The Black Sun That Destroys Inner Darkness: Or, How Bādarāyaṇa Became Vyāsa

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There is a widespread belief in Hinduism that Vyāsa, the alleged editor of the Vedas and author of the *Mahābhārata*, is identical with Bādarāyaṇa, the author of the *Brahma-sūtra*. The identification of these two mythic characters, however, originated between 800–980 CE, after the likes of Śaṅkara, Padmapāda, and Bhāskara, but before Vācaspati Miśra, Prakāśātman, Sarvajñātman, and Yāmuna. The purpose of this paper is to understand how and why such identification took place. The argument developed here is that the Bādarāyaṇa-Vyāsa identity was invented by the author of or community behind the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as part of a complex of self-representation strategies. The *Bhāgavata* intentionally makes itself a work of Vedānta, indeed the *Brahma-sūtra* itself, over which it builds a new soteriology that is centered on the idea of *bhakti*. Two factors in particular stand out in light of the *Bhāgavata*'s Vedāntic background: Vyāsa's paradigmatic character as the preserver of old *dharma* and the innovator, *visionary*, of new soteriologies; and the image of Vyāsa's son Śuka as the model ascetic and ideal candidate for the new soteriological vision, through whom the *Bhāgavata* community chose to represent itself.

There is a commonly accepted belief in Hinduism that Vyāsa, the alleged editor of the Vedas and author of the *Mahābhārata*, is also the author of the *Brahma-sūtra* (BS). This belief hardly needs substantiating: it would be sufficient to look at the fine translation of Śaṅkara's *Brahma-sūtra-bhaṣya* produced by Swami Gambhirananda of the Advaita Ashrama, who customarily renders Śaṅkara's *ācārya* and *sūtrakāra* with "the teacher (Vyāsa)" and "the aphorist (Vyāsa),"[1] or to consult some of the hagiographical material on Śaṅkara, who is said to have met Vyāsa, the author of the *Brahma-sūtra*, at the Badarikāśrama on the Himālaya.[2] One may illustrate this belief with the title of Bhāratitīrtha's (fourteenth-century) *Vaiyāsika-nyāya-mālā* "Garland of Vyāsa's Topics," a versified restatement of the BS in the tradition of Advaita Vedānta.[3] As Bhāratitīrtha says in his auto-commentary, the garland of topics that ascertain the meaning of the Upaniṣadic statements, i.e., the BS itself, was composed by Vyāsa and is, therefore, Vyāsa's.[4] This belief, however, has a roughly determinate birthday

Author's note: I am thankful to the Macmillan Center for International and Area Studies, Yale University, and the Yale Library System, without whose institutional support the research that resulted in this paper would not have been possible. I am also thankful to the three anonymous reviewers and the sectional editor of the Journal, Stephanie Jamison, for their most useful comments that improved the final version of the paper. Two individuals have greatly helped me in this undertaking: the sharp eye and intellect of Phyllis Granoff saved me from many blunders; Christophe Vielle with his intimate knowledge of Kerala clarified what I was only hazily aware of and made it possible for me to write the final section. I am most thankful to both.

1. See Gambhirananda 1965: 45, 272, 335, 433, 550, 645, 664, 883.
2. See, for instance, Mahadevan 1968: chap. II.
3. On this work see Clooney 2020.
4. *vyāsenoktā vaiyāsikī; vedānta-vākyārtha-nirṇāyakāny adhikaraṇāni nyāyāḥ; teṣām anukrameṇa granthaṁ mālā*. Comment on verse 1 (Pandit 1891). Punctuation mine, for clarity. Throughout, the quoted or referenced edition of a Sanskrit work listed in the bibliography is mentioned only on the first quote or reference.

https://doi.org/10.5913/jaos.142.1.2022.ar004

or, like most things in Indian intellectual history, a couple of birth centuries. In the oldest preserved commentaries on the BS, all written probably in the eighth century CE, the author of the BS is most commonly called the *sūtrakāra* and identified with Bādarāyaṇa, one of the several authorities cited in the work. This changes at the end of the tenth century, when four Vedāntins of great importance all maintain that Vyāsa wrote the BS and that Vyāsa *was* Bādarāyaṇa. The purpose of this paper, then, is to tackle the questions "why this change?" and "why this identity?"

I want to emphasize at the outset that my question here does not concern the actual authorship of the BS or its composition history, which are still very much open issues in the study of Vedānta—inextricably related to the question of the unity or otherwise of the two Mīmāṁsās—and tend to raise Indological dust in occasional spouts.[5] The question that I wish to address, simply, is not one of *composition*, but of *reception history*.

My argument here will be that in all likelihood the Bādarāyaṇa-Vyāsa identity was invented by the author of or community behind the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as part of a complex of self-representation strategies. The *Bhāgavata* intentionally makes itself a work of Vedānta, *indeed the BS itself*, over which it builds a new soteriology that is centered on the idea of *bhakti*. Two factors in particular stand out in light of the *Bhāgavata*'s Vedāntic background: Vyāsa's paradigmatic character as the preserver of old *dharma* and the innovator, *visionary*, of new soteriologies; and the image of Vyāsa's son Śuka as the model ascetic and ideal candidate for the new soteriological vision, through whom the *Bhāgavata* community chose to represent itself.

Before I develop the argument, though, I want to give its synopsis and briefly explain the title of the paper. I begin with a statement of the problem in light of the available textual evidence—how there occurs a break in the attribution of the BS authorship between the eighth and the tenth centuries—and then briefly review prominent scholarly attempts to solve it, all of which are found to be unsatisfactory. I propose, next, that understanding the reason for Bādarāyaṇa's becoming Vyāsa is predicated on understanding Vyāsa's character in the Hindu imaginaire. I move, next, to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* strategies of self-representation, in which its claims to Vedāntic pedigree are contextualized. Two *Bhāgavata* ideas prove significant for the problem. They are *naiṣkarmya* and *pāramahaṁsya*, both thoroughly ascetic ideals in the *Bhāgavata* worldview. I consider these in some detail to argue that the *Bhāgavata* overlays *bhakti* on a soteriology which is that of Advaita Vedānta in the strong sense of the term, that of Śaṅkara and Sureśvara, in which light the subsumption of Bādarāyaṇa under the character of Vyāsa makes sense. After briefly considering issues such as the presence of Bādarāyaṇa in the wider Purāṇic literature and the date of the *Bhāgavata*, I finish the paper with an illustration of the circumstances in which Advaita Vedāntins and Bhāgavata Vaiṣṇavas would have been in the kind of proximity that would be required for the *Bhāgavata* soteriology to develop and Bādarāyaṇa to become Vyāsa.

Right at the last juncture when Vedāntins still paid homage to Bādarāyaṇa as the author of the BS, they began describing him as the sun that opens the lotus of the mind, in Bhāskara's words, or of scripture, in Padmapāda's. Our Vedāntins were clearly playing on the *kāvya* image of the sun who is the lover of the lotus that blooms at sunrise, such that Bādarāyaṇa's "dawn" through his *Brahma-sūtra* makes our understanding bloom and opens the secrets of scripture. But then, when Bādarāyaṇa becomes Vyāsa, he acquires a new dimension in his solar identity: he is Kṛṣṇa, the "black" Dvaipāyana, who also goes by the name of Apāntaratamas, "he who removes inner darkness." He becomes the black sun that removes

5. On the latest resurgence of this issue, the reader may wish to consult Bronkhorst 2007; Aklujkar 2011.

inner darkness. As Prakāśātman the next *maṅgalācaraṇa* author notes, the black sun is like no other. When it is hot and bright it illumines the formless sky with its thousands of rays—it depicts the formless Brahman by means of the words of *śruti*—yet by being black it is capable of destroying inner darkness. To extend the poetic image, then, the black sun is able to court the lotus *even when the lotus is closed*; to enter, as the *Chāndogya Up.* (8.1.1) describes it, the *daharaṁ puṇḍarīkaṁ veśma*, the small lotus dwelling, the inner space that is the heart.

THE PROBLEM: BĀDARĀYAṆA BECOMES VYĀSA

The scholarly impression that in Śaṅkara's opinion Bādarāyaṇa and Vyāsa were not identical has been around since the early nineteenth century and Windischmann's Latin work *Sancara: Sive de theologumenis vedanticorum*. However, the first to weigh most of the evidence and formally make the case was Kashinath Trimbak Telang in 1885, in a paper entitled "A Note on Bādarāyaṇa, the Author of the Brahma Sūtras." The issue has been picked up several times since, but not much more of substance—concerning specifically the question of Śaṅkara's opinion on the authorship—has been added.[6] Let us go briefly through the evidence.

Śaṅkara (ca. 700–750 CE),[7] whose *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* (BSBh) is the oldest preserved BS commentary, never describes Vyāsa, the sage of *Mahābharata* fame, as the BS author. Throughout the BSBh, for Śaṅkara the author is simply "the venerable aphorist," if one may translate *bhagavān sūtrakāra* in those terms, or even more generally "the teacher" (*ācārya*).[8] Still, in the introduction to the last *sūtra*, Śaṅkara puts a name to the *sūtrakāra* title: it is the venerable teacher Bādarāyaṇa.[9] To this core several important elements can be added. First, in BSBh 3.3.32 Śaṅkara mentions the rebirth of the "Vedic teacher and Purāṇic seer" Apāntaratamas as Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana at the juncture point between the Dvāpara and Kali ages.[10] He does not identify this Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana, the Vyāsa of the *Mahābhārata*, with Bādarāyaṇa or the *sūtrakāra*, as one might expect he would while commenting precisely on his work. Second, when Śaṅkara does talk about Vyāsa, he generally describes him as a *śiṣṭa*, a member of a select group of *smṛti* text authors, and commonly mentions him along with Manu as the other paragon of this group.[11] And third, not only in the BSBh but throughout his authentic works, Śaṅkara never mixes up Vyāsa with Bādarāyaṇa. Sengaku Mayeda (1965: 186–87) has used this observation as one of the criteria by which to adjudicate the authenticity of Śaṅkara's works: if Bādarāyaṇa or the *sūtrakāra* is called Vyāsa, a work attributed to Śaṅkara is likely not his.

6. Telang refers to Albrecht Weber's *The History of Indian Literature*, in which Weber is not sure if Vyāsa of the *Śaṅkara-vijaya* (attributed to Ānandagiri)—described as the father of Śuka, who is the teacher of Gauḍapāda, the teacher of Govinda—should be identified with Vyāsa Bādarāyaṇa, "though this appears to me at least very probable" (p. 243). Weber, further, refers to Friedrich Heinrich Hugo Windischmann's opinion that Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana of the *Mahābhārata* and Vyāsa Bādarāyaṇa, the author of the BS, must have been different in Śaṅkara's eyes. See also Mirashi 1923; Subramanya Sastri 1946; and Sankaranarayanan 2003, as well as Kane's *History of Dharmaśāstra* V.2: 1165–78.

7. The literature on Śaṅkara's date is extensive; see Uskokov 2018b for an overview.

8. BSBh 1.1.2, 23, 24; 1.3.19; 2.1.1, 14; 2.2.11, 37; 3.3.44, 57 (N. Śāstri 1890–91).

9. *uttaraṁ bhagavān bādarāyaṇa ācāryaḥ paṭhati — anāvṛttiḥ śabdād anāvṛttiḥ śabdāt*. "Thus, the teacher, venerable Bādarāyaṇa, replies, 'no return, because [that is what] the word [says]'." This means that *sūtra* 4.4.22 expresses Bādarāyaṇa's opinion, although the text does not identify it as such.

10. The story of Apāntaratamas, also called Sārasvata, is narrated in the *Śānti-parvan* (chapter 337) of the *Mahābhārata*. For a translation see Sullivan 1999: 120–23. All references to the MBh in this article are to the Critical Edition.

11. BSBh 1.3.29, 2.1.12, 2.3.47, 3.1.14.

Two other Vedāntins temporally proximate to Śaṅkara were similarly innocent of the Vyāsa-Bādarāyaṇa identity. Śaṅkara's immediate student Padmapāda in *maṅgalācarana* 2 of his *Pañcapādikā* (Bhāgavatāchārya 1891) on the BSBh pays respect to the BS author:

namaḥ śruti-śiraḥ-padma-ṣaṇḍa-mārtaṇḍa-mūrtaye |
bādarāyaṇa-saṁjñāya munaye śama-veśmane ||
Homage to the sage bearing the name Bādarāyaṇa, an abode of tranquility and an embodiment of the sun for the cluster of lotuses that constitute the summit of scripture.

Vyāsa himself is never mentioned in the *Pañcapādikā*.

