

Acharya Shankara's Commentaries on the Prayer at the Hour of Death in the *Isha* and *Brihadaranyaka Upanishads*

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THIS ARTICLE EXAMINES commentaries on the 'Prayer at the Hour of Death' traditionally attributed to Acharya Shankara, which appear in the same form in the *Isha Upanishad* and the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* in the *Kanva* recension.¹ A comparison of these two commentaries reveals their striking resemblance on (a) the broader level of the interpretation of the meaning of the Upanishadic passage in question, and (b) on the more specific level, where remarkably similar expressions and wording appear. These commentaries show no real differences, except that the commentary on the *Isha Upanishad*'s version of the prayer is more extensive than the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* version and thus contains some additional information. Although the similarities cannot be used as a valid means to prove they were written by the same author, they still may support this thesis.

Introduction

In the *Isha Upanishad* and the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* we find the 'Prayer at the Hour of Death' that is uttered by a dying person to obtain a safe passage after death. The prayer appears

in the same form in both texts of the *Kanva* recension. The commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, which is traditionally ascribed to Acharya Shankara, must be his genuine work as ascertained by both tradition and Acharya Sureshvara, traditionally held to be Acharya Shankara's direct disciple, who explicitly claims in his *varttika*, sub-commentary on Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* that Acharya Shankara, his teacher, is the author of the relevant commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

For the commentary on *Isha Upanishad*, which is also traditionally attributed to Acharya Shankara, there is no such direct evidence for Acharya Shankara's authorship. However, in a recent article, I argued that this commentary is a genuine work of Acharya Shankara on the ground of Hacker's (1950) terminological criteria for determining Acharya Shankara's authorship and a stylometric statistical approach according to the General Imposters framework.² In this article, the commentaries, which I believe to be Acharya Shankara's, on this same passage that appears in both *Isha Upanishad* and *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* will be examined closely to demonstrate how much they have in common.

This article presents the Upanishadic text of the 'Prayer at the Hour of Death' according to Patrick Olivelle's translation, followed by my

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translation of the commentaries on the relevant passages from the *Isha Upanishad* and the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, which are attributed, justly in my opinion to Acharya Shankara. Later on, similarities between the commentaries will be highlighted alongside a brief analysis of the text.

Translation of the Prayer from the Isha and Briharanyaka Upanishads

This is the prayer from the *Isha Upanishad*:

The face of truth is covered with a golden dish.

Open it, O Pushan, for me, a person faithful to the truth. Open it, O Pushan, for me to see.³

O Pushan, sole seer! Yama! Sun! Son of Prajapati! Spread out your rays! Draw in your light!

I see your fairest form. That person up there, I am he! (16).

The never-resting is the wind, the immortal! Ashes are this body's lot. Om! Mind, remember the deed! Remember! Mind, remember (17).

O Fire, you know all coverings; O god, lead us to riches, along an easy path.

Keep the sin that angers far away from us; And the highest song of praise we shall offer to you! (18).⁴

Now we will see Acharya Shankara's commentary on these passages.⁵ It should be noted that Acharya Shankara's commentary mostly consists of glosses, that is, Acharya Shankara first quotes a word from the Upanishad and then explains the word with a synonymous word or expression, which is a gloss, in order to explain the meaning of the commented word. The word or expression that is quoted serves as a part of the sentence structure, together with its gloss. Therefore, the commentary represents an extension of the commented text. This technique is typical for the functional style of scholastic Sanskrit and is often employed in commentaries with a certain degree of variety.⁶

Sometimes Acharya Shankara's commentaries feature a dialectically structured discussion following glosses. Such passages usually contain philosophical discussions, in which objections, *purvapaksha*, are raised in order to be immediately exposed to criticism, *uttarapaksha*. This pseudo-dialogue form appears after glosses in the commentary on the eighteenth verse of the *Isha Upanishad*, where the commentator Acharya Shankara criticises objections raised by the proponent of the teaching that the combination of ritual and knowledge leads to moksha.

