CHAPTER VI
A VIDYĀ

INTRODUCTION:

The concept of Avidyā is not very clear in the Upaniṣads. But the hint is quite pronounced. Śaṅkara took this hint and freely used it in support of his theory of Avidyā. Avidyā is sometimes taken as the cause of 'adhyāsa', sometimes it is used synonymously with the 'adhyāsa', and both these terms emphatically represent the same principle.

For explaining superimposition, the best example is of the illusory perception of a snake in a rope. The snake is not present, but the rope is observed as a snake. So are the worldly things; though false, they appear as independently real in our perception. In our day-to-day perception, we cognise only the empirical forms but not the underlying reality. This tendency of mistaking one form for reality or reality for the form is commonly called 'adhyāsa' in Advaita Vedānta. The superimposition of Ātman on anātman and anātman on Ātman is the root cause of all illusions.
Post-Śaṅkara views regarding Avidyā:

So far as the question of Brahman is concerned, all the Śaṅkaraś accept as the Absolute Reality, but 'avidyā' is discussed differently by every post-Śaṅkara Vedāntin. Before explaining the view of avidyā by Madhusūdana according to his Siddhāntabindu, it will be interesting to note different views regarding avidyā.

Māndana Miśra is of the opinion that avidyā is false appearance or māyā, because it is neither identical with Brahman nor different from it, it is neither-existent i.e. Sat nor non-existent i.e. asat. If avidyā were identical with Brahman, then it would be real, and being real, it could not be destroyed; and if avidyā were different from Brahman, then it would be like the horn of a hare, and having no existence would never be an object of experience. Avidyā thus has to be recognised as anirvacanīya, i.e. indescribable.

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1. अनीच्छातः - नाविका क्रणा: स्वभावः, नाधीन्तरसु, नालक्षणस्वी, नायि सति, स्वभेदविविधा माया निन्द्रावभवत् हत्युच्छते। स्वभावशैलः कृत्वचिदः, क्वचेवश्च वा परमाये स्वेति नाविका, जलक्ष्तास्तः क्वं स्वयंप्रथौ न व्यवहारार्गमः; कर्मादिन्वितति नायि।

- B. S. p.9.
According to Maṇḍana, avidyā belongs to the individual souls i.e. jīva. Brahman and jīva, both are fundamentally identical, but they appear as different due to avidyā. The diversity of jīvas is due to 'Kalpanā'. Even though we accept that the diversity of jīvas is due to Kalpanā, the question arises: to whom does this diversifying Kalpanā belong? It cannot belong to Brahman, because Brahman is devoid of all imagination. It cannot belong to jīvas, because their very existence is due to Kalpanā. So, neither Brahman nor jīva can be the locus of Kalpanā. Maṇḍana says that the inconsistency of the relation of avidyā and jīva is due to inconsistent nature of avidyā.

Maṇḍana accepts two kinds of avidyā: non-apprehension (अज्ञात) and misapprehension (अन्यप्रकार अज्ञात). Non-apprehension

1. भक्तियेवतुः ब्रजपालो जीवो विभाने, तत्त्वज्ञानो अज्ञातवरस्मेव।

2. क्षण कस्यातिक्रियते, जीवानामिति ज्ञन: | न नू न जीवा ब्रजपालो

— B. S. p. 12.

— Br. S. p. 10
is the cause of misapprehension. In the waking and dream states there are both these types of avidyā but in the deep sleep state there is avidyā only of the type of non-apprehension. Avidyā has two functions—Concealing (कावरण) and projecting (विशेष). Avidyā functions in the waking and dream state as a projective power, while in deep sleep condition its concealing power operates. Avidyā first conceals the true nature of a thing and then projects or superimposes unreal appearance on it.

Mandana has not clearly discussed what sort of a cause of the world avidyā is. But he is bold enough to say that avidyā belongs to the jīvas, and it is responsible for the phenomenal world. Of course he is not very clear regarding the problem whether avidyā differs with each one of its locus i.e. jīva. Perhaps this unsolved question paved the way to the Drstisrṅtivāda of Prakāśānanda. It is notable, that according to Mandana, avidyā belongs to

1. विविधारैयनिकी, प्रकाशस्वःचारिका विज्ञप्तिका, विस्मरणगिरियोदिशिका, वस्तुपरत्वाचारिका कल्पना..., तत्स्मादगुणविविधविशेषन्ति विनियोगाग्रोहो तु विशेषस्य कारणारुपानिकाविविधम्; स्वपनवर्गिरीचीयोदित्यक्षयेऽविव्यवहारोऽपि कारणोपनासनलक्षणवर्ग द्वारा विश्लेषणात् विभिन्न उपपत्तिः।

- Br. S.p. 149-150.
jīva, and when this avidyā is removed, the fundamental unity of jīva and Brahmān is realised. But Maṇḍana does not accept jīvamukti. According to him, jñāna and karma jointly lead to emancipation. Avidyā can be removed by vidyā alone.

According to Suresvara, avidyā is an inconsistent principle, and a baseless illusion. It is the root cause of saṃsāra and is dispelled only by the knowledge of the fundamental unity with the Highest Self.

Suresvara explains that all manifestations of duality are due to the modifications of the antahkaraṇa. When the true knowledge of the Highest Self dawns, these do not last any longer. The buddhi, i.e. intellect undergoes modifications while the self remains unperturbed. But the non-self

1. नाकिन्या विभागः साधनम् ् कि तु विभागः अवधारादिक्षणं- यात्माकीयं निकलैः मृत्युरित्यविषेभी च्छले, तत्त्ता निन्दूः यात्माकीयं किया सुप्रसिद्धमृत्स्यन्मयां स्वस्फलपालक्षां रघु विप्रयागः-पायास्य निषिद्धकान्तपालकत्यागं अष्टजन अष्टजन्ति किया विवेकनैखं बलिष्ठं है। —Br.S.8.13.
   Also See Br.S.o.129-132.

2. उत्पत्तिधिनिज्ञित्वमृत्स्य कुमक्ष्ण किया कथा।
   नोत्त्पत्तिधिनिज्ञित्वमुहृदेशिर्मा ज्ञायते च। — N. S. II.79, p.86
which appears as the buddhi is not a substantive entity like the Prakṛti of the Sāṁkhya. Because, the world-appearance is due to avidyā and it disappears in Brahman as soon as the truth is realised.

Suresvara is more close to Śāṅkara in regarding avidyā as the beginningless, material cause of the world, as also the non-apprehension and the mis-apprehension of the ultimate reality. He is of the opinion that Brahman is the locus as well as object of avidyā. Though Brahman is the locus and object of avidyā, it remains untouched and pure. While accepting and establishing the ābhāsavāda, Suresvara proves this with the example of the prince, who regards himself as a hunter and behaves as such, until he is made to know that he is really a prince. In the same way the jīvas regards themselves as impure and...
distinct from Brahman, till the knowledge of the true nature of the ultimate reality dawns.

