

A Comparative Study of Consciousness in Māṇḍūkya-kārikā and Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment
for the degree of the*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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2018**

DECLARATION

I, **Ajay Jaiswal**, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled '**A Comparative Study of Consciousness in Māṇḍūkya-kārikā and Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi**' in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi is my original research work. The dissertation has not been submitted in part or in full to any other university or elsewhere to obtain any other degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled '**A Comparative Study of Consciousness in Māṇḍūkya-kārikā and Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi**' submitted by **Mr. Ajay Jaiswal**, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi is his original work. It is further certified that the dissertation has not been submitted in part or in full to any other university or elsewhere to obtain any other degree.

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Dedicated

To,

My Mother, Late Mrs. Madhuri Jaiswal

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Ajay Jaiswal

List of Abbreviations

Aitar Up	Aitareya Upaniṣad
Amṛtab Up	Amṛtabindu Upaniṣad
Bṛhad Up	Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad
Chānd Up	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
GK	Gauḍapādakārikā/Māṇḍūkyakārikā
Īśā Up	Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad
Kaṭh Up	Kaṭha Upaniṣad
Ken Up	Kena Upaniṣad
Māṇḍ Up	Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad
MK	Mūlamadhyamakakārikā
Muṇḍ Up	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad
SK	Sāṃkhyakārikā
Taitt Up	Taittirīya Upaniṣad
TSK	Trīṃśikā
VMS	Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi
VST	Vimśatikā

Introduction

Consciousness is both the most intimately familiar and ultimately mysterious to us. Almost all the Indian philosophical systems maintain that consciousness reveals its objects, but they have extensively pondered and argued over its nature and provided various theories of consciousness. On the one hand, objective and empirical theories describe it as an object (contingent property) and merely as bodily or mental epiphenomena as in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Cārvāka respectively. On the other hand, subjective and transcendental theories of consciousness rendered it a supreme status as Being itself, as in Yogācāra Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta.¹ Understanding how these two different traditions establish the non-duality of consciousness is a matter of intense debate in Indian philosophy. This study critically and comparatively engages in exploring the idea of consciousness in the seminal texts of Gauḍapāda and Vasubandhu, viz., Māṇḍūkyakārikā² and Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi³ respectively. It, thus, aims to understand how both the texts, despite coming from different traditions, refute the existence of common sense duality and make startling claims about the nature of Reality in terms of the consciousness principle alone. In addition, it also seeks to comprehend Māṇḍūkyakārikā and its author in relation with Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi in particular and Buddhism in general.

Again, in the history of Indian philosophy, the relationship between Advaita Vedānta and Mahāyāna Buddhism has aroused noticeable attention among scholars since ancient times, from both East and West. Both the schools, Advaita Vedānta and Mahāyāna Buddhism, hold a prominent place in *āstika* and *nāstika* systems respectively. However, this conventional trend of dividing Indian philosophical systems dissipates whenever remarkable similarities and converging points are discovered between Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta. The parallels have been brought to the forefront using shared terminologies like- ‘awareness only’ (*cinmātra*) or ‘consciousness only’ (*cittamātra*); nature of Reality as *Brahman* or *Śūnya* or *Vijñāna*; *avidyā* that describes the phenomenal world of duality to be the product of ignorance; application of similar pedagogical approaches to negate ‘what is perceived’ citing analogies of dreams, illusion, mirage, etc.; doctrine of absence of origination (*ajāti*), mere appearance of percepts (*ābhāsa*), and the idea of creation out of perception (*dr̥ṣṭisr̥ṣṭi*), etc. All these conceptual

¹ Cf. Gupta, Bina, *Cit Consciousness*, pp. 6-15.

² Māṇḍūkyakārikā is a wide-ranging explanatory text on Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. It is also known as Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Kārikā, Gauḍapādakārikā, and Āgamaśāstra. Further, Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, the shortest of all the principal Upaniṣads, contains only twelve verses explaining consciousness vis-à-vis its symbolic counterpart *AUM* (ॐ).

³ Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi is composed of two texts, viz., Viṃśatikā and Triṃśikā containing 22 and 30 Kārikās respectively.

intimacies seem to negate the conditioned and distorted vision of Reality and establish non-duality of consciousness or awareness that permeates Existence.

The astounding similarities also leave us skeptical about the originality of Śaṅkara's thought. To the followers of Śaṅkara, he could be the towering figure in the history of Indian philosophy; but to the critics, his philosophy might be grand but not thoroughly innovative. Orthodox teachers, like Rāmānuja and Vijñānabhikṣu, went so far as to describe Śaṅkara as a '*prachanna buddha*' or a 'Crypto Buddhist'. Modern scholars are also apt enough to recognize this. Emphasizing the similarities, S.N. Dasgupta remarks-

“His (Śaṅkara's) Brahman is very much like Śūnya of Nāgārjuna...The debts of Śaṅkara to the self-luminosity of Vijñānavāda Buddhism can hardly be overestimated. There seems to be much truth in the accusations against Śaṅkara by Vijñānabhikṣu and others that he was a hidden Buddhist himself... Śaṅkara's philosophy is largely a compound of Vijñānavāda and Śūnyavāda Buddhism with the Upaniṣadic notion of the permanence of self superadded.”⁴

Ironically, Śaṅkara has also been criticized as a born enemy of Buddhists. Some of the post Advaita scholars, like Prakāṣatman, find it illogical to claim that the mastermind behind the downfall of Buddhism could be a 'Crypto Buddhist'. Anyone endorsing this view is condemned as the one “who talks something which befits an ignorant man and his case is indeed pitiable.”⁵ Such contrasting views leave us in a confused position regarding our understanding of Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta in general or Śaṅkara and Nāgārjuna or Vasubandhu in particular.

However, the scope and objective of this research work is not to investigate and compare the relationship between Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta in general or between Nāgārjuna and Śaṅkara in particular. Rather, it is to critically and comparatively study two main vital links between them, viz., Gauḍapāda and Vasubandhu with special reference to their key texts- Māṇḍūkyakārikā and Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi respectively, using the shared dominant theme, i.e., consciousness.

Why Gauḍapāda or Māṇḍūkyakārikā?

The historical and cultural gap between Nāgārjuna and Śaṅkara is vast, roughly more than 500 years, and it contains several phases of the transformation of ideas acting as both cause and effect in due course. Philosophers are, as Russell points out, both effects

⁴ Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy Vol. I*, pp. 493-4.

⁵ Prakāṣatman, *Pancāpdikā Vivaraṇa*, p. 84.

and causes; effects of their social circumstances and of the politics and institutions of their time, cause (if they are fortunate) of beliefs which mould the politics and institutions of later days.⁶ The same is true for Buddha and Śaṅkara and all the major philosophers who flourished in between their times. Therefore, the present work chooses to delve deep in two philosophers- Gauḍapāda and Vasubandhu who are crucial in the evolution of Indian philosophical thoughts regarding consciousness from Buddhism to Advaita Vedānta.

Any attempt to study the relationship between Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta remains incomplete without considering Gauḍapāda, who was, traditionally the teacher of Govindapāda who, in turn, happened to be the teacher of Śaṅkara. He was the real preceptor of Advaita philosophy. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, “Gauḍapāda is the first systematic exponent of Advaita Vedānta.”⁷ The core principles of Advaita philosophy, such as the *avasthātraya* (three states of consciousness), *advaita* of *Brahman* and *jīva*, *māyā*, the inapplicability of causality to the Ultimate Reality, ignorance as the root cause of suffering and *jñāna* (knowledge) as the prime method of *mokṣa* (liberation), etc. are set forth in his masterpiece- Gauḍapādakārikā.

However, his teachings also act as a ground for Śaṅkara’s labeling as a crypto Buddhist. To some scholars, Gauḍapāda’s teachings are in immense rapport with Buddhism. Louis Poussin writes-

“One can’t read the Gauḍapāda Kārikās without being struck by the Buddhist character of the leading ideas and the wording itself. The author seems to have used Buddhist works or sayings, and to have adjusted them to his Vedāntic design...”⁸

S.N. Dasgupta also writes-

“Gauḍapāda flourished after all great Buddhist teachers Aśvaghōṣa, Nāgārjuna, Asanga and Vasubandhu, and I believe that there is sufficient evidence in his Kārikās for thinking that he was possibly himself a Buddhist and considered that the teachings of the Upaniṣads tallied with those of Buddha...”⁹

Gauḍapādakārikā contains four chapters, viz., Āgama, Vaitathya, Advaita and Alātaśānti dealing with Māṇḍūkya exposition based on *śrutis* (the Vedas), the unreality of dualism, re-establishment of *advaita*, and refutation of rival schools’ views respectively. In the fourth chapter, namely Alātaśānti, it is noticeable, according to many scholars like

⁶ Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, p. 7.

⁷ Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy Vol. II*, p. 452.

⁸ Poussin, *Buddhist Notes: Vedānta and Buddhism*, p. 134.

⁹ Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, p. 494.

Herman Jacobi, V. Bhattacharya, S.N. Dasgupta, T.M.P. Mahadevan, Radhakrishnan et al., that the method employed to reject realism and dualism of many schools like of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and Sāṃkhya, and to assert its doctrines of monism, illusionism, and negativism, used terminologies and logic strongly resembling with that of Buddhists.

On the other hand, Gauḍapāda has been equally defended by Advaita scholars against above charges. But no doubt they all admit at least some possibility of Buddhist influence on Gauḍapāda, as his philosophy contains both the elements of Śūnyavāda and Vijñānavāda. Nevertheless, he is always credited with having an impartial spirit of interpretation of his own. It is, therefore, in this context, this work attempts to present the philosophy of Gauḍapāda based on his Māṇḍūkyakārikā.

Why Vasubandhu or Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi?

Gauḍapāda's philosophy contains the elements of both Śūnyavāda as well as Vijñānavāda, yet the present study critically compares him with Vasubandhu. The sense of comparison arises with the primary understanding of commonality between these two thinkers (and the texts). They use shared terms, themes, questions and most importantly posited some kind of non-dualistic Idealism based on Consciousness. It can be held that the dominant theme in Māṇḍūkyakārikā is the establishment of 'non-duality of consciousness'. On the other hand, Vasubandhu's primary thesis is also, according to Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti, 'the inexistence of external object of knowledge/ the existence of sole consciousness'.¹⁰ The very title of his major work- Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi, translates as 'Establishing that there is Consciousness Only'.

Hence, though conventionally Vasubandhu and Gauḍapāda represent two distinct philosophical traditions, namely Buddhist and Vedic, which are considered radically different, yet their apparent commonality compels us to be skeptical about it. Hence, the present work engages in a critical and comparative study of their significant texts that may have a broader scope and significance in explicating their position on the nature of Reality as consciousness.

Delimitations

To establish the limits of this study, it is pertinent to say that the present work would not engage in studying Yogacāra Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta in general but Gauḍapāda and Vasubandhu in particular based on the specified texts. Further, the central theme to explore the texts would be 'consciousness'.

¹⁰ Tola & Dragonetti, *Being as Consciousness*, p. 73.

There are numerous commentaries and sub-commentaries on both the texts but the present study mainly relies on the original text and a few selective commentators. The help of the commentary (Bhāṣya) of Śaṅkara and the sub-commentary (Tīkā) of Ānandagiri has been taken to comprehend Māṇḍūkya-kārikā. Regarding Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi, the help of the auto-commentary (vṛtti on Viṃśatikā) of Vasubandhu and commentary of Sthiramati (on Trīmśikā) has been taken.

Furthermore, the pivot of the study would be Gauḍapāda, not Vasubandhu as it is his (Gauḍapāda's) status in the history of Indian Philosophy which is a matter of heated debate, and his Advaitic vision is often contrasted with that of Buddhists.

Recent works on Gauḍapāda and his Kārikās

Though a large number of texts exist on Gauḍapāda and his Kārikā, yet appraisal of his thoughts is scanty, at least if compared with Śaṅkara. The debate concerning our understanding of Gauḍapāda-kārikā and its Buddhist context heated around the first half of the 20th century. The first critical edition of the text was Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya's *The Āgamśāstra of Gauḍapāda* (1943), which considered Gauḍapāda-kārikā to be composite of four different texts and he draws enormous references to prove Buddhist influence on it, especially in the fourth chapter namely, Alātaśānti. Little effort is made, however, to critically appraise the profundity or complexity of the Kārikā in relation to Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.

Immediately several counter-attacks were made, with the appearance of T.M.P. Mahadevan's *Gauḍapāda: A Study in Early Vedānta* (1952), which is a systematic exposition of the fundamental concepts of Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. Though it accepts some influence of Buddhism on Gauḍapāda as in using various arguments, but attacks Bhattacharya's claim simply as a misinterpretation. Further, he also claims that the apparent similarities are because Buddhism was itself influenced by Upaniṣads and whatever is negative in Buddhism is self-contradictory. He states-

“Since nothing is real, the Buddha and what he said is also unreal, This is the logic of nihilism carried to its conclusion. Nihilism itself is Śūnya.”¹¹

But certainly, he devotes less time to explicate the subtlety of Buddhist thoughts and seems to interpret Gauḍapāda-kārikā from Śaṅkara's perception only. He seems to suggest too easily the identity of Śaṅkara's and Gauḍapāda's thoughts. He states-

“Doctrinally, there is no difference whatsoever between what is taught by Gauḍapāda in the Kārikā and what is expounded by Śaṅkara in his extensive works.”¹²

¹¹ Mahadevan, *Gauḍapāda: A Study in Early Vedānta*, pp. 222-23.

R.D. Karmarkar's *The Gauḍapādakārikā* (1953) also presents a counterattack on V. Bhattacharya's thesis using citations from Brahmanical and Vedāntic sources. His work is useful, to some extent, as a corrective measure against the exclusive treatment of Gauḍapādakārikā through the Buddhist lens. However, he does not attempt to show an understanding of the foundations of the two traditions and the cause of their conflicts or converging claims. He evades the basic understanding of the ontological positions of both the traditions merely by citing references from the Vedāntic sources.

Caterine Conio's *The Philosophy of Māṇḍūkya Kārikās* (1971) is also an attempt to provide a systematic analysis of Gauḍapāda's philosophy where she considers Śaṅkara's Bhāṣya as authentic and rejects Buddhist influence on it. But the work is not wide-ranging as it makes very little attempt to improve our understanding of Gauḍapāda's relation with Buddhism and their ontological position regarding consciousness

Sangamlal Pandey's *Pre-Śaṅkara Advaita Philosophy* (1974) presents some insightful discussion on Upaniṣadic sources of Advaita Vedānta and Gauḍapāda. The text rejects V. Bhattacharya's thesis, but it has a polemic attitude towards Buddhism rather than attempting to provide a thorough understanding of Buddhism.

Colin Cole's *Asparśayoga: The Māṇḍūkya Kārikā of Gauḍapāda* (1982), tries to provide a definitive account of Gauḍapādan thought regarding *asparśa yoga*, which he considers akin to the idealism or Vijñānavāda. He considers Buddhists Vijñānavāda and Gauḍapāda's theory as subjective idealism and Absolute Idealism. He states-

“The arguments which Gauḍapāda uses in his explanation are reminiscent of Buddhist *Vijñānavāda* theory. But he is not a “subjective idealist”. Rather he is an “Absolute Idealist” in that he posits a basis for all experience.”¹³

However, it is rather difficult to use western concepts such as ‘idealism’ to an Indian philosophical text such as Gauḍapādakārikā. Cole's view was further endorsed in Stephen Kaplan's *Hermeneutics, Holography, and Indian Idealism* (1987), who interprets *asparśa yoga* as “mind does not touch an external object” (Gauḍapādakārikā, IV, 26), as idealistic, i.e., to say mind creates the world. But he interprets it phenomenologically, that in *asparśa yoga*, mind deals with the appearance of objects rather than objects in themselves. Kalpan, however, does not devote considerable time to explain Buddhist influence on Gauḍapāda and moreover consciousness is exclusively described in terms of perception or modern holographic theories of mind only.

A.O. Fort's *The Self and its States: A States of Consciousness Doctrine in Advaita Vedānta* (1990) presents a valuable translation of Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, the first chapter of Gauḍapādakārikā and Śaṅkara Bhāṣya. Though the text is an exclusive analysis of the

¹² Ibid., p. 240.

¹³ Cole, *Asparśayoga: The Māṇḍūkya Kārikā of Gauḍapāda*, p. 61.

four states (*castuṣpāda*) of Consciousness along with some comparison with modern psychology, but it lacks an explanation of other three chapters of Gauḍapāda-kārikā and also an attempt of explanation of consciousness in Buddhist's context.

Thomas Wood's *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad and the Āgamaśāstra: An investigation into the meaning of Vedānta* (1990), is also a good translation of the text with the main focus of authorship, dating, and a theistic interpretation of *Turīya* as the 'Lord of all' (Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, 6-7). Interestingly he is also critical of Gauḍapāda's *mayāvāda* and Buddhist Vijñānavāda as the world negating theories. But, his critical view exclusively relies on the theistic (*Vaiṣṇavite*) interpretation of *Turīya* as *Īśvara*.

Richard King's *Early Advaita Vedānta and Buddhism: the Mahāyāna Context of the Gauḍapādīya-Kārikā*, is also a comprehensive account of Gauḍapāda within Mahāyāna context. He has comprehensively taken up the issues of *asparṣa yoga*, the Vedāntic background of Māṇḍūkyakārikā, perception, and Absolutism. However, less emphasis is given on Vijñānavāda school of Buddhism and the states of consciousness. Nevertheless, his work is a pioneer in this field.

Furthermore, various articles and essays appeared from time to time, emphasizing various aspects of Gauḍapāda and his Kārikās and their relation to Buddhist philosophy. For example, Louis Poussin's "Buddhist Notes: Vedānta and Buddhism" gives quotations from Gauḍapāda's Māṇḍūkya Kārikā and parallel quotations from Buddhist works. Herman Jacobi's "On Māyāvāda", describes Gauḍapāda as the first formulator of *mayāvāda*, its difference from the Brahmasūtra teachings, and its similarity with the Buddhist Śūnyavāda. V. Bhattacharya's "Śaṅkara's Commentaries on the Upaniṣads" rejects Śaṅkara's authorship of the commentary attributed to him on Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad and Gauḍapāda's Kārikā.

