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The Concept of Scriptural Authority in the Commentaries of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva

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Abstract

In the Indian philosophical tradition, the commentaries (bhāṣyas) written on the Vedānta-sūtras are not merely philosophical explanations but also instruments for establishing the authority of scripture. This paper presents a comparative analysis of the concept of scriptural authority (śāstra-prāmāṇya) embedded in the Brahma-sūtra commentaries of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya (Advaita Vedānta), Rāmānujācārya (Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta), and Madhvācārya (Dvaita Vedānta). It shows that although all three teachers accepted verbal testimony (śabda-pramāṇa) as an independent, authorless source of knowledge inherited from Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā, each developed distinct hermeneutics in keeping with his own spiritual experience, ontological commitments, and institutional needs (Hiriyanna, 1932; Potter, 1981). For Śaṅkara, scripture brings about the immediate realization (aparokṣa-anubhava) of the non-dual Brahman, after which its instrumental function is exhausted (Mayeda, 1979; Rambachan, 1991); for Rāmānuja, it guides worship of, and surrender to, the qualified Brahman, extending in authority to the Pāñcarātra-āgama and vernacular devotional literature (van Buitenen, 1956; Lipner, 1986); and for Madhva, it grounds difference-based (bheda) devotion to the independent Lord Viṣṇu, disclosed through a hierarchy of graded being (tāratamya) (Sharma, 1962; Sarma, 2003). The study examines hermeneutic devices such as samanvaya (reconciliation), anubandha-catuṣṭaya (fourfold prerequisites), avirodha (non-contradiction), and arthāpatti (presumption), situating them within the shared Mīmāṃsā inheritance of all three commentators. The paper argues that scriptural authority in classical Vedānta functions simultaneously as a philosophical, experiential, and institutional category, sustained across generations by sub-commentary, monastic institution, and teacher-lineage, and closes by considering the implications of this threefold divergence for comparative theology and the historiography of "Hinduism" as a unified category.

1. Introduction

In Indian epistemology (pramāṇa-śāstra), when the means of valid knowledge are enumerated, verbal or scriptural testimony (śabda or āgama-pramāṇa) occupies a central place — especially in Vedānta philosophy, where the knowledge of a supersensuous reality such as Brahman is not considered attainable through perception or inference (Dasgupta, 1922). For this reason, in the very first section (pāda) of the first chapter of the Vedānta-sūtra, through the aphorism "śāstra-yonitvāt," scripture is declared to be the sole means of valid knowledge (pramāṇa) for the knowledge of Brahman (Radhakrishnan, 1960). Yet the two questions — "what does scripture say" and "what is scripture's true purport" — gave rise to serious disagreements among the three principal Vedāntic teachers, disagreements from which the separate sectarian traditions of Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Dvaita were born (Sharma, 1960).

A commentary (ṭīkā/bhāṣya) in the Indian intellectual tradition is not merely an explanatory genre but a well-organized method of authority-construction (Clooney, 1990). A commentator, while leaving the words of the original sūtra or Upaniṣadic statement unchanged, is nonetheless able to inscribe his own doctrine within it, because in the Sanskrit commentarial tradition "fidelity to tradition" and "the

introduction of new meaning" (innovation) are not regarded as mutually opposed (Halbfass, 1991). In this sense, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva each presented themselves as revealers of the "true" meaning of the Upaniṣads, the Brahma-sūtra, and the Bhagavad-Gītā, rather than as founders of a new doctrine (Nicholson, 2010).

The purpose of the present paper is to examine on what grounds the authority of scripture was established in the commentaries of these three teachers — authorlessness (apauruṣeyatā), the authority of the speaker (Divine authorship), internal non-contradiction (avirodha), dependence on experience, or the guru-lineage of the sectarian tradition (Sheridan, 1986). It will also examine what hermeneutic devices each teacher adopted for reconciling apparently contradictory scriptural statements (Mumme, 1988).

The methodology of this study is essentially comparative-philosophical and textual. The analysis of the principal terms related to scriptural authority in the three teachers' Brahma-sūtra commentaries, Gītā commentaries, and miscellaneous treatises — such as "śāstra-yonitvāt," "tat tvam asi," "antaryāmī," and the statements describing gradation (tāratamya) — is based on translations of primary sources (Thibaut, 1904; van Buitenen, 1956; Mayeda, 1979) and secondary scholarly studies (Hiriyanna, 1932; Dasgupta, 1922; Sharma, 1960; Lipner, 1986). The paper is divided into several main parts: first, the theoretical background of scriptural authority in Mīmāṃsā and early Vedānta; second, the distinct interpretive methods of the three teachers, treated in turn; third, a sustained comparative analysis organized around specific hermeneutic axes; fourth, a discussion of the broader implications of this threefold divergence for comparative theology and the historiography of Hindu traditions; and finally, the conclusion and directions for future research.

It is worth noting at the outset why a study of this kind still has work to do, notwithstanding the considerable body of scholarship already devoted to each of the three commentators individually. Much of the existing literature on Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva proceeds tradition by tradition: Advaita scholarship engages primarily with Advaita's internal debates (Comans, 2000; Suthren Hirst, 2005), Śrīvaiṣṇava scholarship with the Rāmānuja–Vedānta Deśika–Piḷḷai Lokācārya lineage (Mumme, 1988; Narayanan, 1994), and Dvaita scholarship with the Madhva–Jayatīrtha–Vyāsatīrtha lineage (Sharma, 1960, 1962; Mesquita, 2000). Comparative treatments exist (Carman, 1974; Clooney, 1993; Nicholson, 2010), but relatively few focus specifically and systematically on the question of scriptural authority as a hermeneutical category that cuts across all three traditions, rather than treating it as a subordinate theme within broader doctrinal exposition. This paper attempts to isolate that category and to trace its operation, its criteria, and its institutional consequences across the three bhāṣya traditions in a single, sustained comparative frame.

A further justification for this approach lies in the fact that the very idea of "scriptural authority" is not a neutral, transparent category even within a single tradition, let alone across three. What counts as scripture (the boundary between śruti, smṛti, and āgama), what counts as valid interpretation (the boundary between literal reading and figurative extension), and what counts as a decisive proof-text (the

weight given to a single mahāvākya versus a pattern of statements) are all themselves objects of dispute among the three ācāryas. Treating "scriptural authority" as a single, stable analytic category therefore requires some care: this paper uses the term to designate not a fixed criterion but a contested field of argument, within which each tradition stakes out its own position through characteristic hermeneutic moves. This framing, it is hoped, allows the comparison to remain sensitive to what is genuinely different about each tradition's approach, rather than flattening the three into variations on a single, presupposed theme.