Sarvajñātman, like Sureśvara regards Brahman as the locus and the object of ājñāna. Ājñāna is never seen, but its effects are experienced in the form of Superimposition. It conceals the real nature of Brahman, and projects the three-fold appearance of Soul, God and the world. Avidyā is responsible for the mutual superimposition of Self and non-self.

Avidyā is present as ignorance in a person, and is the cause of this Samsāra. It is indefinable and positive.

It has been called by various names. Sarvajñātman regards

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1. तत्‌बाचक्तवर्धनाविवि कुत्‌ समास्क कृति केलेत वाहागौपाला-

2. अभिभावविद्विभाविष्यको देहाधात्ममोक्षतयाःः ॥

3. ब्रजाधात्रिको विषममोक्षात्मको देहाधात्ममोक्षतयाःः वेतुः॥

-N. S.II. 104, p. 96

-S. S. I. 20.

-S. S. I. 318.
both māyā and avidyā as synonymous, for they both signify the cause of the phenomenal world. Like the Sāmkhya prakṛti, avidyā has three guṇas. The pure consciousness is the locus and object of ajñāna, while jīva being a result of ajñāna, cannot be its locus or object.¹

According to Sarvajñātman, avidyā is an intermediary cause (ङार-कारण) of the world. The creation of the world would be undoubtedly impossible without avidyā, but it is not the ultimate cause of the world, the root cause is the Brahman alone.²

The experience of waking condition is unreal like that of the dream condition, Ajñāna is associated neither with

1. कृत्तिकविण्णयत्वमागतिः सतिविमागतिः तिरिः कैवः
   प्रवृत्तिः श्रताः हि पश्चिमो नात्मवति नारि गौरवः: ॥
   - S. S. I. 319.

2. सामायमैतलुप्ति/व विद्वितीया संताकारणवत्तिः प्रकारः: ॥
   सामायकैतिति संताकारणात्ते श्रारं परं भवति कारणात्ता दश्यतु: ॥
   - S. S. I. 323
   कुटस्थलेण श्रवः: कारणत्वानुपपवे: भाया दश्यास्तः ॥
   - S.L.Ś.P.75, 76.

3. गुणसाधन: शेत्यमात्रैर्विध काहे कौटि: पश्चिमकृष्टसरः राः: ।
   पश्चिमकृष्टीरत्वमागार्मिः व जाताकाहे योज्यार्थिर्यतः ॥
   - S. S. II. 130
the pure Brahman nor with the individual Souls, but it appears and is perceived. The question whether ajñāna is one or many has been discussed in detail by Sarvājñātman. Padmapāda is the first among the successors of Śaṅkarācārya, to say that ajñāna is an unreal material ontological principle. The objective world is the outcome of it, and the subjective experiences are also the outcome of avidyā. He explains the term 'mithyājñāna' of the aḍhyāsa-bhāṣya of Śaṅkara as 'an indefinable force or potency of avidyā which is material in character.' He says that this avidyā is the material cause of the world-appearance.

The words such as 'nāma-rūpa', 'avyākṛta', 'māya', Prakṛti', 'agrahaṇa', 'avyakta', 'tamas', 'Kāraṇa', 'Sakti', 'maḥāsupti', 'nidra', 'Kṣara', 'akāśa' used in the earlier literature are nothing but synonyms of avidyā according

1. See: Sāmkṣepaśārīraka :: II. 132 to 138.
2. मिथ्यावाचनिमित्र हृति । मिथ्या च तद्वाचन्त च मिथ्यावाचन्त ।
मिथ्योत्पतिं अविद्यक्षिणयत उच्चस्व आविष्कार्तिते च अविद्य्का जविकशः
शान्ति-शान्तिस्वपूर्द्धाते वो च तथा विद्यमित्र तदुपपदाति हत्वेऽ॥
— Pf. p. 4.
to Padmapāda. Āvidyā is a positive entity and it obstructs the pure and independent nature of Brahman, and brings about its individualisation (jīvatva). It undergoes its special transformation called Ego, with God as its support, this Ego possesses two powers, i.e. power of knowledge (vijñāna) and power of actions (Kriya). It is this Ego that is doer.

1. शयोऽरुपकुलीशास्पुराणीति प्राणे भूतपुराणम् ब्राह्मण वन्यक्रुति- 
-रघुपुरानम् तम् जीवे शक्तिशालसुप्रतिनिधिह दाराकाश-
-रमित न तत्तद्व दुहुष्ठो गीतोऽकृत्यश्रवन्त रावतस्वरुपातित- 
-वज्राण्यक्रमवर्षसागरः प्रतिविभ्य जीवज्ञापारिधिका कवियाकामिश्रे- 
-प्रसांसकारानितिविषिति: ब्रुदुपेठण्याम् च भवनविहृतस्कारामात्रमप 
स्थितित्वा दितिविषा।

- P.P. p. 20

2. तवत्त: परमेश्वराचिनिष्ठतत्लक्ष्यस्यर्णमविशेषाणि विज्ञानन्दियाशिकतिष्ठिष्ठाय: 
-कृत्यमात्रेत्कृत्यकाराय: कृत्स्थाशृङ्खलतात्संपादेक्यात्क्ष्यातः 
हंसं फ्राचणारो अपरोतां अहंकारो यत्स्मेदात्कृत्स्थाशेत्यो 
विनिदर्श वातमात्मरूपि मित्येव मौक्तेति प्रसिद्धलुप्तः।

- P.P. p. 20
of actions and enjoyer of the fruits of actions. It is through the association of this Ego, that the Self, which is pure, is falsely regarded as the enjoyer of the fruits of actions. Nothing is impossible for avidyā, because avidyā makes impossible things appear as possible.

Padmapāda himself is not very clear regarding the question as to who from Brahman and jīva is the locus and/or object of avidyā. He says only this much that avidyā manifests itself in the individual soul by obstructing the light which is the true nature of the Pure Brahman. Avidyā is Brahmaśvarūpaprakāśācchādikā. He seems to regard jīva as the locus.

Padmapāda has drawn a distinction between 'achyāya' and 'avidyā'. The former is highly subjective in character,

1. न हि मायायप्राणांकर्षणोऽन्यां | अच्छायकायामेवसतुरा | हि सा |
   - P.P: p. 23

2. नन्तू न जीवो ब्रवणांकर्षणे हल्यकतम | बाह्य | का ज्यापरंतेये | ब्रह्मविप्रकाशा चच्छादिका विधि क्लर्ये |
and it lays emphasis on the conjuring activity of ājñāna (atadrūpāvakāśitvam), while the latter is less subjective and lays stress on the activity of concealment (ācchāda-kātvam).

