Madhusūdana Sarasvatī
and the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*

The Bengali Hindu intellectual Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (fl. 1500s–early 1600s) was one of the last great precolonial expositors of the tradition of Sanskrit non-dualist philosophy/theology known as Advaita Vedānta. Madhusūdana flourished during the reign of Emperor Akbar (1556–1605), and was well-known to the Mughal court at the time of the *Jūg Bāsisht*'s composition; based on the available data, he very possibly lived through the reign of Jahāngīr (1605–27) and a portion of the reign of Shāh Jahān (1627–58) as well. Born in Bengal, Madhusūdana spent much of his scholarly career in Banaras (Vārāṇasī), a great center of Sanskrit learning where the Advaita Vedānta tradition, in particular, enjoyed a prominent status.[1] Among Madhusūdana's compositions is his commentary upon Puṣpadanta's *Śivamahimnaḥ-stotra*, known as the *Mahimnaḥ-stotra-ṭīkā;* contained within this commentary, and later circulated as an independent treatise, is Madhusūdana's well-known Sanskrit doxography,[2] the *Prasthānabheda* ("The Divisions of the Approaches"), which this chapter will consider at some length. At approximately the same time, Madhusūdana also penned his most influential philosophical work, the *Advaitasiddhi* ("The Establishment of Non-Dualism"), in response to the extended critique of Advaita thought offered up in the *Nyāyāmṛta* of Vyāsatīrtha (d. 1539), a prominent figure in the rival school of Dvaita ("dualist") Vedānta. A vibrant commentarial tradition attaches itself to the *Advaitasiddhi* and Madhusūdana's other works through to the colonial period and continuing even into the late twentieth century, one of several attestations of Madhusūdana's enduring and powerful impact within Sanskrit intellectual circles.[3] From the colonial period onwards, furthermore, Madhusūdana would exert a different sort of influence in Orientalist and Hindu nationalist efforts to articulate an essentialist,

unified "Hindu" identity, in which his *Prasthānabheda* played a role, as will be discussed below.

Although Madhusūdana's philosophical endeavors, and even his general biography, have been fairly well-studied by modern scholars, one specific question is repeatedly raised but seemingly left frustratingly unanswerable: how did Madhusūdana, a leading Hindu intellectual of his day, make sense of and respond to the Muslim political domination of the subcontinent? Contemporary academics have struggled to explain the complete absence of any specific reference to Muslims across Madhusūdana's writings—and, indeed, in the vast majority of Sanskrit writings through to the early modern period—searching high and low for textual clues, drawing tentative or unsubstantiated conclusions, or else giving up on the issue altogether. Still, the question lingers: surely Madhusūdana must have had *some* thoughts and opinions on the reality of Muslim rule in South Asia? As will be seen, this lack of any definitive answers is likely unavoidable, given the limited archive available to us, though I will nonetheless attempt in this chapter to provide some fresh insights for the inquiry. More important, however, is an angle on the question that has not yet been properly explored: if Madhusūdana did not engage Islamic thought directly in his career or writings, then how might he have facilitated such interactions *indirectly,* that is, through "wisps" connected with his contributions to the Sanskrit philosophical jet stream which might then find their way into the Arabo-Persianate world?

In this vein, my aims in this chapter are, in the first place, to reconstruct Madhusūdana's biography and intellectual context as situated within the Sanskrit jet stream; second, to bring this data to bear on his doxographical writing, particularly the *Prasthānabheda;* and third, to outline the philosophical contributions of Madhusūdana that, once present within the jet stream, could be subsequently picked up and utilized elsewhere in a context of Hindu-Muslim (or Sanskrit-Arabo-Persian) interactions: in this case, the relevant arena being the *Jūg Bāsisht.* As regards the second goal, it is hoped that a close analysis of Madhusūdana's doxographical writing might shed some light on the character of the Sanskrit jet stream in the early modern period and how it shaped, and was (re-)shaped by, Madhusūdana's own scholarly endeavors, with particular attention paid to the conceptualization (or lack thereof) of Islam. In the third section, I will analyze Madhusūdana's intellectual contributions to a particular philosophical query then occupying the attention of several Sanskrit thinkers, namely, the paired notions of *eka-jīva-vāda* ("doctrine of one soul") and *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda* ("doctrine of creation through perception"). Madhusūdana inquired into these two notions by way of the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha,* citing the work as an authoritative source for the doctrines and thus proffering his articulations of these doctrines as the right interpretation of the treatise. As I will go on to argue in later chapters, Madhusūdana's contributions to the topics of *eka-jīva-vāda* and *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda*

would eventually trickle into the context of the Mughal court, where they were taken up by the translation team and incorporated into their Persian rendering of the *Laghu-Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha.*

MADHUSŪDANA SARASVATĪ: LIFE AND TIMES

I have already noted Jonardon Ganeri's observation that, in the world of Sanskrit intellectual history, "textual" data is, by a very large margin, far more readily available than "contextual" data, an observation that certainly applies to the case of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. Madhusūdana's own treatises reveal precious little about the details of his life, aside from his teachers and (helpfully) the other treatises he authored, while no other records have yet been uncovered that could even fix his dates or birthplace beyond doubt. Nevertheless, several modern scholars have taken up the effort to squeeze every potential drop of biographical information out of his writings—the debates over Madhusūdana's dates could almost constitute a subfield in their own right!—while a considerable body of local legends, oral histories, and other anecdotal data have also been brought to bear on the topic. Though sorting the reliable data from the unreliable can involve uncertain guesswork, at the very least, a *probable* picture of the figure can be achieved, alongside some less certain, *possible* biographical episodes. These possible but indemonstrable tidbits, unfortunately and unsurprisingly, are frequently the most tantalizing, but one can only analyze them for what they are worth. Beyond this, modern scholars have also utilized Madhusūdana's teaching lineage in an attempt to reconstruct the social and intellectual networks in which he participated, a process which can reveal other potential sites for the transmission of ideas to and from Madhusūdana's mouth and pen. Since this literature is already readily available, I will only outline the general, relevant conclusions of this scholarship here.

It is generally agreed that, in all likelihood, Madhusūdana hailed from the region of Bengal. In one of his early works, the *Vedāntakalpalatikā,* Madhusūdana makes two references to the deity Jagannātha of Purī as the "Lord of the blue mountain" (*nīlācala*), a form of Kṛṣṇa associated with the region of present-day Orissa in eastern India. This location was an important pilgrimage center for Bengalis, particularly those associated with the Bengali Vaiṣṇava movement of Caitanya (d. 1533) that was gaining considerable momentum in Madhusūdana's time.[4] P.M. Modi argues, on the basis of certain references to Banaras in Madhusūdana's *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa*, *Gūḍārthadīpikā*, and *Advaitasiddhi*, that he must also have lived there for a time, thus giving credence to the overwhelming traditional accounts of Madhusūdana conducting his teaching and writing from there.[5] In his *Advaitasiddhi* and *Gūḍārthadīpikā,* Madhusūdana also mentions one of his preceptors in *nyāya* (logic),[6] Hari Rāma Tarkavāgīśa, with whom Madhusūdana likely studied in Navadvīpa, one of the leading centers of *nyāya* learning. In seven of his treatises, Madhusūdana further mentions Viśveśvara Sarasvatī as his *āśrama guru,*

that is, the preceptor from whom he received initiation into the renunciant way of life (*saṃnyāsa*), likely in Banaras; in the *Advaitasiddhi,* Madhusūdana additionally mentions Mādhava Sarasvatī as "the one by whose grace [I] understood the meaning of the scriptures," that is, his instructor in the disciplines of *mīmāṃsā* and *vedānta,* likely also in Banaras.[7] Within his own writings, Madhusūdana most frequently cites, from among his Advaita predecessors, the figures of Śaṅkarācārya, Maṇḍana Miśra, Sureśvara, Prakāśātma Yati, Vācaspati Miśra, Sarvajñātman Muni, Śrī Harṣa, Ānandabodha, and Citsukha.

Madhusūdana's more prominent disciples included Puruṣottama Sarasvatī, who composed a commentary on Madhusūdana's *Siddhāntabindu* called the *Bindusaṃdīpana,* and a commentary on his *Advaitasiddhi,* the *Advaitasiddhisādhaka;* Balabhadra Bhaṭṭācārya (fl. 1610, Banaras), who penned another commentary on Madhusūdana's *Advaitasiddhi*—known alternately as the *Advaitasiddhivyākhyā* or the *Advaitacandrikā*—and whom Madhusūdana explicitly mentions as his pupil at the end of the *Siddhāntabindu;* and Śeṣagovinda, who would go on to become a preceptor of the famous grammarian and Advaitin, Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita (fl. 1590, Banaras). Tradition would have it that, at some point, Madhusūdana left Banaras and passed away in the sacred city of Haridvār at the age of 107, but no evidence can be given to confirm this oral account.[8]

Helpfully, Madhusūdana was in the habit, within a given work, of referring readers to his other works, thus allowing us to establish many of his authentic writings with relative ease:

1) *Advaitasiddhi*—Madhusūdana's rejoinder to the Dvaitin Vyāsatīrtha's *Nyāyāmṛta.*
2) *Vedāntakalpalatikā*—one of Madhusūdana's earlier works, a partially doxographical inquiry into *mokṣa* composed around the same time as the *Siddhāntabindu* (no. 4).
3) *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa*—a dialectical work directed against the Naiyāyikas.
4) *Siddhāntabindu*—a commentary on the *Daśaślokī* (traditionally attributed to Śaṅkara), framed around the "great saying" *mahāvākya* "That thou art" (*tat tvam asi*).
5) *Saṃkṣepa-śārīraka-sāra-saṃgraha*—a commentary on Sarvajñātman Muni's *Saṃkṣepa-śārīraka.*
6) *Bhaktirasāyana*—a treatise on *bhakti* (devotion) and aesthetics, composed sometime before the *Gūḍārthadīpikā* (no. 7).
7) *Gūḍārthadīpikā*—a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā.*
8) *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa-prathama-śloka-vyākhyā*—a commentary on the first verse of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.*
9) *Mahimnaḥ-stotra-ṭīkā*—a commentary on Puṣpadanta's *Śivamahimnaḥ-stotra* ("Praise of Śiva's Greatness"), a section of which would later circulate as an independent treatise known as the *Prasthānabheda.*