In the translation, words from the Upanishad text are emphasised with single quotation marks to distinguish them from Acharya Shankara's explanations, which follow immediately thereafter. Upanishadic quotations used for the purposes of argumentation are marked with double quotation marks together with the reference to the Upanishadic passage in the endnotes. This is Acharya Shankara's commentary on the relevant passages from the *Isha Upanishad*:

Like 'golden', this one here is golden, that is, it consists of light. With that 'dish', which appears as a cover, 'the face', or door 'of the truth', that is, of Brahman, which stands in the solar orb ['the face'] 'is covered'. 'Open it, O Pushan', remove it; 'for me, a man faithful to the truth', for me whose duty is truth, because I devoutly meditate on you as the truth. I am he whose duty is truth; 'for him' means 'for me'; or it means to one [me] who performs one's duties according to the truth;⁷ 'for me to see', to perceive you, whose Self is truth.⁸

'O Pushan': Pushan is the Sun because he nourishes [*poshana*] the world; the 'sole seer' [*rishi*] flows [*rishati*] or goes alone, that is why he is a 'sole seer'; Yama, because he binds [*samyamana*] everything together; that is why he is 'Yama'; 'Surya', because he appropriates [*svikarana*] rays, that is, breaths and essences; that is why he is 'Surya'. 'Prajapatya' is a descendant

of the Lord Prajapati, that is why he is 'Prajapatya.' 'Spread out,' separate 'your rays.' 'Draw in,' unite; it brings together 'rays,' heat or light. Through thy grace, I see 'your fairest,' endlessly magnificent 'form.' However, I do not pray to you like a servant; I am the person, the one situated in the orb of the Sun whose limbs are utterances [*vyahritis*];⁹ a 'person,' because such a person has the appearance of a human being; the whole world is filled [*purna*] with gusts that consist of breaths and intellect, that is why 'person'; or 'person' [*purusha*], because he resides in the city [*puri*].¹⁰

At this moment let the 'wind,' the breath of me who is going to die, give up the limitations of individual personality, and attain its divine nature, which is a 'never-resting, immortal' thread-soul [*sutratman*]¹¹ contained in everything; the word 'attain' is a *vakyashesha* [a part of a sentence that must be supplied in elliptic expressions]. Let the subtle body that is purified by knowledge and rites ascend; this is how it must be considered, through the strength of prayer for the path [by which the subtle body will ascend]. Thereupon, let this body that is sacrificed to the fire be turned into ashes. 'Om,' according to the devout meditation [performed by the dying person], it is said that Brahman, whose name is sacrificial fire [Agni], whose Self is truth, is no different from Om since Om is its symbol. 'Mind,' whose Self is determination, 'remember,' the time has come to remember what I have remembered; therefore 'remember' everything that has appeared through all this time; O Fire, remember 'the deed,' the deed I have performed since childhood, this is what you must remember. 'Mind, remember the deed! Remember!'—repetition implies zealotry.¹²

The person prays one more time for the path with another sacrificial formula, 'O Fire, lead us,' conduct us towards 'an easy path,' along the magnificent road. The distinction 'along an easy path' means avoiding the southern path.¹³ I am disgusted with the southern path characterised by departing and returning [constant rebirth]; hence I pray to you to lead me along



Death of the Buddha (Gouache painting)

the magnificent road where there is no repeated departing and returning. 'To riches,' to the fortune, to the enjoyment of the fruits of action; [lead] 'us,' who are distinguished by the fruits of religious merit as indicated before;¹⁴ 'all,' every 'covering,' act or cognition, 'O god, you know,' you recognise as such. Moreover, 'keep us away from,' deliver us from, destroy 'the sin that angers,' a sin that is crooked, and has the nature of deception. Thereupon, when we shall be purified, we shall obtain what we desire, such is the meaning. However, we are now not able to attend 'you.' 'We shall offer you,' we shall honour you with 'the highest,' the most abundant 'song of praise,' statement of homage; such is the meaning. "Knowledge and ignorance, a person who knows them both together, passes beyond death by ignorance."¹⁵ "Passes beyond death by the destruction and by the becoming attains immortality" (14). Upon hearing so,

some [people] are in doubt. Therefore, we shall shortly consider [this topic] in order to remove it [the doubt]. In this manner, it is stated what the reason for the doubt is:

[*Purvapaksha*] Why is the knowledge of the highest Self in its principal meaning not conveyed by the words ‘knowledge’ and ‘immortality’?

