CHAPTER IV

Pre-S'ankara Advaita Vedanta

The Advaita Philosophy is Philosophia perennis in both its meaning and scope, in its theory and also practice, in its ideology of commentaries either upon any of the Upaniṣads or Brahma-Sūtras or the Bhagavad-gīta or of any independent tract expounding the views thereof, is the period which is generally supposed to begin with the time of S'ankara. But this is not exactly true as there are references to quite a few pre-S'ankara commentaries. The views of pre-S'ankarite Advaitins have a special place in the history of Advaita Philosophy. Firstly they have their own philosophical importance and secondly they have an historical importance in as much as they shape not only the thought of S'ankara and his immediate disciples but also to an extent determine the course of the formulation of several sub-schools of Advaita philosophy. Hence the Advaita philosophy is classified into the following three periods.

(1) The Pre-S'ankara period
(2) The S'ankara period and
(3) The Post-S'ankara Period.

1. Rāmānuja in the Vedāntahāsāṅgraha, Pandita Edition, P.148 alludes to a number of Pre-S'ankara commentators.
All these Periods are important in themselves for the discovery, presentation, systematization and vindication of the principles of the Advaita Vedānta. They are without exception the great epochs of the philosophic activities in India.

The Philosophers of the Pre-Sāṅkara period of Advaita gave various interpretations to the metaphysical institutions of the Upanīshads. But a great change in the development of the Vedānta came about by the works of Gauḍapāda whose epoch making discoveries and intuitions eclipsed not only other internal developments of the Prastānatraya but also the external developments of philosophy that were going on in the folds of Buddhism.

Gauḍapāda

Gauḍapāda, who is considered the first systematic expounder of the Advaita Vedānta tradition, revived the monistic teachings found in the Upanīṣads or Śrutī and channelized, summarized and developed them into the school of the Advaita Vedānta. Sāṅkarachārya, himself asserts that it was Gauḍapāda who recovered the absolutistic or monistic creed from the Vēdas. In his commentary on Gauḍapāda's Kārikā he says, "he adores by failing at the feet of that great guru. The adored of his adored, who on finding all the people sinking in the ocean made dreadful by the crocodiles of rebirth, out of kindness for all
people, by churning the great ocean of the Védas by his great
curning rod of wisdom, recovered what lay deep in the heart of
the Védas, and is hardly attainable even by the immortal gods.

Gauḍapāda was the teacher of Govindapāda who in turn was
Sānkarachārya's teacher. Sānkara himself in the Āgamasāstra
bhāṣya salutes Gauḍapāda as his revered Paramāguru. Sānkara
quotes from and refers to the author of the Āgamasāstra as the
knower of the Vedānta tradition. Hence it is quite obvious as
Sānkara himself says that he was directly influenced by great
wisdom of this revered sage namely Gauḍapāda.

There are various views regarding the date of Gauḍapāda but
it is generally considered to be 788 AD. He flourished in that
era which came after the great buddhist teachers like Āśvaghoṣa,
Nāgārjuna, Asanga and Vāsūbandhu and that his thoughts are
highly influenced by Buddhistic tendencies is quite an evident
fact in his Kārikā.

The Gauḍapāda – Kārikās or Māṇḍūkya–Kārikās or the
Āgamasāstra as they are commonly known, are the first available
systematic treatise on Advaita Vedānta. In the Āgamasāstra
there

1. Sānkara Bhāṣya on Gauḍapādas Kārikā, (Ananadasharma
Edition), Para 214.
2. 'Yastamī Pūjyādhipujyamī Paramāgurumī Padapātair Natosmi.' -
Āgamasāstra Bhāṣya, IV-100
3. Brahmaśūtra Bhāṣya, II, 1.9

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are 215 Kārikās divided into four chapters or Prakāraṇas and twelve prose sentences. There is quite a burning controversy regarding the issue whether all this work could be the authorship of Gauḍapāda alone. In support of the authorship of Gauḍapāda we can quote Śaṅkara who in the Chāndogya-Bhāṣya makes a reference to the author of Āgamasāstra “The reality of self which can be known only from such past masters of the philosophy of Vedāṇta as have given up all desires for external things, have sought shelter into the identity of Ātman and have adopted the highest stage of a mendicants life, as has been described by the most revered follower of the school of Prajāpati in the four Prakāraṇas. He alone is teaching it these days and nobody else is doing so”. This reference stands in justification that the four Prakāraṇas were written by one and the same person namely Gauḍapāda.

