

THE *AṢṬĀVAKRAGĪTĀ*

BONDAGE AND RELEASE

IN

THE *AṢṬĀVAKRAGĪTĀ*

By

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is an inquiry into the nature of bondage and release in the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā*. The focus in the first half of the thesis is upon to the practices of discrimination (*viveka*) and concentrative absorption (*samādhi*). In place of discrimination and concentrative absorption the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* offers naturalness (*akṛtrima*) and spontaneity (*yadrucchā*). The thesis argues that the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* must be understood as a critique of Yogic and Advaitic soteriology as exemplified by texts such as the *Vedāntasāra* and *Jīvanmuktiviveka*. The thesis then situates *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* in a 'genre' of literature characterized by the repudiation and abandonment of 'means' to release: 'anarchic spirituality.' Finally, the appearance of Yogic and Advaitic soteriological language in the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* is accounted for by arguing that it is used to ironic effect by the text.

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1.0.0 Introduction

The *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* is a text which has largely been ignored by Western scholarship. What little has been written in European languages on the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* has either given an interpretation of the text along the lines of the thought of Śaṅkara and his followers,¹ or has been an interpretation written from the point of view of Advaita Vedānta itself. For example, Swami Nityaswarupananda's English translation of the text begins its preface with the following words: "The *Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā* or *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* as it is sometimes called, is a short treatise on Advaita Vedānta, ascribed to a great sage, Aṣṭāvakra."²

What these interpretations fail to notice is that this particular text contains expressions which lie outside the realm of the Advaita tradition of Śaṅkara and his followers, discourse which cannot possibly be accounted for by a strictly Advaitist interpretation. The limitations of the Advaitist interpretation become especially apparent when it is noticed that the dogmas and dictums of Advaita Vedānta itself are called into question by the text. Thus, the use of Advaita Vedānta -- as either a philosophical base from which one may attempt to give a reading of the text, or as a philosophical context to which one might attempt to orient the text -- fails to provide an adequate interpretation of the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā*

¹See, for example, R. Hauschild, *Die Aṣṭāvakra-Gītā* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1967).

²Swami Nityaswarupananda, tr., *Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1987), p. v.

In light of the above problems, the thesis will examine the nature of bondage and release in the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā*. It will contend that the text must be seen as essentially a **critical reaction** to the Advaita metaphysics of release. Hence, the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā* cannot be regarded as a text within the tradition of Śaṅkara's Advaita.

Though the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā* is primarily a reaction against Advaita Vedānta, its critical comments also apply to Yoga, and to the ritualized procedures of meditation in Tantra, as well. It can therefore be understood as a general critique of the spiritual practices of its time and of the philosophical views underpinning of those disciplines. Hence, with these considerations in mind, the thesis will explore the metaphysics and soteriology underlying the spiritual practices of Advaita, Yoga and Tantra.

Two principles central to the soteriologies of Advaita and Yoga -- concentrative absorption (*saṁādhi*) and discriminative cognition (*viveka*) -- will be the focus of the thesis. The thesis will contend that these two means to release -- though central to the Advaita and Yoga conceptions of spiritual practice -- are rejected by the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā*, on the grounds that their nature is essentially the same as that from which they claim to free the aspirant.

Part one of the thesis (introduction and chapter two) will be an interpretation of the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā*. Part two (chapter three, chapter four and conclusion) will attempt to situate the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā* in both its historical and philosophical/soteriological context.

The *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā* is written in dialogue form, in imitation of the great Indian epics. However, the text cannot be called a true dialogue. Though a subtle tension is sometimes noticeable in the gentle teasing and pseudo-queries that take place between the two participants, Janaka and Aṣṭāvakra, both speak from the same voice and the same point of view. Hence, the dialectical tension in the text is not, for the most part, supplied by the perspectives of the two participants in the text.

As an introduction to the interpretation that follows in chapter two, I think that it is worth looking into the meaning of the choices of Aṣṭāvakra and Janaka as the two participants in the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā*. I will turn, then, to a few of the more pertinent appearances of Aṣṭāvakra and Janaka in epic and philosophical-epic to see if there is anything about their characters that might shed light upon the meaning of the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā*.

1.1.0 Aṣṭāvakra in the *Mahābhārata*

The principle story concerning the sage Aṣṭāvakra occurs in the *Vanaparvan* section of the *Mahābhārata*³. The tale of Aṣṭāvakra is worth telling, and I think it may have some bearing upon the meaning of the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā*. The story is set in a dialogue between the sage Lomaśa and Yudhiṣṭhira. The dialogue begins with Lomaśa telling Yudhiṣṭhira that one named Aṣṭāvakra -- whose name means 'crooked in eight limbs' -- has defeated a great *sūta* named Bandin. His interest aroused, Yudhiṣṭhira asks Lomaśa to tell him about Aṣṭāvakra, and Lomaśa complies with the tale of Aṣṭāvakra.

³ *Mahābhārata*, III, 33, 132:1-134:35.

Aṣṭāvakra, we learn, is the son of Kahoḍa, a brahman who has married Sujātā, the daughter of the sage Uddālaka. The story begins with Sujātā carrying the yet to be born Aṣṭāvakra. As Kahoḍa is working hard at his studies late into the night, Aṣṭāvakra, still in the womb, mocks his father's understanding of the scriptures. Insulted, Kahoḍa curses the as yet unborn Aṣṭāvakra: the child is to be born with his limbs twisted in eight ways.

As the child grows in her womb, Sujātā begins to worry about the family's financial situation. She convinces her husband to petition the king, Janaka, for assistance. Kahoḍa, however, is required to engage in dharma-combat with Janaka's *sūta* Bandin. Kahoḍa is defeated and Bandin has him drowned. Uddālaka asks his daughter to remain reticent toward Aṣṭāvakra concerning the fate of his father, and Aṣṭāvakra is raised believing that Uddālaka is his father and that Uddālaka's son, Śvetaketu, is his brother.

Twelve years later, the truth is revealed during a moment of jealousy between Aṣṭāvakra and Śvetaketu. Incited by the disclosure of his actual relationship to Uddālaka, Aṣṭāvakra presses his mother for the details of his father's demise. Fearing his wrath, she divulges the whole story. Aṣṭāvakra decides that, like his father, he must go to the palace of king Janaka to face his own fate. He encourages his uncle to accompany him in attending a sacrificial rite being performed in Janaka's court.

When they arrive, Aṣṭāvakra, due to his age, is refused entrance. However, on the road outside the palace, Aṣṭāvakra and Śvetaketu encounter the king, Janaka. Aṣṭāvakra manages to convince the king that a brahman takes priority to a king with regard to use of the road, and Janaka allows him to pass on to the gate. The gatekeeper instructs them that only the old and

wise and best may enter, and that juveniles are not allowed. Aṣṭāvakra asks the gate keeper if age is a matter of having an old body. The gatekeeper responds that the young are made wise by their elders, and that wisdom is had only through experience. Aṣṭāvakra retorts that the gods judge one to be an elder on the basis of what he knows, and not according to the number of gray hairs on his head. Acknowledging the boy's cleverness, the gatekeeper allows them into the courtyards, where Aṣṭāvakra once again encounters Janaka.

Aṣṭāvakra then makes known to Janaka his intent to engage in debate with Bandin. Janaka warns Aṣṭāvakra of Bandin's 'skill with words' but Aṣṭāvakra is unmoved in his resolve to meet with Bandin. Janaka decides to test Aṣṭāvakra himself to discover whether or not he is fit for dharma-combat with Bandin. Following two set of riddles, all of which Aṣṭāvakra answers, he asks him a final set: "What does not close its eyes when asleep? Stir when it is born? What has no heart? What does grow under pressure?"⁴ Aṣṭāvakra answers: A fish sleeps without closing its eyes, a freshly laid egg does not stir, a stone has no heart, and a river grows with pressure. Impressed by his wit, Janaka admits to Aṣṭāvakra's 'age' and suitability for debate. Aṣṭāvakra then engages Bandin in dharma-combat.

After a brief exchange between the combatants, Bandin starts the debate with a number-riddle which relates the numerals from one to twelve to the respective categories denoted by the numerals. Bandin begins the challenge with those things denoted by the number one, Aṣṭāvakra continues

⁴J.A.B. van Buitenen, tr., *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 477.

with two, Bandin takes over at three, and the exchange continues until Bandin reaches the number thirteen. Unable to complete the verse relating to the number thirteen, Bandin hesitates, and the verse is finished by Aṣṭāvakra. Bandin is forced to concede victory to Aṣṭāvakra. After he returns those whom he has defeated in debate to their former status among the living, Bandin is drowned in the sea. Aṣṭāvakra and Kahoda are then reunited, and the curse upon Aṣṭāvakra is lifted by his grateful father.

What does the story tell us about the character Aṣṭāvakra, and what, if anything, can this tell us about the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā*? I think that it is fairly clear that Aṣṭāvakra represents the figure of the Upaniṣadic sage. At one point Aṣṭāvakra declares that he has come as a representative of the teaching of the non-dual brahman.⁵ This is made more evident by the structure of the debate.

The thirteen numbers represent the thirteen principles: the five senses, the five objects of sense, the mind, the ego, and the intellect. Bandin is unable to go beyond the thirteenth number, i.e., the thirteenth principle, the intellect.⁶ He is merely 'clever with words,' and his character clearly is meant to portray the intellectual whose arguments are not inspired by spiritual insight but operate solely within the categories of the discursive mind. Aṣṭāvakra is able to go beyond the number thirteen, meaning that he is able to transcend the thirteenth principle. Hence, the character of Aṣṭāvakra is intended to represent the point of view of the mystical self beyond the thirteen principles, a point of view which has been obscured by

⁵ *brahmādvaita* 133:18.

⁶ *buddhi*

eristic arguments of the *sūta* Bandin.⁷ Seen in this way, there is a definite Upaniṣadic tone to the *Mahābhārata* story of Aṣṭāvakra.

The details and interpretation of the other imagery in the story are less clear. What, for example, is the meaning of the name 'crooked in eight ways'? The number eight is a number often associated with the eight aspects of the spiritual path: Patañjali's yoga consists of eight limbs or components of practice, and the Buddhist path to enlightenment is also referred to as eight-fold. Conceivably, then, the choice by the author of the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* of the character Aṣṭāvakra as a protagonist, may be a reference to the eight 'limbs' or aspects of the yogic path -- the intent behind the reference being that understanding is not dependent upon the practice of yoga but is 'sudden' and without means or 'limbs.' Perhaps this can be clarified through reference to another text in which we find 'crooked limbs.'

⁷The tradition of debate as dharma-combat can be inferred from a number of texts, such as the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* and the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. Debates often concerned the more essential aspects of one's existence, such as one's spiritual life. Hence, they were not always a matter of mere elocution. Encounters often meant the death of the loser. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, III, 7:1, Uddālaka admonishes Yajñavalkya:

If you, Yajñavalkya, do not know that Sūtra and that Internal Ruler, and still try to take away the cows that belong only to the knowers of Brahman, your head shall fall off.

Madhavananda, tr., *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965), p. 346. In the later literature we find the defeated one becoming the disciple of the more intellectually powerful of the two combatants. Hence, in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, 8:32-8:38, Śaṅkara, addresses Maṇḍana:

I have come here for an offering of philosophical disputation.... The wager in the disputation should be that the defeated one should become the disciple of the victor.... My mission in life is to establish the truth of the Vedanta by defeating in debate all who hold an opposite view. So either accept the truth of Vedanta forth with, or come for a debate and accept the Vedanta after defeat in debate.

Tapasyananda, tr., *Śaṅkara-dig-vijaya* by Madhava-Vidyaranya (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1986), p. 85.

In the *Chuang Tzu*, there are a number of references to crippled, bent-over sages and gnarly twisted branches.⁸ At one point in the text, Hui Tzu says to Chuang Tzu:

I have a big tree of the kind men call *shu*. Its trunk is too gnarled and bumpy to apply a measuring line to, its branches too bent and twisty to match a compass or square. You could stand it by the road and no carpenter would look at it twice. Your words, too, are big and useless, and so everyone alike spurns them.⁹

Like the words of Chuang Tzu, the teaching of Aṣṭāvakra in the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* is 'useless.' The text does not seem to offer any clear advice on how to practice yoga or meditation, and for this reason its teaching seems less than satisfactory, and even frustrating, to the aspiring seeker. But this is precisely the point of the teaching. Understanding is not a matter of technique or method, just as release is not an 'end' that can be acquired by some particular 'means.' Like Chuang Tzu, Aṣṭāvakra's words in the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* are 'big and useless.' They point beyond the need for means and artificial techniques.

Further evidence of this interpretation of the relationship between Aṣṭāvakra's name and the eight limbs of yoga is bore out by the wisdom of the child Aṣṭāvakra. Aṣṭāvakra's wisdom is not dependant upon his experience in the world but is inherent in him, just as the self is inherently free and fully realized.¹⁰ The reference to the unborn self by Janaka in his query into Aṣṭāvakra's understanding also directs us to the inborn nature of

⁸Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press). See, in the 'inner chapters,' pp. 63-6, 74, 84.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁰*AG* 15:20; 18:5

Aṣṭāvakra's understanding, just as the wisdom of the child Aṣṭāvakra is an example of how understanding is not dependent upon age, experience, or the practice of yoga.

The very young, the very old, the crippled, the mad, the stupid and the foolish are favorite metaphors among writers who portray the sage who has 'shaken off' the world. In the character of Aṣṭāvakra we find an excellent example of the use of these metaphors: Aṣṭāvakra is not only the gifted child prodigy, but is also twisted-up like an gnarly old tree.

Aṣṭāvakra's particular characterization in the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* is perhaps also intended as an indirect reference to the teachings of 'seeing all things as equal,'¹¹ 'contentedness in all states' and 'letting things be.'¹² In the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā*, we find the teaching that all things are but manifestations of consciousness. One point, then, of Aṣṭāvakra's appearance as it relates to the teachings of the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* is to refer indirectly to the teaching that regardless of how people might appear, they are all manifestations of the self that is inherent in all things.¹³

A clue to the other teachings implied by Aṣṭāvakra's appearance might be supplied by another story in the *Chuang Tzu*. It reads:

All at once Master Yu fell ill. Master Ssu went to ask him how he was. "Amazing!" said Master Yu. "The Creator is making me all crookedly like this! My back sticks up like a hunchback and my vital organs are on top of me. My chin is hidden in my navel, my shoulders are up above my head, and my pigtail points at the sky. It must be some dislocation in the yin and yang!"

¹¹ *samadarsīna AG*, 17:15. Cf. *Bhagavadgītā*, 6:29, 5:18.

¹² *AG* 11:3

¹³ Cf. *Chāndogyopaniṣad* VII, 25:2.

"Do you resent it?" asked Master Ssu.

"Why no, what would I resent..... I received life because the time had come; I will lose it because the order of things passes on. Be content with this time and dwell in this order and then neither sorrow nor joy can touch you.... Nothing can ever win against heaven... What would I have to resent?"¹⁴

Hence, Aṣṭāvakra's appearance may also be an indirect reference to the teachings of 'letting things be' and 'contendedness.'

In conclusion, there are three features of the *Mahābhārata* story of Aṣṭāvakra that may be understood to have a bearing upon the interpretation of the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* that I will offer in the following chapter. The first concerns Aṣṭāvakra's relationship with the number thirteen and the discriminative intellect. The second concerns the relationship between the meaning of Aṣṭāvakra's name and the eightfold path of yoga. By combining these two features, we might say that Aṣṭāvakra represents the figure who has transcended the methods and practices of discrimination and yoga. The third feature I wish to emphasize from the above account is the notion of the inborn nature of Aṣṭāvakra's understanding. One might say that he also represents the inherent freedom and prior enlightenment of the self.

1.2.0 Janaka in Philosophical Epic

In the *Jñānakhaṇḍa* section of the *Tripurārahasya* the story of Aṣṭāvakra is picked up where the story in the *Mahābhārata* leaves off.¹⁵

¹⁴Burton Watson, tr., *The Collected Works of Chuang Tzu*, p. 84-85.

¹⁵The *Tripurārahasya* consists of three sections, the *Māhātmya*, *Jñāna*, and *Caryākhaṇḍa*. The story of Aṣṭāvakra occurs in the *Jñānakhaṇḍa*, chapters 16, 17 and 18. The setting of the *Jñānakhaṇḍa* is the instruction of Paraśurāma by Dattātreyā. Teun Goudriaan writes:

The story is set in the latter chapters of the *Jñānakhaṇḍa* section of the *Tripurārahasya* and the intent behind these chapters is the explanation of how the world, which is constructed out of thought, originates out of pure consciousness.¹⁶

In the *Tripurārahasya*, Aṣṭāvakra's knowledge is portrayed as incomplete, and following his victory in the debate he is instructed by an unknown woman and by king Janaka. The point behind Aṣṭāvakra's being instructed by a woman is likely polemical, the philosophical point being that the Upaniṣadic wisdom of *brahmavidyā*, represented by Aṣṭāvakra, is 'completed' by the Śaktic wisdom of the goddess, represented by the unnamed woman. Something similar may be said of Janaka's instruction of Aṣṭāvakra. In the *Tripurārahasya*, Aṣṭāvakra likely represents the renunciate who forsakes the world, whereas Janaka, who is a king,

Its fundamental viewpoint, as usual in Śākta circles, is that of Advaita, but of a special kind: the world and the soul are nothing else than a real manifestation (*ābhāsa*) of the Supreme Śakti, who also completely covers the principle of eternal luminous intelligence represented by the Supreme Śiva as whose freedom of will and action She functions.

Teun Goudriaan and Sanjukta Gupta, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981), p. 167.

¹⁶Goudriaan continues:

[These] chapters continue the theme of Tripurā as pure consciousness (*citi*) with the world as the product of her spontaneous effulgence. In complete autonomy (*svātantryā*), She causes the picture of the world to appear on the wall of her own Self... In chapter XIV (vs. 57f.) the question as to how creation, characterized by articulated thought (*vikalpa*), could originate from the *nirvikalpā citi* is answered by means of the thirty six *tattvas* (categories of existence). Most of the truths are set into the frame of simple stories, such as that of Aṣṭāvakra who was enlightened by an unnamed woman and by Janaka of Videha (chapters XVf.).

Ibid., p. 168.

represents (from the perspective of the *devī* traditions) a more complete wisdom which does not discriminate the world from pure consciousness.¹⁷

Hence, in chapter seventeen of the *Jñānakhaṇḍa* we find Janaka relating to Aṣṭāvakra the story of his own realization. Janaka prefaces his presentation with a description of the first grade of seeker:

O Aṣṭāvakra! One can distinguish three grades of seekers. The best one realizes Brahman during the course of instruction... He does not have to struggle to get it.

Janaka then begins the description of the conditions of his own release:

Let me tell you of my own experience. I was sitting alone with my wife on a luxurious couch in the garden in the front of my palace. Far way, from heaven, the words of great saints¹⁸ regarding the non-dual nature of reality fell on my ears. Soon realization dawned upon me.... I got into this realization within half an hour and later remained in an objectless trance for three hours. I felt dissolved into an ocean of highest bliss... I began to think after a while:... "I will get back again into that state..."

O Aṣṭāvakra! Thinking like this when I was about to withdraw within, disregarding the outside world, a good thought came to me: ... "What have I to reach up to after all?... How can one think of trance and absorption in 'I' which is full and pure joy in essence... 'I' have nothing left to be done or undone. Hence, what is the use of withdrawing the mind. 'I' ... is filled with both perfect joy in both withdrawal and projection.... What loss can come to 'I' which is absolute, unrelated and blissful by withdrawal or non-withdrawal of mind, and what is to be gained by this?"¹⁹

¹⁷Interestingly, at one point (*Jñānakhaṇḍa*, 17:49), Janaka instructs Aṣṭāvakra not to seek out the knowledge of the *nirvikalpa* state but the knowledge of the *savikalpa* state.

¹⁸*siddhas*

¹⁹A.V. Vasavada, tr., *Tripurārahasya (Jñānakhaṇḍa)* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1965), 17:77-17:102, pp. 107-109.

Thus, the point of the Janaka story in the *Tripurārahasya* is the non-discrimination of the world from pure consciousness. In this story, Janaka realizes that it is not necessary for him to abstract himself from the world and abide in concentrative absorption.

Another version of the same story appears in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*²⁰ The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* begins its story by distinguishing two types of seekers:

The first: treading the path indicated by the master, the seeker gradually reaches the goal of liberation. The second: self knowledge literally drops into one's lap, as it were, and there is an instant enlightenment.²¹

The text then has Vāsiṣṭha tell Rāma the story of Janaka:

While [Janaka] was roaming [one day] he heard the inspiring words uttered by certain holy, perfected ones.... Having heard the words of the sages, king Janaka... sought the seclusion of his own chamber.²²

Having heard the words of the *siddhaṣ*, Janaka begins to contemplate their meaning:

I shall give up the apprehension of all objects... Intention or motivation is the seed for this world-appearance. I shall give up this motivation!... What shall I do with this court and royal duties when I know these are all ephemeral? They are useless to me. I shall renounce all activities and duties, and remain immersed in the bliss of the self...²³

Then Janaka comes to the realization that he can remain absorbed in the midst of his daily activities:

²⁰For discussions of the context and content of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* see chapters three and four of this essay.

²¹Venkatesananda, tr., *The Concise Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, Albany: State University of New York, 1984), p. 164.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 165.

²³*Ibid.*, pp. 165-167.

What difference does it make if I am engaged in ceaseless activity or if I remain idle?... I am firmly established in the self; let what is mine be mine! There is nothing that I should work for, nor is there any meaning in inaction...

Vāsiṣṭha then relates to Rāma that Janaka is then able to go about his usual duties:

Reflecting thus, king Janaka rose from his seat... and began to engage himself in the royal duties, without any attachment to them. Having abandoned all concepts of the desirable and the undesirable... he engaged himself in spontaneous and appropriate action.²⁴

Vāsiṣṭha concludes his presentation to Rāma of the story of Janaka: "Thus have I narrated to you how king Janaka attained self-knowledge as if by an act of grace which caused the knowledge to drop from heaven, as it were."²⁵

What can be learnt about the character of Janaka from the above two stories? Admittedly, both texts use the story of Janaka for their respective purposes. But certain features in the stories are similar. Both accounts of Janaka's realization preface their stories with references to the various grades of seekers. Likewise, in both accounts, Janaka's realization is instantaneous: it comes with little effort on his part and its effect upon him is total. Hence, in both texts the character of Janaka is clearly meant as a representation the most highly advanced type of seeker, the one for whom realization comes suddenly, completely and without effort.

The substance of Janaka's realization also has significance. Janaka realizes that his release is not dependent upon anything and that the self is

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 167-168.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

inherently free. It is not necessary for him to remain in the yogic state which is abstracted from the world. The character of Janaka therefore shares certain traits with Aṣṭāvakra. However, whereas Janaka's realization 'dawns' upon him suddenly, Aṣṭāvakra's realization does not 'dawn' upon him at all, as he is born fully realized.

We have, then, in the characters of Aṣṭāvakra and Janaka the representation of two types of individuals: the sage who is born fully realized and the highest grade of seeker in whom realization dawns spontaneously and without effort.

2.0.0 The Philosophy of the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā*

In this chapter, I will attempt to characterize the 'philosophy' of the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā*. Although it may be somewhat misleading to speak of 'philosophy,' as it is conceived in the modern sense, occurring in the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā* there is an 'argument' to be found in the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā* even if we do not find philosophy in the systematic sense occurring in the text.

The text begins with Janaka asking Aṣṭāvakra the question: "O Lord, teach me how man attains wisdom,²⁶ how salvation²⁷ comes, and how renunciation²⁸ is achieved."²⁹ With this question the orientation of the work is set: it intends to discuss the natures of bondage and release as they relate to the traditional means to salvation. Hence, the principal philosophical concerns of the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā* are soteriological in nature.

In this chapter, I will discuss the nature of bondage and release in the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā*. The analysis will pay special attention to the status of the practices of discrimination and concentrative absorption as they relate to the nature of bondage and release. I will begin with an outline of the metaphysical character of the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā* and then move to a discussion of the soteriological features of the *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā*. For preliminary purposes

²⁶ *jñāna*

²⁷ *mukti*

²⁸ *vairāgya*

²⁹ All verses quoted are, except where indicated, from R. Mukerjee, tr., *The Song of the Self Supreme* (Clearlake: Dawn Horse Press, 1982). Phrases or verses which have been retranslated (either by or under the supervision of Dr. Phyllis Granoff) are indicated by the use of square brackets: '[.]'

I will classify the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā*³⁰ as falling into a general class of literature which scholars have called 'mystical.'

2.1.0 The Self: Metaphysical Language³¹

Mystical texts often speak of an ultimate state of consciousness, or of an ultimate reality, which the mystic is said either to merge with, touch, intuit or 'see'. In the *AG*, the term which is most often used to signify this sense of ultimacy is the term 'self.'³² As such, the term 'self' replaces that which the text views as ultimate.

To guarantee the transcendent and absolute character of what the text views as ultimate, the mystical state (or ultimate reality) will often appear described in negative terms. For example, in many mystical texts the mystical state is often described as being ineffable or beyond thought. Likewise, in the *AG* the self is distinguished from those categories of existence which are seen by the text to be less than ultimate.

2.1.1 The *Via Negativa* and the Self

The discrimination of the self from conditional existence is rehearsed in the *AG* in a traditional manner, that is, by way of a description of the

³⁰Henceforth, *AG*.

³¹I take 'metaphysics' to mean those intellectual activities related to the set of fundamental assumptions (stated or unstated) found in any given philosophical position. As such, metaphysics includes both the postulation of fundamental propositions and second order speculation about those postulates. As such, the absolute presuppositions from which any work attempts to operate will determine the point of view of the work.

³²*ātman*. This term appears throughout the *Upaniṣads* and is a central term in all later Vedāntic thought.

discrimination of the eternal from the non-eternal.³³ The self is first distinguished from the grosser categories of existence. The text reads, "You [i.e., the self] are neither earth nor water nor fire nor wind nor sky."³⁴ Thus, the self is not made up of the physical elements. Nor is the self the body or the empirical self.³⁵ Janaka states, "I am not the body, nor does the body belong to me. I am not [the empirical self]." ³⁶

Next, the self is distinguished from subtler orders of existence. Janaka may say "I am not the body," but this does not mean that the self is to be equated with the sense of 'I,' or what we might call the 'ego.' The self is not the I-sense.³⁷ Describing the ultimate identification of the enlightened sage with the self, Aṣṭāvakra says, "He is devoid of [I] and [mine]."³⁸

The self is also distinguished from all intentional states of mind. We read, "virtue and sin, happiness and sorrow, are attributes of the mind, not of yourself. You are neither the doer or the enjoyer."³⁹ Similarly, another verse reads, "You are not the body, nor is the body yours; you are neither

³³ *nityānityavastuviveka*

³⁴1:3 Cf. *Kaivalyopaniṣad*, 23, "I do not have earth, water, fire, air, ether." Cf. also *Upadeśasāhasrī* I, 15: 20, "I am neither an individual element or all the elements..." See Sengaku Mayeda, tr., *A Thousand Teachings: The Upadeśasāhasrī of Śaṅkara* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1979), p. 144.

³⁵ *jīva*. Cf. *Gauḍapādakārikā* 3:7; 3:14; *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 192.

³⁶2:22 Cf. *Upadeśasāhasrī* I, 4:5; I, 12:16; II, 1:12; II, 1:21.

³⁷ *ahamkāra*. Cf. *Bhagavadgītā*, 3:27.

³⁸17:19. Cf. *Upadeśasāhasrī*, I, 14:29, "He to whom both 'I,' and the notion of 'oneself,' and 'my,' the notion of 'one's own,' have become meaningless, becomes a knower of *Ātman*." Mayeda, p. 138.

³⁹1:6. Cf. *Upadeśasāhasrī*, I, 12:16-17, "[The notion that] *Ātman* is a doer is false, since it is due to the belief that the body is *Ātman*....It has been fully ascertained that the understanding, '[I am] a doer,' '[I am] an experiencer,' is false." *Ibid.*, p. 130. Cf. also *Upadeśasāhasrī*, I, 15:19, "As *Ātman* is pure and free from evils, [one should] negate impurity, and as the *Śrutis* says, '[He is] bodiless' (*Isā Up.* 8), [one should negate] the subtle body." *Ibid.*, p. 143.

the doer or the enjoyer."⁴⁰ Hence, for the *AG* the self is neither the mind nor its states: "Passion and aversion are qualities of mind (not of you). The mind is never yours."⁴¹

2.1.2 Epithets of the Self

What, then, is the self? Surprisingly, the *AG* speaks quite a bit about the self. Most of what the *AG* says about the self is given in the form of epithets. Some epithets are thoroughly negative, while others are more positive. Though some epithets are positive, they usually denote a sense of purity from conditional existence and mental states. Each positive epithet is not strictly intended to give a defining characteristic of the self but points to the limits of description.⁴²

The epithets can be divided into a number of groups.⁴³ The first group contains terms which pertain to the conscious and the noetic aspects of the self. The most important and common synonym for the self in this group, and perhaps in the *AG* is 'consciousness.' The self is often identified with consciousness,⁴⁴ and is sometimes called 'of the form of pure

⁴⁰15:6

⁴¹15:5

⁴²There are a large number of epithets of the self given in the *AG*. The large number of epithets given is not intended to give the sense of an infraction of the limit of language. Rather, the large number of epithets is intended to evoke a greater sense of the utterly transcendent nature of the mystical self.

⁴³As the self is identified with the sage in the *AG* any set of epithets of the self can be said to be equally applicable to the sage, and vice versa. I have therefore brought together epithets of the self with those of the sage in the following list.

⁴⁴*cit* 1:12; 2:16; 2:20; *caitanya*, 9:6. For *cit* cf. the *Kaivalyopanīṣad*, 21; *Nṛsimhottaratāpanyupanīṣad*, 7; 8; *Samnyāsopanīṣad*, 1; *Skandopanīṣad*, 4. It is a primarily epithet of the soul (*puruṣa*) in Sāṃkhya, and is found throughout Śaṅkara Advaita. Cf. *Upadeśasāhasrī*, I,17:13. It is also an important term in Kashmiri Śaivism.

consciousness.⁴⁵ This consciousness is not necessarily conscious *of* any one thing in particular. Hence it is spoken of as pure,⁴⁶ or as 'pure consciousness;⁴⁷ 'only pure consciousness;⁴⁸ 'of the form of only consciousness;⁴⁹ and 'pure intelligence.⁵⁰ This consciousness is 'described' as transparent, 'clear and spotless;⁵¹ 'without stain or blemish;⁵² and 'all-pervading' like a cloudless sky or empty space. Hence, the self is also called the 'sky of consciousness.'⁵³

Another group of terms, related to the first, expands upon the allusion to self as consciousness. The self is called the transcendent witness⁵⁴ of all things; and is spoken of as the 'witnessing soul.'⁵⁵ The 'witness' is the passive observer in all states of consciousness. The self as witness does not react to what it sees, that is, it neither thinks, wills, nor brings to memory anything with respect to what it sees. It merely looks on in silence. In this respect, consciousness is often alluded to as illuminating. Hence, we read that the nature⁵⁶ of the self is to illuminate.⁵⁷ Once again,

For the term *caitanya*, cf. *Maitryupaniṣad* 6:10; 6:38; *Brahmopaniṣad* 2; *Sarvopaniṣatsāropaniṣad* 2; 3; 4; *Upadeśasāhasrī* I, 1:1; *Śivasūtra*, 1:1.

⁴⁵ *cidrūpa* 1:3; 15:4

⁴⁶ *śuddha* 18:35; 18:43; 18:70

⁴⁷ *śuddhacaitanya*.

⁴⁸ *śuddhacinmātra* 2:19

⁴⁹ *cinmātrarūpina* 15:10; 15:12

⁵⁰ *cetanaḥ śuddha* 10:5

⁵¹ *vimala* 20:8; 20:11. Cf. *Nādabindupaniṣad*, 20.

⁵² *nirañjana* 18:5; 20:1. Cf. *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* 6:19; *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, III, 1:3.

⁵³ *cidākāśa* 15:13. Cf. Venkatesananda, tr., *The Concise Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 96, 120, 291, 393-4, 402, 405, 406.

⁵⁴ *saksi* 1:12; 1:3; 1:5; 15:4. Cf. *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, 6:11; *Maitryupaniṣad*, 6:16; *Kaivalyopaniṣad*, 18, 23; *Sarvopaniṣatsāropaniṣad*, 1:3; *Muktikopaniṣad*, 1:3. Cf. also *Upadeśasāhasrī*, I, 7:2-3; I, 15:17; *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, 19.

⁵⁵ *sākṣipuruṣa* 14:3

⁵⁶ *svabhāva*

the self does not reflect, but in itself, is 'pure luminosity,'⁵⁸ or 'only pure light.'⁵⁹ It is the self-luminous⁶⁰ 'one seer.'⁶¹

The next group of epithets of the self relate to the self in its noetic aspect. The self is said to be awakened⁶² or 'awakened consciousness.'⁶³ As the intelligence of the self is said to be 'without any particular object,'⁶⁴ that is, 'without an objectifying activity,'⁶⁵ the self is referred to as 'pure awakened knowing or consciousness;' ⁶⁶ as 'only awakened consciousness;'⁶⁷ and elsewhere as pure and awakened;⁶⁸ and as the essence of knowledge.⁶⁹ This knowing or consciousness is also said to be 'supremely blissful.'⁷⁰

⁵⁷ *prakāśa* 2:8. Cf. *Kathopanīṣad* 3:12, *Śvetāśvataropanīṣad* 5:4; *Praśnopanīṣad* 1:6; 2:2; 2:2; *Kaivalyopanīṣad* 17; *Sarvopanīṣatsāropanīṣad* 2; 3; *Hamsopanīṣad* 2. Cf. also *Bhagavadgītā* 5:16; 13:33; *Gauḍapādakārikā* 2:3; 3:12; 3:26. The term *prakāśa*, as an epithet of the self, is important in Śaṅkara Advaita. The term also figures prominently in the theology of Abhinavagupta. See Harvey Alper, "Śiva and the Ubiquity of Consciousness," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 7 (1979): 345-407.

⁵⁸ *śuddhasphuraṇarūpa* 18:71. Cf. *sphuranta* in the *Maitryupanīṣad* 6:24. The technical term *sphuratta* is important in the Śaivism of Kashmir. See J. Singh, tr., *Śiva Sūtras* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), p. 89; and *The Doctrine of Recognition* (Albany: State University of New York, 1990), p.73.

⁵⁹ *sphūrtimātra* 11:8; 15:17. See footnote 30.

⁶⁰ *svaprākāśa* 1:15. Cf. *Nṛsimhottaratāpanyupanīṣad* 2; 5; 6; 8; 9.

⁶¹ *eko draṣṭṛ* 1:7. For the term *draṣṭṛ*, cf. the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopanīṣad* III, 4:2; III, 7:23; III, 8:11; IV, 3:23; IV, 3:32; *Chāndogyopanīṣad* VII, 8:1; VII, 9:1; *Maitryupanīṣad* 6:7; 6:11; *Praśnopanīṣad* 4:9.

⁶² *buddha* 18:35

⁶³ *bodha* 2:17; 11:6; 15:5; 18:1. Cf. *Paramahamsopanīṣad* 3.

⁶⁴ *agādhabuddhi* 1:17

⁶⁵ *alaksya-sphuraṇa* 18:70. See footnote 30.

⁶⁶ *śuddhabodha* 18:69

⁶⁷ *bodhamātra* 2:17

⁶⁸ *viśuddhabuddha* 1:9

⁶⁹ *jñānasvarūpa* 15:8

⁷⁰ *ānandaparamānandah bodha* 1:10

By way of privation, the next group of terms point to an absence of mental activity in the self. The self is said to be 'devoid of thought';⁷¹ 'empty of thought';⁷² 'free from discursive thought';⁷³ and 'without thought'.⁷⁴ The self in its pure state is also 'free of mental tendencies'.⁷⁵ The self is said to be formless;⁷⁶ or 'of the form of emptiness'.⁷⁷ It is also said to be indefinable;⁷⁸ and 'without a nature'.⁷⁹

Terms bearing ontological significance can also be found in the text. One group of terms pertain to the self's transcendence of the natural realm. The self is said to be 'beyond nature';⁸⁰ 'beyond appearances';⁸¹ 'free from particularization';⁸² and 'undefiled by the impurities of gross existence'.⁸³ The self is also said to be 'without change';⁸⁴ and immutable.⁸⁵ It is also

⁷¹ *nirvikalpa* 18:5; 2:17; 11:7; 15:5; 18:66; *niḥsamkalpa* 15:15. Cf. *Brahmabindupanīṣad* 8; 9; and *Tejobindupanīṣad* 6. The term *nirvikalpa* occurs widely in the Advaitic sources. Cf. *Gauḍapāḍakārikā* 2:35; 3:34; . See Nikhilananda, tr., *The Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad* (Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1974), pp. 127, 188. Cf. also the *Yogavāsīṣṭha, op cit*, pp. 53, 57, 400. The term also occurs in a number of Buddhist texts, such as the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*. See Robert Thurman, tr., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), p.35. Cf. also *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 18:9.

⁷² *vikalpaśūnya* 14:4.

⁷³ *nirvimarśa* 20:10. The term may be a reference to the technical term *vimarśa* in Kashmiri Śaivism. See J. Singh, tr., *The Doctrine of Recognition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 45, 48, 56, 68, 90-92.

⁷⁴ *nīścīnta* 18:16

⁷⁵ *nirvāsana* 11:8; 15:17; 18:21. Cf. *Muktikopaniṣad* 2:21.

⁷⁶ *nirākāra* 1:5; 1:18; 18:57. Cf. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, IV, 4:5.

⁷⁷ *śūnyakāra* 18:57

⁷⁸ *anirvācyā* 18:79

⁷⁹ *niḥsvabhāva* 18:79; 20:5

⁸⁰ *prakṛteḥ paraḥ* 15:8

⁸¹ *niṣprapañca* 18:35. Cf. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, 18:9, 22:15, 25:24.

⁸² *nirviśeṣa* 20:4

⁸³ *amala* 2:16. Cf. *Haṃsopaniṣad*, 2; *Rāmapūrvatāpanyupaniṣad*, 94; *Muktikopaniṣad*, 2:69; *Bhagavadgītā*, 14:14.