[*Uttaraksha*] Has it not been determined that the combination of knowledge and the act is unreasonable, because the knowledge of the highest Self is in contradiction to the act?

[*Purvapaksha*] This is true. But the contradiction is not recognised here, because contradiction and non-contradiction are proved valid by the scripture. Just as performance out of ignorance [rituals] and devout meditation on knowledge are proved valid by the scripture, the case is the same with their contradiction and non-contradiction. Just as we learn from the scripture that no living being should be killed, while on the other hand the scripture contradicts it with [the claim] that an animal should be killed in a sacrificial ceremony. The same is possible with knowledge and ignorance, and knowledge and [ritual] action can be combined.¹⁶

[*Uttaraksha*] No; because the scripture claims that “Far apart and widely different are these two: ignorance and what is known as knowledge.”¹⁷

[*Purvapaksha*] What if there is no contradiction on account of the words [of scripture] where it is said that “knowledge and ignorance, a person who knows them both together”¹⁸? (*Isha Upanishad* 11)?

[*Uttaraksha*] No, because there is a contradiction in cause, one’s own form and the fruit.

[*Purvapaksha*] And if there is no contradiction because there is an injunction to combine them, and because it is impossible to accept either contradiction or non-contradiction between knowledge and ignorance?

[*Uttaraksha*] No, because it is unreasonable for them to co-exist.

[*Purvapaksha*] And if knowledge and ignorance take place in one recipient gradually?

[*Uttaraksha*] No, because it is unreasonable to suppose that ignorance exists in the recipient of that [knowledge], because ignorance vanishes with the occurrence of knowledge. It is reasonable to suppose that, in the same recipient in whom the cognition ‘fire is bright and hot’ arose, an ignorant [cognition], doubt, or non-cognizance ‘fire is cold and dark’ cannot arise; and from the scripture [it is seen that] there is no possibility of sorrow, bewilderment, and the like: “When in the self of a discerning person, one’s very self has become all beings, what bewilderment, what sorrow can there be, regarding that self of the person who sees this oneness” (7). We said this because ignorance cannot arise [in a recipient of knowledge], an act that has arisen out of that [ignorance] is also unreasonable. “Attains immortality” (14), immortality is conditional here. If the word ‘knowledge’ presumes a knowledge of the highest Self, then the prayer for the path “with a golden” (16), and the like, is inapplicable. Therefore, devout meditation can be combined [with ritual], but not with the cognition of the highest Self; the sense of the mantras is exactly as we explained; in this way it is concluded.

Now, let us look at Acharya Shankara’s commentary on the relevant passage from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*:

The one who practised the combination of knowledge and action at the time of death prays to the sun. And this is contingent because it [the sun] is the fourth foot of the Gayatri meter. Worship of it [the sun] is under discussion, therefore it [the sun] is being prayed to. ‘With a golden’, ‘with a vessel’ consisting of light; like with some beloved thing concealed within a vessel, Brahman, known as the Truth, is concealed within the orb consisting of light because it is not fit to be seen by a mind that is not concentrated. ‘The face’, the principal in its own form, ‘[the face] of truth is concealed’; the ‘vessel’ is like a cover, which is the cause of the

hindrance to vision; 'O Pushan, O Savitri, the nourishing sun of the world, 'remove', make it open, remove the cause of the hindrance to vision; such is the meaning. 'To one faithful to the truth', such person's, that is, my duty is truth. I am that person, the one whose duty is truth; for one who had become your Self, such is the meaning, 'to see', in order to see. 'Sole seer', that person is the only seer; and that person is the 'sole seer' because of [one's] vision. That is the Self of the whole universe, the Eye that sees the truth of all; or the 'sole seer', goes alone because the mantras teach: "The sun roams alone."¹⁹ O Yama, binding everything in the world is your deed. O Surya, fitly, who subdues the essences; or rays; or breaths; or thoughts of the world. 'Son of Prajapati', descendant of the Lord Prajapati or Hiranyagarbha; 'Son of Prajapati! Spread out, separate 'your rays!'. 'Draw in, contract 'light' so I can quickly see thy form. Just like lightning [hides] forms; therefore, bring together 'light'.