2. Theoretical Background of Scriptural Authority

The concept of scriptural authority has its roots in Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā philosophy, where, in Jaimini's Mīmāṃsā-sūtra and Śabarasvāmin's commentary, the authorlessness (apauruṣeyatva) and eternality (nityatā) of the Veda are given as the basis of its authority (Dasgupta, 1922). According to the Mīmāṃsakas, Vedic statements possess self-validity (svataḥ-prāmāṇya) — that is, their truth does not depend on any external proof (Potter, 1981). Vedānta philosophy, especially in Bādarāyaṇa's Brahma-sūtra, applies this very Mīmāṃsā principle to knowledge concerning the Self (brahma-jijñāsā) (Radhakrishnan, 1960).

All three teachers accepted the independence of verbal testimony, but the point of divergence among them arose over what kind of reality scripture actually teaches — an attributeless, undifferentiated Brahman (nirguṇa-nirviśeṣa), a qualified Brahman possessing attributes (saguṇa-viśiṣṭa), or an entirely distinct, independent Supreme Lord (Deutsch & van Buitenen, 1971). At the root of this divergence lies a difference in hermeneutic method — that is, in the manner of establishing harmony among the different portions of scripture (śruti, smṛti, sūtra) (Clooney, 1990). To understand this, it is necessary to mention the standard devices of the commentarial tradition such as "samanvaya" (systematization), "avirodha" (non-contradiction), and the "anubandha-catuṣṭaya" (subject matter, purpose, relation, and qualified reader) (Sharma, 1960; Mayeda, 1979).

In the commentarial tradition, before writing a commentary on any text it was considered obligatory to determine the "anubandha-catuṣṭaya" — that is, the subject matter (viṣaya) of the text, its purpose (prayojana), the relation (sambandha) between the text and its subject matter, and the qualified reader (adhikārī, i.e., who is fit to study the text). Clarifying these four points was the first step in establishing a commentator's authority (Suthren Hirst, 2005). Each of the three teachers defined these four points differently at the outset of his commentary, which then determined the entire direction of his subsequent interpretation (Grimes, 1990). Further, the principle of "avirodha" — that is, holding that no part of scripture contradicts any other part — is the central theme of the first section of the second chapter of the Vedānta-sūtra, and each of the three commentators interpreted this very principle of non-contradiction differently in an attempt to prove his own doctrine to be in keeping with scripture (Radhakrishnan, 1960; Bhattacharya, 1978). According to Mohanty (1992), in the Indian philosophical tradition "reasoning" (tarka) always operates subordinate to "scripture" (āgama) — that is, reasoning is employed to determine the meaning of scriptural statements and to refute opposing views, not to

establish independent truths apart from scripture. This feature is found equally in all three branches of Vedānta (Mohanty, 1992; Perrett, 2016).

Alongside samanvaya, avirodha, and the anubandha-catuṣṭaya, the commentarial tradition also inherited from Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā a repertoire of specific interpretive maxims (nyāyas) for resolving apparent conflict among textual injunctions, several of which recur, transformed, in the Vedāntic bhāṣyas. Among these, arthāpatti (postulation or presumption) is of particular interest for the study of scriptural authority, since it names the procedure by which a meaning not directly stated is nonetheless inferred as necessary in order to make sense of what is stated (Dasgupta, 1922). Where the Mīmāṃsakas apply arthāpatti chiefly to ritual injunctions — postulating, for instance, an unstated auxiliary action required to make an explicit injunction coherent — the Vedāntins extend the same logical structure to metaphysical claims: Śaṅkara's postulation of a level of empirical reality intermediate between the wholly real and the wholly unreal (vyāvahārika sattā) and Rāmānuja's postulation of an inseparable-but-distinct relation (aprthak-siddhi) both function, in this broad sense, as scripturally warranted presumptions required to reconcile otherwise conflicting textual statements (Potter, 1981; Carman, 1974). Madhva, by contrast, is generally more reluctant to rely on postulated intermediate categories, preferring instead to multiply explicit textual distinctions; where he does resort to a form of presumption, it typically concerns the postulated existence of scriptural statements not extant in the received textual corpus, a matter addressed at length in Section 5.2 below (Mesquita, 2000).

A further inherited category worth noting here is that of pramāṇa-samuccaya, or the coordination of multiple means of knowledge. All three Vedāntic schools accept, in principle, a plurality of pramāṇas — perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), and verbal testimony (śabda) chief among them — yet each assigns a different weight to śabda relative to the others precisely where questions of Brahman, liberation, and the soul's true nature are concerned (Perrett, 2016). This differential weighting is not incidental but constitutive: it is precisely because Brahman is held, by all three, to lie beyond the reach of unaided perception and inference that śabda-pramāṇa is elevated to a uniquely authoritative status in each system, even as the schools disagree sharply about what, exactly, śabda then reveals (Dasgupta, 1922; Radhakrishnan, 1960). This shared elevation of scripture to indispensable status, combined with sharply divergent readings of what scripture says, is the central interpretive puzzle that motivates the comparative analysis undertaken in the sections that follow.

3. Scriptural Authority in the Commentary of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya

3.1 Scripture as the Source (Yoni) of Brahman-Knowledge and Immediate Realization

In the Brahma-sūtra commentary of Śaṅkarācārya (approximately 8th century), scripture is called the "yoni," that is, the source, of the knowledge of Brahman, because Brahman cannot become an object of perception or the other means of knowledge (Mayeda, 1979). According to Śaṅkara, the purpose of scripture is not to produce something new, but to bring about the "immediate realization" (aparokṣa-

anubhava) of the already-accomplished, eternally-free nature of the Self (Rambachan, 1991). For this reason Śaṅkara repeatedly states that scripture reveals an already-existing fact (bhāvārtha), not something to be produced or performed (kāryārtha) — this distinction separates him from the Mīmāṃsaka interpretation of scripture, which centers on ritual action (Rambachan, 1991; Clooney, 1990).