⁸⁴ *nirvikāra* 18:5; 15:5; 18:57. Cf. *Bhagavadgītā*, 18:26.

indestructible;⁸⁶ undecaying;⁸⁷ eternal;⁸⁸ imperishable;⁸⁹ and 'beyond being and non-being.'⁹⁰

A number of terms also relate to the ontological autonomy of the self. Hence, the self is said to be unconditioned;⁹¹ unlimited;⁹² unattached;⁹³ and 'without support.'⁹⁴ Another group of terms relate to the absolute uniqueness of the self. Under this grouping is found a number of epithets: the self is non-dual;⁹⁵ 'beyond the opposites';⁹⁶ 'absolutely alone,' that is, 'one without an other';⁹⁷ indivisible;⁹⁸ all-pervading;⁹⁹ complete;¹⁰⁰ indivisible;¹⁰¹ and 'without space or gaps.'¹⁰²

⁸⁵ *kūṭastha* 1:13; 20:12. Cf. *Sarvopaniṣatsāropaniṣad*, 1; 3. Cf. also *Bhagavadgītā*, 6:8; 12:3; 15:16. The term is also found in Sāṃkhya and Śaṅkara's Advaita. See S. Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, p. 249.

⁸⁶ *avināśina* 3:1. Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, IV, 5:14; *Bhagavadgītā*, 2:17; 2:21.

⁸⁷ *avayaya* 15:13. Cf. *Kāthopaniṣad*, 3:15; *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, 3:12; 6:10; *Maitryupaniṣad*, 6:18; 6:20; 6:35; *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, I, 1:6; III, 2:7; *Tejobindupaniṣad*, 8; *Samnyāsopaniṣad*, 4, 5; *Muktikopaniṣad*, 1:24; 2:25; *Gauḍapāḍakārikā*, 1:10; 1:26. The term is also used extensively throughout the *Bhagavadgītā*.

⁸⁸ *sanātana* 18:7. Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, II, 6:3; *Kāthopaniṣad*, 3:16; 5:6; 6:1; *Maitryupaniṣad*, 6:34; *Kaivalyopaniṣad*, 8; *Bhagavadgītā*, 1:30; 2:24.

⁸⁹ *akṣaya* 18:74. Cf. *Maitryupaniṣad*, 2:4; 4:4; *Gauḍapāḍakārikā*, 3:40; *Bhagavadgītā*, 5:21, 10:33.

⁹⁰ *bhāvābhāvavivihīnah* 18:19

⁹¹ *nirapekṣa* 1:17. Cf. *Nṛsimhottaratāpanyupaniṣad*, 9; *Ksurikopaniṣad*, 21.

⁹² *nirupādha* 20:13

⁹³ *asaṅga* 1:12; 1:5; *niḥsaṅga* 1:15; 2:1. For *asaṅga*, cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, III, 8:8; III, 9:26; IV, 2:4; IV, 4:22; IV, 5:15; IV, 5:15; IV, 3:15; *Muktikopaniṣad*, 2:28; *Gauḍapāḍakārikā*, 4:72; 4:96.

⁹⁴ *nirālamba* 18:21. Cf. *Muktikopaniṣad*, 1:33.

⁹⁵ *advaita* 1:13; *advaya* 4:6; 18:43; 20:6; 20:7. For *advaita* cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, IV, 3:32; *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad*, 7; 12; *Paramahamsopaniṣad*, 2. Its use as a technical term traditionally begins with the *Gauḍapāḍakārikā*, 1:17. Cf. also *Gauḍapāḍakārikā*, 1:16; 2:18; 2:36; 3:18. For *advaya* cf. *Kaivalyopaniṣad*, 19; *Gauḍapāḍakārikā*, 2:33; 2:35; 3:30; 4:4; 4:45; 4:77; 4:80; 4:85. The term *advaya* can also be found in Mahāyāna texts. Cf. Thurman, tr., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti*, pp.71-77.

⁹⁶ *gatadvandva* 20:2

⁹⁷ *eka* 1:12; 1:9; 2:16; 3:1; 5:2. This term is found extensively throughout the following: *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, *Taittirīyopaniṣad*,

A final group of terms carry soteriological significance.¹⁰³ The self is said to be free;¹⁰⁴ 'absolutely autonomous';¹⁰⁵ actionless;¹⁰⁶ 'without striving';¹⁰⁷ 'free from disease[?];'¹⁰⁸ peaceful;¹⁰⁹ cool;¹¹⁰ and unperturbed.¹¹¹

2.1.3 The Self and the World

As was noted above, the *AG* holds that the self is all-pervading. This is to say that all that appears, appears in the self. Just as a hiker, on a dimly lit trail at dusk, may mistake a rope on the path for a snake, so too does the world appear to take on a real existence. The *AG* reads, "[You are] that...

Kathopanīṣad, *Śvetāśvataropanīṣad*, and *Maitryupanīṣad*. Cf. in particular *Chāndogyopanīṣad*, VI, 2:1.

⁹⁸ *ekasmin* 15:13; 20:4

⁹⁹ *vibhu* 1:12. Cf. *Kathopanīṣad*, 2:22; *Maitryupanīṣad*, 6:7; *Muṇḍakopanīṣad*, 1:6; *Kaivalyopanīṣad*, 6; *Gauḍapāḍakārikā*, 1:1, 1:10; *Bhagavadgītā*, 5:15; 10:12.

¹⁰⁰ *pūrṇa* 1:12; 18:35. Cf. *Paramahamsopanīṣad*, 3.

¹⁰¹ *nirvibhāga* 20:12

¹⁰² *nirbhāra* 1:17

¹⁰³ There are also a number of other terms which relate to the self in its soteriological capacity in other senses. I will leave these important terms for discussion later in the essay in a section more closely related to the *AG*'s view of soteriological matters, as they constitute the *AG*'s distinctive contribution to the topic of spiritual liberation.

¹⁰⁴ *mukta* 1:12; 17:20; 18:7; 18:21. Cf. the term *mukti* appears in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopanīṣad*, III, 1:3, IV, 5:6; *Hamsopanīṣad*, 1; *Tejobindupanīṣad*, 13; *Muktikopanīṣad*, 1:5, 15, 17-20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 29, 40.

¹⁰⁵ *kevala* 3:9; *kaivalya* 17:18. For *kevala*, cf. *Śvetāśvataropanīṣad*, 1:11; 4:18; 6:11; *Nāḍabindupanīṣad*, 20; *Bhagavadgītā*, 4:21; 5:10; 18:16. For *kaivalya*, cf. *Kaivalyopanīṣad*, 24; *Amṛtabindupanīṣad*, 29; *Muktikopanīṣad*, 1:18; 1:26; 1:36; *Yogasūtra*, 2:25; 3:50; 3:55; 4:26; 4:34.

¹⁰⁶ *akriya* 1:12; *niṣkriya* 20:9. For *akriya*, cf. *Bhagavadgītā*, 6:1.

¹⁰⁷ *nirāyāsa* 18:5. Cf. *Hamsopanīṣad*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ *nirāmaya* 18:35; 18:57

¹⁰⁹ *śānta* 1:12; 2:1; 11:7; 15:13

¹¹⁰ *śītalāśaya* 1:17. Cf. *Paramahamsopanīṣad*, 2.

¹¹¹ *akṣubdha* 1:17

supremely blissful consciousness [in which] the universe appears as illusory, [falsely cognized] like the snake apprehended as the rope."¹¹² Hence, the self is immanent in all things. The text reads, "You encompass the universe as the universe enters into you."¹¹³ Elsewhere we read, "I am in all beings and all beings are in me."¹¹⁴ In another sense, however, the self is also not of this world. The self also transcends all things. "The Self is not in any object, nor is any object in the Self...."¹¹⁵ The self is thus both transcendent and immanent. The *AG* states, "Just as a reflection covers both the inside and the outside of the mirror, so the Supreme Lord encompasses both the interior and exterior of the body."¹¹⁶

The *AG* also holds very closely to the doctrine that the self is radically autonomous and unique.¹¹⁷ This means that for the *AG* there is *only* the self. We read, "In reality, [you are the one (reality). No thing exists, either saṃsāric or non-saṃsāric], other than yourself."¹¹⁸ Elsewhere the text reads, "In the ocean of existence, the one (the pure Self) only was, is, and will

¹¹²1:10. The example of the rope that is mistaken for a snake is a favorite metaphor in Indian discussions of *māyā* and false cognition. Cf. *Gauḍapāda-kārikā* 2:17, "As the rope, whose nature is not really known, is imagined in the dark to be a snake, a water line, etc., so also is the *Ātman* imagined (in various ways)." Nikhilananda, p. 105. Cf. Śaṅkara's *Upadeśasāhasrī*, I, 14:17; I, 18:46; I, 18:114; II, 2:109. Cf. also *Vivekacūḍāmaṇī*, 197. The rope-snake metaphor also appears in texts such as the *Lankāvatārasūtra*. "Like the ignorant who not recognizing the rope take it for a snake, people imagine an external world, not knowing that it is Mind itself." See D. T. Suzuki, tr., *The Lankavatara Sutra* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1932), p. 262.

¹¹³1:16

¹¹⁴6:4 Cf. *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, 3:7; 4:15; 4:16; 6:11.

¹¹⁵7:4

¹¹⁶1:19. Cf. *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, II, 1:2; *Upadeśasāhasrī*, I, 13:11; I, 17:42.

¹¹⁷There is very little mention of *brahman* in the text. This may be related to the text's doctrine that the self is the only reality.

¹¹⁸15:16

be."¹¹⁹ "He alone fills the constellation of the universe."¹²⁰ In short, for the *AG* "all is the Self."¹²¹

If there is only the self, and nothing else, what is the status of the 'world' in the *AG*? The response of the *AG* is that the world is only an illusion.¹²² It is merely a product of ignorance. "All this world springs from ignorance."¹²³ Just as the 'snake' on the hiker's trail is a creation of ignorance, so too the world is a product of ignorance: "The universe becomes manifest¹²⁴ due to ignorance.... Due to ignorance the snake... becomes manifest...."¹²⁵

The subject, his world, and his knowledge of the world are not real categories for the *AG*. According to the *AG* distinctions made between the world and a subject observing the world are all made in ignorance. In reality, all three apparent categories reside in the self, and the self is without distinction. "The triple categories of the knower, the knowledge, and the object of knowledge do not exist in reality. It is in myself without attributes where the triad becomes manifest due to ignorance."¹²⁶

¹¹⁹15:18

¹²⁰17:2

¹²¹18:9 Cf. *Chāndogyopanīṣad*, VII, 25:2, "The self indeed is all this." See Gambhirananda, tr., *Chāndogyā Upanīṣad* (Delhi: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), p. 564. Cf. also *Bṛhadāraṇyakopanīṣad*, II, 4:6; IV, 4:23; *Aitreyopanīṣad*, I, 1:1; *Upadeśasāhasrī*, II, 1:6; II, 1:37; *Ātmabodha*, 47. The *Yogavāsīṣṭha* reads, "There is only the self and self alone. The self alone is everywhere; everything exist as the self. All this is truly the self." Venkatesananda, tr., p. 154.

¹²² *māyāmātra* 3:11. Cf. *Gauḍapāḍakārikā* 1:17, "This duality (that is cognized) is mere illusion (*Māyā*)." Nikhilananda, tr., p. 64.

¹²³18:70

¹²⁴ *bhāti*

¹²⁵2:7

¹²⁶2:15

Thus, the world, as an entity in itself, is given no real ontological status in the *AG* "This world is only an illusion and is nothing."¹²⁷ The world is neither real nor even provisionally real in the *AG*. The same can be said for the status of ignorance.¹²⁸ Ignorance is not even given the status of 'indeterminate' in the *AG*. It simply does not exist. "The universe is material and unreal."¹²⁹ Ignorance¹³⁰ is also nonexistent."¹³¹ Hence, in reality, nothing exists for the *AG*. "In the yogic [view] nothing exists."¹³² "There is nothing whatsoever."¹³³

Whatever goes by the name of 'world' is in reality the self. "This visible universe is not different from you."¹³⁴ Thus, the *AG* does not deny the *reality* of consciousness. What it denies is the reality of *autonomous objects* separate from consciousness. Hence, when the *AG* says, "Nothing exists in reality,"¹³⁵ this means that nothing exists apart from consciousness. "This universe with the body is insubstantial. This is certain. The Self is pure and is of the nature of consciousness. [Hence, in what locus can things be imagined?]"¹³⁶ For the *AG* there is *only* consciousness. There is no 'thing' separate from consciousness. "You alone are manifest in whatever you

127 15:17

128 *avidyā*.

129 *asat*

130 *avidyā*. Cf. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, I, 1:10; *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, IV, 3:20; IV, 4:3; IV, 4:10; *Iṣopaniṣad*, 10; 11; *Kathopaniṣad*, 2:4; 2:5; *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, 5:1; *Maitryupaniṣad*, 7:9; *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, I, 2:9.

131 10:5. Cf. the *Yogavāsīṣṭha*, "In fact ignorance does not even exist!" Venkatesananda, tr., p. 56.

132 18:80

133 18:78

134 15:12

135 18:70

136 2:19

see."¹³⁷ The light of consciousness is ubiquitous, for the *AG* In every conscious act there is only consciousness illuminating itself. "When this universe [appears], it is I alone who [appear]."¹³⁸ "Just as [I alone make manifest the body by means of illumination]¹³⁹ so do I make manifest the world.]"¹⁴⁰ Hence, in the *AG* the self is called 'self-illuminating.'¹⁴¹

The most frequent metaphor used by the *AG* to give the reader an understanding of this apparent relationship between the self and the world, is the analogy of waves on the ocean.¹⁴² In the analogy, the waves are identified with the universe, while the ocean is identified with the self. "I am like the ocean and the universe is like the wave."¹⁴³ Both are composed of water, which is identified with consciousness. "Just as the waves and the

¹³⁷15:14. The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* reads, "All these innumerable names and forms are consciousness alone.... Jīva and Mind etc. are all vibrations in consciousness.... This world appears to be material, yet in reality it is pure consciousness." Venkatesananda, tr., pp. 50-51.

¹³⁸2:8

¹³⁹ *prākāśā*

¹⁴⁰2:2

¹⁴¹ *svaprākāśā* 1:15. Cf. the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, "It is self-luminous...." Venkatesananda, tr., pp. 46, 113.

¹⁴²Cf. the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, "Mind seeds (*cittabīja*) take their rise in the way images [appear in a mirror] or [waves roll on] the ocean waters." Suzuki, tr., p. 244. Cf. also Śvaghōṣa, "This is like the the relationship that exists between the water of the ocean [ie. enlightenment] and its waves [ie. modes of mind] stirred by the wind [ignorance]." See Y. S. Hakeda, tr., *The Awakening of Faith Attributed to Ashvaghosa* (New York: Columbia, 1967), p. 41. Cf. also the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, "The entire creation came into being like ripples on the surface of the ocean." Venkatesananda, tr., p. 48. "Though like the deep ocean it is not agitated, yet it is agitated like the waves appearing on the surface." *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹⁴³6:2 Nityaswarupananda, tr., *Aṣṭāvakra Saṃhitā* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama), p.51.

bubbles of foam are not different from the water, even so the universe streaming out of the Self is not different from it."¹⁴⁴

The analogy of the waves and the ocean is intended to give the idea that the world is merely ripples in the pure consciousness of the self. The ripples represent the waves of the mind, i.e., thought. "In me, the limitless ocean, [the whole universe is imagined.]"¹⁴⁵ Hence, in the *AG* the world is identified with thought. "All that exists is mere imagination."¹⁴⁶ For the *AG* the world is but a construct of thought; a mere "figment of imagination."¹⁴⁷ Thus, to the extent that the world is a product of the mind, is it an illusory entity. "Even with the false appearance of the universe in imagination,¹⁴⁸ it exists in me as the silver does in the seashell, the snake in the rope, and the water in the sunbeam."¹⁴⁹ In this sense, the world as an entity is nothing. "This world is merely a mode of thinking.¹⁵⁰ In truth¹⁵¹ it is nothing."¹⁵²

At times in the text, the 'universe' is said to arise out of the self: "Oh, in the boundless ocean of myself as the winds of mind arise, manifold worlds

¹⁴⁴2:4. Cf. the *Yogavāsishtha*, "Even as waves are inseparable from the ocean, the universes are inseparable from consciousness." Venkatesananda, tr., p. 261. Cf also *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, 390, 496, 497.

¹⁴⁵ *vikalpa* 7:3. Cf. the *Yogavāsishtha*, "Then mind arise as a wave arises when the surface of the calm ocean is disturbed." Venkatesananda, tr., p. 39.

¹⁴⁶ *kalpanāmātra* 18:7. Cf. 2:20; and the *Yogavāsishtha*: "The materiality of creation is... an illusory projection of one's mind -- imaginary." Venkatesananda, tr., p. 41. "All This is mere imagination or thought. Even now nothing has ever been created." *Ibid.*, p. 49. "The world is nothing but pure hallucination. It is nothing more than an idea." *Ibid.*, p. 99. Cf. also the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, "The world is no more than thought-construction.... The triple world of existence is no more than thought construction." Suzuki, tr., pp. 229-230, 232. Cf. also *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, 194.

¹⁴⁷ *kalpita* 18:28. Cf. *Gaudapādakārikā*, 2:12, 2:33.

¹⁴⁸ *vikalpita*

149:9

¹⁵⁰ *bhāvanāmātra*

¹⁵¹ *paramārtha*

¹⁵² 18:4

quickly appear as its waves."¹⁵³ The metaphor continues: "From me the universe has streamed forth, and in me it will disappear, just as the pot dissolves into the earth, the wave into the water, the ornament into the gold."¹⁵⁴ The sage relates to his listener that the world is no different from the self. "From you the universe emerges as a bubble from the sea."¹⁵⁵ "It is from you that the world springs as the waves from the ocean."¹⁵⁶ But this 'streaming forth' should not be confused with a willful act of creation. The universe arises spontaneously out of (or more accurately, within) the self. "In me the boundless ocean, the waves corresponding to the worlds spontaneously¹⁵⁷ rise and vanish."¹⁵⁸ There is no 'reason' or intent behind the arising of the world; it simply arises: "It is a marvel that in the boundless ocean of myself, [individuals --like waves] -- rise, jostle, play with one another, and merge spontaneously."¹⁵⁹ Hence, the world is not 'willed' or created, by some higher agent. For the *AG* it simply and spontaneously arises. "The waves representing the universe spontaneously arise and disappear in you, the infinite ocean."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵³2:22. Cf. the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, "Just as waves rise and fall in the ocean, the worlds arise and vanish." Venkatesananda, tr., p.132.

¹⁵⁴2:10

¹⁵⁵5:3

¹⁵⁶15:7

¹⁵⁷ *svabhāvata*

¹⁵⁸7:2

¹⁵⁹ *svabhāvata* 2:25

¹⁶⁰15:11. Cf. the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, "In that infinite consciousness, whirlpools known as the three worlds arise spontaneously and naturally..." Venkatesananda, tr., p. 82. Cf. also Aśvaghōṣa's statement that the 'reproducing mind, "arises spontaneously." Hakeda, tr., p.48.

Having sketched the *AG*'s general metaphysical perspective, I will now move to a discussion of the soteriological dimensions of the *AG*. There are three features of the *AG*'s metaphysics that should be kept in mind for the discussion on soteriology which follows: the inherent freedom of the self, the identification of the world as being no different from consciousness, and the spontaneous arising of the world in consciousness.

2.2.0 Bondage: The Language of the Soteriological Problematic

Soteriology, as the word suggests, concerns itself with the topic of salvation. In the Indian context, salvation is spiritual liberation.¹⁶¹ The term 'soteriology' also implies that salvation can have a '*logos*'. By this I mean the following: If it is fair to say that there are soteriological concerns in Indian thought, then, it may be said that each Indian approach to liberation has a 'logic.' By a 'logic of liberation' I mean that there are various *rationales* behind the different approaches or 'paths' to liberation in the Indian tradition. The *AG* is not different in this respect, although the approach of the *AG* toward the very idea of a 'soteriological approach' is unusual, though not without parallels, in the Indian tradition.

The notion of a soteriological rationale, being something which justifies or explains an approach or solution to liberation, presupposes that there is a problem. Simply put, the problem, in Indian thought, is bondage.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ *mokṣa*; *mukti* *Kaivalya* and *nirvāṇa* are also terms used to designate the ultimate goal of life, liberation, and they are sometimes used as synonyms for liberation, although they are also associated with certain schools, as in Buddhism and Sāṃkhya. In general, in the Indian traditions, soteriology involves spiritual liberation.

¹⁶² *bandha*

Generally, bondage is associated with suffering and the cycle of rebirth.¹⁶³ Each solution to the problem involves a spiritual path, that is, each tradition prescribes its own way to release. Each way carries a rationale underpinning the way prescribed by that particular tradition. It is the *AG*'s response toward these rationales, and approach to the very idea of a soteriological problematic, which is distinctive, and which I intend to examine in what follows.

2.2.1 The Problem with the Problem

What does the *AG* see as the source of the soteriological problem? There are two possible answers to this question: a naive answer and a sophisticated (yet simple) answer. A superficial reading of the *AG* reveals the superficial answer. "Desire¹⁶⁴ alone is the soul of bondage."¹⁶⁵ In the paradigmatic formulation, bondage is due to the thirst for sensual objects. "Passion for sense objects is bondage."¹⁶⁶ But what is it about desire that creates bondage? Bondage is not simply due to desire as such but is found in the attachment to things brought about by desire. Bondage involves grasping, clinging and longing. Someone said to be 'bound,' in this sense, craves what he does not have, becomes attached to what he comes to possess, and subsequently pines for what he inevitably loses.

What is more, grasping, clinging and longing are perpetuated by a process which involves the creation of mental tendencies to gravitate toward

¹⁶³ *samsāra*

¹⁶⁴ *tṛṣṇā*

¹⁶⁵ 10:4

¹⁶⁶ 15:2

such states in the future. According to the Sāṃkhya,¹⁶⁷ any mental state, such as the state of grasping, leaves a 'residue' in the mind, a kind of mental impression upon the mind-stuff. This mental impression becomes the 'seed' of a mental tendency to act in a similar way in the future.¹⁶⁸ Thus a pattern of behavior is set up through a kind of mental conditioning: craving, attachment and longing are acted out; acting-out leaves an impression upon the mind; these mental impressions create the seeds of future mental tendencies; these seeds come to fruition, giving rise to inclinations, which are in turn acted out; acting-out creates more future mental tendencies; and so on. Hence, the *AG* states: "[Mental tendencies¹⁶⁹ are the cycle of rebirth]."¹⁷⁰

By moving to the discussion of mental tendencies, the inquiry into the sources of bondage has shifted to another level, to the subtle level of the mind. The unreflective enquiry into the source of bondage blames the objects of sensation themselves as the source of bondage. But a more careful consideration of the problem sees the realm of mental processes as closer to the source of bondage.

Often, however, it is the sense of 'I'-ness which is identified as the problem to be overcome. Hence, the *AG* reads, "when there is ego there is bondage."¹⁷¹ The problem here is the false identification of the self with the

¹⁶⁷The *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, the *Yogasūtra*, and a number of other texts and traditions also speak of mental tendencies in this way.

¹⁶⁸See S.N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), p. 263.

¹⁶⁹ *vāsanā*

¹⁷⁰ *samsāra* 9:8. Cf. the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. Venkatesananda, tr., pp. 328, 252-254.

¹⁷¹8:4. Cf. *Bhagavadgītā*, 18:58. Cf. also the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, "The ego-sense is the source of endless sorrow." Venkatesananda, tr., p.216

empirical self: "O child, you are ever bound by the [noose of believing you are the body]."¹⁷² Through identification with the actor in the cycle of desire, the self appears to undergo the misery of craving and the anguish of loss. This false identification with the agent brings suffering: "'That I am the doer' -- this egoism bites one like a big black [cobra]."¹⁷³

But what is the source of the ego? One way of approaching this question is to ask another question: when does the sense of 'I' arise? According to many philosophers and sages, the 'I' always accompanies the 'I think.' Where there is thought there is a self-conscious 'I.' Not surprisingly, then, it is thought itself which is identified as the source of bondage by the *AG*¹⁷⁴

Thought is always intentional, that is, it always has a object. It is always a thinking about something. An object of thought is something which is always identified *as* something by being distinguished from that which it is not. This is to say that thought always involves seeing identity as well as difference, affirmation as well as denial.¹⁷⁵ In popular jargon, thought is 'dualistic.' It distinguishes *a* from not-*a*. Hence, the *AG* states, "Unhappiness has its roots in duality."¹⁷⁶

With regard to the soteriological problem, the focus of the *AG* is upon thought, especially the tendency to think in certain ways. "There is bondage

¹⁷²1:14. Cf. the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, I, 12:5, "He who misconceives the body as *Ātman* has pain..." Mayeda, tr., p. 129. Cf. also *Vivekacūḍāmaṇī*, 164.

¹⁷³1:18 Cf. *Upadeśasāhasrī*, I, 12:16-17.

¹⁷⁴Cf. the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, "Ideas and thoughts are bondage..." Venkatesananda, tr., p. 108.

¹⁷⁵ *saṃkalpavikalpa*

¹⁷⁶1:16

when the mind is attached to any... [viewpoint]."¹⁷⁷ This point is closely associated with its metaphysics. The world is a product of creative imagining. It is a construct of thought. Hence, as bondage is a part of the world-appearance, bondage too, is a product of thought. "The body together with... heaven and hell, bondage and freedom and anxiety are mere [imagination]."¹⁷⁸ In fact, for the *AG* bondage is nothing other than the thought of being bound. "One who [thinks he is] freedom is free, as one [who thinks he] is bound [is] bondage. There is truth in the popular saying, [you are what you think]."¹⁷⁹

Rather than seeing bondage as an entity unto itself, the *AG* looks upon it as a tendency to think in a certain way. This tendency includes the tendency to think about bondage and about the means of escape from bondage. For the very idea of 'bondage' seems to perpetuate the cycle of bondage itself, as people who have deemed themselves 'overweight' incessantly think only of food the moment they go on a 'diet.' Brooding on the subject only seems to perpetuate the problem. At one level of reflection, bondage, and its correlative, sorrow, are believed to be due to the cycle of desire's tendency to create more desire. But this sorrow is the ego's own mental production. Hence, at another level of abstraction we have the ego's reflection upon its own self-perpetuating cycle of despair. But clearly, this

¹⁷⁷ *dr̥ṣṭi*8:3

¹⁷⁸ *kalpanāmātra*2:20. Cf. the *Yogavāsīṣṭha*, "Since the entire creation is within the mind, the notions of bondage and liberation are also within it." Venkatesananda, tr., p.96.

¹⁷⁹1:11 The reference is likely to the *Bhagavadgītā*, 8:6, where the idea is conveyed that one's final thought at the moment of death determines one's next existence. Cf. the *Yogavāsīṣṭha*, "The mind creates delusion, the mind produces ideas of birth and death; as a result of its own thoughts it is bound and liberated." Venkatesananda, tr., p.120.

sort of second-order hankering gets one no closer to a solution. In this sense, bondage is the result of worry and concern over the problem of bondage itself. Hence, the *AG* states: "The world sorrow¹⁸⁰ is caused through [concern and worry]."¹⁸¹

The point being noted by the *AG* is this: talk of a solution presupposes the problem to the extent that thought about the solution is pervaded by thought about the problem. What is important, argues the *AG* is noticing how extensive the network of 'problem' entities -- thought, the ego, duality, etc. -- truly is. The approach which the *AG* takes toward the soteriological problematic is to treat it on its own terms. It subverts the discourse of liberation by turning its own logic in on itself.¹⁸² It does this by showing what the premise of a problematic implies. What the premise of a problematic implies is that the notion of a problematic is, *on its own grounds*, part of the problem; for the idea of a problem is just that, an idea. If thought is the problem, then the notion of a problem is part of the problem, too. Hence, if the idea of a problematic is part of the problem, then the idea of a solution is part of the problem, too. What the *AG* does is take the premises that accept duality, egoity, and cogitation as characteristic of the problematic, and show how these characteristics are not transcended in the traditional attempts at a solution -- the so-called 'means' to liberation. I will begin with the *AG*'s discussion of the solution presented by the classical yoga.

¹⁸⁰ *duhkha*

¹⁸¹ *cintaya* 11:5

¹⁸² Note that I am not saying 'uses logic to destroy logic.'

2.2.2 The Practice of Concentration

According to the analysis presented so far, the problem of bondage is primarily the problem of cogitation. Thus, stopping of the mind from cogitating would appear to be the remedy for the problem: "One who sees the universe endeavors to obliterate it."¹⁸³ This ploy gives rise to two possible alternative states: trying to achieve the state in which mental functions have ceased and achieving the state in which mental functioning has ceased. One of the two alternatives is an active state while the other is a state of inaction. "The yogis who are attached to the body show insistence on action or inaction."¹⁸⁴

The condition of attachment to the objects of the senses is characterized by the tendency of attention to seek out ever new objects. The mind is attracted to objects, becomes attached to objects, and comes to identify itself with its objects. However, dissatisfaction and disappointment accompany this tendency of the mind to move toward objects, as objects, and pleasure derived from objects, are short lived. Hence, the mind is described as flitting about, shifting its attention to new objects trying to appease its appetite for new experience. This tendency of attention to move toward objects is thus seen as a primary cause of discomfort by the yogi.

Through the cultivation of the one-pointedness of attention,¹⁸⁵ the yogi attempts to use this tendency of attention to focus upon and identify with objects, with the intent to control the mind's tendency to flit about. By focussing attention upon a single object, the yogi attempts to break the cycle

¹⁸³18:15

¹⁸⁴13:4

¹⁸⁵ *ekāgratā*

of attraction and subsequent dissatisfaction. This practice is also said to halt the process of the creation of new latent mental tendencies. The goal of the practice is the cessation of mental functioning.¹⁸⁶

The practice of yoga involves a process which has attention develop through degrees of one-pointedness. Through extended practice, concentration¹⁸⁷ develops into prolonged meditation¹⁸⁸ and meditation into concentrative absorption.¹⁸⁹ The yogi then passes through stages of concentrative absorption, with each stage containing a subtler form of mental functioning than its predecessor. Then, by concentrating upon the flow of thought itself, an insight into the mental processes themselves arises which (theoretically) allows the yogi to discriminate between the mind and the pure self.¹⁹⁰ With the successful completion of this final stage of meditation, the yogi passes into the concentrative absorption in which mental functioning has ceased.¹⁹¹ This state is said to be deadly to the seeds of future mental tendencies. Through repeated entry into the concentrative absorption in which mental processes have ceased, and through constant discrimination between the self and nature, the yogi becomes established in final release, a condition of complete independence from the effects of latent mental tendencies and the like.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁶ *cittavṛttinirodha*

¹⁸⁷ *dhāraṇā*

¹⁸⁸ *dhyāna*

¹⁸⁹ *samādhi*

¹⁹⁰ See J.H. woods, tr., *The Yoga System of Patañjali* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), p. 287.

¹⁹¹ *asamprañātasamādhi*

¹⁹² See J.H. Woods, *The Yoga System of Patañjali*, for a more complete description of Yoga philosophy and soteriology. Cf. also *Bhagavadgītā* 6:11-14

It is this picture of spiritual practice that the *AG* finds inconsistent. The *AG* points out that the strategy oriented toward one-pointedness presupposes that the mind is already distracted. "One who experiences distraction¹⁹³... undertakes self-control."¹⁹⁴ One-pointedness is therefore relative to the condition of distraction. "Encountering the tigers of sense objects, the frightened ones at once seek shelter for achieving [cessation]¹⁹⁵ and [one-pointedness]..."¹⁹⁶ But, as has been pointed out already, belief in the effectiveness of the cure presupposes that the symptom is real. The solution thus remains tied to the problem. On these grounds, the *AG* sees the practice of one-pointedness as foolish. "The [fool] intensely practices [one-pointedness and cessation]..."¹⁹⁷

The *AG* also points to the fact that the practice of concentration involves an effort, that it is an intentional activity directed toward a goal. This kind of activity therefore presupposes an 'I' which is trying to achieve some particular state. Thus, the yogi remains caught in the web of egoism and ambition. "The ignorant sustain the world ... feverish for the attainment (of liberation)."¹⁹⁸ The yogi's misery is merely compounded by his own effort to relieve his situation. "You are unhappy because of effort."¹⁹⁹ Hence,

¹⁹³ *vikṣepa*

¹⁹⁴ *nirodha* 18:17. Cf. the *Gauḍapāḍakārikā* 3:40, "The Yogis ... depend upon the control of their mind for fearlessness, destruction of misery, the knowledge of the self and eternal peace." Nikhilananda, tr., p. 198.

¹⁹⁵ *nirodha*

¹⁹⁶ *ekāgratā* 18:45

¹⁹⁷ 18:33.

¹⁹⁸ 18:38

¹⁹⁹ *āyāsa* 16:3

the yogi does not find release in the practice of yoga. "The ignorant one does not attain liberation through his effort of yogic practice."²⁰⁰

Another problem the *AG* has with the practice of yoga is the tendency of the yogi to become attached to the practices themselves. A relative degree of bliss is possible through the practice of yoga. Thinking that this is an indication of progress on the path, the yogi becomes caught up in the practice of yoga. He thinks that he is closing in upon his goal when really he has only become engrossed in another, if subtler, kind of experience. "In this world men who are habituated to various practices... do not know the Self..."²⁰¹

In a succinct statement, the *AG* sums up its thoughts on the practice of absorption: "That you practice meditation²⁰² -- this indeed is your bondage."²⁰³ One of the primary targets of the *AG*'s critique is clearly the practice of concentrative absorption.

It may be possible to generalize how the *AG* views the practice of meditation. Meditation may be upon an object with form or it may be upon an object without form. Meditation with form clearly involves a mental content. But what of meditation upon that which is without an object? The response of the *AG* is that this is still a form of meditation upon an object. This type of meditation turns the objectless state into an object to be meditated upon. Hence, in this form of meditation, consciousness retains an

²⁰⁰18:36

²⁰¹18:35. Cf. *Gauḍapāḍakārikā*, 3:45.

²⁰² *samādhī*

²⁰³1:15

object. This object is the awareness of the absence of any object.²⁰⁴ Thus, this form of meditation still relies upon a prior conception of that which is to be meditated upon, and this object is conceptualized as 'nothingness' or 'formlessness.' "A man who meditates²⁰⁵ on the unthinkable²⁰⁶... resorts only to a form of ... thought." ²⁰⁷

The upshot is that meditation upon an object does not move beyond the object as long as the object remains in consciousness, even if that object is as subtle as the awareness of the lack of any object. The state of objectless consciousness remains a goal, something to be achieved. As long as the goal is objectified in this way, consciousness does not move beyond the realm of objects. Meditation remains bound to an object. "The intelligence of one who strives after liberation cannot rise beyond a supporting object."²⁰⁸

There is another possible state of affairs and this is the state of meditation or concentrative absorption in which all mental functioning has ceased, the objectless state of consciousness. The *AG* does not deny such a state. What it does deny is that the state of consciousness in which subject and object have disappeared is possible through meditation upon an object, and that such a state gives any lasting sense of relief. I will treat this state under the rubric of inaction, something which the *AG* associates with renunciation.

²⁰⁴ *abhāva-pratyayālamhanāvṛttir nidra*. See A. Avalon, *The Serpent Power* (New York: Dover, 1974), p.80.

²⁰⁵ *cintya*

²⁰⁶ *acintya*

²⁰⁷ 12:7

²⁰⁸ 18:44

2.2.3 Renunciation, Inaction and the Cessation of Thought

Yoga involves detachment (or renunciation) as well as practice. The rationale behind renunciation is easy to see. If the problem is attachment to the objects of the senses then the solution to the problem would appear to involve an avoidance or rejection of the offending object. But overcoming the problem is not that easy. A self-enforced renunciation remains relative to attachment. It is merely the cultivation of aversion. "From impulse²⁰⁹ arises the feeling of attachment.²¹⁰ From withdrawal²¹¹ arises the feeling of aversion."²¹²

The *AG* clearly associates renunciation with inaction and withdrawal. As withdrawal remains relative to involvement, it remains within the sphere of bondage. The *AG* associates this with a mental state. "Bondage is there when the mind desires or grieves over anything, rejects or accepts anything, feels delight or anger with anything."²¹³ That aversion is merely a mental state can be seen by recognizing the fact that renunciation and detachment involve discrimination between what is acceptable and what is not. Discrimination is a form of cogitation; hence, acceptance and rejection remain within the sphere of thought.

Thus, rejection or aversion presupposes the problem it intends to remedy, not merely the problem of desire but also the problem of worry over the problem. Therefore, renunciation is not seen by the *AG* to be a

209 *pravṛtta*

210 *rāga*

211 *nirvṛtta*

212 *dveṣa* 16:8

213 8:1

viable means to the ultimate state. "Abidance in the Self, which does not spring from anything..., cannot be obtained even through renunciation with only a loincloth."²¹⁴

Desire and egoism also permeate the enterprise of self-imposed detachment and renunciation. The seeker is trying to grasp release, he wants liberation, he desires salvation. But he cannot escape from his problem, as every attempt at a solution is the act of an ego trying to escape from its own suffering. "As the ignorant one wants peace he does not attain it."²¹⁵ If the ego is that from which the seeker is trying to escape, and if every act of seeking is an act of the egoism, then the remedy can be seen to be only an exacerbation of the problem of egoism. "One who has ego-sense in respect even of emancipation, and also attachment to his body, is neither a wise man or a yogi. He simply suffers misery."²¹⁶

The naive renunciate thinks that inaction is doing nothing; and clearly, this is mere selfish escapism. "One who has egoism in his mind acts though he is inactive."²¹⁷ In the *AG* the naive renunciate is even presented, at times, as either a kind of phoney or as incredibly foolish. "Outwardly he appears devoid of mental fluctuations through his efforts, but inwardly he craves sense-gratification."²¹⁸ The naive renunciate is not truly inactive because his mind remains active. Thus, he does not escape from the

²¹⁴13:1

²¹⁵18:39

²¹⁶16:10

²¹⁷18:29

²¹⁸18:76

tendency to act. "The withdrawal of the ignorant is transformed into action."²¹⁹

The *AG* also addresses those yogis who see inaction as the state in which all mental activity has ceased. The *AG* does not deny the possibility of such a state. But what it does deny is that any permanent sense of relief is granted by such a state. Even though it is a state in which subject and object have vanished, it is still a state that is turned into an object. It remains as something discriminated from the realm of conditional existence, and hence, it remains bound to the idea a distinction between itself and the 'ordinary' state of consciousness. Thus, any sense of freedom granted by this state remains tied to it. The yogi is therefore released only so long as he remains in such a state. "If one of defective intelligence forsakes such practices as the control of the mind, instantaneously do the wishes and fancies take over control."²²⁰ As should be apparent by now, the problem with this state is that it is only *a* state.