Śaṅkara's fierce critic Bhāskara,[12] like his famous predecessor, associates the last *sūtra*, and *eo ipso* the whole work, with Bādarāyaṇa.[13] He throws in a *maṅgalācaraṇa*—the first of two—for good measure, intending not only to praise Bādarāyaṇa but also to put in a good word for himself:

janma-bandha-vinivṛtti-kāraṇam brahma-sūtram idaṁ udbabhau yataḥ |
śrotṛ-citta-kamalaika-bhāskaraṁ bādarāyaṇam ṛṣiṁ namāmi tam ||
I bow down to that seer Bādarāyaṇa, the one and only sun (Bhāskara) for the lotus of the mind of the listener, from whom this *Brahma-sūtra* that is the cause of cessation of bondage through rebirth had arisen.

*Maṅgalācaraṇa*s thenceforth become the place to salute the BS author, but once we approach the second half of the tenth century, this author becomes explicitly Vyāsa. And it is not small-timers, but three of the greatest Advaitins that make the connection. Let us cite their *maṅgalācaraṇa*s, some of which contain poetic merit as well. Vācaspati Miśra toward the end of the millennium[14] pays the following respect in his *Bhāmatī* (*maṅgalācarana* 5):

brahma-sūtra-kṛte tasmai vyāsāyāpara-vedhase |
jñāna-śakty-avatārāya namo bhagavato hareḥ ||
Homage to Vyāsa, the other creator, the author of the *Brahma-sūtra*, the incarnation of the cognitive power of Lord Hari.[15]

Vācaspati is famous for one of the two dominant post-Śaṅkara streams of Advaita Vedānta, the "Bhāmatī school." However, whichever of the two was philosophically correct—he or Prakāśātman,[16] whose *Vivaraṇa* on Padmapāda's *Pañcapādikā* started the other major stream, the "Vivaraṇa school"—surely the second would win out with the following *praharṣiṇī*, were we to measure the beauty of their homage to Vyāsa:

śyāmo 'pi śruti-kamalāvabodha-rāgaḥ śāntaḥ san nayati tamo vināśam antaḥ |
nīrūpaṁ prathayati yo 'pi go-sahasrais taṁ vyāsaṁ namata jagaty apūrva-bhānum ||
Bow down you all to that Vyāsa, the unprecedented sun in the world, black though he is yet hot enough for the blooming of the lotus of the Vedas. Being calm, he destroys the inner darkness,

12. On Bhāskara's date see Kato 2011: xxiv–xxv. Bhāskara was most likely Śaṅkara's younger contemporary.

13. *iti matvāha bhagavān bādarāyaṇa — anāvṛttiḥ śabdād anāvṛttiḥ śabdāt* "Thinking thus, the venerable Bādarāyaṇa says, 'no return, because [that is what] the word [says]' " (Kato 2011).

14. On Vācaspati's date see Acharya 2006: xviii–xxii. Briefly, Vācaspati mentions 898 as the year when he completed his *Nyāya-sūcī-nibandhana*, without specifying if it was a Śaka or a Vikrama year. It was previously thought that it was the second, corresponding to 841–842 CE, but Acharya shows that the first works better. That would place the *Nyāya-sūcī-nibandhana* around 976 CE, and since *Bhāmatī* was Vācaspati's last work, following the *Sāṅkhya-tattva-kaumudī* and the *Tattva-vaiśāradī*, it would have been written probably after 980 CE, perhaps even closer to the turn of the millennium.

15. Śāstri and Śāstrācārya 1938. I will address Vyāsa's being "the other creator" later in the text.

16. Karl Potter (2006: 405) dates Prakāśātman to 1000 CE. The most extensive discussion on this point is by Klaus Cammann (1965: 4–8). The important lesson there is that Prakāśātman predates both Yāmuna and Rāmānuja.

and he also depicts the formless by means of thousands of words, as the sun makes manifest the sky with his thousands of rays.[17]

The blooming of the lotus of the Veda is an allusion to Vyāsa's dividing the one Veda in four, as we shall discuss shortly, and the destruction of inner darkness plays on Vyāsa's name Apāntaratamas. Prakāśātman does not explicitly say that Vyāsa is the author, but he does not have to. His homage is a beautiful rehash of Padmapāda's verse: homage to him who embodies *both* tranquility *and* the heat of the sun, and who makes the lotus of the Veda blossom. In the beautification process, the name had also changed.

And then there is Sarvajñātman,[18] whose authority in the history of Advaita was second only to that of Śaṅkara and Sureśvara:

vāg-vistarā yasya bṛhat-taraṅgā velā-taṭaṁ vastuni tattva-bodhaḥ |
ratnāni tarka-prasara-prakārāḥ punātv asau vyāsa-payo-nidhir naḥ || *6* ||
May the sage Vyāsa, who is like the ocean, purify us. He, whose extensive speeches are the high waves, whose true knowledge of Reality is the shore, and whose modes of the application of reasoning are the gems.[19]

While here nothing explicitly relates Bādarāyaṇa to Vyāsa, the placement of the verse is suggestive, as it is part of the same homage sequence that second-order commentators follow, after paying respect to their *iṣṭa-devatā*: (1) to the author, (2) to the commentator, (3) to their own preceptor. Following this logic, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī notes that the verse is addressed to the *sūtrakāra*, the first teacher.[20] I take this, therefore, as a testament of Sarvajñātman's conviction that Vyāsa wrote the BS.

A fourth roughly contemporary intellectual of great importance, Yāmuna, the precursor of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Viśiṣṭādvaita, also thought that Bādarāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana were identical.[21] In his *Āgama-prāmāṇya*, where he defends the authority of the Pañcarātra system, Yāmuna tackles the following objection: if Pañcarātra were authoritative, it would not have been refuted by the venerable Bādarāyaṇa. The reference here is BS 2.2.42–45, which in Śaṅkara's commentary is a section where the *sūtrakāra* refutes Bhāgavata/Pañcarātra. Yāmuna, however, claims that the section is not a refutation of Pañcarātra: *kathaṁ hi bhagavān dvaipāyanaḥ sakala-lokādarśa-bhūta-parama-bhāgavato bhāgavataṁ śāstraṁ nirasyatīty utprekṣyate*. "For, how could one imagine that the blessed Dvaipāyana, who was a supreme Bhāgavata (= a follower of Pañcaratra) himself and a model for the whole world, would reject the Bhāgavata doctrine?" (Narasimhachary 1976: 106).

Yāmuna proceeds to quote extensively from the *Mahābhārata* verses that approve of Pañcarātra, before reaffirming his rhetorical question (p. 109):

17. Bhāgavatāchārya 1892: *maṅgalācaraṇa* 4.

18. Sarvajñātman's date for the moment can be set at the end of the tenth century. I will discuss this in more detail toward the conclusion of the paper.

19. Translation and text Veezhinathan 1972: 4.

20. *ataḥ paraṁ sutra-bhāṣyakāra-vārtikakārān guru-pūrva-krameṇa pūjayati tribhiḥ. tatra ratnākara-rūpakeṇa bhagavantaṁ vyāsaṁ viṣṇv-avatāraṁ sūtrakāraṁ prathama-gurum stauti*. *Sāra-saṅgraha* on *Saṅkṣepa-śārīraka* 1.6 (Bhau Sastri 1924).

21. The traditional dates of Yāmuna are 918–1038 CE (see, for instance, Narasimhachary 1998: 12), but that seems too early. If we accept John Carman's (1974: 27, 44–46) dates for Rāmānuja as 1077–1157 and trust the hagiographies that Yāmuna's and Rāmānuja's lives intersected for some two decades, then Yāmuna was active in the eleventh century. Neevel (1977: 14–16) is inclined to trust the traditional date of Yāmuna's death, but proposes that he "flourished as a major figure for a relatively brief period sometime between 1022 and 1038." In either case, both he and Rāmānuja would have been later than Vācaspati, Prakāśātman, and Sarvajñātman.

vedānta-sāra-sarvasvam ātmīyaṁ paramaṁ matam |
pañcarātraṁ nirākuryāt kathaṁ dvaipāyanaḥ svayam ||
How could Dvaipāyana himself refute Pañcarātra, *his own* supreme doctrine, in its entirety consisting of the essence of the Upaniṣads?

Yāmuna's statement is transparent: Bādarāyaṇa would not repudiate Pañcarātra, because he was Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana, its advocate. Rāmānuja makes the same argument in his *Śrībhāṣya*, perhaps just a tad more explicitly—how could the *sūtrakāra* Bādarāyaṇa, having praised Pañcarātra in the *Mahābhārata*, argue against it in the BS[22]—and he also supplies a *maṅgalācaraṇa* to Vyāsa (verse 2) with distinct poetic merit:

pārāśarya-vacaḥ-sudhām upaniṣad-dugdhābdhi-madhyoddhṛtām
saṁsārāgni-vidīpana-vyapagata-prāṇātma-sañjīvanīm
pūrvācārya-surakṣitāṁ bahu-mati-vyāghāta-dūra-sthitām
ānītāṁ tu nijākṣaraiḥ sumanaso bhaumāḥ pibantv anvaham ||
May the gods on earth (i.e., Brahmins) drink daily the nectar of Vyāsa's words, extracted from the midst of the milk ocean of the Upaniṣads, which is the herb that brings back the life taken away by the burning of the fire of transmigration, is well preserved by the former teachers, was far because of many contradicting interpretations, but is now brought near by means of our own words.

In this interval between Padmapāda and Bhāskara on the one hand and Vācaspati Miśra, Prakaśātman, Sarvajñātman, and Yāmuna on the other, or sometime between 750–800 CE and 980 CE, a change had happened. Vedāntins had started believing that Bādarāyaṇa, who was traditionally considered the author of the BS, was, in fact, Vyāsa, who composed the *Mahābhārata* and edited the Vedas. From this point on the Bādarāyaṇa-Vyāsa identity would be taken for granted, and we will soon see that a background story of Vyāsa composing the BS would emerge in the commentaries of Madhva and others.

SCHOLARLY ATTEMPTS AT A SOLUTION

There have been several attempts to explain this change or to otherwise address it. To begin with, Abhayakumar Guha (1921: 5–6) argued that in Śaṅkara's time it must have been transparent that Bādarāyaṇa was Vyāsa, for which reason there was no need to be explicit about it. But this raises two obvious questions. First, if the identity was well known, why is it not attested anywhere? Second, why is it that major Vedāntins around the same time found it necessary to assert this identity at the very beginning of their works or, in Yāmuna's case, in what is meant to be a knockdown argument? Was the identity being forgotten? In any case, the weight of the presented evidence is stronger than mere silence: at this period Vyāsa is exclusively associated with his *smṛti*, the *Mahābhārata*.

A little more intriguing is the argument that there *is* an early piece of evidence for the belief that Vyāsa was the author of the BS. In his *Aṣṭādhyāyī* Pāṇini mentions a group called "Pārāśarins," whose name is derived from their studying a so-called *Bhikṣu-sūtra* that was expounded by Pārāśarya.[23] The name "Pārāśarya" is Vyāsa's patronymic, but it is also just a *gotra* or a family name. From this, some have assumed that this *Bhikṣu-sūtra* of Pārāśarya

22. *Śrībhāṣya* 2.2.42 (Karmarkar 1959–64).

23. *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 4.3.110: *pārāśarya-śilālibhyāṁ bhikṣu-naṭa-sūtrayoḥ*. "The *taddhita* affix *ṆinI* occurs after syntactically related nominal stems *pārāśarya* and *śilālin* when they end in instrumental and derivates signify the residual meaning of 'expounded by him', relative to *bhiksusūtra* and *naṭasūtra,* respectively." Tr. Sharma 1999: 320.

must have been another name for the BS.[24] By extension, if Pāṇini considered Vyāsa to have been the author of the BS, then perhaps this was also transparent to Śaṅkara and others such that it was not necessary to state it explicitly (Guha 1921: 15). The most obvious problem with this argument is that it is not apparent what this *Bhikṣu-sūtra* was. Pāṇini (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 4.3.111), in fact, mentions a second *Bhikṣu-sūtra* studied by the followers of a certain Karmanda. It is reasonable to suppose with Patrick Olivelle that these were works regulating the life of renouncers, bits of which were absorbed into the extant Dharmaśāstras, which frequently quote from unnamed sources.[25]

In fact, the idea that the *Pārāśarya Bhikṣu-sūtra* is the BS seems to have originated with the great seventeenth-century grammarian Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita and the commentarial tradition on his *Siddhānta-kaumudī* (SK). Bhaṭṭoji explicitly asserts this identity, and his commentators provide justification: the BS is conducive to mendicancy; he who had understood it becomes Brahman, disillusioned with ritual through omniscience, and therefore a mendicant; Pārāśarya is not merely a *gotra* name: it is Vyāsa himself.[26] This is a thoroughly Advaita Vedānta belief, and since it is not found in the earlier commentaries on the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, we don't need to argue why the BS, although intentionally esoteric, did not expect its students to have been mendicants or even more generally renouncers.[27]

Then there is Hajime Nakamura's thesis (1983: 405) that it is easy to appreciate how the author of the BS came to be regarded as identical with Vyāsa: the term *vyāsa* means a "compiler," and so it should be understood in that general sense, a synonym of "author" as it were: just as *a vyāsa* is credited with compiling the Vedas and the *Mahābhārata*, likewise *a vyāsa* would have compiled the BS. But this is as misinformed as it is naive. *Vyāsa* does not mean a "*com*piler," but rather a "*di*vider," and the name is intimately associated with the account of Vyāsa's dividing the one Veda in four.