Gauḍapāda discovered the genuine meaning of the Upaniṣads in his verses, which are considered as a sort of Vārtika or original commentary on the Upaniṣad. He is the one who brought forth Advaitism from the innermost depths of the ocean of the Vēdas. He revolutionized not only Vedāṇta but the whole of Indian philosophy by shifting the locus of philosophic enquiry from “IT is” (substance) to “I am” (subject) from adhideva and adhibhūta to adhyātma, and his penetrating work into Adhyātma have cast an indelible impression on Advaita Vedāṇta.

1. Chāndogya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya, VIII 12.1
Gaudapada's work Agamasstra is divided into four chapters Agama (scripture) (2) Vaithathya (unreality) (3) Advaita (unity) and (4) Alatasanti (the extinction of the burning coal). The first chapter mostly concerns itself with explaining the Mandukya Upanishad by virtue of which it is known as Mandukyakarka. Here he also discusses about the self. In the second chapter he discusses the nature of the world, in the third he speaks about the truth which is immortal and that duality is a distinction imposed upon the one (Advaita) by Maya. And lastly he deals with the final state of liberation where all desires and duality is negated and realization of Brahman takes place. We shall now consider Gaudapada's main doctrines.

Asparasayoga:

The Asparasayoga is said to be that which resolves all controversies (avivadah) and contradictions (aviruddah) and in this sense it could be equated with the term dialectic, for Asparasayoga explains the relation that obtains between the principle of identity and the falsity of objects. Identity is untouched by falsity though the latter seems to be in contact with the former. In fact Asparasayoga means not the fact of the realization of identity but on the other hand it stands for the process of that realization. Sri P.C. Diwanji says of it that, "Asparasayoga is a specific kind of Yoga involving a definite course of mental exercise and as a result of it the soul remains untouched by anything at any time.

1. Agamasstra IV 2.
Gauḍapāda identifies the unborn and non-dual Absolute with the Ātman or Brahman which can be directly realized through para-reason or Asparasāyoga or Vaishāsadya or Amanibhāva. In his Kārikās, III 40-46, Gauḍapāda himself, says "that it is mental exercise and that its peculiarity consists in making the mental 1 arena clear of all objective ideas".

For Gauḍapāda the touch of the untouched (asparasāyoga) was the good that produced happiness to all beings. The dictum of Asparasāyoga is that identity, although penetrating all that is false, is in fact not tainted by it, thus in this way Asparasāyoga entirely removes falsity from the purview of identity or Advaita, adhering to the notion that falsity is eternally unconnected with identity. Hence by this doctrines of Asparasāyoga, Gauḍapāda concludes that the knower is not tainted though enjoying. (sa bhunjāna nalipyate). Gauḍapāda salutes 'that Highest Reality, which is unborn, Pure and free from all traces of duality and plurality. He who is enlightened, his knowledge is not related to anything (dharmeṣān na kramate), neither to subject nor object, because it is supra-relational, nor is anything (sarve dharmāḥ) neither the subject nor the object related to his knowledge, because there is nothing outside his knowledge. He has transcended the duality of the subject and the object and also the trinity of knowledge, knower and known. He 3 is one with pure consciousness.

1. Ibid - p.155
2. Āgamaśāstra - I.5
Atmavaitavada:

Gaudapada's Agamashstra is a masterpiece of Sarvaka Mimamsa or in other words an investigation into the nature of the embodied self. He starts with "Bahi Prajno Vibhur Vsiivah" i.e., the cognizant of external objects is the all pervading Viisva. According to him, due to common sense experience every simple individual sees external objects in the waking state, internal objects in dream state and nothing in dreamless sleep. He calls the waking individual, dreaming individual and sleeping individual as Viisva, Taijasa and Prajna respectively. Gaudapada describes the fourth state of the self as unseen (adrgta), unrelationable (avyavaharyam), ungraspable (agrahyaam), indefinable (alaksana) unthinkable (acintyam), inspeakable (avyapadesya), the essence as oneness with the self (ekatmapratyayasara), as the extinction of the appearance (prapa%copasa%a), the quiescence (santam) the good (sivam), the one (advaita).

Although common sense would presuppose that Viisva, Taijasa and Prajna are all identical yet according to Gaudapada's view the space, time, objects and the body of Taijasa are quite different from these of Viisva. He says that the Viisva and Taijasa are sleep and dream. Thus they are bound to cause and effect. Sleep means non cognitian (agrahara) of truth and dream is knowing it otherwise (anyathagrahana) . Again both Viisva and

1. Dasgupta, Surendranath, A History of Indian Philosophy Vol. I. (Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1975), P.425
2. Agamashstra.I.2, 15
Taijasa appear dual as both divide themselves into the subject and object, the percipient and the percieved, also both these states have no characters of their own apart from their objects. But Gauḍapāda goes on to say that this interdependence or duality of Viśva and Taijasa into subject and objects is a mere imagination or vibration of the citta or Ātman, which is presupposed by duality itself. The interdependence or appearance of the subject and objects renders both the subject and objects as unreal. Viśva and Taijasa have thus, the appearance of duality (dvayābhāsa) and Ātman (nondual entity) in common. Prajñā neither sees truth nor falsehood and in fact it sees nothing. It is not only rooted into non-dual unity but does not cognize duality either.

