CHAPTER VI

THE PLACE OF PAÑCAPADIKĀ IN THE SPHERE OF ADVAITA VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

The meaning of the title Pañcapādika - Superimposition in the Pañcapādika - The cruel fate of the Pañcapādika - The philosophy of the Pañcapādika -
Being the earliest commentary on Śaṅkara-bhāṣya the Pañcapādika deserves a careful study. It
sets forth the fundamental doctrines of the system, in particular that bearing on Superimposition or adhyāśa
which is pivotal to the Vedantic non-dualism. It includes an epistemological discussion of high value to
students of modern philosophy. Śaṅkara’s exposition of adhyāśa is brief, though lucid, as all his writings
are. The elaboration and the rebuttal of other schools, were left to Padmapāda. The rival doctrines of the
Naiyyāyikas, the Bhāttas, the Prabhākaras, the Vijñānavādins and the Mādhyamikas of the Buddhist schools are
all subjected to a searching examination and refuted with great argumentative skill by Padmapāda. This exposition
of Adhyāśabhāṣya occupies nearly half of the work — Pañcapādikā.

The first four Sūtras of the Brahmasūtra-
śaṅkarabhāṣya on which Padmapāda has commented may be
regarded as embracing the essentials of the philosophy of Advaita. This Pañcapādikā is expository of Śankara-bhāṣya and as such it lives at the outset a detailed account of adhyāsa which is the very crux of the Vedānta Philosophy.

Padmapāda’s only known authentic work is Pañcapādikā. Padmapāda has not mentioned the title of his work nor his authorship of it, either at the beginning of the work or at its end. After the invocatory verses he abruptly states:— I commence writing this commentary on the clear and profound Bhāṣya with great eagerness?  It is only from the commentary on the Pañcapādikā and further explanatory treatises on them, that we know that the title of Padmapāda’s gloss is ‘Pañcapādikā’.

In the Vivarana, Prakāśatman writes "Vyākhyāsyē Pañcapādikām"; in the Prabodhaparīṣodhiḥ Ātmaswarūpa says —


2. "Bhāsyam prasannagambhiram
tadyākhyām śraddhaya ārabhe"
Pañcapādikā, V.5.
"Vibhāje Pañcapadikā"; and Nṛsiṁhasrama begins his commentary with the words "Vyākurve Pañcapadikā".

In later Advaita works such as Kalpataru references have been made to the Pañcapadika. Why Padmapāda should have deviated from the traditional convention of signifying the name of the work and that of the author, in Pañcapadika is anybody's guess.

The Meaning of the Title Pañcapadika

The name Pañcapadika suggests that the original commentary was obviously on five Sūtras, out of which one was lost subsequently. The name can be justified in two ways. The literal meaning of the word Pañcapadika is "one consisting of five Pādas or parts". In the fifth verse in the introductory part of the Pañcapadika,

3. The Pañcapadika of Padmapāda,


4. Padadivrntabhañere garimanaam bibhartiyatbhāsyam prasannagambhīram tad vyākhyaṁśraddhaya ārabhe
Padmapāda had hinted at the meaning of the title of his commentary. The first word in the verse—Padādvṛntabhārena suggests the five characteristics of a commentary viz., splitting of the words, giving the meaning of the words, Vigrahavākya, explaining the meaning of the words in the proper context of the sentence and objection and reply.⁵

The second way of justification of the name is as follows. Pañca means broad, from the root Pac-vistāre. The word Pāda is derived from the root Pad, the meaning of which is similar to that of the root gam used in the sense of knowing. Hence Pañcapadikā means an elaborate commentary on the entire Sūtrabhaṣya.

The notable subjects dealt with in the Pañcapadikā are the following: (1) Mulāvidyā which is of a positive nature and without beginning—Anādibhāvarūpā mūlāvidyā, (2) The projection of an indescribable ⁵Padacchedam, Padārthokti, Vigraham, Vākya yojana, āksepasamādhānām ca.
object in connection with Brahman - Brahmasthale -
Anirvacanīyapadārthotpatti, (3) The twin adhyāsas viz.,
the Superimposition of jñāna and object jñānādhyāsār-
thādhyāsātmaka - adhyāsadvitayam and (4) Superimposition
of the physical body, of consciousness, and of ignorance
(śarīra, antahkarana and avidyā) on the Ātman.