The most recent attempt at explaining this change was that of S. Sankaranarayanan (2003), who argued that Vedāntins must have felt at a disadvantage to their Buddhist, Sāṅkhya, Vaiśeṣika, and other peers and competitors, all of which had claims to the *omniscience* of their system founders. "[Bādarāyaṇa's] disputations with the said three rival philosophers,

24. Agrawala 1953: 338; also, Kane 1962: 1169. Kane proposes another possibility, that it was an early Sāṅkhya *sūtra* by Pañcaśikha, who is described as a "Pārāśarya" by family name in the *Mahābhārata* (12.308.24). Bhattacharya 1983 rightfully rejects this possibility.

25. Olivelle 1977: 22; similarly Bhattacharya 1983: 75–76; Sankaranarayanan 2003: 100–101.

26. Bhaṭṭoji's *Prauḍha-manoramā* auto-commentary on the SK 1490: *bhikṣu-sūtram iti. catur-lakṣaṇī-rūpam* (S. Śāstri 1992); Vāsudeva Dīkṣita's *Bāla-manoramā* on SK 1489: *bhikṣavaḥ sanyāsinaḥ; tad-adhikārikam sūtraṁ bhikṣu-sūtraṁ vyāsa-praṇītaṁ prasiddham* (Chandrasekhara Sastrigal 1910–11); Jñānendra Sarasvatī's *Tattva-bodhinī* on SK 1490: *bhikṣu-sūtram iti, catur-lakṣaṇī-rūpam. pārāśariṇa iti, pārāśaryo vyāsaḥ* (Panśīkar 1908); Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa's *Bṛhac-chabdendu-śekhara* on SK 1490: *bhikṣu-sūtram—catur-lakṣaṇī-rūpaṁ bhikṣutva-sampādakaṁ sūtram ity arthaḥ. taj-jñāne hi brahma-rūpatvena sarva-jñānāt karmasv anādareṇa bhikṣutva-sampattir ity āhuḥ* (S. Śāstri 1960). That these are the sources is clear from T. M. P. Mahadevan (1975: 69), one of the most prominent advocates of the "*Bhikṣu-sūtra* is the BS" idea, who says without much elaboration: "This work [the BS] has other names also: . . . *Bhikṣusūtra*, because those who are competent to study it are the sannyāsins." I am thankful to Victor D'Avella for providing me with the sources listed here and helping me navigate the *Siddhānta-kaumudī* universe.

27. No such views about the *Pārāśarya Bhikṣu-sūtra* are found in the *Kāśikā-vṛtti* of Jayāditya and Vāmana, and its sub-commentaries the *Nyāsa* of Jinendrabuddhi and the *Pada-mañjarī* of Haradatta, which are the earliest available commentaries on this section of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. I have read claims that Vācaspati considered the *Bhikṣu-sūtra* of Pārāśarya to have been Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahma-sūtra* (Max Müller 1899: 154; Guha 1921: 16). No references for this claim are provided, and no such statement is found in the *Bhāmatī*. It seems to me this view is a conjecture from Vācaspati's *maṅgalācaraṇa*.

the *sarvajña*-s, was a fight between unequals" (2003: 110–11). Making the omniscient Vyāsa the teacher of Vedānta would have somewhat leveled the field.

This argument is a bit mystifying, since Vedāntins in their disagreements with Sāṅkhyas, Buddhists, etc. generally did precisely the opposite: they joined forces with Mīmāṁsakas in rejecting personal omniscience in favor of the impersonal authority (*apauruṣeyatva*) of the Vedas and the derivative authority of the *smṛti* corpus.[28] Besides, while the epistemic validity of omniscience was a common topic of debate between philosophers across sectarian lines, arguments *from* scripture or omniscient authorities were always confined to the boundaries of doctrinal communities.

Lastly, there is V. V. Mirashi's argument (1923) that post-Śaṅkara Vedāntins "lacked all critical spirit" and were all but duped by Pañcarātrins, who wanted to increase the prestige of their own system and did what Purāṇa authors had been doing all along: attribute the work to Vyāsa, who approves of Pañcarātra in the *Mahābhārata*, so as to secure the authority of their own system. Mirashi does not attribute this move to Yāmuna, but it would have been exactly his kind of argument that made the Bādarāyaṇa/Vyāsa identity possible. While Mirashi's account is somewhat crude, it is with him that we come in the vicinity of what might have actually happened, since the paradigmatic role of Vyāsa and his cultural character become the venue for the search of understanding.

THE CHARACTER OF VYĀSA IN THE HINDU IMAGINAIRE

With that, it becomes important to introduce the character of Vyāsa in a little more detail and see why it would have been appealing to Vedāntins to identify him with Bādarāyaṇa. I will rely here on Bruce Sullivan's very informative and insightful 1999 study, *Seer of the Fifth Veda*, which sheds important light on Vyāsa's role as "the most authoritative spokesman for Hinduism" and "the original teacher of its sacred literature" (p. 1). In the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas, Vyāsa is the alleged editor of the Vedas and the author of the *Mahābhārata*. He is commonly depicted as dividing an original single Veda into four, facilitating the easier memorization and understanding by men whose intelligence is failing due to the corrupting power of time, and then writing the *Mahābhārata* as the fifth for the good of those who are ineligible for Vedic study: women and the lower classes. He teaches these Vedas to five of his students. In the *Mahābhārata* they are Paila, Jaimini, Vaiśampāyana, Sumantu, and his own son Śuka, whereas in the Purāṇas Śuka is replaced by one Romaharṣaṇa (Sullivan 1999: 29–31, 5–8). Vyāsa is, additionally, an office with a title, "the arranger," discharged by a different person in each age of a Manu, which suggests a continual need of preservation.

This preservation function is reflected in the later BS commentarial tradition that follows Madhva's line, which depicts a story "from the *Skanda Purāṇa*" where Vyāsa at the end of the Dvāpara age rescues the Veda from oblivion—it was forgotten by the gods, who had been cursed by the sage Gautama—before dividing it and starting the lineages of its transmission, as he commonly does. But even after that, many had misunderstood the Vedas and preached false doctrines in their name, and so Vyāsa had to write the BS in order to restore their meaning yet again.[29] A similar story is narrated in the *Mahābhārata* itself (IX.50). The

28. As would be obvious from reading the post-Śaṅkara commentaries on BS 2.1-2.

29. This story is not in the Motilal Banarsidass translation of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, and on the authority of Roque Mesquita (2008: 262–63, 285–86) it is not in the oldest preserved text of *a Skanda Purāṇa* that dates before the eighth century either. Mesquita notes with respect to Madhva's *Skanda Purāṇa* quotations: "Since they are intimately related to the peculiar teachings of Madhva it is to be assumed that Madhva himself is their author, exactly like untraceable quotes from other Purāṇas and Itihāsas" (2008: 263). On this phenomenon of untraceable quotes in Madhva's work, see Mesquita 2000.

sage Sārasvata, a Vyāsa in a previous age, was the son of Dadhīci and the river Sarasvatī. He remained the only one to remember the Vedas after a drought of twelve years, during which time the seers who knew the Vedas were dispersed and had forgotten them. The seers eventually became Sārasvata's students and learned the Vedas from him.

Vyāsa is, thus, directly responsible for the preservation and continuation of the Vedas, but he is also very much a creator in his own right: as Vācaspati said in the *maṅgalācaraṇa*, "homage to the other creator," *apara-vedhase*. While this expression plays on Vyāsa's similarity to Brahmā, who intuits the Vedas at the dawn of creation and fashions the world in the image of their words, such that Vyāsa's rehash of the Vedas is a second creative act,[30] in the strict sense it is the *Mahābhārata* that is Vyāsa's "other creation," not a division of the one Veda into four but his own composition, a novel product in which Vyāsa does not merely rearrange the vision of others but is himself the seer (Sullivan 1999: 30). This new Veda brings the common goods of the old Vedas, but also some goodies of its own, and it does so precisely by relying on Vyāsa's paradigmatic character. He is the closest approximation of the Brahmanical ideals of *dharma*, but he also teaches "new stuff," such as Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Pañcarātra. Through his own creation he makes the soteriological potential of the Vedas accessible to women and lower-class men (p. 2). Sullivan, therefore, makes the important point (pp. 114–15) that the depiction of Vyāsa in the *Mahābhārata* is used precisely to validate the claim that the *Mahābhārata* is the new Veda. This is essential for Vyāsa's character: he traverses the space between preservation and innovation, for which reason he is well suited to authority claims.

Vyāsa is an ascetic, but, as Sullivan notes (pp. 34, 43), of a liminal kind. Although an ascetic, he fathers three children from the wives (and a maidservant) of his brother Vicitravīrya—again, for the *continuation* of the lineage—and he officiates at Yudhiṣṭhira's inauguration Rājasūya and post-war Aśvamedha sacrifices. Although he teaches the *nivṛtti* or social disengagement path that leads to liberation, *mokṣa*, his own behavior better fits the *pravṛtti* or engagement path that is appropriate to *dharma*. Sullivan argues that Vyāsa's image reflects the character of a *vanaprastha*, the forest dweller who is close to home but not quite at home, rather than that of the homeless renunciant, *sannyāsin*.

Particularly instructive is the contrast between the character of Vyāsa and that of his son Śuka. Vyāsa, as we saw, fathered three sons for Vicitravīyra, but he was not free from the desire for his own progeny either. On one occasion he pleased Śiva with his asceticism and was granted the boon of a son. The son was Śuka, born immaculately when Vyāsa spilled his seed at the sight of a celestial nymph. Thus, although an ascetic, Vyāsa is very much involved in the Vedic religion of householders and sacrifices, based on marriage and progeny, which are required for lighting up the sacrificial fire. The *Mahābhārata* explicitly says that he neither pursued nor attained liberation. This is true for Vyāsa's students as well—except for Śuka, who becomes a true ascetic, avoids marriage, family, and society, and pursues liberation with resolute dedication.[31]

In fact, Śuka's renunciation and liberation cause Vyāsa much anguish. Vyāsa had become very attached to his son, and when Śuka attains liberation and vanishes from the earth, Śiva

Other commentaries that refer to the same story include Baladeva (Vasu 2002: 1–2) and Śuka (Hayavadana Rao 1936: 194). Arguably Nimbarka's follower Śrīnivāsa draws on the same account in the introduction to his *Vedānta-kaustubha*, where he says that the supreme Lord Vāsudeva in the form of Parāśara's son composed the BS upon finding that people had been duped by various false views (Bose 2004: 3).

30. See BS 1.3.26-30 and the commentaries thereon; Vyāsa's similarity to Brahmā has been well noted by Sullivan.

31. Sullivan 1999: 7–8, 40; *Mahābhārata* XII.310–20.

must step in again and give Vyāsa the boon of Śuka's shadow-image to keep him company. Let us note this well, as it will become important shortly: at the loss of his son Vyāsa is grief-stricken and "ashamed at his own lesser attainment" (Sullivan 1999: 40).

ENTER THE *BHĀGAVATA:* VYĀSA IN A SELF-REPRESENTATION PROJECT

This description of Vyāsa's paradigmatic character assumes great importance in the framing story of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and generally in the book's self-representation over its opening and closing sections. The *Bhāgavata* rehearses the story of Vyāsa dividing the one Veda in four, writing the *Mahābhārata*, and starting the transmission lineages, at the end of which he remains dissatisfied.[32] We get hints about the reasons for his dissatisfaction, and they converge on Vyāsa's difference from Śuka. In a beautiful verse early in the first book the *Bhāgavata* directly invokes the *Mahābhārata* image of Vyāsa's grief over his separation from Śuka (BhP 1.2.2):

> *sūta uvāca*
> *yaṁ pravrajantam anupetam apeta-kṛtyaṁ dvaipāyano viraha-kātara ājuhāva* |
> *putreti tanmayatayā taravo 'bhinedus taṁ sarva-bhūta-hṛdayaṁ munim ānato 'smi* ||
> Sūta said: I pay homage to that sage [Śuka], who is the heart of all beings. When he took to renunciation without even undergoing the rites of passage, his father Vyāsa, anguished by the prospect of separation, cried out "my son!" and the trees, because they identified with him, cried back.