At least three other works are often attributed to Madhusūdana, but not without dispute: the *Harilīlā-vyākhyā,* the *Īśvara-pratipatti-prakāśa,* and the *Ānandamandākinī.*[9]

Beyond this rather thin biographical sketch available from Madhusūdana's own writings, scholars have had to rely on more questionable external sources for further details of his life. P.C. Divanji and Anantakrishna Sastri, for example, have collected several reports from *paṇḍit* families in Bengal and Banaras who claim Madhusūdana as an ancestor, alongside a small corpus of family and historical chronicles—most prominently, a manuscript entitled the *Vaidikavādamīmāṃsā*—that affirm Madhusūdana's Bengali birth and lineage.[10] These materials give Madhusūdana's birth-name as Kamalanayana (or Kamalajanayana), one of four brothers born in Koṭālipāḍā in the Faridpur district of east Bengal. His family is said to have migrated from the aforementioned Navadvīpa in west Bengal—the great center of Nyāya learning and the Caitanya devotional (*bhakti*) movement—where, after his initial learning under Hari Rāma Tarkavāgīśa, the young Kamalanayana was sent to learn more advanced Nyāya under the celebrated Mathuranātha Tarkavāgīśa (fl. ca. 1575).[11] It was from here that Kamalanayana is said to have resolved to become a renunciant (*saṃnyāsin*), and so left for Banaras. There, Kamalanaya is reported to have become "Madhusūdana" upon his meeting with Viśveśvara Sarasvatī, who initiated him into *saṃnyāsa*; Madhusūdana also undertook his training in Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta under Mādhava Sarasvatī at this time. As he started to compose his own numerous treatises, Madhusūdana's reputation as a scholar and sage grew to the point where he attracted several disciples; he also earned a reputation as a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa until his death at the age of 107 in Haridvār. Other than V. Rajagopalan, no modern scholar I am aware of has taken seriously an alternative report that would make Madhusūdana a South Indian by birth who migrated north to Vrindavan, on account of a lack of any corroborating evidence.[12]

Madhusūdana's dates have been the focus of a great deal of scholarly energy, with certain consensuses having been reached but nothing conclusively proven.[13] The rather involved arguments from all sides need not detain us here.[14] Nevertheless, it can thankfully be said, more or less all scholars are in agreement that Madhusūdana was active in the latter half of the sixteenth century, with the majority of scholars favoring dates of approximately 1540–1640. The most interesting concrete resource relevant to the question of Madhusūdana's dates, from the perspective of this study, is the mention of Madhusūdana made by Abū al-Fażl (d. 1602)—Emperor Akbar's court historian, secretary, and confidant—in the former's Persian history of Akbar's reign, the *Akbar-nāmah,* completed in 1597 (notably, the same year the *Jūg Bāsisht* was composed). Within the third volume of the *Akbar-nāmah,* known as the *Āʾīn-i Akbarī,* Abū al-Fażl compiled a list of the "learned men of Akbar's time," divided into five hierarchically ordered classes (*āʾīn* number 30, book II). There, among the very highest class of scholars of Akbar's reign, we find

mention of Mādhava Sarasvatī (Madhusūdana's preceptor), followed immediately by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī himself.[15] Thus, Madhusūdana's fame had spread even to the highest levels of the Mughal court, though it remains an open question as to whether Madhusūdana ever actually met Akbar, or whether his good reputation simply spread there by word of mouth. A number of scholars have concluded from such evidence that Madhusūdana was necessarily patronized by Akbar, or that he was "a protégé of the Emperor . . . frequently leading [Akbar's] symposia attended by both Hindu *sadhus* and Muslim *mullahs*."[16] To my knowledge, however, no compelling evidence has yet come to light of such direct connections between Madhusūdana and the Mughal court.

Nevertheless, this Persian document leaves no doubt that Madhusūdana was known to Akbar and the imperial court, and that he was held in the highest esteem among some of its innermost circles. This observation lends some credence to the various oral traditions depicting several encounters between Madhusūdana and Akbar.[17] One of the most famous and best-attested oral traditions was first reported in English in 1925 by the scholar-missionary J.N. Farquhar, who transmitted an account from his *sādhu* informants regarding a meeting between Madhusūdana, Emperor Akbar, and the emperor's Hindu courtier, Rāja Birbal (d. 1586). In this meeting, Madhusūdana is said to have brought up an issue faced by the renunciants (*saṃnyāsīs*) of his Daśanāmī order, as belligerent Muslim ascetics (*faqīrs*) would repeatedly attack and harass the renunciants, while the latter could not protect themselves on account of their vow of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*). Birbal suggested, in response, that the order, composed only of Brahmins, should allow armed Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas to join some of its sub-orders. Both Akbar and Madhusūdana, it is said, accepted this plan, at which point Madhusūdana began to initiate Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas into seven of the order's ten sub-orders.[18] Such oral traditions are quite widespread, though, again, not likely to be confirmed or denied.

Given the seeming lack of certain proof, in either direction, for Madhusūdana's direct personal encounter(s) with the elite of the Mughal court, one could, alternatively, seek out an indication of his *indirect* "presence" there through an examination of the networks of early modern Sanskrit scholars, where one might hope to detect a linkage that could explain how Madhusūdana's teachings or reputation might have reached the court's ears. Though likely too late in time, one could cite, for instance, the aforementioned figure of Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī (fl. mid-17th c.), an Advaitin and Sanskrit *paṇḍit* employed as a Mughal courtier who, famously, convinced Emperor Shāh Jahān to abolish the tax on pilgrims traveling to Banaras. For his successful efforts, a "felicitation volume," the *Kavīndracandrodaya,* was compiled for him, containing prose and verse contributions from numerous notables, *paṇḍits*, and Advaitin *saṃnyāsīs* resident in the city.[19] A figure such as Kavīndra—a learned Vedāntin *paṇḍit* in his own right, a prominent Mughal courtier, a scholar of the *Laghu-Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha* (though almost certainly too late to

have been an influence on the *Jūg Bāsisht*),[20] and a highly regarded representative of Banaras Advaitins—could very well have served the function of transmitting recent names and developments in Sanskrit Advaita philosophy to the imperial court. Similarly, Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja (fl. early- to mid-17th c.; again, not to be confused with the *Jūg Bāsisht* translator, Jagannātha Miśra) is another such potential connection between the scholastic Sanskrit activities of the Advaitin *paṇḍits* of Banaras, on the one hand, and the elite of the Mughal court, on the other, although his arrival at the court also most likely postdates the composition of the *Jūg Bāsisht.* In any case, for our immediate purposes, it suffices to establish that Madhusūdana was indeed known to, and respected by, the Mughal elite in precisely the time period when the *Jūg Bāsisht* was being prepared, while the court's continued connections with Banaras *paṇḍits* left numerous possibilities for the reception of "wisps" from them.[21] Indeed, the name of one of our three *Jūg Bāsisht* translators, Jagannātha Miśra *Banārasī,* indicates his own direct connection with Banaras, where Jagannātha could have easily been exposed to the recent teachings of Madhusūdana, a leading representative of Advaita Vedānta in the city.[22]

Aside from these particulars of Madhusūdana's biography, the *intellectual* moment in which he lived—or, we might say, the contours of the jet stream with which he was presented and to which he responded—is also a matter of central importance for making sense of Madhusūdana's scholarly endeavors. One especially noteworthy feature of Madhusūdana's scholarly career was his considerable investment in the articulation and defense of *bhakti* (devotion to a personal deity) as a valid means to *mokṣa* (liberation). Now, scholarship has tended to overstate the purported "incompatibility" between *bhakti* and Advaita Vedānta prior to Madhusūdana, erroneously suggesting an Advaitin "consensus" that *jñāna* (knowledge) alone can lead to *mokṣa,* a stance that Madhusūdana then, supposedly, heroically took to task. Such affirmations, however, overlook important predecessors to Madhusūdana in articulating an Advaitin path to *mokṣa* via *bhakti,* including the likes of Vopadeva (fl. 1275), Hemādri (fl. 1275), and Śrīdhara Svāmin (ca. 1350–1450).[23] Nevertheless, the philosophical terms of this Advaitin path of *mokṣa*-via-*bhakti* were still being debated and sorted out, with the topic of non-dualist *bhakti* still boasting ample uncharted philosophical waters. And so Madhusūdana's contributions to this active field of Sanskrit inquiry, primarily in his *Bhaktirasāyana* and *Gūḍārthadīpikā,* are certainly worthy of note. A number of oral traditions corroborate Madhusūdana's reputation as a fervent devotee of Kṛṣṇa, such as his purported friendship with the Hindi devotional poet and author of the famous *Rāmcaritmanas,* Tulsīdās (d. 1623), as well as his reported interactions with the renowned Vaiṣṇava preceptor, Vallabha (d. 1531).[24] Several scholars have suggested that Madhusūdana, in his devoted submission to Lord Kṛṣṇa, was somehow "caught up" in the devotional air established by the aforementioned Bengali Vaiṣṇava Caitanya, though little evidence has been offered to substantiate the

intuition.[25] The best argument to advance such a claim has been offered by Lance Nelson, who, after analyzing certain parallels between Madhusūdana's conceptualization of *bhakti* and that of Rūpa and Jīva Gosvāmī (the two leading followers of Caitanya), lays out the possibility of concrete interactions between Madhusūdana and the Caitanya tradition. Nelson further emphasizes, however, that other devotional figures exhibited a much less ambiguous impact upon Madhusūdana, notably, the already mentioned Advaitin commentator on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa,* Śrīdhara Svāmin.[26]

More significant for the present purposes than Madhusūdana's *bhakti,* however, was his direct and influential participation in another strand of Sanskrit debate then current in the subcontinent, namely, the polemics between the Advaita (non-dualist) and Dvaita (dualist) Vedāntins. Before Madhusūdana's lifetime, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, one of the main loci of Sanskrit philosophical debate involved the confrontation between the Advaita Vedāntins and the Naiyāyikas (i.e., adherents of the Nyāya [Logic] tradition). On this front, the Advaitins Śrīharṣa (12th c.) and Citsukha (13th c.) composed, with unprecedented philosophical and technical sophistication, their respective critiques of the epistemological framework of the Naiyāyikas.[27] During the same period, as Gaṅgeśa (late 12th c.) spearheaded the responsive reformulation of Nyāya into the system of *navya nyāya* ("new logic"), the Advaitins, through the very process of refuting *navya nyāya,* came to adopt much of its framework and epistemological insights, hence normalizing *navya nyāya* dialectics within the Advaita school, as did much of the later Sanskrit dialectical tradition more generally.[28] Subsequently, as Minkowski has observed, the Advaita tradition seemed to shift opponents in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as the argument with the Naiyāyikas slowly gave way to polemics with fellow theologians—including the rival Vedānta schools of Viśiṣṭādvaita ("qualified non-dualism") and Dvaita ("dualist") Vedānta—over such questions as the ultimate difference or non-difference of the individual soul (*jīva*) from *brahman*.[29]

