Chapter VI

A Retrospect.

It has been shown until now what phases Advaita reached through the Ages - beginning from RV up to the 19th century A.D. There was a trend towards Advaita in Vedic times and it reached prominence, when we come to Upaniṣads, which record various tendencies of the age at random, but still the majority of them aim at Advaita, which is the underlying principle throughout.

The Upaniṣads seem to have given rise to Śāmkhya and Yoga in general sense, in which the words have been used in B.G. or Kautiliya’s Arthasastra. Even in Upaniṣads we get the term Yoga¹, in the sense of physical and mental equanimity. The word Śāmkhya up to the beginning of A.D. appears to have denoted the Jñānamarga, and Yoga, included the physical Yoga as well as the Karmamarga². B.G. added to these Bhaktimarga and the Purāṇas and the various Smṛtis took up these three and tried to arrive at a blending.

Side by side with this synthetic tendency, the dissensions also were increasing and they led to the Āstika and Nāstika Darśanas and soon the classifications

¹ cf. तै अभिविलिते मन्त्राके स्मिरणाक्रियकारणाम् | कालोपमिति
² cf. कमक्यो भैस कालेन भैस | अभिविलिते स्मिरणाक्रियाध्वस्तः | कालोपमिति
started. The Mīmāṁsakas taking their stand on Brāhmaṇas stressed the importance of Svarga and its means Yajña, which soon attained the meaning of Karma. The view was classified by Jaimini in his Pūrvamīmāṁsāśūtras, while the philosophical generalisations of Vedāntas were summarised in Bādarāyanasūtras. Simultaneously with this, the Sāmkhya of Kapila and Yoga of Patañjali were systematized in two separate Darśanas and the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems also arose sometime about the beginning of A.D. The Nāstika Darśanas were recognised as Lokāyata, Baudhāyaṇa and Jain and all schools started emphasising their own viewpoints and were soon divided into sub-divisions.

The Vedānta Darśana also did not enjoy unanimity among its followers and different doctrines were started by Vedānta scholars like Baudhāyaṇa, Taṅka, Gaṅḍapāda and others. The Bhedābheda was already in vogue when the B.S. were composed and Bhāskara taking his stand upon some Vṛttis held it up, when Ś. came to the arena of philosophical debates. Whether Viśiṣṭādvaita was the view of Bādhāyaṇa or not, cannot be certainly said. For Baudhāyaṇa is identified with Upavargṣa whom Ś. quotes with reverence.

Thus the chief opponents of Advaita were the Mīmāṁsakas, the sāmkhyas and the Bhedābhedavādins.
Bauddhas, Jains and others were already cowed down by Kumārila Bhaṭṭa. Hence S' had to deal with the Śāṅkhyas and also Mīmāṁsakas who were different Dārsānikas while he had to face some Vedāntins (cf. तावृक्षिणिः: त्रिपदिके... ) who accepted Bhedābheda and the reality of the world. Embracing the path shown by Gaṅgāpāda, S' established that the aim of the Upaniṣads is Advaita or Ātmaikya which is also the purport of B.S. and that the world exists only for practical purposes but is superimposed upon the Brahman or Ātman through Avidyā or Māyā which is his power.

It was left for his followers to systematize his generalizations further in separate works. The immediate pupils did this job and decided the nature of Māyā, its relation to the Brahman, the nature of Jīva and Īśvara, and their mutual relation etc. From the various illustrations cited by S' they started different views and Ābhāsavāda of Suresvara and Pratibimbāvāda of Padmapāda appeared on the horizon of Advaita. Soon came Vācaspati, who, resorting to Brahmasiddhi propounded Advacchedavāda.

The chief work was to systematize but that was not all. Bhāskara had composed his B.S bhāṣya and abused S'. Hence the secondary, yet important, work was to refute him, which engaged the Advaitins upto 12th century A.D.
The Advaitins which come after this had to show the consistency of these different Vādas with Advaita as well as with S.B.; but still these Vādas were not first considered as authoritative. The activity of arranging Advaita properly and fixing the indescribability of Māyā was still going on, as is evident in Īstasiddhi of Vīmuktātman. Side by side, many views also were formulated in Advaita circle itself, as are given in Vīvarana or Saṃksepa. The names of the authors of these different views are lost to us.