It is, however, chapter 4 of book 1, leading to Vyāsa's arrangement of the Vedas and the composition of the *Mahābhārata*, that presents their difference in stark contrast. The narrative picks up the trope of grief as Śuka is leaving Vyāsa. Śuka is a great yogi who looks at everyone neutrally, without an imposition of conceptual constructs that are associated with embodiment; in other words, as Śrīdhara notes, he sees the same Brahman in everyone. Yet he presents himself as a dullard so as to remain concealed. While roaming naked, he chances upon bathing nymphs, who do not react to his presence although they too are not dressed. However, when Vyāsa comes after him, the nymphs blush upon seeing him and put their garments on. Vyāsa is surprised and queries their reason, to which they reply: "You discriminate between male and female, whereas your son does not" (BhP 1.4.4–5). This is a significant speech act[33] that intends to portray the disposition in which Vyāsa arranges the Vedas and writes the *Mahābhārata*: he comes with grief, and there occurs a transfer of the vision of embodied distinctions, from him to what he arranges and writes.

Similar concerns emerge from Vyāsa's reasons for dividing the one Veda into four. With his divine vision he is able to perceive that a general decline of everything is coming—energy, lifespan, intelligence, virtue—and that Vedic sacrificial practice has the power to make things better. Thus, precisely for the *continuation of sacrifice* he divides the Veda and writes the *Mahābhārata* as a substitute for those who do not have sacrificial license (BhP 1.4.16–20). But having done that, he does not feel right: "Although I am the best of those who have the luster of the Vedas, the soul in my body feels unaccomplished" (1.4.30). He also has an inkling why that may be the case: "Is it because I have not explicated the norms of the *Bhāgavata* religion, which are dear to Acyuta and to the best renunciants?" (1.4.31).

32. BhP 1.4.14–29 (Shastri 1983).

33. I use the term "speech act" in Quentin Skinner's (2002) sense, whereby intellectual history, insofar as it is available in texts, is to be approached as the study of speech acts that are interventions in a preexisting discourse.

At this moment of Vyāsa's personal crisis, sage Nārada comes to his hermitage and identifies the reason for his dejection as bluntly as one possibly could: Vyāsa had done a gross transgression in the name of *dharma* by recommending something despicable to people who are innately sensual. Following his words, they would misunderstand *dharma* and would not counter this abomination (1.5.15). But why should Vedic action be censurable? For the reason that it does not make one happy even when it is disinterested and faultless—indeed, Vyāsa need but consider his own situation—and how much more so when it is "perpetually unwholesome" (*śaśvad abhadram*), fraught with suffering, and incited by desire as Śrīdhara glosses the phrase. Nārada, in other words, rebukes Vyāsa for his "religion of householders and sacrifices," and if there is any doubt what bothers the author(s) of the *Bhāgavata*, we need but look at one of its opening verses (1.1.2): "Here the highest *dharma* is presented, the one that is purged of fraud (*projjhita-kaitava*)." To take a cue from Śrīdhara, the one that is without self-interest.

Nārada further confirms Vyāsa's self-diagnosis: the best way to help deluded humanity is to present the greatness of Vāsudeva and narrate his deeds (1.5.8–17). When Nārada leaves, Vyāsa sits down to meditate yet again and obtains a new vision, ontological and soteriological. He sees in his meditation *bhagavān*, his power of deception, and the individual soul that is deceived by it. He also sees distinctly the cure for this deception: it is *bhakti-yoga* to *bhagavān*. Since men do not know the cure, however, for their sake he composes the *saṁhitā* (a word denoting the primary Vedic texts) of the *sātvata*s, the adherents of the Bhāgavata religion. The power of this new vision, new knowledge, is to give rise to devotion to Kṛṣṇa, and with that to eradicate "grief, illusion, and fear," no doubt his own grief as much as that of ignorant humanity (BhP 1.7). Vyāsa teaches this *saṁhitā* to Śuka, and Śuka becomes the main narrator of the *Bhāgavata*. Vyāsa's prior revelation is thus made old by the new knowledge of the *Bhāgavata*, but Vyāsa himself is also purified of the fault of the old ritualistic religion that keeps one in grief and transmigration.

We never learn the resolution of the story of Śuka's leaving Vyāsa, and that is because Vyāsa's grief has now become immaterial. Through his new vision Vyāsa is now a true ascetic, like Śuka, and can teach Śuka as if he had never left. There remains, however, a residue of tension between the characters of Vyāsa and Śuka, and precisely this tension constitutes the space that the *Bhāgavata* carves out for itself. The tension's focal point is well expressed in the question asked by Wendy Doniger (1993: 39): why is it that the *Bhāgavata* chose as its narrator the sage Śuka while keeping Vyāsa in the authorial position? Doniger rightly argues that it is Vyāsa's humanness that makes him create the *Bhāgavata*: "Vyāsa creates his story because of his compassion for and involvement with inadequate humans." His compassion for suffering humanity is directly related to his own grief: he knows suffering firsthand.

Śuka, on the other hand, becomes the *Bhāgavata* teacher precisely because of his lack of grief and compassion. As the *Bhāgavata* says, he had already been following the path of renunciation, and his interest in the *Bhāgavata* was simply to do *bhakti* and absorb his mind in the qualities of Viṣṇu. Doniger concludes (p. 39): "Śuka's complete detachment and renunciation is what finally qualifies him to narrate the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*." The *Bhāgavata* community has a message for suffering humanity, and sending such messages is predicated on commiseration. Yet its value system—the message itself—is predicated on renunciation and detachment, on one's already being liberated. While Vyāsa remains in this liminal space, only Śuka can teach the message because only he truly embodies it. We will return to this shortly.

Nārada reaffirms the value of ritual with the provision that it be done solely for the satisfaction of *bhagavān* (BhP 1.5.32–36). This is necessary if the *Bhāgavata* should be a continuation of Vedic *dharma*. Gupta and Valpey (2017: 9–13) have shown how the *Bhāgavata* skillfully uses narrative to subvert normative *dharma* but restore it with *bhakti* as its firm ground.

Indeed, the strategies which the *Bhāgavata* uses to present itself as Vedic have been well documented. Barbara Holdrege (2018) has conveniently grouped them in four categories. The *Bhāgavata* intentionally uses elements of the Vedic language that have become archaic in Classical Sanskrit to send the message—as van Buitenen (1966: 31, 33) put it—"I am not only orthodox in the Vedic tradition, I even sound like the Veda." It incorporates Vedic material—deities, sages, rituals, and myths—throughout its text. It also does what all Purāṇas do: asserting its status as the fifth Veda. Finally, "the *Bhāgavata* goes even further and claims for itself the consummate status of the Kārṣṇa-Veda that is the embodiment of Kṛṣṇa, the supreme Godhead, and the concentrated essence (*sāra*) of the entire Brahmanical canon of *śāstra*s" (Holdrege 2018: 21).

Wendy Doniger had additionally shown that, while the *Bhāgavata* situates itself intertextually with respect to the Vedas, "it cares more to establish its link with the *Mahābhārata*." Specifically, Doniger argued (1993: 34), the *Bhāgavata* inserts itself within the epic by projecting its own frame—Śuka teaching the dying king Parikṣit—into a *Mahābhārata* episode that is "immediately adjacent to the episode (Janamejaya's sacrifice) in which the Epic frames itself." Indeed, the *Mahābhārata* background is exceptionally important. There is little doubt to my mind that the *Bhāgavata* wants to present itself as Vyāsa's new vision, not only in its content—the soul is deluded by *māyā*, which is under the subjugation of Īśvara, but can be freed by *bhakti*—but also in its embodiment through the character of its narrator, Śuka.

One strategy of self-representation through intertextuality that has received less attention but is, I submit, very important, is the *Bhāgavata*'s speech acts (see n. 33 above) through which it presents itself as an elaboration of the BS. Most significant of these is the first verse, in which the *Bhāgavata* opens exactly like the BS, with *janmādy asya yataḥ*:

> *janmādy asya yato 'nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñaḥ svarāṭ*
> *tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ* |
> *tejo-vāri-mṛdāṁ yathā vinimayo yatra tri-sargo 'mṛṣā*
> *dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi* ||
> From him this (world) is born, etc. That cognizant and self-luminous one is (known) by meanings inferred from positive and negative reasoning. He is the one who revealed the Veda through the heart to the first seer, but the gods are confused about him. In him the threefold creation—such as the interplay of fire, water, and earth—is not false, for he has removed all deception by his own power. Upon that supreme truth let us meditate.[34]

Fast-forward to the last chapter, where the *Bhāgavata* claims further to be the essence of all Upaniṣads—*sarva-vedānta-sāraṁ hi śrī-bhāgavatam iṣyate* (12.13.15)—one that is characterized by the unity of Brahman and the self, has non-dual reality as its subject, and liberation as its goal (12.13.11–12). One can find similar statements throughout, but the opening and closing sections are significant because they tell others how the work itself wants to be seen. The underlying intention behind this particular self-representation is not to say merely "I speak about the same topic," "I too am a book about Brahman," as one might think fol-

34. Tr. Gupta and Valpey 2017: 200.

lowing van Buitenen's perceptive remarks about Vedic archaisms: it is, rather, to affirm, "I am the *same book*."

That such is the case should be clear from the following observation: in the *Bhāgavata* Vyāsa is explicitly called "the venerable Bādarāyaṇa" seven times, and most of these instances are quite significant.[35] It is the first personal appellation given to Vyāsa in the text, in verse 1.1.7: the venerable Bādarāyaṇa is the best of the knowers of the Vedas.[36] Vyāsa is also "the venerable Bādarāyaṇa" right after Nārada leaves and he sits down to meditate and obtain the new vision (1.7.1). It is also he, "the venerable Bādarāyaṇa," who was born of Parāśara and fathered Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu, Vidura, and Śuka, that tranquil son to whom he narrated *Bhāgavata* the highest secret, excluding Paila and his other students who were tasked with the business of Vedic transmission (9.22.21–25). But even more significant is the observation that Śuka is the "venerable Bādarāyaṇi," Bādarāyaṇa's son, a whopping forty-one times.[37] Thirty of these are verse introductions that mark the change of speaker, *śrī-bādarāyaṇir uvāca* "the venerable Bādarāyaṇi said," and that is significant in itself: by regularly spicing up the common *śrī-śuka uvāca*, the *Bhāgavata* is not only introducing the identity, it is normalizing it.

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Jīva Gosvāmin (1517–1608) made the formal argument that the *Bhāgavata* was not only founded on the BS, it was its "natural commentary," revealed to Vyāsa in his meditation, in which the Vedantic ontological vision was augmented by the soteriological vision of *bhakti* as the means of attaining the highest good (Elkman 1986: 90–98). "Natural" because the author himself had decided to emend his message. Jīva certainly had a theological axe to grind, but his observation is well founded. As Friedhelm Hardy noted (1974: 26), "The Purāṇa itself had made this claim already." The *Bhāgavata* intended to portray itself as a BS commentary, *and* Bādarāyaṇa-Vyāsa as the author of both.

THE SOTERIOLOGY OF EARLY ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

It is apposite to ask now what precisely the *Bhāgavata* is *doing* by presenting itself as an elaboration of the BS, and specifically by turning Bādarāyaṇa into Vyāsa. We may reformulate this question as follows: if the "new knowledge" of the Bhāgavata is *bhakti*, to which "old knowledge," specifically in the context of its BS frame of reference, is *bhakti* supervenient? Let me briefly state the answer before I elaborate.

As a Vedāntic work, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is set against the backdrop of Advaita Vedānta, and not just any form of Advaita Vedānta that may have been prevalent in the time of its composition, but specifically that of Śaṅkara and his student Sureśvara. Now I should clarify here that I don't have in mind primarily the ontological worldview of Advaita Vedānta. Daniel Sheridan (1986) had argued that the *Bhāgavata* represents ontologically a form of "Advaitic theism," and other scholars before him have argued along similar lines, that is, that the ontology of the *Bhāgavata* is Advaita ontology. Be that as it may, ontology rarely tells us about the whys of a work: why should Bādarāyaṇa become Vyāsa just because the *Bhāgavata* is a work inspired by the Advaita Vedānta ontological worldview? The Advaita Vedānta background that I have in mind here is its soteriology. Bādarāyaṇa becomes Vyāsa because the

35. 1.1.7, 1.7.1, 1.9.6, 8.13.15, 9.22.22, 25, 12.4.42.