According to Padmapāda, Brahman, associated with māyā, is the cause of the world-appearance. That on which the entire world manifests itself is alone the prime cause, namely, Brahman. Prakāśananda, the commentator of Pañcapādikā, explains this giving three alternatives. (i) Brahman and māyā are together joint cause of the world, like twisted thread in a rope, (ii) that which

1. अनुकृतेर्थोऽवैधयाने वाचाधकत्वं नाम यत्स्वैस्ततं तत्साधिर्मिति

2. अतो यदवष्ट्मति विश्वो वितलितं प्रक्षः। तदेव मूलकारणं वक्ष्यति


- P.P. p. 78
has māyā as its power is the cause, (iii) Brahman which supports māyā, the material cause of the world, is the cause. *

Vācaspati speaks of avidyā as being of two-fold and says that all appearances originate from Brahman in association with the indefinable two-fold avidyā; and regards Brahman as the cause of the world. The two-fold activity of the avidyā i.e. concealment of the fundamental reality and projection of apparent one, has been treated almost as two different avidyās by Vācaspati.

Vācaspati, following Maṇḍana, maintains that the locus of avidyā is the jīvātman and not the Brahman. He regards Brahman associated with Avidyā to be the material

1. सैविभवन सम्प्लविते रज्जवा: संयुक्तमुद्ध्यवक-पायवविशिष्ट ब्रह्म कारणालित्वा देवात्मशक्ति स्वगुणीनिगुणिप्रणितामिन्याभिमभिविक्त-पनारणालिता जगदुपादानपायवमायतया ब्रह्म कारणालित्वा वैति ।

- P.P.V. Page. 212.

2. एवमभवशक्तिः क्रोधपाताः जगत् क्रोधविविधस्त, वैस्व च लोकस्य हि सिद्धस्य ।

- Bhāmatī - I. 1.2.
cause of the world. According to him, Brahman as an
object of Māyā residing in jīva, by itself transforms
itself into manifold world; hence Brahman is the material
cause of the world whereas Māyā is simply the accessory
cause.

Ānandabodha regards avidyā as the cause of the world-
appearance. The world-appearance cannot be determined as
'sat' or 'asat', is to say it is anīrvaṇaṇiya and so,
it cannot be the effect of a real substance; hence avidyā
is unreal, for an unreal thing cannot be the cause of
anything. Ānandabodha following Vācaspati speaks of
avidyā as unintelligible and inconsistent concept.

1. एवं अविद्यासिद्धशैल्पकारणं ज्ञानं काेते । - भाष्यकृ।
2. अन्यथा ज्ञानम् वाच्यिलेष शास्त्रसात्निर्माणं श्रवयुग्मातु-
मयायिकारणं न ज्ञातं न कायमां कारणमिल्लान्तं ।

- SLS. p. 77.

2. प्रमाणाद्वारे वाच्यिलेष शास्त्रसात्निर्माणं श्रवयुग्मातु-
प्रश्नशिरसारे अहिति। - पृ. १० (प्रमाणाद्वारे पृ. १०)
According to Śrīharṣa and Citsukha, ājñāna is positive and beginningless and is destructible by jñāna.

Ajñāna is different from the concept of existence and non-existence, yet it is called existent because it is not non-existent.

Vimukttana, in his Īṣṭasiddhi considers avidyā as positively false knowledge, beginningless and the material cause of the world-appearance. He considers māyā and avidyā as one. The locus and the object of avidyā is

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2. Īṣṭasiddhi, p. 144.

3. Īṣṭasiddhi, p. 145.
Brahman.

vidyaranya like others maintains that avidya is beginningless, indefinable and destructible by true knowledge. The indefinability of avidya is a merit rather a drawback. He does not consider avidya and māyā as different entities. According to him, māyā is associated with God, and avidya with jīva. The reflection of Brahman in māyā is Īśvara and the reflection of Brahman in avidya is jīva. Māyā has sattva predominating while avidya has rajas and tamas predominant.

Avidya has a two-fold function-concealing and projecting. In the concealing situation, avidya obscures the true nature of the highest self, while in the projecting situation, it superimposes body and gross material objects

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1. अविद्या अविद्यात् एवांश्र देगापुष्टि

मानयोगाश्चिद्रवणुक्त्रृ आवारणम् हृदये।

विकान्तरस्कवल्लक्ष्यंचष्टिक्ष्णंर्मचे राशिकागामीप्रस्मप्रज्ञाति

- Br.Va.Sara.p.117

विवारासहृद्य वा विद्या अविद्यार एव (विवार प्रेम च देखि)

- V.F.S. p. 175

2. सत्त्वस्मुपकुल्लक्ष्यं मायाकषे च ने मले।

मायाकिं वसीकृत्य तत्र स्थायिकेन ईश्वर: ॥

पृथक्काशी । I. 16.

अविद्यावशस्त्रवस्करागल्लविचित्रादेषोभा ॥-पृथक्काशी । I. 17.
on the pure-self. Sometimes the beginningless avidyā is
1 called mūla-avidyā i.e. root-ignorance. From the supra-
-empirical point of view māyā is tuccha.

Sadananda describes avidyā as a power which cannot
be called 'being' (Sat), for, 'being' is, only Brahman;
nor can it be called 'non-being (asat) in the strict sense,
for it at any rate produces the appearance of this world.
It is the reverse of jñāna. It has three guṇas, and is
3 positive in character. Ajñāna is one or many according
as it is viewed collectively or individually. Just as
trees considered as an aggregate are represented as one,
viz. forest. In the same way ajñāna existing jīvās are
4 collectively referred to as one. The aggregate ajñāna.

1. कन्दर्विकरः पुलिलिभिः पञ्चकाम्। - पुंशदी - VI. 25
2. तुच्छनिर्विचित्रिता च वास्तवी कैव्याः ज्ञित्वा।
          कैया माया रिप्रिबृति: वैत्योमित्तकलोविची।।
          - पुंशदी - VI.130.
3. ज्ञानं तु सवस्तमण्डनिनिं त्रिगुणाल्प्तं ज्ञानिनिः शि
          भावरूपं परिक्षितं वदन्त्यहः हत्यागः नुभवति।।

           Vedāntasārā page.8.
4. ह्ययलां सहस्रश्चत्वाधिपथच्यायणः कैक्ष्मिति च वयमिहै।।

          Vedāntasārā, p.8.
associated with pure Intelligence has preponderance of pure Sattva. Brahman associated with ajñāna is called Īśvara, and this ajñāna as associated with Īśvara is known as the 'Causal body' and 'ānandamaya-Kośa' because it is the cause of all, and is full of bliss. It is also known as 'Cosmic Sleep' because of its function of covering - like a sheath; and hence it is also called the 'place of dissolution (लयस्थान ) of the gross and the subtle phenomena.