In Śaṅkara's Upadeśasāhasrī it is clearly stated that great sentences (mahāvākyas) such as "tat tvam asi" can produce in the hearer an immediate awareness of the identity of the self with Brahman, provided the hearer possesses the requisite qualification (adhikāra) (Mayeda, 1979). Here the criterion of scriptural authority becomes linked to experience — that is, scripture remains a valid means of knowledge only until it produces immediate realization; once that realization has arisen, scripture exhausts its own usefulness, just as a ladder is discarded once the summit has been reached (Comans, 2000). This analogy makes clear that for Śaṅkara scripture is a means, not an end — a view that came to be discussed in the later Advaita tradition under the name "experiential non-dualism" (anubhavādvaita-vāda) (Comans, 2000; Marcaurelle, 2000).

3.2 The Role of Scripture in the Doctrines of Substratum-Superimposition (Adhiṣṭhāna-Adhyāsa) and Nescience (Avidyā)

Śaṅkara's Adhyāsa-bhāṣya (the introduction to the Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya) establishes that both worldly transaction and scriptural ritual are grounded in nescience (avidyā), and that scripture itself operates on the plane of empirical reality (Halbfass, 1991). This gives rise to a particular difficulty — if scripture is itself empirical, how can it produce knowledge of the transcendent (pāramārthika) Brahman? Śaṅkara's solution is that scripture operates through the method of "superimposition followed by subsequent negation" (adhyāropa-apavāda) — first, conditioning attributes (upādhis) are superimposed upon Brahman in order to make it approachable, and then those attributes are progressively negated so as to bring about the realization of pure consciousness itself (according to Sengaku Mayeda, this is the central technique of Śaṅkara's commentarial composition) (Mayeda, 1979).

3.3 The Vṛttikāra Tradition and the Justification of Advaita

In his commentary, Śaṅkara points to earlier vṛtti-writers (Upavarṣa, Bodhāyana, and others) and thereby presents himself as a follower of tradition, whereas modern scholars have shown that Śaṅkara's own exposition of Advaita is itself an extremely novel and highly organized philosophical construction (Nakamura, 1983, as referenced in Nicholson, 2010). Paul Hacker, in his influential studies, argued that within Śaṅkara's commentary a stratification can be traced between "ancient Vedānta" and the "new Advaita" introduced by Śaṅkara himself (Hacker's analysis is discussed in Halbfass, 1991). This raises the question of how much of the claim to scriptural authority is historical and how much is retrospective construction — a question that has remained a persistent subject of debate in Vedānta studies (Nicholson, 2010).

Śaṅkara regards reasoning (tarka) as an auxiliary to scripture, but rejects it as an independent means of knowledge — the well-known statement "śrutyanugṛhītas tarko 'py anubhavāya kalpate" (reasoning aided by scripture alone is conducive to experience) is the central hermeneutic policy of his commentary (Radhakrishnan, 1960; Deutsch & van Buitenen, 1971). Thus, for Śaṅkara, scriptural authority is a two-tiered structure — on the empirical level it functions like any other means of valid knowledge, but on the transcendent level it becomes a self-transcending instrument (Comans, 2000).

3.4 The Method of Superimposition-and-Negation and the Role of the Great Sentences

In Śaṅkara's commentarial method, "adhyāropa-apavāda" (the process of superimposing and then negating) is a central hermeneutic device, by means of which he interprets the creation-narrating portions of scripture (such as "tasmād vā etasmād ātmana ākāśaḥ sambhūtaḥ") not as ultimate truth, but as a temporary expedient meant to make the teaching approachable for worship and contemplation (Comans, 2000; Suthren Hirst, 2005). On the basis of this very method he establishes the four great sentences (mahāvākyas) — "prajñānaṃ brahma" (Aitareya Upaniṣad), "ayam ātmā brahma" (Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad), "tat tvam asi" (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.8.7), and "ahaṃ brahmāsmi" (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad) — as embodying the essential purport of the entire body of Upaniṣadic literature (Gambhirananda, 1965; Olivelle, 1998). According to Śaṅkara, all remaining Upaniṣadic statements function as explanations or supporting arguments (upapatti) of these very great sentences — this "great-sentence-centered" mode of reading gives him the ability to gather the whole mass of scripture into a single non-dual purport (Mayeda, 1979; Comans, 2000).

3.5 The Gītā-Commentary, Smṛti, and the Internal Diversity of the Commentarial Traditions

The same framework of scriptural authority is also visible in Śaṅkara's Gītā-commentary — he regards the discipline of action (karma-yoga) as a preliminary aid to the attainment of knowledge (a means of purifying the mind), not as a direct means to liberation, so that smṛti (the Gītā) attains authority only by remaining subordinate to śruti (Deutsch & van Buitenen, 1971). It is notable that within the later Advaita tradition after Śaṅkara, two principal sub-schools of commentarial interpretation developed — the "Bhāmatī" of Vācaspati Miśra and the "Vivaraṇa" tradition of Prakāśātman — which offered mutually differing interpretations of the subtle questions concerning nescience and scriptural authority implicit in Śaṅkara's original commentary (Potter, 1981). This also makes clear that "Advaita" is not itself a monolithic tradition, but a living tradition engaged in continuous internal dialogue over the question of scriptural authority (Potter, 1981; Nicholson, 2010).

3.6 The Problem of Scriptural Ambiguity and the Function of Sureśvara's Vārttika

A further dimension of Śaṅkara's engagement with scriptural authority becomes visible only once his commentary is read alongside the sub-commentarial literature that immediately followed it, especially

the vārttikas of his direct disciple Sureśvara. Sureśvara's Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad-Bhāṣya-Vārttika and his Naiṣkarmyasiddhi press further than Śaṅkara himself on the question of exactly how a purely verbal instrument — a sentence composed of finite, conventionally-signifying words — can generate knowledge of a reality that, ex hypothesi, admits no distinctions of the kind ordinary language is built to convey (Potter, 1981; Comans, 2000). Sureśvara's resolution turns on a sharpened distinction between the referential function of a sentence's individual words (pada-artha) and the unified import (vākyārtha) that arises only from their syntactic combination, together with the further claim that a mahāvākya such as "tat tvam asi" operates not by ordinary predication but by a special semantic device (akhaṇḍārtha, "partless meaning") through which the sentence points beyond its own compositional structure toward an undivided reality (Comans, 2000). This technical elaboration matters for the present study because it shows that the question of scriptural authority in the Advaita tradition was never settled by Śaṅkara's bhāṣya alone; it generated its own internal hermeneutical problem — how a differentiated instrument can disclose an undifferentiated object — that subsequent generations of Advaitins continued to refine, contest, and re-argue (Potter, 1981; Suthren Hirst, 2005). The very existence of this ongoing internal debate is itself evidence for the claim, developed further in Section 6.3 below, that scriptural authority functions as a living argumentative practice rather than a doctrine settled once and for all by a founding commentator.

