma and will bring a person closer to the true knowledge by purifying his mind. Slowly, the difference between the worshipper and the worshipped decreases and upon true knowledge, liberation occurs.

Creation of the world

See also: Satkāryavāda

At the pragmatic level, the universe is believed to be the creation of the Supreme Lord Ishvara. Maya is the divine magic whereby Ishvara creates the world.^[*citation needed*]

The Upanishads describe how the world is created.^[*citation needed*] First of all, the five subtle elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth) are created from Ishvara. Ether is created by Maya. From ether, air is born. From air, fire is born. From fire, water is born. From water, earth is born. From a proportional combination of all five subtle elements, the five gross elements are created, like the gross sky, the gross fire, etc. From these gross elements, the universe and life are created. This series is exactly the opposite during destruction.

Adi Shankara assumes that Creation is recreation or play of Ishvara. It is His nature, just as it is man's nature to breathe. Creating the world for any incentive slanders the wholeness and perfection of Ishvara. Creating the world for gaining something is against His perfection. Creating the world out of compassion is illogical, since the emotion of compassion cannot arise in a blank and void world in the beginning, when only Ishvara existed.^[*citation needed*]

Adi Shankara states that, at the empirical level, the world is created through *Satkāryavāda*. According to *Satkāryavāda*, the effect is pre-existent in the cause. There is only an apparent or illusory change in the appearance of the cause, and not a material one, when it becomes effect. The effect is just a transformation of the cause. The original cause or ground of everything is seen as Prakriti.^[44]

Shankara's understanding differs from the Samkhya-understanding of *Satkāryavāda*. Samkhya-philosophy adheres to a sub-form of *Satkāryavāda* called *Parinamavada*, evolution, whereby the cause really becomes an effect. Adi Shankara adheres to a sub-form called *Vivartavada*. According to *Vivartavada*, the effect is merely an apparent transformation of its cause, like illusion. For example, in darkness a man often confuses a rope to be a snake. But this does not mean that the rope has actually transformed into a snake.

A criticism against *Satkāryavāda* is the question how Ishvara, whose form is spiritual, can be the effect of this material world. Adi Shankara says that just as from a conscious living human, inanimate objects like hair and nails are formed, similarly, the inanimate world is formed from the spiritual Ishvara.

Ishvara in the Vedas

The sole proof for Ishvara that Adi Shankara gives is Shruti's mentions of Ishvara, as Ishvara is beyond logic and thinking. This is similar to Kant's philosophy about Ishvara in which he says that "faith" is the basis of theism. However, Adi Shankara has also given few other logical proofs for Ishvara, but warning us not to completely rely on them:

- The world is a work, an effect, and so must have real cause. This cause must be Ishvara.
- The world has a wonderful unity, coordination and order, so its creator must have been an intelligent being.
- People do good and sinful work and get its fruits, either in this life or after. People themselves cannot be the giver of their fruits, as no one would give himself the fruit of his sin. Also, this giver cannot be an unconscious object. So the giver of the fruits of karma is Ishvara.

Anthropology - The nature of man

Ātman

Main article: Ātman (Hinduism)

Ātman (IAST: *ātman*, Sanskrit: आत्मन्) is a Sanskrit word that means 'self'. Ātman is the first principle,^[45] the *true* self of an individual beyond identification with phenomena, the essence of an individual.

When the reflection of Atman falls on *avidya* (ignorance), atman becomes *jīva* — a living being with a body and senses. Each *jīva* feels as if he has his own, unique and distinct Atman, called *jivatman*. The concept of *jīva* is true only in the pragmatic level. In the transcendental level, only the one Atman, equal to Brahman, is true.

Ātman is not a part of Brahman that ultimately dissolves into Brahman, but identical with Brahman. The characteristics of Atman are Consciousness, Reality and Bliss.

Atman, being the silent witness of all the modifications, is free and beyond sin and merit. It does not experience happiness or pain because it is beyond the triad of Experiencer, Experienced and Experiencing. It

does not do any Karma because it is Aaptakaama. It is incorporeal and independent.