Into this scene stepped the great Dvaitin thinker, Vyāsatīrtha (d. 1539), who composed his *Nyāyāmṛta* in refutation of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins and Naiyāyikas, but, especially, in refutation of the Advaitins. In systematic, encyclopedic fashion, Vyāsatīrtha made an extended case for the fatal philosophical flaws of the Advaita system, utilizing, in the process, the sophisticated methods of *navya nyāya,* Mīmāṃsā, and large swathes of the Sanskrit philosophical tradition more broadly.[30] Vyāsatīrtha's challenge was one that demanded a response, and Advaitins such as Nṛsiṃhāśrama (fl. 1555) and Appayya Dīkṣita (d. 1592) endeavored to do so. Madhusūdana, however, is the figure to have undertaken the task most head-on, as his *Advaitasiddhi* rendered a point-by-point refutation of the *Nyāyāmṛta,* again making full use of the *navya nyāya* style of dialectic. The impact felt from the *Advaitasiddhi* is readily corroborated by the swift rejoinder penned by the Dvaitin Rāmācarya (ca. 1550–1620), followed by Gauḍa Brahmānanda's commentarial

counter-responses, the *Gurucandrikā* and *Laghucandrikā*. A vibrant tradition of new super-commentaries and refutations continued to be produced throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with a handful composed even in the twentieth century.[31] A number of modern scholars have analyzed the specific, detailed arguments of the *Nyāyāmṛta* and *Advaitasiddhi* (as well as a number of Madhusūdana's other writings),[32] but, for the purposes of this study, I will examine only a very small slice of the *Advaitasiddhi*'s contents.

One of the many doctrinal elements addressed in the *Advaitasiddhi*, which was being discussed among Vedāntins throughout the early modern period (often in explicit connection with the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*), was the doctrine of *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda,* that is, the doctrine of "creation-as-seeing" or "creation as 'seeing only.'" In brief, *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda* contends that only that which is perceived or cognized (*dṛṣṭi,* "seeing") actually exists (*sṛṣṭi,* "creation"), as contrasted with the seemingly more "commonsensical" view that objects are created (*sṛṣṭi*) and continue to exist whether or not there is some perceiver on hand to perceive them (*dṛṣṭi*). This latter view, known as *sṛṣṭi-dṛṣṭi-vāda* or "knowledge/seeing when there is an [independent] creation,"[33] was, generally-speaking, the more common early Advaitin view (perhaps necessary at that time in order to avoid the charge of being "crypto-Buddhist"). *Sṛṣṭi-dṛṣṭi-vāda,* in other words, maintains that creation exists independently of any given knower: whether or not that knower is there to perceive the world, the world just goes on existing on its own. The former doctrine, *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda,* on the other hand, holds that there is no world independent of the knower: when the knower is no longer present to perceive the world, then that world ceases to exist, just like the objects seen in a dream, which disappear upon the dreamer's waking up. Though there were proponents of certain iterations of the view in earlier periods, it was really the figure of Prakāśānanda (ca. 1500)—citing the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha* as one of the source texts for his position—who seems to have put *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda* "on the map," as it were, as a viable philosophical option that Advaitin thinkers could or must thenceforth engage in some fashion.[34] Madhusūdana, accordingly, did precisely that. Throughout his writings, furthermore, most notably in the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh chapters of the *Advaitasiddhi*'s first section (*pariccheda*), Madhusūdana links the doctrine of *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda* with another disputed tenet, *eka-jīva-vāda* or "one-soul theory," which contends that, despite the apparent plurality of individual souls (*jīvas*) in the world, in actual fact, there is only one soul (*eka jīva*), which, through its own "perceiving" (*dṛṣṭi*) and "imagining" (*saṃkalpa/vikalpa*), is the direct material cause of the manifest world.

Two features of Madhusūdana's various discussions of *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda* and *eka-jīva-vāda* are particularly important for the present inquiry: first, Madhusūdana's referencing of the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha* as a foundational authority on the topic of *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda* (in addition to other topics such as the means and stages to liberation,

and the analysis of the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states); and, second, the manner in which Madhusūdana seeks to lay out, critique and defend, adjudicate between, and occasionally even reconcile the various interpretations and critiques of this theory that had been offered by different Advaitin thinkers throughout the history of the tradition. On the first point, Madhusūdana's grounding of his inquiry in the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha* is what created the opportunity for the Sanskrit *paṇḍits* of the translation team, Jagannātha Miśra and Paṭhān Miśra, to consult Madhusūdana's discussions of *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda* and *eka-jīva-vāda* during the course of their own preparation of the *Jūg Bāsisht* translation, a suggestion I aim to substantiate in chapter 6. Indeed, Madhusūdana was only developing a connection that had already been well-established within the Advaita tradition, as Vidyāraṇya (d. 1386), Prakāśānanda, and other Advaitin thinkers had already inaugurated the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha* as an authoritative text for Advaita Vedānta, while also signaling the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha* as a source-text for the doctrine of *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda*.[35] An Advaitin interpretation of the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha* in the style of Madhusūdana, thus, would have been a well-established option within the Sanskrit jet stream by the time the translation team was raising its pens to compose the *Jūg Bāsisht.*

On the second point, the tendency, on the part of Madhusūdana, towards a somewhat encyclopedic accounting of the different stances and views of the various thinkers, texts, and sub-schools contained within the internally diverse Advaita tradition is indicative of a larger trend within early modern Advaita Vedānta more generally. As Minkowski indicates, in this period one observes an increase in the production of doxographies by Advaitin authors—including Madhusūdana's *Prasthānabheda*—that aim to place all extant Advaitic or Sanskritic knowledge-systems within a unified, comprehensive hierarchy.[36] At the same time, works in the genre of Advaita "primers"—geared towards elucidating the basic principles of Advaita doctrine in a systematic, introductory manner—became more popular in this period, including the likes of Sadānanda's (ca. 1500) *Vedāntasāra* and Dharmarājādhvarīndra's (ca. 1615) *Vedāntaparibhāṣā*. In these treatises, as well, the diverse views of the different schools of Advaitin thought are assembled and collectively addressed.[37] This apparent need among early modern Advaitins to grapple with and account for the internal diversity within their tradition is a development that is difficult to explain, though it is tempting to attribute it, as a number of scholars have, to the Advaitins' increasing awareness of the Muslim presence in the subcontinent. Scholars have cited Madhusūdana's *Prasthānabheda,* in particular, as a site that betrays this alleged turn of events.

FEARING THE "MUSLIM THREAT"?

Madhusūdana's short, well-known work, the *Prasthānabheda* ("The Divisions of the Approaches"), is itself only a portion of his longer commentary upon

Puṣpadanta's *Śivamahimnaḥ-stotra,*[38] occurring within the former's elucidation of the seventh verse: "Since the approaches (*prasthānas*) are diverse—the three [Vedas], Sāṃkhya, Yoga, the doctrine of Paśupati,[39] the Vaiṣṇavas—and because of the variety of inclinations—[people think] 'this [way] is best, that [way] is suitable'—for men who favor various paths, straight or winding, you (Śiva) are the one destination, as the ocean is for the various waters."[40] Having to leave aside for the moment, unfortunately, the fascinating phenomenon of a fervent Vaiṣṇava, Madhusūdana, composing a non-polemical commentary on a praise-poem to Śiva,[41] we see that Madhusūdana utilizes this Sanskrit verse to launch into a fairly rudimentary but far-ranging enumeration of the various "approaches" (*prasthānas*) and "sciences" (*vidyās*) that constitute the (in his view) proper "Vedic" (*vaidika*) tradition, singling out, along the way, a few intellectual traditions that are "external to the Veda" (*vedabāhya*) and thus to be rejected. In the end, Madhusūdana categorizes eighteen such Vedic sciences, including the Vedas themselves, the "Vedic supplements" (*vedāṅgas:* pronunciation, grammar, etc.), the "auxiliary supplements" of the Veda (*upāṅgas:* the *Purāṇas,* Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, etc.), and the "auxiliary Vedas" (*upavedas:* medicine, military science, etc.). His overall schema, accordingly, is as follows:

· **4 Vedas:** 1) *Ṛg;* 2) *Yajur;* 3) *Sāma;* 4) *Atharva;*
· **6 Vedic Supplements** or "Limbs" (*vedāṅgas*): 5) *śikṣā* (pronunciation); 6) *kalpa* (ritual); 7) *vyākaraṇa* (grammar); 8) *nirukta* (etymology); 9) *chandas* (prosody); 10) *jyautiṣa* (astronomy/astrology);
· **4 Auxiliary Supplements** to the Veda (*upāṅgas*): 11) *Purāṇa* (including the *Upapurāṇas*); 12) Nyāya (including Vaiśeṣika); 13) Mīmāṃsā (including Vedānta); 14) *Dharmaśāstra* (including the *Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa,* Sāṃkhya*, *Pātañjala Yoga*,* and the Pāśupata [Śaiva] and Vaiṣṇava traditions);
· **4 Auxiliary Vedas** (*upavedas*): 15) *āyurveda* (medicine); 16) *dhanurveda* (military science); 17) *gāndharvaveda* (theater, song, and dance); 18) *arthaśāstra* (statecraft, politics, economics, and moral conduct).