4. Scriptural Authority in the Commentary of Rāmānujācārya

4.1 The Principle of Reconciliation (Samanvaya) and the Hermeneutics of Viśiṣṭādvaita

The Śrī-bhāṣya of Rāmānujācārya (1017–1137 CE) is a systematically organized response to Śaṅkara's attributeless (nirguṇa) interpretation (Lipner, 1986). According to Rāmānuja, the Upaniṣadic statements that assert difference (which teach the distinction between the individual self, the world, and Brahman) and the statements that assert non-difference (such as "tat tvam asi") are not mutually contradictory; rather, their reconciliation is possible through the principle of "aprthak-siddhi" (a relation that is inseparable yet distinct) (van Buitenen, 1956). Thus, for Rāmānuja the supreme criterion of scriptural authority is the internal consistency (non-contradiction) of the whole body of scripture, which he calls "samanvaya" (Carman, 1974).

In his Vedārthasaṃgraha, Rāmānuja establishes that the meaning of the great sentence "tat tvam asi" is not the utter identity of the individual self and Brahman, but an identity grounded in the relation of body and body-possessor (śarīra-śarīrī-bhāva) — that is, the individual self and the world are the "body" of Brahman, and Brahman is their "inner controller" (antaryāmī-ātmā) (van Buitenen, 1956; Lipner, 1986). This interpretive method allows Rāmānuja to keep every single statement of scripture meaningful, without declaring any portion secondary or merely empirical — this is considered the fundamental hallmark of his hermeneutics (Carman, 1974; Clooney, 1993).

4.2 The Authority of the Pāñcarātra-Āgama and of Smṛti

A distinctive feature of Rāmānuja is that, alongside Vedic scripture, he also regards the Pāñcarātra-āgama and the Tamil devotional poetry of the Āḻvār saints (the Nālāyira Divya Prabandham) as authoritative sources, though of a secondary standing (Narayanan, 1994). From this developed, within the Śrīvaiṣṇava sect, the concept of "ubhaya-vedānta" (the equal dignity of both the Sanskrit Veda and the Tamil Prabandham), which later teachers such as Vedānta Deśika and Piḷḷai Lokācārya elaborated still further (Mumme, 1988; Narayanan, 1994). Here the boundaries of scriptural authority become considerably broader than in Śaṅkara, because Rāmānuja gives devotional experience and the tradition of teachers (sampradāya) an active role in determining meaning as well (Mumme, 1988).

4.3 Surrender (Śaraṇāgati) and the Purpose of Scripture

According to Rāmānuja, the ultimate purpose of scripture is not knowledge alone, but devotion to and surrender (prapatti) before Lord Nārāyaṇa (Carman, 1974). From this point of view, the authority of scripture lies in its power to bring about worship — that is, whichever statement orients the worshipper toward God can, in the highest sense, be called authoritative (Lipner, 1986). Thus Rāmānuja does not separate the section on knowledge (jñāna-kāṇḍa) from the section on worship (upāsanā-kāṇḍa) as Śaṅkara does, but subsumes both within devotion (bhakti) (Carman, 1974; Clooney, 1993).

Rāmānuja assigns reasoning an even more limited role than Śaṅkara does in determining the meaning of scripture — according to him, dry reasoning (mere rationalism) alone cannot establish the nature of Brahman, because every argument admits of a counter-argument; hence scripture ultimately remains the decisive means of knowledge (van Buitenen, 1956). On this very basis he declares Śaṅkara's interpretation of an "attributeless Brahman" to be both contrary to scripture and logically flawed (Lipner, 1986).

4.4 The Antaryāmī-Brāhmaṇa and the Scriptural Basis of the Body-Self Relation

In Rāmānuja's interpretive method, special importance attaches to the "Antaryāmī-Brāhmaṇa" section of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, where Brahman is described as the "inner controller" dwelling within all beings and all individual selves (Lott, 1976). On the basis of this very passage, Rāmānuja provides scriptural proof for the doctrine of "śarīra-śarīrī-bhāva" — that is, just as the self, while controlling and sustaining the body, nevertheless remains essentially distinct from it, so too Brahman, while sustaining, regulating, and ruling the individual self and the world, remains essentially distinct from them (Carman, 1974; Bartley, 2002). Through this interpretation Rāmānuja achieves two goals simultaneously — on the one hand, he keeps both types of statements, those asserting difference and those asserting non-difference, meaningful in their literal sense (that is, there is no need to relegate them to a merely empirical level), and on the other hand, he demonstrates that Śaṅkara's method of "lakṣaṇā" (taking a secondary/figurative meaning) is unnecessary and contrary to scripture, since according to him the primary meaning of words is itself sufficient for reconciliation (Lipner, 1986; Bartley, 2002).

4.5 The Unity of the Knowledge-Section and the Ritual-Section, and the Dispute over the Authority of the Pāñcarātra

Rāmānuja does not regard the ritual portion (karma-kāṇḍa) accepted by Mīmāṃsā (sacrifices and the like) and the knowledge portion (jñāna-kāṇḍa) accepted by the Upaniṣads as mutually contradictory, but incorporates both into a single scriptural continuum as sequential stages of devotional practice (Carman, 1974). This is why he avoids drawing as sharp a dividing line between Jaimini's Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā and Bādarāyaṇa's Uttara-Mīmāṃsā as Śaṅkara does, who accepts this division rather more clearly (Clooney, 1993). The question of the authority of the Pāñcarātra-āgama was already disputed in Rāmānuja's own time, since some Mīmāṃsakas regarded it as extra-Vedic and hence non-authoritative; in his Vedārthasaṃgraha, Rāmānuja provides a systematic answer to this objection, attempting to establish that the Pāñcarātra is in accordance with the Veda and was itself revealed by God (van Buitenen, 1956; Narayanan, 1994). This dispute shows that determining the boundary of scriptural authority was itself a subject of continuous hermeneutic contest, in which each sect sought to establish its own particular corpus of āgama literature within the Vedic fold (Mumme, 1988; Narayanan, 1994).

