

# The Position of *Yoga* in Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's Practice Theory

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## 1. Introduction

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, a scholar of the Advaita Vedanta school active from the late 16th to the early 17th centuries, in his auto-commentary, entitled *Bhaktirasāyanaṭīkā* (BhRṬ), on his work on *bhakti* theory, the *Bhaktirasāyana* (BhR), present four *yogas* (practices), namely *karmayoga*, *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, *jñānayoga*, and *bhaktiyoga* as the purposes of human existence (*puruṣārtha*). These four practices are ritual practice, the yoga based on Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* (YS), that for the acquisition of *brahmavidyā* in the Advaita school, and, finally that of *bhakti* (devotion) in the Bhāgavata school, one of the Vaiṣṇava schools.

So far, research on Madhusūdana has focused exclusively on the relationship between *jñānayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*, and has not systematically investigated all four *yogas* in the context of Madhusūdana's theory of practice.<sup>1)</sup> Therefore, in this paper, I will consider the significance of *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, especially in its relation to *jñānayoga*, in Madhusūdana's system of practice, in order to arrive at a systematic understanding of Madhusūdana's theory of practice. In the BhRṬ, Madhusūdana included *aṣṭāṅgayoga* in *jñānayoga*, at the same time considered *aṣṭāṅgayoga* as the entry stage into *jñānayoga*. However, Madhusūdana did not offer a detailed discussion on *aṣṭāṅgayoga*. Rather, his *aṣṭāṅgayoga* theory can be found in his commentary on chapter 6 of the *Bhagavadgītā* (BhG), *Bhagavadgītāgūḍhārthadīpikā* (BhGGAD). This paper will focus on the discussion in BhGGAD on BhG 6.32 regarding the problem of the relationship between the occurrence of true knowledge (*tattvajñāna*), which is *brahmavidyā*, and *Yoga*.

## 2. The Result of *Yoga* practice

First, I would like to consider what Madhusūdana considered the result of *Yoga*. Madhusūdana defines *Yoga* via BhG 6.10–32.<sup>2)</sup> In BhGGAD on BhG 6.15 he mentions,

basing himself on the YS, that the *yogin* proceeds from *saṃprajñātasamādhi* to *asaṃprajñātasamādhi* and from there gains *brahmavidyā*. Furthermore, in BhGGAD on BhG 6.32, Madhusūdana explains the relationship between true knowledge, which is *brahmavidyā*, and Yoga. Madhusūdana interprets the phrase “the highest *yogin*” (*paramo yogī*), found in BhG 6.32, to indicate a person who make no distinction between the suffering and happiness of themselves and others because of being possessed of true knowledge, having eliminated the mind (*manonāśa*), and eradicated latent impressions (*vāsanākṣaya*).

BhGGAD on BhG 6.32 offers the following discussion of true knowledge, elimination of the mind, and eradication of latent impressions.

“True knowledge” is the knowledge that “all dualities are but the false imagining of *māyā* concerning *brahman*, I am none other than *ātman* who is being, knowledge, bliss, and non-dual.” “Elimination of the mind” means that the mind<sup>3)</sup> transforms into a state of suppression (*nirodha*) which excludes all activities by abandoning the transformations (*pariṇāma*) which render the activities actual. And “Eradication of latent impressions” means that when the latent impression of mental peace (*cittaprasāma*), which arises from discriminating knowledge (*viveka*), becomes firm, then, even if there is an external cause, anger (*krodha*) and so forth, which result from the latent impressions, do not occur. In this way, “elimination” of the mind and “eradication” of latent impressions do not mean that the mind itself or the latent impressions themselves are lost. Rather, “elimination” of the mind means that the mental activities are suppressed, and “eradication” of latent impressions means that the latent impressions, which are the cause of anger and so forth, do not arise and this is the reason that mental peace occurs.<sup>4)</sup>

Furthermore, in BhGGAD on BhG 6.32 the means by which to attain true knowledge, elimination of the mind, and eradication of latent impressions are described. The means to attain true knowledge are hearing and so forth, that is to say, hearing (*śravaṇa*), thinking on (*manana*), and contemplating (*nididhyāsana*) the scriptures. The means to attain the elimination of the mind is Yoga. Finally, the means to eradicate a latent impressions is to give rise to a counter-impression (*pratikūlavāsanā*), for example, to give rise to a calm latent impression against that of anger.<sup>5)</sup> The above definition of the means for of the elimination of the mind as Yoga, in so far as it implies that mental activities are restricted, is consistent with the definition of Yoga given in the YS, which defines it as “mental restriction” (*cittanirodha*). Furthermore, it is consistent with the fact that *asaṃprajñātasamādhi*, which is

the final stage in the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* system elaborated in the YS, is the stage in which all mental activities are restricted and ceasing (*nivṛttika*), for which reason it is called the “*samādhi* of suppression” (*nirodhasamādhi*).<sup>6)</sup>