Like other Kevalādvaitins, Sadānanda too accepts the two powers of avidyā. He has explained them very nicely.

According to Sadānanda, God is both the efficient and material cause of the world. God is consciousness

1. इव विविधरूपपालिता विविधस्तवप्राणाः।

   - Vedāntasāra, p. 9.

2. इश्वरवेय विविधरूपपालिता विविधस्तवप्राणाः।

   - Vedāntasāra, p. 10.

3. अय्यानस्तवप्राणाँ विविधस्तवप्राणकालसित॥

   - Vedāntasāra, p. 13.
associated with adjuncts (upādhis) or a body (sarīra).

He is the cause of the world. His consciousness is the efficient cause while his adjunct is the material cause of the world. Take for example, the spider's web. The spider is the cause of the web. But what type of cause is it? Spider is consciousness having a particular body; all secretions of the body of the spider are not different from its body. The spider's consciousness is the efficient cause of the web while the spider's body which secretes saliva is the material cause of the web.

Among the successors of Śaṅkara, Prakāśānanda seems to be the first to deny the objective existence of the phenomenal world. While quoting Gauḍapādiya-Kārikā, he says that the world is tuccha as nothing exists except Brahman. He considers the self to be both the object locus of Avidyā; for the Ātman is devoid of such divisions as jīva and Brahman.

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1. श्वसितव्यक्तज्ञानसौपुष्टिः चैतन्य स्वप्रकाशात् निर्मित्व स्वपाविप्रमान- क्योपाधारः व म्वति। कथा सूक्तात् कक्षाय प्रति स्वप्रकाशात् निमित्व स्वरीस्माप्रमाणोपाधारः व म्बति। —Vedāntaśāra, p. 14-15.

2. श्रात्मात्विनिर्देश्य सकृय सुचक्वमभिमन्न्ते। तद्विरिक्तवस्थ्य कथा न्दिक सत्ये अत्तत्त्यायात्प्रकाशात् तद्वैतः जगतोऽचक्तवं युक्तस्यमेव। —V. S. M. p. 177

3. See Foot note 3 on next page.
Avidya: According to Madhusūdana:

Madhusūdana has first discussed the topic 'āchyāsa'. This āchyāsa is entirely responsible for all the misery and sorrow that an individual self experience. It means mistaking one thing for another previously experienced at some other time. For example a rope in darkness is mistaken for a snake. Here there is a superimposition of the latter upon the former.

In short, "āchyāsa is an erroneous act of mind, which grasps an object under a form different from that which it really is, perceives that object as another one, attributes to it a nature and qualities which it does not possess. It is a congenital activity of the mind an essential characteristic of man, an inevitable sequel of human condition."

Impossibility of āchyāsa:

The opponent says that āchyāsa is not possible.

because the false identification of the non-ātman and ātman cannot be established. He says that, if you accept that the non-ātman is falsely superimposed on ātman, then you have to regard ātman as an adhiśthāna but ātman cannot be an adhiśthāna, because ātman has nothing that would distinguish it from non-ātman, the reason being that it is devoid of general and particular attributes; again ātman is evershining, and therefore, ever perceived, further, ātman has got no similarity with non-ātman. If you also believe, that ātman is falsely superimposed on non-ātman, you are equally wrong, because in that case, the adhiśthāna is non-ātman (an unreal thing) and adhiśthāna must always be real. If shell is ds unreal as silver, it cannot become the adhiśthāna of silver. Here, non-ātman has got no reality at all. An unreal object cannot be the substratum of the superimposition of another object. The reason is that, the one which itself is unreal, cannot give rise to

1. तत्त्व निःसामान्यदिशिशेषतः सत्यं नास्मात्विषेवन सायुष्यादिः
रहितकृतः च विषेषत्वात्त्वामिस्तवः।
Ś.Ś. P. 26

2. कालसात्त्विकाः प्रत्ययोविशिष्टस्वयं वैत्तिकाः
सिद्धार्थविनायकः।
विद्यापूर्वः च न प्रमाणप्रकारः।
न वैशेषिकः शतके
स्वप्रमाणः।
- कितिमपाल : ५० २६ पांकित २-३
another unreality. And if you accept non-ātman as
the substratum, (adhisthāna), then it will result in
the theory of Void and there will be no distinction
between the Vedanta and Buddhist doctrine.

If non-ātman is real, then there would be no
chance of emancipation, because, a real thing is
never destroyed. The characteristic of a real thing
is that it remains abadhita in all the three times.
Prof. Abhyankar gives an appropriate example to explain
this. He raises a question as how a pot which is real,
is destroyed by a stick, the answer to this question is
that, even if the real pot is found to be liable to be
destroyed by the stick, it cannot at least be destroyed
by its knowledge.

The opponent quoting śruti sentences like

"On the realization of that supreme spirit the fetter
of the heart is broken, all doubts are dissolved, and

1. भिक्षुक्तुमोपिष्ठात्तले ज्ञानमाधास्वदा! S.B. P. 27
2. तत्त्व च सत्त्वत्वे तदन्तुच्छेरस्यामाभागच् S.B. P. 27
3. नहि सत्त्वोऽक्तृत्वं कथापि श्चायेन किमाश्च हृदये।
   -किंतुप्रजात पू 27
all his past actions perish when he has beheld Him who is (both) high and low (and Up. II 2.8); "By knowing Him alone one passes over death; there is no other way to salvation." (Svet, Up. III-8) "shows the cessation of the worldly existence through knowledge and thereby suggests the illusory nature of non-ātman. He further says that the śruti such as "One alone without a second" (Chān. Up. VI 2.1), All else than this is misery (Br. Up. III-4.2) etc. establish the unreality of anātman expressly. The śruti sentences themselves distinctly speak of the cessation of all phenomena and thereby suggest that the world or non-ātman is unreal.

Inference also, with the help of logical reason drṣyātva, proves the illusory nature of non-ātman.3

The above discussion reflects the proposition that "the mutual false identification of Ātman and

1. ज्ञातसैणिकविज्ञानिति दशैकत्वं सति शिश्यात्मां प्रकट्याति | S.B. P. 28
2. समसंग्रहति: ज्ञात: सार: शिश्यात्मां प्रकट्याति | S.B. P. 28
3. हृदयनेत्रि तुधिति त्रिविद्यायत्ति: प्रकट्यात्मानाच्छ! | S.B. P. 28
non-Atman is the effect of Nescience and is therefore beyond the range of doubts. This proposition is not to be accepted also because the existence of Avidyā in Atman cannot be explained for two reasons: (i) because Atman is Self-luminous. (ii) It is difficult to solve the problem of Avidyā; viz whether it is illusory or real? If it is illusory, then Avidyā being the cause of all illusion will also be the cause of itself; this will involve the contingency of self-dependence. If it is real, it could not be destroyed by knowledge and so there will be the contingency of non-release.