36. The only prior reference is in 1.1.2, where he is described generally as "the great sage" *mahā-muni*.

37. Śuka is called Bādarāyaṇi in 1.7.11, 1.19.40, 6.4.3, 6.14.8, 6.15.13, 6.18.22, 8.1.33, 8.24.4, 10.12.44, 10.80.5, 12.6.8. The phrase *śrī-bādarāyaṇir uvāca* introduces the following verses: 6.1.11, 6.2.1, 6.3.11, 6.7.2, 6.7.39, 6.8.3, 6.10.1, 6.10.11, 6.16.1, 6.16.12, 7.1.22, 8.3.1, 8.12.1, 9.11.25, 9.15.1, 9.15.7, 9.17.1, 9.20.1, 10.21.1, 10.29.1, 10.36.1, 10.51.21, 10.57.1, 10.60.1, 10.68.29, 10.75.3, 10.85.1, 11.1.10, 11.6.20, 11.23.1.

Bhāgavata community is enamored of two Advaita Vedānta ideals—of *naiṣkarmya* or renunciation that is simultaneously knowledge, and of *pāramahaṁsya* or the *modus vivendi* of those renouncers who give up all emblems—as the ideal ground on which *bhakti* can grow. The old Vedāntic knowledge on which *bhakti* is supervenient is *naiṣkarmya-pāramahaṁsya*, and Bādarāyaṇa becomes Vyāsa for the sake of establishing *bhakti* on this firm ground.

I should like to emphasize that it is *specifically* the Advaita Vedānta iteration of *naiṣkarmya* that informs the *Bhāgavata*. The notion of *naiṣkarmya* itself is almost entirely absent from older Brahmanical sources, except the *Bhagavad-gītā* where it means freedom from the consequences of action achieved by doing one's duties with understanding and without attachment, but remaining engaged in action rather than pursuing formal renunciation.[38] This is not what *naiṣkarmya* involves in Advaita Vedānta, and it is not what it involves in the *Bhāgavata*, as shall be evident shortly. Yet it is important to have this older sense in mind when we come to consider later that no kind of Vedānta other than Śaṅkara's fits the "old knowledge" over which the *Bhāgavata* superimposes *bhakti*.

In Advaita Vedānta, *naiṣkarmya* is equivalent to formal renunciation and ascetic life, and it is the most general term that encapsulates *both* disillusion with Vedic *dharma*, *and* the realization of Brahman, both of which involve freedom from the duties associated with ritual fire and social life and are interpreted as forms of "knowledge" rather than "action." In technical Advaita language, *naiṣkarmya* includes both the stage of *vividiṣā* "desire to know," where one has become a seeker after Brahman the Self, and *vidvattā* "being a knower," where one has realized Brahman. In the classification of Sureśvara's famous *Naiṣkarmya-siddhi*, this ideal would cover the entire section of the Advaita soteriological path from "understanding the nature of bondage" that engenders dispassion; over formal renunciation; to the destruction of ignorance and liberation (1.52). In Śaṅkara's BSBh (1.1.1), though the term *naiṣkarmya* itself is not used, Sureśvara's two initial steps, understanding and dispassion, would be represented as *nityānitya-vastu-viveka* "discernment of permanent from impermanent things" and *ihāmūrtārtha-bhoga-virāga* "dispassion toward enjoying things of the here and the hereafter." They are the first of the four prerequisites for the inquiry into Brahman intended under the first word of the BS, *atha* "now."

Note well, then, that *naiṣkarmya* is knowledge—both of Vedic ritual and social *dharma* as constitutive of transmigration, what Advaitins sometimes call "the rising of knowledge" (*jñānotpatti*), and of oneself being the non-dual, characteristic-less Brahman, "the perfection of the result" (*phala-siddhi*)—as well as renunciation that is predicated on dispassion. As renunciation, *naiṣkarmya* is both the characteristically Advaita soteriological process and also the goal: one's being the action-less Brahman. In addition to being both the way and the goal, *naiṣkarmya as the way* is also the goal of preliminary practices, which are, crucially, describable as Vedic ritual and social *dharma*—what Brahmanical theologians call the *nitya-karma* or obligatory duties of the *āśrama*s—but done without the desire for heaven and with dedication to God, Īśvara. Such practice of Vedic *dharma* culminates in personal purity, on which the four preliminaries are predicated. Under this description, Vedic *dharma* is conducive to *naiṣkarmya*-as-the-way. It may be, therefore, included in its semantic range.

In terms of scripture, the *locus classicus* here is *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.22, which says that Brahmins pursue the Self by practices such as Vedic recitation and ritual. Crucially, however, in Advaita Vedānta soteriology *naiṣkarmya* at the point of attaining the four prereq-

38. Relevant verses include 3.4 and 18.49 (Āgaśe 1934), but the entire context of chapters 2 and 3 is important. A textual search on GRETIL (Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages) failed to produce results on *naiṣkarmya* outside of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, except for a few mentions in the *Mahābhārata* (one in the *Udyoga-parvan*, two in the *Āśvamedhika-parvan*).

uisites, where it properly begins, must involve formal renunciation, a stage where one is no longer governed by the Vedic injunctions and prohibitions. In theological terms, this is at the stage of *vividiṣā*, and the *Bṛhad-āyaṇyaka* passage is customarily used as a marker of what one should practice in order to attain *vividiṣā*, but discontinue when it has been attained.[39]

Significantly, also, renunciation in Advaita Vedānta involved giving up the emblems, *liṅga*, of a renouncer, not only the sacrificial cord that a non-Advaita Brahmanical renouncer would have been wearing in continuation of his *varṇa* membership as part of the entitlement to perform ritual, but also the specifically renunciation *āśrama* emblems such as the top-knot and the triple staff: in short, even the symbolic relation to the Vedic world of *dharma*. Śaṅkara called this renunciation that goes beyond the Vedic *āśrama* system *paramahaṁsa-pārivrājya*, renunciation of the best ascetics, specifically the mendicants. In later Advaita Vedānta there developed a classification of four kinds of renouncers, the highest of which are the *paramahaṁsa*s. They give up all emblems except for the single staff and the water pot, and they must be either striving after the Self or be knowers of Brahman, i.e., on the level of *vividiṣā* or *vidvattā* (Olivelle 1986: 32–34). It is therefore convenient to think of *naiṣkarmya-pāramahaṁsya* as a pair of related Advaita Vedānta soteriological ideals: asceticism that involves knowledge of Brahman and rejection of emblems of any kind, including those of renunciation.

NAIṢKARMYA AND *PĀRAMAHAṀSYA* IN THE *BHĀGAVATA*

As was said above, *naiṣkarmya* figures prominently in the *Bhāgavata*, in the several related senses presented above but crucially involving freedom from Vedic injunctions. Equally, if not more, conspicuous is the ideal of *pāramahaṁsya*, and the Advaita Vedānta overtones of these two concepts become most evident in the *Bhāgavata* frame story.

To begin, *naiṣkarmya* is associated directly with the *Bhāgavata paramparā*. The inaugurator of *naiṣkarmya* is the dual sage Nara-Nārāyaṇa. He is said to have introduced "action that is characterized by *naiṣkarmya*," which in the context must mean asceticism, since the dual sage is the model hermit who never marries. He taught his system to Nārada, whom we have encountered as Vyāsa's teacher (11.4.6 with Śrīdhara). Nārada too is described as an inaugurator of a system that is meant to foster *naiṣkarmya*, the Pañcarātra system (*tantram sātvatam*, 1.3.8). *Pāramahaṁsya* too is associated with the *Bhāgavata paramparā*. In another act of intertextual appropriation, the dialogue between the sage Maitreya and Vidura in book 3, Maitreya proclaims that he will commence the telling of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* itself, although we are obviously knee-deep in it: it was first taught by Saṅkarṣaṇa to Sanatkumāra, who taught it to one Sāṅkhyāyana, "the foremost among the *paramahaṁsa*s," who in his turn taught it to Maitreya's teacher Parāśara, the father of Vyāsa (3.8.7–8). This is an allusion to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, in which the frame story is that of Parāśara teaching Maitreya: the *Bhāgavata* is not only the *Mahābhārata*, the Upaniṣads, the *Brahma-sūtra*, and the *saṁhitā* of the *Bhāgavata*s, speaking good Vedic and fine *kāvya* for the *rasika*s—it is the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* as well. Crucially, however, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* now also has a *paramahaṁsa* pedigree. As with Nara-Nārāyaṇa, the involvement of Sanatkumāra is significant. For Śaṅkara, it is with him and his three *naiṣṭhika-brahmacārin* brothers that the path of *nivṛtti* or disengagement begins (Introduction to his *Bhagavad-gītā-bhāṣya*).

As in Advaita Vedānta, *naiṣkarmya* as a goal in the pursuit of liberation is said to be attained by the performance of Vedic action without desires and with dedication to God:

39. The complicated details of early Advaita Vedānta soteriology are worked out in Uskokov 2018a, chapters 7 through 9.

vedoktam eva kurvāṇo niḥsaṅgo 'rpitam īśvare |
naiṣkarmyaṁ labhate siddhiṁ rocanārthā phala-śrutiḥ ||
By doing actions enjoined in the Vedas without attachment and with dedication to God, one attains the perfection that is *naiṣkarmya*. The promise of result is meant to make such action appealing. (11.3.46)

Śrīdhara here quotes the aforementioned *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka* 4.4.22 passage, associating thereby the *naiṣkarmya* of the verse with the Advaita *vividiṣā*. An innovation in the *Bhāgavata* is that "*tantra*" is a fast-working alternative or addition to Vedic ritual (11.3.47), and from the context—chapter 11 of book 3, a section drenched in Advaita ontology—it is evident that *tantra* here is the Pañcarātra system of temple worship.[40]

If both Vedic and Pañcarātra ritual are conducive to *naiṣkarmya*, does the *Bhāgavata* describe its attainment? Several verses facilitate such a description. First, it involves freedom from Vedic injunctions and prohibitions. This comes out clearly from verse 8.3.16cd, a prayer of the elephant Gajendra to the Lord:

naiṣkarmya-bhāvena vivarjitāgama-svayaṁ-prakāśāya namaskaromi ||
I pay homage to the one who is self-revealed to those who are free from scripture through the cultivation of *naiṣkarmya*.

For Śrīdhara, *naiṣkarmya* here is just knowledge of the Self, whereas *āgama* stands for scriptural injunctions and prohibitions generally.[41]

Positively, *naiṣkarmya* is described as *bhagavat-padam*. Whereas we may translate this lexeme as "the state of *bhagavān*" at first blush, for Śrīdhara *padam* has an instrumental force. Following his gloss:

teṣāṁ durāpaṁ kiṁ tv anyan martyānāṁ bhagavat-padam |
bhuvi lolāyuṣo ye vai naiṣkarmyaṁ sādhayanty uta ||
But what else is hard to achieve by those mortals who, their life on Earth uncertain, nevertheless accomplish *naiṣkarmya*, which brings one to the Lord. (4.23.27)[42]

This reading, then, ascribes instrumentality to *naiṣkarmya*, and it is supported by another verse in Gajendra's aforementioned prayers (8.3.11), where Viṣṇu is acclaimed as "the master of isolation" and "knower of the bliss of liberation," whom the wise attain by *naiṣkarmya* and *sattva*, glossed by Śrīdhara as mental purity:

sattvena pratilabhyāya naiṣkarmyeṇa vipaścitā |
namaḥ kaivalya-nāthāya nirvāṇa-sukha-saṁvide ||

Whether *naiṣkarmya* here is adjectival to *sattva* or not, clearly it is the means of liberation. *Naiṣkarmya*, then, is the goal of practices like Vedic and Pañcarātra ritual; when attained, it involves freedom from scriptural injunctions and prohibitions; and it is itself the means of liberation.

That *naiṣkarmya* is renunciation and knowledge in kind is affirmed by Śrīdhara throughout his commentary, as may be expected of an Advaitin.[43] In the *Bhāgavata* itself the clearest

40. "Innovation" here should be taken with a grain of salt; as will become obvious at the end of the paper, temple Pañcarātra worship was arguably an alternative to Vedic ritual, without a full acceptance of Pañcarātra ontology, since Śaṅkara's time at the least. *Bhāgavata* is more "explicit" than "innovative."

41. *naiṣkarmyam ātma-tattvaṁ tasya bhāvena bhāvanayā vivarjitā āgamā vidhi-niṣedha-lakṣaṇā yais teṣu svayam eva prakāśo yasya tasmai*.