Koshas

According to Advaita Vedanta the Atman is covered by five koshas, usually rendered "sheath" ^[web 34] They are often visualised like the layers of an onion:

According to the Kosha system in Yogic philosophy, the nature of being human encompasses physical and psychological aspects that function as one holistic system. The Kosha system refers to these different aspects as layers of subjective experience. Layers range from the dense physical body to the more subtle levels of emotions, mind and spirit. Psychology refers to the emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of our being. Together, all aspects make up our subjective experience of being alive.^[46]

The five sheaths (pancha-kosas) are alluded to in the fourteen verse of the Atmabodha. From gross to fine they are:

1. Annamaya kosha, food-apparent-sheath
2. Pranamaya kosha, air-apparent-sheath
3. Manomaya kosha, mind-stuff-apparent-sheath
4. Vijnanamaya kosha, wisdom-apparent-sheath
5. Anandamaya kosha, bliss-apparent-sheath (*Ananda*)

According to Vedanta the wise man should discriminate between the self and the koshas, which are non-self.

Avasthātraya - Three states of consciousness

Adi Shankara discerned three states of consciousness, namely waking (jāgrat), dreaming (svapna), and deep sleep (sufupti):^{[web 35][web 36]}

1. The first state is the waking state, in which we are aware of our daily world. "It is described as outward-knowing (bahish-prajnya), gross (sthula) and universal (vaishvanara)" ^[web 36]
2. The second state is the dreaming mind. "It is described as inward-knowing (antah-prajnya), subtle (pravivikta) and burning (taijasa)" ^[web 36]
3. The third state is the state of deep sleep. In this state the underlying ground of consciousness is undistracted, "the Lord of all (sarv'-eshvara), the knower of all (sarva-jnya), the inner controller (antar-yami), the source of all (yonih sarvasya), the origin and dissolution of created things (prabhav'-apyayau hi bhutanam)" ^[web 36]

Status of ethics

Some claim that there is no place for ethics in Advaita, "that it turns its back on all theoretical and practical considerations of morality and, if not unethical, is at least 'a-ethical' in character" ^[47]



The swan is an important motif in Advaita. It symbolises two things: first, the swan is called *hamsah* in Sanskrit (which becomes *hamso* if the first letter in the next word is /h/). Upon repeating this *hamso* indefinitely, it becomes *so-aham*, meaning, "I am That". Second, just as a swan lives in water but its feathers are not soiled by water, similarly a liberated Advaitin lives in this world full of maya but is untouched by its illusion.

Ethics *does* have a firm place in this philosophy. Ethics, which implies doing good Karma, indirectly helps in attaining true knowledge.^[48] Many Advaitins consider Karma a "necessary fiction".^[*citation needed*] Karma cannot be proven to exist through any of the Pramāṇas.^[u] However, to encourage students to strive towards Vidyā (spiritual knowledge) and combat Avidyā (ignorance), the idea of Karma is maintained.

Truth, non-violence, service of others, pity, are *Dharma*, and lies, violence, cheating, selfishness, greed, are *adharma* (sin). However, no authoritative definition of *Dharma* was ever formulated by any of the major exponents of Advaita Vedanta. Unlike ontological and epistemological claims, there is room for significant disagreement between Advaitins on ethical issues.

Advaita and other Indian philosophies

Advaita developed in a multi-faceted religious and philosophical landscape. The tradition developed in interaction with the other traditions of India, Buddhism, Vaishnavism and Shaivism, as well as the other schools of Vedanta.

Influence of Mahayana Buddhism

Although Shankara's Advaita, like other traditions of Vedanta, claims to base itself chiefly on the Upanishads^[v], the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras, many authorities from India and elsewhere have noted that it shows signs of influence from Mahayana Buddhism.