What is more, in terms of the formulation of 'the problem,' the state in which all thought process have ceased has actually become a part of the problem. When someone goes to an oral surgeon to have his wisdom teeth pulled, the anesthesiologist gives his patient a drug to take the patient's attention away from the pain. What is the drug doing? It is distracting the patient's attention away from the pain. The same is true of the practice of concentrative absorption. "Even in inaction the ignorant is distracted due to

²¹⁹18:61

²²⁰18:75

commotion..."²²¹ Hence, concentrative absorption, like the anaesthetic, is in actuality a very subtle and sophisticated form of *distraction*

2.2.4 Discrimination and the Way of Vedānta

Those who practice meditation upon brahman do not fare much better in the *AG* Meditation upon brahman reduces brahman to an object of attention. If one seeks to identify with an object, then this identity cannot be said to be with the objectless brahman. "One who sees the supreme Brahman meditates, "I am Brahman."²²² Hence, the aspirant does not come to identify with the absolute brahman through this kind of practice. In fact, as long as meditation upon any object continues, the mind does not move beyond the objective sphere. No amount of meditation upon an object can move the mind onto that which is not an object. As long as there is an object there is a subject. Hence, this practice goes nowhere. It remains within the sphere of meditation upon an object. "Men of defective intelligence meditate on the pure, non-dual Self but do not realize it. Due to delusion they [will not be released] throughout life."²²³ Once again, the problem is the idea that a supposed subject will gain liberation through identity with an absolute. As long as the ego desires to obtain release for itself, as long as the subject seeks to identify with brahman, the state of bondage continues. "The ignorant one does not attain Brahman, as he wants to become Brahman."²²⁴

²²¹18:58

²²²18:16

²²³18:43

²²⁴18:37. Cf. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 378.

The received soteriological doctrine of Advaita Vedānta is that liberation is only possible through revealed scripture, particularly through the realization of the import of a great saying.²²⁵ Depending upon which interpretation of Śaṅkara is followed, according to the Advaita texts, the realization which gives liberation occurs either directly upon hearing a great saying, or (with the help of yogic means) after pondering and then deeply meditating upon a great saying.²²⁶ This realization is an unmediated knowledge of the identity of the self with brahman. It is a direct intuition²²⁷ of brahman as a metaphysical reality.

But according to the *AG* this knowledge is ineffective. In chapter three -- a chapter devoted to the discussion of the Vedāntic means -- it states, "Having realized 'I am That'²²⁸ from which the universe streams, why do you as a wretched creature run... ?"²²⁹ It goes on to say, "Even after hearing that the Self is pure consciousness and is unsurpassedly beautiful, why do you become deeply entangled with sex and get tarnished?"²³⁰ "It is surprising that, realizing the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self, the man of wisdom continues being egoistic."²³¹ "Strange it is that, having realized the transcendent non-duality and become fixed in the goal of liberation, a person

²²⁵ *mahāvākya*. See Mayeda, tr., pp. 18, 47, 87. The term *mahāvākya* is used by later Advaitins such as Sadānanda.

²²⁶ See S.N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), p.80. For example, texts such as *Vākyaṛtti* stress immediate realization while others, such as *Aparokṣānubhūti*, stress the use of yogic means. Regardless of whether or not Śaṅkara was the author of these texts, they can be seen to represent the soteriological 'poles' of the Śaṅkara school.

²²⁷ *Aparokṣānubhūti*

²²⁸ *so 'ham asmi*

²²⁹ 3:3

²³⁰ 3:4

²³¹ 3:5

yet comes under the sway of lust and is distraught by sexual habits."²³² Hence, for the *AG* the great sayings, and the knowledge had from them, are ineffective and irrelevant to what they claim to be remedying.

So far, the *AG* has had much to say about the practice of meditation. But the *AG* also has much to say about the practice of discrimination.²³³ The goal and the practice of the discriminative process (i.e., the discrimination of that which is eternal from that which is non-eternal)²³⁴ is epitomized by the dictum, 'not this, not that.'²³⁵ The state or object at which this practice aims is that reality in which no mental constructs or distinguishing marks can be found: the non-dual, qualityless brahman. The state correlated with this reality is the concentrative absorption which is devoid of thought.²³⁶ Hence, the critique of the concentrative absorption in which all thought has ceased can also be seen as an aspect of the critique of discrimination. In logical terms, the problem with this state is that it itself is distinguished from states of being that have distinguishing characteristics. It is a state that has

²³²3:6

²³³ *viveka*. Cf. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, VI, 9:2; *Yogasūtra*, 2:26; 2:28; 3:52; 3:54; 4:26; 4:29; *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 175, 203, 345

²³⁴ *nityānityavastuviveka*. See Śaṅkara's *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, I, 1:1. The *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 152, reads, "To remove his bondage the wise man should discriminate between the Self and the non-Self. By that alone he comes to know his own Self as Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, and becomes happy." See Madhavananda, tr., *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982), p.58.

²³⁵ *neti neti*. A. Bharati writes, "The classical definition of this purely cognitive type of engagement as well as its consummation is *nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka* "discrimination between eternal and the ephemeral things" -- the "eternal," of course, being the formless, pervasive Absolute, the "Ephemeral" being everything else.... The person who does whatever he does contemplating upon this distinction is a "knower" (*jñānī*) or at least a full-time seeker of "knowledge" (*jijñāsu*)." *The Light at the Centre*, pp.167-8.

²³⁶ *nirvikalpasamādhi* Cf. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 342, 353, 357, 365

become an object. In short, a nondualism which distinguishes a 'nondual state' from a 'dualistic state' is a form of dualism.

But the *AG* contains much that can be described as discriminative. The negative descriptions of the self all seem to imply the practice of discrimination. The *AG* is not concerned with the advocacy of the practice of discrimination, however. In chapter three of the *AG* the practice of discrimination comes under critique. "The wise are free from attachment to this world and heaven. They discriminate between what is ephemeral and what is eternal, and they aspire after emancipation. Strange it is that even they would dread emancipation."²³⁷ Since the effect of discrimination is the production of distinctions, a critique of distinctions is an implicit critique of discrimination. Hence, in an indirect way, the relentless critique in the *AG* of the contrasting notions²³⁸ is a critique of the practice of discrimination. The source of the contrasting notions is the tendency of thought to either affirm or deny.²³⁹ The source of this tendency is located in discrimination.²⁴⁰ The faculty which discriminates is the intellect, or discriminative mind.²⁴¹ Hence, the *AG*'s critique of discrimination is a critique of the efficacy of the faculty of discrimination to free the aspirant from his self-imposed bondage.

²³⁷ 3:8

²³⁸ *dvandva*

²³⁹ *samkalpavikalpa*

²⁴⁰ *viveka*

²⁴¹ *buddhi, vijñānamayaakoṣa*

2.2.5 Summary

The *AG* sums up its critique of the practices of Vedānta by contrasting the great sayings²⁴² with discrimination.²⁴³ "This is That,' 'I am That,' and 'I am not That,' such thoughts are extinguished for the yogi who has become silent and who knows for certain that all is the Self."²⁴⁴ 'I am that' and 'I am neither this nor that' are thoughts which stand in relation to one another. They are activities involving thinking. Hence, they do not give the mind the power to transcend itself but keep it trapped within the realm of thought.

The yogi, too, remains tied to either trying to escape from his malaise or doing nothing. "The [fool] does not achieve repose either through effort²⁴⁵ or through inactivity."²⁴⁶ The yogi remains bound to meditation upon either an object with form, or an object without form, or to the state in which mental functioning has ceased. "The view of the ignorant is always addicted to either ideation²⁴⁷ or no ideation."²⁴⁸

Hence, the seeker remains in a kind of double-bind situation. There is nothing he can *do* to remedy his situation since this involves an effort directed toward a goal, and this effort remains a form of activity oriented toward the benefit of a subject. *Nor can he do nothing*, as this either remains a form of doing something or, as in the case of absolute inaction, remains relative to activity.

²⁴² *mahāvākya*

²⁴³ *neti neti*

²⁴⁴ 18:9

²⁴⁵ *pratyatna*

²⁴⁶ *apratyatna* 18:34

²⁴⁷ *bhāvana*

²⁴⁸ *abhāvana* 18:63

There is also always the danger of the seeker interpreting a text like the *AG* as advocating withdrawal and inaction. In such interpretations, the text is used to legitimate doing nothing. Of course, this is precisely what the text means by inaction, and so such a reading of the text has missed the point. The only difference between the one who thinks he is released and the earnest yogi, is that the yogi is perhaps more sincere in his efforts. Ultimately, however, the yogi is no better off than the one who merely thinks he has 'attained release.'

2.3.0 The Way of the Sage: Prescriptive Soteriological Language

After everything that has been said above, it is obviously somewhat of a misnomer to speak of a 'solution' in the *AG*. But the *AG* does contain language which speaks of a solution or 'way.' There can be no doubt that the *AG* inherits much of the traditional Upaniṣadic way of talking about liberation and means. But it also develops a rather distinctive way of looking at the very notion of a 'problem' itself. In one sense this is a solution. But in another sense it is not trying to present another 'solution' as much as it is trying to look at the very idea of 'having a problem and looking for a solution.' Its strategy, if it can be called such, is to look into the idea of a problematic as such so that it can then be abandoned. It assumes the vocabulary of the game, that is, it talks about the problem and the solution, but in the end its discussion of an alternative solution does not really enter into the game.

2.3.1 Clear Understanding

Much of the advisory and prescriptive language of the *AG* is devoted to the discussion of clear understanding. A correct understanding of the problem of bondage seems to be one of its primary concerns. Much of the discussion focuses upon how the sage should look upon the world and his place in it.

The sage of the *AG* sees that the world and its problems are not worth worrying about. "My son, rare is the blessed person whose passion for living, enjoyment, and learning is extinguished through observing the [ways of the world]."²⁴⁹ Seeing that the world is not worth worrying about, the sage is able to be at peace. "A man of wisdom becomes serene through the realization that this world is ephemeral, tainted by the threefold misery, worthless,... [worthy of censure and a sham]."²⁵⁰ The sage of the *AG* looks upon the world and himself as if they were nothing. This, argues the *AG* is the way to serenity. [Knowing that the universe is nothing to me, that I am free from mental tendencies, of pure intelligence -- as if I were nothingness itself -- peace is achieved]."²⁵¹ The sage calls upon his listener to ignore the ways of the world and be free. "[See all changes as confined to the material realm. At that moment, free from bondage, you will abide in your pure essence]."²⁵²

The sage also has similar advice with regard toward the body. He advises his listener to ignore the tendency to identify with the body. "With

249:2

250:3

251:8

252:7

the [sword] of wisdom -- 'I am pure consciousness' -- cut the noose [of believing that you are the body] and become happy."²⁵³ Forgetting his body, the sage is relieved of his identification with its sin and stain. "Knowing for certain that 'I am not the body nor does the body belong to me; I am intelligence itself,' one has, as it were, absolute autonomy. He does not remember [his merits or sins]."²⁵⁴ The sage tells his listener that release is immediate and spontaneous for the one who detachs himself from the body and remains relaxed and at ease in simple awareness. "If you [detach the self] from the body and abide at rest²⁵⁵ in pure intelligence, [at once]²⁵⁶ you will become happy, serene, and free from bondage."²⁵⁷

The listener is also told that he is not to identify himself with any of the social classes, or categories of devotees; for he is not other than the self, and the self is beyond these categories. "You are neither a *varṇa* such as the Brahmana, nor do you belong to an *āśrama*... You are non-dual, formless, and the witness of the universe.... Be happy."²⁵⁸ Understanding that he is free from agenthood, the flame of the devotee's mind is extinguished. "As one comprehends that his Self is neither the doer or the enjoyer, all fluctuations are extinguished."²⁵⁹

²⁵³1:13. Cf. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 307.

²⁵⁴11:6

²⁵⁵ *viśrāmya*. The term also means to be relaxed, at ease and trusting

²⁵⁶ *adhunā*. *Adhunā* or 'now' can also mean 'in this life,' referring to the state of *jīvanmukti*. Here, however, I will take preference to sense of the term which connotes the 'suddenness' of release.

²⁵⁷1:4

²⁵⁸1:5. Cf. *Upadeśasāhasrī*, II, 1:9-17.

²⁵⁹18:51

In one verse, the text prescribes meditation: "[Free from] the illusion of the reflected self²⁶⁰ and its internal and external fluctuations, recognize²⁶¹... the Self as immutable, non-dual, pure consciousness."²⁶² Hence, the sage may spontaneously manifest meditation. However, he does not attempt to exploit such states. "O wise one, you may enjoy (the world), undertake duties, or practice *samādhi* [Free from all, you may do them]."²⁶³ At another point, the text speaks of the sage as being liberated by 'mere knowledge.' It states, "The blessed one abides emancipated without any effort through mere intuitive enlightenment."²⁶⁴ The point here, however, is that the sage does not resort to the toil and moil of the yogic means.

For the most part, however, the *AG* stresses correct understanding. "Comprehending that Self, he is untouched in his inner life by the duality of virtue and sin, just as the sky is untouched by the smoke apparently related to it."²⁶⁵ Other verses, too, deal directly with correct understanding. "Burn

²⁶⁰ *ābhāso 'ham*

²⁶¹ *paribhāvaya*. The use of a term for meditation is clearly anomalous with respect to the work as a whole. Can these passages be interpreted in a way such that the text remains consistent? Perhaps the following is a possibility: The *AG* is not necessarily *antagonistic* toward meditation. As critique, the *AG* merely points out that meditation aimed at some *goal* is contradictory. It does not reject meditation *per se*, as that would be contradictory with what it has said about rejection and acceptance. It therefore allows for the possibility of meditation and remains consistent.

²⁶²1:13

²⁶³16:2

²⁶⁴ *viññānamātreṇa* 18:36 Like the one reference to meditation, the use of the term '*viññāna*' is ambiguous in the context of the work as a whole. The context of its use here is a discussion of yogic means. The use of the term seems to imply the superiority of the path of discriminative knowledge. But given the repudiation of discriminative knowledge in later verses (e.g. 14:2), the positive use of the term, as an appellation of the sage's enlightenment, is anomalous within the greater context of the work as a whole; yet it is not without sense within the smaller context of the discussion of yogic means: the sage is beyond means, and he understands this.

²⁶⁵4:3 Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, III, 2:13.

the forest of ignorance with the fire of certitude that 'I am non-dual and pure consciousness;' abandoning sorrow be blissful."²⁶⁶ "I am undefiled, [one], and pure intelligence. All this visible universe is illusory. There is no other remedy... than this...."²⁶⁷

One verse mentions the identity of the self with brahman: "Understanding for certain that the Self is Brahman and that existence and nonexistence and mere imaginings, one becomes free from desires. What would he know, say or do?"²⁶⁸ But this verse can be qualified with the following two verses. The first reads, "[Being certain that there is no other creator god (than the self), one becomes devoid of desire, feels peace and finds no attachment anywhere]."²⁶⁹ The second verse reads, "Knowing for certain that 'it is I who exist as everything from Brahma to the clump of grass,' one becomes free from [cogitation];²⁷⁰ pure and serene, he [becomes indifferent to] what [he has done and not done]."²⁷¹ For the *AG* it is the self which is the sole reality. Hence, the text places emphasis upon the self over brahman.

2.3.2 Abandoning Viewpoints and Teachings

The *AG* says very little about the requirements of formal instruction. With regard to the teacher, he is one who is able to evoke equanimity in others. "[Is he not the true teacher who, having recognized the true nature

²⁶⁶1:9

²⁶⁷2:16

²⁶⁸18:8

²⁶⁹11:2

²⁷⁰ *nirvikalpa*

²⁷¹11:7

of consciousness, causes others to cross over to the equanimity of seeing no distinctions by showing the logic of seeing all things as equal and not clinging?]"²⁷² But from the point of view of the student, the teaching and the teacher are not important. "[An intelligent person reaches the goal by being taught in any manner, while the one who is not intelligent, though seeking throughout his life, never finds truth]."²⁷³

Hence, the description given above concerning clear comprehension should not give the impression that the the *AG* is advocating the acceptance of some particular viewpoint, opinion, teaching, or doctrine. Opinions and 'positions' are all to be given up. "There is freedom when the mind is unattached to any [viewpoint]."²⁷⁴ Hence, the sage of the *AG* advises ignoring the opinions of teachers. "Observing the diversity of opinion among the great seers, sages and yogis, what person is there who [would not be disinterested in them] and attain tranquility?"²⁷⁵

What is more, all teachings and instructions are to be left behind. "Even if Śiva, Hari, or Brahmā becomes your preceptor yet without [completely forgetting what they say] you cannot achieve Self-abidance."²⁷⁶ The scriptures, too, are to be let go. "You may expound the diverse scriptures or listen to them time and again. Yet you cannot have Self-abidance without [forgetting everything]."²⁷⁷ Hence, the *AG* is not concerned with advocating some particular opinion, or point of view, or teaching on the subject of

2729:6

27315:1

274 *dst*8:3

2759:5

27616:11

27716:1

liberation. In the end, its teaching is that all teachings are to be abandoned. This 'teaching' is not inconsistent with what has been said above, either. If the text said, 'abandon every teaching except this one,' then the text would be inconsistent. But since the text says 'abandon every teaching, including this teaching,' it is not inconsistent.

Hence, just as the *AG* is not concerned with metaphysics, philosophical speculation, theories, or doctrines, the *AG* should not be read as a text which advocates an 'intellectualized' form of spirituality. With its repudiation of the means to release, the text may seem to be advocating a purely 'intellectual' approach to the spiritual life. But this tone is actually quite foreign to the text. It is the intellect which is criticized in the text as inadequate to the task it presents itself with. Hence, the *AG* should not be read as a text advocating a merely 'intellectual' approach to spirituality.

2.2.3 Dissolution and Yoga

'*Laya*' or dissolution, can mean many things, including sleep. 'Dissolution,' as it is used in its positive sense within the context of spiritual practice,²⁷⁸ is usually taken to mean the practice of dissolving the mind, the mind's construction of the world, and the body aggregate.²⁷⁹ Two chapters in the *AG* (five and six) deal with the topic of dissolution. The verses seem to be aligned such that the first verse of chapter five corresponds to the first

²⁷⁸In its negative use, it means sluggishness or sleepiness. Of course, critics of the practice of *laya* play on the ambiguity of the term.

²⁷⁹See Venkatesananda, tr., *The Concise Yoga Vāsīṣṭha*, for discussion of the practice of dissolution.

verse in chapter six, the second verse of five with the second verse of six, and so on.

In its discussion of the strategy of dissolution, Aṣṭāvakra first describes the dissolution of the body: "For you there is no contact with anything whatsoever. Pure as you are, what do you wish to renounce? Having dissolved the body aggregate, thus... undertake dissolution."²⁸⁰ Janaka, in the corresponding verse in the subsequent chapter, says: "I am as infinite as [space]. The [material world] is like the pot. This is true knowledge. Thus neither [abandonment] nor [grasping] nor dissolution is possible."²⁸¹ In other words, space pervades the pot regardless of whether the pot is disintegrated or not. Likewise, the body is but a mere thought-construct of pure consciousness. It makes no difference to the sage of the *AG* whether the body has been dissolved or not.

The first verse of the second set of verses reads: "From you the universe emerges as a bubble from the sea. In this manner having known your non-dual Self, practice dissolution."²⁸² Its counterpart reads: "I am like the ocean, and this phenomenal world is like its waves. With such an understanding... there is neither renunciation nor acceptance nor dissolution."²⁸³ What this exchange means is that it is not necessary to dissolve the bubble in the sea. The foam and waves are already the same as

²⁸⁰5:1

²⁸¹6:1 An alternate reading is "neither abandonment nor grasping is dissolution." Dissolution, here, would be dissolving the ego and its intentions. This does not mean that the yogi should abide in a state of mental arrest. *Laya*, then, is not mental arrest but the dissolution of effort, volition, and intentional states. Hence, dissolution, in the *AG*, would not mean the cessation of thinking or functioning.

²⁸²5:2

²⁸³6:2

the ocean. For the ocean to be the ocean it is not necessary for it to first be calm. Whether it is calm or not, it is still the ocean. In other words, whether the sage has dissolved his mind or not, the coterminous identity of the world with consciousness is not dependent upon dissolution.

The third set of verses read: "As the universe, even though visible, is dissolved in your non-dual Self, it no longer exists, being unsubstantial, like the snake vanished in the rope. Undertake... dissolution... in this manner."²⁸⁴ Its counterpart reads: "I am like the seashell. The world... is [imaginary] like the identification of the seashell with the silver. With such an understanding, there is neither [abandonment] nor [grasping] nor dissolution for the Self."²⁸⁵ Hence, there is no need to dissolve the universe for the one for whom the world is but a imaginary construct. The world is allowed to arise and dissolve on its own.

The fourth set of verses read: "Become [complete] and the same, whether in pleasure or pain, hope or disappointment, life or death. Undertake dissolution in this manner."²⁸⁶ The response reads: "I am in all beings and all beings are in me. This is true knowledge. Thus there is neither any renunciation nor acceptance nor dissolution."²⁸⁷ Once again, the point being made in this last verse is that there is no need for dissolution or completion for the self is already complete.

Now, there is also a practice called *layayoga*. This is not necessarily what the *AG* has in mind in its comments on the practice of dissolution.

²⁸⁴5:3

²⁸⁵6:3

²⁸⁶5:4 Cf. *Bhagavadgītā* 2:15; 12:13; 14:24. The use of *sama* and *pūrṇa* is also reminiscent of the Nāth terminology.

²⁸⁷6:4. Cf. *Gauḍapāda-kārikā* 3:42.

However, '*laya*,' -- the dissolution of the mind, the world and the body -- is not necessarily something entirely different from what came to be called *layayoga*

In its later manifestations, *layayoga* comes to be associated with the more advanced and esoteric phases of *hathayoga*, incorporating into its terminology and descriptions of the *laya* process the *prāṇa-nāḍī-cakra* system, the *kuṇḍalinī*-arousal, and also the processes of *nāḍayoga* (concentration upon the subtle sounds heard in meditation). In these descriptions, *laya* is said to involve the dissolution of grosser states of being into subtler orders of being.²⁸⁸ Hence, the process of '*layayoga*' (in the wide sense) involves the progressive absorption of lower structures of being into higher structures. The process is usually described in terms of an ascent.²⁸⁹ Descriptions of the ascent are organized hierarchically -- each ascent following its respective tradition's metaphysical superstructure -- and the process is often presented as the inverse of the cosmological process of creation, whose description descends along the same lines of the ontological hierarchy as those followed by the process of yogic ascent.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸A. Avalon writes, "By this method of concentration [*laya -krama*] ... the gross is absorbed into the subtle, each dissolving into its immediate cause and all into Cidātmā or the Ātmā which is Cit [pure consciousness]. A. Avalon, *The Serpent Power* (New York: Dover, 1974), p. 238.

²⁸⁹S.B. Das Gupta writes of the process of ascent in the Nāth sects, "The yoga practices of the Nāth Siddhas is *Uttā* or regressive, firstly in the sense that it involves yogic process which give a regressive or upward motion to the whole biological as well as psychological systems which in their ordinary nature possess a downward tendency; and secondly, in the sense that the yogic practices lead the Siddha to his original ultimate nature..." S.B. Das Gupta, *Obscure Religious Cults* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969), p. 229.

²⁹⁰See, for example, A. Avalon, *The Serpent Power*, p. 39.

Descriptions of this process may include a description of how the mind, through meditative absorption in the internal sounds,²⁹¹ is dissolved into the celestial sound current,²⁹² and of how the celestial sound current is dissolved into the formless realm.²⁹³ Or, a description of the process may involve an exposition of how the subtle energies, or *prāṇa*, are absorbed by the *kuṇḍalinīśakti* and how the *kuṇḍalinīśakti* is dissolved into the great void.²⁹⁴ I am not concerned with the particular descriptions. But I think that in all of these descriptions, *layayoga* in general, can be seen as a technique for the dissolution of the mind, the world-construct, and the body-aggregate, which involves the progressive absorption and dissolution of lower structures of being into higher structures.

The complex of practices I have described above (*layayoga* in the wide sense) are sometimes divided into a hierarchically organized set of yogas: *hāṭhayoga*, *mantrayoga*, *layayoga* and *rājayoga*²⁹⁵ Each yoga in the series focuses upon an increasingly subtler object than its predecessor.²⁹⁶

²⁹¹ *nāda*

²⁹² *śabda*

²⁹³ *nirguṇa*. Referring to the *Nādabinduṣaḍ*, A. Avalon writes, "There is a particular method by which Laya (absorption) is said to be attained by hearing the various bodily sounds." *The Serpent Power*, p. 220.

²⁹⁴ *mahāśūnya*

²⁹⁵ Referring to the *Varāhapaṇiṣad*, 5:2, and the *Yogatattvopaṇiṣad*, A. Avalon writes, "there are, it is commonly said, four forms of yoga, called Mantra-Yoga, Hāṭha-Yoga, Laya-Yoga, and Rāja-Yoga." *The Serpent Power*, p. 185. See also S.S. Goswami, *Laya Yoga* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), pp.11-12.

²⁹⁶ A. Avalon writes, "Speaking in a general way, ordinary Hāṭha-yoga is specially concerned with the physical body...; Mantra-yoga is specially... concerned with the forces and powers at work outside, though affecting the body. Laya yoga... the supersensible forces and functions of the inner world of the body.... The last and most difficult form of Yoga is Rāja-Yoga. By means of Mantra, Hāṭha and Laya-Yoga the practitioner... becomes fit for Savikalpa-Samādhi. It is through Rāja-Yoga alone that he can attain to Nirvikalpa-Samādhi." A. Avalon, *The Serpent Power*, pp. 222, 255.

Hathayoga focuses upon the body, *mantrayoga* upon shifting attention from gross sounds to subtle sounds, *layayoga* upon purely subtle processes, and *rājayoga* upon the exclusively mental practice of concentrative absorption. There are passages in the *AG* which seem to refer to these practices. For example, chapter twelve of the *AG* can be read as a critique of what I have generally referred to as *layayoga*²⁹⁷

In the *AG* we read of disinterest on the part of the sage with regard to the ascending series of yogas. "At first I [became disinterested in ritual action done by the body],²⁹⁸ then expansion of the word, and then [mental activity]. Thus [have I become just as I am]."²⁹⁹ The practices associated with *haṭha*, *mantra* and *laya* yoga are also often associated with highly ritualized procedures.³⁰⁰ The sage of the *AG* simply ignores such practices. "Understanding fully that... the undertaking [of ritual action stems from ignorance as much as] the cessation of action [stems from ignorance, thus do I exist as I am]."³⁰¹

²⁹⁷The opening phrase of chapter twelve of the *AG* seems to be especially relevant to the *haṭhayoga* of the Nāth yogis. Nāth yoga focuses upon the practices of *haṭhayoga*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *bandha* and the like. S.B. Das Gupta writes of the yogas of the Sahajiyās, "the first thing we should take notice of is the importance attached to the process of Kāya-sādhana or the yogic practices for making the body strong and fit for higher realizations. This principle and practice of Kāya-sādhana is... common to all schools of esoteric yoga and the exclusive emphasis of the Nāth-siddhas was on this Kāya-sādhana. Yoga in general involves psycho-physiological processes; it is therefore that higher forms of yoga should never be entered upon without a mature or perfect body. For this purpose... the practices of Haṭha-yoga are to be adopted." S.B. Das Gupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 92.

²⁹⁸ *kāyakṛtyāsahaḥ*

²⁹⁹ 12:1

³⁰⁰This is especially so in the Tantric setting. For an example of the complexity of the conditions for the use of *mantra* within the tantric context, see A. Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (London: Rider, 1965), pp.126-7.

³⁰¹ 12:6

There is also a yoga involving the mystical ascent of the soul by way of the sound current.³⁰² At each station or level³⁰³ of the ascent, the soul

³⁰² *śabda*. What I have in mind here is the *śabdayoga* of the sants. S. B. Das Gupta has an interesting comment with regard to the yogic practices of the proto-sant Kabir: "It is important to note in this connection that in the practical aspect of yoga the system of Kabir... was essentially the same as that of the Nāth yogins..." *Obscure Religious Cults* pp. 246-247. Das Gupta offers evidence of this with the fact that Kabir, "had a yogic system of his own involving the theory of the lotus or plexus, the nervous system and the control of the vital wind." p.357. But what Das Gupta fails to notice is that the *śabdayoga* of the sants differs from the *kuṇḍalinīyoga* of the *haṭha* yogins and tantrikas. The sants do describe the *cakra*-system, but they also go on to describe a number of structures (usually represented as worlds) beyond the seven *cakras*. *Śabdayoga* ignores the *kuṇḍalinī-cakra* system and concentrates instead upon the internal sound current or *śabda*. Kabir writes:

Apply yourself, O friend,
To the practice of Shabd --
The Shabd from which even the creator came into being;
Imprint that Shabd
In your heart, O friend....
Shabd is the master,
And listening to Shabd
One becomes a disciple;
But rare are they who know
The true meaning of Shabd.
Shabd is the real Master,
Shabd is the disciple's soul too;
Only he knows this
Who goes within
And realizes the Shabd
Imprint that Shabd
In your heart, O friend....

Satt Kabir ki Shabdavali, Sādho shabd sādhanā keejai, tr. U.K.Sethi, *Kabir: The Weaver of God's Name* (Punjab: Radha Soami Beas, 1984), pp. 225-226.

Furthermore, *śabdayoga* begins its ascent at the point between the eyebrows, not at the base *cakra*, as does the *kuṇḍalinīyoga*. Kabir writes:

Between the two eyes is the Master,
The messenger of the Lord.
Between the black and white moles
Is the shining star,
And within the star dwells
That unknown and unseen Lord.
Between the eyes is the Master,
The messenger of God.
Between the eyes shines the
A tiny petal,
And within the petal
Is the hidden door;

serves as the the subjective pole of attention. Hence, in each state³⁰⁴ of attention along the lines of ascent, the soul intends an object of attention. But the soul cannot pass from the meditation upon formlessness into the beyond of subject-object non-differentiation as it remains bound to the intentionality of an observing subject. Thus, it can only approach its goal asymptotically. Hence, in this yoga, there remains no way for the 'soul' to enter the 'formless' realm. It can only *contemplate* the brilliant light of formlessness, for as the soul is ascending ever higher through the upper reaches of the mind, it remains tied to the process of ascent itself. Hence, the sage of the *AG* simply ignores the ascent of attention along the lines of the sound current. "Due to lack of interest in [objects of sound],³⁰⁵ and as the self is not an object to be seen, my mind is free of any distraction and is one-pointed. Thus, I am as I am."³⁰⁶

As was noted in the above sections, the sage of the *AG* is indifferent toward the practice of absorption, too. Meditation is only practiced by those who see a problem to be rectified. "[One expects concentrative absorption when that which attacks concentration causes distraction]."³⁰⁷ But the sage

On that door adjust
Your telescope,
Thus with ease go across the deadly sea.
Between the eyes is the Master,
The messenger of God.

Kabir Sakhi-Sangrah, Musid nainan beech hai, U.K. Sethi, *Kabir: The Weaver of God's Name*, p. 327.

³⁰³ *pada*

³⁰⁴ *avastha*

³⁰⁵ *śabda*

³⁰⁶ 12:2

³⁰⁷ 12:3 Mukerjee gives, "distracted due to superimposition" for *samādhyāsādivikṣiptau*. *Song of the Self Supreme*, p. 167 Our reading is *samādhy-āsādi-*

sees through this picture and recognizes the incoherence of such practices. "[Seeing... meditation]³⁰⁸ and the abandonment of mind and its objects, as mental constructs,³⁰⁹ thus do I remain as I am.]"³¹⁰ Hence, *rājayoga* being that yoga which is concerned with the successive phases of concentrative absorption, is also ignored by the sage of the *AG*

Layayoga (in the most general sense, encompassing both *kuṇḍalinīyoga* and *śabdayoga*) can be seen as the esoteric, or quasi-cosmological, description of the practice and processes of concentrative absorption. This can be understood in the following way: Focussing the mind upon an object tends to break down the sense of separation the mind has with its object. Over an extended period of concentration, the mind comes to identify with its object. Once identification is established, attention shifts to a subtler object of contemplation. As meditation progresses, attention is shifted onto increasingly subtler objects of meditation. In this way, each order of being is 'dissolved' into a higher and subtler order of being. Finally, attention is shifted onto 'formlessness'³¹¹ or the 'void.'³¹² With the final absorption into either the 'nameless realm'³¹³ or 'mindlessness',³¹⁴ all orders of being making up the individual are said to be dissolved into pure consciousness. But the dissolution of the individual into formlessness cannot be

vikṣiptau. See also R. Hauschild, *Die Aṣṭāvakra-Gīta* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1967), p. 44.

308 *dhyāna*

309 *vikalpa*

310 12.5

311 *nirguṇa*

312 *mahāśūnya*

313 *anami*

314 *unmanī*

accomplished by merely contemplating the void, as there remains no way for the meditator to move beyond the support of an object of meditation. Hence, the sage of the *AG* simply ignores the practice of meditation upon formlessness. "A man who meditates on the unthinkable... resorts only to a form of his thoughts. Abandoning that meditation, [I remain as I am]." ³¹⁵ The *AG* summarizes its thoughts on meditation with strong advice: "Forsake in every way even contemplation.³¹⁶ Hold [on to] nothing in your consciousness."³¹⁷

2.3.3 Abandoning Desire, Wealth, Duty, and Liberation

Along with the abandonment of yoga, meditation, and 'intellectual' approaches to spirituality, the *AG* also discusses the abandonment of the four ends of life: desire, wealth, duty and liberation.³¹⁸ The abandonment of the first two ends should come as no surprise. If, at the superficial level, desire is the 'problem,' then the removal of desire would seem to be the 'solution.' The text reads: "The destruction of desire is liberation."³¹⁹ Hence, it states that desire is to be treated with detachment.³²⁰ "Cultivate strong detachment, free yourself from desire and be contented."³²¹

However, desire is not the only thing that the *AG* recommends as worthy of abandonment. It also recommends the renunciation of all

315_{12:7}

316 *dhyāna*

317_{15:20}

318 *kāma, artha, dharma, mokṣa*

319_{10:4}

320 *vairāgya*. Cf. *Yogasūtra*, 1:15; 1:12; 3:50; *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 372.

321_{10:3}

possessions. "One cannot be happy without renouncing all."³²² Of course, it is not so much the objects, as the attachment to them that is the locus of the source of unhappiness. Therefore, the *AG* states, "Be free from ego-sense and possessiveness and make yourself happy."³²³ Since all objects of attachment are ephemeral and phantasmic, their permanence should not be expected, for to expect their permanence is to invite personal disaster. "Look upon friend, land, wealth, house, wife and other objects of fortune as a dream or a magician's show lasting for three or five days."³²⁴ For the *AG* detachment is the way to happiness. "Through non-attachment to the world alone one attains constant bliss of realization...."³²⁵

The *AG* also advocates the abandonment of duty.³²⁶ "Having given up desire as the enemy, wealth as associated with mischief, and also [duty] as leading to both desire and wealth, practice neglect [of the goals of life]."³²⁷ Religious observances and rituals, acts of virtue, and good deeds are all abandoned with the abandonment of duty. Such states are intentionally directed toward some end, the achievement of which reaps 'good karma.' The practitioner of religious rites directed toward some end and the righteous 'do-gooder' soon get caught up in the web of their own goodness and self-worth, and subsequently become fixated upon the actions themselves. "Enough of wealth, desire and [religious observances]³²⁸ in the

³²²18:2

³²³15:6

³²⁴10:2

³²⁵10:4

³²⁶ *dharma*

³²⁷10:1

³²⁸ *sukṛta karma*. The phrase also carries the sense of 'good deed' or 'act of virtue.'

[forest] of the world. The mind [never stops from them]."³²⁹ Hence, there is no attempt by the *AG* to mediate or 'synthesize' *dharma* with *mokṣa*. Both are simply abandoned. The sage knows that there is nothing he can do to secure his own destiny. "Knowing for certain that happiness and sorrow, birth and death, surely come of themselves through fate, one does not seek after the goals of life; he becomes non-active. His deeds do not involve him."³³⁰ Thus, he gives up trying to do effect his fate.

Having abandoned his 'freedom' to 'choose the correct path in life,' the sage is aloof to even his own spiritual liberation. "When the mind becomes free from such duality of opposites as 'this is to be done' and 'this is left undone,' it attains indifference towards righteousness, wealth, desire, and liberation."³³¹ The sage neither strives for nor detests the lesser or higher goals of life. "Only a few broad minded persons have no sense of either attraction for or rejection of righteousness, wealth, desire, and emancipation as well as life and death."³³² Hence, even the quest for ultimate spiritual fulfillment is given up by the sage of the *AG*.

2.3.4 Letting Go of Grasping and Rejecting

So far the discussion has focussed upon the abandonment of 'this or that.' But what of abandonment itself? The *AG* expands its discussion of abandonment to include abandonment itself. It associates 'grasping and rejecting' with the practice of affirmation and denial. Its argument is that as

³²⁹10:7

³³⁰11:4

³³¹16:5

³³²17:6

long as renunciation has anything to do with either affirmation or denial, the goal of renunciation cannot be attained. Hence, the *AG* advocates indifference toward the cogitation of choices. "Do not agitate your mind with... affirmation and denial."³³³ Silencing these, abide happily in your own Self...."³³⁴ Likewise, the practices of identifying the self with, or differentiating the self from anything are also to be abandoned. "Abandon all distinctions³³⁵ such as 'I am that,' 'I am this' and 'I am neither this nor that.' Knowing for certain that the Self is all, be free from any reasoning whatsoever³³⁶ and be happy."³³⁷ Abandoning identifying and distinguishing, the sage lives happily. "Due to my abandonment of the sense of association or dissociation..., I live in ... happiness."³³⁸

The sage of the *AG* sees no need for identification with or revulsion from anything in the world, for the world is but waves on the ocean of consciousness. "This visible universe is not different from you. Hence how, where or in whom can there be any thought of ... acceptance or rejection?"³³⁹ Freedom, then, is the freedom from acceptance and rejection. "There is freedom when the mind neither desires nor grieves, when it neither accepts nor rejects anything, neither feels happy nor is angry with anything."³⁴⁰

³³³ *saṃkalpavikalpa*

³³⁴ 18:19

³³⁵ *vibhāga*

³³⁶ *niḥsaṃkalpa*

³³⁷ 15:15. Cf. the *Yogavāsīṣṭha*, "One should abandon the divisive notions of 'This I am' and 'This I am not'... Venkatesananda, tr., p. 299. Cf. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 455.

