

X

VICTORY OVER MANĀNA MĪSRA

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya wrote his commentary on the Brahma-sūtra in Kāśī. Later Sage Vyāsa debated with him in the guise of an old Brahmin and at the end augmented the Ācārya's period of life from sixteen years to thirty-two and asked him to undertake a tour of victory. It was at Kāśī that Lord Viśveśvara came as a Caṇḍāla and the Ācārya composed the Maṇiṣāpañcakam. Even before that, as already mentioned, Padmapādācārya had received that name. All these four were important incidents that took place while the Ācārya resided in Kāśī.

The Ācārya started his *digvijaya* by proceeding in the easterly direction. It was at Prayāga that he met Kumārila Bhaṭṭa when the latter was immolating himself. The Ācārya converted him by making him convinced that the path of *karma* alone will not do. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa said to the Ācārya: "This truth must be made known to the entire world. In my present condition I cannot undertake this mission. If you go to Maṇḍana Mīśra and win him over to the path of *jñāna* the entire world will realise the truth." As requested by Kumārila Bhaṭṭa Śrī Ācārya went to the place where Maṇḍana Mīśra resided.

Maṇḍana Mīśra lived in a city called Māhiṣmatī.

Sarasavānī was his wife. Both of them were incarnations respectively of Brahmā and Sarasvatī. Maṇḍana Mīśra, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and Jaimini held the same view. This view is called *Purvā-mīmāṃsā* according to which the purport of the Veda is in its *karmakāṇḍa*. The three teachers mentioned above were the leaders of this view.

I shall briefly explain what Pūrva-mīmāṃsā teaches: Is there a God or not? Let us not be concerned with this question. If there is a God let him be. If there is no God it does not matter. We must perform the *karmas* mentioned in the Veda. That *karma* itself will yield its fruit. If we perform an action does not its fruit come to us? Where is the need for the intervention of a God? *Karma* itself will yield its fruit. For instance: we plough the field and as a result paddy grows. The Veda tells us what we do not know through ordinary means of knowledge. If we obey the commands of the Veda we shall enjoy the fruit. For doing what is to be done, there is no need for a God. It may be argued that a God is required for creating the world. But why should God create the world? The world always has been what it is now. Why should we believe that it was created all of a sudden at a particular time?

na kādācit anidṛṣam jagat

This world has always been there. It was never otherwise than what it is now. That being so, why creation? And why deluge? Living beings keep coming into existence. Where is the need for God for this purpose?

You do what is to be done, that will yield its fruit. If the engine is started, the motorcar runs. The Veda teaches us what is beyond the reach of the intellect. If *karma* is performed in accordance with the Veda we get its fruit automatically. Then there is sound which is beginningless and that is the Veda. Even as we have an intellect the Veda is there. Why should it have a beginning? When did time begin? Is not ether always there? Similarly the Veda too. The Veda is therefore the purpose of telling us what is beyond the intellect.

If an evil deed is done, evil will be reaped. If something good is done the result too is good. Deeds will always yield their appropriate results. We enjoy or suffer accordingly and revolve in *saṁsāra*. For this purpose there is no need for a God. We should not remain without doing our work. If we remain so, it is sin and we will go to hell as a consequence.

If we stop doing *karma* sin will result. There are three types of *karma*: *nitya* (obligatory), *naimittika* (occasioned) and *kāmya* (optional). *Nitya karmas* are those which are to be done every day. *Naimittika-karmas* are those which should be performed when the appropriate occasions arise. On the occasion of the eclipse one should take a bath and perform *tarpaṇa*.¹⁰ If some great person comes to our house as a guest he must be properly received and attended to. These are *naimittika-karmas*. *Nitya* and *naimittika-*

10) *Tarpana* is satiating gods and departed persons with oblations of water.