What is 'yours', thy 'form' among all that is eminently fair, fairest, this is what I see, with a change to 'we see'. That person, who has the utterance "*bhur* [earth], *bhuvah* [sky], *svah* [heaven]" as its limbs, and because that person has the shape of a human being, it is a person. 'I am he.' "Day and I"²⁰ because it is said in the Upanishad that they [*abar*, 'day' and *aham*, 'I'] reside in the eye ['I'] and in the sun ['day']; here, it is said that I am that immortal, this is the relation. When this body of mine decays, although I am immortal in reality, the wind that is breath that resides in the body returns to the outer wind. In this manner, other divinities should go to their respective origins. Then this body that is reduced to ashes should go to the earth. At this moment, the person prays to the fire-god Agni, born from one's own volition, which is situated in the mind, 'Om Mind'. 'Om' and 'Mind' are both vocatives here. Or 'Om' because the syllable 'Om' is his [Agni's] symbol. And 'mind' because he is the one who consists of mentality. 'Om! O Mind!' 'remember the deed!' at the end of times one must remember,



'The Death of Casagemas', Picasso, 1901

because a desirable goal is attained through thy recollection at the time of death; hence I pray to thee: Recollect all that I have done. The repetition implies earnestness. Also, 'O Fire, lead us', make us reach 'an easy path' along the magnificent road 'to riches', to wealth, that is, to the attainment of the fruits of action. Not along the southern dark [path] that leads back to worldly existence, but along the bright 'easy path'; 'O God, the knower of everyone's 'covering', knowledge of every living being. Also, 'keep', that is, remove or detach from us the 'sin', crooked evil, everything born from evil. Freed us from this sin, we shall go along the highest path through thy grace. However, we cannot worship you; we only utter repeated salutations to thee; 'the highest', to thee 'to you' 'song of praise', utterance of salutations 'we shall offer'; let us serve you with an utterance of salutations, such is the meaning; we are unable to do anything else.²¹

Similarities Between the Commentaries

It is possible to distinguish similarities between these two commentaries on different levels. On the first level, we can recognise a general agreement as to the main idea underlying both commentaries. The main idea of both commentaries is that the Upanishadic passage in question is a prayer in which a dying person prays to the sun in order to avoid the 'southern path' that leads back to the world of transmigration. In

the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* and the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, the southern path is described as a lower path that leads the deceased back to earthly existence when the beneficial fruits of ritual action are exhausted.²²

The other path is the northern path of gods that leads to the world of lower Brahman or Hiranyagarbha. In his commentaries on both these passages, Acharya Shankara claims that the world of lower Brahman or Hiranyagarbha, *brahmaloka*, to which the northern path leads, is not a final liberation; that is, the world of lower Brahman is a result of the combination of ritual action, karma, and devout meditation, *upasana*. In Acharya Shankara's interpretation, (1) the southern path of the fathers is followed by those who practise Vedic rituals and it leads to the world of fathers; after the results of ritual actions are extinguished, they return to the world of transmigration. (2) The northern path is followed by those who combine Vedic ritual, karma, with devout meditation *upasana*, and it leads to the world of lower Brahman or Hiranyagarbha. (3) The final release is, however, completely different from both these paths, because liberation is knowledge of the highest Self.