If everything is taken to be an outcome of superimposition, then it would not be possible to
distinguish between valid and invalid cognitions.

The opponent argues further that if you consider Atman to be the one and only final entity, then this Atman should be accepted as having the nature of knowledge, knowables, instrument of knowledge and knower- but this would involve contradiction. And still if one were to suppose that there is no contradiction in this view, this view would be identical with that of the Bauddhas, viz. the self which is of the nature of temporary consciousness (चाणक्यविज्ञान) is itself the knower, thing to be known etc. 1

Possibility of Adhyāsa:

Now Madhusūdana Sarasvatī having taken stock of this attack of the opponent attempts to explain systematically his position. This explanation is set forth in the portion of the Siddhāntabindu under the verse no. 1 of the Daśāloki.

1. एकत्रात्म: प्रमाणप्रमेयप्रमितिप्रमाणरूपज विहृतस।
विद्विदिषभवनम् वा संगतसत्साधिति।
S.B. P. 30-31
Everyone has the cognition viz. 'I am a man, doer, enjoyer etc. This cognition is not a recollection because it is perceptual and also because it is the result of the non-grasping of the difference of the thing as such from the thing as cognised. All perceptual cognitions - valid or otherwise - are caused by the non-grasping of the difference between thing as present outside and the thing as cognised. Take for example the valid perceptual cognition of silver and the invalid perceptual cognition of silver in shell. In the first case, there is non-grasping of difference between the thing present outside and the thing cognised i.e. between shell and silver and it is this non-grasping of the difference between shell and silver that gives rise to the invalid perceptual cognition. The cognition namely, 'I am a man, enjoyer etc. is an invalid perceptual cognition because it is contradicted by scriptural testimony. Wiz. "The person here who among the senses

1. अहं पुरुषः कर्म मौक्षत्या विधवति तिहः वत्सवज्ञप्रसिद्धः। तां च न स्मृतः। अयोध्यवाससिद्धां वेदांगसूक्तिकल्पः। S.B.P. 31
2. नापि प्रेमः त्रितियुक्तिविजः चित्तवार्त्तः। S.B.P. 31-32
As 
is made of knowledge, who is the light in the heart" 
(\textit{Br. Up. IV} 3.7), "This self is Brahman" (\textit{Br. Up. II} 5-19);  
"He who knows Brahman as the real as knowledge, as the 
infinite---(\textit{Tait-\textit{Up. II. I} 1-1), "Brahman is knowledge 
is knowlege and bliss" (\textit{Br. Up. III} 9-28) etc.

All these scriptural statements establish that \textit{atman}  
is not a doer, nor an enjoyer, it is the highest 
\textbf{Bliss}. Even reasoning establishes the same thing. If 
\textit{atman} were a man, doer etc. then the following contingencies would arise (i) \textit{atman} would be identical with 
body, because it is the body that has the human form and 
is doer, enjoyer etc. Body being subject to changes 
\textit{atman} will also be subject to changes. Body being 
limited by time and space, \textit{atman} would become limited 
by space and time. (ii) In the cognition ‘If \textit{I} am man’  
one and the same thing viz. \textit{atman} would act as subject  
and object of the cognition. Here, \textit{atman} would be

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{1.} तथा च \textit{इत्यादि}। \textit{योगे विज्ञानभो: प्राणों\textit{ू}हृष्टंतत्त्वाति\textit{: yum}:} 
\textit{S.B. P.32-33}
\item \textbf{2.} किरिणा: \textit{परिवर्णवित्ततात्त्वाति}: \textit{S.B. P.33}
\item \textbf{3.} \textit{सैन्य स्नेहार्दिशः कल्पनामागविरोधादि}; \textit{S.B. P.33}
\end{itemize}
cognising itself. But it is a rule that in an act of cognising there could not be one and the same thing acting as subject and also as object. (iii) To take manhood, doership etc. as the attributes of atman is also not possible. There arises a question as to by what relation these attributes are related to the atman. This relation cannot be samyoga (conjunction). Conjunction being destructible these attributes will not be found in atman when the relation is destroyed, so if these attributes were related to the atman by samyoga relation, the atman would undergo changes; that is to say, so long as there is samyoga sambandha the atman would have these attributes; and on the destruction of samyoga sambandha atman would be devoid of these attributes. Nor could these attributes be related to the atman by the relation of identity. If there is the relation of identity between them, then either the atman would be subject to changes or the attributes would be indestructible giving rise to the contingency of the impossibility of final absolution.  

1. बैंसाग्यस्थ वा चार्यमानांवृणप्रदेशः  
S.B. P.33-34
Manhood, doership etc. do not constitute the nature of the self. According to Madhusūdana or the Vedāntins, it is jñāna that constitutes the nature of the soul. In this context Madhusūdana refers to and refutes the view of the Nyāya-vaiśeṣika philosophy, according to which jñāna is not the nature of the soul, but it is a quality of the soul. For the Nyāya-vaiśeṣika, jñāna is anitya (non-eternal). One particular knowledge arises and passes away giving rise to another knowledge. This anitya quality and the substance are quite different from one another. Knowledge inheres in atman by the relation of inherence. This view of the Nyāya-vaiśeṣika is not accepted by the Vedāntins. According to them jñāna constitutes the nature of the atman, and hence they have to uphold that jñāna is nitya and one. If they accept jñāna to be anitya and many then the atman, whose nature jñāna is, would itself become anitya and manifold. Madhusūdana refutes the Nyāya-vaiśeṣika view as follows. If jñāna were anitya then we should admit (i) multiplicity of knowledges, (ii) mutual distinction among them, (iii) anticipant
and consequent non-existence of knowledges, (iv) the universal i.e. jñānatva, (v) relation called samavāya by which the universal jñānatva inheres in individual jñānas. This shows that the view involves the defect of assumption of many hypotheses. But the Vedānta view that considers jñāna to be nitya and the nature of ātman is free from this defect. That is to say, in this view there is no need of assuming so many hypotheses.

The cognition of production and destruction of jñāna is really caused by the production and destruction of the relation that relates jñāna to the object; it is not caused by the production and destruction of jñāna; jñāna, jñāna is nitya.