karmas should be necessarily performed by all. *Kāmya-karma* is to be undertaken for achieving some desire. For instance: If we desire rain we must perform *varuṇa-japa*. If the desire is for birth of a son the rite prescribed is *putrakāmeṣṭi*. *Āyusya-homa* is done for prolonging life. These are *kāmya-karmas*. One is not obliged to perform them. Such is the view of the *mīmāṃsā*. The followers of this school give reasons for their doctrines.

akaraṇe pratyavāyajanakam, karane'bhyudayam

There are two kinds of *karma*. One kind of *karma* is that which, if not done, will create obstacles. The other kind of *karma* is that which if done will yield welfare. *Pratyavāya* means obstacle. *Abhyudaya* signifies the fruit which causes happiness. *Abhyudaya* includes comfortable house, lands, sons, fame, knowledge etc. In Vedānta *niḥśreyasa* is said to be the final goal. It stands for the unexcellable bliss. *Abhyudaya* means yielding of only small or limited happiness.

Work may be measured. There is appropriate result for each kind of work. This is the path of *karma*. If one kind of work is done the person who does this derives happiness from it. Another kind of work is such that if it is not done obstacles will arise. If we say that *sandhyā-vandana* ought to be performed we are asked by some people 'Why should we perform it? We can give an answer to them easily in accordance with *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā*. If *sandhyā-vandana* is not performed there will be suffering. It stands to reason that if something is done we shall reap

its fruit. But is it reasonable to say that if something is not done there will be difficulty? The followers of *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā* assert that if *sandhyā-vandana* is not performed there will be a defect. They do not say that if we perform it we shall acquire welfare. It belongs to the category of actions which if not done will result in defects and difficulties. The other kind of *karma* includes *arcana* in temple, ceremonial bathing of images of the gods, feeding of the Brahmins, etc. One acquires excellence by performing such acts. They belong to the category of action which if performed lead to welfare.

Is it right to say that there are actions which if not done will result in *pratyavāya*? Are there examples of such action in the world? There are. We give some rice to a beggar. If that is not enough we give him a quarter rupee. If some society appeals for donations to us we give a hundred or two-hundred rupees. Helping others is a merit. It is our duty. We do this expecting to achieve merit. Sometimes we are not inclined to help. At that time we think that we do not require merit. We say, it is not possible to help now. There is no defect accruing from such conduct.

We take Rs. five-hundred as loan from someone. If we tell him, 'I do not want to gain merit by returning you the money' will he keep quiet? He will say 'I have not come here to give you merit. I have only come to get my loan back.' This belongs to the kind of action which if not done will lead to difficulty. Similar is the case of *sadhyā-vandana*. In Tamil *sandhyā-vandana* is called *kālaik-*

kaḍan. and *mālaik-kaḍan*. These words are beautiful. They mean respectively duty to be done in the morning and in the evening.

If *nitya-karmas* are performed one will gain welfare. Actions that are performed for acquiring welfare are *kāmya-karmas*. *Nitya-karma* can be compared to a debt. The example of indebtedness we have given. But that is not enough. Who incurred the debt and where? Some people may ask. We shall consider this question now. In the *Taittirīya-saṁhitā* of the Veda (6,3) it is stated that a Brahmin is born with three debts to discharge. The three debts are *ṛṣi-ṛṇa*, *deva-ṛṇa* and *pitṛ-ṛṇa*. We do not know when these debts were incurred. The Veda tells us what we do not know. We may try to understand it with the help of reasoning. Those who have faith in the Veda will think of favourable reasons. In the case of those who do not have faith, the reasons will become unfavourable.

There are two brothers. One of them is a magistrate, the other is a *vaidika*. The former has the duty of attending the court. If he were to abstain from going to court saying 'My brother does not go to the court, why should I alone go?' his superior will say 'It was you that applied for this post. We accepted it and gave you this office. You agreed to serve as a magistrate and therefore you have to come.' Similarly we have applied for gaining a superior state. We must perform *karmas* in accordance with it. That God has made this order is the view of the Vedāntins. But the

Mīmāṃsakas say that *karma* itself automatically will yield its fruit.