Other important articles/papers include B. N. Krishnamurti's "New Light on the Gauḍapāda Kārikās", "Further Light on the Gauḍapāda Kārikās" and "Still Further Light on the Gauḍapāda Kārikās", "Are the Gauḍapāda Kārikās *Śruti*? A Rejoinder", "The Upaniṣadic Theory of the Gauḍapāda Kārikās - A Rejoinder"; S. Suryanarayana's "Some Observations on the Māṇḍūkya Kārikās"; P.C. Divanji's "Gauḍapāda's *Asparśayoga* and Śaṅkara's *Jñānavāda*"; T.M.P. Mahadevan's "Some Problems of the Māṇḍūkya-Kārikā"; R.D. Karmarkar's "'*Dvipadām Varām*' in Gauḍapāda-kārikā (IV.1)", and "Was Śaṅkara the Author of the Commentary on Gauḍapāda-kārikās Generally Attributed to Him?"; Kumatara Kawada's "Fundamental Difference between Buddhistic and Vedāntic Philosophies"; L.M. Joshi's "Gauḍapāda's Rapprochement between Buddhism and Vedānta"; N. Aiyaswami's "A New Approach to Gauḍapāda-kārikā"; Karl H. Potter's "Was Gauḍapāda an Idealist?"; Stephen Kaplan's "The Yogacāra Roots of Advaita Idealism? Noting a Similarity between Vasubandhu and Gauḍapāda", etc.

Interestingly it can be noted here that in the last paper cited above, we observe a shift in our understanding of the relationship from between Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta in general to Gauḍapāda and Vasubandhu in particular and Kaplan here draws enormous references to show similarities on the basis of *Vijñapti* or Consciousness.

Still, it can be said that the views of above scholars are, at least to some extent, partial, often conflicting and with a little emphasis on consciousness as the nature of Reality in both the traditions. It creates a lack or gap in the study or the literature. Therefore, research in this field is important and worthy of investigation and the comparative analysis of the notion of consciousness in Gauḍapādakārikā vis-à-vis Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi may enrich our methodological, theoretical, and relational understanding. In this pursuit, the present work has been divided into three chapters- the first dealing with Māṇḍūkyakārikā; the second with Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi; and the third with the comparison. Accordingly, the following set of research questions can be posed-

Questions in Vijñaptimātratāsiddhiḥ

- 1- How is the common sense realistic attitude refuted?
- 2- What is the nature of consciousness understood as *Vijñapti*?
- 3- How does it manifest at various levels of existence?
- 4- How does this *Vijñapti* alone exist ontologically?
- 5- How is everything else merely a projection of *Vijñapti*?
- 6- How is the essencelessness (*niḥsvabhāvataḥ*) associated with various modifications of *vijñāna* (*vijñāna pariṇāma*)?
- 7- What is the purpose of Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi?

Questions in Māṇḍūkyakārikā

- 1- How does consciousness which seems to be confined to our body permeate through various levels of subjective and objective experiences?
- 2- How can there be consciousness beyond all our experiences, i.e., in the Fourth State (*Turīya*)?
- 3- How the external world of duality which appears so real to common sense could be false or elusive?
- 4- How can we describe the non-duality of all the stages of consciousness?
- 5- How can we describe the absolute non-origination of everything (*ajātivada*) when the world including ourselves seems to be so real and predicated of birth and decay?

In the light of findings of the queries above, certain questions can be addressed, that would form a part of the comparison, as follows-

- 1- Are the accounts of consciousness in the two texts converging at any point(s)?
- 2- Are they diverging at any point(s)?
- 3- What are the apparent similarities and differences that can be critically examined?
- 4- How to interpret some of the ambiguous expressions of the text (Māṇḍūkya-kārikā) which reflect its Buddhist context?

To elaborate further, merely tracing down similarities would not be the task of the study as the commonality could be mere appearance. Any assumption of commonality will not be well grounded unless we closely compare them, which may reveal significant differences at the end. So, the task would not be only a frenzy search for parallels. The recognition of contrasting differences is also a primary task of this comparison. The comparison is indeed critical here for wherever it is necessary, the apparent similarities or differences would be contrastively dispelled. Nevertheless, both the extremes are to be avoided and an attitude of openness would be reserved.

To put in other words, based on the systematic exposition of the texts we can delve deep in finding the similarities in differences and differences in similarities in their approaches and position regarding consciousness? That would be the interpretive side of the study. Further, noticing differences and similarities, we can refine our assumptions that we make without being aware of them and our understanding of the theoretical and practical consequences of any conventional philosophical position. With the fusion of their distant horizons, we may also have a bigger picture and understanding of the fundamental nature of Reality/consciousness. That would be the constructive side of the study.

Furthermore, since both the texts/thinkers to be studied have been a product of distinct culture, tradition, language, concepts, and standards of justification, best efforts would be made to avoid problems and dangers of a comparative analysis such as linguistic and evaluative incommensurability, one-sidedness, generalization, etc.

It is important to mention here a note regarding 'consciousness', for which there is no definite term in the texts. Various terms appear such as *Ātman*, *Brahman*, *Turīya*, *Cit*, *citta*, *Vijnāna*, *Vijñaptimātratā*, *Tathatā*, *jīvātman*, *manas*, *klišṭa manas*, *pravṛtti vijñāna*, etc. Though they all comprehend consciousness from different aspects yet we can generally classify them under two broad categories- the Absolute and the relative

aspect denoted by the terms beginning with the upper cases and the lower cases respectively.

Lastly, though the debates in the present study are not entirely new, but the approach and the new sides of comparison may help in strengthening our understanding of Gauḍapāda and Vasubandhu in particular and Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta in general regarding the nature of consciousness. With this comparison, we may not only harvest some new answers to the questions about the nature of consciousness but also pose some genuine questions which can lead to further clearer answer in an entirely new paradigm.

Chapter- 1

Consciousness in Māṇḍūkya-kārikā

This chapter seeks to explore the concept of consciousness as described in Māṇḍūkya-kārikā. There is no particular term in the text, which can invariably denote ‘consciousness’ as such. Since the text seeks to explain the reality through various levels, there are different terms, in different contexts, describing different aspects of consciousness, e.g., *cit*, *viññapti*, *manasa*, *prajña*, *prājña*, *jñāna*, *jñeya*, *advaita*, *Ātman*, *Turīya*, *Brahman*, etc.

For the sake of proper delineation of the concepts dispersed in the text, the present chapter has been divided into four sections followed by concluding reflections on the various aspects of consciousness in the text. The first section presents an account of the three levels of consciousness (*avasthā traya*), with their micro and macro aspects, epistemological categories, ontological status, objects of enjoyments, etc. The description would be based on the first chapter of Māṇḍūkya-kārikā, i.e., Āgama Prakaraṇa. In the second section, the notion of *Turīya*, the fourth state of consciousness, has been explained which is both immanent and transcendent to the three states. The explanation would be based on the seventh verse (*mantra*) of Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. In the third section, the notion of *advaita* (non-duality), which enjoys the status of reality as *Turīya*, has been explained. Furthermore, *advaita* has been explained vis-à-vis the unreality (*vaitathya*) of duality (*dvaita*). The discussion would be primarily based on the second and the third chapters of Māṇḍūkya-kārikā, namely, Vaitathya Prakaraṇa and Advaita Prakaraṇa. In the fourth and the last section, the keynote of Gauḍapāda on causality, i.e., *ajātavāda* (non-origination) has been discussed. The discussion would be primarily based on the fourth chapter of Māṇḍūkya-kārikā, i.e., Alātaśantī Prakaraṇa.

Since very little is known with certainty about Gauḍapāda, hence the authorship of Māṇḍūkya-kārikā is a matter of debate. It is also debatable whether the last Prakaraṇa was composed by Gauḍapāda or someone else. For the present purpose, Māṇḍūkya-kārikā is assumed to be a composite text of all the four Prakaraṇas (chapters) with Gauḍapāda as its author. Hence, the title Gauḍapādakārikā (GK) would invariably denote Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad along with the Kārikās of Gauḍapāda. Furthermore, the following enquiry relies primarily on the original texts of Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, Gauḍapāda Kārikās, the commentary (Bhāṣya) of Śaṅkara, and the gloss (Tīkā) of Ānandagiri.

1.1 The Three States of Consciousness (*avasthātraya*)

This section deals with the concept of *avasthātraya*- the three states of Consciousness or Self. As the concept is available in Vedānta philosophy from the most ancient Upaniṣads to later neo-Vedānta texts and it is so wide-ranging and profound that it becomes challenging to decide what to include and what to omit so that the concept is intelligible. Nevertheless, to limit the area of

the enquiry, the concept of *avasthātraya* is approached directly, as posited in Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, in the light of contributions made by Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara. In addition, tracing the roots of the concept available in other relevant Upaniṣads is also a part of the enquiry.

1.1.1 Significance and Approach of Gauḍapādakārikā

If Upaniṣads are the culmination of the Vedās,¹⁴ then Māṇḍūkya may be considered as the essence of all the major Upaniṣads. Muktikopaniṣad gloriously reviews Māṇḍūkya as the alone sufficient text to liberate an aspirant of *mokṣa*.¹⁵ Such exaltations may seem to be exaggerated when one reads the opening words¹⁶ of Māṇḍūkya and is confronted with its exceedingly abstract and cryptic declarations. However, in its brevity lies its profound significance.

Unlike other major Upaniṣads, Māṇḍūkya opens up abruptly without any background story, philosophical questions directly stated, *gurū- śiṣya* setting, and so on. However, a closer look at the setting of the Upaniṣadic declarations by a seer (*ṛṣi*) to his disciples may reveal answers to the most fundamental questions of existence. Upaniṣads (including Māṇḍūkya) deal with the problem of the Ultimate Reality and the knowledge of *Ātman* and *Brahman* as its goal. They directly speak about the truth of the universe and place human experience in it, in their totality. Philosophy, since its origins, might have had many definitions, but in the Upaniṣadic parlance, *darśana* or philosophy is the unified vision of the whole. This idea can be supported by a close inspection of the opening verse of the text, which foretells the symbol of ‘whole’ (*sarva*) as *AUM* (ॐ). Unlike other philosophical systems, narrations of which generally pertain to the waking state only, this Upaniṣad incorporates an exposition of otherwise overlooked but more subtle and important facets of human experience, namely- *svapna* (the dream state), *suṣupti* (the deep sleep state) and *Turīya* (the Fourth and the beyond). The triple stream of consciousness is symbolized by the three morae of *AUM* (ॐ) which encompass *sarva*, the wholeness, anything within time- past (*bhūtam*), present (*bhavat*), and future (*bhaviṣyat*) and even that which is beyond time (*trikālāltīta*). The three morae (*mātrā*) also correspond with the *avasthātraya* and morales (*amātrā*) at the end of the *AUM* (ॐ) denotes *Turīya*. Thus, it accounts for a consciousness that is phenomenal, psychological as well as transcendental and spiritual.

¹⁴ The term ‘*vedānta*’ also literally means the culmination of the Vedās, which incorporates teachings based on Prasthātraya, viz., Upaniṣads, Brahmasūtra, and Bhagavadgītā.

¹⁵ ... māṇḍūkyamekamevālaṁ mumukṣūṇāṁ vimuktaye ||
Muktikopaniṣad, I, 26.

¹⁶ “*Aum*, the word, is all this. A clear explanation of it (is the following). All that is past, present and future is verily *Aum*. That which is beyond the triple conception of time, is also truly *Aum*.”

Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, 1.
(Trans. by Swami Nikhilananda)

It is important to mention here how Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara approach the triple stream of consciousness with the aim of establishing the non-duality of *Ātman* and *Brahman*. This idea of nonduality is pregnant in the second *mantra* of Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, where the ‘*sarva*’ – which was named as *AUM* in the previous verse is now designated as *Brahman* and then as *Ātman*. Just as the limited and modified space is not different, in its essence, from the unlimited space, so is *Ātman* undifferentiated from *Brahman*. The *mahāvākya*¹⁷, i.e., *Ayam Ātma Brahma*, is the tireless repetition of all the major Upaniṣads and Māṇḍūkya’s analysis of *AUM* (ॐ) in correspondence to the triple states of consciousness and *Turīya* has been brilliantly employed in the Kārikās as a means to establish the idea of non-duality.

Now, it would be appropriate to look into each of the three states one by one:

1.1.2 The Waking State (*jāgrat*)

Pure Consciousness, modified with different identifications, functions differently. It has a different location, identity, field of activity, level of enjoyment, etc. *Jāgrat* is the waking state of consciousness. The consciousness of the waking ego, i.e., *viśva*, is extrovert and it enjoys gross objects of sounds, touches, forms, tastes, and smells. This limited enjoyment takes place through nineteen mouths (*ekonaviṁśati mukhaḥ*). As a poetic and metaphorical expression, mouth means the instruments of consumption or the fundamental categories of experience in the *jāgrat* state, viz., the five sense organs of perception (*jñānendriya*), the five organs of action (*karmendriya*), the five aspects of vital air (*prāṇa*), and the inner psychological instruments (*antaḥ karaṇa*), viz., the mind (*manas*), intellect or (*buddhi*), memory (*citta*), and ego (*ahamkāra*). Sarvasāra, another Upaniṣad of Yajurveda, in concordance with Māṇḍūkya, says-

“The self is awake when it cognizes the gross objects, sound, etc., through the fourteen instruments, mind, etc. (i.e., *manas*, *buddhi*, *citta*, *ahamkāra*, and the organs of knowledge and action) fully developed and helped by the sun, etc.”¹⁸

Thus, the nineteen mouths of Māṇḍūkya are the fourteen instruments of Sarvasāra Upaniṣad plus five vital airs (*pañcaprāṇa*). These nineteen elements constitute the subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*) of an individual being (*jīva*). Again, as already stated that *Ātman* is non-different from *Brahman*, therefore Māṇḍūkya juxtaposes the nineteen mouths of individual waking ego

¹⁷ The *mahāvākyas* are the four great sayings of Upaniṣads having supreme importance in Vedānta philosophy. They are:

- 1-prajñānam brahma : Aitar Up, 3.3.
- 2-aham brahmāsmi : Bṛhad Up, 1.4.10.
- 3-tat tvam asi : Chānd Up, 6.8.7.
- 4-ayam ātmā brahma: Māṇḍ Up, 2.

¹⁸ mana ādicaturdaśkaraṇaiḥ puṣkalairādityādyanugrhitaiḥ śabdādīnviṣayān-sthūlānyadopalabhate tadātmano jāgaraṇam |

Sarvasāra Upaniṣad, 5.

(As quoted in Mahadevan, T.M.P., *Gauḍapāda: A Study in Early Advaita*, pp. 91-92.)

(*viśva*) with the seven limbs (*saptāṅga*) of cosmic waking *jīva*, i.e., *Vaiśvānara*. The metaphor of seven limbs is reminiscent of the famous expression met in Chāndogya Upaniṣad where the macrocosmic structure of the waking ego, i.e., *virāt*, is described as having the ‘effulgent region as his head, the sun as his eyes, the air his vital breath, the space as his middle part, the water as his kidney, the earth as his feet, the fire (*ahavānīya*) as his mouth.’¹⁹

Thus, *virāt*, the seven limbed cosmic form of the waking ego, is in essence non-different from nineteen mouthed individual soul or *viśva* just as the room space is non-different from the atmospheric space. So the personal identity as ‘individual’ separate ego (*ahamkāra*) is not extended here to the cosmic level (*vaiśvānara*), but the very being, the very identity (not personal) is extended to the level of non-duality which can be comprehended as the one interdependent organic whole.

These gross channels (*sthūla ekonaviṁśatimukhaḥ*), however, do not exhaust our experience. Every night we disassociate ourselves from these gross limiting adjuncts (*upādhi*) and enter into a different world called dream, the second state of consciousness, i.e., *svapnāvasthā*.

1.1.3 The Dream State (*svapna*)

When consciousness is introvert and creates a world of dreams out of impressions of the waking state, it is called the dream state (*svapnāvasthā*), the second quarter of the Self. Māṇḍūkya indicates²⁰ that the nineteen channels of the waking state endure in the *svapna* too but in a subtle form (*sūkṣmāvasthā*). Therefore, the dream experience is not as concrete as the waking one. It is *praviviktabhuk*- the enjoyer of the subtle objects.

The individual form of *svapna avasthā* of consciousness is called *taijasa*- possibly because it has its own illumining power of cognition²¹ (as ‘*teja*’ also means illumination) and it is the creator of its own objects.

“There are no chariots, nor animals to be yoked to them, nor roads there, but he creates the chariots, animals and roads. There are no pleasures, joys, or delights there, but he creates the

¹⁹ tasya ha vā etasyātmano vaiśvānarasya mūrdhaiva sutejāścakṣurviśvarūpaḥ prāṇaḥ pṛthagvartmātmā samdeho bahulo bastireva rayiḥ pṛthivyeva pādāvura eva vedirlomāni barhirhṛdayaṃ gārhapatyo mano'nvāhāryapacana āśyamāhavanīyaḥ ||
Chānd Up, 5.18.2.

²⁰ svapnasthāno'ntaḥ prajāḥ saptāṅga ekonaviṁśatimukhaḥ praviviktabhuktaijaso dvitīyaḥ pādaḥ ||
Māṇḍ Up, 4.

²¹ ...atrayam puruṣaḥ svayam jyotirbhavati...||
Bṛhad Up, 4.3.14.

pleasures, joys and delights. There are no pools, tanks, or rivers there, but he creates the pools, tanks and rivers. For he is the agent.”²²

Therefore, the agency, ownership, and enjoyership of *taijasa* (the individual dreamer) are illusionary, for the actual Self never acts and never enjoys.²³ That remains unattached (*nirlipyā*).²⁴ This analogy has also been extended to the waking state and hence it is conceivable, at least in theory, and we can very well be skeptical about our agency and enjoyership in the waking state too. Advaita Vedānta scholars have invoked this analogy extensively to prove the illusionary nature of *jāgrat*. This nature of unreality (*vaitathya*) expounded in Kārikās is further discussed in the third section of this chapter.