1

2

1. ज्ञानानित्यत्वपर्य तुह्यक्षेत्रियव्यक्तप्रागमाक्षमात्यात्मनत्व

2. तत्त्वशुचिनित्यद्वियो ज्ञात्वस्यस्तुविषयकविषयकविषयत्वाद

S.B. P. 34
Purusottama Sarasvati explains this as follows. When it is said that श्रृण्णी नश्च: even though neither the दण्ड nor the पुरुष is destroyed, it means that what is destroyed is the relation obtaining between the दण्ड and the पुरुष. Similarly when it is said that र्वर्मी नश्च: what is destroyed is not the soul but the relation obtaining between the soul and the र्वर्मी. Again when it is said that घटाकाश उत्पन्न: and कूपाकाश: नश्च: what is produced and destroyed is not the अकाश but the relation obtaining between अकाश on the one hand and ग्हाता and कुप on the other. Similarly when it is said that घटाकाश उत्पन्न: and पटाकाश नश्च: what is produced and destroyed is not the knowledge but the relation obtaining between ज्ञान on the one hand and ग्हाता and पता on the other. This relation is called 

1. कर्ण वा दशपुरुषोऽपि अस्मातेऽ स दण्डानुशत्र इति प्रत्यय 

2. एत्तद्वस्यायोग अस्वयम्यक्ति, कर्ण वा ब्रह्म विद्वान नातः 

घटाकाश उत्पन्नः, कूपाकाश उत्पन्नः, कूपाकाश नश्च: इति प्रत्यय न 

Cond. 32.
Atman is of the nature of jñāna and ānanda. It is eternal and admits of no change whatsoever. It is Self-luminous. Manhood, Kartrtva, bhoktṛtva which belong to body are superimposed on the Self.

Material Cause of the Superimposition or the Metaphysical

Bhrānti:

The material cause of the superimposition or the unreal world of appearance is avidyā. Atman is not its material cause because it is pure and devoid of all modes of changes. Nor can antahkaraṇa etc. be considered as the cause of this bhrama, because they themselves are produced by the bhrānti. Avidyā resides in that in which contd...foot note No.1

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1. प्रस्तुताश्च दिव्यविषयक्त्वः अपि विद्याधारिताविषयक्त्वः, तथा
   ज्ञान नस्त्ममिति प्रत्यक्ष न ज्ञान विषयत्वम् किंतु तद्भवः:
   सम्बन्धविषयक्त्वः इत्यथाः। क्यविषयकप्रत्ययक्त्वः स्वविषयक्त्वः
   तत्त्वस्वीकृत्वा, तत्त्वस्वीकृत्वा प्रवर्तिते । न च धिनोग्रहुभिव
   ज्ञानः तत्त्व नारात्स्विनेन कथे तदपलय इत्य वाच्यः, विषयान्तः
   रपज्ञानयोः सम्बन्धुपपत्रृक्षी हूँ ज्ञानः ।
   - किंघुमकुपीकांसः: गृहा २९

1. परम्प्रवेदकृतीत्वः तत्स्यान्तः दर्पत्वान्तः नारात्स्विनेन्द्रियस्मृताश्चुत्स्मृतः
   स्वात्मित्यायः। - S.B. p.35
the bhramajñāna resides. If avidyā and bhramajñāna do not have the same locus then their could not obtain cause-effect relation between them. Hence both have the same locus namely Ātman i.e. jivātman.

Nature of Avidyā:

Avidyā is positive in nature. It is not the negation or absence of knowledge. To consider avidyā as of the nature of jñānabhāva, involves logical self-contradiction. Knowledge of abhāva of anything can take place only after the knowledge of the locus (dharmin) and the

1. काल्याणं व तदात्मकयथासत्तैव चिन्मार्कर्मानेन सिद्धतिः न बानामिति साविशेषेनविलिङ्गनिवार्यमस्य चतुर्वेदं

   - S. B. p. 35

2. कैन्य बाल्याकर्न सिद्धसंघादंकारण श्रवित्तानुतप्पोकाराणाम् अत्मकेन सिद्धति। वनयकिन्नर्ये कागीकारण समन्वयोऽगताः

   - निन्दुप्रलाल, p.35

3. न चेतन्वलवहुपणि

   - S. B. p. 36.
memory of the counter-positive (pratīyogin). Take for example the cognition of ghaṭābhāva on bhūtala. This cognition cannot take place if we do not have the cognitions of bhūtala and memory of the ghaṭa. Similarly cognition of jñānābhāva could not take place if the locus ātman is not cognised and the pratīyogin jhāna is not remembered. But on the acceptance of these two i.e. cognition of ātman and memory of jhāna there could not be jñānābhāva. Thus the term jñānābhāva here becomes self-contradictory. So jhāna here means not jñānābhāva but bhāvarūpaajhāna. Here the meaning of bhāvanūpa is simply that it cannot be taken as abhāvanūpa. This points to its indescribable nature. Again it is indescribable because it is neither sat nor asat. It is not sat because if it were regarded as sat then this our view will come in conflict with the scriptures declaring that "nothing is real except ātman". Nor is it asat because it is the material cause of the positive effect i.e. bhrama.
Avidyā is not of the nature of the series of empirical bhramajñānas, nor is it of the nature of the series of saṃsārayajñānas, nor is it of the nature of the series of their saṃskāra. It is so because all the three series are not of the nature of perception but of the nature of parokṣajñāna. Again empirical bhrama and saṃsāya do not function as a veil covering the nature of ātman, because they are empirical cognitions of the form of mental psychosis. Nor does saṃskāra function as a veil covering the nature of ātman, because it is simply a producer of a particular manovṛtti.

Avidyā is said to be a power of God in the śruti. It has been designated as māyā, avidyā, anṛta

1. नापि प्रमाणसूत्स्तत्स्तकार्यपरिपरमपि - S.B. P.37
2. अमरोजात्यतु - S.B. P.37
3. जीतनागरप्रमाणसूत्स्तकारणाः। परोजात्यतु जात्यस्तक्यत्वाः। स्मृतियोपमोपायत्वाय जात्यस्तक्यत्वाः। निर्कीर्त्यसूत्स्तकारणांदेख ततजन्यत्वाः। S.B. P.37
4. देवांसेवकसिंह स्वाम्योपिनिन्त्यदाः। स्मृति ११३। S.B. P.37
and nihāra in various srutis. It is said that this indescribable Avidyā can be destroyed by the rise of the knowledge of ātman. It is the cause of the superimposition of anātman on ātman.

Avidyā is by nature beginningless and therefore, it can have no origination.

**Process of Avidyā**

Having proved the possibility of superimposition, Madhusūdana explains the process of adhyāsa.