Our birth depends on previous *karma*. We must perform the duties assigned to us. If we do not perform our duty we shall have to face difficulty. In the world codes of good conduct must be followed. Each should perform the acts which belong to his station. The oilmonger should produce oil and the leather-worker should produce footwear. The Brahmin should not eat indiscriminately, but must keep his body, mind and soul pure and meditate on the supreme Self. He must make others also meditate. That is why he has been given some land. In the olden days each professional had his appropriate land-gift. If he ceases from his profession there will be confusion in the world. His land would be taken away from him and would be given to another. In these days tax will be levied on such land. Therefore by failing to do one's duty one will acquire a sin and also will lose the facilities due to him in the world. Through performance of *nitya-karma* there will occur no sin and also there will be welfare. Thus it yields a double result. It results in *pratyavāya* when not done and *abhyudaya* when done. We Vedāntis too accept this position. The *nitya-karmas* must be done always. We must not fail to perform *śrauta*¹¹ and *smārta-karmas*.

The Veda says "As long as you live perform the *Agni-hotra* (fire sacrifice)." This ought to be done. The *mīmāṃsā*

11) *Śrauta* = *karmas* (rituals) enjoined in the *Śruti*, i.e. the Veda

view is that it is enough if such *karmas* are done. Those who advocate this view hate *sannyāsa-āśrama*. In the *sannyāsa-āśrama* there are no *karmas*. Relinquishing *karma* is a great defect according to the *Pūrvamīmāṃsaka*. Voluntarily giving up *karmas* and taking *sannyāsa*, according to him, is like becoming a Christian. The *Īśavāsyā-upaniṣad* says that one must desire to live for a hundred years doing *karma*. The *Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa* declares that if one extinguishes the *Agni-hotra* fire, one would incur the sin of killing a hero. Performing evil *karma* is sin. Omitting to perform *nitya-karma* is also sin. The *sannyāsī* is a transgressor. Therefore if one happens even to see him one must perform the appropriate expiatory ceremony. This is the view of the *Mīmāṃsakas*. Sin will accrue to us if we see a sinner, talk with him, touch him or eat with him. Therefore one should not see a *sannyāsin*. This was the view of Maṇḍana Miśra.

Sannyāsa, Brahman, Mokṣa, Jñāna—are not these stated in the Veda? That being so why do you reject them? If this be asked, the *Mīmāṃsakas* have a ready answer. We shall see what their answer is. It is true that the *Upaniṣads* speak about *Jñāna, Brahman* etc., but what is the Veda? The Veda is *Śabda* i.e. word. What is its purpose? *Śabda-pramāṇa* makes known what is not otherwise known. *Śabda-pramāṇa* reveals what cannot be seen with the eyes and what cannot be understood by surmise. Its purpose is not to tell us what is of no use. All words have two types of use. They say (1) Do this and (2) Do not do this.

*pravṛttirvā nivṛttirvā nityena kṛtakena vā
pumsām yenopadiśyeta tacchāśtram abhīdhiyate*

This is the view of the Mīmāṃsakas. Words that speak about an existent entity alone are of no use. They are vain and useless words. If a person says: "A crow is flying" or "crows are black" what is the use of such statement? If we say "Tomorrow night there will be a discourse here" it has a meaning. The meaning is "all are welcome to attend." The use lies in activity. If it is said "there is a discourse in Kumbhakonam tomorrow" it is a useless statement. Who is prepared to go there from here? There should be no word without some use. The use should be either activity or withdrawal from activity. All other words are vain and useless. The Veda is in two parts. The first part consists of injunctions and prohibitions. The second part consists of stories. This part has no independent purport. It must be construed along with some injunction. In an advertisement about a *lehya* (tonic) for body-building, there is a picture of a sturdy man fighting a lion. What is the purpose of this picture? The meaning is that you should buy the tonic spending your money, falsely believing in the efficacy of the tonic. The stories that are related in the Veda are useful only in association with an injunction. These stories are called *artha-vāda* (eulogistic and condemnatory passages). The manufacturer of some medicine publishes the certificates he has obtained for this medicine. Why does he print them in his advertisement? The reason is that he wants his medicine to sell. In the *artha-vādas*

there is a mixture of truth and falsity. The falsity is called *guṇa-vāda*. There is also true *artha-vāda*. There is one type which is known as *anu-vāda* which says what we already know. That fire burns is known. Saying it is *anu-vāda*. In a particular medicine there are some components. Detailing them is *bhūtārtha-vāda*.