4.6 The Teṅkalai–Vaṭakalai Dispute and the Afterlife of Rāmānuja's Hermeneutics

The interpretive latitude that Rāmānuja's hermeneutics opened up — particularly his admission of Tamil devotional literature and his emphasis on surrender (prapatti) as the practical culmination of scriptural teaching — did not remain static after his death but became, in later centuries, the ground of one of the most consequential internal disputes in the history of Vedāntic commentary: the split between the Teṅkalai ("southern") and Vaṭakalai ("northern") schools of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, associated respectively with Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Vedānta Deśika (Mumme, 1988). At stake in this dispute was, in essence, a disagreement over how much interpretive weight Rāmānuja's own admission of the Tamil Prabandham alongside the Sanskrit Veda should be allowed to carry: the Teṅkalai school, developing the doctrine of prapatti in a more radical direction, held that surrender alone, requiring no further human effort, suffices for liberation, and drew on the intimate, emotionally saturated idiom of the Āḻvār poets as itself scripturally decisive; the Vaṭakalai school, by contrast, insisted on a more conservative reading in which surrender operates alongside, rather than in place of, the disciplined practice enjoined by the Sanskrit scriptural corpus (Mumme, 1988; Narayanan, 1994). This dispute is instructive for the present study because it demonstrates concretely how a single founding commentator's hermeneutic principles — in this case, Rāmānuja's principle of samanvaya extended to a bilingual scriptural canon — can generate, rather than foreclose, subsequent and equally serious disagreement over scriptural authority within the very tradition he founded (Carman, 1974). The cat-and-monkey analogy later used to characterize the two schools' differing accounts of the human contribution to surrender (the kitten passively carried by its mother versus the monkey clinging actively to its mother) itself became a durable hermeneutical shorthand within Śrīvaiṣṇava theology for two rival readings of the same body of scripture (Mumme, 1988).

5. Scriptural Authority in the Commentary of Madhvācārya

5.1 The Doctrine of Difference (Bheda) and the Authorlessness of Scripture

The Brahma-sūtra commentary of Madhvācārya (1238–1317 CE) and his extensive Anuvyākhyāna present a severe critique of the non-dualist tendencies found in both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja (Sharma, 1960). According to Madhva, scripture teaches a fivefold distinction (pañca-bheda) among the individual self, the world, and God — the distinction between one self and another, between the self and God, between the self and inert matter, between God and inert matter, and between one instance of inert matter and another — and this distinction is ultimate, transcendent reality, not merely empirical (Sharma, 1962; Sarma, 2003). Like the Mīmāṃsakas, Madhva accepts the authorlessness of the Veda, but he also holds that Viṣṇu himself is the speaker of the Veda and its final arbiter of meaning — in this way he offers a distinctive reconciliation between authorlessness and divine authorship (Sarma, 2003).

5.2 The Principle of Differential Reading (Viṣamalakṣaṇā) and the Problem of Indeterminacy

Madhva's most distinctive hermeneutic device is the reading of scriptural statements through the lens of difference, called "viṣama-lakṣaṇā," through which the graded hierarchy (tāratamya) of beings implicit within every Vedic statement is disclosed (Sharma, 1960). According to Madhva, whereas Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja remain intent on discovering either unity or a part-whole relationship, scripture itself in fact proclaims the unchanging difference and the qualitative gradation among God, the individual self, and the world — to overlook this would be a fundamental error in interpreting scripture (Sharma, 1962). Madhva also regarded the "Rahasya-trayī" and certain Purāṇas (especially the tradition referred to in the Mahābhārata-Tātparya-Nirṇaya) as authoritative on a par with the Veda, although his method of citation in this regard has remained a matter of dispute among modern scholars (Mesquita, 2000; Sarma, 2003).

According to Roque Mesquita, Madhva cites in his commentaries numerous "proof-verses" that are not found in any available text, holding that these are lost, unavailable, or scriptural fragments preserved only within a hidden tradition (Mesquita, 2000). This adds a new dimension to the definition of scriptural authority — that is, the basis of authority is held to be not merely the available texts, but the entire "unseen yet true" storehouse of the Veda, access to which is possible only for a limited number of persons (Sarma, 2003; Mesquita, 2000). This view has itself been much debated even within the Madhva sect (Sharma, 1962).

5.3 Gradation (Tāratamya), Devotion, and the Hierarchy of Authority

According to Madhva, scripture teaches not only difference but also clarifies the qualitative gradation (tāratamya) among all beings, at the summit of which stand Vāyu (Mukhya-prāṇa) and then the other deities, and on the basis of which separate categories of eternally-transmigrating and darkness-fit (tamo-

yogya) beings are determined (Sharma, 1962). This doctrine has been sharply criticized by both the Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita traditions, since it appears to limit the universal character of devotion (Sarma, 2003). Nevertheless, followers of Madhva argue that this arrangement is clearly described in scripture itself, and that not to accept it would itself be a violation of the fundamental principle of scriptural authority (Sharma, 1960).

Madhva assigns reasoning a limited, auxiliary role in determining the meaning of scripture, but, unlike Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, he also regards perception and inference as independent and fully valid means of knowledge (Sarma, 2003). In this sense, Madhva's epistemology appears closer to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tradition, though he never acknowledges this and declares himself to be a purely Vedāntic thinker (Sharma, 1960).

5.4 The Argument for Regarding the Itihāsa-Purāṇa Literature as Supplementary Scripture

Another distinctive feature of Madhva's commentarial method is that, through the Mahābhārata — especially through his own foundational treatise, the Mahābhārata-Tātparya-Nirṇaya — he establishes the itihāsa-purāṇa literature as "supplementary/explanatory" (upabṛṃhaka) scripture to the Veda, thereby extending the authoritative scope of Vedic literature beyond śruti and smṛti to include the epic and Purāṇic literature as well (Sharma, 1962; Padmanabhachar, 1909). According to Madhva, the tradition of calling the Mahābhārata the "fifth Veda" is not merely figurative but a substantive claim from the standpoint of scriptural interpretation, because in it the Lord Vedavyāsa himself has systematically set forth the Vedic purport (Sharma, 1962). By contrast, Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja regard the Purāṇa-itihāsa literature only as secondary supporting authority, not as primary authority (Bhandarkar, 1913).

