



## {7} VEDĀNTA AND SĀṂKHYA IN THE ORIENTALIST IMAGINATION

### INDIAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE CRITIQUE OF ORIENTALISM

The period from 1550 to 1750 that directly preceded the British rule of the Indian subcontinent was enormously fertile for philosophical innovation.<sup>1</sup> Yet although he could not have known it, Vijñānabhikṣu's generation of Sanskrit intellectuals was one of the last that remained untouched by colonialism. Coming near the end of an ancient commentarial tradition, Vijñānabhikṣu's Difference and Non-Difference philosophical system had little lasting impact on Indian intellectual life. Unlike the medieval Bhedābhedavādins Vallabha and Caitanya, Vijñānabhikṣu's writings did not become the theological basis for a popular devotional sect. The demanding nature of his writings and the relatively small place he gives to *bhakti* made such a movement unlikely. Nor was he the founder of a major school of philosophical commentary, like Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. There are records of three immediate disciples of Vijñānabhikṣu: Bhāvāgaṇeśa, Prasāda Mādhava, and Divyasiṃha Mīśra.<sup>2</sup> Bhāvāgaṇeśa's *Sāṃkhyatattvayāthārthyadīpana* (Light on the True Meaning of the Sāṃkhya Principles), for instance, extends Vijñānabhikṣu's project by applying Navya-Nyāya terminology in a commentary on the *Tattvasamāsasūtras*, another influential sūtra collection in the Sāṃkhya tradition.<sup>3</sup>

Vijñānabhikṣu's final follower in the premodern period is Nāgojī Bhaṭṭa (early eighteenth century), whose *Laghusāṃkhyavṛtti* is a condensed version of the *Sāṃkhyapravacanabhāṣya*.<sup>4</sup> There is also at least one record of a follower of a different school citing Vijñānabhikṣu. Puruṣottama, an important commentator on the works of the Bhedābheda