Bhūtārtha-vāda has the purpose of being useful to an injunction by relating a false story. "Do not drink toddy" is an injunction. "The one who drinks is destroyed immediately" is *artha-vāda*. The meaning is that one should not drink toddy. If it is said 'If toddy is drunk there will be giddiness' this is *anu-vāda*. All stories thus should be related to something which is to be done (*kārya*).

In the Veda there is a section which describes a particular sacrifice. There it is said "Give gold as a gift, do not give silver."

In the Taittirīya-saṁhitā it is stated that silver should not be offered as a gift. In this context a long story is related and at the end the statement is made "Do not give silver". The purpose of this story is to show what should not be done. This *artha-vāda* has purport only in stating an injunction. The words that constitute it have no purport in themselves. It is in this manner that the Mīmāṃsakas give their reply to the objection that was raised above.

It is true that the Upaniṣads speak about the nature of *Brahman*. They do not enjoin something as what is to be done. But when will the Veda become *pramāṇa*? Only

when it speaks about what is to be done (*kārya*). Therefore the Upaniṣads are *artha-vāda*. One part of the Veda says about what already exists, but what is it that we should know? Is it existent things or is it the deeds that we should do? We should perform *yāga*, *yajña* (sacrifices) etc. *Śabda* is for this purpose. We do not need *śabda* for knowing what already exists. What exists can be known somehow. Therefore that part of the Veda which speaks about existent objects is *artha-vāda*. *Śabda* should tell us what we do not know. Therefore the Upaniṣads are not *pramāṇa*. What then are they for? Their purpose is to praise the sacrificer. They eulogize the *jīva* who wants to perform ritual. The purpose is to enthuse him so that he will do his *karma* properly and well. Refraining from performing *karma* is wrong. To become a *sannyāsin* is also wrong.

Holding such views Maṇḍana Miśra lived in the city of Māhiṣmati. "One must work and enjoy the wage that one earns from it. It is work that must give its wage to the worker". This was Maṇḍana's view. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya went to him. He thought about the Mīmāṃsakas thus: "They cannot gain the eternal bliss. They long only for transitory happiness. They believe in repeated births. This is not good. They must be made to realise that their beliefs are wrong. Therefore I should engage myself in a debate with their leader Maṇḍana Miśra." Miśra as already mentioned was Sarasvatī's husband. He preached against the Buddhists and strongly established the Mīmāṃsa view.

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya went to Māhiṣmati and was in search of the place where Maṇḍana Miśra lived. He saw women coming back from the river taking water in their vessels. He asked them "Where is Maṇḍana Miśra's house?" They were scholarly people. They replied in the form of a verse while Śrī Śaṅkara framed this question in simple prose. This is the reply that the women gave.

svataḥ pramāṇam parataḥ pramāṇam kīraṅganā
yatra ca saṁgirante
dvārasthanīdāntarasarīrūddhā jānīḥ
tanmaṇḍanapāṇḍitaṅkaḥ
 [Mādhavaśaṅkara-vijaya, LIX, 6]

This is the meaning of this verse: "That house is Maṇḍana Miśra's in whose porch parrots would be saying "*svataḥ pramāṇam parataḥ pramāṇam*". Even the parrots in Maṇḍana Miśra's house would discuss *śāstra*. Even the women of that city had the ability to compose verses.