Madhusūdana employs the terms "approach" (*prasthāna*) and "science" or "knowledge-discipline" (*vidyā*) in quite a range of senses, referring, at one and the same time, to the "revelation" (*śruti*) itself (the Veda); the proper methods for the study and ritual performance of the Veda; other supplementary "scriptures" (e.g., the Epics and *Purāṇas*); philosophical, theological, legal, and practical knowledge-systems; the foundational texts (*śāstras*) of each of these knowledge-systems, all construed as continuous with the Veda; and the respective praxis enjoined by each of those knowledge-systems. Madhusūdana is clear in presenting these *vidyās* as complementary to one another, rather than as competing "schools." In light of his opening assertion that all these *prasthānas* are aimed, directly or indirectly, at the Lord (*bhagavat*) who is their unifying, overarching goal, the imagery invoked in the original verse of the *Mahimnaḥ-stotra* seems particularly apt: just as all the rivers, tributaries, streams,

and even the rain are ultimately trying to get back to the ocean—and, in many cases, work together to do so, as when rain contributes to a tributary, or a tributary contributes to a river, all on their way towards the same ocean—just so, all the *prasthānas/vidyās* have the Lord as their object and destination.[42] I have accordingly translated the term *prasthāna* as "approach" (in the sense of "path," "way of proceeding," or even "method"), although, like the term *vidyā,* it encompasses a broad variety of denotations that is difficult to capture by a single English term.

What Madhusūdana's treatise provides for us, then, is a broad glimpse into the early modern Sanskrit jet stream, and at least one Sanskrit author's vision for making sense of, ordering, and articulating the internal coherence of that jet stream. It would be a mistake, of course, to read the *Prasthānabheda* as an objective account of the current philosophical schools and scholastic disciplines then inhabiting early modern South Asia: Madhusūdana takes up a fair bit of space, for instance, to explain the views of four Buddhist schools, even though the Buddhists had, by that time, been effectively absent from the scene for several centuries. Rather, as Qvarnström, Halbfass, and Nicholson have suggested, doxographical writing in Sanskrit is something of a literary genre in its own right, with its own lexicon and conventions.[43]

Accordingly, by convention, the Buddhists must be accounted for within a doxographical treatise such as the *Prasthānabheda,* but not in a way that is simply an empty gesture. Rather, Buddhist intellectuals, though effectively no longer present in the subcontinent, had nevertheless left their indelible mark on the world of Sanskrit thought, and so remained quite alive within the intellectual world of the Sanskrit jet stream, even if devoid of living representatives within it. In other words, without Buddhist philosophy, there would not have been, for instance, a Nyāya or a Vedānta tradition as Madhusūdana then knew it, these traditions having matured and developed as they did in large part *because* of their sustained, dialectical encounter with Buddhists over several centuries, particularly in their formative periods. It is for this reason, at least in part, I would argue, that post-Buddhist "Hindu" theological and philosophical traditions, in their foundational texts and educational practices, continued to teach and discuss the old Buddhist critiques and the proper counter-responses to them, for the mastery of such argumentation, in the perspective of these Sanskrit knowledge-systems, was still deemed an indispensable step on the way to intellectual clarity and well-reasoned understanding.[44]

And so, rather than an enumeration of the current "schools" of Sanskrit thought, we could instead plausibly read the *Prasthānabheda* as a fairly comprehensive account, in Madhusūdana's view, of the most important constituents of the Sanskrit jet stream as an *academic* space, that is to say, the ideas and traditions that still had an intellectual presence within the realm of early modern Sanskrit scholarship, having shaped the contours of the jet stream even if, for some traditions, lacking living representatives by that time.[45] Exactly which elements of the Sanskrit jet stream are included is thus, in large part, a list received from earlier precedent.

Beyond this, however, Madhusūdana is able to exercise some individual liberty according to his announced standard: he may select those traditions which, in his estimation, have the Lord as their object (*tātparya*), whether directly or indirectly. What is immediately clear is that, for Madhusūdana, only *prasthānas* that operate in the Sanskrit language have any chance of directing the practitioner towards the Lord and the proper ends of humankind (*puruṣārthas*), given that every tradition that earns a mention in the *Prasthānabheda* conducts its activity in Sanskrit. What becomes equally clear is that, according to Madhusūdana, the most basic criterion for that which contributes to the proper ends of humankind is, in his eyes, a sufficient connection and concord with the Veda.[46] For Madhusūdana, in short, a particular intellectual tradition or practice is valuable to the precise extent that it draws from, is connected with, serves the purposes of, and teaches the veridical content of, the Sanskrit Veda, while anything "external" to the Veda (*vedabāhya*) cannot contribute to the proper ends of human existence in any meaningful way.

Accordingly, echoing a framework that had been utilized in several earlier doxographies, Madhusūdana places all the various Sanskrit disciplines of knowledge within a hierarchy, locating Advaita Vedānta at the apex.[47] Although he is here merely employing a schema inherited from previous writers, Madhusūdana does include a few small innovations that some scholars have argued to be of considerable significance. In the first place, in Madhusūdana's concise treatment of the *nāstikas*—that is, the "deniers" of the Veda/truth, typically referring, by this period, to the Cārvāka Materialist, Buddhist, and Jain groups who historically denied the validity of the Vedas—they are contrasted with the *āstikas,* the "affirmers" of the Veda/truth. In this passage, Madhusūdana explicitly associates the *nāstikas* with the category of the "*mlecchas*" ("foreigners," "barbarians"),[48] an affirmation Nicholson takes to be original to Madhusūdana,[49] but which Vācaspati Miśra, at least, had already articulated in the tenth century.[50] Now, one of the most perplexing and frustrating features of Sanskrit doxographical writing for modern scholars is that, despite the ineluctable presence of Muslims across the subcontinent for centuries, no premodern Sanskrit doxography ever mentions or even coins an explicit category to represent them,[51] despite the existence of viable terminology such as "*turuṣka*" or "*yavana*" in other Sanskrit materials.[52] With Madhusūdana's inclusion of the term *mleccha* in connection with the *nāstikas,* however, it becomes tempting to follow Nicholson in interpreting it as really referring, specifically if obliquely, to "Muslims," rather than as a generic placeholder for "all *mlecchas.*" The question then arises: has Madhusūdana felt the presence or even threat of Muslims to such an extent that, for perhaps the first time, a non-Sanskrit tradition has finally forced its way into doxographical recognition? Interpreting Madhusūdana's innovation in this fashion becomes all the more tempting in light of the increasing prevalence of "Muslim" as its own explicit category within Indian vernacular writing over the preceding century or so,[53] including, to some extent, in Madhusūdana's native Bengali language.[54]

What sort of evidence could confirm or deny that this was Madhusūdana's intention? One wonders whether such evidence might even exist, given the paucity of direct discussion about Muslims in premodern Sanskrit materials.[55] And yet, any hint of the Muslim presence in India causing perceptible ripples within the Sanskrit jet stream is certainly worthy of focused attention, particularly for the purposes of this study. As Lorenzen and others have affirmed, it is often the presence of a prominent "other" that serves as the central impetus for a community's drawing the lines of its identity more sharply;[56] that the Muslim presence might have provoked a scholar such as Madhusūdana to clarify, defend, reshape, or even reconceptualize the boundaries of the "Vedic" community would be a point of considerable historical significance. Indeed, in articulating, at the conclusion of the *Prasthānabheda,* what makes this "Vedic" community coherent, Madhusūdana, perhaps uniquely among doxographers,[57] goes so far as to depict all the sages (*munis*) and founders of all the multifarious traditions of "Vedic" thought as in fact omnisciently knowing one and the same truth, and yet consciously teaching different paths for different souls situated at different levels of readiness for liberation and knowledge. Thus, we witness in this text a degree of unification of the "Vedic" (or "Hindu") tradition that was seemingly unprecedented up to that point in time, painting all its luminaries as entirely in agreement—although, it should be noted, the eleventh-century allegorical drama, Kṛṣṇamiśra's *Prabodhacandrodaya,* comes rather close.[58] In any case, in this regard, there is little doubt that the *Prasthānabheda* played a role in paving the way for later conceptualizations of a unified "Hinduism" at the hands of not only modern South Asian thinkers (such as Vivekānanda and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan) but also western Indologists and Orientalists (such as Henry Thomas Colebrooke and Albrecht Weber).[59] Nevertheless, the question remains: what precisely provoked Madhusūdana to these unique elaborations and innovations regarding the Sanskrit intellectual tradition?

It bears re-emphasizing that the great majority of Madhusūdana's scholarly career proceeded, as seen above, as though the presence of Muslims in South Asia was utterly irrelevant: the overwhelmingly significant context for, effectively, the entirety of Madhusūdana's corpus was the Sanskrit discursive tradition in which he participated, addressing his thoughts to this jet stream's questions, conventions, and disciplinary concerns. In asking, however, what could have provoked Madhusūdana to render these intriguing innovations within the *Prasthānabheda*, the answer that has jumped out to many scholars is: "the Muslims." Lorenzen, as we have seen, identifies the increasing awareness of the Muslim presence as the primary facilitator for the formation of a unified "Hindu" identity.[60] Nicholson brings the most evidence to bear upon the specific case of Sanskrit doxographies, including the *Prasthānabheda,* and concludes that "[p]hilosophical authors writing in Sanskrit do not acknowledge Islam explicitly. But the perceived threat of Islam motivated them to create a strictly defined category of *āstika* philosophical systems, systems that professed belief in the authority of the Veda."[61] Hence, according to

Nicholson, the Muslim presence turns out to be the single most important moti-vating factor for medieval and early modern doxographers like Madhusūdana to cultivate an increasingly unified "Vedic" identity. Nicholson correctly recognizes, however, that Sanskrit doxographies "were not empirical accounts of a state of affairs," but rather, "an idealized vision of the doctrines: clear, unambiguous, dis-tinct, and progressing inevitably from lower to higher."[62] Thus, Nicholson rightly asserts, the question is not "how was it the Buddhists remained in the doxographic record long after they had ceased to exist on the ground?," but rather, "[u]nder what conditions might Buddhism be removed from the doxographic record, and another doctrine (e.g., Islam) take its place? . . . Only a fundamental shift in the understanding of the purpose of doxography could have removed the Buddhists from their fixed place among the *nāstika* schools."[63]

The simple answer to this question, I would argue, is that Muslims could be added to the doxographical roll call as soon as they started writing in Sanskrit and participating in the rules and conventions of the Sanskrit jet stream. Minkowski, whom I quote here at length, comes to much the same conclusion:

> Now, we might have expected Madhusūdana to be more concerned with . . . the pressure of Islamic religious authority on Hindu religious forms. The collective memory of Madhusūdana certainly emphasized his interactions with Akbar and his participation in the 'ecumenical' project at Akbar's court . . . Yet, in his own writ-ing, Madhusūdana ruled out any serious consideration of Islamic theology, even in works where he surveyed the other philosophical positions on offer in his world. The 'yavanas' (foreigners) were too far outside the Vedic fold. Instead, Madhusūdana devoted his efforts to the argument with the Dvaitins. . . . Dialogue or confrontation with comparable Islamic doctrines, after all, would have been conducted without the shared ground rules, textual presuppositions and philosophical commitments of the universe of Sanskritic discourse, unless Madhusūdana made the effort to create them anew for this ecumenical purpose. It would have been very difficult to bring such a dialogue up to the level of philosophical seriousness that Madhusūdana could expect from the start in engaging with the Dvaitins.[64]

Madhusūdana simply did not have the linguistic and conceptual tools at his dis-posal to seriously engage Islamic thought and practice at the level of refined dia-lectic; perhaps he could have set out to generate such a scholarly apparatus, but he had far more interesting and intellectually rewarding ways to spend his energies. Sanskrit philosophy, by this point, had become so technical, so standardized in its method and epistemological presuppositions, and so "full" of such a dazzling array of figures and ideas and arguments, that entrance into the club, so to speak, came only after copious prerequisites. For a non-Sanskrit-writing tradition to be included within such an enterprise could only be, at best, a rare, exceptional occa-sion. By the early modern period, accordingly, to start a new, historically unprec-edented dialogue with a given non-Hindu community could most easily occur on the more "neutral" territory of a vernacular or a "young" scholastic language

whose conventions had not yet been so set and deeply entrenched. As I will argue in the chapters to come, Persian was a viable option to fit the latter bill.

Even beyond the conventions of the Sanskrit jet stream, I would further submit that, in considering the question of Sanskritic engagement with the "other," how thinkers conceptualized the nature of the Sanskrit language also needs to be taken into account. For Madhusūdana—indeed, for most Sanskrit thinkers at this time— the Sanskrit language was "the language of the gods in the world of men," that is, the one and only language in which revelation (*śruti*) was uniquely conveyed to humankind in the form of the Vedas, and without which *mokṣa* (liberation) or *jñāna* (liberative knowledge) could simply never be realized. In other words, without *śruti*—which happens to be in Sanskrit, and in no other language—there is simply no hope of attaining *mokṣa,* and *mokṣa,* for someone like Madhusūdana, is perhaps the one and only matter of genuine importance. Taken in this light, Sanskrit scholars' exasperating "Indocentrism," as Halbfass describes it, is perhaps less an irrational and excessive "self-isolation," but rather, a principled prioritization of that which is most vitally important in their own eyes: there may often be a profuse layering of Brahminical chauvinism, no doubt, but such arrogance may nonetheless be informed by this deeper rationale, namely, the belief that Sanskrit and the Sanskrit "revelation" alone can provide that which is most essential and enduring.[65] If what Madhusūdana really cares about is *mokṣa,* and *mokṣa* is impossible without Sanskrit, then what could there really be to learn from a Muslim, for instance, that would be of any real significance? Anything learned could only be, at best, secondary or accidental, so why bother looking?

Indeed, this deeper rationale arguably reveals itself once the *Prasthānabheda* is compared against the doxographical portions of Madhusūdana's other writings. Of all his treatises, the *Vedāntakalpalatikā* and *Siddhāntabindu* contain the most relevant material of a doxographical orientation. As I have argued at greater length elsewhere, in the *Vedāntakalpalatikā,*[66] Madhusūdana again makes use of the *āstika/nāstika* distinction, the latter category including two subgroups of the Materialists (Cārvākas), two subgroups of Buddhists, and the Jains. The *āstika* category, in turn, contains an even broader selection of Sanskrit intellectual traditions than is to be found in the *Prasthānabheda.* No group is ever mentioned, however, that could be identified with "Islam" or even *mlecchas* more generally. Furthermore, although, in the *Vedāntakalpalatikā,* the views of the *nāstikas* are refuted somewhat more summarily than those of the *āstikas,* it is far from a perfunctory "casting aside" simply because the *nāstikas* do not affirm the Veda; rather, Materialist, Buddhist, and Jain arguments are laid out, engaged, and then critiqued in the standard modes of *śāstric* debate as a genuine intellectual undertaking. Furthermore, the *āstika/nāstika* distinction is actually invoked only once in the entire treatise, and, in fact, put into the mouth of an objector (*pūrvapakṣin*), who is then refuted by the respondent (*siddhāntin*). The objector's suggestion of an alliance among the *āstika* traditions united against the *nāstikas,* in other words, is flatly

rejected: the respondent retorts with the "true" view, namely, that Advaita Vedānta alone is veridical. Nowhere in the text is any hierarchy of traditions presented, much less a cohesive vision of all the sages working together to guide civilization collectively toward Advaita Vedānta. Quite to the contrary, at both the opening and the conclusion of the treatise, it is affirmed that the statements of Jaimini (founder-figure of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā), Patañjali (founder-figure of Yoga), Gautama (Nyāya), Kaṇāda (Vaiśeṣika), Kapila (Sāṃkhya), and Śiva, etc., are all to be rejected, so that the reader may turn instead to Advaita Vedānta. The framing of the entire treatise is also relevant, as the persistent question that threads through the work is: which group teaches the correct view of liberation (*mokṣa*), and also a view of the self (*ātman*) that, without logical inconsistency or incoherence, could be thus liberated? Hence, Madhusūdana signals clearly that which is most essential in his eyes.

In the *Siddhāntabindu*,[67] Madhusūdana's commentary on the *Daśaślokī,* we see an even greater departure from the *Prasthānabheda.* Not only is there no group in the treatise that could conceivably represent "Islam" or the *mlecchas,* but even the basic vocabulary of *āstika* and *nāstika* is nowhere deployed. Accordingly, in the two doxographical sections of the treatise, no framework whatsoever is offered to distinguish the *āstikas* from the *nāstikas,* nor any suggestion of any sort of hierarchy of schools or traditions. The views are simply presented, and then refuted in favor of the views of the "followers of the Upaniṣad," that is to say, Advaita Vedānta. The *Siddhāntabindu,* accordingly, thoroughly refuses to entertain any notion of a "(proto-)Hindu unification," and indeed routinely undermines the idea. The framing of the treatise, furthermore, is relevant, as Madhusūdana structures the *Siddhāntabindu* around the "great saying" (*mahāvākya*) "That thou art" (*tat tvam asi*). Now, the Advaita tradition has long considered the hearing of such *mahāvākyas* to be the central if not sole means of achieving liberation, although doubts and confusions over the semantics of these Vedic utterances prevent the dawning of realization within the aspirant.[68] Refuting the Materialists, Buddhists, and Jains, along with all other schools, accordingly, performs the crucial soteriological function of clearing away delusions and uncertainties over the meanings of the *mahāvākya*'s words—are "you" really your body? Your consciousness? Is "that" God the creator of the world? What, then, is "your" relationship with "that"?—without which *mokṣa* is simply not possible. In answer to the above question of why long-absent "*nāstika*" groups continued to be engaged within early modern doxographies, then, this framing of the *Siddhāntabindu* provides a clear answer: even if practitioners of those particular traditions are no longer to be found, doubts posed by their ideas and arguments can nevertheless persist, posing mental confusions and obstacles against liberation within living individuals today that simply must be addressed.

These two additional doxographic offerings within Madhusūdana's corpus, accordingly, do not at all echo the distinctive, peculiar features of his *Prasthānabheda.* What could account for this discrepancy? Modern scholars generally consider the

Vedāntakalpalatikā and the *Siddhāntabindu* to be two of Madhusūdana's earliest works, given that at least one of them is referenced in nearly all of his other writings. These two texts, furthermore, are generally believed to have been composed around the same time, since they each mention one another. The *Śivamahimnaḥ-stotra-ṭīkā,* meanwhile, explicitly references the *Vedāntakalpalatikā,* and contains an arguable reference to the *Siddhāntabindu.*[69] It seems fairly certain, accordingly, that both the *Vedāntakalpalatikā* and the *Siddhāntabindu* were composed prior to the *Prasthānabheda.* Could it be that events in Madhusūdana's life in the intervening years prompted him to develop new views, or, perhaps, to emphasize or render explicit certain views that he kept quieter in his younger years? One could only speculate that, as Madhusūdana traveled across different regions of South Asia—or, perhaps, as his status grew more prominent and he took on new roles and responsibilities—he might have perceived a need for certain types of teachings over others. Alternately, if Madhusūdana's contacts with Muslims grew over the years, maybe even at the Mughal court, this might have prompted him to begin to re-envision the boundaries of his own religious and intellectual community.

All such suggestions, however, are inescapably speculative, as most would be that are based on Madhusūdana's tendentious biography. And so more concrete evidence must be sought elsewhere. On this front, we can refer to two of Madhusūdana's other writings: the aforementioned *Bhaktirasāyana,* a treatise on *bhakti* (devotion), and the *Gūḍārthadīpikā,* Madhusūdana's commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā,* itself also containing a considerable volume of discussion on the topic of *bhakti.* Based on Madhusūdana's cross-references, it is clear that the *Bhaktirasāyana* predates the *Gūḍārthadīpikā,* the former being one of his earliest compositions. As Lance Nelson describes in his comparison of the presentation of *bhakti* between the two texts, a significant discrepancy has occurred: in the *Bhaktirasāyana,* Nelson argues, the young Madhusūdana boldly affirms for *bhakti,* against the grain of nearly all preceding Advaita tradition, a status equal to, if not surpassing, that of *jñāna* (knowledge), as he defends the former as an independent means to *mokṣa* (liberation) available to all regardless of gender or social background. In the "more sober" *Gūḍārthadīpikā,* in contrast, Madhusūdana "domesticates" *bhakti* into more conventional Advaitin sensibilities, restricting the attainment of the highest levels of *bhakti* only to male Brahmins who have formally renounced the world (*saṃnyāsa*).[70] While, again, it might be tempting to attribute this shift to Madhusūdana's "exuberant youthfulness" versus his "sober maturity," Nelson disagrees, given that, in the *Gūḍārthadīpikā,* Madhusūdana repeatedly refers his readers back to the *Bhaktirasāyana,* which "disallows the simple explanation that, having changed his mind, he had repudiated the teaching of his earlier work."[71] Instead, Nelson suggests that, between the two works, Madhusūdana "is simply speaking to different audiences and adjusting his discourse accordingly," aiming to bring educated *bhakta* devotees closer to an Advaita perspective, in the first case, and to recommend *bhakti* to his fellow Advaitin renunciants, in the second.[72]

