

sexes. I shall now take advantage of his ignorance in this respect and try to gain victory over him.' Resolving thus in mind, she challenged the Sannyasin this wise: "Discuss with me the science and the art of love between the sexes (*Kusumāstra-sāstram*). Enumerate its forms and expressions. What is its nature and what are its centres? How does it vary in the sexes during the bright and dark fortnights? What are its manifestations in man and woman?" At this, Sankara sat silent for a while, revolving the various issues in his mind. He was on the horns of a dilemma; if he did not take up the challenge, his claim to be the master of all learning would be compromised. If he directly entered into a discussion on the subject, it would go against the Dharma of a Sannyasin, as he is not expected to concern himself with the love of the sexes. Though he had some theoretical knowledge of this topic also, he professed ignorance in order to observe the Sannyasin's code of conduct, and said: "Give me a month's time. It is a practice among controversialists to ask for notice. After an interval of a month, I shall meet you again, and then you will give up your pride of proficiency in the science of sex-love, too."¹

The Propriety of acquiring Knowledge of Sex-love discussed

(73–78) On her agreeing to this proposal, Sankara, along with his disciples, left the place. By his Yogic power, he and his disciples were travelling through air, when they came across the dead body of a king who in majesty looked like another Indra, the king of the Devas. His body was surrounded by ladies in tears and by ministers and officers with faces sorrow-stricken and downcast. The king had gone ahunting to the forest the previous

¹ The character of Ubhaya-bharati, known also as Sarasavani in other Sankara-vijayas, is a very intriguing one. To have challenged a mighty personage like Sankara for debate, to have held him at bay for several days, to have discovered the only vulnerable point in him to be his ignorance of Kama-sastra (the science of sex-love) because of his having become a Sannyasin from boyhood, and to have questioned him on this topic in that assembly of learned men-bespeak as highly of her learning as of her intelligence and daring. According to the historians of India's social development, by the post-Upanishadic period, the higher education of women had come to be discouraged and gradually discarded. Evidence of this is reflected even in Sankara's own writings. In his commentary on *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (6.17), where Sankara comments on a passage inculcating a ritual to be performed by