As regarding the juxtaposition of *ekonaviṁśati mukhaḥ* and *saptāṅgaḥ* in the dream state, the explanation could be the same as about the waking state. In *svapna* too, the non-duality of *vyaṣṭi* dreamer (*taijasa*) and the *samaṣṭi* dreamer (*hiranyagarbha*) is unequivocally maintained.

But this dream world is also ephemeral and there comes a state of deep sleep with the complete abeyance of the thoughts and language and all subjective-objective distinctions whatsoever whether gross or subtle. It is the third state of consciousness, i.e., deep sleep (*suṣupti*).

1.1.4 The Deep Sleep State (*suṣupti*)

Māṇḍūkya’s description of the deep sleep begins by focusing on it as a state where there is no desire.²⁵ Activity, whether objective or subjective, is suspended (as otherwise facilitated by the nineteen mouths and seven limbs) for there is a cessation of desire or any lack of fulfillment in the Self. Therefore, desire, cravings, activity, bondage, and suffering appear to be causally connected. Enjoyments and satisfaction of gross level are fulfilled in the waking state (*jāgrat avasthā*), and those which remain unfulfilled or suppressed to the subtle level are fulfilled in the dream state (*svapnāvasthā*), and then in the deep sleep (*suṣupti*) one finds temporary cessation of all the desires.

Again, the nineteen channels and the seven limbs are not there in the *suṣupti*, neither in gross nor subtle form but they are there as the causal potentiality. They all are absent, but not non-existent. They all merge in one point of homogenous consciousness (*ekībhūtaḥ* and

²² nā tatra rathā nā rathayogā na panthāno bhavantyath rathānrathayogānpathaḥ sṛjate |... sṛjate sa hi kartā ||
Ibid., 4.3.10.
(Trans. by Swami Madhavananda)

²³ ... asango hi ayam puruṣaḥ ... ||
Bṛhad Up, 4.3.16.

²⁴ sa bhuñjāno na lipyate ... ||
GK, I, 5.

²⁵ yatra supto na kañcana kāmam kāmāyate na kañcana svapnam paśyati tat suṣuptam ... ||
Māṇḍ Up, 5.

prajñānaghana). There is no object seen but the pure concept of sight remains, no object contacted but the pure concept of touch remains, and so on. The deep sleep (*susupti*) is not, as commonly understood, a state of unconsciousness. Modern trends in cognitive sciences also support this idea. Studies suggest that fast frequency ripples in the hippocampus region of brain during deep sleep is a strong evidence against total blackout of consciousness therein.²⁶

Indian philosophical schools, especially Vedānta, Yoga, and Nyāya have widely discussed on the nature of the deep sleep state and its relation with consciousness. The debate underlies two prominent metaphysical views on the nature of *Ātman* and consciousness. On the one hand, Naiyāikas maintain that consciousness is an accidental property of the Self. In the deep sleep, the self continues to exist but it loses its contingent property of consciousness. The famous utterance, ‘I slept peacefully, and I did not know anything’ which one makes when one wakes up, is based upon inference, not on direct experience for one is unable to remember any positive account of the deep sleep.

On the other hand, Vedānta, to some extent in agreement with Yoga, rejects the idea that the above utterance is based on inference just because we tend to forget about the deep sleep state. This retrospective forgetting cannot be a ground to prove the complete lack of consciousness in the deep sleep state (*susupti*). Rather, as consciousness, being an essential aspect (*svabhāva*) of Self, a homogenous, subtle, and minimal subliminal consciousness is present there is the deep sleep (*susupti*) too. Vedānta (most prominently Advaita Vedānta) maintains that the utterance is based on memory, not on inference and this memory is not like the memory of some subjective-objective events. Rather it is more primary, more fundamental memory in the form of retentional consciousness that ties together the states of *susupti* and *jāgrat*. Therefore, Māṇḍūkya describes *susupti* as *ekībhūtaḥ* and *prajñānaghana* – a solidified homogenous mass of consciousness.

Susupti is also the enjoyer of bliss (*ānandamaya* or *ānanda bhuk*) as there is no choice and struggle or desire of attaining anything whatsoever. In the absence of desire and consequently any impulse for movement, peace and bliss (*ānanda*) are inevitable. This is the interception point of the bliss sheath (*ānandamaya kośa*) of the famous five sheaths (*pañcakōśa*) doctrine of Taittirīya Upaniṣad.

“That Bliss was Brahman, he concluded. From Bliss, indeed, are these beings verily born; by Bliss, when born, do they live; into Bliss do they, when departing, enter.”²⁷

²⁶ [http://www.cell.com/current-biology/pdf/S0960-9822\(16\)30081-1.pdf](http://www.cell.com/current-biology/pdf/S0960-9822(16)30081-1.pdf)
Accessed on 2/01/2018.

²⁷ ānando brahmeti vyajānāt | ānandādhyeva khalvimāni bhūtāni jāyante | ānandena jātāni jīvanti | ānandaṃ prayantyaabhisamviśantīti |... ||
Taitt Up 6.1.
(Trans. by Alladi Mahadeva Sastry)

It is clearly evident from the analysis of our everyday experience that the waking state (*jāgrat*) is sublated by the dream state (*svapna*) which in turn is sublated by the deep sleep state (*suṣupti*). *Suṣupti* is verily the origin and dissolution point of all subjective/objective experiences. Hence, Māṇḍūkya calls it the doorway (*cetomukhaḥ*) to other two states.

The above observation applies to both the levels, viz. individual *suṣuptātma*, i.e., *prājñā* and the cosmic *suṣuptātma*, i.e., *Īśvara*. With the universal extension, *Īśvara* is the source of all. This idea is reflected in the sixth verse of Māṇḍūkya, which belongs to *Īśvara-*

“This is the Lord of all; this is the knower of all; this is the controller within; this is the source of all; and this is that from which all things originate and in which they finally disappear.”²⁸

The bliss of *suṣupti*, however, is not permanent. Every day we descend from the heights of *ānandmaya suṣupti* to the waking life, and the non-dual experience of *suṣupti* is broken. This finitude of bliss, even in *suṣupti*, and the search for *paramānanda* (infinite bliss) paves the way for another state of consciousness with unqualified peace and bliss, and that is *Turīya*.

1.1.5 Gauḍapāda’s Contributions

To explicate the *avasthātraya* and then the Fourth (*Turīya*) more clearly, Gauḍapāda composes 29 Kārikās with Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad as the foundation, which constitutes the Āgama Prakaraṇa. From the very outset, Gauḍapāda’s emphasis on the non-duality of consciousness is evident. In the diverse *avasthātraya*, he hints at some unifying principle. He hints that whatever is cognized in the three *avasthās* is the manifestation of one Absolute. Only the One is known in the three ways (*eka eva tridhā smṛtaḥ*).²⁹

He also assigns metaphorical embodiments to the three *avasthās* in the right eye, the mind (*manas*), and the heart space (respectively in order).³⁰ Traditional commentators have described them as the places of meditation also.

Gauḍapāda also specifies the way of contentment of *avasthātraya*. *Viśva*, *taijasa*, and *prājñā* are contented (in ascending order) exclusively in gross enjoyments (*sthūla bhuk*), subtle enjoyments (*pravivikta bhuk*) and bliss intrinsically (*ānandamaya*) respectively. However, all these contentments are not ultimate; rather they are the source of bondage. The *jīva* with various modifications and identifications seeks its contentment objectively and suffers. But when one discriminates between the experiencer (*bhoktā*) and the experienced (*bhojya*), then one enjoys

²⁸ eṣa sarveśvaraḥ eṣa sarvajña eṣo'ntaryāmyeṣa yoniḥ sarvasya
prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām ||

Māṇḍ Up, 6.

(Trans. by Swami Nikhilananda)

²⁹ GK, I, 1.

³⁰ dakṣiṇāśimukhe viśvo manasyantastu taijasaḥ | ākāśe ca ḥṛdi prājñāstridhā dehe vyavasthitaḥ ||
Ibid., I, 2.

the fluctuations of various contentments, but is unaffected in itself (*na lipyate*)³¹. But what is the source of various identifications, non-apprehension, and misapprehensions? In one word, it is ignorance (*avidyā*), and the nature of this ignorance with respect to *avasthātraya* and *Turīya* is the subject of the next section.

-II-

1.2 The Fourth State (*Turīya*)

In this section, the concept of *Turīya*, the fourth *pāda* of Self, is discussed as indicated through various negative and positive terms via the Upaniṣadic method of *neti neti* (not this, not this ...). Prior to that, to understand *Turīya* with reference to the three states and their relations with each other, the concepts of *avidyā*, the transcendental illusion, and *adhyāsa*, the superimposition or erroneous identification of *Ātman* with *anātman*, have also been discussed.

The Ultimate Reality, according to Upaniṣads, is *Ātman* or *Brahman* or *Turīya*. However, every day human experience is merely a periodic shuttling among the *jāgrat*, *svapna*, and *suṣupti* states, with different gross and subtle identifications. *Turīya*, *Ātman* or *Brahman* is camouflaged somewhere in these states, and its enquiry and realization must be sought.³² A natural question springs up in mind- how are this concealment and various projections possible? Gauḍapāda gives a detailed and interesting account of this phenomenon. All the transactions of *avasthātraya* are possible just because of *avidyā*. It can also be known as the primordial transcendental nescience. For instance, if one understands $4 + 3 = 8$, then this false knowledge is possible primarily by virtue of not knowing the truth, i.e., $4 + 4 = 8$. Such an ignorance is *anādi*³³, i.e., without any beginning but it is *sānta*, i.e., with the potential of being ended. Another classical *dr̥ṣṭānta* (example) is of the superimposition (*adhyāsa* or *adhyāropa*) of a snake on a rope.

“*Adhyāropa* is the superimposition of the unreal on the real, like the false perception of a snake in a rope which is not a snake.”³⁴

Avidyā has two aspects of functioning- i) *āvaraṇa*, i.e., concealment and ii) *vikṣepa*, i.e., projection which lead to *agrahaṇa* (non-apprehension) and *anyathāgrahaṇa*, (misapprehension), respectively. Gauḍapāda explains them, in terms of *kāraṇa*, i.e., cause (or non-apprehension) and

³¹ triṣu dhāmasu yadbhojyaṁ bhoktā yaśca prakīrtitaḥ | vaidaitadubhayaṁ yastu sa bhuñjāno na lipyate ||
GK, I, 5.

³² ...sa ātmā sa vijñeya ||
Māṇḍ Up, 7.

³³ “...anādi māyaya supto... ||
G.K, I, 16.

³⁴ Vedāntasāra, 32.
(Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda).

kārya, i.e., effect (misapprehension).³⁵ Due to this *avidyā*, *jīva* develops a wrong understanding or identification, i.e., *adhyāsa*. The complexity of *jīva*'s understanding is *adhyāropa*. The Upaniṣad and the Kārikās aim to negate this Self-forgetfulness and *adhyāropa*, the complexity of self-identifications, one by one and thus reveal the true nature of the non-dual *Ātman* or *Turīya*.

Using the above terminologies, Gauḍapāda tries to explain the relation of *avasthātraya* among themselves and with *Turīya*. First, there is some similarity in all the three states. *Jāgrat*, *svapna*, and *suṣupti*, all these have non-apprehension or not knowing Reality as it is. The 'cause' is immanent in all the three states. However, *jāgrat* and *svapna* are shackled by cause and effect both or non-apprehension and misapprehension both. In *suṣupti*, non-apprehension is there, but not misapprehension. In this regard, *Turīya* is where there is neither cause nor effect; or neither non-apprehension nor misapprehension.

“*Viśva* and *Taijasa* are conditioned by cause and effect. But *Prājñā* is conditioned by cause alone. These two (cause and effect) do not exist in *Turīya*.”³⁶

Again, in *suṣupti*, truth or untruth, self or not-self, nothing is known.³⁷ There is no dichotomy but the casual ignorance remains in the seed form. *Turīya*, in sharp contrast, also has no dichotomy but it is always the all-knowing capacity, i.e., Pure Knowing Consciousness.³⁸

Subsequently, Gauḍapāda unfolds the meaning of *svapna* (dream) and *nidrā* (sleep) as misapprehension and non-apprehension respectively.³⁹ Since non-apprehension and misapprehension are there is *jāgrat* also, it follows from it that *svapna* (dreams) and *nidrā* (the metaphysical slumber) pervades in *jāgrat* too. So is the case with *svapnāvastha*. Similarly, in *suṣupti*, there is no *svapna* but *nidrā* only.

“The first two (*Viśva* and *Taijasa*) are associated with the conditions of dream and sleeps *Prājñā* is the condition of sleep without dream. Those who have known the truth see neither sleep nor dream in *Turīya*.”⁴⁰

The effect of *suṣupti* is in the other two states. The effect of *svapna* is there in *jāgrat* and vice versa. Temporality is the essence of these three states. Nevertheless, all these states acquire

³⁵ kāryakāraṇabaddhau tāviṣyete viśvataijasau | prājñāḥ kāraṇabaddhastu dvau tau turye na sidhyataḥ ||
GK, I, 11.

³⁶ Loc cit.

(Trans. by Swami Nikhilananda)

³⁷ nātmānṁ na parāmścaiva na satyaṁ nāpi canṛtam | ... ||
GK, I, 12.

³⁸ prājñāḥ kiñcana saṁvetti turyaṁ tatsarvadyaksadā ||
loc. cit.

³⁹ anyathā gṛhṇataḥ svapno nidrā tattvam-ajānataḥ | ... ||
Ibid., I, 15.

⁴⁰ svapna-nidrā-yutāvādyau prājñastvasvapna-nidyayā | na nidrāṁ naiva ca svapnaṁ turye paśyanti niścitaḥ ||
Ibid., I, 14.

(Trans. by Swami Nikhilananda)

their appearing existence or ‘is-ness’ from *Turīya* only. *Avasthātraya* is not possible without *Turīya* but the realization of *Turīya* transcending the three states is possible.

The mystical realization of *Turīya*, however, may be possible but its linguistic expression is a formidable task. The state of *Turīya*, transcending the linguistic concepts, is ineffable or indefinable in its entirety. *Turīya*, through *śabda pramāṇa*, is sought to be merely ‘indicated’⁴¹ in different ways. It has only pedagogical value.

Both the *apopathic* (i.e., *via negativa*) and the *kataphatic* (i.e., *via positiva*), ways of expressing reality, fail to describe ‘That’ aptly. Upaniṣads’ way of *neti neti* is a transcendence of the both for the words cannot reach there. Kena, another principal Upaniṣad, declares-

“There sight travels not, nor speech, nor the mind...”⁴²

Māṇḍūkya also, previously, states that the nineteen doors of human understanding are exclusively functional at gross and subtle level in *jāgrat* and *svapna* respectively. Leave *Turīya* far aside, these nineteen doors are inert even in *suṣupti*.

For Śaṅkara, the Fourth is *śabdapravṛtti nimitta śunyatvāta*,⁴³ i.e., devoid of any sufficient reason required for verbal expression. His argument, in a simplified way, is as follows-

There are four grounds of verbal expression, namely *jāti*, viz., *sāmānya* (generic) and *viśeṣ* (specific), *guṇa*, i.e., attributes, *kriyā*, i.e., activity, and *sambandhha*, i.e., relation.

Turīya is devoid of all these grounds as it is the one without a second.

Therefore, *Turīya* cannot have any verbal expression.

Hence, *Turīya* cannot be described as either *sāmānya* or *viśeṣ*, e.g., a specific cow or a cow in general, because ‘That’ is non-dual. Since *Turīya* is *nirguṇa* (attributeless), it cannot be described as having any *guṇa* as in the sentence: ‘The cow is ‘black’. *Turīya* can neither be described as an activity as in case of a ‘cook’ because *Turīya* is *prapañcopaśamam* and *śāntam* where all activities cease. *Turīya* can also not be described in relation to anything.

The words that describe *Turīya*, as already stated, are merely indicative just as the statement- ‘the moon is between two branches of a tree’, which merely suggests where a glimpse of the moon can be found. The moon is not there actually between the branches. Another

⁴¹ The expression- *nirdidkṣati*, in Śaṅkara’s introductory remark to the seventh verse of Māṇḍ Up that defines *Turīya*, means ‘suggestiveness’ or ‘indication’ only, via negation of all attributes.

⁴² na tatra cakṣurgacchati na vāggacchati no mano ... ||
Ken Up I, 3.
(Trans. by Sri Aurobindo)

⁴³ See Śaṅkara’s introductory remark on the seventh mantra of Māṇḍ Up that describes *Turīya*.

driṣṭānta could be as in a snake appearing in a rope, where to arrive at the truth of the rope, it is indicated that the snake is not there, the snake has never been there, and the snake will never be there. It only appeared (*pratīti*) due to ignorance. Similarly, Māṇḍūkya, following the way of *neti neti*, indicates *Turīya* as follows-

“*Turīya* is not that which is conscious of the internal (subjective) world, nor that which is conscious of the external (objective) world, nor that which is conscious of both, nor that which is a mass all sentiency, nor that which is simple consciousness, nor that which is insentient. (It is) unseen (by any sense organ), not related to anything, incomprehensible (by the mind), uninferable, unthinkable, indescribable, essentially of the nature of Consciousness constituting the Self alone, negation of all phenomena, the Peaceful, all Bliss and the Non-dual. This is what is known as the fourth (*Turīya*). This is the *Ātman* and it has to be realised.”⁴⁴

Here, *Turīya* is indicated in the following thirteen negative and three positive terms:

1- *nāntaḥprajñam*

Turīya is not that ego which is conscious-inward. It is not the dream state or *taijasa*. *Taijasa* is its *pratīti* (appearance); its *svarūpa* (real nature) is not *taijasa*.

2- *nābahiḥprajñam*

Turīya is neither the ego which is conscious outward or the state of *jāgrat* where the nineteen doors are functioning identified at the gross level.

3- *nāubhayataḥprajñam*

Turīya is also not a state of ego consciousness between internal and external. Here, the *sandhikāla*, i.e., the meeting point of any two states is negated. *Turīya* also negates all the altered states of consciousness where one is partly conscious of both the internal and the external.