What is *svataḥ pramāṇam* and what is *parataḥ pramāṇam*? Gautama wrote the *Nyāya-sūtra* and Kaṇāda the *Vaiśeṣika-sūtra*. Both these works constitute *tarka* (logic) *śāstras*. Following the teachings of this logical school one Gaṅgeśa Miśra Upādhyāya wrote a work called *Tattva-cintāmaṇi*. He has stated therein sixty-four *vādās*.

At first he was an unintelligent person. He lived in Bengal. He belonged to a *kulīna Brahmin* family. *Kulīna* means one born in a good family. To one born in a good

family ordinary and low-level Brahmin girls would be given in marriage. One man for instance would marry more than fifty girls. But Gaṅgeśa Miśra married only one girl and he lived in his father-in-law's house. Brahmins in Bengal would eat fish. In that country for more than six months in the year there would be flood. There would be no land to grow vegetables. And so during those months they would eat fish. In the eastern part of Bengal people call the fish water-flower.

In the house of Gaṅgeśa's father-in-law it was a habit to cook fish. Gaṅgeśa used to be called Gaṅgā for short. Thinking that he was unintelligent they would serve on his leaf-plate the bones of fish and on other plates the flesh. And then all those who were there would make fun of him. This he could not bear. One day without informing anybody he went to Kāśī. There he studied for ten years. The people at home thought that the foolish Gaṅgā had gone somewhere and they did not take any trouble to trace him. After studying for ten years he returned home. The family thought that he had come back after roaming about for such a long time. When he sat for eating, bones were served on his leaf-plate as usual. Then he composed a verse, *nāham gaṅgā kiṁ tu gaṅgeśamiśraḥ* meaning "I am not the river Gaṅgā; I am Gaṅgeśa Miśra. If I were to be the Gaṅgā it would be all right to throw bones into it."

This Gaṅgeśa Miśra wrote the *Tattva-cintāmaṇi*. Many scholars have written commentaries on it. One

Ragunātha Śiromaṇi wrote a commentary called *Dīdhiti*. It was only after this scholar that the title *Śiromaṇi* came into use. One Gadādhara wrote a commentary on this. In that work, for ten *vādas* he wrote an explanation which is in the form of a long treatise. Although it is long, not one sentence is superfluous. If one reads even five *vādas* in this work, Gadādhara, one would become very intelligent. If one reads ten *vādas* one's intelligence would be increased enormously. After that there is *prāmānya-vāda*. If this is read by one he would become the most intelligent of all. There is a logical work called *Cintāmaṇi* that is not available in this southern part of the country. There is a commentary thereon called *Jāgadiśi*. There is another commentary by one *Dharmarāja-Dīkṣita*, there is still another commentary by one *madhurā-nātha*, but it is the Gadādhara that is studied by all.

Prāmānya-vāda is one of the *vādas* stated there. A scholar from south India went to Navadvīpa (Nadia) with the intention of studying *tarka* (logic) there. This is the place where there were many logicians. The scholar who went from here was a great poet. By his ability to compose poems he had amassed great wealth in the south. But when he went to Navadvīpa and started studying logic nothing entered his mind. He tried his best but the result was that he lost his skill in poesy. His wrangles with logic in which he did not succeed resulted only in the loss of his poetical skill. He lost his wealth also. At least his skill had brought him money. Even that was now gone and

therefore he was in great difficulty. He could not master *prāmāṇya-vāda*. But there was still some poetical ability left. He composed the following line

namaḥ prāmāṇyavādāya matkavitvāpahāriṇe

The meaning is, "I pay obeisance to *prāmāṇya-vāda* which has destroyed my poetical skill."