Buddhist influences

John Grimes writes that while Mahayana Buddhism's influence on Advaita Vedanta has been ignored for most of its history, scholars now see it as undeniable:

That Mahayana Buddhism had an influence upon the formation of Advaita Vedanta philosophy is now indubitable. However, for over a thousand years, this influence has either been virtually ignored, on the one hand, or either hotly contested by Advaita adherents or summarily paid lip service as some sort of crypto-Buddhism, on the other.^[50]

Eliot Deutsch and Rohit Dalvi state:

In any event a close relationship between the Mahayana schools and Vedanta did exist with the latter borrowing some of the dialectical techniques, if not the specific doctrines, of the former.^[51]

S. Mudgal noted that among some traditionalist Indian scholars, it was the accepted view that Shankara

Adopted practically all [...] dialectic (of the Buddhists), their methodology, their arguments and analysis, their concepts, their terminologies and even their philosophy of the Absolute, gave all of them a Vedantic appearance, and demolished Buddhism... Sankara embraced Buddhism, but it was a fatal embrace".^[52]

Madhyamaka and Yogacara

Main articles: Madhyamaka and Yogacara

The Mahayana schools with whom Shankara's Advaita is said to share similarities are the Madhyamaka, founded by Nagarjuna,^[53] and the Yogacara,^[54] founded by Vasubandhu^[55] and Asanga^[56] in the early centuries of the Common Era.

Gaudapada

This influence goes back at least to Gaudapada:

Gaudapada rather clearly draws from Buddhist philosophical sources for many of his arguments and distinctions and even for the forms and imagery in which these arguments are cast.^[51]

Michael Comans has also demonstrated how Gaudapada, an early Vedantin, utilized some arguments and reasoning from Madhyamaka Buddhist texts by quoting them almost verbatim.

However, Comans believes there is a fundamental difference between Buddhist thought and that of Gaudapada, in that Buddhism has as its philosophical basis the doctrine of Dependent Origination, while Gaudapada does not at all rely on this principle. Gaudapada's Ajativada is an outcome of reasoning applied to an unchanging nondual reality, the fundamental teaching of the Upanishads.^[57]

Upanishadic influences

Many authors are of the opinion that the similarities in Advaita and certain aspects of Buddhism were due to the Upanishadic influence on both streams. For instance, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, an important intellectual figure of 20th century India, wrote in his book *Indian Philosophy*:

"There are no doubt similarities between the views of Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta, and this is not surprising in view of the fact that both these systems had for their background the Upanishads."^[58]

In the same vein, C.D Sharma, in his *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, states:

Buddhism and Vedanta should not be viewed as two opposed systems, but one which starts with the Upanishads, finds its indirect support in Buddha, its elaboration in Mahayana Buddhism, its open revival in Gaudapada, (and) which reaches its zenith in Sankara."^[59]

Mudgal states that the Advaita according to Shankara is a synthesis of two independent and opposing streams of thought, the Upanishadic and the Buddhist, representing the orthodox and the heterodox respectively.^[60]

Advaita-criticisms

In India, the similarity of Shankara's Advaita to Buddhism was brought up by his rivals from other Vedanta schools, while on the other hand, Mahayanists such as Bhavyaviveka had to defend themselves from Theravada Buddhist accusations of the Mahayana doctrine being just another form of Vedantism.^{[61][w][62]}

Shankara defended himself against these accusations:

Samkara's criticisms of Buddhism are nevertheless powerful and they exhibit clearly at least how Samkara saw the difference between Buddhism and his own Vedantic philosophy.^[51]

Mutual influence

Sri Kamakoti Mandali points to a mutual influence of Mahayana Buddhism and Vedic culture on each other.^[web 37] Mandali mentions the *Vedantinization* of Buddhism, which is discernable in the Aālayavijñāna of the Yogacara and the Tathāgatagarbha-doctrine:

As is well known, in the Lankavatara Sutra, which was probably composed around the year 400 A.D., Tathāgatagarbha or the matrix-embryo of the tathAgata was not only at times identified with Alaya-vijñna, but the definition of this Tathāgatagarbha was also very similar to the definition of Brahman in the Vedanta.^[web 37]

An important difference is that the Aālayavijñāna is not a "permanent substratum", where-as Atman and Brahman are "one persistent entity", "absolutely unchangeable".^[web 37]

According to Mandali, "Buddhism was gradually in the process of moving towards monism". The inclusion of the Aālayavijñāna and Tathāgatagarbha doctrines in Buddhist thought...