Superimposition in the Pañcapādikā

Śrī Saṅkara raises the question in the intro-
duction to his Brahmasūtrabhāṣya - "what then is this
thing called Superimposition?" And he gives the answer
in the form of a definition - "It is the manifestation
at one place of what had previously been seen at another
place, of the nature of a memory". The Pañcapādikā
explains that passage as follows. Here the words 'at
another place' imply that it is something else that
is manifesting other than the actual object. The manifes-
tation is like a memory - Smṛtirūpah. The word Smṛti
here means not the act of remembering but the memory
image. A superimposition is like a memory but is not literally a memory. For it is something that manifests clearly in front of one as if it is an object of perception. It is however, rightly called 'like a memory' because it is a manifestation of something that has been seen previously. There is no illusory manifestation of silver in a piece of shell when a person is in sense-contact with the latter unless he has previously seen silver. And the definition of Superimposition extends by implication to the erroneous cognition that has the imposed thing for its object.  

The Pāñcapādikā says that it has been shown through the shell-silver example that the silver is not the true nature of that shell with which the sense-organ is in contact. The ego is Superimposed, and is not the true nature of the Self as Pure Consciousness, the latter being the 'non-this' element. That the ego is by nature a 'thou - entity' is shown by the fact that it has to be illumined by the light of pure Consciousness to become manifest.

It is a different point that is made through reference to the example of the double vision of the moon. This is to show that the appearance of a distinction between the soul and the Lord and between the different souls does not represent the true nature of the Self.

In the case of an external object defects leading to erroneous perception may be found in the object, such as excessive similarity to some other object, and defects may be found in the sense organ, such as the disease of double vision. And since external objects have parts, it is reasonable to suppose that while one part of the object was known, the defect should constitute an obstacle to the knowledge of another part. And the whole process of superimposition which implies that part of an object should be perceived and part not perceived is impossible in the case of the partless, self-luminous consciousness.

In the Pañcapādikā the exponent of the prima facie view is also made to raise an objection against

7. ekaścaṁdraḥ sa dvitiyavatīti
Superimposition on the ground that the individual soul is not different from the Absolute. It might be objected to. It is universally agreed that in empirical experience the Absolute is not manifest in its true form. But it does not follow from this that the true nature of the individual soul should not be manifest and should be wrongly perceived. Just because a piece of shell is not perceived, it does not follow that a post should fail to be perceived or should be wrongly perceived. Perhaps the Advaitin will reply to this by saying that the Absolute is not different from the individual soul. Since the Upaniṣad recorded 'Being' as meaning the living soul, it may be argued that non-perception of the Absolute implies non-perception of the true nature of the Soul. But if it is the case, ignorance, of the true nature of the soul would be all the more impossible. For the Absolute is the very nature of the knowledge. Everything manifests through it alone as consciousness, as is expressed in the text "All this shines through its light".

8. Tasya bhaṣa sarvam idam vibhāti,

Kat.Up.II., ii.15.
The Cruel Fate of the Pañcapādikā

After Padmapāda had finished his task of composing the full text of the Pañcapādikā he was seized with a desire to go out on a pilgrimage. He went to his guru for permission to leave. Śaṅkara at first was not willing to let him go, but as he was insistent, he ultimately gave permission. Padmapāda started on his journey. All the time he was carrying the Pañcapādikā along with him. On the way to Rameshwaram, he reached his native village where his uncle lived. The uncle was a true follower of the Prabhākara school of Mīmāṃsa. To this uncle Padmapāda showed his Pañcapādikā. The views of Pañcapādikā are opposed to those of the Prabhāraka School. In the Pañcapādikā Padmapāda had refuted Prabhākara and supported Śaṅkara's viewpoints. After leaving all his belongings including his Pañcapādikā at his uncle's house, Padmapāda left for Rameshwaram.
On reading the Pañcapadika the uncle was delighted with the extraordinary scholarship and intelligence displayed by his nephew in it. But the delight soon turned into hostility by certain apprehensions. Padmapada had refuted the doctrines of other schools with powerful arguments and this caused concern in the uncle's mind. He found that the teachings of Prabhakara of whom he was a disciple, were specially refuted in his nephew's work. Though overcome with sectarian jealousy at this powerful criticism of his own school of thought he nonetheless professed great appreciation for the work externally.