Hence the reality of the non-dual unity is universally present in every state. It works as their foundational ground and is responsible for their appearances, mutual comparisons and total destruction. This unity is the inside as well as the outside of everything (sabāhyābhyantara) so the Ātman which is the inmost unity underlying Viśva, Taijasa and Prajñā is Brahman. In all significance, Gauḍapāda calls it Sarvajñā or Sarvadṛṣṭik. Sánkara explains this as "all reality and thought or knowledge".

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1. Ibid IV - 67
2. Āgamasāstra.I 13
3. Sarvascāsanum Jñāscā Sarvajñāḥ, Āgamasāstra Bhāṣya IV.
When the mind becomes free from objects (nirviśāya) it becomes unattached (asaṅga) and thus eternal (nityā). This state is Brahman. Viśva, Taḻjasa and Prajña constitute one Jīva. The number of Jīvas is many. But the plurality, of Jīvas does not imply the plurality of Ātmans. Ātman is like space and the Jīvas or individual souls are like space in the Jars. Just as on the destruction of the Jars, their, spaces merge into space so also when ignorance is destroyed due to right knowledge the Jīvas merge into the Ātman. Jīvas are mere illusions of Self which is all reality.

Hence Gauḍapāda's views on the self logically leads to the role and whole reality of self which is Ātmavaitavāda or absolution of Advaita Vedānta.

Ajātivāda:

This is the doctrine of non-origination where negatively it takes its stand as nothing is bound by cause and effect, hence the world being only an appearance is in fact never created, positively it means that the Absolute self, being self existent is never created or unborn (Ajā).

The Absolute self is non-dual, Gauḍapāda describes the self as that which has neither antecedent nor consequent (apūrvam aparām), neither outside nor inside (abahyam anantaram), neither birth nor motion nor materiality, (ajam, acalam, avastutvam).

1. Agamasāstra III – 4
2. Agamasāstra I.26, IV 45
Hence self transcends the categories of casualty, time, space, notion and matter. As the self is not a substance nor is there anything which is different from the self-this non-difference of the self itself proves its being unborn. That which is born is sure to die and the nature of self is immortal or eternal and thus is unborn for ultimate nature can never change.

Again that the self is unborn, and that casualty is not applicable to it, means that the self is neither the effect of anything nor is it the cause or even the first cause of anything, hence the self is that unborn which pervades everywhere inside and also outside (Sabāhyābhantarao, ajah) and when this self is cognized the plurality is negated (Neha nānāsti Kiṁchana). The Śrūthi declares that the Unborn appears to be born as many (Ajayāno Bahudhā Vilayati) and this appears to be so only due to illusion or Māyā.

Gauḍapāda firmly states that nothing is bound in reality with cause and effect. He says "whatever is supposed to be born is not of itself, of another, or of both another and itself".

Again he says, "Nothing is in fact produced, whatever it be, existent, non existent or both". This means that if the object which is said to be produced is existent, then it cannot be

1. Ibid. IV 53
2. Mādhyāmika Kārikā. IV 67
3. Brhadārañyaka Upaniṣad. IV 4.19
4. Ibid. II 5;19
5. Agamasāstra. IV 22
6. Ibid. IV 23
produced as it is already there before production, if it is non-existent, it cannot be by its very own nature ever produced. And lastly if it is both existent and non-existent, it will be self destructive by virtue of its contradictory nature and hence will not be produced.

He goes on refuting the very idea of causality by saying "the unreal as well as the real cannot have the unreal as their cause nor can the unreal have the real as their cause. And how can the real be the cause of the unreal". Hence the whole notion of causality for Gaudapāda becomes but a pure myth.

Creation, according to him is but the very nature of God. It simply emanates from Him. There is in fact no actual creation. Duality is only an appearance and the world of plurality appears only as a dream or illusion and so much so is unreal.