... reveals to us the weakening of Buddhism as a social force and the revival of Brahmanism and the consequent Brahmanization or Vedantinization of Buddhism. The tendency towards a monistic way of thinking is one great current that runs through the orthodox line of the history of Indian thought from the time of Rgveda.^[web 37]

On the other hand, in the Advaita Vedanta school...

... the realistic monism of the Brahmasutra was gradually transformed and moved closer and closer to the Buddhism which had a more advanced theoretical system than the Vedanta. While doing so, this Vedanta philosophy came to be "buddhisticized" considerably.^[web 37]

This 'Buddhistisation' is clearly reflected in Gaudapada's Mandukyakarika.^[web 37] Shankara's goal was to revive the Vedanta school "from the standpoint of orthodox Brahmanism".^[web 37]

[U]sing his profound knowledge of Buddhism, he transmuted Buddhist doctrines in the Mandukyakarika into Advaita; in other words, he re-injected the Upanishadic spirit into the extremely buddhisticized Mandukyakarika of his paramaguru, pouring new life into it as it were, giving it an interpretation that followed the line of Vedanta school and achieved the re-Vedantinization of the buddhisticized Vedantic tradition.^[web 37]

The incorporation of 'absolutist' and 'essentialist' doctrines has also been noted by Kalupahana. He sees the Madhyamaka and Yogacara-schools as reactions against this development, trying to counter it with a return to the original process-ontology of early Buddhism.^{[63][64]} Both schools survive in the Buddhist traditions of Tibet, China and Japan, bearing witness to the influence of Indian culture in Asia, but eventually vanished from India, together with the 'essentialist' schools of Buddhism.

Modern praise of the Buddha

In modern India, spiritual gurus following the tradition of Advaita Vedanta have generally been enthusiastic in their praise of the Buddha. Swami Vivekananda of the monastic Ramakrishna Mission, a leading figure in the late 19th century religious scene in India, spoke highly of the Buddha^[65] and the similarities between Advaita

and Buddhist thought.^[66]

Common-core thesis

See also: Perennial philosophy

Western scholars like N.V. Isaeva state that the Advaita and Buddhist philosophies, after being purified of accidental or historical accretions, can be safely regarded as different expressions of the same eternal absolute truth.^[67]

Ninian Smart, a historian of religion, noted that the differences between Shankara and Mahayana doctrines are largely a matter of emphasis and background, rather than essence.^{[68][x]}

Relationship with other forms of Vedanta

The exposition and spread of Advaita by Sankara spurred debate with the two main theistic schools of Vedanta philosophy that were formalized later: Vishishtadvaita (qualified nondualism), and Dvaita (dualism).

Vishishtadvaita

Main article: Vishishtadvaita

Yamunacharya, a 10th-century AD proponent of the Vishishtadvaita philosophy that opposed Shankara's Advaita, compared Advaita to Buddhism and remarked in his *Siddhitraya* that for both the Buddhists and the Advaitins, the distinctions of knower, known and knowledge are unreal. The Advaita traces them to Maya, while Buddhist subjectivism traces them to buddhi.^[69] Ramanujacharya, another prominent Vishishtadvaita philosopher, accused Shankara of being a *Prachanna Bauddha*, that is, a hidden Buddhist^[70]