Although I view Nelson to have rather overstated the discrepancy between the *Bhaktirasāyana* and *Gūḍārthadīpikā*,[73] as mentioned above, he has nevertheless offered us a promising key: the question of *audience.* The *Vedāntakalpalatikā* and *Siddhāntabindu,* for instance, are, philosophically-speaking, rather challenging texts, clearly meant for advanced readers of some sort, while the *Prasthānabheda* is written in a far more basic and accessible style. Indeed, the *Prasthānabheda* announces its own audience in its opening section: the treatise was written "for the sake of the cultivation of *bālas.*" Now, a *bāla* could be a "novice" or someone "inexperienced" or "lacking in knowledge"; the most literal sense of *bāla,* however, is that of a "youth" or "child." If we follow the literal sense, this means that the *Prasthānabheda* was intended for young students at the early stages of their studies, a suggestion that accords with the simple language of the text and its exceptionally introductory character. If we reflect, additionally, upon the original context of the *Prasthānabheda* before it was re-rendered as an independent treatise, one could readily imagine a slightly different though comparable story: taking advantage of the *Śivamahimnaḥ-stotra*'s status as a devotional poem intended for broad popular appeal, Madhusūdana could conceivably have intended his commentary to fulfill a function of public education.[74] Given the cross-sectarian context of the commentary, with a Vaiṣṇava Advaitin offering an interpretation of a Śaiva hymn, Madhusūdana may well have grasped the opportunity to promote a vision of a coherent, ecumenical "Vedic" tradition, a vision plausibly edifying in various ways for an educated but non-scholarly "Hindu" public at large. In contrast, Madhusūdana tells us that he composed the *Siddhāntabindu* for one of his closest disciples, Balabhadra, while the dialectical sophistication of the *Vedāntakalpalatikā* clearly presupposes an intelligent audience already steeped in Sanskrit learning and well-trained in philosophical method. The audience for these latter two doxographies, in short, is completely different, and considerably more scholastically and philosophically advanced, than for the *Prasthānabheda.*

In light of the above, it should come as no surprise if Madhusūdana accordingly tailored his treatises to such significantly divergent audiences. While writing for "young students," "novices," or even those just a bit "dull," Madhusūdana presents a unified vision of the "Vedic" Sanskrit tradition, highly respectful of all its branches of learning, introducing readers to most of its basic constituents even while gently steering them towards an Advaita worldview and away from anything "extra-Vedic." The potential benefit of such a tone and content for a fresh new student, in terms of cultivating an affection and attachment for the "Vedic" tradition, is not too difficult to imagine; the more advanced and committed students of the *Vedāntakalpalatikā* or *Siddhāntabindu,* meanwhile, could likely dispense with such preliminary pleasantries. Accordingly, it may well be the case that Madhusūdana's unique vision of the unanimous founder-sages (*munis*) was less some principled, deliberate transformation to the doxographical genre, and more a particular propaedeutic teaching tool applied to a specific context or audience. The reference

to the *mlecchas* is undeniably present in the *Prasthānabheda,* which could indeed suggest some perceived need, on the part of Madhusūdana, to communicate something to his readers about Muslims; on the other hand, in an introductory work, the fleeting and easily missed reference could very well be simply generic and nothing especially pointed or significant. In general, one could at least say that approaching the *Prasthānabheda* as a "student primer" casts Madhusūdana's unification of the *munis* in a potentially new light, suggesting less a beleaguered Hindu becoming increasingly fearful of the "threat" of Muslims and hence desperately trying to hold his tradition together, and more a teacher offering a perhaps strategically exaggerated account of the unity of the Sanskrit tradition to his young students, in the hopes of pushing them along in the "right" direction.

Nevertheless, it is still instructive to pause in order to search for alternative explanations to the apparent "unificatory" trend of early modern Hindu thought, other than the oft-repeated and oft-assumed (often without a great deal of evidence) "Muslim presence/threat." As much as the latter may indeed have been a determining factor, it should also be recalled that the early modern era was a period of immense fertility and productivity for Sanskrit intellectuals.[75] The Sanskrit jet stream, in other words, seemed to be doing just fine, and so one would hope for a more textured account of the precise character of this "Muslim threat." Certainly Madhusūdana's compositions do not betray the signs of an "epistemological crisis" of the sort articulated by MacIntyre.[76] Unlike the calls for a fundamental Hindu reform that would become increasingly common under British colonial rule, I read Madhusūdana's compositions, in contrast, to be brimming with confidence in the Sanskrit intellectual tradition's ability to provide everything that a tradition should provide. The further observations that Vācaspati Miśra had already associated the *nāstikas* with the *mlecchas*, and that Kṛṣṇamiśra's *Prabodhacandrodaya* had already presented a popularizing vision of dramatic *āstika* unity, both in periods *prior* to Muslim hegemony, only further undermines the notion of the "Muslim threat" as the primary motivating factor. Bearing all this in mind, suddenly an attitude of genuine indifference towards Muslims seems perhaps just as likely as one of fear. Strictly on the basis of Madhusūdana's writings, it seems that he cared, above all else, about knowledge, Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti, mokṣa,* and the means (*sādhana*) to attaining them: in the early modern socio-cultural-intellectual environment, he might have been content so long as he was able to pursue them all. With such an elaborate and profound Sanskrit intellectual tradition already before him, and with so much work to be done in response to it, Madhusūdana perhaps had little time, energy, or inclination left to worry about or reflect on Muslims, surprising as that may seem to us today. This is not to say that Madhusūdana ignored or had nothing to do with political or social affairs—none of the above is incompatible with, for instance, the traditional orally-transmitted memories of Madhusūdana meeting with Akbar in search of relief for the *saṃnyāsis* against Muslim harassment—but only to robustly open the possibility that perhaps philosophical matters relatively

exclusive to the Sanskrit jet stream provide the predominant context for nearly all of Madhusūdana's Sanskrit oeuvre.

As for Madhusūdana's seemingly synthetic tendencies, then, which have so far been regarded as a response to the changing social conditions wrought by Mughal Muslim rule, explanations more internal to the Sanskrit scholarly universe, or even to Madhusūdana's personal temperament, should also be considered. Indeed, as described above, even in his most advanced philosophical treatise, the *Advaita-siddhi,* a similar impulse towards the comprehensive and encyclopedic capturing of the internal diversity of the Advaita tradition is on display, as Madhusūdana seeks to present, critique, defend, and adjudicate between the various points of view that emerged from within his own Advaita school on the subjects of *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda, eka-jīva-vāda,* and other topics. Accordingly, let us take a closer look at how Madhusūdana accomplishes that survey—the fruits of which, I will argue, find their way to the Mughal court and contribute to the *Jūg Bāsisht,* irrespective of Madhusūdana's own apparent disinterest in engaging Islamic thought.

ON THE SOUL (*JĪVA*) IN THE *YOGA-VĀSIṢṬHA*[77]

In Madhusūdana's overall metaphysics, shared, in its broad strokes, by most Advaita Vedāntins, it is affirmed that, in the last analysis, there is one and only one true Reality: *brahman,* which is identical with the true "Self" or *ātman.* Yet we all experience the world around us, and we experience it as not *brahman.* Hence, given that the world—known as "creation" (*sṛṣṭi*)—*is* experienced (unlike other, less controversial fictions that are never directly experienced, such as square circles or cities in the clouds), the appearance of the world thus has to be explained in some manner. Madhusūdana's basic account for creation is through the concept of *avidyā* ("ignorance"): although *brahman* is one, unique, and immutable, it nevertheless "creates" the world through the instrumentality of *avidyā. Brahman,* being eternal and absolute, cannot itself undergo any change or alteration in the process of creation; rather, it is *avidyā* that undergoes all the modifications, while *brahman* is merely the passive locus (*āśraya*) or substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*) upon which *avidyā* "sits" or which *avidyā* "covers." *Avidyā,* in other words, is the proper material cause of the universe, the "stuff" out of which the universe is made: the various particular "modifications" (*vṛtti, vivarta*) that this "cosmic ignorance" can assume accounts for the countless, diverse forms of the objects and entities of the world. *Brahman,* meanwhile, is only the substratum that underlies it, unchanged, unaffected, and absolute. *Brahman,* accordingly, is the "cause" of the world only indirectly or by attribution, whereas *avidyā* is the direct cause of the world's appearance.

This *avidyā* has no beginning—it has always been present—but it does have an end: *vidyā*, "knowledge," can destroy *avidyā* (ignorance). Hence, according to Madhusūdana and the Advaita tradition in general, the fundamental goal of

the Advaitin practitioner is to root out his own ignorance so that knowledge will dawn upon him, and the illusion of this world—caused, precisely, by ignorance (*avidyā*)—will finally be dispelled. It is important to note, however, that Madhusūdana would object to the suggestion that *avidyā* and its product, the phenomenal world, are "illusions" pure and simple: a pure illusion would be something totally non-existent (*asat*), like the proverbial square circle or the son of a barren woman, while the world, in contrast, does possess some sort of conventional (*vyāvahārika*) reality. *Avidyā,* thus, is said to be neither existent (*sat*) nor non-existent (*asat*), but a third category, "indefinable" (*anirvacanīya*). This account has, historically, opened Advaitins up to the critique that, with all the work that they make *avidyā* accomplish within their metaphysical vision, they really admit *two* existent realities (*brahman* and *avidyā*) rather than the one that they claim (*brahman* alone). Indeed, as we shall see in chapter 5, Muslim scholars, too, were confused by Advaita teachings in this regard. In any case, whatever the merits or limitations of the critique, Advaitins themselves have long maintained that *avidyā* is neither real nor unreal, while it also disappears at the moment of liberation (*mokṣa*). Hence, the exclusive reality of *brahman* is, in the eyes of Advaitin thinkers, coherently maintained.