Viewing the whole thing from the ultimate standpoint there is neither death nor birth, neither disappearance nor appearance, neither destruction or production, neither bondage nor liberation, there is none who works for freedom none who desires salvation, and none who has been liberated, there is neither the aspirant nor the emancipated this is the highest truth. The world cannot be regarded as manifold by its very nature. It is neither one nor many this the wise know it. It is the non dual absolute Brahman alone.

1. Ibid. IV 40
2. Ibid., II, 32, 34
Māyāvāda:

This doctrine of illusion makes two counter statements. One, that everything is produced or caused empirically (Samvṛtyā Jāyate Sarvam) and the other that everything is unproduced or uncaused except that Absolute Reality. (Sabdhāvena hyajān sarvam).

Māyā is the principle of indeterminancy of all appearances of phenomena. This in other words means that the appearances or phenomena have no absolute truth. Māyā is also the cause of individuation among phenomena (māyā bhidyate hyetad) for one finds that phenomena are different amongst themselves in form, name and function. Empirically they have substantiality, practicality, casualty, motion and purposiveness in their own fields and limits.

The whole universe according to Gauḍapāda is Māyā. All appearances though perceived are false. They are unreal things but appear real. As the principle of differentiation Māyā is also known as Prāṇa which has two stages, unmanifest (avyakta) and manifest (vyakta) Gauḍapāda holds the view that "māyā does not exist in reality" (sa māyā na vidhyate) . Hence Māyā the source of the world is an unreal as the world itself.

Gauḍapāda introduced the idea of dialectical synthesis of all systems in place of the spirit of compromise. He declares

1. Agamaśāstra. IV 57
2. Ibid. III 19
3. Ibid. IV 58
that his views have no quarrel (vivāda) or conflict (virādha) with any dualist. This synthesis of all systems attracted his followers, as it provided them a powerful weapon of removing the conflicts among them by controverting them into Advaitism. And it has since then become a truism in Indian Philosophy that all systems lead to Advaitism. Hence Gauḍapādaś Advaitism has exerted tremendous influence on the whole of the later tradition of Advaita Vedānta.
**Mandana Miśra**

Mandana Miśra has quite a few works to his credit and these were written over a period which also points out the various stages of his philosophical progress or development. At first being a Mīmāṃsā Philosopher, he wrote the Mīmāṃsānakramaṇikā. Then he wrote the Vidhi-viveka and Bhāvanāviveka, as the follower of Kumarila Bhatta. Later as he became a critic of Kumarila and he under the influence of Bhartṛhari, a renowned grammarian, he came out with his work Ṣphoṭasiddhi. Next he wrote a book on epistemology Vibhramaviveka. This gave him a theory of error which finally led him to the highest stage of his development and that is to the Advaita theory of truth and his final masterpiece came out in the form of his work Brahmasiddhi which classified as a work on Advaita Vedānta. Thus each phase of his indicates a further growth of his Vedāntic conviction.

Mandana cut out his own approach of Vedānta. He adopted the style of a Prakaraṇagrantha and wrote in terse prose punctuated with subtle kārikās or verses here and there. He being a free thinker that he was, gave vent to his own thoughts of Brahman realization and hence the full significance of the Upanīṣadic statement 'Tat Tvam Asī' or 'That Thou Art', was brought out.

The Brahmasiddhi of Mandana Miśra is in four chapters — the Brahma-Kāṇḍa, Tarka-Kāṇḍa, Niyoga-Kāṇḍa and Siddhi-Kāṇḍa, in the form of long annotations (Vṛttis) and verses (Kārikās) Mandana in the Brahma-Kāṇḍa discusses the nature of Brahman where he propounds the view that reality is one without a second and
everything else is a fictitious product or a derivative of the reality itself. In the next chapter, namely, Tarka-Kāṇḍa, he puts forth his view that we cannot perceive 'indifference' through perception and hence one cannot begin to interpret the Upanīṣhadic texts on dualistic lines just because perception reveals differences. The fourth part of his Brahma-Siddhi deals with the refutation of the Mīmāṃsā view that says that all Vedic scriptures urge us to either engage ourselves in some kind of action or to restrain ourselves from certain other kinds of action. And lastly in the final chapter Mandana discusses that the Upanīṣads show that the world of appearance does not actually exist at all and it is only on account of the avidyā of Jīva that world of appearance, appears to have apparent existence.

Mandana's Advaita philosophy is well known for the following doctrines.

**Bhāvādvaita**

Mandana propounds his support of Bhāvādvaita on Sadādvaita or Ens Monism. He held the view that the admission of abhāva or an indefinable something other than Brahman does not cause any obstruction in the concept of Advaita since the Advaita as he puts it is bhāvādvaita or monism excluding all other positive entities and not also the negative entity. Thus the

dissolution of ignorance or Avidyādharma which is a negative entity its existence does not violate the concept of monism. And according to Madana there is the annihilation of avidya or avidyānivṛtti, which he conceives as something other than existence and non-existence, and describes it as anirvacaniya or beyond the categories of description.