Dvaita

Main article: Dvaita

The Dvaita, founded by Madhvacharya (1238–1317 AD), was partisan to Vaishnavism, building on a cogent system of Vedantic interpretation that proceeded to take on Advaita in full measure. Madhvacharya's student Narayana, in his *Madhvavijaya*, a hagiography of Madhva, characterized Madhva and Shankara as born-enemies, and describes Shankara as a "demon born on earth".^[71] Surendranath Dasgupta noted that some Madhva mythology went so far as to characterize the followers of Shankara as "tyrannical people who burned down monasteries, destroyed cattle and killed women and children".^[72]

Advaita and Kashmir Shaivism

Over time, followers of Advaita came to consider Shankara as an incarnation or Avatar of the God Shiva.^{[web 40][73]} The Kashmir Shaivism tradition founded by Abhinavagupta is also non-dualist in outlook, much like the Advaita Vedanta, though it differs in many significant ways.^[citation needed] For example, while Advaita Vedanta is based on the Upanishads, Brahma Sutras, and the Bhagavad Gita,^[74] Kashmir Saivism is based on a monistic interpretation of the *Bhairava Tantras* and *Kaula Tantras*.^[75] Some authors have

suggested a link between the two, with philosophy of Vedantins such as Gaudapada finding its further development and theistic expression in Abhinavagupta.^{[76][y]}

Advaita and Sufism

Sufism is the mystical tradition of Islam. According to sufi scholar Martin Lings,

Prince Dara Shikoh (d.1619), the Sufi son of the Mogul Emperor Shah Jahan, was able to affirm that Sufism and Advaita Vedantism [Hinduism] are essentially the same, with a surface difference of terminology.^[web 41]

List of teachers

Main article: List of teachers of Advaita Vedanta

Advaita Vedanta has had many teachers over the centuries in India and other countries.

See also

- Shri Gaudapadacharya Math
- Kashmir Shaivism - an unrelated Hindu monistic / nondual school
- Sringeri matha
- Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya - a non-profit organisation dedicated to Advaita Vedanta

Notes

- a. ^ "Brahman" is not to be confused with Brahma, the Creator and one third of the Trimurti along with Shiva, the Destroyer and Vishnu, the Preserver.
 - b. ^ The following Sanskrit Verse among Smarthas provides the list of the early teachers of the Vedanta in their order:^{[web 2][7]} "नारायणं पद्मभुवं वशिष्ठं शक्तिं च तत्पुत्रं पराशरं च व्यासं शुकं गौडपादं महान्तं गोविन्दयोगीन्द्रं अथास्य शिष्यम् श्री शंकराचार्यं अथास्य पद्मपादं च हस्तामलकं च शिष्यम् तं तोटकं वार्त्तिककारमन्यान् अस्मद् गुरुन् सन्ततमानतोऽस्मि अद्वैत गुरु परंपरा स्तोत्रम्"
- "nārāyaṇam padmabhuvam vasishtam saktim ca tat-putram parāśaram ca vyāsam śukam gauḍapāda mahāntam govinda yogīndram athāsya śiṣyam śrī śankarācāryam athāsya padmapādam ca hastāmalakam ca śiṣyam tam trotakam vārtikakāram-anyān asmād gurūn santatamānato'smi Advaita-Guru-Paramparā-Stotram",
- The above advaita guru paramparā verse salute the prominent gurus of advaita, starting from Nārāyaṇa through Adi Sankara and his disciples, up to the Acharyas of today.
- c. ^ the famous redactor of the vedas, he is also traditionally identified with Bādarāyaṇa, the composer of the Brahmasūtras
 - d. ^ It is often used interchangeably with the term *citta-mātra*, but they have different meanings. The standard translation of both terms is "consciousness-only" or "mind-only." Several modern researchers object this translation, and the accompanying label of "absolute idealism" or "idealistic monism".^[9] A better translation for *viḅṅapti-mātra* is *representation-only*.^[10]
 - e. ^ 1. Something is. 2. It is not. 3. It both is and is not. 4. It neither is nor is not.^{[web 3][11]}
 - f. ^ The influence of Mahayana Buddhism on other religions and philosophies was not limited to Vedanta.