³³⁸ 13:4

³³⁹ 15:12

³⁴⁰ 8:2

Hence, the final word on abandonment is that it too is to be abandoned. "Abandoning renunciation and acceptance I live in true happiness."³⁴¹

How is the reflexivity of abandonment to be understood? One way of understanding it is to see it as going beyond mere rejection. Just as the *AG* does not advocate either action or inaction, it does not advocate either abidance or renunciation. Abidance and the way of action stress the attempt to control the phenomenon of suffering, as if it could be over-powered. But this attitude of self-assertiveness only feeds the fire. The other way, that of renunciation and inaction, stresses the attempt to avoid suffering. But this is mere escapism. Abandonment, as the *AG* sees it, is somewhere 'between' domination and indifference, 'between' and yet beyond.

The abandonment of the 'contrasting notions' can be understood as taking a path with no fixed direction. The choice as to which action is proper or which is not, falls away for the sage of no fixed path. "[When and for whom will the pairs of opposites, such as what is to be done and what is not to be done, cease. Out of disinterest be intent on abandonment and be lawless]."³⁴² Hence, 'anarchic spirituality,' including forgetting about the customary ritual obligations, religious observances and doctrinal dictums governing the 'path,' is one sense of abandonment.

Another sense is given by the English term 'abandonment' itself. The usual way of thinking of 'abandoning' is in terms of giving something up. This takes the form, '*I* give some *thing* up.' But what of giving one's *self* up? Instead of thinking of abandonment as some 'I' rejecting some 'thing,'

³⁴¹13:1

³⁴²*avrata* 9:1. '*Avrata*' also carries the sense of 'not observing religious rites and obligations.'

the term 'abandon' is here thought of as it often is in its substantive sense, as in the phrase, 'with careless abandon.' Hence, the text reads: "When there is no ego there is freedom.... Reflecting on this, refrain from acceptance or rejection of any thing with [a carefree abandon that is both happy and apt]."³⁴³ Thus, abandonment in the *AG* is best thought of as living 'with abandon.'

2.3.5 Letting Things Be

Independent of inner and outer limitations, the sage described by the *AG* lives happily, unfettered by the incessant need to control his environment and himself. "Through autonomy³⁴⁴ one achieves happiness; through autonomy one attains the supreme; through autonomy one attains repose; through autonomy one reaches the supreme state."³⁴⁵ The sage makes no goal of his activity nor attempts to coerce or manipulate situations or those around him. In this way, his nature is to be happy; he has no need to bring about his happiness by external means. "The man [whose activity has no object]³⁴⁶ becomes tranquil by nature."³⁴⁷

The sage of the *AG* simply lets things arise as they arise. He discriminates no 'plan of action,' but lives his life as it comes to him, and lets it go as it passes by. "[Ignoring the (conflicting pairs) and living off what

³⁴³ *helayā* 8:4

³⁴⁴ *svātantryāt*. The term *svātantrya* has a technical use in Kashmiri Śaivism. See, e.g., J. Singh, *Śiva Sūtras* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), pp. 6, 16, 19, 33, 53, 105, 159, 211, 216, 224.

³⁴⁵ 18:50

³⁴⁶ *alaksyasphuraṇa*

³⁴⁷ 18:70

comes to you, you reach perfection]."³⁴⁸ The sage is aware that his attempts to control and alter the course of his life are ineffectual: "Knowing for certain that happiness and sorrow, birth and death, surely come of themselves [by chance],³⁴⁹ one does not seek after the goals of life; he becomes non-active. His deeds do not involve him."³⁵⁰ Just as the waves rise up spontaneously on the ocean, so too does the sage allow the world to ebb and flow. "[Recognizing that things come to be and leave contrary to anything that you can do], one becomes unaffected and free from pain, [and finds peace]."³⁵¹

Attempting to effect control only brings misery, as it inevitably fails. When expectations are frustrated, anger and despair ensue. Removed from expectation and the attempt to control the world and his mind, the sage lives simply and happily. "Knowing for certain that in the course of time fortune and misfortune visit one [by chance],³⁵²...contented..., with senses... unperturbed, one neither desires or grieves."³⁵³ Hence, as situations and events arise and pass by, the sage remains unaffected. He has not removed

³⁴⁸9:4. Cf. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 539.

³⁴⁹ *daivāt*

³⁵⁰11:4 Cf. *Bhagavadgītā*, 5:7.

³⁵¹11:1

³⁵² *daivāt*, *Daiva* means 'fate' or 'destiny.' In the ablative, however, it means 'by accident.' There is a difference between the two, and I am not entirely convinced that 'fate' is what the text means to imply here. 'Fate' implies a preordained determinism. Hence, in 'fatalism,' events are grounded in a predetermined order. When things happen accidentally, however, the order of their occurrence is entirely undetermined. Metaphysical considerations aside, what is being underlined here is the fact that no one can know the ultimate 'why' of any occurrence or event. The upshot is that there is no sense hankering over such causes and essences, since, ultimately, they are mysterious. Cf. the *Yogavāsistha*. See Venkatesananda, tr., pp. 95, 143, 167.

³⁵³11:3

himself entirely from them, nor is he entirely indifferent to them. He simply lets them be. "[Whatever happens to be, you simply exist]."³⁵⁴

2.3.6 The Inherent Freedom of the Self

How is it that the sage is able to find happiness with no apparent effort? The answer is that the sage is already free. He is the self, and the self is inherently free. "You are the Self and surely ever free. Why do you ponder³⁵⁵... for nothing?"³⁵⁶ There is no need to seek the self, as the self is always present. "The Self is neither [far] nor [close] because [you have it already]."³⁵⁷ Hence, any attempt to procure the self is ridiculous because the self is always already 'there.'

One qualifying point should be noted with regard to the 'teaching' of the inherent freedom of the self. What I have in mind here is a possible reading of the text which has the seeker trying to extract a purely intellectual meaning from the text: 'The text says I am already enlightened, therefore I don't need to practice.' This kind of response clearly falls under the category of 'doing nothing.' It is an intellectualized strategy formulated by the devotee in his attempt to rid himself of his predicament. What is essential to an adequate representation of the text's argument is a recognition of the text's presentation of the double-bind dilemma of the devotee: there is nothing the devotee can *do* that will solve his problem, yet he cannot *do nothing* as this is mere escapism.

3549:8

355 *vimarśa*

35615:20

35718:5

What the *AG* tries to preserve is the tension in the spiritual life of the seeker between trying to effect release and giving up entirely in disgust. The spiritual life confronts the seeker as an irresolvable dilemma. No inference with regard to practice can be drawn from the dilemma, as to do so means the adoption of one or the other disjuncts. Ultimately, the distinction between the seeker and the sage is false. But in the mind of the *seeker*, the ideal of the 'sage,' as distinct from the 'seeker,' acts as a kind of limiting or critical-concept guaranteeing his double-bind situation. Paradoxically, the seeker *is* the sage, yet there is nothing that he can do to *become* the sage. Any attempt at trying to become the sage is the expression of a confusion on this point, a confusion indicative of the seeker's malaise. Hence, as long as he thinks in terms of release, his 'release' remains an impossibility.

2.4.0 The Happy Wanderer: Ecstatic Language

Most of what the *AG* has to say is not about the seeker, but about the sage who is awakened and released. Perhaps this is one of the most distinctive features of the *AG*. It speaks less about how the aspirant should go about seeking release, than it does about the sage who already is enlightened. Much of the language in this final category is in the first person. The language here is meant to be the expression of a sage who is beyond all means. It is the song of a sage confessing his ecstatic condition.

2.4.1 Beyond Meditation and the Means to Release

Much of the point of the repudiation of meditation and means to liberation can be seen to be based upon the ontological priority of the

natural state of the self. By this I mean that nothing can be said to be the cause of the self's liberation. Nothing can *cause* the self to do anything. The self is ontologically prior to cause and effect, so it makes no sense to speak of something effecting the liberated state. The self is already liberated. There is no need to liberate the self. It is in *need* of nothing.

Hence, the need for means to liberation drops out of the picture in the *AG*. The sage *is* the self. "The person whose mind is absorbed in the Self is bereft of doubts and does not take resort to the means of emancipation...."³⁵⁸ There are no means, and hence, there are no fruits of practice. "For the wise one, always [free of thought]³⁵⁹ like the sky,... where is the goal, and where are the means?"³⁶⁰ Liberation is not some *thing* that is to be acquired. It is grounded in the self, and the self is not an object amidst other objects. Hence, the text asks rhetorically: "What is creation and what is withdrawal, what is end and what is means, what is the seeker and what is the accomplishment?"³⁶¹ For the sage, there is no seeker, no teacher, and no scripture. He is aloof to such things. "To me who am Siva... what is teaching and what is scripture, what is disciple and what is master, and what is the ultimate goal of life?"³⁶² He therefore has no need for instruction upon the traditional means to liberation. "For me, completely poised in my own Self, there is no need of discourse about the three goals of life, about yoga, and about wisdom."³⁶³

³⁵⁸18:47

³⁵⁹ *nirvikalpa*

³⁶⁰18:66

³⁶¹20:8

³⁶²20:13

³⁶³ *vijñāna* 19:8

As the sage is the self, and the self is free, the sage is already free. "Having nothing to achieve what would he do?"³⁶⁴ However, the text does speak of a kind of 'magical means.' "Now I have abandoned the world along with my body due to [some trick].³⁶⁵ I see only the Supreme Self."³⁶⁶ The point being underlined here, though, is that there are no logical means to attain the self, as the freedom of the self is not 'caused' by anything.

Hence, the sage does not resort to meditation as a means to liberation but remains aloof from either meditation or non-meditation. He does not *choose* between remaining meditative or non-meditative, since, "The wise man... does not know the mental alternatives³⁶⁷ of contemplation³⁶⁸ and non-contemplation.... He abides in the state of absolute aloneness."³⁶⁹ The sage is neither distracted nor seeks to concentrate. "For the yogi who has [become serene] there is neither distraction nor one-pointedness...."³⁷⁰ For such a one, asks the text rhetorically, "What is distraction and what is concentration?"³⁷¹ "Where is meditation and where is non-meditation...?"³⁷² The sage of the *AG* has nothing to meditate upon since he intends no goal to be achieved. Besides, "What would he meditate³⁷³ who sees no duality and ceases to think?"³⁷⁴ Seeing neither dissolution nor meditation as necessary,

364 18:17

365 *kauśala*. The term can also mean 'clever skill' and 'good fortune.'

366 2:3

367 *vikalpa*

368 *samādhi*

369 *kaivalya* 17:18

370 18:10. Cf. *Upadeśasāhasrī*, 13:14; 13:17; 13:25.

371 20:9

372 19:4

373 *cintayati*

374 18:16

the sage asks rhetorically, "Where is dissolution of consciousness and where is *samādhi*?"³⁷⁵

The sage also has little regard for the traditional Vedāntic soteriological means and ends. The text reads, "To me ever transcending the duality of opposites, what is scripture and what is knowledge of the Self,³⁷⁶ what is mind dissociated from objects..."³⁷⁷ Thus, there is no meditation upon brahman for the sage of the *AG*. "Where is delusion, where is the world, where is meditation of the Reality?"³⁷⁸ Just as there is no meditation upon brahman, there is no direct intuition of brahman, and no release as a result of such intuition. What object would there be to intuit for such a one? For 'intuition' implies that there is something intuited and someone intuiting. The sage asks, "What is... direct perception..."³⁷⁹ and what is the fruit thereof?"³⁸⁰ Hence, just as the sage of the *AG* is aloof from the means and ends of Yoga, so too he is aloof from the means and ends of Vedānta.

However, the *AG* does say that the sage enjoys the freedom of which the way of yoga speaks. "The action of the wise shares in the fruits of withdrawal."³⁸¹ He also enjoys the fruit of the way of knowledge. "The wise one, in spite of his absence of desire for Brahman, enjoys the nature of Brahman."³⁸² Thus, the sage of the *AG* 'has' what the followers of Yoga and Vedānta seek. "He has obtained the fruit of wisdom as well as of the practice

375 19:7

376 *ātma vijñāna*

377 20:2

378 *taddhyāna* 18:14

379 *aparokṣa*

380 20:5

381 18:61

382 18:37

of yoga who, Self-contented and purified of senses, [enjoys] his aloneness."³⁸³ Notice that this does not say that the wise one obtains the fruit of yoga *through the practice of yoga*, only that the wise one enjoys the fruit of yoga, that is, that he enjoys what the yogi's seek.³⁸⁴ The difference between the two is that the sage of the *AG* does not seek out the fruit as if it were a goal (as it is not). Yet he enjoys it, nonetheless.

2.4.2 Naturalness

In place of meditation and artificial means, the *AG* offers naturalness.³⁸⁵ The sage of the *AG* is fully at home in the natural state. He is simply himself as he goes about his daily routine. Naturalness is the inherent state of the self, and hence of the sage. "The wise one, even when engaged in practical life,³⁸⁶ does not have any distress like the ordinary man due to his [natural state]."³⁸⁷

In one sense, in contrast to the 'transcendent' reality or mystical 'beyond' of other-worldly mystics, 'naturalness' is an 'at-homeness' in everyday circumstances. It is ordinary existence. But in another sense, 'naturalness' is not quite the same as the common experience of most people. Naturalness is beyond, or perhaps 'between,' the transcendent and the

383 17:1

³⁸⁴ Interpreting this verse, T. Byrom writes, "The seeker may abandon meditation only after he has gathered the fruit of long practice." I find nothing in the text to suggest this. See T. Byrom, tr., *The Heart of Awareness* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990), p. 89.

³⁸⁵ *akrtrima*. The term *akrtrimānanda* appears in the *Aparokṣānubhūti*, 125. In his *Parāprāveśikā*, Kṣemarāja describes *vimarsa* as "*akrtrimāham iti visphuraṇam*." See J. Singh, *Śiva Sūtras* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), p. xx.

³⁸⁶ *vyavahāri*

³⁸⁷ *svabhāva* 18:60

everyday. In metaphysical terms, it denotes the coincidence of the transcendent and the immanent, the absolute and the relative. In simpler parlance, by emphasizing naturalness, the *AG* wishes only to point out that the sage it speaks of does not abide in a state which is exclusive of the waking or 'ordinary' state of consciousness.

Another sense of 'naturalness' can be seen by comparing it to 'effortlessness.' Naturalness is easy. The sage's natural state is effortlessly maintained, as it is his natural state. "For the wise one who delights in the Self... control is [always] natural."³⁸⁸ He does not *try* to remain serene. This consideration leads to another sense of 'naturalness,' one that can be seen by contrasting it with artificiality. The sage does not seek to exploit artificial or unnatural techniques and methods.³⁸⁹ He is also natural in the sense that his serenity is not 'put on' or artificial. "The wise one's conduct, though unrestrained and natural,³⁹⁰ shines, but not with the artificial serenity of the ignorant one with his mind full of desire."³⁹¹

The naturalness of the sage of the *AG* also lies in his spontaneity. The sage may suddenly become absorbed in ecstasy or in a deep, serene meditative state, but these states are not sought out by him. "The mind of the liberated one does not engage itself in either meditation or activity, but becomes meditative and active without any intention."³⁹² Hence, naturalness is also a continual openness to ecstasy. The sage totters between

³⁸⁸ *akṛtrima* 18:41

³⁸⁹ Cf. *Gauḍapāda-kārikā*, IV, 86.

³⁹⁰ *akṛtika*

³⁹¹ 18:52

³⁹² 18:31

ecstasy and the waking state. He is continually absorbed in his natural state, yet he is blissfully aware of objects as they arise in consciousness.³⁹³ He is therefore at all times 'ecstatic.' This is called 'natural *samādhi*' by the *AG* "He renounces all goals of desire and becomes the embodiment of perfect bliss pertaining to his essential nature. Glory to him who abides in... natural [and continuous absorption]."³⁹⁴

2.4.3 Beyond Contrasting Alternatives³⁹⁵

However, the primary aim of the *AG*'s critique of traditional spirituality is the practice of discrimination. Most of its critique is directed at the pairs of opposites and contraries that arise from the cogitation of affirmation and denial.³⁹⁶ The text almost seems to be attempting to exhaust the seemingly endless series of bifurcations that are made by the discriminative faculty.³⁹⁷

The *AG* begins with bifurcations and polarities at the level of common experience. The sage of the *AG* does not distinguish between the contraries usually observed in ordinary life. The text asks rhetorically, "Where is distance, where is nearness, where is outside, where is inside? And where is the gross and where is the subtle?"³⁹⁸ Nor does the sage worry about

³⁹³These objects are neither pursued nor obstructed but are tacitly recognized as consciousness itself.

³⁹⁴*akṛtrīmo 'anavacchinne samādhi* 18:67. Cf. *Upadeśasāhasrī*, I, 13:25; *Bhagavadgītā*, 6:7; *Yogavāsīṣṭha*, Venkatesanada, tr., pp. 223, 227, 294, 296-297; *Tripurārahasya (Jñānakhaṇḍa)*, 18:162; 20:121-127. See A. V. Vasavada, tr. *Tripurā-Rahasya* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1965), pp. 123, 140

³⁹⁵*dvandva*

³⁹⁶*samkalpavikalpa*

³⁹⁷*buddhi*

³⁹⁸19:6

distinctions made in the social sphere. "In the wise man whose mundane life has waned, and who transcends humanness, there is neither violence or compassion, neither pride nor humility, neither surprise nor agitation."³⁹⁹ In intercourse with others and amidst his daily routine, he remains himself regardless of how he is treated or what confronts him. "He neither abuses nor praises, neither rejoices nor is angry. He neither gives nor receives. He has [no tastes or desires in regard to] all things."⁴⁰⁰

The sage also has no concern for ethical considerations. He does not care if his actions are moral or not. The sage states, "I have given up good and evil, and live in... happiness."⁴⁰¹ Hence, for the *AG*, the sage is someone who is no longer in conflict with himself. The sage does not care if he is on the proper path or not. For such a one, asks the text rhetorically, "Where is good and where is evil?"⁴⁰²

The sage no longer perceives things in terms of discrimination. "I do not see any duality."⁴⁰³ Everywhere he goes anyone or anything he meets, the sage sees only the self. "The wise do not see this and that... but see (only) the immutable Self."⁴⁰⁴ He moves about happily, independent of the world and any responsibility to it. "The wise one, alone and unattached to all things, rejoices. He is without any possession, moves about at pleasure,⁴⁰⁵ is free from the conflict of opposites,⁴⁰⁶ and dispels all his doubts."⁴⁰⁷

³⁹⁹17:16

⁴⁰⁰17:13

⁴⁰¹13:7

⁴⁰²19:4

⁴⁰³1:21

⁴⁰⁴18:40

⁴⁰⁵ *kāmacāra*

⁴⁰⁶Cf. *Tejobindupanīṣad* 3; *Bhagavadgītā* 2.45; 5:3.

The *AG* also addresses more subtle dualities. It points out the more fundamental dualisms that exist in the metaphysics underpinning traditional forms of soteriology -- dualities such as those between 'the transcendent' and 'the immanent,' 'the absolute' and 'the relative.' In the more radical phase of its critique of discrimination, the text asks, "Where is Self and where is non-Self?"⁴⁰⁸ Hence, even the notion of 'self' is to be given up. There is no 'thing' to which the term 'self' refers, as the self is not a thing. The *AG* also challenges the distinction between Brahman and *māyā* it asks, "What is illusion⁴⁰⁹ and what is... *samsāra*... What is the *jīva* and what is That Brahman?"⁴¹⁰ Likewise, the *AG* challenges the traditional distinction between the absolute and the relative. "To me ever free from (discursive) reasoning what is relation⁴¹¹ and what is absoluteness,⁴¹² what is happiness and what is misery?"⁴¹³

To the casual reader, the *AG* may seem to be a standard Advaita text. But if it is a form of advaitism, it certainly is not a form which distinguishes a non-dual reality from dualistic realm. The text asks rhetorically, "Where is duality and where is nonduality?"⁴¹⁴ Hence, the *advaita* of the *AG* is no ordinary form of *advaita*. Rather, it is a text which repudiates any attempt made by the discriminative faculty to discriminate, by way of the '*neti neti*' dialectic, a non-dual, transcendent absolute from mundane existence. In

⁴⁰⁷18:87 Cf. *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* II, 2:9.

⁴⁰⁸19:4

⁴⁰⁹ *māyā*

⁴¹⁰20:11

⁴¹¹ *vyavahāra*

⁴¹² *paramārthatā*

⁴¹³20:10

⁴¹⁴19:2

fact the text concludes on this note: "What is existence and what is non-existence, what is dual and what is nondual? Nothing of me springs up. What more can be said?"⁴¹⁵

Hence, for the *AG* there is no mystical 'void' or metaphysical 'non-duality' (as discriminated from the 'everyday world' or 'phenomenal realm') which the sage or mystic need attempt to abide in or intuit. To the sage of the *AG* such states are merely more things to which mystics and metaphysicians may cling.

2.4.4 Beyond Discrimination and Renunciation

For the *AG* the discrimination of the self from nature is unimportant. The reality of the self is ubiquitous. Hence the text asks rhetorically, "For the yogi who is free from the duality of opposites, where are righteousness, desire, wealth, and [discrimination]...."⁴¹⁶ The same can be said for the knowledge born of the practice of discrimination. In Vedānta, the practice of discrimination, in the form of the '*neti neti*' *via negativa*, is said to lead to that which can only be characterized as '*neti neti*', the formless, qualityless brahman. The knowledge had of brahman is, therefore, a discriminative knowledge, a knowledge of a reality *as discriminated* from conditional existence.⁴¹⁷ Both the mediated knowledge pointing to that experience and the discriminative knowledge of that reality itself, are inconsequential for

⁴¹⁵20:14

⁴¹⁶ *viveka* 18:12. The four goals are referred to here with discrimination being identified with liberation. Cf. *Gauḍapāḍakārikā* 4:60.

⁴¹⁷ Mayeda writes of Śaṅkara's *Upadeśasāhasrī*, "Thus transmigratory existence is said to be nothing but the absence of discriminating knowledge (*aviveka*) concerning *Ātman* and non-*Ātman*..." *A Thousand Teachings*, p. 72.

the sage of the *AG* He asks rhetorically, "[Where are the scriptures and where is discriminative knowledge?]"⁴¹⁸

Likewise, for the sage of the *AG* discrimination as a means to choosing the proper course of action is unnecessary. The sage does not act according to carefully considered decisions. Discrimination as a virtue falls away for the sage. "To the yogi whose nature is [without existence] what is patience, what is discrimination ... and what is courage?"⁴¹⁹ The sage of the *AG* also has no concern for the discrimination associated with renunciation and detachment. The hope of the renunciate is that by discriminating out objects which are conducive to either desire or pain, the sorrow associated with such objects can be avoided. The process is a two-step procedure: first, discriminate those objects or situations which either will directly lead to pain or which will lead to pain in a matter of course (*via* the mental tendencies), then reject or renounce said objects or situations and thereby detach yourself from their effects. It is this kind of renunciation which the *AG* criticizes.

The happiness born from the practice of rejection is a happiness relative to the efficacy of the intellect which is discriminating. In order for the process to be effective, the mind must constantly be discriminating. Hence, no permanent state of detachment is possible since the efficacy of the result is relative to the ongoing practice itself. Hence, efficacy is proportional to the degree of obsessiveness with which the practice is carried out. Obsessiveness would seem to preclude a satisfactory sense of happiness, and

⁴¹⁸ *viñāna*

⁴¹⁹ 18:79; 14:2

so the practice does not seem to have any conclusion as it is only effective so long as the discriminative intellect moves between its options.

Hence, the above type of renunciation is not deemed to be a viable 'solution' by the *AG*. The sage of the *AG* does not worry about objects of sense, desire, or repulsion. "The emancipated one has neither aversion nor craving for the objects of the senses. With his detached mind [he takes whatever he gets]."⁴²⁰ He takes life as it comes to him and ignores the alternatives of rejection and acceptance. "The man of poised intelligence knows that the visible world from its very nature has no substance. He considers nothing acceptable or rejectable."⁴²¹ He moves about and partakes freely of the senses, yet is unmoved to either grasp or reject. "The emancipated person, the noble minded one, as he sees, hears, touches, smells, eats, accepts, speaks, and moves is free, indeed, from attachment or aversion."⁴²²

The sage of the *AG* perceives nothing separate from the self, and so he has no need for renunciation. The text asks, "For one who has envisioned the Self as pure luminousness and does not perceive the phenomenal world, where is the rule of life, where is non-attachment, where is renunciation, and where is control of the senses?"⁴²³ He no longer looks upon the world as a problem to be solved, as for him, the world is not some 'thing' distinct from consciousness. "For him the sense of reality of the world is annihilated and

42017:17

4213:13.

42217:12

42318:71

he has neither attachment nor aversion⁴²⁴ for it."⁴²⁵ He looks upon the world as no different from consciousness.

2.4.5 Seeing All Things as Equal

Since he sees all things as manifestation of consciousness, the sage looks upon all things equally. He sees no intrinsic worth or value which allows him to distinguish hierarchically some objects from others. "There shines the wise one who has no ego-sense and looks upon a clod of earth, a stone, or a piece of gold as of equal worth. The knot of his heart⁴²⁶ is perfectly cut asunder...."⁴²⁷ Nor does he distinguish good people from bad people. "One who is free from desires neither has praise for the good nor blame for the wicked."⁴²⁸ The same is true of noblemen and rogues. He sees all in the same light. "No [mental tendency] springs in the heart of the wise man encountering or honoring a learned Brahmin, a god, a place of pilgrimage, a woman, a king, or a beloved person."⁴²⁹ He looks upon all people, states of being, and things as manifestations of consciousness. Hence, he looks upon them all as inherently of equal value. "The wise one who sees the same⁴³⁰

⁴²⁴ *virakti*. The term also means 'indifference to' or 'alienation from.'

⁴²⁵ 17:9

⁴²⁶ *hrdayagranthi* Cf. *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, II, 2:9.

⁴²⁷ 18:88 Cf. *Bhagavadgītā*, 6:8; 14:24.

⁴²⁸ 18:82

⁴²⁹ 18:54. The *Bhagavadgītā* 5:18, reads, "In a knowledge and cultivation perfected, Brahman, a cow, an elephant, And a mere dog, and an outcaste, The wise see the same thing." Franklin Edgerton, tr., *The Bhagavad Gītā* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 30. Cf. *Ibid.*, 6:29; *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, 433, 543.

⁴³⁰ *samadarsin*

everywhere, finds no difference between happiness and misery, man and woman, fortune and misfortune."⁴³¹

Likewise, he has no preference of heaven over earthly existence, or of the life of a hermit over the life of one in society, but goes about his life as if it made no difference which lifestyle he were to adopt. "Whether he possesses the kingdom of heaven or adopts mendicancy, whether he gains or loses, whether he is in society or solitude, the yogi whose nature is free from [alternative choices]⁴³² finds no difference."⁴³³ As noted above, the wise one does not distinguish proper courses of action from improper ones, but follows the course of life as it spontaneously arises. "The wise one who has achieved pure consciousness⁴³⁴ by just hearing [of the nature of reality] and who is tranquil... makes no difference between action, proper or improper, and inaction."⁴³⁵ Whatever course his life happens to be taking he follows it effortlessly. He lives his life spontaneously.

2.4.6 Spontaneity

Just as the waves rise and fall spontaneously upon the ocean, so too the sage of the *AG* lets thoughts and situations arise spontaneously. "In me, the limitless ocean, let the wave of the world [spontaneously] arise and vanish of itself. I neither increase nor decrease thereby."⁴³⁶ He moves about like a ship adrift in the wind. He lets nothing within him obstruct the course of

⁴³¹17:15

⁴³² *vikalpa*

⁴³³18:11

⁴³⁴ *śuddhabuddhi*

⁴³⁵18:48

⁴³⁶7:2 Nityaswarupananda, tr., *Aṣṭāvakra Saṃhitā*, p. 54.

events in his life. "In me, the infinite ocean, the ship of the universe moves here and there, driven by the wind of the mind. I do not have any [resistance]."⁴³⁷ He neither shirks away from thoughts as they arise nor hankers after them. Whatever comes to him he allows to come. "Rare is the individual who knows the non-dual Self as the Lord of the Universe. He does whatever comes to his mind and has no fear from anywhere."⁴³⁸

He does not act according to preconceived plans. His actions are 'without why.' "A person liberated in life performs his action but would not say why, although he is not a fool. Although living in the world he is quite happy and blessed."⁴³⁹ He allows situations to unfold by themselves. He does not try to manipulate events but does what is required at the moment of its requirement. "Fully understanding that nothing in reality is ever really done..., I only do whatever comes of itself."⁴⁴⁰ The liberated sage merely follows the course of his life as it presents itself to him. "For the yogi who is liberated while living, there is neither any duty nor desire in his heart. In this world his deeds merely follow the lot of his life."⁴⁴¹

To the sage of the *AG* life is play. He takes nothing too seriously. "There can be no comparison between an ignorant creature, who carries the burden of the world, and the knower of the Self, who plays the sport of life."⁴⁴² He may spontaneously retire into seclusion or he may playfully wander about the world. "The wise are free from imaginings, unfettered in

⁴³⁷ *asahiṣṣutā* 7:1

⁴³⁸ 4:6

⁴³⁹ 18:26

⁴⁴⁰ 13:3

⁴⁴¹ *yathā jīvanah* 18:13

⁴⁴² 4:1

intelligence, and unbound. They (may) sport in great enjoyment or take resort to the mountain caves."⁴⁴³

The liberated sage wanders about spontaneously or 'as he pleases.' "Contentment ever abides in the heart of the wise one who subsists on whatever is his lot. He roams about at his pleasure,⁴⁴⁴ sleeping wherever the sun sets."⁴⁴⁵ But this wandering 'at will' is not a consequence of the operation of his own will. "To the yogi who is guileless and simple and realizes the supreme goal of life, what is willfulness,⁴⁴⁶ what is restraint and what is the determination of the Truth of the Self?"⁴⁴⁷ The sage does not act according to his own will, but spontaneously and without volition.

Hence, in place of discrimination and aversion, the *AG* offers 'spontaneity.'⁴⁴⁸ Instead of acting according to deliberation, the sage of the *AG* acts naturally and according to spontaneity. "The wise man who comprehends the entire world as his Self lives as he likes.⁴⁴⁹ Him, none can forbid."⁴⁵⁰ Spontaneous action is carefree, purposeless and appears random. "By nature void in mind⁴⁵¹ and acting [spontaneously]⁴⁵² he has no feeling of

⁴⁴³18:53

⁴⁴⁴ *svacchandam carataḥ* The term *svacchanda* has a technical use in Kashmiri Śaivism. Cf. *Śiva Sūtras* Singh, tr., pp. 49-50. In his *Spandanirṇaya*, Kṣemarāja refers to the *Svacchanda Tantra*: "One should regard everything as the form of *Śiva* and *Śakti* and finally it says 'One who has this conviction is liberated while living.... The yogi functioning freely by means of *svacchanda yoga* is united with the status of *Svacchanda* and acquires equality with *Svacchanda*. He becoming *Svacchanda* moves about freely, and enjoys full Freedom (*Svacchanda Tantra* VII, 258)." See J. Singh, *Spanda Kārikās* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), p. 124.

⁴⁴⁵18:85

⁴⁴⁶ *svacchandya*

⁴⁴⁷18:92

⁴⁴⁸ *yadṛcchā*

⁴⁴⁹ *yadṛcchā*

⁴⁵⁰4:4

⁴⁵¹ *sūnyacitta*

honor or dishonor like that of an ordinary man."⁴⁵³ However, by 'spontaneity' the *AG* does not mean 'acting out of desire.' "For him who has abandoned the mind's passions, who is above duality of attributes and is desireless, for him any experience that comes as a matter of course⁴⁵⁴ gives neither pleasure nor pain."⁴⁵⁵

Spontaneous action is action that is unobstructed by either moral or sensual hankering. It is action that does not intend an object or goal. Hence, intentional states of mind fall out of the picture as unimportant in the *AG*. Likewise, the notion of an intending subject -- planning his course of action, making the correct moral decisions and discriminating out sensual and reprehensible objects -- has no place in the *AG*. The sage of the *AG* acts non-volitionally, intends no object, and discriminates no proper course of action.

2.4.7 Beyond Bondage and Release

Since the sage of the *AG* acts naturally and spontaneously, he has no need for liberation and does not worry about bondage. "The wise one, being without both concentration and distraction, is neither a seeker of liberation nor the reverse."⁴⁵⁶ He has neither an aversion for conditional existence nor directs his longing toward knowledge of the self. "The wise one neither [hates *samsāra*] nor [loves] Self-realization."⁴⁵⁷ All categories, high or low,

⁴⁵² *yadrcchā*

⁴⁵³ 18:24

⁴⁵⁴ *yadrcchā*

⁴⁵⁵ 3:14

⁴⁵⁶ 18:28

⁴⁵⁷ 18:83

including sorrow and happiness hold no power over him. As far as he is concerned, he is neither liberated nor seeking after liberation. "To him there is neither heaven nor hell, nor even liberation in life."⁴⁵⁸ He is not a man of the world nor a world renunciate. These are simply artificial categories for the sage of the *AG* "He is neither happy nor unhappy; he is neither a recluse nor a man of company, neither liberated nor aspiring after liberation....."⁴⁵⁹ Hence, there is no distinction between bondage and release for the sage of the *AG* The text asks rhetorically, "For one who does not perceive... nature, but [is] the Self shining in infinite forms, where is bondage, where is salvation, where is joy, and where is sorrow?"⁴⁶⁰

In the manner of a confessional, the sage of the *AG* expresses his utter transcendence of the traditional categories of 'bound' and 'liberated.' He neither longs for liberation nor wishes to remain bound. "As I have known the Supreme Self... I have neither desire for bondage or liberation, nor care for salvation."⁴⁶¹ He is the self and the self is ever free. "[I have neither bondage or release. All that exists, exists in me.] The illusion is now [stilled and without support]."⁴⁶² The listener is told that he, too, is never bound or released. "There is neither bondage nor salvation for you."⁴⁶³

Hence, for the *AG* there is no distinction between bondage and release. The text asks, "What is knowledge and what is ignorance,... what is bondage

⁴⁵⁸18:80

⁴⁵⁹18:96

⁴⁶⁰18:72

⁴⁶¹ *mukti*14:3

⁴⁶²1:18

⁴⁶³15:18

and what is liberation...?"⁴⁶⁴ The distinction between liberation in life and liberation at death is also another artificial distinction. "What is liberation in life⁴⁶⁵ and what is aloneness at death?"⁴⁶⁶ Likewise, just as there is no distinction between liberation and bondage, there is no seeker after liberation and no one who is bound. "To my indivisible, essential Self, what is... the aspirant for liberation, what is the yogi and what is the wise man, what is the [bound] and what is the free man?"⁴⁶⁷ All such distinctions are products of the discriminative mind. The sage concludes, "To me ever abiding in the immutable and indivisible Self, what is impulsion and what is withdrawal, what is liberation and what is bondage?"⁴⁶⁸

2.4.8 Contented in all States

The yogi or sage who seeks freedom in meditation is only free as long as he is absorbed in meditation. But the sage of the *AG* has no need to seek the relative bliss and freedom of meditative states. "He is contented and is the same in joy or sorrow. He discerns nothing to be achieved."⁴⁶⁹ The sage is happy with any state and does not seek to escape from the world. "For the man of wisdom there is neither longing for the dissolution of the universe nor aversion for its existence. Hence he lives contentedly with whatever is his lot."⁴⁷⁰

46420:3

465 *jīvanmukti*

466 *vidhekaivalya*20:4

46720:6

46820:12

46918:82. Cf. *Bhagavadgītā* 2:15; 12:13; 14:24; *Vivekacūdāmaṇi* 434.

47017:7

Whether he is actively engaged in day to day activities or idly watching the world go by he is unconcerned with whether what he does is good or bad. The sage of the *AG* confesses, "Neither any good or any evil is associated with my stability, movement, or repose. Hence I live in... happiness whether I am at rest, move about or sleep."⁴⁷¹ If something is required of him he does it happily. "For the wise one there is no [addictive grasping] in either action or inaction. When action is demanded of him, he does it and lives happily."⁴⁷² He remains unmoved by the fact that he may be actively engaged in the world, as action is not a problem for him. "The emancipated one is established in the Self under all conditions and released from the notions of action and duty. Owing to his absence of desire, he is the same under all circumstances and does not ponder over what he has or has not done."⁴⁷³ He remains the same whether he is at work, play or rest. "The adept one, even when doing his duties, verily remains unperturbed."⁴⁷⁴

Hence, the sage of the *AG* does not distinguish between states of consciousness. All states are the same for the sage who only sees the self. "The wise one is not asleep in deep slumber nor lying down in dreaming, nor even awake in the waking state. He is contented in all states..."⁴⁷⁵ In all states and situations he is always the same contented self. "Even in the practical affairs of life the [one whose mental processes are stilled] sits contentedly, sleeps contentedly, moves contentedly, speaks contentedly, and

47113:5

47218:20

47318:98

47418:58

47518:94

eats contentedly."⁴⁷⁶ In short, "He remains the same everywhere and under all conditions."⁴⁷⁷ He is a mindless, happy-go-lucky wanderer. "Fulfilled by this wisdom... with his [mind melted away]⁴⁷⁸ he lives happily, seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and assimilating."⁴⁷⁹

2.4.9 Mindlessness

For the sage of the *AG* mind and body have fallen away. He has no concern for his bodily condition. "Shining is the life of the wise man who is free from any expectation, who is without attachment... and without care for even his body."⁴⁸⁰ Death is also not an object of fear for the sage who is free. "The great one has no care whether the body dies or lives."⁴⁸¹ The sage described by the *AG* is already 'dead.' His sense of self does not exist as it does for others. "The wise man shines without ego-sense, egoism and desire."⁴⁸² Hence, with no ego to fulfill or desire to satisfy the sage does not seek power or hedonistic pleasure. Hence, his spontaneity is not a menace to those around him. "The wise man, free from egoism, does not commit any wrong deed."⁴⁸³

The sage is also described as devoid of thought and perceptive capacity. "[Exhausting] himself [of] diverse reasonings..., the wise one attains complete

⁴⁷⁶18:59

⁴⁷⁷18:10

⁴⁷⁸ *galitadhi*. The term can also mean 'dropped off.'