Madhusūdana describes this *brahman* as pure, undelimited consciousness (*caitanya*), the only truly existent Reality, and the one and only self-revealing (*svaprakāśa*) entity. Like a light, which, by its very nature, reveals itself and reveals other objects, so too *brahman*, pure consciousness, spontaneously reveals itself and the objects of the universe, which are, in themselves, the non-conscious (*jaḍa*) products of *avidyā. Brahman,* being the substratum of *avidyā,* is hence that which underlies the universe, with *avidyā* as a covering upon it: *brahman* "shines through" the *avidyā*-covering, revealing all the objects contained within *avidyā* in the process. At one point, in answering a critique made by the Viśiṣṭādvaitin Rāmānuja (d. 1137), Madhusūdana invokes the image of the sun in a cloudy sky: *brahman,* the sun, spontaneously reveals itself, but a cloud (*avidyā*) may cover the sun, giving the beholder the mistaken impression that the sun is not there.[78] Without the presence of the sun, furthermore, the sky would be pitch black, and the clouds would not appear at all; it is only when the sun is present that all the clouds, in all their myriad shapes and forms, are revealed. Accordingly, like the clouds, Madhusūdana attributes to *avidyā* two distinct "powers" (*śaktis*): the power of "concealment" (*āvaraṇa śakti*) and the power of "projection" (*vikṣepa śakti*). Through its concealing (*āvaraṇa*) power, *avidyā* hides the real nature of *brahman* as undelimited, infinite, pure consciousness, causing it to appear as limited, finite, and non-conscious, just as the cloud blocks the pure, brilliant light of the sun and renders it dull, weak, and diffuse. Through its projecting (*vikṣepa*) power, *avidyā* projects its own illusory qualities onto *brahman* in the form of the universe, just as the cloud makes the beholder mistakenly think that sunlight is grey, that the sun has the shape of a cloud, etc.[79]

Among all the objects in the world that are other than *brahman,* three in particular garner extended attention from Madhusūdana: *jīva,* the individual person or "soul"; *īśvara,* the Lord and Creator; and *sākṣin,* the omniscient "witness" who is the revealer of all perceived objects. *Brahman,* pure consciousness, when it becomes associated with *avidyā,* illusorily appears as each of these three (as is true of all objects in the world). Advaitins disagree, however, over the particular nature of *brahman*'s association with *avidyā* that produces these three manifestations, and have accordingly crafted rival models and frameworks to account for the relationship. In his *Advaitasiddhi*—and also in other texts, particularly the *Siddhāntabindu*—Madhusūdana expounds all of these frameworks and attempts to adjudicate between them. According to Madhusūdana, the first grand distinction between the models occurs over the question of the *jīva* (soul): are there many *jīvas* (*aneka jīva*), or is there really only one (*eka jīva*)? Those who opt for the first option—that there are many *jīvas*—are further subdivided into three camps: 1) the proponents of *ābhāsavāda* (doctrine of "semblance," *ābhāsa*), 2) the proponents of *pratibimbavāda* (doctrine of "reflection," *pratibimba*), and 3) the proponents of *avacchedavāda* (doctrine of "delimitation," *avaccheda*). As for those who opt for the second option—that there is really only one *jīva*—Madhusūdana identifies this group with the abovementioned doctrine of *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda,* within which he enumerates two camps.

Madhusūdana begins his account in the *Advaitasiddhi* with the first subgroup within the group that affirms the existence of many *jīvas* (*aneka-jīva-vāda*), namely, the *ābhāsavādins* (i.e., proponents of the doctrine of "semblance" or "appearance"). The *ābhāsavādin* doctrine aims to emphasize, in particular, the thoroughgoing unreality of creation (*sṛṣṭi*), going so far as to assert that "there is no creation as such."[80] According to this group, the only entity that ever really "appears" is consciousness, which is, in reality, changeless; any purported appearance that is other than pure, immutable consciousness, then, is in fact only an illusion or "semblance" (*ābhāsa*), as discussed in the previous chapter.[81] What is real is the sun; the cloud is utterly *not* the sun, and so, to take the latter as real would be an error pure and simple. The *ābhāsavādins* thus begin with the one and only Reality: *brahman* or the Self (*ātman*). This Self becomes conditioned (*upahita*) by *avidyā* and, owing to the influence of *avidyā,* mistakenly becomes identified with that conditioned state. This conditioned self, identified with its conditioned state, however mistakenly, is known as *īśvara,* the Creator of the world, and also the *sākṣin,* the omniscient Witness over the world. On this point, the *ābhāsavādins* are quick to interject that the pure Self does not *itself* fall prey to the delusion of identifying itself with that conditioned state, because it, after all, remains above the whole fray; rather, only the *conditioned* self (*upahita ātman*) can become the object of such misidentification. We might say, by way of analogy, that the sun itself will ever be the sun, but the particular bit of light that produces a mirage can be misidentified as a lake, which, of course, is not really there.

In turn, the pure Self also becomes conditioned (*upahita*) by a particular modification (*vṛtti*) of *avidyā* called the "intellect" or *buddhi,* and, again, becomes identified with that particular conditioned state. This form of the conditioned self is called the *jīva,* which, through a lack of discrimination, mistakenly thinks itself to be the doer (*kartṛ*), the enjoyer (*bhoktṛ*), and the knower (*jñātṛ*), when, in actuality, it is only failing to recognize its true identity with *ātman/brahman.* The intellect or *buddhi* is different in each body, while there are also countless bodies in the world, and so, these "*jīva* semblances" are also countless. *Avidyā* per se, however—that is, the "cosmic *avidyā,*" as contrasted with each person's individual ignorance—is one; thus, the Self conditioned by the one *avidyā*—that is, *īśvara*—is also one.[82]

We could thus summarize *ābhāsavāda* as follows:

Ātman → (conditioned [*upahita*] by, and identified with, ***avidyā***) = *īśvara, sākṣin*
Ātman → (conditioned [*upahita*] by, and identified with, ***buddhi***) = *jīva*

As for the second subgroup of the *aneka-jīva-vādins,* the *pratibimbavādins* (proponents of the doctrine of "reflection"), their doctrine utilizes the idea of a reflection to emphasize, contra the *ābhāsavādins,* the manner in which creation is ultimately *identical* with *brahman.* In the case of an object reflected in a mirror, in a certain sense, the reflected object (*bimba,* often translated as "prototype"), on the one hand, and its "reflection" within the mirror (*pratibimba*), on the other, are identical. If, when a person looks at himself in the mirror, he recognizes himself, then it is precisely because of this sort of "identity" between the prototype and the reflection. So, according to Madhusūdana, the *pratibimbavādins* affirm that the Self, pure consciousness, first becomes conditioned (*upahita*) by cosmic *avidyā,* the result of which is consciousness in the form of *īśvara,* the Creator. This *īśvara*-consciousness, in turn, becomes reflected (*pratibimbita*) upon the particular modification of *avidyā* that is the *buddhi* (intellect), the result of which is the *jīva.* Once again, since there are countless intellects residing within countless bodies, the *jīvas* too are countless.

Madhusūdana also mentions an alternative version of *pratibimbavāda,* wherein the pure Self conditioned (*upahita*) by *avidyā* becomes the Witness, *sākṣin.* This *sākṣin,* in turn, becomes the prototype for two separate reflections: first, the *sākṣin* reflected (*pratibimbita*) upon *avidyā* becomes *īśvara;* second, the *sākṣin* reflected (*pratibimbita*) upon the *buddhi* becomes the *jīva.*

We could thus summarize *pratibimbavāda* as follows:

First model:

Ātman → (**conditioned** [*upahita*] by ***avidyā***) = *īśvara* →
                              īśvara (**reflected** [*pratibimbita*] upon ***buddhi***) = *jīva*

Second model:

Ātman → (**conditioned** [*upahita*] by ***avidyā***) = *sākṣin* →
                    sākṣin (**reflected** [*pratibimbita*] upon ***avidyā***) = *īśvara*
                    sākṣin (**reflected** [*pratibimbita*] upon ***buddhi***) = *jīva*

As for the third and final subgroup of the *aneka-jīva-vādins,* the *avacchedavādins* (i.e., proponents of the doctrine of "delimitation"), Madhusūdana describes their model as being quite different. He identifies the *avacchedavādins* as those belonging to the so-called "Bhāmatī" sub-school of Advaita Vedānta, which finds its classical expression in Vācaspati Miśra's (ca. 960) super-commentary upon Śaṅkarācārya's *Brahmasūtra* commentary; the *ābhāsavāda* and *pratibimbavāda* models, presumably, are more reflective of Advaita's "Vivaraṇa" sub-school, tracing its lineage through Prakāśātman's (ca. 975) *Vivaraṇa* super-commentary on Padmapāda's (fl. ca. 800) own *Pañcapādikā* super-commentary on the first five sections of Śaṅkarācārya's *Brahmasūtra* commentary.[83] The Bhāmatī sub-school resisted the idea that *brahman* could have any direct connection whatsoever with *avidyā. Brahman,* after all, is Reality, knowledge, and pure consciousness, so ignorance (*avidyā*) should become entirely obliterated on contact with it. Accordingly, the *avacchedavādins* rejected the notion that *brahman* could be the locus (*āśraya*) or substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of *avidyā; avidyā* could never "sit upon" or "cover" *brahman* directly—to say so is to suggest that *brahman* could become ignorant! Rather, the locus of ignorance should be, naturally, the entity that is itself ignorant, which is not *brahman,* but rather, the *jīva,* the individual soul. As such, for the *avacchedavādins,* while the *jīva* is the "seat" of *avidyā, brahman* is only the "object" (*viṣaya*) of *avidyā:* in other words, the *jīva* is the one who is ignorant, and *brahman* is merely that *about which* the *jīva* is ignorant. Rather than clouds in the sky occluding the sun, for *avacchedavādins,* the impediment rests in the beholder himself, who might have, in this analogy, an eye disease preventing him from seeing the sun properly.