Nāyāvāda or Avidya-vāda

According to Madana, Nāyā, avidyā and mithyā are synonyms. This is so because his view holds that avidya or ignorance, māyā or illusion and mithyā or false appearance is neither the characteristic nature (Svabhāva) of the ultimate reality or Brahman nor an entity which stands entirely different from Brahman (Arthāntaram). Avidya for him is of two kinds non-apprehension (agrahāpa) and mis-apprehension (Anyathāgraḥaṇa) and both are found related to each other as cause and effect. Avidya can be said to be neither real (satī) and existent nor unreal (Atyanatamasatī) and absolutely non-existent. If Avidya is characteristic of anything then whether it is identical with it or whether it is different from it yet it would be a reality and hence it could not be avidya. Again were avidya to be absolutely unreal or non-existent like the flower in the sky and in such circumstances it would have no practical bearing in experience which on the contrary it very much has. Hence the best way in which avidya can be termed is indescribable or anirvacaniya. And all philosophers to maintain their consistency must necessarily
accept it to be such.

Mandana holds the view that the individual or Jīva is the seat (as‘-raya) of avidya and that Brahman is the object (viṣaya) of avidya (Jīvanāmāti brūmah), for the individual depends upon mental constructions or imagination (Kalpanā) and this in turn depends on the individual. But again according to him avidya is itself an inconsistent category and thus quite naturally the defect of inconsistency of the relationship of avidya with the Jīvas arises., 'The Jīvas being in essence, identical with Brahman, phenomenally appear to be diverse and this diversity of Jīvas is due to imagination (Kalpanā) which is but a product of avidya. But Brahman is devoid of avidya and all imagination (Tasyā Vidyātmanah Kalpanā S’unyatāt) and the Jīvas are the product of imagination or avidya themselves.

The defect of interdependence which we find in the above case is only in the conception of reality and not in the conception of unreality, for māyā itself is that category whose concept cannot be consistent. The concepts of jīva and avidya are inconsistent and hence they are merely māyā or unreal and had they been consistent they would have been real and not unreal.

Mandana goes on to describe the unfoldment and the annihilation of avidya. Avidya unfolds itself into the Jīvas,

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1. Brahma-Siddhi, P 9
2. 'Jīvanāmāti Brūmah M.B.S. P-150
3. BrahmaSiddhi - P.10
its karman and the world. There is no cause of dhronological
order in avidya, Jīva-Karman and the world. They come into
existence simultaneously and go out of existence simultaneously.
They are simultaneous entities.

'\text{It is through this avidya that jīvas suffer the cycle
births and rebirths and this avidya is natural to the jīvas,}
\text{1 since the jīvas themselves are the products of avidya'.}

The annihilation of avidya can be said to be the reverse
process of its unfoldment. When avidya is annihilated jīva,
karm and the world also are annihilated. The means of removal
of avidya, that is, true vidya (knowledge) destroys avidya while it
also destroys all the paraphernalia produced by avidya. This
means of removal of avidya or right knowledge can be got through
Sravana, Manana and nidhidhyāsana and means like Brahma-chārya
etc as exorted in the Upanīshads.

Mandana remarks, "Ignorance (avidya) is removed by ignorance
(Karma or action) alone and when it has thus been destroyed what
remains in Pure knowledge or the immortal self shining in its
pure consciousness.

Thus on the destruction of avidya, Brahmanhood can be
attained.'

1. Ibid P-11-12.
2. Ibid P-13.
Atman or Brahman

Atman/Brahman is the only existing reality. It is object of avidya and is the ground underlying all world appearances. Brahman on account of its special potency appears through maya as the world of diverse phenomenal objects. The diverse phenomenal objects an account of the false notion of similarity appear as if they are one. But in reality all difference is grounded in the supreme Brahman.

The apparent duality of subject (draṣṭr), object (dṛṣṭya) must be ultimately transcended. If this duality were to be real then this could never be bridged over and no relation between the two could be established. According to Madhava the absolutely pure - Self (Draṣṭa) which knows no change can never be really related to changing objects (Dṛṣṭya). Hence Madhava agreeing with the Vedantin Abhidavādins holds that only unity is real and that diversity is a mere appearance. All difference for him is an appearance and is best described as grounded in Brahman which alone is the ultimate reality.

1. Brahmasiddhi II 32
2. Ibid P-60