*Asaṃprajñātasamādhi* is a state in which all mental activities up to *saṃprajñātasamādhi* are restricted and ceasing. Additionally, in this *samādhi*, the latent impressions caused in *saṃprajñātasamādhi* are also restricted. However, since in *asaṃprajñātasamādhi* both the flow of the mental transformations in their suppressed form and the flow of the latent impressions resulting from them continue to exist, it is also called the remnant of the latent impressions.<sup>7)</sup> As mentioned above, because the mental activities are restricted in *asaṃprajñātasamādhi*, which is the final stage of *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, it is consistent with the understanding that Yoga is the means towards the elimination of the mind. In addition, it should also be understood that the eradication of the latent impressions is achieved in *asaṃprajñātasamādhi*, since in *saṃprajñātasamādhi* the flow of the latent impressions itself persists while those generated there are restricted.

### 3. Yoga is a requirement for the investigation of *brahman*

Now, as pointed out above, according to BhGGAD on BhG 6.32 the means towards true knowledge are hearing and so forth. This statement seems to be inconsistent with the description in BhGGAD on BhG 6.15 that *brahmavidyā*, that is to say, true knowledge, is caused by *asaṃprajñātasamādhi*. In the following, I would like to consider this point more closely.

Madhusūdana, quoting the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* (LYV) 5.10.113, states that true knowledge, the elimination of the mind, and the eradication of the latent impressions are the cause of each other. In explaining why elimination of the mind is the cause of true knowledge, he elaborates as follows: when the mind is eliminated by Yoga, tranquility, self-control, and so forth are achieved (*śamadamaḍisaṃpatti*). This gives rise to true knowledge.<sup>8)</sup> This “achievement of tranquility and self-control of the mind” is one of “four means” (*sādhana-catustaya*), which are among the requirements for the investigation of *brahman* in the Advaita school.<sup>9)</sup> Therefore, Yoga in the present context can be considered to correspond to one of the means which are required for the investigation of *brahman*, namely the achievement of tranquility, self-control, and so forth of the mind.

Moreover, in BhGGAD on BhG 6.32, Madhusūdana classifies those qualified

(*adhikārin*) for *brahmavidyā* into those who perform worship (*kṛtopāsti*) and those who do not (*akṛtopāsti*). Those who do not perform worship, Madhusūdana states, can achieve the elimination of the mind without Yoga. This may imply that generally the elimination of the mind is achieved by Yoga. Furthermore, Madhusūdana also mentions that such a person achieves tranquility, self-control, and so forth after having achieved the elimination of the mind. Therefore, this can be considered an indirect confirmation that Yoga corresponds to one of the means required for the investigation of *brahman*, namely the achievement of tranquility, self-control, and so forth of the mind.

To continue, Madhusūdana also states that those who have achieved tranquility, self-control, and so forth, also achieve hearing, thinking on, and contemplating the Vedānta scriptures, and further acquire true knowledge by practicing them. Therefore, the following sequence is implied: 1) the practice of Yoga, 2) the achievement of the elimination of the mind, 3) the achievement of tranquility, self-control, and so forth of the mind, 4) the achievement of hearing, thinking on, and contemplating the Vedānta scriptures, and finally, 5) the occurrence of true knowledge by practicing them. In addition, according to BhGGAD on BhG 6.15 and so forth, the Vedānta scriptures are necessary for Yoga.<sup>10)</sup> Therefore, it seems clear that the order from 1) the practice of yoga to 5) the occurrence of true knowledge is the one Madhusūdana actually considered. Thus, Yoga is a direct means for the elimination of the mind, and indirectly, a means for the attainment of true knowledge through the achievement of tranquility, self-control, and so forth of the mind.