Now, the question is, if liberation is only knowledge of the highest Self, what is the case with the northern path of the gods that leads to the world of Hiranyagarbha? This answer can be found in Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, where he explicitly claims that, in the world of Hiranyagarbha, a person lives for as many *kalpas* as a lifespan of Hiranyagarbha. When a life-span of the lower Brahman or Hiranyagarbha is finished, they do not return to the world.²³

At the beginning of his commentary on the 'Prayer at the Hour of Death' in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, Acharya Shankara explicitly claims that the prayer is uttered by one who

has practised the combination of knowledge and action, *jnana-karma-samucchayakarini*. The same is stated in the commentary on the prayer in *Isha Upanishad*, where Acharya Shankara claims in the seventeenth verse, that the subtle body purified by the combination of rites and knowledge ascends to the [northern] path. In the eighteenth verse, Acharya Shankara makes a detailed distinction between the combination [of knowledge and rites] and the knowledge of the highest Self.

In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, we find Acharya Shankara's critique of the *jnana-karma-samuchchaya* view, which is attributed by Anandagiri to the ancient Advaitin Bhartriprapancha.²⁴ He was an adherent of an ancient Vedantic teaching called *bhedabhedavada*, the view that the world is not an illusion and that the world is simultaneously different and non-different from Brahman, just like the sea, highest Brahman, and the waves, multiplicity of the world,. In this respect, the ritual portions of the Vedas, corresponding to the manifested world and Upanishads, corresponding to the highest Brahman, do carry the same importance, and should be combined in order to achieve liberation. Acharya Shankara's commentary on the eighteenth verse of the *Isha Upanishad* is similar to his commentary on *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 5.5.1, where Bhartriprapancha's idea of *bhedabhedavada* and the combination of ritual and knowledge is criticised by Acharya Shankara.

For Acharya Shankara, ritual action belongs to the sphere of ignorance, because it is driven by desire, and cannot remove ignorance; ignorance can be removed only by its opposite, knowledge, and not by action.²⁵ Acharya Shankara also removes the doubt raised in the eighteenth verse of the *Isha Upanishad* that the process of knowing arises gradually and that rites deal with the first stages of the rise of knowledge leading to

liberation. Acharya Shankara asserts that, when knowledge arises, fire is hot, no ignorance remains, fire is cold.

In his commentary on the *Isha Upanishad*, Acharya Shankara criticises the view that knowledge can appear gradually and his reasoning is found in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.²⁶ Here, Acharya Shankara criticises the teaching of the gradual appearance of knowledge of the Self, which is again attributed by Anandagiri to Bhartriprapancho, who taught that the combined path of ritual and knowledge leads to the gradual process of liberation. According to Acharya Shankara, the combined path of ritual and knowledge can lead only to the world of lower Brahman, Hiranyagarbha. In his commentary on the eighteenth verse of *Isha Upanishad*, he even specifies that 'knowledge', in the combination of ritual and knowledge, means devout meditation, *upasana*, most probably a deliberation on a particular Upanishadic passage that deals with the lower Brahman.

On this general philosophical level, we thus see a significant agreement between the commentaries on the relevant portions of the *Isha Upanishad* and the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. On the other hand, the consistency of both of these commentaries with Acharya Shankara's commentaries on *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* and the *Chhandogya Upanishad* is also obvious.

The second level of agreement of both these commentaries exists on the level of glosses, the explanatory expressions used to interpret particular Upanishadic words and phrases. On this level of interpretation, both commentaries are in remarkable agreement, although the commentary on the *Isha Upanishad* is longer and contains more information.

At the beginning, for instance, the Upanishadic word *hiranmaya*, 'golden' is glossed in both the commentaries with the same expression



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jyotirmaya, 'consisting of light'; the word *patra*, 'vessel' is glossed in both commentaries with the same word *apidhana*, 'cover'. Furthermore, both commentaries derive the name Yama, the god of death, from *samyamana*, 'binding together'. The word *rashmi*, 'ray' is glossed in both commentaries with the words *prana*, 'breath' and *rasa*, 'essence'.