⁴⁷⁹17:8

⁴⁸⁰18:84

⁴⁸¹18:86

⁴⁸²18:73

⁴⁸³18:29

repose. He neither thinks nor knows nor hears nor perceives."⁴⁸⁴ His mind is free from movement and cogitation. "The mind of the liberated one is without either agitation or action. It is passive, free from fluctuations,⁴⁸⁵ desireless, and purged of doubts."⁴⁸⁶ He intends no object, as all he sees is the self. "The liberated person of desireless intelligence [has no object]."⁴⁸⁷ Intentional states of mind have dropped away as inconsequential to his actions. "How and for whom can be depicted the inner experience⁴⁸⁸ of one who... transcends all his sufferings?"⁴⁸⁹

The sage's mind has 'melted away' or 'dropped off.' "A supreme state is possessed by the man of wisdom who with his mind melted away is [devoid] of the [manifestations] of the mind, delusion, imagination, and inertia."⁴⁹⁰ The sage may appear to be dumb. "This knowledge of the truth... makes a person who is eloquent, wise and vigorous to be mute, inert and inactive."⁴⁹¹ He may also appear distant or oblivious, and his actions may appear random. "His gaze becomes vacant, his bodily action purposeless, and his senses inoperative."⁴⁹² Yet, he is not entirely mindless, as, in another sense, he does see, think, hear, and act.

2.4.10 The Paradox of the Sage

⁴⁸⁴18:27

⁴⁸⁵ *spandavarjita* This may be a reference to the *spanda* doctrine of Kashmiri Śaivism. See Mark Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987).

⁴⁸⁶18:30

⁴⁸⁷18:44

⁴⁸⁸ *antar yad anubhūyeta* 'that which is experienced within.'

⁴⁸⁹18:93

⁴⁹⁰17:20

⁴⁹¹15:3

⁴⁹²17:9

The sage of the *AG* does not exist in a mere blank state. For he does allow thoughts present themselves to his consciousness. Likewise, he is also not entirely inactive, either. But in another sense, the sage does not act, for the sage is identified with the self and the self does not undergo transformation or 'do' anything. This 'condition' of the sage is expressed by the *AG* in terms of paradox.⁴⁹³ The text reads: "He is devoid of ego-sense and ego-feeling... With all his desires melted away [from within] he has no action though he acts."⁴⁹⁴ How is this to be understood? The sage does nothing in the sense that the self does nothing. But he does not 'do nothing' in the sense that he remains completely inactive. He does nothing in the sense that his activities are not goal directed. "The wise one... does nothing even though he apparently acts in the eyes of the world."⁴⁹⁵

At times, the sage is described as being beyond pleasure or pain. But this does not mean that he would not feel a painful experience should it occur. Once again, this formulation is expressed by a paradox. "Delighted,

⁴⁹³Simply put, the point of such talk seems to be that the sage does not shun ordinary states of mind. He is engaged with ordinary activities yet these states and activities are at the same time transcended. An abstract way to see the necessity of the paradoxical formulation can be found in the argument that consciousness has no limits. Since consciousness is limitless, and since limits are set upon consciousness by claims of exclusivity (i.e., the claims of discriminative knowledge and concentrative absorption), to speak of exclusivity is, in a sense, to speak in contradictory terms. Contradictions can then be teased out of such claims: 'concentration is a form of distraction,' 'non-dualism is a form of dualism,' etc. The 'logic' of a limitless consciousness and a self that is always ever free, dictates that ordinary states not be set apart from wholly transcendent or mystical states. Hence, the paradoxical formulation is, in this sense, a more consistent formulation than one which limits consciousness to exclusive meditative and noetic states.

⁴⁹⁴17:19

⁴⁹⁵18:19

yet he is not delighted; afflicted, yet he is not afflicted. Only one like him can appreciate his marvelous condition."⁴⁹⁶

Similar expressions are found in the *AG* with regard to the thinking capacity of the sage. The sage does not abide in a state which excludes thought. There are thoughts in his consciousness, yet in another sense he does not intend those thoughts. "The wise one who is [devoid of mental activity]⁴⁹⁷ by nature perceives objects through [lapse of attention]⁴⁹⁸ and is, [as it were, awake though asleep]."⁴⁹⁹ He is aware of thoughts but he does not objectify them. "[The view] of one abiding in the Self in spite of his ideation of objects represents no object."⁵⁰⁰ Similar formulations are applied by the *AG* to the ego, intellect and sense-organs. "The man of Self knowledge is devoid of thought as he thinks, and of sense organs as he uses them. Endowed with a good intellect, he is without intelligence. Endowed with ego, he is without ego-sense."⁵⁰¹ The noetic capacity of the sage can only be expressed paradoxically: "Who but the one free from all desires knows not while knowing, sees not while seeing, and speaks not while speaking?"⁵⁰²

The same paradoxical formulations are used in the *AG* with respect to meditative states. The absorption of the sage is not a meditative state that he has 'entered into.' He does not intentionally enter into absorption as if to

⁴⁹⁶18:56

⁴⁹⁷ *sūnyacitta*

⁴⁹⁸ *pramāda*. The term can mean 'heedlessness,' 'carefree neglect of duty,' 'joyful play,' 'delight,' 'intoxication,' or 'madness.'

⁴⁹⁹14:1

⁵⁰⁰18:63

⁵⁰¹18:95. Cf. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 544.

⁵⁰²18:90

find serenity. In this sense his absorption is not some state set off from other states. "Neither in distraction is he distracted nor in *samādhi* is he in meditation...."⁵⁰³ For the sage, there is no distinction between meditation and non-meditation, sleep or wakefulness. Again, this is expressed in the terms of a paradox. "The wise man is neither awake nor asleep, he neither opens nor closes his eyes."⁵⁰⁴ The reference to the opening and closing of the eyes is a reference to the meditative and post-meditative states. No matter what 'state' the sage happens to be in, he makes no effort to remain in one state or another. "Happiness is for him, that head idler, who feels [exhausted] even at the effort of opening and closing the eyelids."⁵⁰⁵ The sage does not distinguish between the meditative and non-meditative states. He does not distinguish between any of the states of consciousness. He asks rhetorically, "Where is dreaming, where is deep sleep, where is wakefulness,

⁵⁰³18:97

⁵⁰⁴ *no 'nmīlati na mīlati*17:10 Cf. the *Spandanirṇaya* of Kṣemarāja: "the manifestation of the state of the fully illuminated yogi... is to be brought about by both introvertive (*nīmīlana*) and extrovertive (*unmīlana*) meditation both of which are to be interpenetrative (*ubhaya-visargāra-ñibhūtaḥ*)..." See J. Singh, tr. *Spanda-Kārikās* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), p. 127.

⁵⁰⁵ *nimeṣonmeṣa*16:4 References to the opening and shutting of the eyes also refer to the opening and shutting of the eyes of Śiva. When Śiva opens his eyes the world is created, when he closes them, the world is dissolved. In the yoga of Kashmiri Śaivism, the opening and shutting of the eyelids refers to the meditative and post-meditative states. Kṣemarāja writes, "[The yogi] views the whole world as play and by evolution (*unmeṣa*) and involution (*nimeṣa*) manifests or withdraws it...The great yogi has his consciousness absorbed in the Universal Consciousness, and even while he is living i.e. even while he exercising the act of maintaining *prāṇa*, his entire bondage is burnt to ashes by the spiritual knowledge..." See J. Singh, tr., *Spanda-Kārikās* p. 120. Cf. the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*: "With the slightest movement in the mind (when the mind blinks), the *saṃsāra* (world-appearance) arises and ceases. Make the mind unwinking (free from the movement of thought) by the restraint of the *prāṇa* and also the latent tendencies (*vāsanā*)." Venkatesananda, tr., p. 305.

and where is the fourth state... for me who abide in my own glory?"⁵⁰⁶

2.4.11 Fools, Idiots, Madmen

The sage, as he has been described so far, may seem to be much like the ordinary man. He is different in one respect, however. "The wise man is the reverse⁵⁰⁷ of the average man though living like him."⁵⁰⁸ The sage is 'turned around' while the average man is not. This has important implications, implications which are more clearly manifest at the mythological level. By 'turned about,' the text does not mean the usual '180 degree' about-face of the yogi, who withdraws his senses away from the things of the world and turns toward an inner or 'higher' reality. The yogi 'fights the current' of the usual downward flow of psychic energies and attempts to polarize or redirect his energy toward the crown *cakra*. But the 'upside-down' world of the yogi is not really an 'upside-down' world at all. It is the same hierarchically oriented cosmos; the only thing that is different in the yogi's world is that the yogi is ascending. The '180 degree' inversion of the yogi is not the same as the complete, '360 degree' turning-about of the 'mad' sage, as the turning-about mentioned in the *AG* is not an orientation toward inversion or ascent. It is a complete turning-about which has re-embraced the world. In metaphysical terms, it denotes the coterminous reality, embracing both the transcendent and the immanent, the relative and the absolute.

Mythologically, the '360 degree turn' manifests itself either in terms of ordinary, everyday descriptions ('mountains are mountains') or in terms of

⁵⁰⁶19:5 Nityaswarupananda, tr., *Aṣṭāvakra Samhitā* p. 186.

⁵⁰⁷ *viparyasta*. The term means 'turned about.'

⁵⁰⁸18:18

descriptions which have the entire hierarchical cosmos turned on its head. In such descriptions, the order of the universe often appears upset, and the cosmos can appear as if it is chaotic. The sage in such a setting is often unusual, wild and anarchistic. He might be ugly, crippled or deformed, or appear childlike (as in the case of Aṣṭāvakra). He may appear to be drunk, or act as if he is mad; or he may act like a fool, or appear idiotic. This should not be interpreted as saying that the sage *is* mad, or that for the sage, the universe *is* chaotic. The unusual descriptions are intended to underline the point that for the sage, it is acting in a world of artificiality and constraint which is the 'mad' and topsy-turvy way of viewing things. Hence, the queer descriptions of the mad sage and his topsy-turvy world are intended as 'mirrors' of an already crazy world, reminders to the reader or would-be seeker that if he finds the descriptions inane or crazy, it is only because his artificially constructed world is inane and crazy.

Descriptions of the sage in the *AG* fit with the above descriptions. In the *AG* the sage is most often compared to the child. The child is naive to the sophistications of the world and it is this naivete that the sage approaches in his obliviousness to the world. "The wise man is like a child free from the duty of opposites and is verily well established."⁵⁰⁹ The sage is also like a child in that his actions are playful, like those of a child absorbed in play. "The sage who moves about childlike without desire in all undertakings and who is pure has no involvement even while performing action."⁵¹⁰ The sage also has no need of pretenses, affectations or insincerity.

509_{16:8}

510_{18:64}

His actions are spontaneous and unconsidered as a child's often are. "The [straightforward] one does whatever [comes to him], whether good or evil, as his actions are childlike."⁵¹¹

The sage may act foolishly, or seem stupid or idiotic. "He behaves like a dullard."⁵¹² He may also appear as if he is asleep or inert. "The wise [fixed] in the Self, do not find anything to be attained, like persons asleep."⁵¹³ The sage is not necessarily passive, however. He may appear to be mad or intoxicated.⁵¹⁴ "Devoid of any thoughts⁵¹⁵ within, and moving about at his pleasure⁵¹⁶ [like a madman],⁵¹⁷ the wise man's different conditions can only be understood by a similar... one."⁵¹⁸ Hence, he can also be a wild and unpredictable fellow. He is ordinary, yet he is also extraordinary. The sage has come back to the world, yet he is not quite of the world.

2.5.0 Summary

In summary, for the *AG* both discrimination and absorption are practices which involve cogitation. In the practice of yogic and tantric

⁵¹¹18:49

⁵¹² *mūḍha* 18:32. Cf. *Ātmabodha*, 52, "He remains unaltered under all conditions, like a dumb person." See Nikhilananda, *Self-Knowledge* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1980) p. 160. Cf. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 540, "He wanders in the world, sometimes like a madman, sometimes like a child and at other times like a ghoul...." Madhavananda, tr., p. 201. Cf. also 542, "Sometimes a fool, sometimes a sage... sometimes wandering, sometimes behaving like a motionless python." *Ibid.*, p. 202. Cf. also *Jābālopaniṣad*, 69:6; and *Vasiṣṭhadharmasūtra*, 10:19.

⁵¹³18:33

⁵¹⁴This is also suggested by the term '*pramāda*' above.

⁵¹⁵ *vikalpaśūnya*

⁵¹⁶ *svacchanda*

⁵¹⁷ *bhrānta* The term can also mean one who wanders aimlessly about, as if confused, or it can also refer to the wild and unpredictable bull elephant in rut.

⁵¹⁸14:4

absorption, for example, the object of meditation may be the form of a god or goddess, or a *mantra* or some other object; or, (as in Advaita) the object of meditation may be a 'great-saying'. Whether the technique involves an elaborate visualization or a simple formula for repetition, in any case, it will involve mental processes.

Likewise, discrimination will always involve discriminating one object from another, one idea from its opposite. Thus, the practice of discrimination will involve vacillating from one position to another, from one idea to its compliment.⁵¹⁹ If the mind is that which is to be transcended, then the problem remains as to how the mind is able to 'pull itself up by its own bootstraps' and go beyond itself. How, in other words, can thought be used to go beyond thought? As long as we consider absorption and discrimination as the means to a transcendent state, the goal of such practices must be seen as impossible.

In place of absorption, the *AG* offers naturalness. Naturalness implies that there is no new experience or different state of consciousness that need be sought out by the practitioner. All such activity is abstraction that (though being no worse than the 'problematic' state) puts the practitioner in no better a position than he finds himself in at present. It also implies that the notion of the necessity of yogic ascent has dropped out of view as an inconsequential aspect of the strategy oriented toward formless absorption.

In place of discrimination, the *AG* offers spontaneity. Spontaneity implies a lack of intentional states oriented toward objects and goals. In the *AG* the notion of a willing subject, selecting his strategy and planning his

⁵¹⁹ *samkalpavikalpa*

means to release, drops out of view. Therefore, in the *AG* the practice of discriminating correct objects from incorrect ones, along with the practice of deciding upon the proper course of action, falls out of view as unimportant.

Both 'spontaneity' and 'naturalness' imply the rejection of a problem-based soteriology oriented toward the adoption of strategies intended to remedy a deficient state of being. Therefore, the text should be seen as the abandonment of any soteriology (or 'logic of liberation') that seeks a 'solution' to a fictitious 'problem.' Hence, when the text expresses the abandonment of contrived soteriological strategies, this should be taken as an expression of the natural spontaneity of which the text speaks. Strictly speaking, then, the text cannot be said to offer any new strategy or point of view on the subject matter of 'means to release.' The distinction between bondage and release is simply another product of cogitation.

3.0.0 The *Vedāntasāra* and *Jīvanmuktiviveka* as Philosophical Parallels to the *Aṣṭavakraḡita*

In this chapter, I will examine certain attempts to place the *AG* within an historical and doctrinal context. I will begin by indicating the direction attempts to find a context for the *AG* have been taking and move to a discussion of the inadequacy of recent attempts at finding a doctrinal context for the *AG*. The chapter will attempt to show that though steps in the right direction have been made with regard to placing the text in its proper historical context, attempts at placing the text in its proper doctrinal context have proved to be less than satisfactory. Recent scholarship has dated the text at a more reasonable date than dates previously assigned to the text by Advaitic apologists. Nonetheless, recent attempts to situate the text within the philosophical and spiritual milieu of the time period assigned to it have superficially and unquestioningly accepted the commentarial tradition's assimilation of the text into the tradition of post-Śaṅkara Advaita Vedānta, rather than attempting to move beyond the received dogmatic Advaitic interpretation.

I will argue that the *AG* cannot be understood as just another popular 'handbook' of Advaita philosophy, but rather, that it stands in opposition to certain Advaitic texts. Through a analysis of the soteriological elements of Sadānanda's *Vedāntasāra* and Vidyāraṇya's *Jīvanmuktiviveka*, I will show that, though it might be granted that *AG* is written in a style that resembles the popular Advaitic philosophizing found in Sadānanda and Vidyāraṇya, the

AG is not a text that, in terms of its soteriology, can be doctrinally grouped with either Sadānanda's *Vedāntasāra* or Vidyāraṇya's *Jīvanmuktiviveka*

3.1.0 Recent Attempts at Finding a Context for the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā*

The most detailed introduction in English to the *AG* is found in Radhakamal Mukerjee's *The Song of the Self Supreme*. The work is a translation of the *AG* with commentarial notes and a short introduction. In his introduction and commentary, Mukerjee traces a large number of terms and phrases in the *AG* to their Upaniṣadic sources, and shows where the *AG* has affinities with other texts within the general tradition of Vedānta and with texts and traditions outside of Vedānta. However, a major weakness of Mukerjee's study lies in his numerous attempts (in the tradition of apologetic Advaitic commentary) to assimilate the text into the received Vedāntic soteriology of Śaṅkara Advaita. At times, the strains exerted upon the text made by the attempt to assimilate it take on almost grotesque proportions. Mukerjee writes, "The Upaniṣadic *mahāvākyas* that Aṣṭāvakra uses for meditation in order to produce the direct experience of Atman are several." Among the examples cited by Mukerjee, we find the *mahāvākya* "'I am Brahman' (*aham brahmāsmi*) (1:20; 18:8, 28, 37)."⁵²⁰ But when we turn to *śloka* 18:37, one of the verses cited by Mukerjee, we read, "The ignorant one does not attain Brahman because he wants to become Brahman. The wise one, in spite of his absence of desire for Brahman, enjoys the nature of the Supreme Brahman."⁵²¹ Rather than finding an injunction stating that meditation upon the phrase 'I am brahman' is the means to overcome the

⁵²⁰R. Mukerjee, *The Song of the Self Supreme*, p. 81.

⁵²¹*Ibid.*, p. 221.

problem of ignorance, we find instead a bit of advice suggesting to us that meditation upon brahman *is* the problem. Here, Mukerjee's own reference to the text actually refutes his attempt to assimilate it.

The most serious weakness with Mukerjee's work lies in his attempt to date the text. Mukerjee claims that its date "may be assigned to the period immediately after the *Bhagavad Gītā* (c. 5th-4th century B.C.)." However, the appearance of specific phrases and of certain terminology in the text seems to presuppose at least exposure to language of a much later date than the date assigned by Mukerjee. Much of the language in the text suggests that its author had, at the very least, been acquainted with the ideas of Yogācāra and Vijñānavāda Buddhism:

I am like the ocean and the universe is like the wave.⁵²²

Just as the waves and the bubbles of foam are not different from the water, even so the universe streaming out of the Self is not different from it.⁵²³

In me, the limitless ocean, [the whole universe is imagined.]⁵²⁴

All that exists is mere imagination.⁵²⁵

This world is merely a mode of thinking.⁵²⁶

These kinds of formulations appear throughout works such as the *Larkāvātārasūtra*, as I have indicated in the footnotes of chapter one, and are indicative of a language of a later date than the one suggested by Mukerjee.

⁵²²6:2 Nityaswarupananda, tr., *Aṣṭāvakra Saṃhitā* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama), p. 51.

⁵²³2:4

⁵²⁴ *vikalpa* 7:3

⁵²⁵ *kalpanāmātra* 18:7. See also 2:20.

⁵²⁶ *bhāvanāmātra* 18:4

The appearance of certain other terms, such as *svacchanda*⁵²⁷ *svātantrya*⁵²⁸ also suggest exposure to the developed theologies of the post-Śaṅkara age.⁵²⁹ Mukerjee's own account of such theistic language in the text is forced. Although he wishes to claim that, "Long before Gauḍapāda's *Kārikā* Aṣṭāvakra rehabilitated the Upaniṣadic creed,"⁵³⁰ he also says:

It is remarkable that Aṣṭāvakra, though showing no theistic inclination at all, links the ancient terms for the Lord or God with the Self.... Neither Gauḍapāda nor Śaṅkara of the later ages has done this.⁵³¹

What is more likely the case is that theistic language in the *AG* presupposes the developed theologies of the post-Śaṅkara age.

The appearance of other terms and phrases such as *sphūrtimātra*⁵³² *viśvam sphurati*⁵³³ *sudhasphuraṇa*⁵³⁴ *sphurata*⁵³⁵ *spandvarjita*⁵³⁶ suggest acquaintance with the ideas of Kashmiri Śaivism. A number of phrases are also reminiscent of the language of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*:

It is a marvel that in the boundless ocean of myself, [individuals -- like waves] -- rise, jostle, play with one another, and merge spontaneously.⁵³⁷

⁵²⁷ *AG* 18:21; 18:85; 18:92

⁵²⁸ 18:50

⁵²⁹ On the use these terms outside of the Śaiva context see P. Granoff, "The *Yogavāsiṣṭha*: The Continuing Search for a Context," in *New Horizons of Research in Indology*, V.N. Jha, ed., (Poona: Centre of Advanced Studies in Sanskrit, 1989).

⁵³⁰ R. Mukerjee, tr., *The Song of the Self Supreme*, p.78.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, p.82

⁵³² *AG* 11:8

⁵³³ *AG* 15:7

⁵³⁴ *AG* 18:71

⁵³⁵ *AG* 18:72

⁵³⁶ *AG* 18:30

⁵³⁷ *svabhāvata* 2:25

In me the boundless ocean the waves corresponding to the worlds spontaneously⁵³⁸ rise and vanish. I experience neither gain nor loss on this account.⁵³⁹

One who understands with certitude that existence, destruction, and change are inherent⁵⁴⁰ in things becomes unaffected and free from pain.⁵⁴¹

The waves representing the universe spontaneously arise and disappear in you, the infinite ocean.⁵⁴²

The metaphor of waves upon the ocean, the appearance of terms such as *spanda*, and the specific use of the term *svabhāva* all suggest affinities with the language of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*⁵⁴³ As a preliminary conclusion, I would conclude that the text as a whole was written no earlier than the final redaction of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, which scholars have placed at the time period between 1150 and 1250 C.E.⁵⁴⁴

A recent attempt to date the *AG* has been Richard Hauschild's critical edition of the *AG*, *Die Aṣṭāvakra-Gītā*⁵⁴⁵ Hauschild's conclusion on the date of the text is that it should be taken as belonging to a period contemporaneous with either Sadānanda's *Vedāntasāra* or Vidyāraṇya's *Jīvanmuktiviveka*. He writes:

Also ist, zeitlich gesehen, die *Aṣṭāvakra-Gītā* etwa mit dem

⁵³⁸ *svabhāvata*

⁵³⁹ *AG* 7:2

⁵⁴⁰ *svabhāva*

⁵⁴¹ *AG*, 11:1

⁵⁴² *AG*, 15:11. Cf. the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, "In that infinite consciousness, whirlpools known as the three worlds arise spontaneously and naturally..." Venkatesananda, tr., p. 82.

⁵⁴³ See the footnotes to chapter one for technical similarities between the language of the *AG* and the language of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*.

⁵⁴⁴ See T.G. Mainikar, *The Vāsiṣṭha Rāmāyana* (New Delhi: Meharchand Lachhmandas, 1977).

⁵⁴⁵ Richard Hauschild, tr., *Die Aṣṭāvakra-Gītā* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1967).

bekanntem *Vedāntasāra* zusammenzunehmen, dessen Verfasser Sadānanda man auf ±1490 ansetzt oder *Jīvanmuktiviveka* des Vidyāraṇya, den Srockhoff auf etwa 1380 datiert.⁵⁴⁶

In this statement, there is no direct doctrinal connection or affinity explicitly referred to by Hauschild with respect to the *AG* and the *Vedāntasāra* or the *AG* and the *Jīvanmuktiviveka*. However, Hauschild's introductory remarks are clearly in line with the Advaitic interpretation of the *AG*.⁵⁴⁷ There are also a number of references to Sadānanda in his notes which seem to indicate that this is the direction that he intends his interpretation to lean. We might infer, then, that the closest Hauschild comes to settling on the matter of the *AG*'s doctrinal context is an unstated inference that the Vedānta of the *AG* is closest to either the Vedānta of Sadānanda's *Vedāntasāra* or the Vedānta of Vidyāraṇya's *Jīvanmuktiviveka*.

The latest English translation of the *AG* is Thomas Byrom's *The Heart of Awareness*. In the foreword to Byrom's translation, the move to speaking of doctrinal connections between the *AG* and the *Vedāntasāra* and *Jīvanmuktiviveka* is explicitly made by J.L. Brockington. He writes of the significance of Aṣṭāvakra in the *AG*:

We are left with the significance of the context of the *Mahābhārata* episode as the only real clue. It is perhaps the relevance of that alone, combined with the similarity in title to the *Bhagavadgītā* which has encouraged many Indian scholars to see [the *AG*] as belonging to the same period and thus as dating to around the fourth century B.C.E. They therefore see certain radical Advaitic views found in the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* which occur in Gauḍapāda's writings as anticipating his ideas. In reality, however, the

⁵⁴⁶R. Hauschild, tr., *Die Aṣṭāvakra-Gītā*, p. 55.

⁵⁴⁷See *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 10.

Aṣṭāvakra-gītā as a whole reveals a form of Advaita Vedānta which has undoubtedly undergone a long line of development and must at least be later than Śaṅkara, the renowned codifier of the Advaita system. Doctrinally, the text has much in common with Sadānanda's *Vedāntasāra* and Vidyāraṇya's *Jīvanmuktiviveka* from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, while in its adaptation of an epic setting to the propagation of an Advaita viewpoint it has analogies with the *Yogavāsīṣṭha*...⁵⁴⁸

There may indeed be language and terminology which is shared by the *AG*, *VS* and *JMV*. The *AG* may also be said to be similar to the works of Sadānanda and Vidyāraṇya insofar as the *AG* like works such as the *Vedāntasāra* and Vidyāraṇya's *Pañcadaśī*, was likely used as a compendium of popular Vedānta philosophy. In this sense, the *AG* may be included within that genre of literature associated with the appearance of the popular philosophizing which arose in the time period of the *VS* and the *JMV*, evidenced by the appearance of the Vedānta 'handbooks' such as the *Vedāntasāra* and *Pañcadaśī*.

However, to say that the *AG* belongs to the same spiritual and philosophical milieu as the *Vedāntasāra* and *Jīvanmuktiviveka* does not necessarily mean that the *AG* has soteriological similarities with the *VS* or the *JMV*. In fact, if it can be said that the *AG* stands in any relation at all to the *VS* and the *JMV*, it must be said that it is critical of the *VS* and the *JMV*. In the sections that follow I will argue that the *VS* and the *JMV* are inadequate as doctrinal parallels to the *AG* and that they cannot be used as texts providing the proper philosophical context for the *AG* except insofar as they provide grist for the *AG*'s soteriological critique.

⁵⁴⁸Thomas Byrom, tr., *The Heart of Awareness* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990), p. xi.

3.2.0 Soteriology in Sadānanda's *Vedāntasāra*

In this section I will focus upon the means to release as they occur in the *VS*. The means to release are discussed in two sections of the *VS*. In the first chapter of the work the means to knowledge are discussed under the chapter heading 'Preliminaries.' The other section in which the means to release are discussed is the fifth chapter of the work, 'The Steps to Self Realization.' It will be my contention here that the means of release that Sadānanda discusses are foreign to the *AG*. Given that the *AG* is critical of such means, it will be shown that the soteriology of the *VS* does not provide a reasonable comparative model for the understanding of release in the *AG*.

3.2.1 The Means to Knowledge

The discussion of the means to knowledge comes under the chapter entitled 'Preliminaries' in the *VS*. In this chapter, Sadānanda deals with the requirements of the student who wishes to study Vedānta. Sadānanda writes:

The competent student is one who, by studying in accordance with the prescribed method the Vedas and the *Vedāngas* (the auxiliary books to the Vedas), has obtained a general comprehension of the entire Vedas; who, being absolved from all sins in this or the previous life by avoidance of the actions known as *Kāmya* (rites performed with a view to attaining a desired object) and *Niṣiddha* (those forbidden by scriptures) and by the performance of actions called *Nitya* (daily obligatory rites) and *Naimittika* (obligatory on special occasions) as well as by penance and devotion, has become

entirely pure in mind, and who has adopted the four *Sādhanas* or means to the attainment of spiritual knowledge.⁵⁴⁹

Following a discussion of the required rites and actions described previously, Sadānanda then goes on to describe the means to spiritual knowledge:

The means to knowledge are: discrimination between things permanent and transient; renunciation of the enjoyment of the fruits of actions in this world and hereafter; six treasures, such as control of the mind etc.; and the desire for spiritual liberation.⁵⁵⁰

Sadānanda then explains each of the means. Discrimination⁵⁵¹ consists of the discrimination that "Brahman alone is the permanent Substance and that all things other than it are transient."⁵⁵² Discrimination is therefore both the means to knowledge and the fruit of the means. Discrimination is the fruit of the means in the sense that the knowledge of brahman is a knowledge of brahman as discriminated from transitory objects.

The second means for the acquisition of knowledge is indifference⁵⁵³ to the enjoyment of the fruits of action. Sadānanda writes that the fruits of heaven are to be considered as transitory as the enjoyment of earthly objects of pleasure. Hence, the aspirant desists⁵⁵⁴ from both the objects of pleasure in this world and the next. This component of the spiritual practice follows from (or is grounded in) the first in the sense that the objects to be

⁵⁴⁹Nikhilananda, tr., *Vedāntasāra* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978), 6, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁰ *Vedāntasāra*, 15. The list here parallels the list in the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* of Śaṅkara, I, 1:1. See G. Thibaut, tr., *Vedānta-Sūtras*, Part I (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), p.12.

⁵⁵¹ *viveka*

⁵⁵² *VS*, 16.

⁵⁵³ *virāga*

⁵⁵⁴ *virati*. The term also means cessation, abstention and resignation.

renounced must first be discriminated as objects worthy of renunciation if they are to be abandoned.

Next, the six treasures are described by Sadānanda: calmness,⁵⁵⁵ or restraint with respect to the tendency of the mind to gravitate toward external objects; self-control,⁵⁵⁶ or restraint of the five sensory organs as well as the five organs of action (speaking, grasping, moving, evacuating, and generating); cessation,⁵⁵⁷ the continual withdrawal of the mind from the objects of sense; forbearance,⁵⁵⁸ the tolerance⁵⁵⁹ of the pairs of opposites,⁵⁶⁰ such as pleasure and pain, heat and cold; intentness,⁵⁶¹ the constant concentration⁵⁶² of the mind upon the scriptures and those virtues conducive to knowledge; and faith,⁵⁶³ which is defined as trust⁵⁶⁴ in the truths of Vedānta.

Sadānanda defines the fourth means to knowledge, yearning for spiritual freedom,⁵⁶⁵ as the desire for release.⁵⁶⁶ To these lists, Sadānanda adds the following qualification, namely, that the Vedānta should "always be taught to one who is of tranquil mind, who has subjugated his sense, who is

555 *śama*

556 *dama*

557 *uparati*

558 *titikṣā*

559 *sahiṣṇutā*

560 *dvandva*

561 *samādhāna*

562 *samādhi*

563 *śraddhā*

564 *viśvāsa*

565 *mumukṣutva*

566 *mokṣeccha*

free from faults, obedient,⁵⁶⁷ endowed with virtues, always submissive,⁵⁶⁸ and who is constantly eager for liberation."⁵⁶⁹

Can there be said to be any similarity between the *AG* and this section of the *VS*? Of the six treasures, four -- calmness, self-control, cessation and intentness -- can be grouped with those yogic practices oriented toward the attainment of concentration outlined in the previous chapter. Hence, these four clearly fall within the domain of the *AG*'s critique. However, the *AG* does refer to the sage as remaining the same in both happiness and in sorrow.⁵⁷⁰ The *AG* also extols faith: Aṣṭāvakra says, "Have faithfulness, my child, have faithfulness."⁵⁷¹ Hence, of the treasures, only forbearance, as the tolerance of polarities,⁵⁷² and faith are favorably referred to by the *AG*.

Neither do the other means to knowledge in the *VS* find acceptance in *AG*. With respect to the practice of discrimination, the *AG* states, "To the yogi who is... indelible what is patience, what is discrimination, and what is courage?"⁵⁷³ Something similar can be said for the final means to knowledge mentioned by Sadānanda, the desire for liberation. There are a number of allusions in the *AG* with respect to the aspirant's desire to attain release. The *AG* reads: "The ignorant sustain the world... feverish for the attainment (of liberation)."⁵⁷⁴ Elsewhere, it states: "The ignorant one does

⁵⁶⁷Mayeda gives, "whose acting is prescribed [by the scriptures]." *A Thousand Teachings* p.156.

⁵⁶⁸Mayeda gives, "always obedient." *Ibid*.

⁵⁶⁹ *VS*, 26, p.14. The reference is to the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, I,16:72. Sadānanda seems to have added the desire for liberation to Śaṅkara's list in the Mayeda edition.

⁵⁷⁰ *AG*18:82

⁵⁷¹ *śraddhā* 15:8

⁵⁷² *dvandvasahiṣṇutā*

⁵⁷³ *AG*, 18:79

⁵⁷⁴18:38

not attain Brahman, as he wants to become Brahman."⁵⁷⁵ Hence, neither discrimination nor the desire for liberation are suitable analogs to the soteriological concepts found in the *AG*

The only means for which a case might be made, is the one associated with term '*virāga*' a term which also means aversion, dislike and indifference.⁵⁷⁶ In his definition of the term, Sadānanda gives, as a synonym, the term '*virati*', a term denoting cessation which also carries the senses of 'desistance,' 'abstention,' and 'resignation.' Of the possible senses of the two terms in question, the meanings which come closest to the *AG*'s notion of abandonment are 'resignation' and 'indifference.' But this is already laboring the interpretation. The primary meanings of the two terms used by Sadānanda are 'aversion' and 'abstinence,' and it is this sense of abandonment which the *AG* finds problematic. In fact, when the *AG* states, "For him the sense of reality of the world is annihilated and he has neither attachment nor aversion for it,"⁵⁷⁷ the term '*virakti*' in the verse is almost identical to the term used by Sadānanda, '*virāga*' Hence, the 'renunciation' of the *VS* is not the 'renunciation' of the *AG* It now remains to be seen if there are any doctrinal similarities between the chapter concerned with the steps to realization in the *VS* and the *AG*

3.2.2 The Steps to Realization

In this chapter, Sadānanda outlines the four stages of the study of Vedāntic texts and the eight limbs of yoga. Sadānanda writes of the four

⁵⁷⁵18:37

⁵⁷⁶ *virāga* *VS*, 17

⁵⁷⁷ *AG*17:9

stages: "Till such realization of the Consciousness which is one's own Self, it is necessary to practice hearing, reflection, contemplation, and absorption...."⁵⁷⁸

Hearing, or ascertaining the meaning of the Vedānta, is achieved through six modes or 'features' of the practice of 'hearing.'⁵⁷⁹ Each mode is said to establish the philosophy of Vedānta and contribute to the student's understanding of the scriptures.

The next stage of practice, reflection,⁵⁸⁰ is defined by Sadānanda as, "the constant thinking⁵⁸¹ of Brahman, the One without a second, already heard about from the teacher, by arguments agreeable to the purport of the Vedānta."⁵⁸² Here the meaning of the scripture obtained through hearing is carefully considered. By way of debate and argumentation, the aspirant becomes convinced of the validity of the scriptures.

Contemplation⁵⁸³ is defined by Sadānanda as, "a stream of ideas of the same kind as those of Brahman, the One without a second, to the exclusion of such foreign ideas as those of the body, etc."⁵⁸⁴ In contemplation, attention is focussed upon a great saying, or some other suitable object, to the exclusion of all other thoughts. When concentration upon the object of

⁵⁷⁸ VS 181

⁵⁷⁹Understanding the purport of scripture can be achieved in the following ways: through a presentation of the subject matter to be understood in a form consisting of a thesis and a conclusion; through the formal representation and interpretation of the subject matter to be understood; by way of the recognition that that which is heard is taught only by the scriptures; by means of the actual practice of what the scripture purports to teach, along with the fruit of such practice; through praise of the scriptures; and by way of the rational demonstration of the truth of the scriptures. VS 185-190.

⁵⁸⁰ *mananam*

⁵⁸¹ *cintanam*

⁵⁸² VS 191

⁵⁸³ *nididhyāsana*

⁵⁸⁴ VS 192

contemplation is sufficiently developed the meditator approaches concentrative absorption.

Absorption, for Sadānanda, is of two kinds. In the first there remains a trace of the mental functioning.⁵⁸⁵ In the absorption with thought, though the mental modifications⁵⁸⁶ take on the form of brahman with qualities, the distinction between the meditator and object of meditation remains.⁵⁸⁷ In the absorption in which there are no mental processes, the distinction between knower, object of knowledge and knowledge is dissolved, just as salt is dissolved in water,⁵⁸⁸ and the meditator is said to merge with brahman.⁵⁸⁹

Sadānanda states that the means to the distinctionless concentrative absorption is the practice of yoga.⁵⁹⁰ Yoga consists of eight limbs: restraints (non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy and the non-acceptance of gifts), observances (cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study of the scripture, and meditation upon *īśvara*), yogic postures, control of the vital breaths, withdrawal of the senses from their respective objects,

⁵⁸⁵ *savikalpasamādhi*

⁵⁸⁶ *cittavṛtti*

⁵⁸⁷ *VS* 194

⁵⁸⁸ *VS* 198

⁵⁸⁹ *VS* 197

⁵⁹⁰The section upon yoga in the *VS* is clearly derived from the *Yogasūtra* of *Patañjali*. For example, Sadānanda also outlines the four obstacles to the concentrative absorption in which mental processes have ceased. Derived from the *Yogasūtra* (1:30) these are torpidity, distraction, attachment and enjoyment. Torpidity is sluggishness due to sleepiness or laziness. Distraction is simply the failure to concentrate due to distraction. Attachment is the inability to break away from transitory objects due to the residual mental tendencies. Enjoyment is defined by Sadānanda as "tasting the bliss of *savikalpasamādhi*." The enjoyment of this bliss must be abandoned if meditation is to proceed to the higher state of absorption without distinction. *VS* 213.

concentration, meditation, and absorption.⁵⁹¹ The yogic postures involve the practice of placing parts of the body in particular positions, and the maintenance of those positions. Control of the vital breaths involves exercises making use of the inhalation, retention and exhalation of the breath. Concentration, meditation and absorption have already been discussed, but it should be noted that for Sadānanda, the three involve fixing the mind upon brahman.⁵⁹²

Having outlined the soteriological features of this chapter of the *VS* it now remains to be seen if there are any similarities between this section of the *VS* and the *AG*. To begin the comparison I would like to point out that many of the practices offered by Sadānanda overlap with other practices described in the *VS*. For example, the practice of withdrawing of the senses bears many similarities to the prerequisites of self-control and cessation described in the previous section of the *VS*. Likewise, intentness, concentration, meditation, contemplation, and absorption, though not identical, carry a significant feature in common between them, and that feature is 'one-pointedness.' The *AG*'s position on the practice of one-pointedness is clear: "The [fool] practices [one-pointedness] and control."⁵⁹³

There are also a number of other comments in the *AG* which address the type of spiritual path outlined by Sadānanda. For example, with respect to the practice of yoga we read, "The ignorant one does not attain liberation through his effort of yogic practice."⁵⁹⁴ From this statement it is clear that

⁵⁹¹ *VS* 200

⁵⁹² *VS* 207

⁵⁹³ *AG* 18:33

⁵⁹⁴ *AG* 18:36

the *AG* has no sympathy for the means given by Sadānanda for the attainment of concentrative absorption. Something similar can be said with regard to the practice of meditation upon brahman. Sadānanda suggests that meditation upon brahman should take the form of concentrating upon a scriptural passage proclaiming the truth of the identity of the self with brahman. With respect to this type of practice, the *AG* states, "The ignorant one does not attain Brahman as he wants to become Brahman."⁵⁹⁵ As long as the meditator meditates upon an object, his meditation does not move beyond the object. The *AG* states, "The intelligence of one who strives after liberation cannot rise beyond a supporting object."⁵⁹⁶ Hence, the type of meditation extolled by Sadānanda in the *VS* does not find a doctrinal parallel in the *AG*.