In the ninth century A.D. a tendency was to form definite views regarding the nature of Jīva and his relation to Brahman; and an important step was taken to achieve this when Prakāśātman supported the Pratibimbāvāda of Padmapāda. It has proved the most important Prasthāna, to this day, in Advaita. Sarvajñātman changed this Pratibimbāvāda a bit, keeping his Brahman away from Māyā and regarded Īśvara also as the reflection of Brahman.

A tinge of devotion entered the Advaitins by this time, might be due to the influence of Bhāgavata school. Sarvajñātman regards Viṣṇu as the highest
form and devotes his heart towards him. Or it might be due to the influence of Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja who made much of the personal God. Of course devotion was not altogether foreign to the hearts of Advaitins. Even Śiva is credited with a number of stotras addressed to personal God, but the position of this god was inferior to that of Nirguna Brahman.

The different Vādas appear not to have attracted the opponents much, as Rāmānuja does not refer to any of these.

With Sarvajñātman, practically we come to the end of the development of Advaita. For, the tendency to take up the views propounded so far, and to amplify them is definitely visible in Ānandabodha, Citsukha and others. This age was the age of big Naiyāyikas, like Udayana, and Advaita was enhanced through the dialectical wealth added to it by Ānandabodha, Śrīharṣa, Citsukha and Co.

The Advaita had influenced all the scholars of the then India and it also entered into the vernacular compositions. This is evident from the compositions of the Mahārāṣṭrīya saints like Jñānesvara (who wrote his Jñānesvarī, taking into consideration the doctrine of Śiva) of the 12th century, Nāmadeva, Tukārāma (16th cen.)
Rāmadāsa and others who are much inclined towards Advaita. But they tried to reconcile Advaita with Bhāgavatī Bhakti.

Once the dialectics entered into Advaita, they were taken up and carried to perfection, reached in the 17th century visible in Advaitasiddhi of Madhusūdana. Throughout the 11th to 15th century A.D. one or the other vāda of the three, was accepted and independent compositions or com. on authoritative works were produced as is seen in the works of Ānandabodha, Amatānanda, Prakāṭārthakāra and Vidyāraṇya.

The development of Advaita should be studied in connection with the historical circumstances also. In the age of Independence there was a full growth, while through 12th to 15th century A.D., when there was Muslim aggression, the stagnation started. But with the establishment of Vijayānagara empire, there was some revival of Advaita which was opened to all, even to women, at the hands of Vidyāraṇya.

By this time, Advaita had reached the perfection and there was nothing to be added. The statements of the earlier Advaitins were analysed and annotated to defend the Darsana against the attacks of new Darsanas like that of Madhva or Vallabha. In considering
minutely the Āvidyaka world Prakāśānanda, explained a sort of new Vāda viz. Drṣṭisṛṣṭivāda, which goes with Ekajīvavāda also. Thus these four Vādas and their respective paraphernalia viz. Ekjīvavāda, Nānājīvavāda, Ekājñāna, Ajñānaanānātva etc. were discussed by later Advaitins like Nṛsiṃhāśrama, Appayya, Madhusūdana and others. They synthesise all these different views. The extent of the Advaita by the end of the 16th century A.D. is seen in S.I. of Appayya. The Advaitins who came after them, only commented on the former works or composed small works to explain the different prevailing views.

The inclinations towards Bhakti, of these Advaitins were increasingly displayed and Madhusūdana and Appayya actually wrote separate works on Bhakti. But still the Prasthāna of Advaita, as it came down to them, was preserved in tact.

This, in short, is the picture of Advaita through the different ages. The influence of Advaita on the practical life of Indians is well-known and need not be discussed here. It has undoubtedly greatly impressed the saints all over the India, as visualised in the works of Kabīr, Tulsī etc., who spread moulded the spiritual life upto the lowest strata of people.
The importance of Śaṅkara Advaita cannot be described in words. Ever since the western scholars came across it, they have started discussing it and identifying the views with those prevalent in their own philosophy; and the interest is still not dwindled a jot, as new books are being published every day on the subject. Take off the Śaṅkara Advaita and the vital breath of India would be taken away. In fact, Indian philosophy would lose all its interest, if it is bereft of Śaṅkara Advaita.

It should be considered from modern points of view, so as to uplift the present condition of India.