In the absence of Padmapada, the uncle thought that if Pañcapadika gains publicity and popularity, the teachings of his own Acarya will be adversely affected. For the arguments raised in this were irrefutable. So the destruction of this book seemed necessary for the survival of his own doctrine. Persuaded by sectarian and selfish motives, he set fire to his own house, so that his nephew's work would perish in the flames. Returning to his master, Padmapada informed him
about the disaster that had overtaken his cherished work. He bitterly regretted having gone out on a pilgrimage against his Guru's advice. The Ācārya thereupon dictated to him the Catussūtri portion of the work which he remembered. That accounts for the incompleteness of the present work. That the uncle chose to destroy his own house so that the Pañcapādikā would not see light, is evidence enough for the greatness of that work.

The Philosophy of the Pañcapādikā

The Pañcapādikā figures prominently one among the Śāstragranthas of the Advaita Vedānta Philosophy. Padmapāda believes that Brahman itself is the locus as well as the object of avidyā. It is a beginningless material power. Its function is to obstruct the self-revealing nature of Brahman. It is the canvas on which are painted ignorance, actions and past impressions - a complex which produces the individual soul.

9. "Pravṛttirvā nivrṛttirvā nityena kṛtakena vā
Pumśām yena upaśyeta tat śāstramityabhidihiyate".

reflected in avidyā is the jīva.\textsuperscript{10}

The study of Vedānta helps man to conquer the deep-rooted effects of long-standing ignorance. But the study of the truth taught by the Vedānta would have no effect unless the mind is previously prepared for ready reception. The preparation necessary for undertaking the study of the Vedānta is fourfold:\textsuperscript{11} One should, first be able to discriminate between what is eternal and what is ephemeral. He should, secondly be able to give up all desires for enjoyment of objects here and hereafter. Thirdly, he should control his mind and his senses and develop qualities like detachment, patience etc.\textsuperscript{12} And lastly he should have an ardent desire for liberation.

The Pañcapādikā says that until man attains the ability to discriminate between the eternal and

\begin{enumerate}
\item Pratibimśavādām
\item Sādhanacatuṣṭayam i.e.
\begin{itemize}
\item Nityāṇityavastuvivekaḥ, ihāmutrarthaphalahbhogavirāgah, śamādi satkā sampattih,
\item mumukṣatvaṁ ca
\end{itemize}
\item Šaṃmāṁ, damāṁ, uparati, titikśā, śraddhā and Samīdhaṁ
\end{enumerate}
the ephemeral he cannot be dispassionate. He can free himself from attachment to things of the world only if he can maintain calm when he sees them perishing before his eyes, sometimes in the very process of enjoying them. He must be able to realise that there is much pain and trouble involved in acquiring things and must learn by experience that there is no real happiness even when the things have been enjoyed. This dispassion leads to a desire for being liberated from the entanglements of the world. After that he becomes fully equipped with self control, abstinence, endurance, and contemplative concentration. Then alone is he at all capable of undertaking a serious inquiry into the nature of Brahman.

The definition of adhyāsa - "Smṛtirupāḥ paratra pūrvadrśṭhāvabhaśaḥ" has been analysed by dialecticians of Advaita Philosophy and Padmapāda has very ably clarified this lakṣaṇa. As to the first word Smṛtirupāḥ, Padmapāda says that the first part i.e. Smṛtī refers to the object of recollection. As to the
question of the existence of the false manifestation of Kartrṭva and bhokṛtvā pertaining to the self during Suṣupti, Padmapāda shows that when all the functions of the primal nescience are inoperative, those false manifestations also cannot logically endure, as those are the products of avidyā.