The notion of the ego is superimposed on the self-qualified by the superimposition of nescience. And the attributes of the ego such as desire, determination etc, and the attributes belonging to the sense organs viz. one-eyedness, deafness are superimposed on the self qualified by the adhyāsa of the ego

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1. इन्द्राय नायायिनि पुरुष पुरुष हैः | नो रूप सिद्धे कृत्यन् हि प्रत्येकः | - हृद यात्र नीरोण्य ग्राम्यालः | सैनानि
2. माया अविष्कारित्व अन्तव्यमुल्ल मात्रक्षानिवर्ते | श्र्व कृषि रूप चालानिलं वर्गमनी | करणात् | S.B. P.38
3. तेनात्मात्स्त्रन्तिः विशिष्टते ज्ञात्मकार्यायास्वदिभिैव | वायुप्रवर्तकायोऽभ्येतां नामस्वभूतायामिनिहृदयमन्त्रायणां व | काणात्मविचित्रवादीनामध्यः | S.B. P.38-39
But the organs themselves are not subject to perception and therefore they cannot be falsely superimposed. The gross body is falsely superimposed on the atman qualified by the attributes of the ego and the attributes of the organs of senses. This type of adhyāsa takes place only through the attributes (manhood etc.) of the gross body and it assumes the form 'I am a man' and not 'I am a body.' One does not identify oneself with the body but feels 'I am a human being.' Thus on atman qualified by the adhyāsa of the gross body, fatness etc. are superimposed and on the atman thus qualified are superimposed the attribute viz. perfection (fulness) or imperfection (some want) of external things son, wife etc.

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1. इन्द्रियार्थाय तु परारोज्ज्वानाय परारोज्ज्वायुः इति सिद्धवातः।

   - S. B. p. 39

2. तद्विपित्ते च स्वालेहः अत्यः घृप्प्पुरस्कारणेयोऽहि पुरुषं हम्यः हत्याकारः।
   न हि स्वप्नवतोऽहि वैह इत्यवः। तथा द्राक्षत्त्वावतः।

   - S. B. p. 39

3. तद्विपित्ते च स्वीकीर्त्तियाः व्रत्येवानायामवः। तद्विपित्ते च ब्रह्मायाः।
   व्रत्येवानाः पृथिवियास्त्वायामवः।

   - S. B. p. 39
Conversely, the false superimposition of consciousness on ego etc. is also to be accepted. Some one might object here, that if consciousness is superimposed on ego etc. then consciousness would become unreal because what is superimposed is always unreal. In the instance of the superimposition of silver on shell, silver which is superimposed on shell is unreal. To avert this contingency the vedāntins hold that when it is said that consciousness is superimposed on ego etc. what is meant is that the relation of consciousness to ego is superimposed on ego. Hence it is this relation which is superimposed is unreal, and not the ātman.

The mutual or two way superimposition should be accepted. If we were to accept only one-way

1. एवं चेतन्याच्याक्षरादिशु देशयेन्देशवधास: संस्करित:।
   S.B.P. 40
   - नन्ते चेतन्यायाच्यासांगीनार्थः चेतन्याच्यक्षरादिशु देशयेन्देशवधास: संस्करित:।
   चेतन्यायासः हि चेतन्यार्थावेचि शूचितायचेतन्यसंस्कारादिशु देशयेन्देशवधास: संस्करित:।
   चेतन्याच्यात्मकः प्राप्तिः। चेतन्याच्यात्मकः प्राप्तिः। चेतन्याच्यात्मकः प्राप्तिः।
   तथा चेतन्याच्यात्मकः प्राप्तिः। चेतन्याच्यात्मकः प्राप्तिः। चेतन्याच्यात्मकः प्राप्तिः।
   चेतन्याच्यात्मकः प्राप्तिः। चेतन्याच्यात्मकः प्राप्तिः। चेतन्याच्यात्मकः प्राप्तिः।
   केन्द्रितात्मकः प्राप्तिः।
   - केन्द्रितात्मकः प्राप्तिः।
superimposition instead of the two-way. Superimposition, then there would not be the experience (bhāva) of one of the two (say, ātman and body), because in illusory cognition only that which is superimposed is experienced or perceived. But in the metaphysical illusion, there is the experience of the two (say, ātman and body) and hence the form this metaphysical illusion takes is पूण्योक्षयम्. So we should accept two-way superimposition.

This mutual superimposition gives rise to superimposition of the form of the 'knot' of self and non-self.

The intensity of love depends upon the degree of intervening screen of adhyāsa. Madhusūdana here quotes a verse from Vārttikākāra which says that, the son is dearer than wealth, the body is dearer than the

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1. एकतरस्यासांवाकारैर्वर्ततरस्यामानुसारसः | ज्यातस्याय ग्रामे | माननिर्नयम् | से प. 40

2. वैनायकान्यामानव्यासितवदिगितंस्यस्यपान्य | से प. 40

3. विज्ञायवर्तानालम्याश्च प्रक्षारतम् | से प. 40
son, in the same way an organ is dearer than the body, the prāna is dearer than the organs and ātman is dearer than the prāna. He has given a beautiful example to elucidate the fact that the organs are dearer than the body. On the fall of a weapon or a shower of rain, instead of running away from the dangerous place, we close our eyes the first.

The superimpositions of ego etc. are related as cause and effect, the preceding one is the cause of the succeeding one. But the series of cause and effect has no beginning. These superimpositions of the ego etc. are beginningless just in the same way as the seed and the sprout are. Let us explain this fully. It is due to the rise of the impressions of the previous experience of silver that we superimpose

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1. विज्ञातपुः प्रियं पुनः प्रामाण्यं: पिण्डाञ्चाध्ययः।
   इन्दृष्टयैः प्रियं प्राणं प्राणादात्मा परं: प्रियः॥ P.40

2. देहपैशाचाय चैन्द्रयाणार्थमेव शक्तिस्वयमिधारामार्थः
   चिद्वैर्मिनिमीलदैवतादृशंस्मृतम्॥ S.B. P.40

3. तत्समात्तुष्णाय अत्यक्षुल अवयुमुखोऽराजारवपायोऽविज्ञानकुरक्ततादि:। S.B. P.41
silver on shell. Similarly our superimposition of ego on atman pre-supposes the experience of ego, in a previous kalpa. This experience itself is false but it is capable of producing impressions. One who has seen simply a painted serpent can have the illusion of a serpent in a rope. This proves that even false experience is capable of producing impressions. Thus even the false experience of ego that had taken place in previous kalpa produces impressions. But this false impression itself is bhrama or adhyasa and hence it needs an impression as its cause. Thus the impression which this false experience requires as its cause is generated by another false experience in the kalpa prior to the one mentioned above. In this way the cause-effect chain of impressions and adhyasa is beginningless.