5.5 Critique of the Doctrine of Illusion (Māyāvāda) and Comparison with Buddhist Philosophy

In several of his independent treatises — especially the Upādhikhaṇḍana and the Tattvodyota — Madhva criticizes Śaṅkara's doctrine of illusion (māyāvāda), from the standpoint of scriptural interpretation, as "crypto-Buddhism," arguing that the Advaita conception of the world's falsity comes extremely close to Buddhist śūnyavāda and vijñānavāda, whereas scripture repeatedly affirms the reality of the world and the individual self (though a reality dependent upon Brahman) (Sharma, 1960; Sarma, 2003). This critique, though it has remained controversial — since the Advaita tradition considers itself entirely distinct from Buddhist philosophy (Comans, 2000) — nonetheless makes clear that for Madhva, defending scriptural authority meant not merely a theoretical exposition but also a continuous intellectual struggle to prove that rival doctrines were extraneous or contrary to scripture (Sharma, 1960). Madhva's follower Jayatīrtha (14th century) further systematized this very method of critique in his extensive sub-commentaries, through which the tradition of scriptural argumentation within the Dvaita school grew ever richer (Sharma, 1960).

5.6 Jayatīrtha, Vyāsatīrtha, and the Consolidation of Dvaita Scriptural Argument

If Madhva established the fundamental hermeneutic orientation of the Dvaita school, it was his successors — above all Jayatīrtha (c. 1345–1388) and, two centuries later, Vyāsatīrtha (c. 1460–1539) — who transformed that orientation into a fully articulated system of scriptural argumentation capable of sustained engagement with rival Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita polemics (Sharma, 1960). Jayatīrtha's Nyāyasudhā, a vast sub-commentary on Madhva's Anuvyākhyāna, works through the logical structure of Madhva's proof-texts in painstaking detail, supplying the syllogistic scaffolding that Madhva's own terser prose often leaves implicit, and in doing so effectively completes the transition of Dvaita hermeneutics from scriptural assertion to formal philosophical argument (Sharma, 1960; Buchta, 2014). Vyāsatīrtha's Nyāyāmṛta, in turn, mounts an extended point-by-point refutation of Advaita metaphysics, to which the Advaitin Madhusūdana Sarasvatī later replied in his Advaitasiddhi — an exchange that produced one of the most sustained instances of cross-traditional scriptural and logical debate in the history of Vedānta, and one in which the status of specific scriptural proof-texts (rather than abstract metaphysical principle alone) remained the recurring point of contention on both sides (Sharma, 1960). This layered history of commentary upon commentary illustrates a pattern common to all three traditions, and considered further in Section 6.3 below: that the authority of the founding bhāṣya is never simply inherited passively by later generations but must be continually re-argued, re-defended, and re-articulated against the sharpened objections of rival schools.

6. Comparative Analysis

6.1 Differences in the Method of Reconciliation (Samanvaya)

The fundamental difference among the three teachers' methods of determining scriptural meaning centers on the device used to resolve apparently contradictory scriptural statements. Śaṅkara adopts the method of stratification (the distinction between the empirical and the transcendent), whereby statements asserting difference are held to be true on the empirical level and statements asserting non-difference are held to be true on the transcendent level (Comans, 2000). Rāmānuja reconciles both types of statements at a single level, without any stratification, through the method of qualifier-and-qualified (a part-whole relationship) (Carman, 1974). Madhva goes further still, holding that statements asserting difference are themselves the primary purport of scripture, and that statements asserting non-difference must be interpreted in a secondary or figurative sense (such as expressing the intimate relation between master and servant) (Sharma, 1960).

6.2 The Relative Roles of Experience, Scripture, and Reasoning

The relationship of experience and reasoning to scriptural authority also differs across the three traditions. For Śaṅkara the final criterion is immediate realization, which scripture confirms (Rambachan, 1991). For Rāmānuja the criterion is devotional experience together with the interpretive tradition determined by the sect (Mumme, 1988). For Madhva the criterion is scripture's literal indication of difference together with a logically consistent system of gradation (Sharma, 1962). Despite these differences, all three teachers share a common ground — that is, no teacher rejects or subordinates scripture; rather, each attempts to establish his own doctrine as the "true" meaning of scripture (Nicholson, 2010; Halbfass, 1991).

6.3 Sect, Guru-Lineage, and the Social Dimension of Authority

Modern scholars have also shown that scriptural authority is not merely a purely philosophical question, but also a social-institutional one — that is, which sect's guru-lineage (ācārya-paramparā) will be accepted as the final arbiter of scriptural interpretation (Clooney, 1990; Mumme, 1988). Through their monastic institutions, lineages of disciples, and commentarial works, all three teachers ensured that their own interpretation would become the authoritative gateway to scripture for future generations (Nicholson, 2010). In this process the commentary itself acquires authority as a kind of secondary scripture (meta-scripture), especially within the Madhva sect, where Madhva's own writings have attained a quasi-scriptural dignity (Sharma, 1962; Sarma, 2003).

6.4 A Brief Overview of the Three Perspectives on the Eligibility of Women and Śūdras

The practical expression of scriptural authority is also visible in the question of determining who is qualified (adhikārī) to study scripture. Śaṅkara accepts differences in qualification within the framework of the varṇa-āśrama system, though he too regards this difference in qualification as belonging, ultimately, to the empirical level (Rambachan, 1991). Rāmānuja views differences in qualification with a relatively more liberal outlook within the path of devotion, especially in the path of surrender (prapatti), where surrender is held to be accessible to all varṇas (Carman, 1974). Madhva, in keeping with his doctrine of gradation, presents differences in qualification in a more structured form (Sharma, 1962). This subject in itself calls for extensive study, but it is mentioned here sufficiently to underscore the social implications of scriptural authority (Mumme, 1988).