Prajapatya is a descendant, *apatya*, of the lord Prajapati. The imperative *vyuha*, 'spread out' is interpreted in both texts with *vigamaya*, 'separate'. The case is the same with the imperative *samuha*, 'draw in', which is glossed with *upasambara*, 'bring together'. In both commentaries, *purusha* from the prayer consists of limbs, *avayava*, that are seven utterances, *vyabriti*. In his commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, Acharya Shankara elaborates somewhat further by first enumerating three great utterances, *vyabritis*; *bhur*, *bhuvah*, and *svah*. The Upanishadic *raye*, 'to riches', is glossed in both commentaries with the synonymous word *dhanaya*, 'to fortune'.

There are also similar expressions in both commentaries. For instance, when commenting on the repetition of the words, '*Krato smara kritam smara krato smara kritam smara*; mind, remember the deed! Remember! Mind, remember', Acharya Shankara says, '*punar uktir adarartha*'

in the commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* and ‘*punar vachanam adarartham*’ in the commentary on the *Isha Upanishad*, both meaning, the ‘repetition implies earnestness’.

Also in his commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, we find: ‘*He’gne naya prapaya supatha shobhanena margena*; O Fire, lead us, make us reach an easy path, along the magnificent road.’ And in the commentary on the *Isha Upanishad*, we find: ‘*He’gne! naya gamaya supatha shobhanena margena*; O Fire, lead us, conduct us towards an easy path, along the magnificent road.’ Also, there is a remarkable similarity in the interpretation of the Upanishadic passage that appears as the seventeenth verse in the *Isha Upanishad* and as 5.15.1 in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, where it states ‘Om krato’, which is interpreted in both commentaries as a hail to Agni, whose symbol is Om.²⁷

Conclusion

Both commentaries on the ‘Prayer at the Hour of Death’ contain striking similarities (a) on the broader level of understanding the sense of the Upanishadic passage in question and (b) on the micro-level of glossing Upanishadic expressions, where the same or similar expressions appear and the Upanishadic words are glossed with the same synonyms. No remarkable differences appear in these commentaries, although the commentary on the *Isha Upanishad* version of the prayer is longer and it contains some additional information. It is quite understandable that, no matter how similar the passages are, the similarities cannot be direct proof that the same person composed both texts. Although I, in a forthcoming paper, have argued on different grounds that the commentaries on the *Isha Upanishad* and the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* were indeed composed by Acharya Shankara, the similarities indicated here may support this thesis. 

Notes and References

1. See *Isha Upanishad*, 15–8 and *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 5.15.1.
2. See Ivan Andrijačić, ‘Acharya Shankara and the Authorship of the Īśā-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya and Kāṭha-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya’, Forthcoming.
3. *Isha Upanishad*, 15.
4. Patrick Olivelle, *The Early Upanisads* (New York: Oxford University, 1998), 141–3, 409–11.
5. For convenience sake I offer here my translation. My translation does not bring anything new except that it highlights in the endnotes, the parallels with Acharya Shankara’s commentary on the relevant passage from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. Fine translations of the same commentary can be found in *Eight Upaniṣads, with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, 2 vols (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2006), 1.26–32 and *Īśopaniṣad: The Secret Teaching on the Lord*, trans. Neal Delmonico and Lloyd W Pflueger (Kirksville: Blazing Sapphire, 2017), 99–118.
6. For an explanation of the glossing technique in scholastic Sanskrit, see Gary A Tubb and Emery R Boose, *Scholastic Sanskrit: A Manual for Students* (New York: The American Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2007), 19–31.
7. Two possible interpretations are presented here: according to the first one, a dying person prays to Pushan to remove the cover so that the face of Brahman residing in the solar orb can be removed. The dying person performs a devout meditation, *upasana*, on Brahman as truth. The second possibility is that the dying person is acting rightfully according to one’s duty.
8. Acharya Shankara’s commentary on the *Isha Upanishad*, 15.
9. The seven worlds are called *vyahritis*. The large *vyahritis* are *bhur*, earth; *bhuvar*, atmosphere; and *sva*, heaven; the others are *mahar*, *janar*, *tapar*, and *satya*.
10. Acharya Shankara’s commentary on the *Isha Upanishad*, 16. Here, Acharya Shankara presents two interpretations of the word ‘*purusha*’ or ‘*person*’. According to associative resemblance, the word ‘*purusha*’ is connected to (a) *purna*, full, or (b) *puri*, city.
11. We find the term ‘*sutra*’ or ‘*thread*’ in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 3.7.1–2. This thread is