42. Śrīdharaḥ: *bhagavān padyate gamyate 'neneti tathā tan naiṣkarmyaṁ jñānam.*

43. *niṣkarma brahma, tad-ekākāratvān niṣkarmatā-rūpaṁ naiṣkarmyam*, on 1.5.12; *naiṣkarmyeṇa sannyāsena*, on 8.3.11; *naiṣkarmyam ātma-tattvam*, on 8.3.16; *naiṣkarmyaṁ karma-nivṛtti-sādhyaṁ jñānam*, on 11.3.41.

link between *naiṣkarmya* and knowledge, along with their ultimate insufficiency, is established in one of its most celebrated and quoted verses, which we have already discussed above but may now properly translate. After rebuking Vyāsa in four verses for not depicting the greatness of *bhagavān*, Nārada says the following (1.5.12):

> *naiṣkarmyam apy acyuta-bhāva-varjitaṁ na śobhate jñānam alaṁ nirañjanam* |
> *kutaḥ punaḥ śaśvad abhadram īśvare na cārpitaṁ karma yad apy akāraṇam* ||
> Although knowledge may be free from action (*naiṣkarmya*) and completely pure, it does not appeal sufficiently if it is without emotion toward Acyuta. How much more so action, which is perpetually unwholesome if not offered to God, even if it is done without interest.

Śrīdhara glosses: knowledge that is actionless because of being uniform with the actionless Brahman.[44] This verse is repeated with a minor emendation toward the end of the Purāṇa, and it sets in large perspective both the fascination of the *Bhāgavata* with *naiṣkarmya* and its subsumption under *bhakti*.[45]

The *Bhāgavata* is even more vocal when it comes to *pāramahaṁsya*, and it repeatedly associates *bhakti* with the ways of the best ascetics: the practices that pertain to *bhagavān* are dear to the best ascetics (*bhāgavatā dharmāḥ . . . priyāḥ paramahaṁsānām*, 1.4.31); Kṛṣṇa is he whose purpose is to enjoin the practice of *bhakti* for the best ascetics, who are sages of pure heart (*paramahaṁsānāṁ munīnām amalātmanām bhakti-yoga-vidhānārtham*, 1.8.20); the Lord grants the attainment unto those men who are firm in the vocation of the best ascetics (*puṁsāṁ punaḥ pāramahaṁsya āśrame vyavasthitānām anumṛgya-dāśuṣe*, 2.4.13); Viṣṇu's lotus feet are attained by the path of the best ascetics (*pāramahaṁsyena pathādhigamyate*, 2.9.17); the highest devotion is obtained at the destination of the best ascetics (*bhaktiṁ parāṁ paramahaṁsa-gatau labheta*, 11.31.28); this destination of the best ascetics where *bhakti* is attained is the Lord himself (*tvayi . . . paramahaṁsa-gatau,* 7.9.31); and it is renouncers of the *paramahaṁsa* kind (*paramahaṁsa-parivrājaka*; note the Śaṅkara-esque lingo) who directly perceive Nārāyaṇa as innate bliss in their hearts purified by meditation, of the cultivated and bursting-forth *pāramahaṁsya* kind (*paramahaṃsa-parivrājakaiḥ parameṇātma-yoga-samādhinā paribhāvita-parisphuṭa-pāramahaṃsya-dharmeṇodghāṭita-tamaḥ-kapāṭa-dvāre citte 'pāvṛta ātma-loke svayam upalabdha-nija-sukhānubhavo bhavān*, 6.9.33).

Like *naiṣkarmya, pāramahaṁsya* too is identified with knowledge in another celebrated verse and a self-encomium toward the end of the *Purāṇa*. The verse also features *naiṣkarmya*, and both ideals are associated with and subordinated to *bhakti* (12.13.18):

> *śrīmad-bhāgavataṁ purāṇam amalaṁ yad vaiṣṇavānāṁ priyaṁ*
> *yasmin pāramahaṁsyam ekam amalaṁ jñānaṁ paraṁ gīyate* |
> *tatra jñāna-virāga-bhakti-sahitaṁ naiṣkarmyam āviskṛtaṁ*
> *tac chṛṇvan supaṭhan vicāraṇa-paro bhaktyā vimucyen naraḥ* ||
> A reflective man who hears and properly reads the *Bhāgavata*—a spotless Purāṇa, dear to the Vaiṣṇavas, in which the one spotless knowledge of the best ascetics is sung as the highest, and where inaction (*naiṣkarmya*) conjoined with knowledge, dispassion, and devotion is revealed—becomes liberated by means of devotion.

44. *niṣkarma brahma, tad-ekākāratvān niṣkarmatā-rūpaṁ naiṣkarmyam*; Śrīdhara on 1.5.12.
45. 12.12.53; only the final line is slightly different: *na hy arpitaṁ karma yad apy anuttamam*.

THE ŚUKA-PARIKṢIT ENCOUNTER

I have suggested above that *naiṣkarmya* as represented in the *Bhāgavata* involves the same soteriological structure as in Advaita Vedānta: it is attained by Vedic (and Pañcarātra) practices—it is a goal—but on its part it is the means of liberation; it is associated with knowledge, and that it is both attainment of prior practices *and* a means of liberation suggests a sequence similar to that of *vividiṣā* and *vidvattā* in Advaita Vedānta. I have also been translating *paramahaṁsa* and its abstract noun as "the best ascetics" and what pertains to them, assuming some correspondence in meaning between the *Bhāgavata* and Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta: asceticism that involves mendicancy, a rejection of emblems, and freedom from the scriptural injunctions that govern the ritual and social world of Brahmanism. That *pāramahaṁsya* as a form of asceticism means just this is evident from *Bhāgavata*'s chapter 13 of book 7, which is entirely a description of what is called *dharmaṁ pāramahaṁsyam* (7.13.46). We will, however, not analyze this chapter, not only in view of space but also because its content is mapped on Śuka, the *Bhāgavata* narrator, in his encounter with king Parikṣit, i.e., in the *Bhāgavata* frame story. This frame story presents the *Bhāgavata* soteriology in the clearest terms: the Advaita ideal of renunciation is *enacted* by the two interlocutors, who are *embodied* representations of *vividiṣā* and *vidvattā* respectively, and we see what kind of knowledge *naiṣkarmya/pāramahaṁsya* must be: disillusion with the here and the hereafter, and consummation in Brahman without distinguishing characteristics. Over precisely this ground, in its entirety, does the *Bhāgavata* expect *bhakti* to be founded.

Parikṣit is a royal figure in an existential crisis.[46] He had been cursed to die within seven days from the snakebite of Takṣaka. Unlike the other famous king in crisis, Arjuna, Parikṣit has no doubts with respect to the world of *dharma* and his social duties: the serpentine venom had become for him the cause of dispassion toward this and the next world, which he had already examined and found to be worthy of rejecting. The wording itself—*atho vihāyemam amuṁ ca lokaṁ vimarśitau heyatayā purastāt* (1.19.5), with attention to *atha*—suggests that Parikṣit's state represents the two initial stages of Advaita *naiṣkarmya*—discriminating between eternal and transient things and disillusion with the enjoyments of the here and the hereafter—and perhaps reflects some of Śaṅkara's own BSBh 1.1.1 language.

Parikṣit had also been disillusioned with domestic life, and he takes the vow of renunciation, *muni-vrata*, resolving to fast until death. Like Arjuna, Parikṣit does have doubts, not with respect to *dharma* but rather *mokṣa*. He wishes to know what all men and specifically those like him who are on the verge of death should do in terms of religious practice: what they should hear, mutter, meditate on, venerate. With the aforementioned disillusion and dispassion, the formal renunciation and the pursuit of liberation clearly mark him as one occupying something like the Advaita state of *vividiṣā*. Here, however, his situation diverges from that of the typical *vividiṣā* Advaitin, who would at this juncture practice *śravaṇa, manana*, and *nididhyāsana* on the Upaniṣadic identity statements. Parikṣit clearly wishes to do something of the kind, but he does not seem to care about his identity with Brahman.

Assembled on the bank of the Ganges, where he will fast until death, are the most prominent Vedic sages, including Vyāsa, but before any of them can speak, the peripatetic sage Śuka chances upon the gathering, sits on a raised seat, and begins teaching Parikṣit. Significantly, Śuka, who is called "the venerable Bādarāyaṇi" at the very close of the first book, just as he is about to begin teaching, is an ascetic without the external symbols to indicate his renouncer *āśrama*. The *Bhāgavata* describes him as *alakṣya-liṅga* "one of invis-

46. This is in the last chapter of book 1, which concludes with Śuka just about to speak.

ible emblems"[47] and generally very much like the ascetics of the old *śramaṇa* tradition: bearing the marks of a great person (*mahā-pauruṣika*), skyclad (*digambara*), and not staying in the homes of ritualists even so long as to wait for a cow to be milked. Śuka begins his instruction with a diatribe against family, social, and ritual life, which surely is intended to mark Parikṣit's state as the proper qualification for instruction, and then overlays the ideal of *bhakti* on what is explicitly an Advaita foundation: those sages who are disengaged from Vedic injunctions and prohibitions—*the* Advaita ideal if there ever was one, and Śuka's own *Mahābhārata* path of *nivṛtti*—and are fixed in the state of Brahman without qualities, *nairguṇya*, delight in the narrations about the qualities of Hari (2.1.7):

prāyeṇa munayo rājan nivṛttā vidhi-ṣedhataḥ |
nairguṇya-sthā ramante sma guṇānukathane hareḥ ||

In fact, he has himself in mind (2.1.9):

parinisṭhito 'pi nairguṇya uttama-śloka-līlayā |
gṛhīta-cetā rājarṣe ākhyānaṁ yad adhītavān ||
Royal sage, although firmly established in the state of Brahman without qualities, I learned this work [the *Bhāgavata*] because my mind has been captured by the plays of the most praiseworthy Lord.

So Parikṣit and those like him on the verge of death, disillusioned with this world and the next but wishing for liberation, should hear about, praise, and meditate on *bhagavān* Hari. Whatever they do, they must remember him at death.

The frame story, then, represents Śuka as someone on a stage corresponding to the Advaita *vidvattā*. He is a *paramahaṁsa* without emblems, firmly situated in the knowledge of Brahman that has no distinguishing characteristics. The two interlocutors embody and enact the entire scope of Advaita Vedānta *naiṣkarmya*: a fresh renouncer who knows that the attainments of the here and the hereafter are without value, is disillusioned with them, and is keen on the highest good; and the seasoned *paramahaṁsa* who knows the non-dual Brahman. Both are in a state beyond Vedic injunctions and prohibitions. And yet, for both of them the recommended path is *bhakti*: the one should strive after it; the other cannot help but engage in it.

WHY BĀDARĀYAṆA BECAME VYĀSA

The *Bhāgavata* is fascinated with dispassion and renunciation like no other major Hindu scripture before. In the *Hari-vaṁśa* (13.45–48), for instance, Śuka goes on to marry and becomes a part of a *vaṁśa*, a lineage, where procreation is the norm, in his case the so-called ancestors' lineage, in which Vyāsa was born. Śuka must father one daughter and four sons and only then go beyond rebirth. With this, it is Śuka who is brought closer to Vyāsa's way of life rather than the other way around.

What is, then, the compounded significance of the several observations we have made so far—the use of the character of Vyāsa as the paradigmatic preserver of the old and visionary of the new, the adoption of Śuka the ideal ascetic as value model and speaker and of Parikṣit the renouncer as the ideal inquirer, and the conjoining of *bhakti* with *naiṣkarmya-pāramahaṁsya*, which involves the transcendence of *dharma*; all of it specifically against

47. See also 7.13.2, the section on *dharmyaṁ pāramahaṁsyam*, where the ascetic is prohibited from using emblems that he had discarded before, other than the staff.

the background of the *Bhāgavata*'s self-representation as an heir to and elaboration of the BS—for the reasons of Bādarāyaṇa's becoming Vyāsa?

In its self-representation as a Vedāntic work, the *Bhāgavata* intended to place *bhakti* over a value system and a soteriology that were those of Advaita Vedānta. I mean this in the strong sense, not *an* Advaita Vedānta but *the* Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara and Sureśvara. The thorough dislike of family life, the rejection of Vedic ritualism at the advanced stages of spiritual progress, the ultimate transcendence of the system of *varṇa* and *āśrama*, none of it squares with any other early kind of Vedānta that we know, save for that of Gauḍapāda. The ideal *Bhāgavata* soteriology is certainly not compatible with the forms of *jñāna-karma-samuccaya* that Śaṅkara and his followers so vehemently criticized, the representative advocates of which were Bhartṛprapañca and Maṇḍana Miśra, where Vedic ritual and *āśrama-dharma* were thought to be causally efficacious throughout, not merely conducive to dispassion and terminating in renunciation. Even in the case of Maṇḍana Miśra, the performance of ritual, though optional and supererogatory to meditation on Brahman, played the role of a catalyst, in that liberation would happen so much faster with than without it (Balasubramanian 1976: chap. 5). Insofar as such Vedānta may be said to advocate for *naiṣkarmya*, it was of the *Bhagavad-gītā* kind, freedom from karma by engaged renunciation, not of the Advaita Vedānta kind.