Hence, with respect to spiritual praxis and the matter of doctrinal parallels between the *AG* and the *VS*, I find no clear parallelism between the *AG* and the *VS*. If anything the *AG* should be understood as a text which criticizes the *VS*. What is more, in the *VS*, a number of topics are discussed, none of which are developed in the *AG*. In the *AG*, we do not find the Advaitic formula of being-consciousness-bliss.⁵⁹⁷ Nor do we find a discussion of superimposition.⁵⁹⁸ Nor do we find the development of the doctrines of the states of consciousness and the sheaths of the self.⁵⁹⁹ Nor do we find an exposition of the great sayings.⁶⁰⁰ The question arises as to the

⁵⁹⁵ *AG* 18:37

⁵⁹⁶ *AG* 18:44

⁵⁹⁷ *saccidānanda VS* 33

⁵⁹⁸ *VS* 32

⁵⁹⁹ *VS* 35-121

⁶⁰⁰ *VS* 143-171

grounds upon which the judgement was made that there are doctrinal similarities between the *AG* and the *VS*

What we do find in common between the two texts are a number of references and allusions that are by no means unique to the *AG* and the *VS*. In the *VS*, there is an allusion to the rope/snake metaphor,⁶⁰¹ one of the time-honored and pat expressions in Indian thought, used in a wide variety of texts with respect to the problems of appearance and falsely cognized objects. There is also a long string of epithets of brahman in the *VS*, a number of which can be found in the *AG* as epithets of the self. In the *VS* brahman is eternal pure intelligence, liberated, of the nature of true being, supremely blissful, infinite and non-dual.⁶⁰² But like the rope/snake metaphor, the appearance of any of these, or all of these together, is hardly convincing with respect to the theory of soteriological parallels between the two texts, since these terms occur throughout the philosophical and mystical literature of India. My suspicion is that the thesis of the similarity between the *AG* and the *VS* is premised upon certain passages in the final chapter of the *VS* a chapter dealing with the one who is liberated while living.

In the *VS* we find the following description of the liberated one:
 'He who does not see anything in the waking state as in sound sleep; who though seeing duality does not really see it as he sees the Absolute; who though engaged in work is really inactive; he, and no other is the knower of the Self. This is the truth.'
 (*Upadeśasāhasrī* 5).⁶⁰³

601 *VS* 32

602 *nityaśuddhabuddhamuktasatyasvabhāvaparamānandānantādvaya* *VS* 170

603 *VS* 221

A similar passage occurs in the *AG*. We read: "The wise one... does nothing even though he apparently acts in the eyes of the world."⁶⁰⁴

There are other passages in the *VS* that are similar to passages in the *AG*. For example the *VS* reads: "Witness such Śruti passages as: 'Though he has eyes he is as one without eyes; though possessed of ears, he is as one without ears,' etc."⁶⁰⁵ In the *AG* we find: "Who but the one free from all desires knows not while knowing, sees not while seeing, and speaks not while speaking?"⁶⁰⁶

The only unequivocally common passage shared between the *AG* and the *VS* is a verse borrowed from the *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*. We find the following description of the liberated one in the *VS*:

'The knot of his heart is broken asunder, all his doubts are solved, and his past actions are neutralized when he who is high and low (cause and effect) has been realized' (Muṇḍ. Up. 2.2.8).⁶⁰⁷

The phrase 'he whose doubts are dispelled' also occurs in the *AG*⁶⁰⁸ as does the phrase 'he whose knot of the heart has been cut asunder.'⁶⁰⁹

Hence, in terms of their descriptions of the sage and the ultimate state, the *VS* and the *AG* speak a common language. In terms of their descriptions of the spiritual path, however, the *AG* and the *VS* are at variance with each other. Hence, though the two texts share discourse relating to the ultimate state of the sage, the thesis that the two texts are

⁶⁰⁴ *AG*18:19

⁶⁰⁵ *VS* 220

⁶⁰⁶ *AG*18:90

⁶⁰⁷ *VS* 218

⁶⁰⁸ *chinnasamsāya AG* 18:87

⁶⁰⁹ *subhinnahṛdayagranthi AG* 18:88

soteriologically compatible must be rejected, as their descriptions of their respective spiritual paths are completely different.

3.3.0 Soteriology in Vidyāraṇya's *Jīvanmuktiviveka*

Vidyāraṇya's *JMV* is divided into five chapters: 'Authority Bearing Testimony to *Jīvan-Muktī*,' 'On the Obliteration of Latent Desire,' 'On the Dissolution of the Mind,' 'The Purpose of the Attainment of *Jīvan-Muktī*,' and 'Renunciation-of-the-Enlightened.' I will focus upon two chapters, 'On the Obliteration of Latent Desire' and 'On the Dissolution of the Mind,' with the intent to show that the use of the *JMV* as a doctrinal parallel to the *AG* does not stand the test of a careful comparative analysis of the soteriological contents of the two texts.

3.3.1 Discrimination and the Obliteration of Latent Desire

Vidyāraṇya begins the discussion of his soteriology in the chapter on the obliteration of latent desire.⁶¹⁰ He writes, "We now proceed to deal with the means which lead to 'Liberation-in-this-life'. They are '*Gnosis*,' 'the Dissolution of the Mind,' and 'the Obliteration of Latent desire'."⁶¹¹

Vidyāraṇya explains that there is a reciprocal relationship between the three means.⁶¹² As long as the mental tendencies are not destroyed the mind undergoes transformation, and hence, dissolution of the mind is

⁶¹⁰ *vāsanāksaya*

⁶¹¹ Subrahmanya Sastri and T.R. Srinivasa Ayyangar, tr., *The Jīvan-mukti-viveka of Śri Vidyāraṇya*. (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1935), p.49. The set of three means are derived from the *Yogavāsīṣṭha*. See Venkatesananda, tr., *The Concise Yoga Vāsīṣṭha* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 254.

⁶¹² *JMV*, p. 51. Cf. *Yogavāsīṣṭha*. See Venkatesananda, tr., p. 254.

delayed. On the other hand, if there is no dissolution of the mind, that is, abidance in the state hostile to the production of mental tendencies, then mental tendencies continue to arise and cause the mind to undergo modifications.⁶¹³ There is a way out of this apparent dilemma, however, and that way is the production of certain mental states which guard against and inhibit mental tendencies. Vidyāraṇya writes:

The Obliteration of Latent Desire means the absence of scope for the rise of anger and the like, even in the presence of appropriate external causes, as a result of *Vāsanāṣ* such as Self-Control and the like, generated by Discrimination, being firmly fixed in the Mind.⁶¹⁴

Likewise, as long as the latent mental tendencies have not been destroyed, spiritual knowledge cannot dawn, and as long as spiritual knowledge has not dawned the mind continues to undergo transformation. Vidyāraṇya notes that, "Gnosis never comes about, for want of proper means, such as Self-control and the like, as long as the latent power of anger and the like is not laid entirely to rest."⁶¹⁵ Hence, "Self-control and the like, which are identical with the obliteration of the latent sense of anger and the like, are the proper means of *Gnosis*"⁶¹⁶

Thus, Vidyāraṇya argues that the aspirant should practice all three means simultaneously. Vidyāraṇya quotes the *Yogavāsīṣṭha*: "Therefore, O Rāghava! with free personal effort, accompanied by right discrimination, one

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

should betake himself to these three..."⁶¹⁷ Vidyāraṇya explains the passage from the *Yogavāsīṣṭha* thus:

'Personal effort' connotes enthusiasm requisite to form the firm resolve 'Somehow or other I shall verily accomplish this.' 'Discrimination' means the conviction borne on one after due analysis and observation, that *Sravaṇa* and the rest⁶¹⁸ are the means to *Gnosis* *Yoga* is the means to the Dissolution of the Mind, and the setting up of an opposite current (of *Vāsanā*) the means to Obliteration of *Vāsanā*⁶¹⁹

The way to enter the causal circle of the three means is through the 'setting up of the opposite current,' that is, through the cultivation of those mental states which counteract the production of latent mental tendencies. Vidyāraṇya distinguishes two kinds of mental tendencies: pure (i.e., neutral) and impure mental tendencies. The pure mental tendencies are "of use only in keeping the body alive"⁶²⁰ and do not lead to the production of merit or demerit, and hence, do not lead to future incarnations. Impure mental tendencies are of three kinds: those relating to the world, those relating to learning, and those relating to the body.⁶²¹

Impure mental tendencies with respect to the world include the tendency to praise one's clan or race at the expense of belittling outsiders, and the tendency to seek praise and the favor of public opinion. Impure mental tendencies with respect to learning are said to be of three kinds: the tendency to overemphasize the mere study of books, the tendency to study

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁶¹⁸ Thinking and contemplation.

⁶¹⁹ *JMV*, pp. 54-5.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*

too many subjects at once, and the tendency to focus only upon the observance of injunctions laid down in religious books.⁶²² All three gravitate toward vanity and pride and for this reason they are said to be impure.⁶²³ Impure mental tendencies relating to the body are made up of three divisions: the tendency to identify the self with the body, the tendency toward vanity with respect to the bodily form, and the tendency to think that relief from conditional existence is possible through purely medical means.⁶²⁴

With respect to the three impure mental tendencies, Vidyāraṇya writes: These three *Vāsanās* then, relating to the World, Learning, and the Body, though apparently agreeable to the Mind of the uninformed, should be entirely given up by those who have acquired Discrimination; for, they obstruct the rise of Knowledge in the Seekers and interfere with the permanence of *Gnosis* acquired by the Enlightened.

Vidyāraṇya continues, "It may be asked: 'how is it possible to give up *Vāsanās*?' His answer is:

One should examine his own Mind and should then apply himself to the cultivation of such pure *Vāsanās* as are thought necessary to counteract the impure *Vāsanās*... As one, harassed by children, friends, wife and the like, feels disgust for them all and betakes himself to Renunciation, so should one, afflicted with the impure *Vāsanās*.. cultivate 'Discrimination' to counteract them.⁶²⁵

⁶²² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

Likewise, intellectual pride, avarice, and anger are all to be done away with by means of 'proper discrimination,'⁶²⁶ as are attachments to the opposite sex, attachments to family and friends,⁶²⁷ and any other impure mental tendency. Vidyāraṇya explains:

As he does away with the impure *Vāsanās* pertaining to Learning, Wealth, Anger, Woman and Son by proper discrimination, so also should he allay other similar *Vāsanās* by skillfully discriminating the evil attendant on each of them and by having recourse to the remedies prescribed in the *Sāstras* and out of his own resourcefulness. This being done, the highest condition, characteristic of *Jīvan-mukti*, is within easy reach.⁶²⁸

Vidyāraṇya notes that discrimination is sometimes led astray by the senses. If this is the case, then the senses must be held in check.⁶²⁹ Hence, by means of discrimination and control of the senses comes the destruction of the impure mental tendencies.⁶³⁰ This having been done, the aspirant can then fix his mind on pure consciousness:

Having accomplished this, he should apply himself to the study of the *Vāsanā* of '*Gnosis* pure and simple'.... Having thus resolved that the Noumenon, the Transcendent Consciousness underlying all phenomenon -- which appear in and after it -- is the natural and real form of everything, he should cultivate in his mind 'the *Vāsanā* of pure *Gnosis*' disregarding the phenomena.⁶³¹

Having summarized Vidyāraṇya's position on practice of discrimination and its relation to the destruction of latent mental tendencies, I think that it

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-2.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.103.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

is worth looking into how the *AG* and *JMV* might possibly be related to one another with respect to the question of practice of discrimination. What is interesting about this section of the *JMV*, is that some of the objections Vidyāraṇya poses for himself can easily be seen as coming from a text like the *AG*. I will pursue the discussion of one possible critical exchange that can be seen to obtain between the *AG* and the *JMV*.

As noted above, Vidyāraṇya sees the practice of discrimination as an indispensable means to the obliteration of latent mental tendencies. He goes to some length to insist upon the necessity of discrimination for all types of practitioners, be they adepts, or aspirants, or those in whom spiritual knowledge has dawned spontaneously. With respect to the necessity of the practice of discrimination for the aspirant in whom realization has dawned spontaneously, he states the following objection to his position:

"This Discrimination precedes the rise of *Gnosis* as knowledge of the *Brahman* is not possible without employing means, such as, discriminating between the Eternal and the Non-eternal. We are now dealing with the employment of means, such as the Obliteration of *Vāsanāṣ* so as to enable the Knower of the *Brahman* to enjoy the Bliss of *Jivanmuktī*. While so, the introduction of Discrimination at this stage will be tantamount to dancing at the wrong moment, i.e., thoroughly out of place." ⁶³²

What the objection amounts to is the claim that discrimination should not be a practice which follows self-realization, as it is clearly unnecessary if the self has already been realized. But wishing to insist upon the necessity of discrimination, apparently for even those cases in which realization has

⁶³² *JMV*, p. 93.

already come about spontaneously, that is, without the practice of discrimination, Vidyāraṇya replies to the objection thus:

No mistake has really been committed. The knowledge of *Brahman* comes to one, only after the mastery of the four means⁶³³.... In the case of Janaka, however, through the maturity of previous merit, *Gnosis* dawned upon him suddenly, as a result of his having heard the *Siddha-gītā* even like the fall of fruit from heaven. Thence Discrimination had to be resorted to, for acquiring peace of Mind. Therefore Discrimination has been introduced quite in its proper place.⁶³⁴

Thus, Vidyāraṇya's position is that discrimination is to be practised even if realization has already come about spontaneously. For Vidyāraṇya, without discrimination, the obliteration of latent mental tendencies cannot come about. Without the obliteration of the mental tendencies complete liberation cannot be achieved. For Vidyāraṇya, discrimination is therefore necessary for liberation.

However, Vidyāraṇya has now worked himself into the difficult position of maintaining that for certain realized ones some forms of spiritual practice are still necessary after realization. Hence, one of Vidyāraṇya's positions seems to be that realization, the obliteration of latent tendencies, and the dissolution of the mind are all necessary preconditions to liberation in this life. On the other hand, he seems to be willing to admit the possibility of a spontaneous realization, which not only precludes the practice of discrimination, but is, in itself, all that is necessary for liberation in this life.

⁶³³Discrimination, detachment, the six requisites, and the desire for liberation.

⁶³⁴*JMV*, p. 93.

With respect to this difficulty, the *AG* gives a possible reply to Vidyāraṇya's position. We read: "What remains to be done by one who is pure intelligence...?"⁶³⁵ The point being made here by the *AG* is that there is nothing that the realized self needs to *do*. The free soul is not *dependent* upon anything -- be it yoga, discrimination or even spiritual knowledge. Indeed, for the *AG* thinking in terms of 'this still needs to be done' is merely indicative of a lack of understanding. The sage of the *AG* simply abandons such notions: "When the mind becomes free from such duality of opposites as 'this is done' and 'this is left undone,' it attains indifference toward righteousness, wealth, desire, and liberation..."⁶³⁶

The point of the practice of discrimination for Vidyāraṇya is the rejection of objects causing the formation of impure latent mental tendencies. But for the sage of the *AG* disgust and aversion can never give freedom. It is precisely the *AG*'s point that the sage is free when he no longer discriminates good things from bad things. He takes things as a matter of course in life, no matter what kind of object or circumstance he happens to encounter: "For the man of wisdom there is neither longing for the dissolution of the universe nor aversion for its existence. Hence he is blessed as he lives contentedly with whatever kind of living is his lot."⁶³⁷ Hence, Aṣṭāvakra's response to Vidyāraṇya's insistence upon discrimination would read: "To the yogi who is [without a nature] and undefinable, what is patience, what is discrimination..., what is courage?"⁶³⁸

⁶³⁵ *AG* 18:69

⁶³⁶ *AG* 16:5

⁶³⁷ *AG* 17:7

⁶³⁸ *AG* 18:79

3.3.2 Concentrative Absorption and the Dissolution of the Mind

Vidyāraṇya begins the chapter on the dissolution of the mind⁶³⁹ by pointing out that if the mind is to be dissolved, it is necessary to first learn to control the mind. He argues that effort toward controlling the mind disappears only after the mind has been dissolved,⁶⁴⁰ and he supports his claim with a number of references, one of which is to Gauḍapāda:

In the case of *Yogins* in general, the condition of Fearlessness depends upon the proper control of the mind; Freedom from misery, the dawning of Wisdom and the Attainment of endless Peace, likewise depend on it.⁶⁴¹

Control, Vidyāraṇya tells us, is of two kinds: 'control by vehemence' and 'control by degrees.' Control by vehemence involves the attempt to control the mind and the senses by sheer force of will. Vidyāraṇya rejects this type of self-control, treating it as a practical impossibility. Instead, he opts for 'control by degrees,' a practice which consists of three means: spiritual knowledge,⁶⁴² the company of holy men,⁶⁴³ and the regulation of

⁶³⁹ *manonāśa*

⁶⁴⁰ *JMV*, p. 110.

⁶⁴¹ *JMV*, p. 111. The reference is to *Gauḍapādakārikā* 3:40. The use of this particular verse by Vidyāraṇya appears to be out of context. Verse 3:39 is a description of Gauḍapāda's *asparśayoga*, which he says ordinary yogins fear. Verse 3:42 reads: "The mind distracted by desires and enjoyments as also the mind enjoying the pleasure of oblivion [*laya*] ... should be brought under discipline by the pursuit of proper means. For the state of oblivion is as harmful as the desires." Nikhilananda, tr., p. 200. (This is precisely what I mean by the ambiguity of the term '*laya*.' In his commentary, Śaṅkara states that the practice of *laya* is no better than sleeping; an obvious reference to *laya* as 'sluggishness,' one of the 'obstacles' in yoga). Verse 3:45 of the *Gauḍapādakārikā* relates that the mind should not be allowed to enjoy the bliss of *samādhi*. Gauḍapāda then gives the means for freeing the mind from its attachment to absorption: *prajñā*. Hence, Gauḍapāda's reference to the 'yogins who seek to control the mind' is likely polemical.

⁶⁴² *jñāna*; *brahmavidyā*

⁶⁴³ *satsaṅga*

the vital breaths.⁶⁴⁴ Vidyāraṇya argues that since the modifications of the mind are due to both the flow of the vital breath and the fruition of latent tendencies, and since each gives rise to the other, the vital breath must be controlled along with the destruction of the mental tendencies.

In line with the position of classical yoga, Vidyāraṇya insists that for breath-control to be effective, the yogic postures must first be mastered.⁶⁴⁵ He then argues that since the senses are but forms of the vital breath, they too, must be controlled. Finally, as an introduction to the discussion that follows, he points out that with mastery of the control of the vital breaths, "the mind becomes fit for Contemplation, Absorption and Trance."⁶⁴⁶ However, control of the vital breath is not the only means whereby the mind is dissolved. Vidyāraṇya points out that concentrative absorption is "another means toward the same end."⁶⁴⁷ It soon becomes apparent that he intends to discuss the classical yoga of Patañjali.⁶⁴⁸

For Vidyāraṇya, absorption is of two types: with thought,⁶⁴⁹ in which each presently arising modification of the mind is identical to its predecessor; and without thought,⁶⁵⁰ in which all modifications are held in check. The latter state arises out of the former when distractions fall away and perfect one-pointedness arises.⁶⁵¹ Vidyāraṇya explains how the

⁶⁴⁴ *prāṇāyāma* *JMV*, p. 113. The three means are taken from the *Yogavāsīṣṭha*. See Venkatesananda, tr., pp. 254-255.

⁶⁴⁵ *JMV*, p. 115.

⁶⁴⁶ *JMV*, p. 123. *Yogasūtra*, 2:53

⁶⁴⁷ *JMV*, p. 124.

⁶⁴⁸ *JMV*, pp. 118-119.

⁶⁴⁹ *saṃprañāta*

⁶⁵⁰ *asaṃprañāta*

⁶⁵¹ *Yogasūtra* 3:11

absorption with thought is transformed into the absorption without thought: "These distractions diminish day by day, by special effort put forth in that behalf by the *Yogin* and 'Concentration'⁶⁵² rises in an increasing measure. Such transformation of the mind is called 'Trance.'⁶⁵³

With regard to the practice of meditation, Vidyāraṇya follows the traditional interpretation of Patañjali, namely that meditation occurs in stages: "One who is exclusively devoted to Yoga, attains the height of Yoga, stage by stage."⁶⁵⁴ "The conscious variety of Trance (*Samprajñāta-samādhi*) directed toward the Self, leads to Obliteration of *Vāsanā* and Absolute [cessation] (*Nirodha-samādhi*)."⁶⁵⁵ For Vidyāraṇya, the practice of absorption is a gradual process of controlling the mind and its tendency to become distracted: "These impressions of Distraction are daily and hourly wiped off, by effort, put forth by the *Yogin*..."⁶⁵⁶ Only through superior effort and persistent practice can the concentrative absorption without thought be brought about:

Complete suspension is suspension of the transformations of the Mind. For bringing about this, strong personal effort is essential... The result of such repeated effort is... *Asamprajñāta-samādhi*.⁶⁵⁷

By means of the absorption in which thought has ceased, self-realization occurs:

"By the Mind intercepted from all transformations by the Trance, known as interception... is realized the *Ātman*..."⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵² *ekāgratā*

⁶⁵³ *samādhi*, *JMV*, p. 125.

⁶⁵⁴ *JMV*, p. 141.

⁶⁵⁵ *JMV*, p. 131.

⁶⁵⁶ *JMV*, p. 132.

⁶⁵⁷ *JMV*, p. 134.

⁶⁵⁸ *nirodhasamādhi* *JMV*, pp. 144-5. The term does not appear in the *Yogasūtra*.

This having been achieved, the mind is then ready for initiation into the knowledge of brahman, a further stage in the process that reveals Vidyāraṇya as a Vedāntin:

"Though purified by the *Nirodha-samādhi*...a special kind of transformation of the Mind, known as *Brahma-vidyā* (*Gnosis*) has to be induced, through the influence of the *Mahāvākya*...⁶⁵⁹

How does Vidyāraṇya's theory on the practice of yoga jibe with the *AG*'s soteriology? Vidyāraṇya's position is that only through detachment and the toil and moil of yoga is release from mental modifications possible. He quotes Patañjali on this point: "Their suppression is secured by Application⁶⁶⁰ and Detachment."⁶⁶¹

With respect to detachment, Vidyāraṇya writes: "The attainment of *Samādhi* is nearest to those whose Detachment is most ardent."⁶⁶² Vidyāraṇya distinguishes three grades of seekers on the basis of the zealotness of the practitioner:

Yogins are of three classes, according to the degree of the ardor of detachment... The best among the best of *Yogins* such as Janaka... belong to the class of practitioners with extremely excessive ardor, for they can at a moment's thought, work themselves up into the condition of confirmed Ecstatic Trance.⁶⁶³

Vidyāraṇya's presentation of Janaka's 'ardor of detachment' is, however, not consonant with the *AG*. The response from the *AG* to the *JMV* might read: "[Fools] (merely) sustain the world... feverish for the attainment (of

⁶⁵⁹ *JMV*, p.146.

⁶⁶⁰ *abhyāsa*

⁶⁶¹ *vairāgya* *JMV*, p. 157. *Yogasūtra* 1:12

⁶⁶² *JMV*, p. 162. Cf. *Yogasūtra*, 1:21

⁶⁶³ *asamprajñātasamādhi* *JMV*, pp. 162-3.

liberation). The wise cut the very roots of this [grasping, which is] the source of all suffering."⁶⁶⁴

Vidyāraṇya then explains what he means by practice ('Application'): The frequent propulsion of the Mind to the firm resolve 'I shall, by all means, control the Mind from its inherent tendency of straying away from objects,' is what is meant by Application here...⁶⁶⁵

He therefore insists that the meditator become fixed in pure consciousness by means of effort:

Till the consciousness underlying phenomena is entirely obliterated and the consciousness of simple *Gnosis* becomes as unconsciously natural as the coming in and going out of the breath, effort to keep up the '*Vāsanā* of simple *Gnosis*' should not be discontinued.⁶⁶⁶

Hence, for Vidyāraṇya it is only through personal effort and the practices of absorption and discrimination that the aspirant can become fixed in pure consciousness. In response to the objection that the practice of absorption, too, must be given up, Vidyāraṇya argues that it is only the practice of meditation that must be given up to the practice of concentrative absorption.⁶⁶⁷ He explains:

The '*Vāsanā* of simple *Gnosis*' arising from the coordination of the agent⁶⁶⁸ and the instrument⁶⁶⁹... called Concentration (*Dhyāna*)... has to be given up (in favor of the higher process called *Samādhi*--Trance).⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁴ *AG*18:38

⁶⁶⁵ *JMV*, p. 158.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 106

⁶⁶⁸ *buddhi*

⁶⁶⁹ *manas*

⁶⁷⁰ *JMV*, p. 106.

Effortlessness is possible only after the supreme effort has been exerted and release been achieved:

When by constant practice, both the consciousness of co-ordination of agent and instrument as well as attention ceases, there arises what is called Ecstasy or Trance (*Samādhi*).... After getting confirmed in such Ecstasy with long continuous and arduous application, he should give up even the effort which has been put forth...⁶⁷¹

In support of his position on the necessity of effort, Vidyāraṇya refers to the 'fool' who thinks that yoga can be achieved without effort:

People often speak of the argument of the fool, who would say, "the *Vedas* extant are only four in number and it is a wonder why a *Māṇavaka* (pupil), who went to study them, has not yet returned, though it is already five days since he left." The *Yogin*, who thinks that *Yoga* can be accomplished in a few days or months, adopts the same logic. Hence *Yoga* should be practiced a long time, measured in years, nay in births.⁶⁷²

Aṣṭāvakra's response to Vidyāraṇya would sound something like this: "If you [detach] the [self] from the body and... rest in pure [consciousness], [instantly] you will become happy, serene and free from bondage."⁶⁷³ As a counter-charge, Aṣṭāvakra would reply with his own polemic against the 'fool' who thinks he can gain release through yoga:

The [fool] intensely practices fixation and control of the mind. The wise, [fixed] in the Self, do not find anything to be attained.

The [fool] does not achieve repose either through effort or inactivity. The wise one becomes [released] merely by ascertaining the truth of the Self.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁶⁷³ *AG*1:4

In this world men who are habituated to various practices (of yoga) do not know the Self...

The [fool] does not attain liberation through his effort of yogic practice. The blessed one abides emancipated without any effort through mere intuitive enlightenment.⁶⁷⁴

Just as he is insistent upon the necessity of the practice of discrimination, Vidyāraṇya holds to the necessity of the practice of absorption for adepts and seekers alike. Vidyāraṇya poses the objection to his position: "It may here be asked: ... 'to one who has realized the Truth,... Trance is no longer necessary for the attainment of *Jīvan-mukti*'"⁶⁷⁵ Vidyāraṇya's response to the objection is predictable: "This is not so.... There is the supreme necessity, even for those who have realized the Truth, to resort to the Unconscious variety of Trance, with a view to destroy mental suffering."⁶⁷⁶

The *AG*'s response to Vidyāraṇya's insistence upon the practice of absorption would be the same as his response to the practice of discrimination: "What remains to be done by one who is pure intelligence...?"⁶⁷⁷ Curiously, at the conclusion of the chapter on the destruction of latent mental tendencies, Vidyāraṇya, quotes a passage relating to Janaka's discovery of this very truth:

Having remained long in the condition of (ecstatic) Silence, Janaka, on regaining ordinary consciousness, be-thought to himself, with his mind all at peace, of the life and ways of men. "What is worth being taken up by me in this world? What can I accomplish with effort? What imaginings are possible for me, who am of...

⁶⁷⁴ *AG*18:33-18:36

⁶⁷⁵ *JMV*, p. 150.

⁶⁷⁶ *JMV*, pp. 150-1.

⁶⁷⁷ *AG*18:69

Consciousness, self-sustained and ever pure? I desire not what I have not; I care not to part from what I have; I stand in the Eternal Self in me; let that be mine which has been mine..."⁶⁷⁸

How might the *AG* interpret the above passage? It would respond that Janaka has discovered the truth that there is no *need* for him to re-enter and abide in concentrative absorption. Janaka states that the self is 'ever pure.' Likewise, the phrase 'which has been mine' means that since Janaka is the self and since the self is ever free, and not dependant upon the processes of yogic ascent, his freedom, too, is not dependent upon, *nor ever was dependent upon*, the practice of yogic absorption.

That having been said, the question arises: In what ways might the *JMV* and the *AG* be said to be similar? Like the *VS*, most of the similarities between the *JMV* and the *AG* obtain between the final chapter of the *JMV* and the *AG*. Vidyāraṇya writes:

The Enlightened Knower of the Truth has no concern whatever with action of any kind and is therefore not affected by any formal Injunctions and Prohibitions.⁶⁷⁹

For Vidyāraṇya, such statements are fine, as long as they do not refer to the practitioner. For the *AG* however, statements like the above are incorporated right into its prescriptive language.

What is of particular interest in the final chapter of the *JMV* is Vidyāraṇya's references to descriptions of the *Paramahaṃsa*:

As a child absorbed in play, feels no cold whatever, even on a winter morning, though all uncovered, so does the *Yogin* engrossed in the Supreme Self know no cold whatever.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁸ *JMV* pp. 108-9.

⁶⁷⁹ *JMV* p. 194.

⁶⁸⁰ *JMV*, p. 201.

Vidyāraṇya also makes a reference to the 'open mind' and 'non-committal' nature of the *Paramahansa*⁶⁸¹ He explains it thus: "The non-committal attitude refers to the absence of his being tied down to any conventions or forms of daily life."⁶⁸²

Suddenly, however, the comparison between the two texts breaks down:

If Gold is touched with eagerness, then the Mendicant, who touches it, is degraded to the condition of *Paulkasa* i.e., a veritable *Mleccha*⁶⁸³

Vidyāraṇya continues:

As looking at Gold and other similar acts, with eagerness, are the causes of sin, the Mendicant should avoid looking at gold or touching it...⁶⁸⁴

In the *AG* we read:

There shines the wise one who has no ego-sense and looks upon a clod of earth, a stone, or a piece of gold as of equal worth.⁶⁸⁵

Hence, the *JMV* and the *AG* differ even with respect to their descriptions of the sage. Vidyāraṇya seems to think that the enlightened sage must keep discriminating between good and evil, sin and purity. For the *AG* indifference (or 'neither rejection nor acceptance') toward good and evil is inherent in its description of the sage.

In conclusion, though the descriptions of the sage in the two texts are similar, the soteriology of the *JMV* depends upon the presence of effort,

⁶⁸¹ *JMV*, p. 213.

⁶⁸² *JMV*, p. 214.

⁶⁸³ *JMV*, p. 219.

⁶⁸⁴ *JMV*, p. 220.

⁶⁸⁵ *AG*18:88. Cf. *Bhagavadgītā*, 6:8; 14:24.

which is required by its style of meditation, and upon the free reign of the discriminative faculty. And this is precisely where it differs from the *AG*: for the *AG*, meditation, discrimination, and the effort and will-power required of both, are an aspect of the seeker's own self-imposed bondage. It is, therefore, primarily on the basis of their respective views on the nature of spiritual praxis that the *AG* differs from the *JMV*.

3.4.0 Conclusion

Though the descriptions of the liberated sage in the *AG*, *VS* and *JMV* are similar in many respects, the *AG* can only be understood as a critique of the soteriologies of the *VS* and the *JMV*. For the *AG* effortlessness, freedom from discrimination and freedom from the need for artificially induced absorption are all a part of its spiritual 'praxis' (if it may be called that). For both the *VS* and the *JMV*, the practices of concentrative absorption and discrimination are central to the path to release.

I find no problem with assigning the *AG* to the time period of the *JMV* and the *VS* (1350-1500 C.E.). In fact, I would suggest that the *AG* can best be understood as a critical reaction to the specific soteriologies of the *JMV* and *VS*. In particular, the *AG* appears to be grappling with many of the same problems as the *JMV*. Far from seeing a mutual agreement between the *AG* and the *JMV*, I see a heated, if not polemical debate occurring between the *JMV* and the *AG* over the issue of the practice of yoga.

4.0.0 Anarchic Spirituality and Religious Dissent

In this chapter, I will attempt to find a suitable genre of literature for the *AG* and begin the attempt to relate the *AG* to a particular tradition. I will first outline the teachings of a number of sages that I think typify a particular philosophical/soteriological 'genre', which I will call 'anarchic spirituality,' and then ask if the *AG* can be related to any of the texts examined in the chapter. The chapter will then conclude with a discussion of language of anarchic spirituality.

By 'anarchic' spirituality I mean spirituality which is not based upon methods, techniques, or principles of practice. Anarchic language in this context includes discourse concerning 'spontaneity,' 'naturalness,' 'no means,' and 'instantaneous release' -- discourse which has been shown to occur throughout the *AG*. The task will be to show that this type of discourse occurs in texts other than the *AG* and that the literature containing this type of language can therefore be called a 'genre.'

My argument in the latter section of this chapter will be that the language of anarchic spirituality can be understood in a number of ways: as a discourse concerned primarily with soteriological considerations, as a manifestation of the phenomena of religious dissent (i.e., the critique of the religious establishment and institutional authority), and as a rhetorical or polemical device aimed at rival traditions.

I will begin the chapter by featuring a number of sages, each typifying what I mean by the 'philosophical genre of anarchic spirituality,' and then

conclude with a discussion of how the rhetoric of anarchic spirituality relates to soteriology, polemics, and the phenomena of religious dissent.

4.1.0 The Dissident Sage in Taoism and Buddhism

In this section I will look at anarchic elements in the soteriological teachings of three sages in Taoism and Buddhism. As the *AG* is clearly not a Buddhist or Taoist text, the expositions in this section will be for the sake of clarifying what I mean by a 'genre of anarchic spirituality,' and toward the end of demonstrating how, in one way, this type of language can be related to the historical conditions of its appearance. I will begin each subsection by discussing those soteriological features of each sage's 'teaching' which can be considered anarchic, and then move to a discussion of how those features relate to the phenomenon of religious dissent.

4.1.1 Chuang Tzu

In the *Chuang Tzu*, a work attributed to the Chinese sage Chuang Tzu, we find the teaching of 'letting things be:'

When I talk about having no feelings, I mean that a man doesn't allow likes or dislikes to get in and do him harm. He just lets things be the way they are...⁶⁸⁶

He lets things be, argues 'Chuang Tzu,' because he understands that there are some things he can do nothing about. Hence, the sage takes all things as a matter of course:

Life and death are great affairs, and yet they are no change to him. Though heaven and earth flop over and fall down, it is no loss to

⁶⁸⁶Burton Watson, tr., *The Complete Works Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 75-76.

him.... He takes it as fate that things should change, and he holds fast to the source.⁶⁸⁷

The point is that there is no sense fretting about what one cannot change. Thus, the *Chuang Tzu* teaches contentment with respect to those things that are impossible to change: "To know what you can't do anything about, and to be content with it as you would with fate -- only a man of virtue can do that."⁶⁸⁸ The sage sees change as an aspect of the nature of things. Understanding that change is something he can do nothing about the sage is content to let nature be: "There are some things that man can do nothing about -- all are a matter of the nature of creatures."⁶⁸⁹ Chuang Tzu calls this the 'perfection of virtue:' "To understand what you can do nothing about and to be content with it as your fate -- this is the perfection of virtue..."⁶⁹⁰

The *Chuang Tzu* also teaches the equality of all things. The sage sees nobility in all members of society. He makes no distinction between beautiful and ugly, great and small, or good and evil. He ignores the hierarchical structuring of the world according to a principle of inherent value or virtue:

Whether you point to a little stalk or a great pillar, a leper or the beautiful Hsi-shih, things ribald and shady or things grotesque and strange, the Way makes them all into one..... But trying to make things into one without realizing that they are all the same -- this is called 'three in the morning'.... When the monkey trainer was handing out acorns he said, "you get three in the morning and four at night." This made all the monkeys furious. "Well then" he said,

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

"you get four in the morning and three at night." The monkeys were all delighted.⁶⁹¹

Just as the sage does not distinguish between virtue and sin, he does not discriminate between right and wrong courses of action:

The way I see it the rules of benevolence and righteousness and the paths of right and wrong are hopelessly snarled and jumbled. How could I know anything about such discriminations?"⁶⁹²

Hence, for Chuang Tzu, the sage does not rely upon a faculty of discrimination for theorizing about the nature of things or for judging appropriate courses of action:

There is left, there is right, there are theories, there are debates, there are divisions, there are discriminations, there are emulations, and there are contentions. These are called the Eight Virtues. As to what is beyond the Six Realms, the sage admits its existence but does not theorize.... the sage debates but does not discriminate.... The sage embraces things. Ordinary men discriminate and parade their discriminations before others.⁶⁹³

The sage makes no decisions as to how he lives his life. His actions are unplanned. In the *Chuang Tzu* we find Confucius instructing a student, "you have too many policies and plans."⁶⁹⁴ Chuang Tzu's sage is complacent, modest and unambitious. His activities are unintentional, meaning that they are not directed toward the fulfillment of some goal: "The True Man of ancient times did not rebel against want, did not grow proud in plenty and

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40 -41.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57. The use of Confucius in this context is, of course, ironic.

did not plan his affairs."⁶⁹⁵ Chuang Tzu teaches that one should ignore schemes directed toward self-improvement. The *Chuang Tzu* states:

Do not be a storehouse of schemes; do not be an undertaker of projects; do not be a proprietor of wisdom...wander where there is no trail.... The Perfect Man uses his mind like a mirror going after nothing, welcoming nothing...⁶⁹⁶

Thus, Chuang Tzu's sage lives his life spontaneously. His actions are non-volitional and without intent. Chuang Tzu teaches, "Just go along with things and let your mind move freely. Resign yourself to what cannot be avoided."⁶⁹⁷ Chuang Tzu calls this 'wandering aimlessly,'⁶⁹⁸ a term that signifies total freedom and spontaneity in action. He relates, "Let your mind wander in simplicity."⁶⁹⁹ Chuang Tzu relates the teaching of meandering to the notion of 'inaction,'⁷⁰⁰ which, from the context, is clearly not 'doing nothing,' but acting without intention. Chuang Tzu speaks of the sages: "Idly they roam beyond the dust and dirt; they wander free and easy in the service of inaction."⁷⁰¹

As the sage's actions are effortless and without purpose, the sage of the *Chuang Tzu* appears as if he were idiotic. The text reads, "Ordinary men strain and struggle; the sage is stupid and blockish."⁷⁰² The sage may also appear mad:

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

⁶⁹⁸ *yu*

⁶⁹⁹ Watson, tr., p. 94.