It was this *prāmāṇya-vāda* that Maṇḍana Miśra's parrots were discussing. Let us enquire into the nature of this *vāda*. When we see an object there arises cognition in us. Some cognitions are valid and other are invalid. We may see a crystal and think that it is a piece of candy. This is invalid cognition. Knowing candy as candy is valid knowledge. Valid knowledge is known as *pramā*. Invalid knowledge is *bhrama*. Doubtful knowledge and determinate knowledge are two kinds of knowledge. Even when we see that which is invalid, during the time of seeing, it seems to be true. At that time it appears that that knowledge is true. Some cognitions even at the beginning are realised to be false. The reflection of a tree in a tank is realised to be false. As knowledge, its recognition as true or untrue is twofold in kind. When a knowledge is realized to be true as it arises, it is *prāmāṇya-graha-jñāna*. When invalid knowledge is recognised as invalid even when it rises, it is *aprāmāṇya-graha-āskandhita-jñāna*. There is knowledge of validity in regard to both *prama* and *bhrama*. When crystal is mistaken for sugar-candy it seems to us to be valid. If there is knowledge in the form 'this

is a lamp' it is also true knowledge. 'This is a plantain tree' is also true. These are two kinds of knowledge. Even at the time when we have the knowledge 'This is a plantain-tree' is there the knowledge 'This is true'? Or is the knowledge that it is tree from some other source? Those who accept the former view sponsor *svataḥ-pramāṇa-vāda* and those who support the latter view advocate *parataḥ pramāṇa-vāda*.

Such views were being debated by the parrots in Maṇḍana Miśra's house, to which place Śrī Śaṅkarācārya went. On that day Maṇḍana Miśra was engaged in performing a *śrāddha* ceremony. He was a very wealthy man. He had performed many *soma-yāgas*.

Soma-yāga is known as *jyoti-ṣṭoma*. It would be performed in every spring season. For performing a *yajña* three things are necessary—money, ability and knowledge. Those wealthy men who get from their lands in one year grains that would be enough for their maintenance for three years should perform *yāga* every spring. They are known as *prativasanta-soma-yājins*. Now-a-days they perform *yāga* by receiving donations. Wealthy men spend their money unnecessarily in celebrating weddings etc.

Maṇḍana Miśra was a very wealthy person. So he was performing this *śrāddha* ceremony in a grand manner.

His home was shut and bolted from within. There is a legend about the way Śrī Śaṅkarācārya entered the home.

In those days a secret art was known to toddy-tappers. Standing beneath a coconut palm tree they will beat the trunk uttering a *mantra*. Then the tree would bend. Again if he uttered another *mantra* it would stand erect. Śrī Śaṅkara went to a toddy-tapper and learnt this art. There was a coconut palm tree outside Maṇḍana Miśra's house. Śrī Śaṅkara climbed the tree and uttered the appropriate *mantra*. The palm tree bent inside the house and left Śrī Śaṅkara there. This story is not related in the Śaṅkara-vijayas. In those texts the version is that Śrī Śaṅkara entered the house through the power of yoga. For the *śrāddha* ceremony Vyāsa and Jaimini had come for *brāhmaṇārtha* (feeding Brahmins during the *śrāddha* ceremony). Even as the serpent Takṣa went to Parīkṣit hidden in a lemon-fruit Śrī Śaṅkara had entered Maṇḍana's house in spite of the care that had been taken not to allow anyone to enter. Maṇḍana Miśra got very angry on seeing Śrī Śaṅkara. There are many stories which relate how a talk started between the two. Maṇḍana Miśra asked the visitor : "Wherefrom are you, shaven-headed one?" Śrī Śaṅkara humorously replied taking a different meaning for the word 'wherefrom' and said: "I am shaven-headed from my neck." *Sannyāsins* should have a shave up to the neck. Jaimini and Vyāsa pacified both Maṇḍana Miśra and Śaṅkara. They said to Maṇḍana Miśra: "According to scripture it is *sannyāsins* that should be requested for *brāhmaṇārtha* and so please make Śrī Śaṅkara take the place of Viṣṇu." When such great ones as Vyāsa and Jaimini give a direction

what could Maṇḍana Miśra do? The one who performs a *śrāddha* ceremony must carry out the directions of those invited for *brāhmaṇārtha*. Therefore Maṇḍana Miśra offered obeisance to Śrī Ācārya and invited him for *bhikṣā*. Śrī Śaṅkara replied: "I have come for *vāda-bhikṣā* and not for food."