6.5 Modern Scholarly Reassessment

Western and Indian scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have also reassessed this threefold dispute over scriptural authority. Paul Deussen (1912) regarded Śaṅkara's Advaita as the "most consistent" philosophical conclusion of the Upaniṣads, whereas George Thibaut (1904), in his comparative translation work, argued that the original intent of the sūtra-author Bādarāyaṇa appears closer to Rāmānuja's interpretation than to Śaṅkara's. This dispute remains unresolved today and is known in modern Indology as "the problem of Bādarāyaṇa's original intent" (Potter, 1981; Nicholson,

2010). On the other hand, comparative theologians such as Francis Clooney (1993) have proposed that, rather than viewing the three commentarial traditions as mutually opposed "truth-claims," it is more fruitful to view them as three distinct yet equally disciplined ways of engaging with the scriptural text (reading practices). Andrew Nicholson (2010) has also shown that the scriptural disputes among precisely these three Vedāntic commentarial traditions made a significant contribution to the construction of the modern, unified concept of "Hinduism," particularly in the intellectual milieu of the Vijayanagara and colonial periods (Nicholson, 2010).

6.6 A Critical Perspective

A question that must also be raised here is whether the claim to scriptural authority made by all three teachers represents the discovery of an objective, pre-existing purport, or whether each teacher "retroactively reads into" scripture his own already-established spiritual insight (whether experiential or devotional). In the terminology of the Western hermeneutic thinker Hans-Georg Gadamer, this could be called the role of "pre-understanding" (Vorverständnis), which supplies the reader with a determinate orientation of meaning even before he approaches the text — although this kind of comparison has been used only to a limited extent within the Indian commentarial tradition (Halbfass, 1991). According to Mohanty (1992), Indian commentators generally do not present their doctrine as an entirely independent new construction "apart from scripture," but always as "a meaning already implicit within scripture, but hitherto undisclosed" — this manner of self-presentation itself reflects the socio-cultural necessity of scriptural authority, since no new philosophical proposition, if presented as independent of scripture, could gain acceptance within the Indian intellectual society of the time (Mohanty, 1992; Halbfass, 1991). For this very reason Francis Clooney calls scriptural commentary "disciplined imagination" — that is, a commentator is neither wholly free nor wholly bound to the text, but works within a balanced, creative space between tradition and new creation (Clooney, 1990).

It is worth adding that this Gadamerian framing, while useful as a heuristic bridge for readers trained in Western hermeneutics, should not be imported uncritically. Gadamer's account of pre-understanding presumes a historically self-conscious reader aware of standing within a "horizon" that differs from the text's horizon of origin, and much of his hermeneutics is oriented toward the problem of historical distance between reader and text (Halbfass, 1991). The Sanskrit commentators, by contrast, generally operate within a framework in which the text's authority is understood as timeless and trans-historical (nitya) rather than as a historically situated utterance requiring a "fusion of horizons"; their self-understanding is not that they stand at a historical remove from the Upaniṣads which must be creatively bridged, but that they occupy an unbroken lineage of direct transmission (paramparā) that renders such historical distance largely immaterial to the question of authority (Halbfass, 1991; Nicholson, 2010). Comparative use of Gadamerian vocabulary is therefore best treated as an analytic aid for the outside observer rather than as a description the commentators themselves would recognize or endorse — a caution that applies equally to any use of modern Western hermeneutical theory to characterize the self-understanding of premodern Sanskrit exegetes.

6.7 Institutional Consolidation: Maṭhas, Paramparā, and the Reproduction of Authority

A final axis of comparison concerns the institutional mechanisms through which each tradition sought to perpetuate its distinctive reading of scripture across generations, beyond the persuasive force of the bhāṣya text itself. Śaṅkara is traditionally credited with establishing four (or, in some accounts, more) monastic centers (maṭhas) at the cardinal points of the subcontinent, each headed by a succession of pontiffs (Śaṅkarācāryas) charged with preserving and transmitting Advaita teaching (Nicholson, 2010). The Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition founded by Rāmānuja developed an elaborate network of temple-centered institutions and teacher-lineages (ācārya-paramparā), through which questions of scriptural interpretation were often adjudicated as much through appeal to a chain of authoritative teachers as through independent textual argument (Mumme, 1988; Narayanan, 1994). The Dvaita tradition founded by Madhva similarly developed a network of maṭhas in and around Uḍupi, whose pontiffs continue, into the present, to hold periodic ceremonial charge (paryāya) of the central Kṛṣṇa temple and to serve as institutional custodians of Madhva's commentarial legacy (Sharma, 1960, 1962). These institutional structures matter for the study of scriptural authority because they show that the reproduction of a given hermeneutic across centuries has never depended on textual argument alone: maṭha, paramparā, and ritual office all function as parallel, mutually reinforcing mechanisms by which a founding commentator's reading of scripture is transmitted, defended, and — when necessary — adapted to new circumstances without forfeiting its claim to continuity with the founder's original intent (Clooney, 1990; Nicholson, 2010). The interpretive authority of a bhāṣya, in other words, is sociologically as well as philosophically constituted, a point increasingly emphasized in recent scholarship on the institutional history of Vedānta (Nicholson, 2010).

7. Broader Implications: Comparative Theology and the Historiography of Hindu Traditions

7.1 Scriptural Authority as a Resource for Comparative Theology

The threefold hermeneutical divergence examined in this paper has implications that extend beyond the internal history of Vedānta. Comparative theologians working across religious traditions have long grappled with the question of how a single scriptural corpus can sustain multiple, mutually incompatible, yet each internally rigorous, systems of interpretation — a question that arises with comparable force in the history of biblical exegesis, Qur'ānic tafsīr, and rabbinic midrash (Clooney, 1993). The Vedāntic case is instructive for comparative theology precisely because the three traditions considered here share not only a common root text (the Brahma-sūtra together with the principal Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad-Gītā) but also a common set of formal interpretive tools inherited from Mīmāṃsā — samanvaya, avirodha, anubandha-catuṣṭaya — and yet arrive at metaphysically incompatible conclusions regarding the nature of ultimate reality (Clooney, 1990, 1993). This suggests that shared interpretive method does

not, by itself, guarantee convergence of interpretive outcome; the residual variable is supplied by factors external to method proper — spiritual experience, devotional orientation, and institutional commitment — that shape how the shared tools are actually deployed (Nicholson, 2010; Mumme, 1988). For comparative theologians seeking analogues to intra-Christian or intra-Islamic hermeneutical pluralism, the Vedāntic case offers a particularly well-documented instance in which the mechanics of that pluralism can be traced across eight centuries of continuous commentarial elaboration.