This *avacchedavāda* framework, however, raises an immediate question: how can the *jīva,* itself a *product* of ignorance, also be the "seat" or substratum upon which ignorance rests? This scenario seems to imply an infinite regress, with ignorance depending on *jīva* for its existence—there is no such thing as ignorance without the *jīva,* for it is precisely the *jīva* who is ignorant—but the *jīva,* in turn, depending on ignorance for its own existence, since the *jīva* is the effect/product of ignorance—when ignorance is dispelled, so too is the *jīva,* after which only *brahman* remains. To this charge of a mutual dependency leading to an infinite regress, the *avacchedavādins* reply: quite correct! There is indeed an infinite regress here, but not a problematic one. Just as a plant was produced by a seed that was itself produced by another plant, going back *ad infinitum,* in the same way, *avidyā* effects a new *jīva* and the *jīva* then effects new *avidyā.* Indeed, in the world of Sanskrit thought, where *karma,* reincarnation, and infinite cycles of created and destroyed universes are basic shared presuppositions, this particular infinite regress poses no real difficulties. A particular *jīva* will be born, produce all sorts of new *karmas* during its lifetime, and then die, at which point those *karmas* will determine the character of the *jīva*'s next birth. As generally all Advaitins will agree, this beginningless cycle of rebirth and redeath and the accrual of ever new *karmas* can be

broken in only one way, namely, when the knowledge of *brahman* (*brahma-vidyā*) is attained and all ignorance, along with its effects, is dispelled.

Accordingly, as Madhusūdana explains, for the *avacchedavādins*, in the first place, there is the pure Self, *ātman,* which itself has no direct contact with *avidyā.* The *jīva,* in turn, is in no way a "creation" or "product" of *ātman*; rather, it is entirely an effect of ignorance, as well as the locus upon which ignorance rests. This means that, according to this model, the *jīva,* "delimited" (*avacchinna*) by its own *avidyā,* is the material cause of the universe. In other words, just as the person who erroneously sees the rope as a snake in fact *produces* that snake through her own ignorance, in the same way, the individual, ignorant *jīva* projects and creates the universe. Since, according to the *avacchedavādins,* there are countless *jīvas,* accordingly, in a certain sense, there are also countless worlds, each *jīva* creating and experiencing its own individual universe. Nevertheless, this plurality of *jīvas* all inhabit the same space, and so the suggestion seems to be that the projections of their individual "ignorances" cumulatively effect the collective universe as we know it, shared by all of us though also uniquely experienced by each of us. The object (*viṣaya*) of the *jīva*'s ignorance, meanwhile—that *about which* it is ignorant—is *ātman.* In its ignorance about *ātman,* the *jīva* mistakenly thinks that it (*ātman*) is the Creator of the universe (*īśvara*), when in fact *ātman* is completely unconnected with creation.[84]

We could thus summarize *avacchedavāda* as follows:

> **Ātman** = the object (*viṣaya*) of *avidyā*; that *about which* one is ignorant
> **Jīva** = the locus (*āśraya*) of *avidyā*, and "delimited" (*avacchinna*) by *avidyā*: the "one who is ignorant." The plurality of *jīvas* is, collectively, the material cause of the universe

What unites all of the three groups above is their shared classification within the perspective of *sṛṣṭi-dṛṣṭi-vāda,* that is, the view that creation is independent of perception. In other words, *sṛṣṭi-dṛṣṭi-vāda* maintains that the created universe continues to exist whether or not you, the individual perceiver, are there to perceive it. Taking the *jīva* as an example of a created entity, all three of the above groups admit that there are multiple *jīvas,* meaning that a particular *jīva* residing in the far north of Kashmir, for instance, will continue to exist whether or not a second particular *jīva* in the deep south of Kerala is aware of the former. In all of these models, accordingly, "existing" and "perceiving" are distinct and separable events. The final two models that Madhusūdana enumerates, however, articulate the alternative doctrine called *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda,* or "creation-as-seeing." Madhusūdana further links both of these models with the abovementioned view of *eka-jīva-vāda,* that is to say, the view which affirms that, despite all appearances, there is, in reality, only one *jīva.*

The first group of advocates for *eka-jīva-vāda,* according to Madhusūdana, identifies *ātman* with *īśvara.* Here, however, *īśvara* is simply a synonym for pure consciousness (*śuddha caitanya*); the *īśvara* articulated in this model does not

directly do any creating. This *īśvara,* in other words, is sheer consciousness entirely unconditioned by *avidyā.* This same consciousness conditioned (*upahita*) by *avidyā,* however, becomes a single *jīva,* which then proceeds to imagine the entire phenomenal cosmos. Just as, in a dream, the dreamer creates an entire universe through her own imaginings—only to have that universe completely destroyed upon waking up—in the same way, this single *jīva,* under the sway of ignorance, imagines the world (including the other [apparent] *jīvas* within it), thus serving as the material cause for all of creation. Should the one and only *jīva* dispel its ignorance, then, this entire imagined (*kalpita*[85]) universe will also cease to be. Given that the creation of the world is here equated with the singular *jīva*'s imaginations and perceptions, this model falls squarely within the category of *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda.*[86]

This particular model of *eka-jīva-vāda,* which is the abovementioned view articulated by Prakāśānanda in his *Vedāntasiddhāntamuktāvalī* (15th c.),[87] can be summarized as follows:

$$\textbf{\textit{Ātman}} = \textbf{\textit{īśvara}} \text{ (\textbf{unconditioned} by \textit{avidyā})} \rightarrow$$
$$\textbf{\textit{īśvara}} \text{ (\textbf{conditioned} [\textit{upahita}] by \textit{avidyā})} = \textbf{\textit{jīva}}$$

Finally, we come to the last group of *eka-jīva-vādins,* whose stance is actually Madhusūdana's own preferred model. In a notably synthetic fashion, Madhusūdana here articulates a framework that incorporates the central concepts from all of the above models, namely, *ābhāsa, pratibimba, avaccheda,* and *eka-jīva-vāda.* According to this model, in the first place, there is *ātman,* the pure consciousness that stands alone, suffering no relationship with any other entity. Then, as in the *ābhāsavāda* and *pratibimbavāda* models, this *ātman*-consciousness, when conditioned (*upahita*) by *avidyā,* becomes *īśvara;* this *īśvara,* in turn, stands as the prototype (*bimba*) that, when reflected (*pratibimbita*) in the cosmic or "collective" (*samaṣṭi*) *avidyā,* has the *jīva* as its reflection (*pratibimba*). Since the collective *avidyā* is single, the reflection of *īśvara* within it is also single, resulting in the one and only *jīva* there really is. As in the first *eka-jīva-vāda* model, this singular *jīva* functions as the material cause of the world, projecting the entire phenomenal universe through its own powers of imagination, as in a dream. The *jīva*'s perception (*dṛṣṭi*) of the objects of its own imagination, accordingly, is synonymous with creation (*sṛṣṭi*), in accordance with the basic definition of *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda.*

Furthermore, Madhusūdana, collapsing the concepts of *ābhāsa* and *avaccheda,* next describes the "process" by which,[88] during the *jīva*'s creative activities, it becomes delimited (*avacchinna*) by the various different intellects (*buddhis*) residing within the various different bodies, which are then falsely identified with this one true *jīva.* The result is the plethora of individuals in this world, each thinking of herself as a "*jīva,*" when, in fact, she is only a false "semblance" (*ābhāsa*) of the one true *jīva.* As Madhusūdana articulates it, the one *jīva* should be identified as the "I" (*aham*) within each body: while it may appear as though there are multiple "I"s, each "I" is, in fact, only an individual delimitation of the single "I" of the one

and only *jīva.* This *jīva,* hence, is the principle of self-awareness or "I-ness" within each individual.[89]

We could thus summarize Madhusūdana's own preferred interpretation of *eka-jīva-vāda* as follows:

> **Ātman** → (**conditioned** [*upahita*] by *avidyā*) = **īśvara**
> **īśvara** (the *bimba*) → (**reflected** [*pratibimbita*] in *avidyā*) = **jīva** (the *pratibimba*)
> **jīva** → (**delimited** [*avacchinna*] by different *buddhis*) = **jīvābhāsas** (multiple)

Though the very specific details of Madhusūdana's quite complex model need not detain us here, for the larger purposes of this study, it is important to highlight Madhusūdana's identification of creation with perception—à la *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda*—occurring, in this case, in the form of the imaginings of the *jīva.* According to this model, the entire world is really just consciousness or awareness; the various existent objects and entities of this world, no matter how insentient they may appear, are really just modifications (*vṛttis*) of consciousness, just as the world seen in a dream is really nothing more than the modifications of the dreamer's mind. It is also important to emphasize, along these lines, that Madhusūdana's preferred framework alone, among these models, articulates an explicitly cosmic or "collective" (*samaṣṭi*) *jīva,* which provides the "mind" within which this entire universe is imagined and projected. Madhusūdana connects this *jīva* directly with the notion of self-awareness or "I-ness," depicting it as the principle and common source for the sense of "I" that occurs within the mind and consciousness of each and every individual self-aware being. Lastly, as mentioned above, Madhusūdana explicitly attributes this doctrine to the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha,* identifying this work as the doctrine's primary source.[90]

Having laid out these various frameworks, including his own preference, within the *Advaitasiddhi, Siddhāntabindu,* and other treatises, Madhusūdana thus sent his contributions off into the Sanskrit jet stream, where they would become available for others' use. Indeed, in discussing *eka-jīva-vāda* and *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda,* Madhusūdana was only extending a discussion that was already well-established within the Sanskrit jet stream: Vyāsatīrtha, for example, had already critiqued these ideas in his *Nyāyāmṛta,* while Prakāśānanda's rather bold interpretation of the doctrines had attracted considerable attention and resistance; on the other end, Appayya Dīkṣita, Madhusūdana's contemporary, furthered the discussion in his *Siddāntaleśasaṃgraha.* Madhusūdana's notably synthetic treatment of the subject only further serves to emphasize the location of this discussion within a wider jet stream: Madhusūdana, it seems, felt the inclination to square *eka-jīva-vāda,* in some fashion, with the various older *aneka-jīva-vāda* models that had been articulated and refined by centuries of previous Advaitins.

Madhusūdana himself, accordingly, participated in this particular scholastic conversation from completely within the confines of the Sanskrit jet stream. Once released into the jet stream, however, these ideas could travel and be used for other

purposes. As I hope to demonstrate in the chapters to come, this particular San-
skrit discussion did indeed meander into the Mughal court, where the translation
team would seize upon it for their own purposes within the *Jūg Bāsisht*. In the
process, a "wisp" of the Sanskrit jet stream thus found its way into the world of
Arabo-Persian scholarship, despite Madhusūdana's own concerns and interests,
it seems, being almost exclusively confined to and determined by the universe of
Sanskrit—indeed, explicitly so, if his doxographies are any indication.

Having spent the bulk of this study, so far, on the Sanskrit side of the story, let
us now begin to flesh out the Arabo-Persian tradition's contributions to the tale.