⁷⁰⁰ *wu wei*

⁷⁰¹ Watson, tr., p. 87.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

They pay no attention to proper behavior, disregard their personal appearance and, without so much as changing the expression on their face, sing in the very presence of a corpse.⁷⁰³

The sage's unconventional behavior and appearance is clearly meant as an expression of his utter spontaneity and freedom from constraints. It is only from the perspective of conventional behavior that he appears crazy.

It has been suggested by a number of scholars that the *Chuang Tzu* was written as a reaction to Mohist and Confucian ethics. As Confucianism became established, it came to stress the identity of virtue with conformity to a moral code of conduct based upon status and social interaction between social stations.⁷⁰⁴ The freedom of the sage came to be limited by the constraints set by Confucian morality. The *Chuang Tzu* can be seen as the attempt to free the sage from the limitations set upon him by the Confucian code of conduct. Other elements in the *Chuang Tzu* indicate that it was written in response and to the peculiar form of debate that arose out of the Confucian and Mohist disputes.⁷⁰⁵ Comments such as the ones made above with regard to discrimination are suggestive of this theory.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁷⁰⁴ See H.G. Creel, *Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tse-Tung* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

⁷⁰⁵ Graham argues that the *Chuang Tzu* is directed "in particular against rational choice between one course of action and another. The book goes counter to the whole trend towards increasing rationality which had began with Mo-Tzu late in the fifth century B.I.E. Confucius (551-479 B.I.E) had never needed to give reasons for his dicta.... With the emergence of Mohism.... debate intensified, and it became habitual to argue one's case, define one's terms, look beyond moral and political disputes to... the relation between morality and human nature....

In his time [370-300 B.I.E.] the crucial debate was still between Confucians and Mohists, and the issues on which it centered were moral. Confucians understood the word *yi* ('righteousness, duty') in terms of the customary 'appropriateness' ... of conduct to status, as ruler or subject, father or son, elder brother or younger brother... The Mohists exposed all traditional standards to the tests of whether or not in practice they benefitted the people." A.C. Graham, "Taoist Spontaneity and the Dichotomy of 'Is'

The emphasis in the *Chuang Tzu* is upon non-discrimination and spontaneous action. These teachings can be seen as responses to the Confucian and Mohist ethical ideals. Clearly, statements such as, "The sage... looks on slaves as exalted,"⁷⁰⁶ can undermine any ethical superstructure based upon status and a hierarchy of value. Likewise, the teaching of spontaneity can be seen as the repudiation of the efficacy of moral decision making, whether it be based upon an utilitarian ideal or upon norms established according to status. These teachings are also an attack upon conformity and the institutions governing modes of conduct in a society. The ideal of a mad or idiotic sage, too, pokes fun at established norms of behavior. On the whole, the *Chuang Tzu* can be read as a reaction to the Confucian ethical establishment, and to the intellectual institutions governing rational debate at the time of the writing of the *Chuang Tzu*. Hence, the *Chuang Tzu* can be seen as a teaching arising out of a milieu of spiritual dissent.

4.1.2 Vimalakīrti

In the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* we find a teaching which attempts to break down the distinction between the ordinary and the extraordinary. The *bodhisattva* of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* makes no distinction between the worldly and the supraworldly: "This is mundane' and 'this is

and 'Ought' " in *Experimental Essays on Chuang Tzu*, edited by V.H. Mair (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁰⁶Watson, tr., p. 47.

transcendental' is dualism."⁷⁰⁷ This teaching is extended to the practice of the *bodhisattva*

You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you can manifest all ordinary behavior without forsaking cessation. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you can manifest the nature of the ordinary person without abandoning your cultivated spiritual nature....⁷⁰⁸

For 'Vimalakīrti,' the *bodhisattva* is in the world, yet he is also naturally absorbed in the midst of his daily life: "He may follow the ways of sensuous distraction, yet, naturally concentrated, his contemplation is not dissipated."⁷⁰⁹ He is without the use of artificial techniques for controlling the mind: "Noble son, the seat of enlightenment is the set of positive thought because it is without artificiality."⁷¹⁰ In the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* the *bodhisattva* neither tries to control his mind nor becomes attached to the passions: "He should live neither in control of his mind nor in indulgence of his mind."⁷¹¹ As 'Vimalakīrti' teaches, "Distraction and attention are two."⁷¹² The *bodhisattva* is beyond the distinction between abiding in absorption and coming out of absorption: "Neither affected by passions, neither involved in concentration nor free from concentration, neither living in the world nor abiding in liberation."⁷¹³

⁷⁰⁷Robert A.F. Thurman, tr., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania, 1976), p. 74.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

For Vimalakīrti enlightenment is beyond intentional objects such as goals and means: "Enlightenment is free of the functioning of all intentional thoughts... Enlightenment is free from all discriminative constructions."⁷¹⁴ The *bodhisattva* therefore intends no goal to be achieved. Likewise, he has no means for the achievement of absorption. For Vimalakīrti the domain of the *bodhisattva* is "a domain essentially without undertaking."⁷¹⁵ It is a domain, "where one does not fall into extreme quietism."⁷¹⁶

Thus, the enlightened condition is not something that can be brought about. It is beyond causation. The same can be said of the *bodhisattva* "He is not produced from causes, nor does he depend on conditions."⁷¹⁷ For Vimalakīrti, the enlightened state is not the result of any procedure or method. Vimalakīrti teaches, "It is the seat of instantaneous, total understanding of all things..."⁷¹⁸ It cannot therefore properly be called a state at all. It does not arise, nor does it disappear. Its 'coming about' is therefore impossible. In the *Vimalakīrtinirdesasūtra*, the character known as the goddess relates: "Perfect enlightenment stands upon the impossible. Because it is impossible, no one attains the perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood."⁷¹⁹ No one attains the state of perfect enlightenment because enlightenment is never attained. The goddess states, "I have attained nothing... I have no realization."⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

For Vimalakīrti, liberation is never attained because it is already present. Thus, there is nothing that need be done. Vimalakīrti teaches, "There is nothing to be applied, and there is nothing to be removed."⁷²¹ 'Liberation' is merely the correlative of 'bondage.' "Liberation can be found where there is bondage, but where there is ultimately no bondage where is there need for liberation?"⁷²² The two are but an illusion: "What is bondage? And what is liberation?"⁷²³ Vimalakīrti therefore teaches that there is no need to seek out liberation: "He should... not encourage him to find solace in liberation."⁷²⁴ To seek liberation is to seek bondage, as it involves thinking that there are real 'things' called 'bondage' and 'liberation.' Vimalakīrti states, "He who is attached to anything, even liberation, is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in the taint of desire...."⁷²⁵ Liberation is already present in all beings: "All beings are utterly liberated."⁷²⁶ "The nature of all things is liberation."⁷²⁷ There is, therefore, no need to run from the world.

In the text, liberation is identified with the equality of all things: "The holy liberation is the equality of all things."⁷²⁸ Vimalakīrti teaches Mahākāśyapa, "Reverend Mahākāśyapa you should dwell on the fact of the equality of things..."⁷²⁹ In the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*, this is also an

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁷²² *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁷²³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁷²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

aspect of the way of the *bodhisattva* that is, seeing all things on par with one another: "Equal toward all things, he does not discriminate between them."⁷³⁰ Vimalakīrti's way is therefore a way of non-discrimination.

There are a number of features of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* that indicate the context in which the text was written. In the text, we read that the character Vimalakīrti is a lay person with "a son, a wife, and female attendants."⁷³¹ We also read that, "he even entered the brothels" to teach, and that he was "compatible with ordinary people."⁷³² We might infer from these statements and other data in the text that the text was written as a reaction against the monasticism of the period of its composition (150-200 A.C.E.).⁷³³

There are a number of other statements in the text that are suggestive of the hypothesis that the text can be read as a reaction to renunciation and asceticism. At one point in the text, Māra offers twelve thousand divine maidens to a monk, but the monk is required to refuse them, as he has taken vows. Vimalakīrti suggests that he receive them instead: "Evil Māra, since these heavenly maidens are not suitable for this religious devotee... give them to me."⁷³⁴ There are also a number of reversals of 'cosmic hierarchy' in the text. Vimalakīrti teaches that the way of the *bodhisattva* includes,

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷³² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷³³ Hajime Nakamura writes, "The *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*, in which the pious layman Vimalakīrti gives a sermon to monks and denounces the homeless ascetic life they lead, is perhaps the best expression of the lay Buddhist ideal." "Mahāyāna Buddhism," in *Buddhism and Asian History*, edited by J.M. Kitagawa and M.D. Cummings (New York: Macmillan, 1989), p. 221.

⁷³⁴ Thurman, tr., p. 37.

"Conceiving the world as a garden of liberation...considering immoral beings as saviors."⁷³⁵ Elsewhere in the text we read, "Only those guilty of the five deadly sins can conceive the spirit of enlightenment and can attain Buddhahood."⁷³⁶

The appearance of a goddess in the text also suggests that the text is intended to undermine the authority of the monastic establishment. The goddess teaches, "The very nature of desire, hatred and folly is liberation itself...."⁷³⁷ Mañjuśrī says to Vimalakīrti that the *bodhisattva* "may show himself engaged in dancing with harem girls, yet he cleaves to solitude.... He follows the ways of the dumb and incoherent, yet... he is adorned with varied eloquence."⁷³⁸ These sorts of teachings clearly fly in the face of the codes of conduct of the monastic institutions. The *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* can therefore be read a critique of the Buddhist monastic establishment.

4.1.3 Saraha

The teachings of 'Saraha' are found in the songs⁷³⁹ attributed to him. Many of the songs contain sharp criticisms of a number of spiritual practices that we can assume were current in his day. His criticisms include attacks upon the Śaivas:

They adopt a posture and fix their eyes
Whispering in ears and deceiving folk.⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁷³⁹ *caryāgītī; dohā*

⁷⁴⁰ "Saraha's Treasury of Songs" (*dohākośa*, 188), tr., D. Snellgrove, in Edward Conze, ed., *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1954), 5, p. 225.

He criticizes the Jains, "Enslaving themselves with their doctrine of release."⁷⁴¹ His comments include the monks of the Lesser Vehicle, who "wither away in their concentration on thought;"⁷⁴² and he is also not without words for those of the Great Vehicle, who "just meditate on Mandala-circles."⁷⁴³

His critique is generally directed at the yogic practices of his day. He writes of the yogins:

Some people have kindled the inner heat and raised it to the
fontanelle
Stroke the uvula with the tongue in a sort of coition and confuse
That which fetters and that which gives release,
In pride will call themselves yogis.⁷⁴⁴

Elsewhere, Saraha states:

Don't concentrate on yourself, restricting your breath.
Fie yogin, don't squint at the end of your nose.⁷⁴⁵

Saraha especially has in mind the followers of the *tantras*

Mantras and Tantras, meditation and concentration,
They are all a cause of self-deception.⁷⁴⁶

Hence, meditation is simply more self-deception for Saraha. He advocates the abandonment of meditation.

Will one gain release, abiding in meditation?⁷⁴⁷
Abandon such false attachments and renounce illusion!⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 188:6

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*, 188:10

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*, 188:11

⁷⁴⁴ "The Song on Human Action" in Herbert Guenther, tr., *The Royal Song of Saraha*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 24, p. 68.

⁷⁴⁵ Conze, ed., (*dohākośa*, 188:44), p. 230.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 188:23, p. 227.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 188:14

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 188:16

Apparently, for Saraha enlightenment does not depend upon the practice of meditation: "It is not a matter of meditation, or concentration or the reciting of mantras."⁷⁴⁹ Saraha gives a number of arguments for his position. He argues that the yogin either abides in an inert state or is only released as long as he is meditating:

But when the flow of his breath is quite motionless
 And the yogin is dead, what then?⁷⁵⁰
 So long as one is in the sphere of the senses,
 Desire pours forth of itself.⁷⁵¹

The yogin is therefore bound by his practice of yoga.

The same may be said of those who meditate upon emptiness. Those who abide in the absorption of emptiness are released only as long as they remain in such a state. They are like a bird on an ocean-going ship, who thinking he might escape the ship, flies up and away from the ship, only to become tired and have to return to the place where he started:

He who does not enjoy the senses purified
 And practices only the Void,
 Is like a bird that flies up from a ship
 And then wheels round and lands back there again.⁷⁵²

Saraha offers the following in place of meditation on emptiness:

Do not cling to the notion of voidness,
 But consider all things alike.⁷⁵³

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 188:62, p. 232.

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 188:66, p. 233.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 188:67, p. 233.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*, 188:70

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*, 188:75, p. 234.

Saraha teaches, "Do not discriminate but see the world as one."⁷⁵⁴ This brings the discussion to the central teaching of Saraha, the teaching of *sahaja* or 'spontaneous coemergence.'

Central to the teaching of Saraha is the notion of *sahaja*. A number of different yet related senses of this term can be drawn out from the primary meaning of the term. Metaphysically the term denotes the co-emergence of transcendence and immanence, absoluteness and relativity.⁷⁵⁵ Hence, the term denotes the coterminous reality.⁷⁵⁶ For Saraha, enlightenment is not 'far away' or on the 'other shore,' but is inherent in the everyday.

Though spontaneity is all encompassing and close,
To the deluded it remains far away.⁷⁵⁷

Hence, whoever seeks it, as if it were far away, never finds it:

Whoever deprived of the Innate seeks nirvana,
Can in no wise acquire absolute truth.⁷⁵⁸

Sahaja is therefore immediately and spontaneously accessible:

Though the fragrance of a flower cannot be touched,

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 188:26, p. 228.

⁷⁵⁵ Shashibhusan Das Gupta writes, "As the quintessence of all, it is the absolute reality, both immanent and transcendent." Das Gupta gets the 'immanent' but neglects the 'relative.' *Obscure Religious Cults* (Calcutta: Firma Mukhopadhyay, 1969), p.78.

Herbert Guenther writes, "

The literal translation of the Tibetan term *lhan-cig skyes-pa* (Sanskrit *sahaja*) would be 'coemergence'.... Essentially it refers to the spontaneity and totality of the experience in which the opposites such as transcendence and immanence, subject and object, the noumenal and phenomenal indivisibly blend. The translation of this term by 'i'Inne' (M. Shahidullah) and 'the Innate' (D.L. Snellgrove) is wrong.

The Royal Song of Saraha (Seattle: University of Washington, press, 1969), p. 9-10.

⁷⁵⁶ For the discussion of analogous notions in the Japanese context see Hajime Nakamura, "The Acceptance of Phenomenalism," in *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1971), pp. 351-406.

⁷⁵⁷ Guenther, tr., *The Royal Song of Saraha*, 3, p. 63.

⁷⁵⁸ Conze ed, (*dohākośa* 188:13), p. 226.

'Tis all pervasive and at once perceptible.⁷⁵⁹

Within the above context, Saraha's arguments concerning the practice of meditation become clearer. Saraha offers the following constructive dilemma regarding the practice of meditation:

If it is already manifest, what is the use of meditation?⁷⁶⁰

If it exists apart from meditation, how may one meditate upon it?⁷⁶¹

For Saraha, the state of enlightenment is the natural state. There is no sense trying to meditate, as if enlightenment were an end to be achieved. Such artificial constructs merely obstruct what is already present:

Do not defile in contemplation thought that is pure in its own nature,

But abide in the bliss of yourself and cease those torments.⁷⁶²

Saraha teaches, "The world of appearance... is continuous and unique meditation."⁷⁶³ Thus, there is no need to seek out absorption.

Hence, the way of *sahaja* is a natural way and is not constructed out of artificial techniques.⁷⁶⁴ As such, it is unhampered by unnecessary constraints and difficult yogic feats. Thus, the term *sahaja* also refers to the easiness of the way of natural yoga.⁷⁶⁵ Saraha's way follows the spontaneity

⁷⁵⁹Guenther, tr., *The Royal Song of Saraha*, 16, p. 66.

⁷⁶⁰Conze, ed., (*dohākośa*, 188:20), pp. 226-227.

⁷⁶¹*Ibid.*, 188:22, p. 227.

⁷⁶²*Ibid.*, 188:23

⁷⁶³Guenther, tr., *The Royal Song of Saraha*, 32, p. 69.

⁷⁶⁴Shashibhusan Das Gupta writes, "This [*sahaja*] process of yoga is the most natural process for a man; for in the nature of man hunger and sex are recognized to be the most primitive and fundamental propensities; and all religions would prescribe strict rules for their suppression; but this is a way, said by these Yogins, which is absolutely unnatural. The Sahajiyās... take human nature itself as the best help for realizing the truth. *Obscure Religious Cults* p. 51.

⁷⁶⁵Das Gupta continues, "What is natural is the easiest, and thus Sahaja, from its primary meaning of being natural acquires this secondary meaning of being easy, straight or plain." *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 52.

of the yogin, and as such, it is not dependent upon the practices of institutional yoga, *tantra* or meditation.

Saraha's writings can be seen as direct attacks upon the Buddhist establishment. This can be inferred from a number of references in the writings attributed to him. Like Vimalakīrti before him, we find Saraha making the same anti-ascetic pronouncements:

Eat, drink, indulge the senses...

By these things you'll gain the world beyond.⁷⁶⁶

Saraha was a lay, or at least, a non-monastic wanderer. His writings can be seen as a reaction to the monastic ideal:

Without meditating, without renouncing the world,

One may stay at home in the company of one's wife.

Can that be called perfect knowledge, Saraha says,

If one is not released while enjoying the pleasures of the senses?⁷⁶⁷

These wandering adepts, or *siddhas*, became the ideal for the later Sahajayāna movement.

Sahajayāna Buddhism developed out of the Vajrayāna as a reaction to the Tantric Buddhist establishment. By the time of Saraha (750-800 A.C.E.), the Vajrayāna had become amalgamated with the universities.⁷⁶⁸ The

⁷⁶⁶Conze, ed., (*dohākośa*, 188:24), p. 227.

⁷⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 188:19, p. 226.

⁷⁶⁸Luis Gomez writes:

The Sahajiyā was a movement that represented a clear challenge to the Buddhist establishment: the ideal was a homeless madman wandering about with his female consort.... The Vajrayāna [in contrast]... was incorporated into the ordered program of spiritual cultivation accepted in the monasteries, which corresponded to the desired social and political stability of the academic institutions and their sponsors. The iconoclastic saints of the Sahaja, on the other hand, sought spontaneity, and saw monastic life as an obstacle to true realization.... This particular Tantric tradition, therefore best embodied the iconoclastic tendencies found in all Tantra.

Sahajayāna was characterized by its disdain for bookish learning and its aversion to traditional religious practices. Its ideal was the wandering adept who roamed about freely with his consort practicing yoga as it suited him, or not practicing at all.⁷⁶⁹ Thus, Saraha's criticisms of the institutionalized yoga and *tantra* became the inspiration of the later Buddhist Sahajiyās, and hence constitute an important phase in the history of religious dissent in India.

4.2.0 Parallels to Aṣṭāvakra in the *Āstika* Traditions

In this section I will explicate the teachings of two 'sages' in the *āstika* tradition with the intent to show how the teaching of 'Aṣṭāvakra' might be related to the teachings of these other two sages. It will become apparent that the three, to some extent, share a body of discourse relating to the topic of the 'means to release.' The task, here, will be to see if the *AG* differs from the other two texts examined in this section.

4.2.1 Vāsiṣṭha

The teachings attributed to the sage Vāsiṣṭha can be found in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*.⁷⁷⁰ In this text we find Vāsiṣṭha dismantling the dualities

"Buddhism in India" in *Buddhism in Asian History*, ed. by J. Kitagawa and M.D. Cummings (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p.90.

⁷⁶⁹Gomez continues:

The Sahajayāna was dominated by long-haired, wandering *siddhas*, who openly challenged and ridiculed the Buddhist establishment. They openly referred to the object of their religious experience as 'the whore' both as a reference to the sexual symbolism of ritual Tantra and as a challenge to monastic conceptions of spiritual purity....

Ibid., p. 89.

⁷⁷⁰The most comprehensive study of this work to date is T. G. Mainkar, *The Vāsiṣṭha Rāmāyana* (New Dehi: Meharchand Lachmandas, 1977). See also Peter Thoni "The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* in Its Longer and Shorter Versions." *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 11 (1983): 107-116.

between the transcendent and the immanent, the absolute and the relative. For example, for Vāsiṣṭha the distinction between liberation and bondage is illusory. He states, "When bondage is nonexistent, surely liberation is false, too."⁷⁷¹ Since the world is no different from release, there is no need to run from it: "Oh I am disgusted with this world and I shall abandon it' -- such thoughts arise only in the ignorant."⁷⁷² Hence, Vāsiṣṭha advocates the teaching of seeing all things as equal: "One should look with equal vision upon that which is pleasant and beautiful through and through and that which is unendurably unpleasant."⁷⁷³

Vāsiṣṭha also makes no distinction between meditation and distraction: "Freed from the delusion of meditation and nonmeditation, let be what has to be. I do not desire meditation and non-meditation."⁷⁷⁴ Apparently, for Vāsiṣṭha meditation is not the answer to the problem of bondage:

Austerity, meditation and such other practices can therefore not cause [the world's] cessation or enlightenment. As long as the notion of creation lasts, even the contemplation (*samādhi*) in which there is no movement of thought (*nirvikalpa*) is not possible. Even if it were possible, the moment one returns from such contemplation, the creation with its sorrow arises in the mind.⁷⁷⁵

Likewise, we find Vāsiṣṭha being critical of the practice of yoga: "The mind should not rest in the head, inside the palate, between the eyebrows, at the tip of the nose..."⁷⁷⁶ For Vāsiṣṭha, the meditative state is not something that

⁷⁷¹Venkatesananda, tr., *The Concise Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* (Albany: State University of New York Press), p. 98.

⁷⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁷⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁷⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁷⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁷⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 233.

is 'entered' into -- 'Now I am going to meditate.' Absorption should be natural and continuous: "Self knowledge is spontaneous, natural and therefore unbroken."⁷⁷⁷

Since meditation is natural it is also effortless: "This can be easily achieved without any effort at all... by the cultivation of the proper attitude."⁷⁷⁸ For Vāsiṣṭha, one should not seek out what one does not already have. Release is always already present. It is, therefore, the easy, natural state which is in no need of effort: "One should not make the least effort to attain that which one does not possess."⁷⁷⁹ Thus, Vāsiṣṭha's teaching is that one should, "Live effortlessly without grabbing or giving up anything."⁷⁸⁰

Vāsiṣṭha associates this naturalness with living non-volitionally: "Engage yourself in the non-volitional act of creation. For what will you gain by abandoning your natural function?"⁷⁸¹ The idea is to mirror the spontaneity of the arising and dissolving of the universe. Just as the universe arises and dissolves without any known reason, so too, action should proceed non-volitionally and without reasons:

Desirelessness,... fearlessness... wisdom, nonattachment... those qualities are nonintentional and spontaneous.... Not even thinking about what has thus befallen you, live a non-volitional life.⁷⁸²

Vāsiṣṭha teaches that the yogin should let things come as they come and let them go as they leave: "Whatever comes let it come; whatever goes

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 177.

let it go."⁷⁸³ By this he means that action should be spontaneous and without expectations or intentions: "Let appropriate actions spontaneously proceed from you."⁷⁸⁴ "Do whatever has to be done spontaneously."⁷⁸⁵ Just as action is spontaneous, so too, is release spontaneous. Hence, for Vāsiṣṭha, liberation can be immediate: "In this world, O Rāma, liberation is at hand at all times everywhere. Therefore be thou liberated here and now."⁷⁸⁶

The parallels between the *AG* and the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* are clear. For example, in the *AG* we read:

[Recognizing that things come to be and leave regardless of anything he can do, one] becomes unaffected and free from pain. It is he who can easily find peace.⁷⁸⁷

This passage from the *AG* is similar to the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*'s teaching that it is the nature of things to spontaneously come to be and pass away. In both texts, the message behind the metaphor is that the yogin should model god, in his (or her) spontaneous generation of the world, and act spontaneously. This having been said, there is also much about the teaching of Vāsiṣṭha that is different than Aṣṭāvakra's.

In the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* there are a number of formulations that appear to give the work an ambiguous flavor. For example, though Vāsiṣṭha says that release *can* be immediate, for some, release only comes about by following the path set out by the master. He therefore distinguishes two paths:

The first: treading the path indicated by the master, the seeker reaches the goal of liberation. The second: self-knowledge literally

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

⁷⁸⁷ *AG* 11:1

drops into ones lap, as it were, and there is an instant enlightenment.⁷⁸⁸

There is also a section in the *Yogavāsīṣṭha* -- resembling Vidyāraṇya's description of the means to liberation -- on the cessation of the latent mental tendencies and the dissolution of the mind. The *Yogavāsīṣṭha* reads:

For until the mind is free from the movement of thought, cessation of conditioning is difficult, and vice versa. Yet again, until the conditioning ceases, the unconditional truth is not realized, and vice versa. Since the realization of truth, cessation of the mind and the ending of conditioning are interwoven, it is extremely difficult to deal with them individually and separately.

Hence, O Rāma, by every means in your power renounce the pursuit of pleasure and resort to all three simultaneously... This world appearance has been experienced as a truth for a long time and it needs persistent practice to overcome it.⁷⁸⁹

Rāma then outlines the means whereby the mind is dissolved:

It is not possible to kill the mind without the proper methods. Knowledge of the self, company of holy men, the abandonment of conditioning and the restraint of *prāṇa* are the means to overcome the mind.⁷⁹⁰

There are also a number of passages in the *Yogavāsīṣṭha* which to refer to the toil and moil of yoga. For example, there are a number of references to effort in the text: "He who desires salvation should divert the impure mind to pure endeavor by persistent effort."⁷⁹¹ "Whenever it strives, then and there it surely finds the fruition of its suffering."⁷⁹² There are also a

⁷⁸⁸Venkatesananda, tr., p. 164.

⁷⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 254.

⁷⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 255.

⁷⁹¹*Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷⁹²*Ibid.*, p. 93.

number of references to the practice of meditation in the text: "By the persistent practice of such meditation, even your body will become one of pure consciousness."⁷⁹³ "He attains the supreme being by constant meditation."⁷⁹⁴

The teaching of Aṣṭāvakra can not be said to be compatible with this latter teaching. For example, in the *AG* we read, "All are unhappy because of effort."⁷⁹⁵ Elsewhere we read, "The ignorant one does not achieve repose through effort or through inactivity."⁷⁹⁶ There are similar references to the practice of meditation in the *AG* : "Forsake in every way even contemplation."⁷⁹⁷ Elsewhere the *AG* states: "That you practice meditation - this, indeed, is your bondage."⁷⁹⁸

I would conclude on the basis of this latter comparison that though the two texts share some commonality with respect to the language pertaining to the teaching of spontaneity,⁷⁹⁹ the two texts are dissimilar in that the *Yogavāsīṣṭha* periodically insists upon effort and the practice of meditation. Thus, though there are anarchic elements in the *Yogavāsīṣṭha*, its insistence upon the practice of meditation and yoga indicate that a careful evaluation of 'anarchic' language, and its relation to the entire text in question, is necessary before comparisons can be drawn with the *AG*

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁷⁹⁵ *AG*, 16:3

⁷⁹⁶ *AG*, 18:33

⁷⁹⁷ *AG*, 15:20

⁷⁹⁸ *AG*, 1:15

⁷⁹⁹ *svabhāva*

4.2.2 Dattātreya

In the *Avadhūtagītā* a text attributed to the sage Dattātreya, we find a number of repudiations of the practices of meditation and yoga. With respect to the practice of yoga we read:

He attains to the supreme, eternal Self, in whom is no closing of nostril nor gazing nor posture, and in whom is neither knowledge nor ignorance nor any nerve current.⁸⁰⁰

The text continues on the subject:

He attains the supreme, eternal Self whether he has perfect self control or not, whether he has withdrawn his sense or not, whether he has gone beyond activity or is active.⁸⁰¹

The text's pronouncements upon the practice of meditation are similar. We read that, "There is no need of knowledge, reasoning,... instruction from a teacher, or attainment of *samādhi*"⁸⁰² 'Dattatreya' asks rhetorically, "Why does your mind meditate shamelessly?"⁸⁰³ The true state of the self is beyond meditation: "In thy mind there is neither the meditator, meditation, nor object of meditation. Thou hast no *samādhi*"⁸⁰⁴ There is, therefore, no need to meditate. Meditation is only indicative of delusion: "There is no knowledge or ignorance and no practice of concentration... Why doest thou, who art the identity in all, grieve in thy heart?"⁸⁰⁵

In the *Avadhūtagītā* we find a constructive dilemma similar to the one put forward by Saraha concerning the necessity of meditation. Dattātreya

⁸⁰⁰ Ashokananda, tr. *Avadhūta Gītā* (Mylapore: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1981), 2:35, p. 59.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 2:37, p. 61.

⁸⁰² *Ibid.*, 1:58, p. 31.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1:26, p. 14.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:41, p. 92.

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 5:5, p. 116.

argues, "If it is the nature of the not-Self, how can there be *samādhi*..? If it is of the nature of the Self, how can there be *samādhi*?"⁸⁰⁶ The meaning of the argument is identical to Saraha's: if the self were not already present, meditation would be impossible. Since it is already present, what is the point of meditating? Dattātreyā gives similar arguments with respect to the practice of discrimination: "If there is only one indivisible, all-comprehensive Absolute, how can there be consciousness of discrimination and lack of discrimination?"⁸⁰⁷

Dattātreyā is a representation of the sage who has 'shaken off' the world: the *avadhūta*, the most extreme type of renunciate.⁸⁰⁸ We find mention of the *avadhūta* in a number of other scriptures and secondary literature. For example, in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* there is the story of Bharata. In this story, Bharata first incarnates as a deer and then as a brahman -- not just any brahman, but an *avadhūta*. We discover that his brothers address him as a, "Madman, a stupid or a deaf fellow."⁸⁰⁹ The story relates that he "attained the knowledge of his Self which is not the product of any cause but is self-existent, of the nature of extremely pure bliss; and he never identified with his body in pleasure or pain caused by pairs of opposites..."⁸¹⁰

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:23 p. 12.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 6:21, p.147.

⁸⁰⁸ *avadhūta*. On Dattātreyā and the literature surrounding him see H.H. Jayachamaraja Wadeyar, *Dattātreyā* (London Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957).

⁸⁰⁹ Tagare, G.V., tr., *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Vol. 3. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), V, 9:9, p. 677.

⁸¹⁰ *Ibid.*

In the story, Bharata begins to manifest unusual behavior: "He wandered about barebodied like a bull... nor did he take a bath. Under a coating of the dirt... his spiritual glory remained unmanifested ..."⁸¹¹ In the course of his wanderings, Bharata is one day forced to assist in the carrying of a palanquin of a king named Rahūgaṇa. Due to his easy gait, Bharata is threatened by Rahūgaṇa with punishment. Bharata responds:

If I be a *mukta*-- beyond bondage of *samsāra* what purpose and to what extent, can be served by your treatment (punishment) or lessons to me who am established in the self, though appearing like a lunatic, intoxicated or dull witted person.⁸¹²

His royal pride abated somewhat by Bharata's responses, the king asks:

Who are you of the great Brahmanas who go about in disguise, as you wear the sacred thread? Who are you among *avadhūtā* (like Dattātreya and the others, if you be an *avadhūtā*)?⁸¹³

Bharata proceeds to give instruction to the king on the nature of bondage, the soul and release. Bharata concludes his speech: "He continues to wander so long as he does not understand that the mind, the conditioning environment of the Soul, is the field of *samsāra*..<"⁸¹⁴

In the chapter that follows the tale of Bharata, the characteristics of the *avadhūta* are given. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* relates that the *avadhūta*: may, though learned, show himself (i.e. behave externally like) a mad person or an ignorant child; though highly intelligent and wise he should appear to be dumb in the eyes of the public.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹¹ *Ibid.*, V, 9:10

⁸¹² *Ibid.*, V, 10:13, p. 684.

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*, V, 10:16

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*, V, 11:16, p. 690.

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.*, VII, 13:10, p. 975.

Other characteristics are also given in conversation between Prahlāda and Dattātreya. In the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* Dattātreya relates some of the characteristics of the *avadhūta*

Being free from all desires and with contented mind, I accept what is brought to me by providence. If not, I lie inactive like a big serpent for many days, depending on my power.⁸¹⁶

Sometimes I eat scant food; sometimes I enjoy a heavy meal irrespective of sweetness....⁸¹⁷

Remaining contented in mind, I enjoy what is ordained by fate...⁸¹⁸

Sometimes I sleep on the bare ground; sometimes on grass or on a heap of leaves or on a slab of stone or in ashes; sometimes I lie inside the mansions on a rich bed over a precious bedstead...⁸¹⁹

Sometime I walk stark naked like an evil spirit...⁸²⁰

I neither revile nor praise people who are of diverse nature.⁸²¹

In the *Avadhūtopaniṣad* we find Dattātreya giving similar characteristics of the *avadhūta*. There, the *avadhūta* is described as follows:

He who rests constantly in himself after crossing [the barrier] of castes and stages [of social position] and thus rises above *varṇa*-s and *āśrama*-s and is in union... is said to be an *avadhūta*⁸²²

His worldly existence consists in moving about freely, with or without clothes. For him there is nothing righteous or unrighteous; nothing holy or unholy....⁸²³

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*, VII, 13:36, p. 978.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*, VII, 13:37

⁸¹⁸ *Ibid.*, VII, 13:39

⁸¹⁹ *Ibid.*, VII, 13:40

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*, VII, 13:41

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*, VII, 13:42

⁸²² *Avadhūta Upaniṣad* in *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad-s* (Adyar: Theosophical Society, 1978), 2, pp. 1-2.

⁸²³ *Ibid.*, 7, p. 3.

The 'teachings' of the *avadhūtas* are also set forth in the *Avadhūtopaniṣad*. Their teaching with regard to meditation is as follows:

When the results of actions set in motion [*prārabdha-karman*] are exhausted, the habitual usage also ends. This... will not cease even after repeated meditation unless such actions are exhausted.⁸²⁴

If infrequency of worldly dealing is sought, let there be contemplation for you. Wherefore should I, to whom worldly dealings offer no hindrance, contemplate?⁸²⁵

Because I do not have distractions, I do not need concentration, distraction or concentration obeying of the mind that modifies.⁸²⁶

Among these 'teachings' we also find the following verse:

There is neither death nor birth; none is bound, none aspires. There is neither seeker after liberation nor any liberated; this indeed is the ultimate truth.⁸²⁷

The Dattātreya of the *Avadhūtagītā* gives a similar teaching: "There is no state of liberation, no state of bondage, no state of virtue, no state of vice.

There is no state of perfection and no state of destitution..."⁸²⁸

In the *Avadhūtagītā* we find the following descriptions of the *avadhūta*:

The *avadhūta* alone, pure in evenness of feeling, abides happy in an empty dwelling place. Having renounced all, he moves about naked. He perceives the Absolute, the all within himself.⁸²⁹

The enlightened one, nude or clad in patched garment made of rags gathered from roads, follows the path which is devoid of virtue and

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21, p. 5.

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.*, 22

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23, p. 6.

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*, 11, p. 4. The verse is identical to *Gauḍapāda-kārikā* 2:32. See below.

⁸²⁸ Ashokananda, tr., *Avadhūta Gītā*, 5:19, p. 125.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:73, p. 38.

vice and stays in an empty abode, absorbed in the pure, stainless, homogeneous Being.⁸³⁰

The enlightened one... wanders leisurely, filled with the spontaneous joy of his own mind.⁸³¹

To all things from the practice of religious laws and duties to liberation, we are completely indifferent.⁸³²

In the *Avadhūtagītā* the term '*avadhūta*' is pseudo-etymologically broken down into its component syllables and each syllable is related to a characteristic of the *avadhūta*:

The significance of the letter 'a' is that the *avadhūta* is free from the bondage of hopes, is pure in the beginning, middle, and end, and dwells ever in joy.⁸³³

The syllable 'va' is indicative of him by whom all desires have been renounced, whose speech is wholesome, and who dwells in the present.⁸³⁴

The syllable 'dhū' is a sign of him whose limbs are grey with dust, whose mind is purified, who is free from diseases, and who is released from the practices of concentration and meditation.⁸³⁵

The syllable 'ta' is significant of him by whom the thought of Truth has been made steady, who is free from ignorance and egoism.⁸³⁶

The same formulation occurs in the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati*, a Nāth text attributed to Gorakhnāth.⁸³⁷ Other terminology in the *Avadhūtagītā* reveals that the *Avadhūtagītā* is, in fact, a Nāth text.⁸³⁸ The term '*samarasā*' a

⁸³⁰ *śuddhanirañjanasamarasamagna Ibid.*, 7:1 p. 152.

⁸³¹ *sahajānanda Ibid.*, 7:9, p. 157

⁸³² *Ibid.*, 7:14, p. 160.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*, 8:6, p. 165.

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*, 8:7

⁸³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8:8, p. 166.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*, 8:9

⁸³⁷ Cf. *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* 8:6-8:9.

⁸³⁸ S. Radhakrishnan calls the *Avadhūtagītā*, "Advaita Vedanta philosophy." See the introduction to H.H. Jayachamaraja Wadeyar, *Dattātreya* (London: Routledge Kegan

technical term in the yogic terminology of the Nāths and Siddhas denoting the yogi's final absorption in the ultimate state, occurs throughout the *Avadhūtagītā*⁸³⁹ The term *sahaja*, another term in the vocabulary of the Naths and Siddhas, also appears throughout the text.⁸⁴⁰ These features make it extremely likely that the *Avadhūtagītā* is a Nāth text.