1. न नु पूर्वै रजवे दुष्टे चैत्यस्तम्भरक्षावाच्चुक्ति रज्जवांशास्त्रो मति।
   तथा चाक्षारः पूर्वे स्वानूमृ हति चैनः । क्लपांवरे तदनुभक्त्वात्।
   यथापि सौजन्यमय कथार्याय एव तथापि तत्कथ सूक्ष्माभास्त्वात्।
   चिन्तन्येव कैलं सप्त्रेष्टवातै। प्रृथ्वा स्मरणामहात्।

   खिद्धुपलात् ॥ २० ॥
like the chain of seed and sprout.¹

Each adhyāśa leaves in the individual a latent impression (sāṃskāra) which actualizes and produces a new impression and so on and this series has no beginning and would continue endlessly unless terminated by true knowledge of Reality.

The superimposition of avidyā on ātman is not caused by any impression as there is no difference in avidyā in different kalpas. So the superimposition of avidyā on ātman is beginningless and only one. ²

**Definition of adhyāśa:**

The definition of adhyāśa given by Sāṅkara is रूपित्रिः।

According to this

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¹ नून कल्याणरीयोत्तमोक्षार्थार्थात् यथार्थ्यो निःसंक्रायुक्तवादः धितो नाम।
विद्वान स्वप्न प्रम स्वेदित तवं तत: पूर्व कर्म संस्कारः इति सुभद्र।
ततः प्राक्कल्पितमेवत्परिपूर्वकः। यथावेक्षं संस्कारा-च्यासोऽर्थोद्धार्यस्थापि ब्रजाभये- याज्ञवल्लभायेऽपि संभवं याच्यन । परिहार्यं।

² किंतु प्राचीन: पूर्वः सर्व्वत्रः।

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² chordulā "व स. य. 41."
definition adhyāsa is the apparent presentation to consciousness (avabhāsa), in the form of remembrance (सृविरुपः), of something previously perceived (पूर्वेष्टस्य) in some other thing or place (परात्र).

It is objected that if this definition is accepted then adhyāsa cannot be regarded as beginningless. It is so because adhyāsa, by this definition, is of the form of remembrance and hence produced by impressions (समस्करस). To avert this difficulty it is said that the present definition has in view only those adhyāsas which are called कायवाच्याः, i.e., adhyāsas of ahmikāra etc., on Atman. It does not have in view the avidyādhyāsa which is kāreṇādhyāsa.

1. नन्यविश्वासानात्त्विरुपः परात्र पूर्वेष्टस्यायायाः इति बदला भाषकारणं सुभविश्वस्य प्रमुखं संस्कारानुपयुक्तं विशिष्टप्रयत्ति चेत।
2. कायवाच्यासप्रपायत्वाच्य ।
3. कारणस्य वाच्याः कारणाः कारणाः। कारणसम्बन्धविधिविधायाः कारणः स्वतः। अविचारपि तस्मात् कारणसम्बन्धायेत्। एवं दिवाबिविधिपि विचारास्य कारणात्मकत्वमपन्नतः। एवं कायवाच्य इत्यत्त्वात्।
But this answer does not make the definition free from the defect of avyāpti, that is to say it does not apply to all the cases of adhyāsa. To make the definition faultless, Madhusūdana drops the term 'प्रत्ययितप:'.

Hence according to him the definition of adhyāsa is simply 'परत्र परावभासै अखायः'. This definition means the apparent presentation to consciousness of something in some other thing. This definition applies to both the types of adhyāsas i.e. कार्यद्यास and कारण-द्यास. Or taking the clue from the bhasya phrase i.e. सत्याउत्ति सत्यशक्ति जैविकता जैविकता we may formulate the definition of adhyāsa as 'सत्यद्याससत्यकार्यद्यासाश्रयायां'.

Thus according to this definition, adhyāsa is the false appearance of the identity of real and unreal things.

This definition also applies to both the कारणद्यासa and कार्यद्यास. कार्यद्यास though generated by सूक्ष्म is beginningless because the series of

1. परत्र परावभासै अखायः हत्येताक-नास्त्यवन्यात्मकात्त्वकान्तपादानात्त्वः।
   से प: 41-42.

2. यद्वा सत्याच्छास्तु सत्यशक्तिवैति भाष्यमात्त्वसत्यद्यासात्त्व-सूक्ष्मावभासै अखायः हत्येव सौधानत्वकान्तपादानात्त्वः।
   से प: 42.
kāryādhyāsa and sāṃskāra has no beginning just like
the series of the seed and the sprout.  

The cognitions viz. 'I am a man' 'I am a doer' etc are neither recollection nor right experience.
They are false experiences. The cause of these false experiences is beginningless. Ignorance which can be said to be neither real nor unreal, i.e. indescribable.
And yet it is a positive entity, it is not a negation of knowledge nor is it of the nature of empirical delusion, doubt etc. Ignorance is superimposed upon the self from beginningless time. This superimposition gives rise to the superimpositions of Ego etc. on ātman.
Thus avidyādhyāsa is the root cause of all the superimpositions. And this avidyādhyāsa, though beginningless, can have an end.

Two powers of Avidyā.

Avidyā is possessed of two powers, i.e. power of concealing or covering (वासाणशक्ति) and

1. कै न कारणावासुगुणेन लक्षणघात्रीति। कारणघात्रिवच \n
S.B. P: 42.
power of projection (विशृष्टि). Thus it operates in a double way - (a) it conceals the Brahman and (b) it shows all illusory effects (ego, sense-organs, objects, in short the entire world) in place of the real Brahman. This means that it first suppresses Brahman and then substitutes the unreal world in its place.

A question may arise as to how the all-pervading Brahman becomes screened or covered by the limited avidyā. In answer to this it is said that the power of concealing conceals the all-pervading Brahman just as a finger taken near an eye covers the solar ērb. It cannot be objected that here it is not the solar ērb but the eye that is covered, because if it were so then the eye should not be able to see the finger; as a matter of fact it does see the finger.

1. कहुँतिकहिंतेनंपुरं स्थिता मूर्त्यमलम्। तत्र चतुष्मा र्वावरणी- दृश्यार्थर्मकशांगाऽऽ। कृत्रिमार्थर्वारणमन्वरण विचृृष्टीपूर्णविशेषं।

S.B. P: 55
After concealing Brahman, avidyā associated with the previous impressions and acts of jīves transforms itself in the form of the objects of the world. It bears the reflection of Brahman. Through this reflection it gets identified with Brahman and consequently all its effects get permeated by Brahman through that reflection.  

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1. तत्त्वं सा पूर्वपूर्वसंज्ञार्जोऽर्थमपरं पति  
    सति विशिष्टविवक्ष्यते । सति एव इत्यतिहासियामास्त्रेवरा विचारविद्याविरुद्धवेति  
    तत्त्वायेपिसर्वमास्त्रेवरा चितितृतृकैव ।

S.B. P: 55