Similarly, the study of Brahman in early Vedānta was not normatively limited to ascetics. In his refutation of Śaṅkara's interpretation of *atha*, i.e., on the competence for the study of Brahman, Bhāskara reaffirmed what Śaṅkara argued against and what we may take to have been the norm before him: the inquiry into Brahman was consequent on the inquiry into ritual, and on several other things classifiable as *āśrama-dharma* across its spectrum: *caturṇām apy āśramiṇām aviśeṣeṇa vedānta-vidhy-adhikāritā brahma-jijāseyam prastūyate* "Members of all four *āśrama*s *without distinction* are entitled to the inquiry into Brahman through the Upaniṣadic injunctions."[48]

If we take the liberty, then, in light of the *Bhāgavata's* self-representation as a work of Vedānta, to read the Śuka-Parikṣit encounter as "the *atha*" of the *Bhāgavata*, that is, a statement of who the *Bhāgavata* and its world of *bhakti* are best suited for, this would be a thoroughly Śaṅkara-esque *atha*: they are for the renouncers who are disillusioned with the social and ritual world, or who are already established in the knowledge of the non-dual Brahman. In view of this, Bādarāyaṇa the Vedāntin becomes Vyāsa in order to introduce the new knowledge, *bhakti*, over the old knowledge of Advaita Vedānta soteriology.

I am not suggesting, of course, that the author(s) of the *Bhāgavata* and their community were followers of Śaṅkara: that would be theoretically simplistic, disregarding the complexities of the two worldviews, and practically impossible with the paucity of data about the *Bhāgavata*'s compositional history. Advaita ontology and the norms of renunciation, including that of *paramahaṁsa*, very much inform the world of Pañcarātra as well, so whoever wrote the *Bhāgavata* would have been in a cultural context saturated with both of them.[49] However, as the recent work of Anand Venkatkrishnan (2015) and the earlier work of Friedhelm Hardy (1974) have made apparent, before it was taken up for scholastic treatments, the *Bhāgavata* "flourished in communities that offered a version of Advaita, or nondualist Vedānta" (Venkatkrishnan 2015: 31). If it had flourished in such communities, it might as well have been born around one of them, a community inspired by Advaita Vedānta soteriol-

48. Bhāskara's *Brahma-sūtra-bhaṣya* 1.1.1. See also the argument of Walter Slaje, who tackles the early history of the idea of *jīvan-mukti* and shows that originally it meant liberation *while remaining engaged* in social and other action, throughout one's life, rather than renunciation (2007: 127–30).

49. On Pañcarātra ontology see Granoff 1989; on Pañcarātra renunciation see briefly Olivelle 1986: 34.

ogy—and choosing to represent itself through the idealized character of Śuka—yet enamored of the world of *bhakti*.

ŚUKA IN ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

The character of Śuka had a continued significance in Advaita Vedānta imaginations of lineage. He appears in the *guru-paramparā* of the Śṛṅgeri Maṭha as the teacher of Gauḍapāda, i.e., as the most direct mythic figure from whom what may be called "historical Advaita" derives: Śiva → Viṣṇu → Brahmā → Vasiṣṭha → Śakti → Parāśara → Vyāsa → Śuka → Gauḍapāda → Govindabhagavatpāda → Śaṅkara (Seshagiri Sastri 1899: 99–102). The same is stated in one of the earlier hagiographies of Śaṅkara, Vyāsācāla's *Śaṅkara-vijaya* (4.63 [Chandrasekharan 1954]):

> *vyāsaḥ parāśara-sutaḥ kila satyavatyāṁ tasyātmajaḥ śuka-muniḥ prathitānubhāvaḥ* |
> *tac-chiṣyatām upagataḥ kila gauḍapādo govindanātha-munir asya ca śiṣya-bhūtaḥ* ||
> Vyāsa was born as a son of Parāśara and Satyavatī, and his son, sage Śuka, was famed for his direct experience. Gauḍapāda became Śuka's student, and sage Govindanātha became Gauḍapāda's disciple.

Śaṅkara-digvijaya, attributed to Mādhava, repeats this verse (5.105), and it also narrates an episode in which Śaṅkara toward the end of his life sees in meditation his *parama-guru* Gauḍapāda. While praising the master, Śaṅkara says that Śuka became Gauḍapāda's teacher, the same Śuka who went forth immediately upon birth and whom Vyāsa followed crying out, "my son, my son." In what the commentator recognizes as an intertextual reference to the *Bhāgavata* verse (1.2.2) quoted above, Śuka, who had attained the Yoga state of unity with all existence through cultivation of the universal sense of Self, had now assumed the identity of the forest trees, to reply through their echo to his grieving father (ŚDV 16.44–46 [M. C. Āpte 1891]). And, in what had by now become yet another identity for Vyāsa, the forest echo was Śuka's reply to the "author of the commentary on the *Yoga-sūtra*."[50]

These are but few examples of a widespread phenomenon. Śuka as the teacher of Gauḍapāda is a regular fixture in Advaita Vedānta *paramparā*s.

BĀDARĀYAṆA IN PURĀṆIC LITERATURE

Outside of the *Bhāgavata* Bādarāyaṇa—individually or as identical with Vyāsa—is practically a nonentity in Purāṇic literature. A few places mention Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa when they refer to the *Bhāgavata*, and *Skanda*'s *Prabhāsa-khaṇḍa* lists Vyāsa and Bādarāyaṇa separately in an enumeration of sages.

The *Bhāgavata-Māhātmya* in the *Uttara-khaṇḍa* of the *Padma Purāṇa* (6.194.70, Nag Pub. 1984) mentions the dissatisfaction and the subsequent composition of the *Bhāgavata*, ordinarily associated with Vyāsa, but it attributes them to Bādarāyaṇa (*yadīya-smaraṇāt sadyo nirviṇṇo bādarāyaṇaḥ cakāra mahad ākhyātum ātmārāma-manoharam*). The *Padma* in its *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma* also has the following (6.71.274–75):

> *mahābhārata-nirmātā kavīndro bādarāyaṇaḥ* |
> *kṛṣṇadvaipāyaṇaḥ sarva-puruṣārthaika-bodhakaḥ* ||
> *vedānta-kartā brahmaika-vyañjakaḥ puruvaṁśa-kṛt* |

50. *yoga-bhāṣya-praṇetā* 16.46. I will address this point shortly.

The author of the *Mahābharata*, the best of poets, Bādarāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇadvaipāyanaḥ, the sole presenter of all human goods, the author of Vedānta, the unique manifester of Brahman, the progenitor of the Puru lineage.

Then there is *Skanda*, *Brāhma-khaṇḍa* (3.3.22.17–18, Nag Pub. 1986):

kalau hīnāyuṣo martyā durbalā śrama-pīḍitāḥ |
durmedhaso duḥkha-bhājo dharmācāra-vivarjitāḥ ||
iti sañcintya kṛpayā bhagavān bādarāyaṇaḥ |
hitāya teṣāṁ vidadhe purāṇākhyaṁ sudhā-rasam ||
In the age of Kali, mortals are short-lived, weak, and troubled by exhaustion. They are stupid, miserable, and without proper conduct. Realizing this, the venerable Bādarāyaṇa kindly made the nectarine juice called "Purāṇa" for their benefit.

The first verse is clearly modeled on *Bhāgavata* 1.1.10:

prāyeṇālpāyuṣaḥ sabhya kalāv asmin yuge janāḥ |
mandāḥ sumanda-matayo manda-bhāgyā hy upadrutāḥ ||
Gentleman, in this age of Kali men are generally short-lived, weak, slow-witted, miserable, and oppressed.

The *Prabhāsa-khaṇḍa* in its *Prabhasa-kṣetra-māhātmya* (7.1.22.12–19) describes the Kṛtasmara Mountain, which is frequented by many sages. Vyāsa is mentioned in verse 15, Bādarāyaṇa in 18.

There is only one case of Bādarāyaṇa's identity with Vyāsa in the Purāṇas that seems, *prima facie*, independent of the *Bhāgavata* context. It is in the story of Acchodā, a mind-born daughter in the aforementioned lineage of the ancestors, *pitṛ-vaṁśa*, who falls from heaven because of lusting after one Amāvasu and is reborn as Satyavatī, the mother of Vyāsa. Several Purāṇas narrate her story in nearly identical language, and they all seem to go back to the *Hari-vaṁśa* as the source.[51] Acchodā will give birth to Parāśara's son, who will divide the one Veda into four, but *Matsya* and *Padma* add the following detail: the son will be Bādarāyaṇa because of being born on an island of Badarī trees:

kanyā bhūtvā ca lokān svān punar āpsyasi durlabhān |
parāśarasya vīryeṇa putram ekam avāpsyasi ||
dvīpe tu badarī-prāye bādarāyaṇam acyutam |
sa vedam ekam bahudhā vibhajiṣyati te sutaḥ ||[52]

In all probability someone who was already acquainted with Vyāsa's being Bādarāyaṇa had found it appropriate to intervene in the story and provide an etymological source. Hazra (1940: 50, 109–12) dates the *Matsya* version to "before 1100 AD" and considers the *Padma* to be its derivative.

DATE OF THE *BHĀGAVATA*

Obviously the weight of the argument for why Bādarāyaṇa became Vyāsa rests on the date of composition of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. While this question has not been settled, there is a general consensus that the *Bhāgavata* presupposes the idea of *bhakti* specifically as expressed in the songs of the Āḻvārs, such that it must be posterior to some of them. But it cannot be later than 1030 CE, *in some form* in any case, when al-Bīrūnī mentions it in his

51. The birth of Vyāsa is specifically mentioned in *Hari-vaṁśa* 13.36, *Vāyu Purāṇa* 73.15–16, *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 2.3.10.69–70. Cf. Pargiter 1922: 69.

52. *Matsya Purāṇa* 14.15–16 (Ānanadāśrama 1907). *Padma Purāṇa* (1.9.25–26) has minor differences.

account of India. There is the mandatory caveat that it must have been around for a while to gain enough standing for al-Bīrūnī to recognize it as a *mahā-purāṇa*. This zeroes in on the ninth and tenth centuries, or anywhere between 800 and 950 CE. There are some tendencies to stretch this a bit later, "towards the end of the tenth century" (Vaudeville 1975: 116), as well as contrary tendencies to place it closer to the beginning of the line, around 850 CE.[53]

Dennis Hudson (1995) argues that the final form of the Purāṇa in twelve books took shape in eighth-century Kāñcipuram under Pallava rule, though some parts were added a century later. Hudson's account is based on an analysis of the sculpted panels in the Vaikuṇṭha Perumal temple of Kāñci, the organization of which, he argues, depicts stories in the same way as the *Bhāgavata*, making an architectural enactment of the book, as it were.

ADVAITA VAIṢṆAVAS AND BHĀGAVATA VEDĀNTINS

Erring on the side of caution, one could place the *Bhāgavata* anywhere between 800 and 980 CE, in other words, exactly over the period during which Bādarāyaṇa, the author of the BS, became Vyāsa, the editor of the Vedas and the author of the *Mahābhārata.* So what does all of this tells us about our initial question: how is it that Bādarāyaṇa became Vyāsa in the BS commentaries at the turn of the millennium?

Let me first briefly restate my argument. The individual or the community behind the writing of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* found the character of Vyāsa as the paradigmatic preserver of the old and visionary of the new a useful vehicle for promoting its own doctrine of *bhakti* as an outgrowth and *telos* of Upaniṣadic Vedānta. That Vyāsa would have been the ideal locus of such an undertaking is further clear from his next identity as the author of the *Yoga-sūtra-bhāṣya*, which we have encountered in the *Śaṅkara-digvijaya* story. Recent work of Philipp Maas (2013: 57–69) has shown that in its early history the *Yoga-sūtra* along with the *Bhāṣya* that is now attributed to Vyāsa was considered to be the work of a single author, Patañjali, going by the name of *Pātañjala-yoga-śāstra*. That the *Bhāṣya* was eventually ascribed to Vyāsa could have happened as a result of subsuming Yoga under Vedānta, perhaps an early instance of the phenomenon described as "unifying Hinduism" by Andrew Nicholson (2010). The point is this: that Vyāsa was the model of *dharma* and yet in the *Mahābhārata* recommended Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Pañcarātra made him eminently useful for projects of self-representation and doctrinal unity. The *Bhāgavata* had done it, Yāmuna had done it, and eventually it made its way into the reception history of Yoga.