#### 4. Conclusion

From the above considerations, the following conclusions can be drawn: Madhusūdana considered *aṣṭāṅgayoga* as a means to the elimination of the mind. In addition, because tranquility, self-control, and so forth of the mind, which are requirements for the investigation of brahman in the Advaita school, are achieved when the mind is eliminated, Madhusūdana regards *aṣṭāṅgayoga* as the means to their achievement. Thus, since true knowledge occurs following the order of, first, the achievement of tranquility, self-control and so forth, second, the achievement of hearing, thinking on, and contemplating the Vedānta scriptures, and Finally, putting them into practice, Madhusūdana considered *aṣṭāṅgayoga* as the indirect means for achieving true knowledge.<sup>11)</sup> These facts may indicate that Madhusūdana positioned *aṣṭāṅgayoga* as a preliminary stage for the investigation

of *brahman*. And this is consistent with the fact that *aṣṭāṅgayoga* is the stage preceding *jñānayoga* in the BhRṬ.

### Notes

- 1) In particular, there has been little discussion of Madhusūdana's interpretation of *aṣṭāṅgayoga*. To the best of my knowledge, only Saha (2014, 187–196) touches on this subject. On the issue of Madhusūdana advocating that Advaita scholars do not depend on *Yoga* even while discussing *Yoga*, Saha argues that Madhusūdana contextualized *Yoga* in the frameworks of the Advaita school by embracing the *yoga* theory of the LYV.
- 2) BhGGAD 294,22f. (on BhG 6.10).
- 3) For Madhusūdana, the terms “the mind” (*manas*), “intellect” (*buddhi*, *dhī*), and “heart” (*citta*) are synonymous.
- 4) BhGGAD 322,32–323,9 (on BhG 6.32).
- 5) BhGGAD 323,13–16 (on BhG 6.32).
- 6) BhGGAD 302,40f. (on BhG 6.15).
- 7) BhGGAD 301,16–35 (on BhG 6.15).
- 8) BhGGAD 323,9–13 (on BhG 6.32).
- 9) These “four means” are found in Śaṅkara's (ca. 756–772) *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (BSBh) on *Brahmasūtra* (BS) 1.1.1. See Shima 1980, 39. In addition, BSBh does not explain in detail what is included in “and so forth” of “tranquility, self-control, and so forth” (*śamadamādi*), and it seems that a unified view was established only gradually. In the end, the following six elements were included: “tranquility” (*śama*), “self-control” (*dama*), “ceasing” (*uparati*), “endurance” (*titikṣā*), “fixing the mind” (*samādhāna*), and “faith” (*śraddhā*). See Nakamura 1996, 225.
- 10) BhGGAD 301,40f. (on BhG 6.15), BhGGAD 306,21–23 (on BhG 6.20), BhGGAD 316,23–25 (on BhG 6.29). In addition, in BhGGAD on BhG 6.29–31, after passing through *saṃprajñātasamādhi* and *asaṃprajñātasamādhi*, the object of the word “thou” (*tvam padārtha*), the object of the word “that” (*tat padārtha*), and the object of the sentence “thou art that” are confirmed.
- 11) The framework comprised of true knowledge, the elimination of the mind, and the eradication of the latent impressions can already found in the *Jīvanmuktiviveka* (JMV) of Vidyāraṇya (14th CE). Therefore, it can be said that Madhusūdana's *yoga* theory is influenced by the JMV. I will discuss the impact of the JMV on Madhusūdana on another occasion.

### Abbreviations

- BhGGAD *Bhagavadgītāgūḍhārthadīpikā* (Madhusūdana Sarasvatī). *Srimadbhagavadgīta with the Commentaries Śrīmadśāṅkarabhāṣya with Ānandagīri, Nilakanṭhī, Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā of Dhanapatī, Śrīdhārī, Gītārthasaṃgraha of Abhinavaguptācārya, and Gūḍhārthadīpikā of Madhusūdana with Gūḍhārthattattvāloka of Śrīdharmadattaśarmā (Bhachchāśramā)*. Ed. Wāsudev Laxmaṇ Śhāstrī Paṇṣīkar. 2nd ed. Bombay: Nirṇaya Sāgar Press, 1936.
- BhR(Ṭ) *Bhaktirasāyana(ṭikā)* (Madhusūdana Sarasvatī). *Śrīmadhusūdanasarasvatīpraṇītaṃ Śrīmadbhaktirasāyanam*. Ed. and Com. Janārdhanaśāstrī Pāṇḍeya. Vārāṇasī: Motilal Banarsidas, 2018.
- LYV *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* (Vālmīki). *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha: Text with the Sanskrit Commentary Vāsiṣṭha-Candrikā*. Ed. Vasudeva Sharma Panasikara. Dillī: Motilal Banarsidas, 1985.

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(This research was supported in part by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 17J00156)

**Key words** Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, *Bhagavadgītāgūḍhārthadīpikā*

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