4- *nāprañanaghanam*

⁴⁴ nāntaḥprajñam na bahiḥprajñam nobhayataḥprajñam na prajñānaghanam na prajñam nāprajñam |
adr̥śyamavya vahāryamagrāhyamalakṣaṇamacintyamavyapadeśyamekātmapratyayasāram prapañcopaśamaṃ śāntaṃ
śivamadvaitaṃ caturthaṃ manyante sa ātmā sa vijñeyaḥ||

Māṇḍ Up 7.

(Trans. by Swami Nikhilananda)

Turīya is not the deep sleep or a mass of consciousness. As previously stated, casual ignorance remains in deep sleep too, but not in *Turīya*.

Śaṅkara clarifies⁴⁵ that *Ātman* has four foot in the sense that it has two aspects- *paramārtha* and *aparmārtha* where *jāgrat* and *svapna*, and *suṣupti* are seen as sprouts and seed respectively. They only appear different from the *aparamārtha* aspect, i.e., the unreal aspect. The seedless aspect, without cause and effect, (*beejātmakam paramārtha svarūpam*) is *Turīya*.

5- *na prājñam nāprajñam*

That is neither simply consciousness nor unconsciousness, for both hold their meaning with reference to each other. *Turīya*, being non-dual, is neither one of them.

6- *adr̥ṣtam*

Turīya is also not observed by the five sense organs for the senses function specifically in relation to their objects. Eyes cannot touch, nose cannot see, and so on. *Turīya* does not contain any object of sense organs hence it is *adr̥ṣtam*. Here, *pratyakṣa pramāṇa*, i.e., direct perception is negated.

7- *avyavhāryam*

Since *Turīya* is *adr̥ṣtam*, therefore it is *avyavhāryam*, i.e., non-transactional, also. Transactions, give and take (*artha kriyā*), is possible only when there is duality and with that which is *dṛṣya* or within the grip of senses. That which is beyond senses and non-dual cannot be subject to any transaction or give and take.

8- *agrāhyam*

Agrāhyam negates *Turīya*'s achievability with any of the *karmendriya*, viz., the five action organs.

9- *alakṣaṇam*

⁴⁵ See Śaṅkara's introductory remark on the seventh mantra of Māṇḍ Up that describes *Turīya*.

That is beyond the reach of *anumāna*, i.e., inference, also. For *anumāna*, some *liṅga* or sign with a concomitant variance (*vyāpti*) is necessary. *Turīya* is non-dual, and it has no *vyāpti* sign or *lakṣaṇam*. It falls beyond causality. Hence, logic and inference fail there. Kaṭhopeniṣad declares-

“This wisdom is not to be had by reasoning ...”⁴⁶

10- *acintyam*

Turīya is not even an object of intellect (*buddhi*). It cannot be ‘thought of’ as something.

11- *avyapdeśyam*

Since it is *adr̥ṣṭam*, *alakṣaṇam*, and *acintyam*, hence it is *avyapdeśyam*, i.e., its discourse is not possible; words cannot aptly describe it.

“This Self is not won by exegesis, nor by brain-power, nor by much learning of Scripture.”⁴⁷

12- *ekātma pratyaya sāram*

Turīya is that which is one *Ātman* or *essence* or one common element of all cognitions of the three states. Amṛtabindu, another Upaniṣad of Atharvaveda tradition, states-

“Ātmā should be contemplated upon as One in (the three states), the waking, the dreaming, and the dreamless sleep.”⁴⁸

13- *prapañcopaśamam*

⁴⁶ ... naiṣa tarkeṇa matirāpaneya ... ||
Kaṭh Up, 1.2.9.

(Trans. by Sri Aurobindo)
⁴⁷ nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na bahunā śrutena | ... ||
Muṇḍ Up, 3.2.3.

(Trans. by Sri Aurobindo)
⁴⁸ eka evātmā mantavyo jāgratsvapnasuṣuptiṣu | ... ||
Amṛtab Up, 11.
(Trans. by Narayanasvami Aiyar)

In *Turīya*, there is the cessation of all *prapañca*, the pluralistic phenomenon of the five great elements (*pañca mahābhuta*). Śaṅkara explains that the earlier negation of ‘*nāntahprajñam*’, *nābahisprajñam*’, etc. negated various egos (*sthānī*) of the respective field. While the term ‘*prapancopaśama*’, the knowing field of these egos (*sthāna*) is also negated.⁴⁹

14- *śāntam*

Where there is neither concealment nor projections, there is peace naturally. Śaṅkara interprets *śāntam* as ‘*avikriyam*’, i.e., without any disturbance or change. All the disturbances occur to and from various identifications. *Turīya*, in itself (*svarūpa*), is *śāntam*, ever peaceful.

15- *śivam*

That which is *prapañcopaśamam* and *śāntam* is also auspicious and ever blissful.

16- *advaitam*

All the above terms explaining *Turīya* both rest on one uniform principle, i.e., non-duality; and also they establish the latter. Non-duality negates duality of *jāgrat*, *svapna* and *susupti* and their knower egos *viśva*, *taijasa*, and *prājña* respectively.

Hence, the Ultimate Reality is expressed as *Turīya* or *Caturtham* (the Fourth), only with reference to the three states.⁵⁰ In itself, it entails the concept of non-duality which is at par with *nirguṇa Brahman* or *Paramātman*, as described in other Upaniṣads. Māṇḍūkya asserts that the knowledge of *advaita Turīyātman* should be known. Since the concept of *advaita bhāva* is crucial to the *Turīya* consciousness, it needs more elucidation and therefore is the subject of the next section.

⁴⁹ ...prapancopaśamīti jagratsthāna dharmābhāv ucyate...
Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on Māṇḍ Up, 7.

Here, ‘*sthāna*’ means the field of knowing. Contrary to it, ‘*sthānī*’ means the ego or the knower of various fields.
⁵⁰ Śaṅkara, in the invocation of his commentary on Māṇḍ Up, states ‘*māyāsaṅkhyā turīyātītam*’, i.e., *Turīya* is the fourth with reference to the three states of *māyā*.

1.3 Non-duality

The reality, according to Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, is indicated as the Fourth (*caturtha*) or *Turīya* which is non-dual (*advaita*) and the core substratum of all the dual appearances of the three states (*avasthātraya*). When the ultimate Truth is realized, the duality implied in all the explanations and experiences cease to exist.⁵¹ Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara develop a full-fledged account of non-duality implicit in Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. In the first chapter of the Kārikās (Āgama Prakaraṇa), Gauḍapāda sought to establish the non-duality and unreality of the three states with the evidence of scriptures (*śruti*) only. In the remaining chapters, he takes recourse to reasoning (*anumāna*) also to establish the same.

Śrutis (scriptures), however, with a double voice admit both duality and non-duality. The ritual sections of the Vedas (*karma-khaṇḍa*), assuming a pluralistic universe, prescribe worshiper-worshipped related rituals. Furthermore, the knowledge section (Upaniṣads) of the Vedas also equivocally asserts both dualism and non-dualism. The passages describing creation theories, dialogues, and the very fact that the teachings of the Upaniṣads are intended for someone, presupposes some form of duality. On the other hand, the statements of difference (*bheda-vākya*) are later on negated by the statements of non-difference (*abheda-vākya*) such as: ‘there is no plurality anywhere’⁵²; ‘there is no second, nothing else different from it (the self) that it could see’⁵³; ‘Verily, fear arises only from a second’⁵⁴; ‘When, indeed, he makes the smallest distinction in it (the Self), there is fear for him’⁵⁵; ‘He who sees any difference here goes from death to death’.⁵⁶ Such conflicting claims demand some reconciliation.

Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara, and other Advaita proponents maintain the supremacy of *abheda-vākya* over *bheda-vākya*. *Śrutis* begin with duality depending on various levels of the understanding of the students taught, but the final purport is to establish non-duality only. The early statements of duality are to be taken in the figurative sense (*gauḍa*) or as having instrumental value (*upāya*) only, but, in the ultimate sense, there is non-duality.⁵⁷ If understood in the literal sense, *śruti vākyas* present problems difficult to surmount.

⁵¹ ...updeśādayaṁ vādo jñate dvaitaṁ na vidyate... ||
GK, I, 18.

⁵² ... neha nānāsti kiñcana | ... ||
Bṛhad Up, 4.4.19.

⁵³ ... na tu taddvītyamasti tato'nyadvibhaktaṁ yatpaśyēt ||
Ibid., 4.3.23.

⁵⁴ ...dvītyādvai bhayaṁ bhavati ||
Ibid., 1.4.2.

⁵⁵ yadāhyevaiṣa etasmīnudarmanataram kurute | ... ||
Taitt. Up, 2.7.1.

⁵⁶ ... mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyumāpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati ||
Bṛhad Up, 4.4.19

⁵⁷ ... upāyaḥ so'vatārāya nāsti bhedaḥ kathañcana ||

To establish the non-duality, however, Gauḍapāda first aims to prove unreality (*vaitathya*) of all entities (*sarva bhāvānām*). First, he introduces arguments to negate the duality and apparent reality embedded in the dream consciousness. Then, with the similar arguments, he extends the analogy of dream to the waking consciousness also.

Before delving deep into the unreality of all entities, however, it would be necessary to explicate the meaning of this unreality or illusoriness itself for which Gauḍapāda employs several expressions such as *vaitathya*, *mithyā*, *viparyaya*, *māyā*, *kalpita*, *abhāsamātra*, etc. *Māyā*, as already stated in the previous section, is the beginningless (*anādi*) cause of the appearance of the three states (*avasthātraya*) which conceals *Ātman* and projects the unreal world of duality. The second *prakaraṇa* is significantly named ‘*vaitathya*’ which is the quality or nature of being *vitatha*, i.e., not as such (*vi-* not and *tathā-* suchness).⁵⁸ *Brahman* or *Turīya* is per se *tahtā*, i.e., being as it is in its true nature (*svarūpa*); and the erroneous cognition of the world is *vaitathya* or *mithyā*. This erroneous perception is also called *viparyaya*, and the appearance (*ābhāsa*) is merely imaginary (*kalpita*).

Regarding the unreality of dream, the first reason (*hetu*)⁵⁹ is that of ‘being inside’ (*antaḥ sthānāttu*), i.e., all the dream objects such as elephants, chariots, mountains, etc. are inside the body and hence unreal. One may object that there are entities ‘being inside’ of another larger entity, e.g., a pen being inside a box. Thus, the *hetu* gets falsified (*vyabhicārita*). In response, as a rebuttal to this point, Gauḍapāda supplements ‘being inside’ as being in an inappropriate enclosed space (*saṁvṛtatvena*). Objects of dream consciousness are inappropriately located in a tiny place and thus possess unreality. Again, an objection is raised that the dreamer might see the contents by actually travelling to that place. But it is evidently false as when one dreams entities located far away, and when he wakes up, he finds himself at the same place. Thus, the laws of time and space are violated when consciousness shifts from one plane to another. Along the similar lines, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad also denies the existence of dream contents.⁶⁰

Gauḍapāda examines the waking world also on the analogy of dream and concludes how *svapna* and *jāgrat* are illusory in similar ways. *Dṛśyatva* (being seen) and *asatyatva* (being falsified) are common to both the states and the only difference is that of being perceived- i) within the body, and ii) in a closed space.⁶¹ Śaṅkara presents this in the form of a syllogism as follows-

GK, III, 15.

⁵⁸ vitathasya bhāvo vaitathyam, asatyatvamityarthaḥ | ...

Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on GK, II, 1.

⁵⁹ vaitathyam sarva bhāvānām svapna āhurmanīṣiṇaḥ | antaḥsthānāttu bhāvanām saṁvṛtatvena hetunā ||

GK, II, 1.

⁶⁰ ... atho khalvāhuḥ, jāgaritadeśa evāsyaiṣa iti yāni hyeva jāgrat paśyati tāni supta iti | ... ||

Bṛhad Up, 4.3.14

abhāvaśca rathādīnām śrūyate nyāyapūrvakam | vaitathyam tena vai prāptam svapnam āhuḥ prakāśitam ||

GK, II, 3.

⁶¹ antaḥsthānāttu bhedaṇām tasmājjāgrite smṛtam | yathā tatra tathā svapna saṁvṛtatvena bhidyate ||

Pratijñā (proposition to be established) - Objects of waking consciousness are illusory.

Hetu (reason) - Because of being seen (*dr̥śyatva*).

Dr̥ṣṭānta (example) - As in dream consciousness, the objects seen are illusory.

Hetūpanaya (application) - So, even in the waking consciousness being seen (*dr̥śyatva*) is there.

Nigamana (conclusion deduced) - Therefore, the object of waking consciousness is declared to be illusory.⁶²

Gauḍapāda mentions another characteristic of unreality (*vaitathya*), common to both *jāgrat* and *svapna*, as that which has a beginning and an end. An entity which is non-existent at the beginning (past) and at the end (future), is so even in the middle (present) also.⁶³ An objection is raised to this argument that appearing objects, such as a mirage, are illusory only because they lack practical efficiency, otherwise appearing objects with practical value are real. Gauḍapāda responds that the practicality of waking objects is contradicted in the dream state.⁶⁴ For instance, a person, having fully eaten and satisfied, may go to sleep and experience hunger or starvation as if he had not taken food for weeks. Similarly, dream objects also have practical efficiency as long as the dreams last. Therefore, practicality cannot be the criterion of testing the unreality of an object.

Apart from practicality, a further objection is raised against the similarity between dream and waking objects. The dream objects are often unique (*apūrvam*), abnormal, and strange such as an elephant with five tusks and the dreamer observes everything with complete equanimity. The waking objects, on the other hand, are presented with harmony and order. Gauḍapāda, in response, questions that to whom do dream objects appear weird? They appear weird to the waking person only not to the dreamer. Each plane of consciousness has its own peculiarities. For example, heaven dwellers like *Indra* are said to have a thousand eyes which is perfectly normal in that realm. Furthermore, a person travelling in a new place observes things abnormal to him but perfectly normal to the people of that place. Therefore, the comparison between the waking and the dream state is not illogical.⁶⁵

The contents of dream and waking consciousness bear another similarity. In dreams, there are certain things cognized objectively (*bahīścetogrhītam*) enjoying the imagined status of reality; and there are certain things inside the perceiver's mind (*antaḥ cetasaḥ*) which is considered unreal. On waking up in *jāgrat*, however, both the states are regarded as unreal.

GK, II, 4.

⁶² See Śaṅkara's Bhāṣya on GK, II, 4.

⁶³ ādāvante ca yannāsti vartamāne'pi tat-tathā | vitathaiḥ sadr̥śāḥ santo'vitathā iva lakṣitāḥ ||

GK, II, 6.

⁶⁴ sa-prayojanatā teṣām svapne viprati-padyate tasmādādyantavatvena mithyaiva khalu te smṛtāḥ ||

GK, II, 7.

⁶⁵ See Śaṅkara's Bhāṣya on GK, II, 8.

Similarly, in *jāgrat* also there is a subjective and objective world as unreal and real respectively, but the reality assigned to the objective world is also negated with the realization of non-dual *Ātman*. Mental objects exist as long as their thoughts exist in mind (*cittakālas*) and objective entities last till two points of time externally (*dvayakālas*) fit for worldly transactions, but both these objects (*cittakālas* and *dvayakālas*) are unreal. The dream contents, being subjective, are unmanifest (*avyakta*); while the waking contents are manifest (*spḥuṭa*). The functioning of the external sense organs is present in the latter only.⁶⁶

Apart from dream analogy, *jāgrat* is proved to be illusory based on many other illustrations also. Using the famous illustration of snake-rope, Gauḍapāda explains that just as when the real nature of rope as such is ascertained, all the illusions (*vikalpa*) regarding it disappear; in the same way when the non-dual *Ātman* is realized, all the superimpositions or imaginations about it disappear.⁶⁷

As in dreams and magic, we see ‘the palace city of the fairy Morgan’ (*gandharvanagara*), with castles, streets, villages, markets, etc. in the same way, the pluralistic universe is imagined by the same *Ātman*, is the experience of Vedāntins.⁶⁸

In the fourth chapter, i.e., Alātaśānti Prakaraṇa, Gauḍapāda gives another famous illustration of a firebrand (*alāta*)⁶⁹ to prove the unreality of name and form (*nāma* and *rūpa*) of the worldly appearances (*samsāra*). When a firebrand is in motion, it appears in various forms such as straight (*ṛju*), crooked (*vakra*), and so on, and when it is motionless, various forms disappear. In the same way, when consciousness is in motion (*spanditam*), various forms are perceived through the perceiver (*grāhya-grāhaka bhāva*); and when the consciousness is not in motion (*aspandamānam*), all the appearances disappear. The forms appearing in motion neither come into being nor in non-being for they are naught. They are contradictory and hence indescribable, i.e., it is *māya mātra*. The sole reality behind all the appearances is its substrate, i.e., the Pure Consciousness (*śuddha Vijñāna* or *Vijñapti*). *Ātman* has no birth (*jāti*), no death, no attribute whatsoever. Bhagvadgītā also advocates the same principle of *sat* (being) never turning into *asat* (non-being) and vice versa for *sat* is ever-present (*trikālābādhitā*).⁷⁰ This theory of non-origination is termed as *ajātavāda*, which is further explained in the next section.

Hence, though there are aforesaid differences between *jāgrat* and *svapna* from the empirical point of view, yet from the ultimate point of view, both have the feature of illusoriness (*vaitathya*). Since everything objective and subjective is illusory (*vaitathyam sarvabhāvānām*), it

⁶⁶ ... kalpitā eva te sarve viśeṣastvīndriyāntare ||
GK, II, 15.

⁶⁷ anīcitā yathā rajjurandhakāre vikalpitā | sarpadhārādibhirbhāvaistadvadvātmā vikalpitaḥ |
GK, II, 17.

⁶⁸ svapnamāye yathā dṛṣṭe gandharvanagarām yathā | tathā viśvamidaṁ dṛṣṭam vedānteṣu vicakṣanaiḥ ||
Ibid., II, 31.

⁶⁹ See GK, IV, 47-51.

⁷⁰ nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ | ubhayor api dṛṣṭo’ntastvanayos tattva-darśibhiḥ ||
Bhagvadgītā, 2,16.

does not prove that all is vacuity (*śunya*). The one who has all the imaginations (*kalpanā*), i.e., *Ātman* is *sat* (real).