Reflection and concentration exist as rational and methodical tools to prepare the way for knowing Brahman. The objective of Padmapada's treatise is to place knowledge of the Vedas through verbal testimony above all else, and in the process he also questions the value of meditation. Meditation is not the cause of immediate perception. Since it does not result in intuitive perception. In fact, meditation on Brahman is a Superimposition that hinders the process of reflection. Padmapāda argues that it is against reason that the self be attained by an act - kriyā - of meditation as its cause. Knowledge arising from the Vedas, however, has the capacity to remove ignorance. Only Vedic testimony brings about immediate experience. The classical example that Śaṅkara and his disciples use
to illustrate the efficacy of verbal testimony is a story about ten boys who cross a river. When the ten arrive on the farthest shore, one of them counts but nine in the group, obviously neglecting to count himself. A passerby noticing the consternation of the boys, counts them and finds all ten present, verbal testimony immediately dispells the previous ignorance. Verbal testimony brings about a rational comprehension of the meaning of words. Elevating verbal testimony above every other pedagogical tool, padmapāda at the same time raises the role of the guru in the educational scheme. The conclusion of Pañcapādikā heralds the unique and absolute need for the guru and his directions.

The first four śūtras on the bhāṣya on which Padmapada has commented setforth the quintessence of Advaita Vedānta. Each system of philosophy has to deal with three topics, those relating to God, the Soul and the world. While the pluralistic and theistic schools

regard these three as distinct realities, the Advaita teaches that the basic Reality - Brahman - is one and non-dual. The truth of non-duality is the import of the Upaniṣads. And Brahman owing to its association with avidyā, appears as God, soul and the world.

Padmapāda says that avidyā, like knowledge, requires a substratum as well as a content. On this issue Padmapāda’s view as interpreted by Prakāśatman in his Vivarāṇa is that Brahman is both the locus and content of avidyā as against the view of Vācaspati Miśra that avidyā has Brahman as its object and jīva as its support.

This is one of the fundamental points of difference between the Vivarāṇa line of interpretation and the Bhamati line of interpretation. On the subject of causality of Brahman, Padmapāda says that, that on which the world-appearance is manifested, that Brahman is the cause of the world. As regards the nature of the Universe, Padmapāda holds that it is indeterminable in the sense of not being either real like Brahman or unreal like an absolute nothing. In other words, he defines mithyātvaṁ.
or indeterminability as सदासदलक्षणात्वम्.

Dasgupta says that -- "This चन्द्रपदिका is one of the most important of the Vedanta works known to us". Because of the greatness of this work Śaṅkara admires it and calls it the "Vijayadindima" of the Vedānta. Padmapāda's commentary on the bhasya, is known as the Tīka, the first part being styled the चन्द्रपदिका, the rest Vṛtti. From internal evidence it is perceived that Padmapāda in all probability wrote his gloss on the entire bhasya, but what is left is only the Tīka relating to the bhasya on the Catuṣṭūtri portion. The place of the Vivarana school in the history of Advaitic thought is spread through the चन्द्रपदिका.

Jīvanmukti or freedom in its embodied state, is a doctrine which is cardinal to the Advaita. This is clearly depicted in the ninth Varṇaka of the Pañ- capādikā. It is stated that the liberated person has to wait only till the fall of his physical body to be merged in the Supreme.\textsuperscript{17} The Śruti is explicit that the knowledge of Brahman enables one to attain freedom from the bonds of Samsāra here and now.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17} Tasya tvādeva ciraṁ yāvanna vimokṣye
    ātha sampatsye, \textit{Ch. Up. VI.xiv, 2.}

\textsuperscript{18} Atha marthyo amṛto bhavati atra brahma samaśnute,
    \textit{Kat. Up., II.iii.14.}