7.2 Implications for the Historiography of "Hinduism"

The three-way scriptural dispute examined here also bears on ongoing historiographical debates about the origins and coherence of "Hinduism" as a unified category. Andrew Nicholson (2010) has argued that the perception of a single, coherent "Hindu" religious identity, rather than being simply imposed from outside by colonial administrators and Orientalist scholars, was itself substantially prepared for by indigenous doxographical and hermeneutical projects — including, prominently, later attempts to harmonize or rank the Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Dvaita readings of the Vedānta-sūtra within a single encompassing framework, as seen for instance in Vijayanagara-period doxographies. Understanding precisely how and why the three ācāryas' commentaries diverged on the question of scriptural authority is therefore not merely of antiquarian interest: it clarifies the raw material out of which later syncretistic and doxographical projects worked, and it helps to specify what, exactly, those later projects had to reconcile, suppress, or reinterpret in order to produce an image of underlying unity (Nicholson, 2010; Halbfass, 1991). In this sense, the present study's insistence on the genuine depth of hermeneutical disagreement among the three traditions serves as a corrective to overly harmonizing accounts of classical Vedānta, while also illuminating why later harmonizing projects found the task as difficult, and as historically significant, as they evidently did.

7.3 Contemporary Relevance: Textual Authority in a Pluralistic Public Sphere

Finally, the threefold model of scriptural authority examined in this paper has a bearing on contemporary discussions — both academic and public — about how textual authority functions within living religious communities more generally. Contemporary Hindu communities continue to inherit, often without full awareness of their historical origins, interpretive habits traceable to one or another of the three classical schools: an emphasis on direct, experiential verification of scriptural teaching (traceable to Advaita); an emphasis on devotional surrender and the incorporation of vernacular devotional literature alongside Sanskrit scripture (traceable to Viśiṣṭādvaita); or an emphasis on hierarchical ordering and literal textual precision (traceable to Dvaita) (Klostermaier, 2007; Flood, 1996). Recognizing the classical hermeneutical roots of these contemporary habits can contribute to a more historically grounded public conversation about textual authority within Hindu traditions, one less prone to treating any single interpretive stance as the unmarked, default reading of "what Hinduism teaches." This is of particular relevance in contexts of interreligious dialogue, where interlocutors often implicitly assume that a single tradition speaks with one interpretive voice on questions of scriptural authority — an assumption that the

history examined in this paper shows to be untenable even within a single, textually continuous tradition (Perrett, 2016).

8. Conclusion

The foregoing analysis makes clear that Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva — the three Vedāntic teachers — while all regarding scripture as the sole and independent means of knowledge of Brahman, nevertheless exhibited profound differences in their methods of interpretation, differences that ultimately lie at the root of their respective philosophical doctrines — Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Dvaita (Potter, 1981; Nicholson, 2010). Scriptural authority is not a fixed, predetermined concept, but a living tradition reconstructed by each teacher through his own hermeneutic devices — stratification, reconciliation, or differential reading (Clooney, 1990; Halbfass, 1991). This study also shows that, within the Indian commentarial tradition, "authenticity" and "interpretive creativity" are not mutually opposed but mutually nourishing elements — each teacher, even while professing fidelity to tradition, re-reads scripture in accordance with the spiritual needs of his own age (Nicholson, 2010; Sheridan, 1986). It would be useful for future studies to undertake a comparative analysis of the commentarial methods of the later commentators of these three traditions (such as Vācaspati Miśra, Vedānta Deśika, Jayatīrtha, and Vyāsatīrtha), so that the historical development of the concept of scriptural authority may be understood more broadly (Sharma, 1962; Mesquita, 2000).

In the end, it may be said that the commentaries of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva bring to light a distinctive conception of "authenticity" within the Indian intellectual tradition, in which the fixity of the text and the dynamism of interpretation are not mutually contradictory but mutually indispensable elements (Clooney, 1990; Nicholson, 2010). This is why, even today, eight centuries later, these three commentarial traditions remain active and competing forces within Indian religious-philosophical life — each claiming, for its own followers, to be the sole correct interpretation of scripture, and, at the same time, each demonstrating that within the Indian scriptural tradition "authenticity" has never been a closed, final, and uncontested concept, but has always remained alive through reinterpretation, dialogue, and intellectual struggle (Halbfass, 1991; Perrett, 2016). In this sense, the study of scriptural authority is not only a means of understanding the history of Vedānta philosophy, but also demonstrates how, in any living religious tradition, text and interpretation, memory and new creation, function in mutual interdependence.

The comparative framework developed in this paper — attending simultaneously to hermeneutic device, epistemic criterion, and institutional mechanism — suggests a general model for studying scriptural authority that may prove useful beyond the specific case of classical Vedānta. Rather than asking simply "what does this tradition say scripture means," the model proposed here asks three linked questions of any commentarial tradition: by what specific interpretive devices are apparently conflicting scriptural statements reconciled; what external criterion (experience, devotion, logical consistency, or some combination) governs the deployment of those devices; and through what institutional mechanisms is the resulting reading transmitted and defended across generations. Applied to Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and

Madhva, this threefold model clarifies both what unites the three traditions — a shared inheritance of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutic method and a shared refusal to treat scripture as dispensable — and what divides them irreducibly, namely the distinct spiritual, ontological, and institutional commitments that determine how that shared method is actually put to work. Future research applying this same threefold model to the later sub-commentarial traditions surveyed briefly above — the Bhāmatī–Vivaraṇa dispute within Advaita, the Teṅkalai–Vaṭakalai dispute within Śrīvaiṣṇavism, and the Jayatīrtha–Vyāsatīrtha elaboration of Dvaita — would allow the historical development of scriptural authority within each tradition to be traced with a precision that a study confined to the three founding bhāṣyas alone cannot achieve.

Declarations

Author Contribution

B.B. conceived and designed the study, conducted the research and textual analysis, and wrote the manuscript. D.B.B. reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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