Hence, the duality imposed on non-dual *Ātman* though various adjuncts (*upādhi*) is illusory⁷¹ and devoid of any independent existence. Non-dual *Ātman*, *Brahman* or *Turīya* is the only reality.

-IV-

1.4 Non-Origination (*ajāti*)

One of the major themes of Gauḍapāda's philosophy is *ajātavāda*, the view that denies real origination or creation (*jāti*) of anything. It does not mean that vacuity (*śūnya*) is the Ultimate Truth. Rather, *Ātman* is the sole reality, neither born nor subject to death and the appearance of plurality, the product of *māyā*, is also an illusion and devoid of any essence, and thus never born. The ultimate truth (*uttamam satyam*) is that the egocentric individual (*jīva*) is never born for there is no cause which can produce this effect.⁷² Hence, negatively *ajātavāda* means that the world of duality (*dvaita prapañca*) is born only apparently; and positively, it means the non-dual *Ātman* is ever-present and subject to neither creation nor dissolution.

Consequently, in the ultimate sense (*paramārthataḥ*), there is neither any dissolution (*na nirodhaḥ*), nor creation (*na utpattiḥ*), nor anyone in bondage (*na baddhaḥ*), nor anyone seeking liberation (*na mumukṣuḥ*), nor anyone liberated (*na vai muktaḥ*).⁷³ Gauḍapāda establishes *ajātavāda* on the basis of *śrutis* (scriptures) as well as reasoning in the following way:

1.4.1 Verbal Testimony (*śruti pramāṇa*)

Gauḍapāda quotes many scriptural passages as the verbal testimony to the theory of *ajātavāda*. The true purport of the scriptures describing creationist views has been already described as merely figurative, and instrumental (*upāya*) for the various levels of the teacher and the taught. Ultimately they indicate at the non-duality or non-creation.

Śrutis, on the other hand, in many places directly suggest the idea of non-creation by refuting duality and establishing non-duality of *Ātman*.

“There is no plurality whatsoever.”⁷⁴

“*Indra*, through *māyā*, assumes different forms.”⁷⁵

⁷¹ ... māya mātram idaṁ dvaitamadvaitaṁ paramārthataḥ ||
GK, I, 17.

⁷² na kaścijjāyate jīvaḥ sambhavo'asy na vidyate | ... ||
GK, III, 48.

⁷³ na nirodho nacotpattirna baddho na ca sādhaḥ | na mumukṣurna vai mukta ityeṣā paramārthatā ||
Ibid., II, 32.

⁷⁴ ... neha nānāsti kiñcana | ... ||
Bṛhad Up, 4.4.19.

“In the beginning, there was *Ātman* only.”⁷⁶

“In the beginning, there was *Brahman* only.”⁷⁷

“Who indeed can generate him?”⁷⁸

In Īśavāsyā Upaniṣad also, the reality of *Brahman* as the cause and the effect is denied. The terms used there are *sambhūti* and *asambhūti*. Those who worship, says Īśavāsyā, are in *asambhūti* (*Brahman* as the cause) fall in darkness and those who worship *Brahman* as *sambhūti* enter into even greater darkness.⁷⁹ Śaṅkara interprets *asambhūti* as *kāraṇa Brahman* or *avidyā* or *avyākṛta*; and *sambhūti* as *kārya Brahman* or *hiranyagarbha*. They are taught only as *adhyāropa* (superimposition) on *Ātman* which are later negated as *apavāda*; whereas granting them the final truth value is a mistake in Advaita Vedānta. Dualistic expressions are just means to indicate at the final truth of the unborn *Ātman* through the method of *neti neti*.⁸⁰

1.4.2 Arguments for *Ajātavāda*

Gauḍapāda, in addition to verbal testimony, puts forward various arguments also, in the third and the fourth chapter of GK, for *ajātavāda*:

- i- In the third chapter, i.e., Advaita Prakaraṇa, Gauḍapāda lays down that non-duality implies *ajāti* of *Ātman* and how other views generate contradictions and certain fallacies.
- ii- In the fourth chapter, i.e., Alātaśānti Prakaraṇa, Gauḍapāda employs the method of *avīta nyāya* which shows how mutual contradictoriness of rival schools establish *ajātavāda*.

Contradiction (*virodha*) and the Fallacy of Infinite Regress (*anāvasthā doṣa*)

In the Advaita Prakaraṇa, he shows how various other ontological creationists' views besides *ajātavāda* are logically inconsistent. Those who hold the view that the Ultimate Reality is born as a real creation (*pariṇāma*), actually state that an unborn Being is born, which is contradictory (*virodha*).⁸¹ On the other hand, the fallacy of infinite regress (*anāvasthā doṣa*) is also implicit

⁷⁵ ... indro māyābhiḥ pururūpa īyate ... ||

Ibid., 2.5.19.

⁷⁶ ātmaivedamagra āsīteka eva ... ||

Ibid., 1.4.17.

⁷⁷ brahma vā idamagra āsīt ... ||

Ibid., 1.4.10.

⁷⁸ jāta eva na, jāyate, ko nvenam janayetpunaḥ ||

Ibid., 3.9.28.

⁷⁹ andham tamaḥ praviśanti ye'sambhūtimupāsate | tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u sambhūtyā ratāḥ ||

Īśā Up, 12.

⁸⁰ sa eṣa neti netī vyākhyātaṃ nihnute yataḥ | sarvamagrāhyabhāvena hetunājam prakāśate ||

GK, III, 26.

⁸¹ See Śaṅkara's Bhāṣya on GK, III, 27.

there for if only that which is capable of being born (*utpattiśīla*) is born, then its cause must also be sought, thereby resulting in *regression ad infinitum*.

Those who are engaged in a worshiper-worshiped relationship (*upāsana*) also do not realize the logical inconsistency of their views, and therefore are considered miserable and narrow-minded (*kṛpaṇa*) by Gauḍapāda.⁸² In *upāsana*, the worshiper thinks that the *aja Brahman* enters into the bondage of creation as *jīvas* and through various efforts (*sādhana*), after death, *jīva* can merge into *Brahman*. Such a *Brahman*, being really born as *jīva*, is miserable (*kṛpaṇa*) and there is no guarantee that He will not be in bondage again. Wherever *śruti* commands worship (*upāsana*), that is for the aspirants of different levels- the lower, the middle, and the higher (*hīna madhyamotkṛṣṭa-drṣṭyah*).⁸³ Nevertheless, from the ultimate point of view, those who adhere to the idea of separateness are unfortunately narrow-minded (*prthagvādāstasmāt-te kṛpaṇaḥ smṛtāḥ*).⁸⁴

Gauḍapāda also shows that if we take the Ultimate Reality to be non-existent (*asadvāda*) and postulate its birth, either as a real creation or as an illusion, even then it is logically untenable. He gives an example (*drṣṭānta*) of a son of a barren woman (*vandhyāputra*), an unreal entity, which can neither be born as an illusion nor as reality. In the same way, an *asat* reality cannot give birth to anything whatsoever. Hence, the creation is only possible through an unborn (*aja*) reality (*sat*), and as *māya* only, not in reality (*tatvataḥ*). As previously stated, both in dream and waking, the world of the seer and the seen (*grāhya-grāhaka*) are illusory. In all the states, only *Ātman* is unborn and real.

1.4.3 *Ajātavāda* and Dialectic on Causality

In the fourth chapter, Gauḍapāda, using *avīta nyāya*, engages in the dialectical treatment of two major rival views on causality in Indian philosophy. He shows their contradictoriness using their own logic and establishes *ajātavāda*. In a nutshell, the two rival views⁸⁵ are-

1- *Satkāryavāda/Pariṇāmavāda*

The view that the effect pre-exist in the cause and hence both are real, and nothing *de novo* is produced.

⁸² upāsanāśrīto dharmo jāte brahmaṇi vartate | prāgutpatterajaṃ sarvaṃ tenāsau kṛpaṇaḥ smṛtāḥ ||
GK, III, 1.

⁸³ āśramāstrividhā hīnamadhyamotkṛṣṭadrṣṭayah | upāsanopadiṣṭeyaṃ tadarthamanukampayā ||
Ibid., III, 16.

⁸⁴ vaiśāradyaṃ tu vai nāsti bhede vicaratāṃ sadā | bhedanimnāḥ prthagvādāstasmāte kṛpaṇāḥ smṛtāḥ ||
Ibid., IV, 94.

⁸⁵ Though Gauḍapāda did not explicitly mention the names of any Indian philosophical schools as such, but Śāṅkara explains these rivals as Sāṅkhya and Nyāya school, which advocated *satkāryavāda* and *asatkāryavāda* respectively.

2- *Asatkāryavāda/ Ārambhavāda*

The view that the effect does not pre-exists in the cause and the creation is always *de novo*.

Sāmkhya, following *satkāryavāda*, asserts that the effect is unmanifest or concealed (*tirohita*) in the cause and with *kāraṇa vyāpāra*, i.e., the proper causal operation, the effect becomes manifest. Traditional Sāmkhya scholars mention five arguments in support of *satkāryavāda*:

“asatkāraṇād upādāna-grahaṇāt sarvasambhavābhāvāta
śaktasya śakya-karaṇāt kāraṇa bhāvacca satkāryam.”⁸⁶

1- *asatakāraṇāt*

That which is not there as *asat*, like a horn’s hair, cannot produce anything.

2- *upādāna-grahaṇāt*

A material cause is needed to produce a particular effect, e.g., clay is needed in producing a pot.

3- *sarvasambhavābhāvāta*

Everything cannot produce everything; just like sand cannot produce oil.

4- *śaktasya śakya-karaṇāt*

Only a particular potent cause can produce a particular effect, not otherwise.

5- *kāraṇa bhāvāta*

The cause and effect are of the same nature. The effect identically exists in the cause, e.g., curd in milk.

The arguments conclude that if *satkāryavāda* was not true, then anything could have come out of anything. However, the fact is that only certain things as a material cause with the help of an efficient cause only can produce certain effects. Hence, the effect pre-exists in the cause.

On the contrary, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools, endorsing *asatkāryavāda* or *ārambhavāda* maintain that the effect is a new creation. Following *satkāryavāda*, if the effect is preexisting in the cause, then there is no need of the act of production. Sāmkhya’s notion of ‘manifestation

⁸⁶ SK, Kārikā, 9

from the unmanifested' is also unintelligible for if the manifestation is not there already then the Sāṃkhya's position is self-defeating; and if the manifestation is already there then what is the need of that manifestation and it would be absurd to say 'that which is manifested is already manifested'. An entity 'A' cannot be different and non-different at the same time from another entity 'B'. Hence, as per Nyāya school, a new creation takes place (*ārambhavāda*).

Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika invoke the idea of inherence (*samavāya*) to account for the restriction of a particular cause to a particular effect. *Samavāya* accounts for the principle of the inseparable relation between the cause and the effect. Nevertheless, the notion of *samvāya* brings back Nyāya to the Sāṃkhya's position for the relation between an existing cause and a non-existing effect cannot take place.

Gauḍapāda's contention is that since both the views cannot come to any definite conclusion regarding creation, they unknowingly prove *ajātāvada*⁸⁷ as nothing is ever born in the real sense. His approach is not to quarrel with them but to show how they quarrel with themselves and prove *ajātāvada*.⁸⁸ Gauḍapāda acknowledges that the intrinsic nature (*prakṛti*)⁸⁹ of a thing never changes (*prakṛteranyathā-bhāvo na kathañcid-bhaviṣyati*), and immortal can never be mortal and mortal can never be immortal.⁹⁰

Gauḍapāda shows how any attempt to comprehend causation fails paradoxically. In various Kārikās, he repeatedly states:

- 1- If cause itself is born as the effect then the cause can never be called unborn (as the '*prakṛti*' of Sāṃkhya is). The moment an unborn cause is born as an effect, it is conditioned by time, and hence subject to origination, growth, and decay.⁹¹
- 2- If the effect is identical with the cause, then the effect must also be eternal like the cause. However, if both are eternal, then we cannot call them as the cause and the effect.⁹²

⁸⁷ bhūtasya jātimicchanti vādinaḥ kecideva hi | abhūtasypāpare dhīrā vivadantaḥ parasparam ||
GK, IV, 3.

⁸⁸ khyāpyamānāmajātiṃ tairanumodāmahe vāyam | vivadāmo na taiḥ sārddhamavivādam nibodhata ||
Ibid., 5.

⁸⁹ Gauḍapāda gives five illustrations of the term *prakṛti* in GK, IV, 9 as follows:

- 1-*Sāmsiddhiki*- acquired nature as in yogic powers.
- 2-*Svābhāviki*- inherent nature as light and heat in fire.
- 3- *Akṛtā*- not artificial as the flowing nature of liquids.
- 4- *Sahaj*- innate capabilities such as flying nature of birds.
- 5- *Svarūpa*- essential nature as of clothiness in a cloth.

⁹⁰ na bhavatyamṛtaṃ martyaṃ na martyamamṛtaṃ tathā | prakṛteranyathābhāvo na kathañcidbhaviṣyati ||
GK, III, 21,

na bhavatyamṛtaṃ martyaṃ na martyamamṛtaṃ tathā | prakṛteranyathābhāvo na kathañcidbhaviṣyati ||
Ibid., IV, 7.

⁹¹ kāraṇaṃ yasya vai kāryaṃ kāraṇaṃ tasya jāyate | jāyamānaṃ kathamajam bhinnaṃ nityaṃ katham ca tat ||
Ibid., IV, 11.

- 3- If an effect is born out of an unborn cause, it is impossible to justify it with an illustration.⁹³ On the other hand, as previously stated, if a born cause gives rise to an effect, then that cause seeks further causal explanation, leading to *regression ad infinitum*.
- 4- If cause and effect are reciprocally dependent on each other, as Mīmāṃsakas maintain, as in a seed-sprout example, where the effect is the cause of the cause and cause is the cause of the effect, then the beginninglessness of both the cause and the effect cannot be explained. It is just like a son giving birth to his father (*putrājjanma pituryathā*)⁹⁴.
- 5- If anyhow the cause and the effect are there, then their sequence must be decided. They cannot be simultaneous like the two horns of an animal (*yugapat-sambhave yasmādasambandho viṣāṇavat*)⁹⁵. If they are produced from each other as sprout-seed, it involves contradictions. Furthermore, the illustration of sprout-seed itself has an unsettled relationship, and hence it cannot be used to prove any conclusion. It involves the fallacy of *petitio percipi* (*sādhya-sama*) where the *proban*, being itself unproved, is unable to establish the *probandum*.

Thus the inability to decide the order of succession (*kramakopah*), clearly leads to non-creation (*ajātavāda*).⁹⁶ Thus, nothing is ever born neither from itself (*svataḥ*), nor from another (*parataḥ*); neither (being) *sat* is born, nor *asat* (non-being) is born, nor the 'being and non-being' (*sadasat*) is born.⁹⁷

An objection is raised⁹⁸ from the point of view of Bāhyārthavādins (the Buddhist realist school) that subjective cognition, i.e., *prajñapti*, must be the effect of an objective cause, i.e., *nimitta*, on two grounds-

1- The diversity of subjective cognitions

⁹² kāraṇādyadyananyatvamataḥ kāryamajam yadi | jāyamānāddhi vai kāryātkāraṇam te katham dhruvam ||
Ibid., IV, 12.

⁹³ ajādvai jāyate yasya drṣṭāntastasya nāsti vai | jātacca jāyamānasya na vyavasthā prasajyate ||
Ibid., IV, 13.

⁹⁴ hetorādiḥ phalam yeṣāmādirhetuḥ phalasya ca | tathā janma bhavetteṣām putrājjanma pituryathā ||
GK, IV, 15.

⁹⁵ sambhave hetuphalayoreṣitavyaḥ kramastvayā | yugapatsambhave yasmādasambandho viṣāṇavat ||
Ibid., IV, 16.

⁹⁶ aśaktiraparījñānam kramakopo'tha vā punaḥ | evaṃ hi sarvathā buddhaiḥ ajātiḥ paridīpitā ||
Ibid., IV, 19.

pūrvāparāparījñānam ajāteḥ paridīpakam | jāyamānāddhi vai dharmāt katham pūrvam na grhyate ||
Ibid., IV, 19.

⁹⁷ svato vā parato vā'pi na kiṃcidvastu jāyate | sadasatsadasadvā'pi na kiṃcidvastu jāyate ||
Ibid., IV, 22.

⁹⁸ prajñapteḥ sanimittatvamanyathā dvayanāśataḥ | samkleśasyopalabdheśca paratantrāstitā matā ||
Ibid., IV, 24.

2- The experience of suffering (*saṃkleśa*)

Following, Vijñānavādins (the Buddhist idealist school), Gauḍapāda counters the above charge and maintain that from the point of view of empirical reasoning (*yukti darśana*), variety of subjective cognitions may be acknowledged, but from the Ultimate point of view (*bhūta-darśana*), all these are illusory. The existence of external objects is only a logical hypothesis as the cause of appearances (*ābhāsa*). There is no real contact between mind and external objects. Śaṅkara makes it clear that Gauḍapāda is not a Vijñānavādi, but he resorts to their arguments just to encounter realists' arguments.⁹⁹ For Vijñānavādins, *vijñāna* is born every moment¹⁰⁰ but for Gauḍapāda, there no birth at all, neither of mind nor of objects of mind. Those who recognize such births are only trying to see footprints of birds in the sky.¹⁰¹

1.4.4 *Asparśayoga* (the yoga of no contact)

Ajātavāda and *advyaavāda* also imply the doctrine of *asparśayoga*. It is both an ontological view as well as a methodological approach. As the former, it states that there is nothing born and no duality, hence contact of any kind whatsoever is impossible. As the latter, *asparśayoga* makes efforts to realize the state of *ajātavāda*. As a *sādhanā* (method), it seeks, negatively, detachment from the objects of mind (*asparśa*) and positively, union (*yoga*) with the Supreme unborn self. Hence, paradoxically it is named as the touch of the untouched (*asparśa-yogaḥ vai nāma*).¹⁰²

It is also extremely difficult to grasp (*durdarśaḥ*), and relentless effort (*aparikhedataḥ*) is needed to control the mind (*manasaḥ nigraha*). The effort is as difficult as to empty the ocean, drop by drop, with the help of a blade of grass (*kuśā*).¹⁰³ In addition to the control of the distracted mind (*vikṣiptam*), its fall into slumber (*laya*) which also has to be avoided. Slumber or complete oblivion is as detrimental as enjoyments of objects (*viśaya*).¹⁰⁴ Therefore, this *yoga* strives for a state of equilibrium (*samaprāptam*) between agitations and complete oblivion of mind. At this stage of tranquility (*niṣcalam*), one should unify (*ekī kuryāta*) mind (*cittam*) with the Self. Consequently, when there is neither distraction (*vikṣiptatā*) nor complete oblivion (*laya*), that motionless (*aniṅganam*) state reveals *Brahman*.¹⁰⁵ That state is peaceful like

⁹⁹ See Śaṅkara's commentary on GK, IV, 28.