- designated as *vayu*, wind, by which this life, the next life, and all beings are held together. In his commentary on this passage, Acharya Shankara designates sutra as the innermost by which the earth, gods, and Vedas are held together. Also, in Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 5.5.1, the birth of Brahman as truth, *satya*-brahman is the birth of *sutratman*, who is the same as *hiranyagarbha* or the manifestation of *avyakrita*, the undifferentiated universe. In Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Aitareya Upanishad*, 3.3, *sutratman* is again the same as *hiranyagarbha*. This means that *sutratman* is a lower Brahman, an all-pervading entity closely connected to *vayu*, wind.
12. Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Isha Upanishad*, 17. Also compare the statement in Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 5.15.1, '*punar-ukti adarartha*' with the statement in his commentary on the *Isha Upanishad*, 17, '*punar vachanam adarartham*'.
 13. The southern path in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 6.2, and the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 5.10.3, is a path of fathers.
 14. I have translated dharma here as 'religious merit', because Acharya Shankara is not referring only to the fruit of ritual action, but also to the fruit of devout meditation, *upasana*, which leads towards the path of gods.
 15. *Isha Upanishad*, 11.
 16. The same problem is discussed in Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 5.1.1. The opponent identified by Anandagiri as Bhartriprapancha claims that Brahman is simultaneously different and non-different from the manifested world, like the ocean and the waves. The case is the same with ritual, analogous to the world, and the Upanishadic, analogous to Brahman, portions of the Vedas, which are equally important to moksha. The opponent in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 5.1.1, presents the same example of hurting animals, enjoined in the ritual portions, and the example of not hurting animals, enjoined in the Upanishads, which co-exist. From the *bhedabhedavada* point of view, this is not a contradiction, that is, this apparent contradiction is analogous to the difference—or ritual portions enjoining the sacrifice of animals—and non-difference—the Upanishads prescribing the non-hurting of animals.
 17. *Katha Upanishad*, 1.2.4.
 18. *Isha Upanishad*, 11.
 19. *Taittiriya Samhita*, 7.4.18.
 20. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 5.5.3.
 21. Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 5.15.1.
 22. See *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 6. 2.16 and *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 5.10.10.
 23. See Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 6.2.15. It is interesting to note that Acharya Shankara finds a philological argument for this interpretation in the Madhyandina version of the text, where the particle *iha* 'here' appears. Acharya Shankara argues that the Madhyandina text '*tesham iha na punar avrittir asti*; they do not return here' with *iha*, which does not appear in *Kanva* text, indicates that they will not return; otherwise, the word *iha* would be meaningless.
 24. See Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 4.4.22. For more on Bhartriprapancha's view on jnana-karma-samucchaya and further reading material on Bhartriprapancha, see Hajime Nakamura, *A History of Early Vedanta Philosophy*, 2 vols (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), 2.149–51; Ivan Andrijačić, 'Quotations and (Lost) Commentaries in Advaita Vedānta: Some Philological Notes on Bhartṛprapañca's "Fragments"', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 43/2–3 (May 2015), 257–76; and Ivan Andrijačić, 'Bhartṛprapañca and the Eight States of Brahman', *Revista Científica Guillermo de Ockham*, 14/1 (April 2016), 57–67.
 25. See Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 3.2.13; his commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*, 1.1.4; and his introduction to his commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 3.3.1.
 26. See Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 3.2.13. The view of the gradual attainment of liberation, *kramamukti*, is also criticised in Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*, 1.1.12. See also his commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*, 1.3.33 and 3.2.21, where *kramamukti* is not final liberation.
 27. The phrase is '*omkara-pratikatvad*' in the commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* and '*om-pratikatmakatvat*' in the in the commentary on the *Isha Upanishad*.