Such language is just as revealing with respect to the *AG*'s relationship to the *Avadhūtagītā*. One of the titles sometimes given to the *AG* is *Avadhūtānubhūti*⁸⁴¹ We might assume from this that the *AG* was at times associated with teachings related to the notion of the *avadhūta*. However, nowhere in the *AG* do the technical terms *avadhūta*, *samarasa*, or *sahaja* appear. We must assume, therefore, that '*Avadhūtānubhūti*' is a mere appellation, and that the *AG* is not associated with either the Nāths or the Siddhas, though its teachings may be said to bear a strong resemblance to the *Avadhūtagītā* and to the teachings of the Siddhas.⁸⁴²

Paul, 1957), p. vi. S. Mukashi-Punekar points out that a manuscript of the *Avadhūtagītā* in the Trivandrum Library includes a chapter containing a dialogue between Dattātreya and Gorakhnāth. In light of this, the *Avadhūtagītā* becomes Dattātreya's address to Gorakhnāth. See Mukashi-Punekar's introduction in Shree Purohit Swami, tr., *Avadhoota Gita* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1979), pp.4, 42; for the chapter in question see *Ibid.*, pp. 173-187.

⁸³⁹ *Avadhūtagītā*, 3:3-3:42; 7:1; 7:10; 7:11. Cf. *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati*, 5:59.

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:17; 2:30; 3:46; 7:4; 7:9.

⁸⁴¹ V. Raghavan, ed., *New Catalogus Catalogorum*, Vol. I (Madras: University of Madras, 1949), p. 345.

⁸⁴² Although the Nāths arose out of a milieu of dissent analogous to that of the Buddhist Sahajiyās, and although much of the language in the *Avadhūtagītā* is anarchic in that it denies principles of practice, for reasons that will become apparent in what follows, this particular use of anarchic language in the *Avadhūtagītā*, though arguably soteriological, can also be understood as polemical language.

4.3.0 Gauḍapāda and Nāgārjuna on Release

In the instances of anarchic spirituality outlined above, a number of common elements were presented, including the teaching of 'no means,' the teaching of instantaneous release, and the teaching of spontaneous action. In what follows I will show how these teachings can be related to the philosophical explication of the unconditionality of release. My intent will be as follows: if the teachings of 'no means' and 'instantaneous release' can be shown to follow directly from the logic of the inherent freedom of release, then such a philosophy which argues for the implicit freedom of all individuals can serve as a powerful legitimating device for the spiritual anarchist.

In a number of *āstika* texts, we find the teaching that the soul or self is inherently free. For example, in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* we read:

Of certainty, therefore, not any spirit⁸⁴³ is bound or liberated, nor does it transmigrate; It is Primal Nature, abiding in manifold forms, that is bound, is liberated, and migrates.⁸⁴⁴

The question arises: if the soul or self is already free then what is the point of seeking liberation? In the philosophy of Gauḍapāda, we find this very line of thought pursued.

Gauḍapāda's arguments hinge upon the premise that the transcendent self and the empirical self should be treated upon the same logical grounds. For Gauḍapāda, just as the transcendent self is unborn, "No *jīva* [empirical self] is ever born. There does not exist any cause which can produce it. This

⁸⁴³ *puruṣa*

⁸⁴⁴ *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, 62. S. Radhakrishnan and C. Moore, eds., *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 444.

is the highest truth that nothing is ever born."⁸⁴⁵ For Gauḍapāda, nothing is ever born as everything is the self, and the self is unborn. This leads to the conclusion that just as no being is ever born, no being is ever liberated or bound: "There is no dissolution, no birth, none in bondage, none aspiring for wisdom, no seeker of liberation and none liberated. This is the absolute truth."⁸⁴⁶ For Gauḍapāda, there is no liberation because liberation is not an event. If it were, then it would have a beginning and would therefore not be eternal. If it were not eternal then how could it be one of the inherent characteristics of the self, which is eternal? Gauḍapāda argues, "*Mokṣa* or liberation cannot have a beginning and be eternal."⁸⁴⁷

Gauḍapada's full argument, then, is that all things are the self, the self is inherently free, therefore all things are inherently free:

All *Dharmas* or *Jivas* are from the very beginning and by their very nature, all peace, unborn and completely free. They are

⁸⁴⁵Nikhilananda, tr. *The Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad with Gauḍapāda's Kārikā* (Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1974), 3:48, p. 207. Potter has written upon this topic under the rubric of what he calls 'leap philosophies.' He writes:

Leap philosophers are those who believe in *ajātivāda*, the theory that nothing ever is born, created, or caused -- "no causation." When we become free, nothing comes to be; therefore, none of the problems about puzzle progress philosophers arises for the leap philosopher.

Nevertheless, even if we are all in one sense free already, as the leap philosopher likes to say, there is another sense in which we are not all free -- the sense in which we are not fully appreciative of our freedom in the first sense...

With respect to this second sense, in which there *is* change from "not free" to "free," leap philosophers may be divided into "do-it-yourself" and "non-do-it-yourself" philosophers.

Though he mentions the teaching of *ajātivāda*, Potter does not discuss Gauḍapāda in *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*. The term for 'non-origination' in Nāgārjuna, whom Potter does discuss, is *anutpāda*, not *ajāta*. See Karl H. Potter, *Presuppositions of India's Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963), pp. 236-256.

⁸⁴⁶Nikhilananda, tr. *Gauḍapādakārikā*, 2:32, p.117. Cf. the *Avadhūtopaniṣad* above. The formulation is identical.

⁸⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 4:30, p. 243.

characterized by sameness and are non-separate from one another. Therefore the *Jīvas* are *Ātman* unborn, always established in 'sameness' and 'purity' itself.⁸⁴⁸

For Gauḍapāda, nothing else is required than the understanding of this:

All *Jīvas* are by their very nature illumined from the very beginning and they are immutable in their nature. He who having known this, rests without... seeking further knowledge, is alone capable of realizing the highest truth.⁸⁴⁹

Working from different premises, Nāgārjuna reaches conclusions with similar consequences.⁸⁵⁰ For Nāgārjuna, no being that is 'bound' can be 'unbound' just as no being that is 'unbound' can be 'bound.' Similarly, there is no *movement* from bondage to release. For Nāgārjuna, thinking in terms of 'bondage'⁸⁵¹ and release⁸⁵² is just as much a part of the soteriological problem as is the problem of desire and attachment. As long as one *thinks* in terms of 'release,' it remains an impossibility:

In truth, then, a bound entity cannot be released and it is so also with an unbound entity. If by chance a bound entity is in the

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:93, p. 300.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 4:92

⁸⁵⁰ Frits Staal writes:

While the yoga is concerned with the methods which lead to *samādhi*, the Upaniṣads begin to develop a notion of *mokṣa* which is beyond all methods. In the Advaita Vedānta this notion is expressed in terms of the contrast between *siddha* and *sādhya*... In Buddhism the unconditionality of *nirvāṇa* is present in the superstructure almost from the beginning; but it is especially expounded by Nāgārjuna. In his philosophy, *nirvāṇa* is never attained because it is already there, so there is no seeker of *nirvāṇa* and no process of liberation. Gauḍapāda (*Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* 2.32) described these notions in lines which use almost identical expressions...

Frits Staal, *Understanding Mysticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 179.

⁸⁵¹ *mokṣa*

⁸⁵² *bandhana*

process of being released, then bondage and release will be simultaneous phenomena.⁸⁵³

Those who delight in maintaining, "Without the grasping, I will realize *nirvāṇa*, *Nirvāṇa* is in me;" are the very ones with the greatest grasping.⁸⁵⁴

Where *nirvāṇa* is not subject establishment and *samsāra* not subject to disengagement, how will there be any conception⁸⁵⁵ of *nirvāṇa* and *samsāra*?⁸⁵⁶

Philosophies like those of Gauḍapāda and Nāgārjuna tend to undermine notions which conceive of release as a *process* or as the result of a number of *causes*. Hence, philosophies like those of Gauḍapāda and Nāgārjuna *can* (though they *need* not) be used as justifications for arguments intended to repudiate both the necessity of means (i.e., practices or techniques) and the necessity of traversing a gradual path to enlightenment or realization. What they can also do, however, is serve as powerful legitimating devices for *any* particular means of practice.⁸⁵⁷ Thus, with the introduction of such ways of

⁸⁵³Kenneth K. Inada, tr., *Nāgārjuna: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1970), 16:8, p.103.

⁸⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 16:9

⁸⁵⁵*vikalpyate*

⁸⁵⁶Inada., tr., *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 16:10, p. 103.

⁸⁵⁷Staal writes:

In Advaita Vedanta, *jñāna* is regarded as... having for its object something that is *siddha* "established." This term is contrasted with the term *sādhya*, which denoted something that is "to be established...." In elaborating on this contrast between *siddha* and *sādhya*, the Advaitins were undoubtedly thinking of their adversaries the philosophers of the *Mīmāṃsā*. For... the *Mīmāṃsā* is concerned with what is *sādhya* "to be established," not *siddha* "established."

Śaṅkara regards *dhyāna* "meditation" also as activity, which.... relates to what is *sādhya*.... In thus subordinating *dhyāna*, Śaṅkara probably had the Yoga in mind....

In Sanskrit there is another term derived from the same root as... *sādhya* namely, *sādhana*, literally "means of establishing," that is, "religious practice." In advocating knowledge which is confined to what is *siddha*, and rejecting or subordinating all those other notions which pertain to what is *sādhya*, the Advaitins in fact undermined the foundations of religious practice. But... they

thinking, not only is the philosophical justification of religious dissent possible through the invoking of such arguments, but an entire arena of religious polemic is opened up. In the next section I will discuss the various types of anarchic religious language and how the characteristic features of anarchic language relate to soteriology, dissent and polemics.

4.4.0 Conclusion: The Rhetoric of Anarchic Spirituality

There are a number of ways in which the language of anarchic spirituality can be understood. Likewise, a number of uses of anarchic religious language can be distinguished. There is considerable overlap between the ways in which such discourse can be used and understood, and so in what follows, I do not mean to imply that each of the instances described functions, or should be understood, in only one way. The task will be to unravel the various functions and perspectives upon these functions. For the sake of keeping the discussion as clear as possible, I will divide the genre of anarchic language into two subcategories: the soteriological and the rhetorical.⁸⁵⁸

adhered to the Vedic tradition, and in practice adopted a kind of compromise. They could do this because they accepted the distinction of two levels [of truth], which originated with Nāgārjuna. This distinction enabled Buddhists as well as Advaitins to justify in theory whatever practice they chose to adhere to.

See *Understanding Mysticism, op cit*, pp. 176-177.

⁸⁵⁸There is another distinction that could be made with respect to teachings of spontaneity and divine madness, and that is the distinction between the *bhakti* and non-*bhakti* literature. I will not pursue the *bhakti* literature, as that would take us somewhat far afield from the *AG* (though the *AG* shares terminology with the theistic systems of thought). On spontaneous release and divine madness in theistic and bhaktic literature see Shashibhusan Das Gupta, *Obscure Religious Cults* (Delhi: Mukhopadhyay, 1969); David Kinsley, "Through the Looking Glass: Divine Madness in the Hindu Religious Tradition," *History of Religions* 13 (1974): 270-305; Karl Potter,

4.4.1 The Soteriological Use of Anarchic Language

1. In the *Avadhūtopaniṣad* and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* there are descriptions of the *avadhūta* that can be understood as anarchic. In these texts the *avadhūta* is described as beyond social status, covered in dirt, wandering naked, and as existing beyond the moral categories of good and evil. In such descriptions, anarchic language is used to portray the sage who has utterly 'shaken off' or transcended the world. The implication is that the *avadhūta* is completely identified with the coterminous reality; hence, relative categories do not apply to him. Such descriptions are intended as representations of the ideal of the sage, who, though covered in the dirt of the world, walks beyond its dust and grime.

In these cases anarchic language functions as a soteriological *ideal*, that is, as an end toward which spiritual practice is directed. In such descriptions, there need not be injunctions telling the practitioner to actually emulate the spontaneity of the *avadhūta*, as the tradition making use of the ideal of the *avadhūta* may deem that the means to the ideal state involve the practices of yoga and meditation. Hence, in such cases the end toward which practice is directed is not necessarily identical with the means leading to it.

2. The second way in which the language of anarchic spirituality can function soteriologically arises when the ideal is made into an actual way life for the practitioner. Vāsiṣṭha's advice to Rāma, "Live effortlessly without grabbing or giving up any thing,"⁸⁵⁹ is an example of making the ideal of

Presuppositions of India's Philosophies (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963); Edward C. Dimock, jr., *The Place of the Hidden Moon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); and June McDaniel, *The Madness of the Saints: Ecstatic Religion in Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁸⁵⁹Venkatesananda, tr., *The Concise Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, p.163.

spontaneity an actual part of spiritual practice. In such a case, the description is still of an ideal, but the ideal is held to be identical with the practice leading to it. In these descriptions of spontaneity the implication is that the aspirant should live his life in the same way that the sage lives his life. Such language is therefore *prescriptive* in nature.

2.a.i. There are two ways in which anarchic language can function prescriptively. The first has two subspecies. The first subspecies intends for anarchic features of the path to be an aspect of the final phases of the spiritual path. In this case, 'spontaneity' and 'no means' refer only to the final stage of a long path involving the gradual transformation of the yogin; that is, for such disciplines, spontaneity in practice is possible only after a gradual and arduous practice.

Two examples of this particular use of anarchic language include the *anupāya* literature of the Pratyabhijñā school of Kashmiri Śaivism⁸⁶⁰ and the *atiyoga* literature of the rDzogpa Chenpo tradition of Tibetan Vajrayāna.⁸⁶¹ Concerning the rDzogpa Chenpo, Mipham Namgyal writes:

⁸⁶⁰See *Tantrāloka*, 2:1; 2:4-6; 2:9; 2:11. For a discussion of *anupāya* in the Pratyabhijñā literature see Mark Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), pp. 175-180.

⁸⁶¹For primary literature in translation on the topics of spontaneous practice and the teaching of 'no means' in the rDzog chen and its sister school, the Mahāmudrā, see respectively Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, tr., *Buddha Mind* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1989); and Lobsang P. Lhalungapa, tr., *Mahāmudrā* (Boston: Shambhala, 1986). For a suggestive discussion on rDzog chen, Ch'an and the Siddhas see G. Tucci, *Minor Buddhist Texts* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), pp. 412-417 (part two, pp. 102-107). On the topic of 'sudden enlightenment' in the Indian context see Luis Gomez, "The Direct and the Gradual Approaches of Zen Master Mahāyāna: Fragments of the Teachings of Mo-Ho-Yen," in *Studies in Ch'an and Hua Yen*, ed. by R. M. Gimello and P. N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983); and "Indian Materials on the Doctrine of Sudden Enlightenment," in *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, ed. by W. Lai and L. K. Lancaster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). For primary literature in translation on Ch'an subitism see Phillip Yampolsky, tr., *The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967). On subitism in the Chinese

This (*rDzogpa Chenpo*) is the only resultant *yāna* and it is the summit of all the *yānas*

Except for this one, other *yānas* are accompanied by accepting and rejecting, defending and negating,

And are created by mind.

They are the stairs (leading) to this *yāna*

All the different tenets, divisions of *yānas*

And the paths and stages --

By accomplishing the great confidence in this realization --

Will be perfected in the equalness state without efforts.⁸⁶²

In this case, it can be seen that effortlessness and spontaneous practice are intended as the culmination of a gradual path comprised of a series of yogas.

The *rDzogpa Chenpo* teaching is therefore an example of *institutional anupāya*.⁸⁶³

2.a.ii. The second subspecies has its descriptions of spontaneity apply here and now for any practitioner. In these cases of anarchic language, there are no prerequisites for the practice of spontaneity. This use of language represents anarchic spirituality in its 'purest' form. The language of the *AG* fits closest with this type of anarchic language, as it describes no meditative procedures as preliminaries to the life of spontaneity. Its teaching is therefore an example of *anarchic anupāya*

2.b. The other type of prescriptive anarchic language tells its practitioner to act *as if* he were acting spontaneously. An example of this type of language can be found in the teachings and practices of the Pāśupatas. The *Pāśupatasūtra* tells its practitioner that he should smear his

context see Peter Gregory, ed., *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987).

⁸⁶²Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, tr., *Buddha Mind* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1989), p. 91.

⁸⁶³Literally, 'no means.'

body with dirt, act like a lunatic, pretend to be drunk or asleep, speak nonsense and make sexual advances upon women. The goal is to actively seek public disdain and censure.⁸⁶⁴ Hence, the behavior prescribed by this type of anarchic language is largely *dissimulative* in nature.

4.4.2 The Rhetorical Use of Anarchic Language

1.a. The language of anarchic spirituality can also be understood as rhetorical discourse. There are two ways in which this function of anarchic language can be used. In the first, the discourse, once again, appears to be anarchic in that in its instantiations there are sweeping dismissals of a wide variety of spiritual practices. For example, in Saraha and the Nāth literature such as the *Avadhūtagītā* we find a number of criticisms of the techniques and methods of yoga. But these critiques are often not so much critiques of techniques *per se* as they are critiques of rival yogic paths and disciplines. For example, in Saraha we read, "Thought is pure when it is consigned to the forehead."⁸⁶⁵ Likewise, he says, "Here is the sacred Jumna and here is the River Ganges... here is the Sun and the Moon."⁸⁶⁶ These kinds of descriptions are clearly references to yogic states and practices.⁸⁶⁷ Likewise, in the

⁸⁶⁴Wendy Doniger O' Flaherty writes, "The bowdlerized nature of the *Pāśūpata Sūtra* is obvious: The devotee is instructed to "pretend" to be drunk, to make indecent gestures to women, etc., but not actually violate any caste strictures. By this means he obtains the unjust censure of passersby, and thereby his bad *karma* is transferred to them and their good *karma* to him." See "The Origins of Heresy in Hindu Mythology," *History of Religions* 10 (1974): 281. See also D. Kinsley, "'Through the Looking Glass': Divine Madness in the Hindu Religious Tradition," *History of Religions* 13 (1974): 294.

⁸⁶⁵Conze, ed., (*dohākośā*, 188:83), p. 235.

⁸⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 188:47, p. 230.

⁸⁶⁷On the yoga of Saraha, see Shashibhusan Das Gupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*

Caryāgīṭīkoṣa Saraha states, "why are all the meditations practiced?"⁸⁶⁸ This passage might also be read thus: "what can these (other) *samādhis* do?" In other words, Saraha's statements concerning yoga and meditation can also be read as a critiques of rival spiritual paths. Thus, we can conclude that Saraha's intent is not merely the dismissal of yogic practices and meditations *per se*, but the dismissal of yogic practices and meditations with the intention of introducing his *own* yogic practices.

Similarly, in the *Avadhūtagītā* we read: "One should successively take recourse to the objects of concentration, as mentioned by the yogis, in accordance with their subtlety, invisibility and attributelessness."⁸⁶⁹ In the same text we read: "When through constant practice one's concentration becomes objectless, then, being divested of merits and demerits, one attains the state of complete dissolution in the Absolute through the dissolution of the object of concentration, but not before then."⁸⁷⁰ What is the point of 'anarchic' language in a text that contains these kinds of formulations? I would suggest that the appearance of anarchic language in texts also containing these types of formulations should be understood as being largely *polemical* in nature. In these cases, anarchic critiques are used as polemical devices meant to 'clear the ground' before the introduction of a prescribed soteriological means.⁸⁷¹

⁸⁶⁸ *saala samāhia kāhi kariāi*. Nilratan Sen, ed., *Caryāgīṭīkoṣa* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1977), 1, p. 129.

⁸⁶⁹ Ashokananda, tr. *Avadhūta Gītā*, 2:15, p.46.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:16, pp. 47-48.

⁸⁷¹ The point of the polemic is not so much the total discrediting of rival sects as it is the individuation and glorification of the lineage making use of the polemic. Cf. *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati*, 6:20-6:21; 6:33. Cf. also *Ibid.*, 6:34-6:71.

1.b. The other type of rhetorical use of anarchic language is to a greater degree a manifestation of the phenomena of religious *dissent*; i.e., it is the articulation of a general dissatisfaction with and rebellion from religious authority and the social *status qua*. All of the characteristic features of anarchic spirituality (spontaneity, no means, instantaneous release) can be understood in this way, and I have described how they might be used so above. This does not mean that all instances of anarchic language are necessarily a function of dissent, or that this is the only way to understand anarchic language. There are admittedly profound philosophical and soteriological reasons behind the arguments of anarchic spirituality. However, the language of anarchic spirituality is also an ideal mode of expression for the rejection of established meditative practices and codes of conduct.

For example, the critique of 'means to release' can signify for the dissenter that the practices required of him by the religious establishment are all null and void. Likewise, the teaching of 'instantaneous release' signifies that a long arduous practice, as dictated by the institutional religious establishment, is not necessary. The teaching of 'spontaneity' can also be used as a counter-claim against the institutional code of conduct, or against the conventional norms of behavior established by the social *status qua*. Teachings such as 'no means,' spontaneity, and instantaneous release are therefore powerful devices of legitimation for the spiritual dissident.⁸⁷²

⁸⁷²Agehananda Bharati writes:

Meditational traditions which prescribe a gradual, well defined set of physical and cognitive activities, and which provide highly formulated guidelines for peripheral behavior -- food, dress, sexual demeanor -- and which reject attempts at sudden advances toward the zero-[mystical] state... seem to appeal to

As an example of how this relationship between soteriology and dissent might work, I will examine the phrase 'beyond accepting and rejecting,' a phrase that appears throughout 'anarchic' writings on spirituality. The phrase 'beyond rejecting and accepting' can be used in a number of different ways. In its usual usage, it is used to radically point beyond worldly existence. The enlightened sage transcends the world. He is beyond being either caught up in it or running from it. Thus the phrase can be used as an expression of an ideal -- the enlightened sage.

The expression is also powerful because it points beyond the range of 'normal' behavior. There is no doubt that the phrase has important connections with soteriological and philosophical considerations. But consider the ideological implications of this phrase. When this type of

the greatest number of people, since most people are conformists....Why are the most laborious, intrinsically unpleasant, pedantic, joyless methods the orthodox ones? Because "important things are hard to come by; real consummation is the result of real effort," etc..... The real reasons for the symbiosis of orthodoxy and orthopraxis lie deeply embedded in ideology and in power.... Gradual, strenuous, orthopractical training is the least likely to rock the boat. The process of gradual training toward mystical ends are so time-absorbing, so highly formalized, and so schedule-bound, that the disciples have neither the time nor the energy to get funny ideas. Danger to the religious establishment comes from heretics, from people who dispute the official claim that the laborious way is the only one, or even the best.

Agehananda Bharati, *The Light at the Centre* (Santa Barbara: Ross-Erikson, 1976), pp. 129-130.

Frits Staal argues that the distinction between 'easy' and 'difficult' paths is largely a moral distinction:

Institutional religions are not so much concerned with the religious or mystical experience of individuals, as with society, ethics, morality and the continuation of the *status quo*. One of the ways to make ethical actions palatable... is to show that they are meritorious. By extrapolation, they are claimed to contribute to the highest realization of the religious life, which is often regarded as a mystical vision. But the mere ingestion of a drug can hardly be considered meritorious, so how could it lead to such an exalted state? That would be unfair, to say the least. Hence the moralist's distinction between "easy" and "difficult" ways...

Understanding Mysticism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 165.

expression is invoked as an actual component of the spiritual praxis it can be used to call into question established norms of behavior instituted by organized religion and society in general. It thus serves as a powerful rhetorical expression of dissent. This can be shown by bringing it into relation with two other sets of terms: bondage and release, and meditation and discrimination.

Each path in the Indian tradition describes the conditions of *bondage* and the conditions of *release*. There is a small degree of variance as to what constitutes bondage and what constitutes release, but there is a larger degree of variance as to the means *out of* bondage and the means *to* release. Hence, each path is best defined in terms of its description of the means or method whereby the seeker is lead away from bondage and toward release.

A way is set out for the seeker in each respective path. He is told those things which will lead him toward release and those things which will lead him toward bondage. Thus, the path tells the seeker which things he must *accept* if he is to be successful and and those things he must *avoid* if he is not to fail. For only if he accepts those things that lead him to release will he be released and only if he rejects those those things he must avoid will he be lead out of bondage.

The seeker must also learn to orient himself toward those things that will give him release, and away from those things that will keep him bound. Hence, he must learn to *meditate* upon those things that will grant him peace and to *discriminate* and reject those things that cause him misery. The things he must meditate upon are a part of the *prescriptions* of the path while the things must discriminate and reject are a part of the *prohibitions*

of the path. Prescriptions tell him things he should *do* while the prohibitions tell him the things he should *not do*. Hence, to say 'I neither accept anything nor reject anything' is to pull oneself completely outside of the language-game of 'codes of conduct.' Obviously, then, the phrase 'beyond accepting and rejecting' can be a powerful expression of dissent from authority.⁸⁷³

Of the two rhetorical usages of anarchic language, the *AG* comes closest to the latter type in that its language is less polemical with respect to rival religious factions than a representation of a radical or complete dissent from the spiritual practices of the religious establishment. Its critique is a critique of yogic methods and meditative techniques in general and not merely a critique of the spiritual practices of rival traditions. The *AG* offers no concrete yogic practice or meditative discipline of its own to fill the void left

⁸⁷³For the use of this phrase cf.: the *Chuang Tzu*: "Why don't you just make him see... that acceptable and unacceptable are on a single string?" Burton Watson, tr. *The Collected Works of Chuang Tzu*, p. 72; the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*: "The Dharma is without acceptance or rejection." Thurman, tr., p. 50; Saraha: "How do you exit, by accepting and rejecting what?" Sen, tr. *Caryāgīṭikosa*, (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1977), 6, p. 131; Tilopa's "Song of Mahāmudrā": "Mahāmudrā is beyond all acceptance and rejection." Garma Chang, *Teachings of Tibetan Yoga* (Hyde Park: University Books, 1963), p. 29; the *dptoa gtsug p'ren ba*: "The path is beyond any notion of grasping an idea or rejecting another." G. Tucci, tr., *Minor Buddhist Texts* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 1986), p. 413; the *Bhagavadgītā*: "Be thou free... from acquisition and possession..." F. Edgerton, tr., *The Bhagavad Gītā* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 2:45, p.14; the *Gauḍapāḍakārikā*: "In the *Brahman* which is free from all acts of mind there is neither any idea of acceptance nor any idea of giving up (of anything). Nikhilananda, tr., 3:38, p. 195; the *Upadeśasāhasrī*: "As I am *Brahman*, I have nothing to reject or accept." Mayeda., tr., I, 17:67, p.166. Cf. also *Ibid.*, I, 17:82; I, 13:24; the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇī*: "In the ocean of Brahman filled with the nectar of Absolute Bliss, what is to be shunned and what accepted..? Madhavananda, tr., 484, p. 181; the *Anuttarāṣṭikā* of Abhinavagupta: "Neither reject anything, nor accept, abide in your essential Self which is Eternal presence." 2, in J. Singh, tr., *Siva Sūtras* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), p. xxxiv; the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*: "We neither accept nor reject." Venkatesananda, tr., p. 279. Cf. also *Ibid.*, p. 281; the *Avadhūtagītā*: "renounce the poison of renunciation and nonrenunciation." Ashokananda, tr., 3:46, p. 95.

by its critique. This feature of its polemic is connected to the fact that its discussion of 'no means' is radically anarchic and not merely the capstone for a series of gradual, institutionalized, meditative practices. In this way, the soteriological understanding of the *AG* is connected to the rhetorical understanding of the *AG*: its language is completely anarchic just as its language is completely the language of dissent.

5.0.0 Conclusion

In this final section, I will attempt to pull together the various types of language in the *AG*. I will begin by discussing certain linguistic and doctrinal features that the *AG* shares with the Advaita of Śaṅkara. I will then move to a discussion of the critical language in the *AG*. Finally, I will attempt to tie the conservative and radical features of the *AG*'s language together.

5.1.0 Vedāntic Language in the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā*

There can be no doubt that there is much in the *AG* that represents traditional ways of thinking about release and the means to release. The *AG* shares a large vocabulary with a number of diverse traditions. Many of its formulations of the ideal of the spiritual life closely resemble Buddhist formulations of the same ideals.⁸⁷⁴ This should not be a source of alarm, as it merely shows that these traditions shared a way of speaking about the nature of release and the means to it. This is not to say that their conceptions of release and the means to release were identical, only that there was a common mode of discourse among them.

In this respect, the *AG* makes particular use of the language of the *Upaniṣads* and Vedānta, especially Advaita Vedānta. For example, the first chapter of the *AG* bears a number of similarities with the *Upadeśasāhasrī* of Śaṅkara. The *AG* reads:

⁸⁷⁴For example, "There is freedom when the mind is unattached to any [viewpoint] (*drṣṭi*)" *AG* 8:3

You are neither earth nor water nor wind nor sky. For the sake of freedom know the Self as the embodiment of pure consciousness and the witness of all of these.⁸⁷⁵

You are neither *varṇa* such as the *Brāhmaṇa*, nor do you belong to an *āśrama* nor are you perceived by the senses. You are non-dual, formless, and witness of the universe. Thus contemplating, be happy.⁸⁷⁶

O all pervasive one, virtue and sin, happiness and sorrow, are attributes of the mind, not of yourself. You are neither the doer or the enjoyer. Surely you are ever free.⁸⁷⁷

If you differentiate [the self] from the body and... rest in pure intelligence, [at once] you will become happy, serene, and free from bondage.⁸⁷⁸

In the *Upadeśasāhasrī* Śaṅkara uses similar expressions:

I am neither an individual element nor all the elements; I am neither an individual sense organ nor all the sense organs.... The Knower is different from these.⁸⁷⁹

From the [apparent] mixing up of *Ātman* with intellect, mind, eye, light, object, and so on, actions arise; therefrom results the confused idea that *Ātman* acts.⁸⁸⁰

[The notion that] *Ātman* is a doer is false, since it is due to the belief that the body is *Ātman*. The belief, "I do not do anything," is true and arises from the right means of knowledge.⁸⁸¹

[The *Śrutī*] "Not thus! Not so!"... negates all things, including the agency which is superimposed upon the *Ātman*, Pure Consciousness...⁸⁸²

⁸⁷⁵ *AG*, 1:3

⁸⁷⁶ *AG*, 1:5

⁸⁷⁷ *AG*, 1:6

⁸⁷⁸ *AG*, 1:4

⁸⁷⁹ Mayeda, tr., *A Thousand Teachings*, I, 15:20, p. 144.

⁸⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 16:19, p. 151.

⁸⁸¹ *Ibid.*, I, 12:16, p. 130.

⁸⁸² *Ibid.*, I, 18:25, p. 174.

As [*Ātman*] cannot be negated. [It] is left unnegated [by the *Śrutī*]
 "Not thus not so!" (Bṛh. Up. II 3,6). One attains [It] in some such
 way as "I am not this. I am not this."⁸⁸³

Distinguishing one's own *Ātman* from the rest, one should know It
 to be pure and the highest state, the Seer abiding in all beings....⁸⁸⁴

It can be seen from these passages that the opening chapter of the *AG*
 bears a strong resemblance to the *Upadeśasāhasrī* of Śaṅkara. It was, no
 doubt, precisely this sort of language, and other Vedāntic phrases in the text,
 which facilitated the assimilation of the *AG* back into the Advaitic fold. But
 such language does not convey the primary teaching of the *AG*. As was
 noted in chapter three, the *AG* must essentially be seen as a critique of
 Advaita Vedānta, especially the Vedānta of Sadānanda and Vidyāraṇya.

5.2.0 Critique and Dissent

There are many elements of the *AG* which demonstrate that the *AG* in
 fact is a critique of Advaita Vedānta, and many have been pointed out so far
 in this essay. But by looking at the *AG* in terms of the order of its chapters,
 the critical elements can be related to the Advaitic elements in a manner
 that makes the appearance of both types of language in the text more easily
 understandable.

As noted above, chapter one has the characteristics of a typical Advaitic
 work. By chapter three, however, signs of dissent begin to manifest:

Having realized 'I am That' from which the universe streams forth
 like waves from the sea, why do you as a wretched creature run
 (after the universe)?⁸⁸⁵

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*, I, 2:1, p. 108.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 15:36, p. 145.

⁸⁸⁵ *AG* 3:3.

It is surprising that realizing the Self in all beings and all being in the Self, the man of wisdom continues being egoistic.⁸⁸⁶

Strange it is that having realized the transcendent non-duality and become fixed in the goal of liberation, a person yet comes under the sway of lust and is distraught by sexual habits.⁸⁸⁷

The wise are free from attachment to this world and heaven. They discriminate between the ephemeral and what is eternal, and they aspire after emancipation. Strange it is that even they would dread emancipation.⁸⁸⁸

The point being made in these verses is that the Advaitin's knowledge is incomplete and ineffective in that it is a knowledge abstracted from the world. The Advaitin is free only as long as he intuits the non-dual reality which is discriminated from the world. But back in the world he is no better off than he was prior to the intuition of transcendent knowledge.⁸⁸⁹ Ironically, it is his aspiration for escape and his attempt to discriminate an absolute reality from the world that are indicative of the Advaitin's self-imposed bondage. Hence, to aspire after liberation is, ironically, to dread emancipation as it only exacerbates the problem from which the seeker is attempting to escape.

As can be seen from the verses above, chapter three has a rather sarcastic edge to it. The reader begins to think that perhaps something is amiss in the Advaitic picture of release. By the middle of the work, the efficacy of discrimination and discriminative knowledge are beginning to be openly questioned:

⁸⁸⁶ *AG*, 3:5.

⁸⁸⁷ *AG*, 3:6.

⁸⁸⁸ *AG*, 1:8.

⁸⁸⁹ *jñāna*

As my desires melt away,... where can be the scripture, and where the [discriminative knowledge]?⁸⁹⁰

For the yogi whose nature is... indefinable,... what is discrimination and what is courage?⁸⁹¹

In the final chapter, the critique comes to full bloom in a taunting rhetorical questioning of the soteriological necessity of the Advaitic notions of knowledge:

To me, ever transcending the duality of opposites, what is scripture⁸⁹² and what is [discriminative] knowledge of the Self,⁸⁹³ what is mind dissociated from objects and what is contentment?⁸⁹⁴ What is knowledge⁸⁹⁵ and what is ignorance, what is ego and what is the world, what is mine, what is bondage and what is liberation...?⁸⁹⁶

To myself, who am ever devoid of natural attributes,... what is inaction and what is manifestation, what is the direct perception (of the Self)⁸⁹⁷ and what is the fruit thereof?⁸⁹⁸

Thus, in chapter one the focus is upon discriminating the self from that which is non-self, in the traditional Advaitic fashion. The seeds of dissent are sowed in chapter three, and by chapter twenty the discriminative approach to the self is dismissed as inadequate. Two questions arise: why do both types of language appear in the text, and is there a tactic behind the order of the chapters in the *AG*?

⁸⁹⁰ *vijñāna* *AG* 14:2

⁸⁹¹ *AG* 18:79

⁸⁹² *śāstra*

⁸⁹³ *ātmavijñāna*

⁸⁹⁴ *AG* 20:2.

⁸⁹⁵ *vidyā*

⁸⁹⁶ *AG* 20:3.

⁸⁹⁷ *aparokṣa*

⁸⁹⁸ *AG* 20:5.

5.3.0 Using the Useless: The *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* as Ironic *Upāya*

What remains to be accounted for, then, is the appearance of both traditional or conservative elements in the text and anarchic or radical elements. At first glance, the text may appear to be contradictory. But a flat, two-dimensional reading of the *AG* misses an important function of the text, one that can only be noticed when the text is appreciated as a piece of literature and not merely a collection of propositions to be analyzed. To see this feature of the *AG*, another function of anarchic language in the *AG* needs to be pointed out.

Another way in which the language of the *AG* can function is (ironically) as an actual means designed to elicit a specific response from its reader. Used evocatively in this way, the anarchic language of the *AG* functions as a kind of spiritual 'shock therapy.' To demonstrate this aspect of the *AG* I will feature the discussions surrounding the practice of meditation, as they are perhaps the most striking example of this aspect of anarchic language in the *AG*.

In chapter one we read the following advice to the aspirant: "Having abandoned the illusion of the reflected self and its internal and external fluctuations, meditate upon the Self as immutable, non-dual, pure consciousness."⁸⁹⁹ With this phrase, the reader is lead to believe that the text is perhaps another manual on the practice of meditation. Only two verses later, however, we read: "That you practice meditation -- this, indeed, is your bondage."⁹⁰⁰ The first reaction in the reader is one of

⁸⁹⁹ *AG* 1:13

⁹⁰⁰ *AG* 1:15

surprise and disbelief: "That can't be right!" But the *AG* has already accomplished its task -- it has elicited a response from the reader. These evocative statements are then followed-up with explanations intended to reinforce the initial response: "A man who meditates on the unthinkable reality resorts only to a form of his thought."⁹⁰¹

It is important to note that the success of such language is largely dependent upon the reader's acceptance of the original mode of discourse; here, the Advaitic and Yogic ways of thinking. The reader is first lead to believe that the way of discrimination and absorption is the way to conduct one's spiritual life. The reader is thereby left open to the attack that comes in the latter sections of the *AG*. In those latter sections, the text begins to undermine and ridicule those beliefs with provocative statements intended to shock the serious seeker. The effect is ironic: it is the seeker's own seeking that is his problem:

The intelligence of one who strives after liberation cannot rise beyond a supporting object.⁹⁰²

The ignorant (merely) sustain the world... feverish for the attainment (of liberation).⁹⁰³

The ignorant one does not attain Brahman, as he wants to become Brahman.⁹⁰⁴

The *AG* can therefore be seen as a kind of ironic *upāya*⁹⁰⁵. This perspective on the text also allows for a more complete account of the language of the text. The appearance of the original Yogic and Advaitic

⁹⁰¹ *AG* 12:7

⁹⁰² *AG* 18:44

⁹⁰³ *AG* 18:38

⁹⁰⁴ *AG* 18:37

⁹⁰⁵ 'means'

discourse in the early chapters of the text reinforces the success of the irony in the later chapters of the text where the Advaitic and Yogic ways of thinking about release are ridiculed and subjected to critical analysis.

This reading also sheds more light upon the the meaning of Aṣṭāvakra's eight useless limbs. In the *Chuang Tzu* we find the story Tzu-ch'i, who was one day wandering around the hill of Shang. In the midst of all the smaller trees on the hill, he notices a huge tree whose limbs are too gnarled and twisted for rafters or beams and whose trunk is too pitted and rotten to be useful for making coffins. He sniffs the odor of the tree and notes that it is strong enough to make him drunk for three days. Tzu-ch'i then says, "It turns out to be a completely unusable tree... and so it has been allowed to grow so big. Aha! -- it is this unusableness that the Holy Man makes use of!"⁹⁰⁶

Like the sages of the *Chuang Tzu*, Aṣṭāvakra, too, makes use of the useless. For Aṣṭāvakra, the soteriological teachings of Advaita and Yoga are ultimately useless. But it is precisely their uselessness that the *AG* makes use of in its ironic *upāya*. In this way, Aṣṭāvakra makes use of his eight, crooked, useless limbs.

⁹⁰⁶Burton Watson, tr., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, p. 65.

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