¹⁰⁰ Whether the *vijñāna* of VMS is eternal or momentary is a matter of debate.

Also see, *infra* pp. 67-68.

¹⁰¹ tasmāna jāyate cittam cittadrśyaṃ na jāyate | tasya paśyanti ye jātim khe vai paśyanti te padam || GK, IV, 28.

¹⁰² asparśayogo vai nāma durdarśaḥ sarvayogibhiḥ | yogino bibhyati hyasmādhaye bhayadarśinaḥ || Ibid., III, 39.

¹⁰³ utseka udadheryadvatkuśāgreṇaikabindunā | manaso nigrahastadvadbhavedaparikhedataḥ || Ibid., III, 41.

¹⁰⁴ upāyena nigṛhṇīyādvikṣiptam kāmabhogayoḥ | suprasannaṃ laye caiva yathā kāmo layastathā || Ibid., III, 42.

¹⁰⁵ yadā na līyate cittam na ca vikṣipyate punaḥ | aniṅganamanābhāsaṃ niṣpannaṃ brahma tattadā || Ibid., III, 46.

Nirvāṇa, and also unborn. It renders the revelation that the nothing is ever born (*na kaṣcit jāyate*) and that is the ultimate truth (*uttamaṁ satyam*), as far as it can be described.¹⁰⁶

To sum up, we can derive the following philosophical points from the foregoing discussions regarding the concept of consciousness in Māṇḍūkya Kārikā-

1- Holism

The terms of the very first verse of Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, such as *AUM*, *sarva*, within time and without time, etc. all suggest that to comprehend consciousness, a holistic approach has been taken. The study of parts of a system cannot yield its complete knowledge, hence, remarkably in the text, consciousness is comprehended not only from the level of waking world but also from the levels of dream, deep sleep and the transcendental state of *Turīya*. Furthermore, in every state, individual ego is analyzed through cosmic egos, which points at the non-duality based on a holistic understanding.

2- Metaphysics/Ontology

Metaphysically, there are various levels of consciousness, broadly divided in appearance and reality (*abhāsika* and *paramārtha*). Waking (*jāgrat*), dream (*svapna*), and deep sleep (*susupti*) represent the phenomenal realm of consciousness which are unreal (*vaitathya*) and consciousness there is extrovert, introvert and homogenous respectively. Their appearance is accounted on the basis of primordial nescience (*avidyā/māyā*). These states are sublated by each other and also from the viewpoint of *Turiyātman*. The triple stream of consciousness also corresponds with the Upaniṣadic doctrines of the five sheaths (*pañcakośa*) and the three bodies (*śarīra traya*).¹⁰⁷

Ontologically, only non-dual *Ātman*, the Pure or Absolute Consciousness, ever peaceful, enjoys the status of the Reality. Other states derive their appearing existence from *Ātman* only. Using *anvaya* (the logic of agreement), we can say that wherever there are three states, *Ātman* is also there, but using *vyatireka* (the logic of disagreement), we can say that *Ātman* is there without the three states also. Hence, only non-dual *Ātman* is the ontological reality. As a non-dual consciousness, it negates all differences: homogenous (*sajātīya*), heterogeneous (*vijātīya*), or internal (*svagat*). Modified consciousness is within the realm of time and change, and the

¹⁰⁶ svasthaṁ śāntaṁ sanirvāṇamakathyaṁ sukhamuttamaṁ | ajamajena jñeyena sarvajñaṁ paricakṣate ||
Ibid., 48.

¹⁰⁷ See *infra* p.77.

Pure Consciousness as *Turīya* is within and beyond time (*tikālātīta*) also.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, from the absolute point of view, no form of consciousness is ever born (*ajātavāda*) as we have seen how causality implies contradictions and fallacies. That which is (*sat*) cannot become (*asat*) and *vice versa*. *Ajātavāda* endorses all the three kinds of negations (*ābhāva*) in the Absolute consciousness, namely the antecedent negation (*prāgābhāva*), the consequent negation (*dhvaṃsābhāva*), and the mutual negation (*anyonyābhāva*). Hence, the reality is unborn, and it is one's own reality as *Ātman*.¹⁰⁹

3- Epistemology

The means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) and the knowledge obtained also have hierarchy vis-à-vis metaphysical realms. Different epistemological categories operate at different levels of consciousness. The phrase ‘*ekonaviṃśati mukhaḥ*’ (nineteen mouths) can be said to constitute all the *pramāṇas* of the waking and the dream states, chiefly perception and reasoning. Deep sleep is known neither through perception nor inference, but through memory (based on experience) and some form of retentional consciousness. Analysis of deep sleep also proves that consciousness is self-luminous (*svaprakāśitaḥ*). Beyond that, discursive knowledge and all the *pramāṇa* are incapable to directly realize the fourth state of *Ātman*. That (*Turīya*) is known in a special sense through immediate experience or mystical intuition (*aparokṣa anubhūti*). Using Kantian terminologies, we can say that the Pure Consciousness denoted as *Turīyātman* is both transcendental, i.e., beyond our understanding, and also transcendent, i.e., the necessary condition for any experience whatsoever.

Pramāṇa samplava is also evident throughout the text. To prove the central themes of the text, such as *advaita*, unreality, non-origination, and so on, Gauḍapāda generally begins with *śrutis* (scriptures), then moves on to reasoning (*tarka*) and analogy (*drṣṭānta*), and then emphasizes on its verification thorough experiential knowledge. Hence, *śrutis* indicate at the truth to be realized and other *pramāṇas* facilitate their understanding, and direct experience reestablishes that truth.

4- Methodological Approach

In the text, we also find methods or meditative techniques for the supreme realization. There are broadly two methods mentioned- firstly, in the *Āgama Prakaraṇa*,

¹⁰⁸ omityetadaḥsaramidaṃ sarvaṃ tasyopavyākhyānaṃ bhūtaṃ bhavadbhaviṣyaditi sarvamoṅkāra eva | yaccānyattrikālātītaṃ tadapyoṅkāra eva ||

Māṇḍ Up, 1.

¹⁰⁹ sarvaṃ hyetad brahmāyamātmā brahma so 'yamātmā catuṣpāt ||

Māṇḍ Up, 2.

meditation on the mystical symbol *AUM* (ॐ) is prescribed to understand the complex relationships among the states of consciousness; secondly, there is the description of *asparśayoga*, the yoga of non-contact. It is like withdrawing mind (*pratyāhāra*) from its objects and fix it on the non-dual unborn *Ātman*. It is a movement from the intentional consciousness (*saviśaya*) to the Pure (*nirviśaya*) and tranquil Consciousness.

5- Axiology

Consciousness is not only an ontological reality, remote and transcendental, but also it has been granted the supreme value as Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. It is the only ‘*axio*’ or the goal ‘worthy to be known’ and realized.¹¹⁰ Only *Turīya* is capable of burning all the sufferings forever.¹¹¹ Objective pleasures are temporal and dissatisfying whereas the bliss (*paramānanda*) of Brahman is eternal. Realization of *Ātman* as the Pure Consciousness and its beatific vision is the *summum bonum* of not only Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad but also of Vedānta philosophy in general.

6- Ineffability

Finally, repeatedly, the ineffability of consciousness is maintained in the text. All the descriptions are merely indicative (*upāya*) for the sake of progressive dialogue among the teacher and the taught. The ultimate truth about Consciousness cannot be encapsulated in language. The dialectic on causality also shows our linguistic frailty. The view that language fails to comprehend reality is repeatedly indicated in the text through terms such as the silence of *AUM* (ॐ), *viśāradam* (profundity), *durdaśa* (extremely difficult), and *anirvachanīya* (indescribable).

¹¹⁰ ... sā ātmā sā vijñeya ||
Māṇḍ. Up, 7.

Here, ‘*vijñeya*’ (that should be known) can be compared with the term ‘axiology’ that comes from the Greek root ‘*axios*’, meaning ‘worthy’.

¹¹¹ nivṛtteḥ sarvaduḥkhānāmīśānaḥ ... ||
GK, I, 10

Chapter- 2

Consciousness in Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi

This chapter seeks to explore the notion of consciousness and its various aspects in the text- Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi and understand how ‘only consciousness is established’¹¹² as the Ultimate Reality. For a clear exposition, the chapter has been divided into three sections- the first dealing with the historical development of the Vijñānavāda school of Buddhism; the second with the central concepts of the text- Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi; and the third and the last section providing some concluding philosophical reflections on the nature of consciousness in the text.

-I-

2.1 The Rise of Vijñānavāda

Buddhism is not a system of single doctrine. Buddha’s silence and speech, both have been recorded, interpreted and comprehended differently by the *śrāvakas* (the listeners) and owing to their dispositions it gave rise to different schools, sub-schools, sects, and sub-sects. They had certain metaphysical leanings ranging from realism, empiricism, and pragmatism to subjectivism, idealism, and absolutism. However, historians like Tārānātha and Buxton have discerned three great swings of Buddhism- *dharma cakrapravartana*¹¹³, as follows-

- 1- The realist phase constituting the schools of Sarvāstivāda (Vaibhāṣika)¹¹⁴ and Sautrāntika¹¹⁵.
- 2- The critical phase constituting the Mādhyamika or Śūnyavāda school of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva.
- 3- The idealist phase constituting the early Yogācāra¹¹⁶ Vijñānavāda of Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and Sthiramati and the later Svatantra Vijñānavāda school of Dinnāga, Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita, and Kamalaśīla.

Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi is one of the key texts of the idealist phase (the early one) of Buddhism, refuting the category of objectivity and vindicating the sole reality of Consciousness. The elements of subjectivity and criticality were, however, latent in the Buddhism from the very

¹¹² The literal meaning of the text is the same.

¹¹³ Boston’s *History Of Buddhism* (Tr. By Dr. Obermiller) Vol II, pp. 52-4.
(As quoted in Sharma, C.D., *The Advaita Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, p. 15.)

¹¹⁴ ‘*Vaibhāṣika*’ means that which is based on Mahāvibhāṣa Tīkā (around 78 AD) of Vasumitra on the seventh chapter (i.e., Abhidhammajñānaprasthāna) of Abhidhammapīṭaka (as compiled by Kātyāyanīputra around 150 AD).

¹¹⁵ ‘*Sautrāntika*’ means those who hold *Sūtra Piṭaka* as the *anta* (final or true) teachings of Buddha.

¹¹⁶ ‘*Yogācāra*’ is named so because it lays great emphasis on *yogic* practices.

outset¹¹⁷ and it culminated in the Absolute Idealism of Vijñānavāda. Hence, it is important here to discuss how this development takes place.

2.1.1 The Realistic Phase

Sarvāstivāda literally (*sarvam asti*) means- the theory that all exists. Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya of Vasubandhu states-

"He who affirms the existence of the *dharmas* of the three time periods (past, present and future) is held to be a *Sarvāstivādin*."¹¹⁸

Here, *sarvam* (all) includes all the elements of existence (*dharmas*) but not that of *pudgalas* (the wholes). The former is real and the latter only apparent (*prjñapti sat*). Both the *pudgalas* namely, the subjective unity of self (ego) as well as the supposed unity of objects are unreal, and their imposition upon *dharmas* (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*), is a perceptual and fundamental error. Thus, *sarvāstivāda* is critical of the subjectivistic imposition of *pudgalas* and realistic regarding *dharmas*.

The Sautrāntika school is in conformity with the metaphysics of *sarvāstivādins* with a greater emphasis on its logical basis.¹¹⁹ It establishes the central concepts of Buddhism, viz., *anityatā* (transience), *anātmatā* (no self or substance), and *svalakṣaṇatā* (discreteness) which militate against the general notions of permanence, self-hood or substantiality, and universals respectively.

2.1.2 The Critical Phase

The Mādhyamika school extends the Sautrāntika logic and the subjective (*a priori*) factors to an extreme. There were 75 *dharmas* enlisted by Sarvāstivādins, and which were cut down to 45 by the Sautrāntikas. The Mādhyamikas followed this critical enquiry to an extreme until all the *dharmas* proved to be unreal. The Mādhyamika dialectic relies on the relativity of thought. Substance (real), for Mādhyamiaka, is that which exists independently on its own. If identity (*pudgala*) is an illusion, then the difference fares no better option for the both are relative to each other. If identity, universality, substantiality, and permanence are unreal *a priori* constructions, then discreteness, particularity, difference, modal change, and momentariness are equally unreal thought constructions.

¹¹⁷ "The Buddhist metaphysics from the very start partook of the Humean and the Kantian."
Murti, T.R.V., *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, p.57.

¹¹⁸ As quoted on: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarvastivada#cite_note-FOOTNOTEde_La_Vall%C3%A9e-Poussin1990807-1

¹¹⁹ Cf. Chatterjee, A.K., *The Yogācāra Idealism*, pp. 2-6.

Hence, the Mādhyamika endorses not only *puḍgalanairātmya* (unreality of the wholes) but also *dharmanairāytmya* (unreality of the individuals).

This relativity can be illustrated through two major metaphysical problems, viz., of causality and self. Nāgārjuna shows how the concept of causation is unintelligible and it presupposes two irreconcilable categories of relation and differences between the cause and the effect.¹²⁰ The relation implies *satkāryavāda*, and the difference implies *asatkāryavāda*.¹²¹ Both have logical fissures and hence are relative, subjective, and dependent rather than real.

“What entity is established through dependence?
If it is not established, then how could it depend?
However, if it is established merely through dependence,
That dependence makes no sense.”¹²²

A similar mark of relativity is observed when we analyze the problem of self which presupposes change as well as continuity. Adhering to the metaphysics of either change or continuity would be dogmatic for the one is unintelligible without the other. Change presupposes an unchanging identity of awareness which observes it and identity without change is like the identity of nothing. Yet, at the same time, they are contradictory to each other. Hence, the concept of self is riddled with insoluble antinomies.

“So it (self) is neither different from the appropriating
Nor identical to the appropriating.
There is no self without appropriation.
But it is not true that it does not exist.”¹²³

Thus, for Mādhyamika, reason can only construct relative *dharmas* and *puḍgala*, and both are devoid of reality (*niḥsvabhāva*), and relinquishing all such views is the hallmark of the Buddhist spirit.

¹²⁰ See MK, Ch. I, Pratyaya Parīkṣā.

¹²¹ See *supra* pp. 33-34.

¹²² yo apekṣa sidhyate bhāvaḥ so siddhopekṣate katham | athāpyapekṣate siddhastvapekṣāsyā na yujyate ||
MK, X, 11.

(Trans. by Jay L. Garfield)

¹²³ evaṃ nānya upādānāna copādānameva saḥ | ātmā nāstyanupādāno nāpi nāstyeṣa niṣcayaḥ ||
Ibid., XXVII, 8.

(Trans. by Jay L. Garfield)

2.1.3 The Idealistic Phase

The Yogācāra endorses the subjectivity, i.e., the constructive mechanism of thought as explained by the Sautrāntikas, but along the lines of the Mādhyamika, denies the reality of *dharmas* as well. The difference between the Yogācāra and the Mādhyamika lies in their interpretation of this subjective element. For Mādhyamika, the subjective element and its constructions, all are relative and unreal; while for Yogācāra, subjective ground of all the construction is real. Everything that appears is within the experience, and objective consciousness is an illusion. But the Yogācāra is not a mere idealism or solipsism. Rather, it is also a form of absolutism. It also assigns an ontological status to the Pure Consciousness (*Vijñaptimātratā*) that is the sole reality and due to transcendental illusion projects various *vijñāna pariṇāma* (modifications).

Hence, the Yogācāra (also Vjñānanvāda) owes much to the Sautrāntikas as well as the Mādhyamikas; yet it transcends them. It complements and supplements them. It is in this context, that we can delve deep into the central doctrines (anti-realistic as well as anti-nihilistic) of Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi.

-II-

In Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi, to establish the reality of ‘Consciousness only’, i.e., *Vijñaptimātratā*, Vasubandhu follows both the approaches: the critical and the constructive. In *Vimśatikā*, with apagogic¹²⁴ proofs, he refutes the realistic principles such as objectivity, atomism, etc. It also raises certain objections from the realists’ point of view and tries to encounter them. In this pursuit, the critical approach is much akin to that of Mādhyamika dialectic.¹²⁵ As a constructive side of its metaphysics, Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi (mainly in *Trimśikā*) explains how the ‘Consciousness only’ evolves into its different complex modifications and how the way of *Nirvāṇa* is carved out of *samsāra*.

It would be now appropriate to further analyze the central notions of the text under the aforesaid two approaches as follows-

¹²⁴ The apagogic method relies on proving one’s own postulations indirectly by showing the absurdity or incorrectness of their contrary.

¹²⁵ The refutation of realism is common to both the schools of Mahāyāna school, viz., Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. In Mahāyāna, all the three realms of existence (*kāmadhātu*, *rūpadhātu*, and *arūpdhātu*) are held to be in Consciousness only.

mahāyāne traidhātukaṃ vijñaptimātraṃ vyavasthāpyate | ...
Vimśatikā, Vṛtti, p. 1.

2.2. The Critical Approach (Viṃśatikā)

2.2.1 Refutation of Realism

Realism is a theory, which holds that the contents of perception (or consciousness) exist independently. Consciousness does not create or modify the contents in any way. It generally results in a dualism of ‘consciousness’ and ‘its objects’ and perception is indeed ontologically neutral. Perception can be compared with the light, which only reveals the objects that were hitherto unobserved. An object exists independently and is not affected by the adventitious fact of its being perceived.