Now-a-days the term *vāda* is taken to mean verbal fight. But that is not true. Verbal fight is called *jalpa*. *Vāda* means exchange of thought with a view to know what one does not know. Debate with a view to understand the truth is called *vāda*. *Jalpa* on the contrary means arguing with a view to show that the participant is totally wrong. Apart from these two kinds there is a third one which is called *vitandā*. In this type of debate one does not have a view of one's own but is interested only in demolishing whatever the participant says.

When Śrī Ācārya asked for *vāda-bhikṣā* Maṇḍana said: "Let this *bhikṣā* be over and then we can have the *bhikṣā* you have asked for." As soon as the *śrāddha* was over the *vāda* began. There was the question of appointing an umpire. Maṇḍana's wife Sarasavānī who was an *avatāra* of Sarasavātī was asked to serve as umpire. On whose side could she speak? One of the debators was a *sannyāsin* and the other was her husband. Whoever was defeated it was difficult for her to say. Therefore she put a flower-garland on each of them and said that the one whose garland began to wither first would be deemed the

defeated person.¹² Before the debate began the two participants came to an understanding. Śaṅkara said to Maṇḍana: "If I win you should take *sannyāsa*, if you win I shall become a house-holder after performing the appropriate expiatory ceremony or I will continue to perform expiation until death." Sarasavānī gave her agreement for this proposal. The debate continued for twenty-one days. On the twenty-first day the flower-garland around Maṇḍana Miśra's neck began to wither. At once Sarasavānī offered obeisance to both of them and asked them to accept *bhiksā*. Maṇḍana Miśra took *sannyāsa*. Śaṅkara gave him the name Sureśvarācārya. Sureśvara wrote a work called *Naiṣkarmya siddhi*. The purport of this work is that through the Veda one can gain the bliss which is other than the fruits of *karma*.

How did Śrī Ācārya gain a victory over Maṇḍana Miśra? If any word is uttered it must be useful in accomplishing an act. Because a deed is the fruit we accept *śabda*. If freedom from action be the fruit, can we not then accept *śabda* as authority? Action may be the fruit of *śabda*. If actionlessness be the fruit that also should be

12) In this connection see "The Secret Life of Plants" by Peter Tomkins and Christopher Bird (Penguin Publications 1978). The following passage may be of some interest for understanding the behaviour of plants including flowers: "...at the Bose Institute near Calcutta he first became aware that plants not only give off radiations which can be sensed by man, but are themselves sensitive to the radiations given off by humans."-Tr

regarded as the purport of *śabda*. Therefore the purport of *śabda* is the fruit and not action. It is said in the Veda "Do not drink liquor". What do you do when you hear this? You do not do anything. Has not this *śabda* a purport? Not doing anything is its purport. Being without anything is called *abhāva*. *Abhāva* is the purport of all prohibitions. If remaining without doing an action can be a fruit, staying without doing any action should be the greatest fruit. Because the Vedantic texts have for their purport actionlessness they are supremely purportful. The Lord says in the *Gītā*: *sarvaṁ kar-mākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate* (iv, 33).

All *karmas* should be offered to Paramēśvara. Remaining without *karma* is the supreme truth. That is unexcellible bliss. When this is realised there will be no more birth. This is the supreme purport of the Veda. The entire *karma-kāṇḍa*, must be construed as auxiliary to *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, and only then will *karma-kāṇḍa* be of use. Śrī Śaṅkara established this view in his debate with Maṇḍana Miśra.

While Maṇḍana Miśra became Śrī Śaṅkara's disciple, Sarasavānī started to go back to her original state thinking "What further purpose is there for me?" At that time Śaṅkara told her: "You will remain as Śārādā Pīṭha." Śaṅkara established a Pīṭha for her and invoked her presence there.