The *Bhāgavata* had also found Vyāsa's son Śuka a most welcome value model, instantiating distance from *dharma* and complete dedication to spiritual practice, yet simultaneously subsuming the worldview of the Vedas. With the *Bhāgavata*'s professed Vedāntic allegiance, it was but natural for Vyāsa to have written the BS and Śuka to have raised it to the next level.

The question remains—if Bādarāyaṇa's being Vyāsa had come from the corners of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, how did it make its way into the commentaries on the BS, and why would specifically Advaitins have been inclined to accept it? Issues of doctrinal identity are complicated. On the one hand, by now it should be obvious that whoever wrote the *Bhāgavata*, the author(s) surely were Vedāntins, even if we think of them more restrictedly as Bhāgavata Vaiṣṇavas. On the other hand, early Advaita Vedāntins in Śaṅkara's lineage

53. The literature on the date of the *Bhāgavata* is vast. The reader may wish to consult Filliozat 1962; Hopkins 1966: 4–6; Hardy 1983: 486–88; Bryant 2002.

seem to have had a distinct Vaiṣṇava predilection. We know this from the good work of Paul Hacker (1995: chap. 2[54]), whose argument we may now state briefly.

To begin with, Hacker noticed that Śaṅkara had a partiality for illustrating Brahman's feature of residence (*avasthiti*), that is, presence in objects of veneration, through Vaiṣṇava symbols, the *śālagrāma* stone and temple images of Viṣṇu. He further argued that Śaṅkara's rejection of the Pañcarātra/Bhāgavata doctrine in the BSBh seemed to have been limited only to its realist theology of emanation (*vyūha*) and did not involve a wholesale rejection of Vaiṣṇava practice:

> We do not controvert the doctrine that Nārāyaṇa, who is known to be higher than the Unevolved, who is the Supreme Self and the Self of All, has multiplied himself through himself into single forms . . . Nor do we raise any objection if it is intended to worship the Bhagavān with unceasing concentration of mind by approaching him (probably in his temple) or by other means.[55]

I may add to this parenthetically that in his *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka-upaniṣad-bhāṣya* Śaṅkara explicitly says that Īśvara, the inner ruler and ever-free witness who guides all divinities and is the self of all beings, is called Nārāyaṇa (BĀUBh 3.7.3 [Āgaśe 1891]).

Hacker next noted that while Śaṅkara personally was not in the habit of writing *maṅgalācaraṇa*s, some of his early followers such as Sureśvara, Toṭaka, Sarvajñātman, and Ānandabodha all invoked Viṣṇu in their introductory stanzas. Finally, he pointed out (1995: 39) that there are texts, for instance, passages from the *Bhāgavata*, "that expressly profess Vaiṣṇavism and teach radical Advaitism at the same time," concluding: "It seems that the earliest masters of Śaṅkara's school, in the more restricted sense of this word, all belonged to Vaiṣṇava environments." In another short piece (1995: 28[56]), Hacker conjectured that the term *Bhāgavata* itself "refers specifically, though not exclusively, to Advaitic Vaiṣṇavism."

It would thus seem that Hacker considered Śaṅkara and his early followers to have been Bhāgavatas, in that "specific but not exclusive" sense, adherents of a religion focused on the worship of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, but not Pañcarātrins, perhaps at a time when the two groups were merging yet were recognizably distinct. Bāṇa in his *Harṣa-carita*, roughly a century earlier, still mentions the two groups as separate.[57]

Hacker drew his conclusions from an affinity that is apparent in texts, but that perhaps does not necessarily indicate personal commitment to Vaiṣṇava practice. Hacker's evidence, however, may be supplemented with a note on Sarvajñātman, whom we recognized toward the beginning as one of the possible early witnesses of the Bādarāyaṇa-Vyāsa identity. Let us turn to him briefly. We know from the conclusion of *Saṅkṣepa-śārīraka* that Sarvajñātman wrote his masterpiece during the reign of a king whom he calls Manukulāditya (4.62):

> *śrī-deveśvara-pāda-paṅkaja-rajas-samparka-pūtāśayaḥ*
> *sarvajñātma-girāṅkito muni-varaḥ saṅkṣepa-śārīrakam* |
> *cakre saj-jana-buddhi-vardhanam idaṁ rājānya-vaṁśe nṛpe*
> *śrīmaty akṣata-śāsane manukulāditye bhuvaṁ śāsati* ||
> The best of renunciants adorned by the name of "Sarvajñātman," his mind purified by the touch of the dust from the lotus feet of Deveśvara, composed this *Saṅkṣepa-Śārīraka* that magnifies

54. Originally published 1965: *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens und Archiv für Indische Philosophie* 9: 147–54.

55. Śaṅkara's BSBh 2.2.42 in Hacker's translation (1995: 37); the note in parenthesis also his.

56. English translation of a section of "Zur Geschichte und Beurteilung des Hinduismus: Kritik einiger verbreiteter Ansichten," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 59 (1964): cols. 231–45.

57. See the translation of Cowell and Thomas 1897: 236.

the understanding of noble men, while the glorious Manukulāditya of royal pedigree rules the Earth without interruption.

Based on inscriptional evidence, this Manukulāditya has been identified as the Chera king Bhāskara Ravivarman I, the dates of whose reign seem to have been 962–1021 CE.[58]

Now Sarvajñātman did not write just a *maṅgalācaraṇa* as Hacker notes, but was a devotee of Padmanābha Svāmī, the famous image of Viṣṇu in Trivandrum (Thiruvananthapuram). He pays respect to Lord Padmanābha in two verses encircling the above-quoted mention of his mundane patron, making thus a triplet that concludes the *Saṅkṣepa-śārīraka* (4.61, 63):

avirala-pada-paṅktiḥ padmanābhasya puṇyā caraṇa-kamala-dhūli-grāhiṇī bhāratīyam |
ghanataram upaghātaṁ śreyasaḥ śrotṛ-saṅghāt sura-sarid iva sadyo mārṣṭuṁ māṅgalya-hetuḥ ||
bhujaṅgamāṅga-śāyine vihaṅgamāṅga-gāmine |
turaṅgamāṅga-bhedine namo rathāṅga-dhāriṇe ||
May this pious literary composition, of tightly knit strings of words, bearing the dust of Lord Padmanābha's lotus-like feet, and the cause of auspiciousness—in all ways like the Ganges—instantly wipe away the impassable hurdles to the highest good by so much as touching the listener. . . . Homage to the Lord who sleeps on the serpent-bed, travels on Garuḍa, had killed Keśin, and bore the chariot wheel.

That the deity here is Viṣṇu's image in Trivandrum follows easily from Sarvajñātman's mention of Manukulāditya, and the commentarial tradition offers confirmation: Padmanābha here is Nārāyaṇa, the resident of Anantapura, who sleeps on the serpent-bed (*padmanābhasya śrīmad-anantapura-vāsinaḥ śeṣāṅke śayānasya nārāyaṇasya*).[59] The Anantapura Lake Temple is traditionally considered Padmanābha Svāmī's original seat. Another commentator, Nṛsiṁhāśrama (Śukla 1936–41), reads from this an indication that Sarvajñātman offered, or perhaps even presented, his composition to the feet of the image (*athavā anena bhāratyāḥ padmanābhasya śrīpādāravinde samarpaṇaṁ sūcitam*). Additionally, the last verse in some manuscripts has a second part in which Sarvajñātman pays homage to Lord Nṛsiṁha. A deity of Nṛsiṁha is installed in the southern shrine of the temple (Easwaran Nampoothiry 1973: xiv–xv).

Perhaps equally significant is that from inscriptional evidence on the history of monastic establishments in Kerala that are traditionally associated with Śaṅkara, scholars have argued that Sarvajñātman in his time was the *puṣpāñjali* Svāmiyār at Lord Padmanābha's temple.[60] That would have made him the highest religious authority in Manukulāditya's realm—indeed, he was not one to shy away from self-praise, as the words "best of renunciants

58. See Narayanan 1969; and Easwaran Nampoothiry 1973: ix-xxiii.

59. Rāmatīrtha's *Anvayārtha-prakāśikā* on 4.61 (H. N. Āpte 1918).

60. The argument may be briefly stated as follows. There is an ancient tradition that Śaṅkara personally or through his four famous students—Sureśvara, Padmapāda, Hastāmalaka, and Toṭaka—established four monasteries in the city of Thrissur. Whatever one may think of the tradition itself, one of these four monasteries, the Naṭuvil Maṭham that is associated with Sureśvara, is related to what is now its branch monastery located in the so-called Mithranandapuram place, in the western part of the Padmanābha Svāmī Temple complex itself. A copper-plate inscription attests to the existence of this monastery in the twelfth century (Nowicka 2019: 38–41). There is also, two miles to the southeast of Trivandrum, an area called Manukulāditya-maṅgalam, which must have been a Brahmin settlement donated by king Manukulāditya and therefore bearing his name; the area is a property of an old Bhagavatī temple, the ownership of which rests with the *sannyāsin*s performing *puṣpañjali* at the Padmanābha Svāmī temple, i.e., the same *sannyāsin*s as at the branch of the Naṭuvil Maṭham. So, by association, they would have been in the monastery in late tenth century as well. The *sannyāsin*s of Naṭuvil Maṭham to this day do *puṣpañjali* to Lord Padmanābha, which is the most important and prestigious service in the Temple. See Sanku Ayyar 1966; Easwaran Nampoothiry 1973: xv–xvi. I am most thankful to Christophe Vielle for connecting the dots and providing me with the sources.

adorned by the name of 'Sarvajñātman'" in the above-cited verse make apparent, indicating perhaps someone accustomed to high honors—as well as intimately involved in the Temple governance. But more importantly, he would have been daily engaged in offering flowers to the image of the Lord, the most important religious function in the Temple.

In Sarvajñātman then we have a case of an early Advaitin of enormous influence who had more than just an affinity for Vaiṣṇavism. If we take him as an illustration of early post-Śaṅkara Advaita Vedānta more generally, we may well imagine an intersection between Advaita Vaiṣṇavas—or Advaitins with Viṣṇu and his forms as their *iṣṭa-devatā*—with allegiance specifically to Śaṅkara rather than someone like Maṇḍana Miśra on the one hand, and Bhāgavata Vaiṣṇavas who were profoundly inspired by Śaṅkara's soteriology, of the you-have-seven-days-to-live urgency to become free from Vedic ritual and social norms, on the other. Both would have called themselves *parama-bhāgavata*s.[61] This intersection—however wide or narrow its scope may have been—sometime in the ninth or tenth century, with the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* already written down or still germinating, is the locus where we should find the answer to our original question about the Bādarāyaṇa-Vyāsa identity and its appearance in scholastic Vedānta. While we may not know the precise mechanism—where geographically this would have happened and who precisely would have been involved at exactly what time—the intersection provides the doctrinal locus and the required reasons for Vyāsa to become Bādarāyaṇa.

That the *Bhāgavata* had so little formative influence on early Viśiṣṭādvaita and Śrīvaiṣṇavism, where the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* always kept the place of pride, makes to my mind Yāmuna's and Rāmānuja's knowledge of the Bādarāyaṇa-Vyāsa identity derivative.

It remains possible, of course, that Guha, whom we mention earlier, was right and that our early Vedāntins knew all along something that we do not know, that Bādarāyaṇa was recognized as Vyāsa transparently by everyone such that there was no need to be vocal about it. This, however, is possible only to the degree that anything in the humanities is possible. It is also possible that Vācaspati, if he was the first to pay homage to Vyāsa, woke up one morning and thought, "today it feels like Vyāsa wrote the BS, why don't I pay homage to him." Others then followed suit, and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* welcomed this as a gift from heaven to promote its message as the epitome of Vedānta and everything else. If, however, we take our bearings in understanding *why* some Vedāntins would have wanted to assert that Bādarāyaṇa was Vyāsa and others would have been inclined to agree, then the account I have provided here should be more satisfying.

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61. For Sarvajñātman's full endorsement of this appellation, see *Saṅkṣepa-śārīraka* 3.54:
śravaṇādikaṁ śama-damādi-paraḥ paramātmanaḥ parama-bhāgavataḥ |
kuru tāvatā paramam eva padaṁ paramātmanas tvam avalokayasi ||
Possessed of tranquility and sense-control and fully devoted to *bhagavān*, engage in hearing etc. about the supreme Self. By this much, you will see the highest state of this supreme Self.
Cf. *Bhāgavata* 3.16.21, 6.3.39.

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