Generally, there are two forms of realism, naïve and critical. Naïve realism is a two-term theory of direct perception or presentation, while critical realism believes in a three-term representational perception where the *in-itself* objects are represented by ideas. Naïve realism is untenable because we perceive the subjective factors of the so-called external objects and never the objects directly as themselves. The representative realism breaks as it dogmatically asserts the existence of a *thing-in-itself*, which is beyond the ken of perception.

Vijñānavāda refutes all kinds of realism. Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi also begins with this refutation as –

“All this is perception only, because of the appearances of non-existent objects, just as there may be the seeing of nets of hair by someone afflicted with an optical disorder.”¹²⁶

The idea of *sahopalambhaniyama* is implicit here, which states that consciousness and its objects are perceived simultaneously. The consciousness of blue and the blue are not different. In order to establish two things differently, they need to be perceived apart. The *relata* have to be different. But, if they are invariably found together, they cannot be said to be different from each other.

Sahopalambhaniyama is not, however, sufficient to refute realism completely since it cannot give any definite account of what lies beyond our consciousness. It results only in a form of agnosticism and nothing is proved ontologically, neither realism nor idealism. We remain limited to our ego-centric predicament¹²⁷. It does not guarantee the creativity of consciousness. To establish the same, Vasubandhu resorts to stronger cases where this creativity is evident, i.e., in the cases of illusions and hallucinations. In the first Kārikā of Viṃśatikā, Vasubandhu, with the example optical illusion, suggests the subjective creativity of consciousness. But

¹²⁶ vjñaptimātramevedamasadarthābhāsanāt | yadvat taimirikasyāsat keṣoṅḍrakādīdarśanam ||
Viṃśatikā, Kārikā, 1.

(Trans. by Stefan Anacker)

¹²⁷ The term ‘ego-centric predicament’ was coined by Perry in 1997 in his article titled ‘The Ego-Centric Predicament’.

Vasubandhu's emphasis is on the universal creativity of consciousness like in a dream. Hence, he raises certain objections in this context and tries to overcome them invoking the example of dreams and hell states. He conceives the following three objections¹²⁸ from the realists' point of view:

1- Physical Laws (*deśa kāla niyama*)

If things do not have an external existence, then why do we perceive them in a particular place and time? Why cannot we produce them anywhere at our sweet will?

2- Intra-subjective Experience (*santānaniyama*)

The world is not a private subjective world but an intra-subjective world. Only the persons with optical disorder can see illusory objects such as hair-nets, not everybody. A 'pot' is seen as a 'pot' to everybody.

3- Practical Efficiency (*krtyakriyākāritva*)

Illusory objects like hair-nets cannot have practical efficiency. They do not pass the pragmatic test of reality. Bare ideas do not have any practical potentiality. Objects of the real world, on the other hand, do have such pragmatic value.

Objections answered

1- The physical laws (of time and space) are there in dreams¹²⁹ also, yet we do not assign reality to them (dreams). In dreams, we perceive different people, garden, city, etc. in a particular place and time only, not everywhere. Hence, even without the existence of external objects, we can have a world governed by the physical laws of time and space.

2- We have intra-subjective experiences even without the external world as in case of *pretas'* world where departed people with the same *saṃskāras* (karmic impressions) or *karma vipāka* (fructifying actions) experience the same torture such as a river of pus (*pūyanadī*), etc.¹³⁰ Intra-subjective experience is, hence, essentially a subjective stream of consciousness (*citta-santāna*) which coincides with the *karma saṃskāra* of other individuals.

¹²⁸ na deśakālaniyamaḥ santānaniyamo na ca | na ca krtyakriyā yukta viñaptiryadi nārthataḥ ||
Viṃśatikā, Kārikā, 2.

¹²⁹ deśāniyamaḥ siddhaḥ svapnavat... ||
Viṃśatikā, Kārikā, 3.

¹³⁰ ...pretavat punaḥ sarvaiḥ pūyanadyādīdarśane ||
Viṃśatikā, Kārikā, 3.

- 3- Successful activity is also possible as in dreams and other illusions. Ideas are efficient, e.g., in nightmares and rope-snake illusion. Vasubandhu also gives the example of how the activity of semen-discharge takes place in dreams where there is no actual copulation.¹³¹

2.2.3 The Question of *āyatana*

Buddha discussed about *āyatana*, literally meaning ‘sense-field’, which includes six internal sense organs (*ajjhakkāni āyatanāni*) and their corresponding external objects (*bahirāni āyatanāni* or *viṣayas*). If everything were consciousness only, then why would Buddha have discussed about such *āyatanāni*? Vasubandhu replies that Buddha’s statements, for his disciples, were suggestive only. Buddha was an *upāyakuśala* (skilled), the one who adopts different means of discourses to teach his students based on their different dispositions and temperament. The true import of the teaching of *āyatana* was to initiate his disciples into the view of *pudgalanairātmya* (no soul or substantiality) and *dharma-nairātmya* (no elements of existence).¹³² There is neither an actual *drṣtā* (perceiver) nor the *dharmanas* (elements) or objects being perceived. The *grāhya-grāhaka bhāva* is *kalpita* (imaginary). They are only apparent (*pratibhāsika*).¹³³

However, the above analysis does not wholly establish the doctrine of ‘Consciousness only’. How can the true import of Buddha be verified? Earlier also, *sahopalambhaniyama* and the analogy of dreams, hell, and other illusions do not universally establish the creativity of consciousness. Therefore, Vasubandhu deems it necessary to show how the realists’ hypothesis such as of ‘objectivity’ and an ‘atomic world’ is logically unintelligible.

2.2.4 Refutation of Objectivity and Atomism

Vasubandhu claims that if Buddha ever believed in the existence of external things, then they should also be proved through any *pramāṇa*. However, this is not the case. Even if we take the realist hypotheses to be true, then we must cognize (*upalabdhi*) the objects in any of the three ways, namely, as a whole (*avayavī*) consisting of parts (*avayava*), or as atoms (*paramāṇu*), or as a group of atoms (*paramāṇu samūha*). Nevertheless, all such notions are logically untenable.

The external object cannot be a whole (*avayavī*) or a substance. Realists hold the view that we perceive the substance as a whole along with its parts or attributes. But this is unintelligible for whenever we perceive, we perceive mere sense-data, not different objects. The eyes can sense the blue colored object but not the blue and an object. We perceive different parts (*avayava*) of a chariot such as its wheel, horses, flag, etc. The notion of a chariot as a whole

¹³¹ ... yathā svapna dvayasamāpattimantareṇa śukravīsarga lakṣaṇaḥ svapnoghātaḥ...
Vimśatikā, Kārikā, 4 with Vṛtti.

¹³² tathā pudgalanairātmyapraveśo hi anyathā punaḥ | deśanā dharmanairātmyapraveśaḥ kalpitātmanā ||
Vimśatikā, Kārikā, 10.

¹³³ ... vijñaptimātramidaṁ rūpādīdharmapratibhāsamutpādyate... |
Vṛtti on Vimśatikā, Kārikā, 10.

(*avayavī*) is merely constructed on the various sense data of different parts. Therefore, the external object cannot be established as a whole.

If the external object is not a whole, then it may be comprehended as consisting of ultimate undividable units called atoms (*paramāṇu*). Everything cannot have the same infinite number of parts. Hence, things must have a definite number of atoms. Atoms must also be of the least perceptible magnitude for if it has magnitude and extension, then it is further divisible into its parts. Atomism is necessary to establish the realistic world and its plurality. It is the result of a regressive cosmological analysis. Atoms are the unconditioned last link in the causal chain of conditions. However, the real problem is that the atoms are postulated on *arthāpatti* (supposition or presumption). Atoms lie beyond empirical cognizance (*atīndriya*). Everything is made up of atoms yet whatever we perceive is of gross magnitude. Why do we not perceive atoms as such? In the quest of the unconditioned in the cosmology, atoms posit an arbitrary end. Why not continue the process till *ad infinitum*? Hence, there is no way to prove the existence of atoms. If one atom is unproven, then the plurality of atoms (*paramāṇu samūha*) is also merely a subjective fiction.

Vasubandhu, further shows how the concept of the atom has logical inconsistencies. An atom has said to have six possible sides (east, west, north, south, up, and down) from where their adjoining can take place. Once this presupposition is admitted, the view that ‘atom is an indivisible part’ loses its logical ground. The adjoining of atoms from six sides can take place either in two ways. Firstly, the atoms can join from the six sides and become identical (*tadākāra*). In that case, the product is nothing but only one single atom¹³⁴, and that too is invisible and indivisible. Consequently, everything will be identical to everything else. Secondly, the atoms can adjoin from the six sides without being identical. But this gives the idea that atom has six sides as six parts.¹³⁵ Thus, the original doctrine of ‘atoms having no divisible part’ is contradicted. Hence, the concept of an atom cannot be proved to be true on a logical basis.

However, establishing the reality of *Vijñaptimātratā* merely by refuting the basic tenets of realism is not enough. Notwithstanding the reality of *Vijñāna* only, our everyday world has a plurality of empirical distinctions. The relation between *Vijñaptimātratā* and such infinite plurality must be stated. Therefore, Vasubandhu also engages in the constructive aspect of Yogācāra metaphysics in *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* (mainly in *Triṃśika*), and its salient notions can be understood in the following way-

¹³⁴ ...ṣaṇṇām samānadeśatvāt pindaḥ syādaṇumātrakah ||
Viṃśatikā Kārikā, 12.

¹³⁵ ṣadakena yugapadyogātparamānoḥ ṣadanśatā | ... ||
Ibid., Kārikā, 12.

2.3 The Constructive Approach (Triṃśikā)

2.3.1 The Three *Vijñānas*

Vasubandhu accepts three kinds of *vijñānas*, viz., *ālayavijñāna*, *kliṣṭa manovijñāna*, and *pravṛtti vijñāna* to account for the apparent subjective-objective empirical distinctions. The infinite evolutes of *Vijñāna* partake broadly in these three categories¹³⁶, which are not separate and static but interconnected phases of diversifying process of evolution. Creativity or projection is the essence of these *vijñānas* which is initiated by the illusory idea (*avidyā*) of subjective-objective distinction. It is posited as a beginningless process until the evolutes revert back to the *Vijñapti mātrata*, the state known as *Nirvāṇa*.

1- *Ālaya-vijñāna*

It is the first and the most fundamental phase of differentiation of the pure *Vijñāna*. It is called *ālaya* as it is the seat or place¹³⁷ of all the seeds or impressions of any *karma* or *vāsnās* (motive force) of whatsoever. It is also called *vipāka vijñāna* as it is the place where all actions leave a residue. Hence, it is the cause of all (*sarvabījaka*) *dharmas* whether subjective or objective; it also gives rise to further *vijñānas*. The *hetu-pariṇāma* is the accumulation of seeds of *vijñānas* whereas the *phala-pariṇāma* is the actualization of those seeds. Hence, it evolves as a reciprocal or a cyclic process.

Vāsanā (impression) is also of two kinds- *vipāka vāsanā*, which accounts for the continuity of the stream of consciousness and causes rebirth; and *niḥṣyanda-vāsanā* is the result or actualization of present experiences.¹³⁸ The latter gives rise to *kliṣṭa manovijñāna* and *pravṛtti vijñāna*.

Since all the *vijñāna* is creative, *ālaya* also must have a content. *Vijñāna* means that which knows (*vijānātīti vijñānam*). What is that which *ālaya* knows? It is not something empirical but an indeterminate content (*aparichinna ālambana*). It is bare objectivity or the going-on-ness of the other. It is yet undifferentiated (*avyākṛta*). It is the dawn of the bifurcation of the pure *Vijñāna*, its primal projection and the first precipitation of the transcendental illusion (*avidyā*). It is the beginning of all the categorizations. This indeterminate content functions as both internally (*ādhyātmika*) as well as externally (*bāhya*). They both are crucial in the process of evolution of further

¹³⁶ ... pariṇāmaḥ sa ca tridhā ||
Triṃśikā, Kārikā, 1.

¹³⁷ ālayaḥ sthānamiti paryayau | ...
Sthiramati's Bhāṣya on Triṃśikā, Kārikā, 2.

¹³⁸ See Sharma, C.D., *The Advaita Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, p. 95.

determinations of *vijñāna* as the former gives rise to *kliṣṭa manovijñāna* (the subjective) and the latter to *pravṛtti-vijñāna* (the objective). In other words, this indeterminate content further bifurcates in the individual ego and the sensuous objects of existence. Hence, *ālayavijñāna* is the *a priori* condition of all the categorizations and all the phenomenal activity of a continuous subject, its bondage, and liberation.

2- *Kliṣṭa mano-vijñāna*

It is the link between the *ālaya-vijñāna* and the *pravṛtti-vijñāna*, responsible for the categorization or intellection (*manana*) of the indeterminate content of *ālaya*. Hence, the category of ‘other’ which is indeterminate in *ālaya* while it is determinate in *kliṣṭa manas*. More precisely, the subject aspect of the indeterminate content of *ālaya* gets differentiated by the processing of *manas* while the object aspect gets differentiated as *pravṛtti vijñāna*. *Ālaya* is the locus (*āśraya*) of both the subject and the object; it is the transcendental Ego while *manas* is the empirical ego which is capable of self-introspection (*svasaṁvedana*).

Mano-vijñāna or *manas* is invariably called *kliṣṭa* because it is defiled by the elements or seeds of suffering (*kleśa*). Vasubandhu mentions four¹³⁹ of them-

- i) *ātma-dṛṣṭi*- the notion of an ego.
- ii) *ātma-moha*- attachment to the ego.
- iii) *ātma-māna*- vanity of the ego.
- iv) *ātma-prema*- love for the ego.

The imposition of an unreal ego over the ever-flowing stream of consciousness of individual (*upādāna-skandha*) is also called *satkāyadṛṣṭi*. It is this projection and attachment to this ego, which is the source of all sufferings (*kleśas*). It owes its apparent existence from the transcendental illusion embedded in *ālaya*. The purpose of Yogācāra meditations and practices is to know the truth about the ego and *ālaya* and transcend them and rest in the pristine purity of *Vijñaptimātratā*.

3- *Pravṛtti- vijñāna*

It is the third manifestation of *vijñāna*, resulting in the complete determinate awareness of the object. This *vijñāna* constitutes all our practical empirical experience. There are six¹⁴⁰ kinds of this *vijñāna* grouped into two as follows-

¹³⁹ kleśaiścaturbhiḥ sahitam nivṛtvāvyākṛtaiḥ sadā | ātmadṛṣṭātmamoha ātmamāna ātmasnehasamjñitaiḥ ||
Trimśikā, Kārikā, 6.

¹⁴⁰ ... tritīyaḥ śadvidhasya yā viśayasyopalabdhiḥ sā ... ||

- i) External –
It includes the five sense cognitions of color/form (*rūpa*), taste (*rasa*), touch (*sparsā*), smell (*gandha*), and sound (*śabda*). They are called external because they project our so-called empirical external objects (though what we perceive always is merely sense-data).
- ii) Internal-
It includes the normal mental statues such as feelings, ideas, and volitions. Again, though they are internal yet projected as objects having *rūpa*, etc. This *vijñāna* is also called *mano-vijñāna* which should not be confused with *kliṣṭa-mano-vijñāna* (the second *vijñāna* of subjectivity).

Again, *ālaya* is the source of all the projections (external as well as internal) of *pravṛtti vijñāna* which constitutes our phenomenal world. Hence, *ālaya* is also called the *mūla pravṛtti vijñāna*. The objects of dreams, illusions, hallucinations, etc. are the projections of *pravṛtti vijñāna* merely. The objective sensations of *pravṛtti vijñāna* can be simple or complex, and it is a momentary flow just like waves in an ocean (*tarāṅgānām yathā jale*).¹⁴¹ This flux is broken only in the five conditions, viz., deep sleep, liberation, trance states, swoon, and death.¹⁴²

Hence, the absolute pure *Vijñāna* gets modified into the three *vijñānas*. The three *vijñānas* are not the ultimate as they are conditioned by the transcendental illusion of objectivity. The entire evolution is a logical process, not historical as we can move from the world to the Absolute, and not vice versa. Since the Absolute is never really defiled, it can be realized, and the emphasis of Yogācāra discipline is to realize that state of *Vijñaptimātratā* where there is no trace of *vijñāna-pariṇāma* at all.

2.3.2 The Three Truths (*svabhāvas*)

The fact that the Absolute pure *Vijñāna* differentiates into our empirical world of subjective-objective duality necessitates the postulation of different degrees or kinds of Truth. The dichotomy between the Absolute and the relative, the phenomenon and the noumenon (*what appears* and *what is*) is the keynote of Vijñānavāda of Vasubandhu. We have real (*paramārthika* or *pariniṣpanna*) on the one hand and the unreal (*samvṛtti*) on the other. The real is always obscured by appearance, but the former somehow retains its pristine purity in all its modification. Hence, from the empirical level, Vasubandhu draws such distinctions where the unreal is

Trimśikā, Kārikā, 8.

¹⁴¹ Trimśikā, Kārikā, 15.

¹⁴² Ibid., Kārikā, 16

diversified in the duality of experience, and the Real is free from the least trace of it. In Trimśikā, we find the three *svabhāvas* (truths or realities) where each one is postulated just for the sake of negation so that there is the dawn of *paramārtha* with the negation of *samvṛtti*.

Now, the three *svabhāvas* can be examined individually as follows:

1- *Parikalpita*

It is that which is pure imagination (*kalpanā mātra*). It is imagining what is not there actually.¹⁴³ It is *vikalpita* or *āropita* as it has no real existence.¹⁴⁴ The *parikalpita* is projected (*upacārita*) by the creative power of consciousness and it has the *abhāva* of *sattā* (real existence). Though it is not a complete blank (*asat*) yet it cannot be said to be something real. It has no ontological existence. This imaginary object is that which is confronted to the consciousness as the other, and it can be both- internal (*ādhyātmika*) as well as external (*bāhya*). It appears as other or existing independently, but with the dawn of philosophical consciousness, that *parikalpita* idea is negated. The imagined object (*parikalpita*) has no external counterpart and hence it has no external cause as an object.

2- *Paratantra*

That which is *parikalpita* (imagined) must have some basis (*āśraya*) also. The form that is projected as different external objects in *parikalpita* and the stuff out of which this projection is possible is called *paratantra*. It is the subjective side of the projection. It is *paratantra* as it is dependent on causes and conditions (*pratityasamutpāda*)¹⁴⁵. It is indeed the creative consciousness and thus includes *ālaya*, *kliṣṭamanas*, and *pravṛtti vijñāna*. It is the reservoir of all the subject-object duality. As we have already seen, the three *vijñānas* are differentiated from the pure *Vijñāna* due to the transcendental illusion of objectivity (*avidyā*). Hence, *paratantra* is nothing but the Absolute modified due to the illusion of objectivity.

3- *Pariniṣpanna*

Pariniṣpanna means *rahitatā*, i.e., freedom, negation, or absence. Here, it denotes *rahitatā* from subject-object (*grāhya-grāhaka*) imaginations (*parikalpita*). Hence,

¹⁴³ yena yena vikalpena yadyad vastu vikalpyate | parikalpita evasau svabhāvo na sa vidyate ||
Ibid., Kārikā, 20.

¹⁴⁴ ... atra kāraṇamāha na sa vidyate iti | ...
Sthiramati's Bhāṣya on Trimśikā, Kārikā, 20.

¹⁴⁵ paratantrasvabhāvastu vikalpaḥ pratya yodbhavaḥ | ... ||
Trimśika, Kārikā, 21.
... parairhetupratayayyaistannatrayat iti paratantra utpadyat ityarthah | ...
Sthiramati's Bhāṣya on Trimśika, Kārikā, 21.

pariniṣpannasvabhāva is that aspect of *Vijñāna* which is eternally (*sadā*) free from subject-object duality.¹⁴⁶ In other words, *pariniṣpanna* is free from all the modifications. It is *avikārita*.¹⁴⁷ *Paratantra*, as we noted earlier, is the basis of *grāhya-grāhaka* (subject-object) projection of *parikalpita*; and when the same *paratantra* is free from *parikalpita*, it denotes *pariniṣpanna*.¹⁴⁸ Here, the *pariniṣpanna* is described *via negativa* as the absence of *parikalpita* in *paratantra*. This negation or absence (*rahitatā*) of *parikalpita* in *paratantra* is eternal (*sārvakālika*) or there is *atyantarahitatā* (absolute negation). Hence, positively, *pariniṣpanna* is something eternal, non-dual, *dharmatā* of all *dharma*s, pure *Vijñapti*, pure ‘That’ (*tan-mātra*), pure Being (*vastumātra*). Moreover, since whatever is momentary is miserable, *pariniṣpanna* is pure Bliss as That is eternal (*sārvakālika*).

Pariniṣpanna is, paradoxically, different (*anya*) as well as non-different (*ananya*) from *paratantra*.¹⁴⁹ It is different as it has the absolute negation of *parikalpita*. It is non-different as it is the *dharmatā* (reality/essence) of *paratantra*. Here, we get the glimpse of the famous doctrine of Mahāyāna, i.e., *samsāra* is *Nirvāna*. *Paratantra* is *pariniṣpanna* in a sense, i.e., when devoid of the illusory idea of its diverse *pariṇāma*. *Pariniṣpanna* is both immanent and transcendent to *paratantra*. Nothing can be added or negated from the Absolute *Vijñāna*.

In the process of knowing the Absolute *Vijñāna*, negation plays an important role. *Parikalpita* is negated merely by discarding its imaginative existence; *paratantra* is known in its entirety only with the dawn of *pariniṣpanna* as the latter is the essence of the former.¹⁵⁰ Through the yogic practices, when one attains indeterminate higher knowledge (*nirvikalpa lokottara jñāna*), *paratantra* is realized in its entirety only when *pariniṣpanna* has been realized. With this *lokottara jñāna*, all the *dharmās* are realized as *svabhāva śunya* such as dreams or various reflections of the moon in a water body.¹⁵¹ The negation is applied on the three *svabhāvas* also but in a unique sense. There are three kinds of *niḥsvabhāvatās*¹⁵² corresponding to the three kinds of truth as follows:

¹⁴⁶ ...niṣpannastasya pūrveṇa sadā rahitata tu yā ||

Trimśikā, Kārikā, 21.

Here, ‘*pūrveṇa*’ denotes the previously mentioned *parikalpita svabhāva*.

¹⁴⁷ avikārapariniṣpattyā sa pariniṣpannaḥ...

Sthiramati’s Bhāṣya on Trimśika, Kārikā, 21.

¹⁴⁸ partantrasya parikalpitena atyantarahitatā pariniṣpanna-svabhāvaḥ |

Sthiramati’s Bhāṣya on Trimśika, Kārikā, 21.

¹⁴⁹ ata eva sa naivānyo nānanyaḥ partantrataḥ | ... ||

Trimśikā, Kārikā, 22.

¹⁵⁰ ... nādyāṣṭesaminniti pariniṣpannasvabhāve sa dr̥śyata iti paratantraḥ svabhāvaḥ |

Sthiramati’s Bhāṣya on Ibid.

¹⁵¹ tatapriṣṭhalabdheṇa jñāneṇa māyamaṛicisvapnapratiśrutkodakacandranirmitsamān sarvadharmān pratyeti ... |

Sthiramati’s Bhāṣya on Ibid.

¹⁵² trividhasya svabhāvasya trividhām niḥsvabhāvatām | sanghāya sarvadharmāṇām deśitā niḥsvabhāvatā ||

1- *Lakṣaṇa niḥsvabhāvatā*

The appearing object has no reality. Its *lakṣaṇa* (apparent characteristic) is imaginary and is, therefore, *niḥsvabhāva*. Therefore, *lakṣaṇa niḥsvabhāvatā* invariably pertains to *parikalpita*.

2- *Utpatti niḥsvabhāvatā*

Paratantra has *utpatti niḥsvabhāvatā*. As noted earlier, *paratantra* is real in its essence yet its appearance as causal forms is unreal.¹⁵³ Hence, the appearance of *utpatti* in *paratantra* is the mark of *niḥsvabhāvatā* here.

3- *Paramārtha niḥsvabhāvatā*

In *paramārtha* or *parinṣpanna*, there is negation or *niḥsvabhāvatā* of all kinds of *dharmās*.¹⁵⁴ Sthiramati compares *paramārtha* with space (*ākāśa*) where all *dharmas* partake, but in itself, *paramārtha* has the absolute negation of them. *Dharmas* appear and disappear, but *dharmatā* is ever constant. This *paramārtha* is also named as ‘*Tathatā*’ in the text. *Tathatā* is so because it retains its suchness in all the states and time, and this is *Vijñaptimātratā*.¹⁵⁵ Hence, the realization of *Tathatā* or *Vijñaptimātratā* necessarily requires the negation of all the *vijñanas* of subjective-objective duality.¹⁵⁶

2.4 Bondage and Liberation (*Samsāra* and *Nirvāṇa*)

Though there may be some doctrinal differences, yet every Buddhist discipline culminates in *Nirvāṇa*. It is the *summum bonum* of not only of Vijñānavāda in particular (including VMS) but also of Buddhism in general. Buddhism may not have any empirical value, yet it cannot be considered merely as intellectual hairsplitting over the ultimate questions of existence. Instead, it has spiritual and soteriological value, reflected in the state of *Nirvāṇa*, where there is, negatively, cessation of all the sufferings and, positively, the ultimate incessant bliss.

As we noted earlier, for the Sarvāstivādins (or the Hinayānists), *dharmas* exist, but *pudgalas* do not. Hence, *Nirvāṇa* was the outcome of realization of *pudgalanairātmya*, and not of *dharmanairātmya*. For the Vijñānavādins, *Nirvāṇa* consists in the knowledge of the both, *pudgalanairātmya* and *dharma nairātmya* as well. It resembles with the Śūnyavāda doctrine of

Trimśikā, Kārikā, 23.

¹⁵³ ... na svayaṁ bhāva etasyetyaparā niḥsvabhāvatā | ... |

Trimśika, Kārikā, 24.

¹⁵⁴ dharmanām paramārthaśca sa yatastathatāpi saḥ | ... ||

Trimśika, Kārikā, 25.

¹⁵⁵ ... sarvakālaṁ tathābhāvāta saiva vijñaptimātratā ||

Loc. cit.

¹⁵⁶ yāvad vijñaptimātratve vijñānaṁ nāvatiṣṭhate | grāhdvayasyānuśayastāvanna vinivartate ||

Trimśikā, Kārikā, 26.

Absolute Truth, yet *Nirvāṇa* there, is only the lack of all mental conceptualizations (*prapancaśūnya*) and it is not a *bhāva* (a positive thing).

Vijñānavāda, on the other hand, supplements the conception of *Nirvāṇa* with some positive attributes as well. Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi describes it as *sukhaṃ, Tathatā, dharmatā, paramārtha*, etc. In a nutshell, *ālaya* and its satellite modifications constitute *samsāra*, and the pure *Vijñapti* is *Nirvāṇa*. *Ālaya* is the source of two kinds of covering or ignorance, namely-

1- *Kleśa āvaraṇa*

Kleśa means *rāga* (attachment) and *dveṣa* (aversion), and similar attitudes of mind. When the pure *Vijñāna* evolves into three *vijñānas* and the pure Will is defiled, the notion of ego is crystallized. *Ālaya* is the source of all modifications of *samsāra* and *kliṣṭa manas* evolves into subjective aspect giving rise to various defilements such as *ātma-drṣṭi, ātmamoha, ātmamāna, and ātmaprema*. As *ālaya* is *abhūtaparikalpita* also, hence it projects unreal objects and though they are ideal, yet they appear external to the crystallized ego. Attachment or repulsion to such external objects gives incessant suffering. This is *kleśa āvaraṇa* on *Vijñāna*.

2- *Jñeya āvaraṇa*

It is the veil that hinders true knowledge of things or *dharmas*. The *dharmas* known empirically as real external things constitute wrong knowledge. *Jñeya āvaraṇa* is removed when one knows the ideality or *dharmatā* of the so-called external objects.

Sthiramati makes it clear in his commentary on *Trimśikā* that the *updeśa* of *pudgalanairātmya* and *dharmanairātmya* is for the sake of removal of the dual-ignorance, namely, that of *kleśāvaraṇa* and *jñeyāvaraṇa* respectively.¹⁵⁷ With the realization of the unreality of ego, the tendencies of attachment and aversion are removed. With the realization of the unreality of external objects, ideality (*vijñapti*) of existence is known. Hence, *pudgalanairātmya* and *dharmanairātmya* complement each other and serve as the basis of *Nirvāṇa*. It seeks to avoid two extremes- the first one-sided view is that of the reality of both- the *vijñāna* (consciousness as such) and the *vijñeya* (objects). The other extreme view is that they both are unreal (the nihilistic view). *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* states that though the *vijñeya* (including ego) is unreal, its base as pure *Vijñapti* is real.

Thus, the bondage is the imposition (*upacāra*) of subjective-objective distinctions (*grāhya-grāhaka bheda*), over the Pure Will (*Vijñapti*) and the cessation of such modifications and the realization of the *Vijñapti*, in its universality, is freedom. Unless this non-dual (*advaya*) nature is realized through *yogic* practices, there is no *Nirvāṇa*.¹⁵⁸ *Vijñāna pariṇāma* and *vikalpa* is

¹⁵⁷ ... pudgaladharmanairātmya pratipādanam punaḥ kleśāvaraṇa prahānārtham | ...

Sthiramati's Introductory commentary on *Trimśikā*.

¹⁵⁸ yāvad advayalakṣano vijñaptimātre yoginaniścitam na pratiṣṭhitam bhavati, tāvad grāhya-grāhakānuśayo na vinivartate na prahīyate ... |

anitya and hence brings suffering (*dukha*); while the pure non-dual *Vijñapti* is eternal (*nitya*) and hence blissful (*sukham*).¹⁵⁹ Further, *Nirvāṇa* is not a novel acquisition; it is the realization of Reality as such (*Tathatā*). From the subjective point of view, the discipline and the attainment is real, while objectively, the entire process is unreal like a *māya marīcikā*, dreams, or reflections of the moon in water bodies.¹⁶⁰

-III-

In the analysis given above of the text, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, we find that the theory of consciousness ramifies in many philosophical ways. Following is a concluding reflection on it:

1- Metaphysics/Ontology

Vasubandhu, at the very outset of *Vimśatikā*, declares that Consciousness alone is real and the external objects are just projections of this consciousness. Hence, the entire word of subject-object (*ātman* and *dharma*) is nothing but the modifications of consciousness (*vijñāna-pariṇāma*). Consciousness is Absolute and creative. The text maintains the distinction between *what appears* and *what is*. Spatio-temporal determinations of these modifications are similar in waking and dreams. The intra-subjective experience of the contents of consciousness is due to similar *saṃskāras* and *kārmika* fructifications of individuals. Hence, the conclusion: the external objects and the subjective ego consciousness both are the modifications of Consciousness. They are dependent on consciousness both epistemologically and ontologically.

Further, *vijñāna pariṇāma* evolves at three steps- *ālaya* which is the storehouse consciousness accounting for the continuity of subsequent *vijñānas*. It may be the earliest formulation of sub-consciousness affecting consciousness reciprocally. The second *vijñāna pariṇāma*, is the *kliṣṭa manas*, the ego or I-consciousness which is the locus (*āśraya*) of mental tendencies such as attachment and aversion. The third *pariṇāma* is the *pravṛtti vijñāna* which constitutes our six senses based experiences. All the three modification are in flux, changing from moment to moment. The so-called ego and the objects- all are merely the flux of *vijñāna*. They are *niḥsvabhāva* (essence-less). Ontologically they are unreal, and only the Pure Consciousness or *Vijñapti* is real which is free from all the modifications.

Sthiramati's Bhāṣya on *Triṃśikā*, Kārikā, 26.

¹⁵⁹ dhruvo nityatvāt akṣayatayā | sukho nityatvādeva | yadnityam tadduḥkham | ayam ca nitya iti, asmāta sukhaḥ | ...
Sthiramati's Bhāṣya on *Triṃśikā*, Kārikā, 30.

¹⁶⁰ tatapriṣṭhalabdheṇa jñānena māyamarīcisvapnapratiśrutkodakacandranirmitsamān sarvadharmān pratyeti
Sthiramati's Bhāṣya on *Triṃśikā*, Kārikā, 22.

2- Epistemology

Epistemology is of the utmost value not only in the text (Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi) in particular but also in Buddhism in general. Since the entire *vijñāna pariṇāma* is conditioned by the *avidyā*, the transcendental illusion of objectivity, the real antidote for this ignorance can only be the right knowledge (*jñāna*). Interestingly, Sthiramati, in his commentary on Triṃśikā, (Kārikā 9) calls *pramāṇas* and *apramāṇas* as *yoga* and *ayoga* respectively. Yoga (the right way of knowing) is of three types- *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, and *āptopadeśa*; and the resultant knowledge is *bhāvanāmaya*, *cintāmaya*, and *śrutāmaya*.¹⁶¹ Conversely, the wrong *pramāṇas* (*ayoga*) are *anāptopadeśaḥ* (false words), *anumānābhāsa* (logical fallacies), and *mithyāpraṇihita* (illusory perception).

The common sense realistic view of subjective-objective consciousness is defiled with *avidyā*. Perception itself yields illusory ideas of realities of *dharmas* and *pudgala* resulting in suffering. However, the words (*updeśa*) of the awakened ones- the Buddhas, hint at the true knowledge which is capable of rendering complete cessation of suffering. The logic (*anumāna*) proves the unreality of objectivity in consciousness. However, the highest Truth about Consciousness is not a subject of logic. The text attaches immense importance to yogic disciplines (though there is no mention of actual practices) where in the higher states of knowledge (*lokottara prajñā* or *jñāna*) the Truth is known. Thus, in the text, we have a description of various states of knowledge or truths.

The highest Truth is known entirely in a different sense than of the subjective-objective intentional knowledge process. On the one hand, the triple modifications of *vijñāna* have intentional contents to them. Further, they are internal, though they appear to be external. *Ālaya* has an indeterminate content to it. *Kliṣṭa manas* has the *svasamvedana* (self-recognition) of the subject, and the full-fledged empirical experience takes place through the various forms of *pravṛtti vijñāna*. All the modifications of *vijñāna* are in an incessant flux. On the other hand, the Pure *Vijñapti* has neither the knower nor any intentional content. This is Pure Consciousness or Knowledge free from *grāhya-grāhaka bhāva* (subject-object knowing).

Hence, the objects of our knowing consciousness are the imaginary construction (*parikalpita*) which is cancelled by the mere knowledge of it; the relative flux of knowing states (*paratantra*) is purified by *yogic* practices, and the final truth of the Absolute (*pariniṣpanna*) is intuited through the mystical *Gnosis* in *Nirvāṇa* state.

¹⁶¹ *Śrutāmaya*, *cintāmaya*, and *bhāvanāmaya* can be compared with the Vedāntic ideas of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nidhidhyāsana* respectively

3- Language

The text clearly defines the limits of language which can deal with the modifications of *viññāna* only. It is incapable of giving an exact description of the absolute state of Consciousness. The language involves concepts, predications, and symbols and the Truth about Consciousness is beyond all the conceptualizations. Vasubandhu painstakingly refutes the category of objectivity and establish the reality of *Vijñaptimātratā*, yet at the end of the *Vimśatikā*, he expresses his linguistic frailty to describe the state of *Vijñaptimātratā* completely.¹⁶² That (Truth) can be known only by the Buddhas (*buddhagocara*), where all the thought and language is transcended.

4- Axiology

Finally, the state of *Vijñaptimātratā* is *the summum bonum* of Yogācāra discipline. It is equivalent to *Nirvāṇā*. The sole aim of the text (*Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*) is to remove the dualistic veil of subjectivity and objectivity (*kleśāvaraṇa* and *jñeyāvaraṇa*). The attachment or repulsion (*rāga* and *dveṣa*) to them brings suffering for they are afflicted with impermanence (*anitya*). On the other hand, *Vijñaptimātratā* is the culmination of the quest of beatifism for this Being as Consciousness is non-dual (*advaya*) and permanent (*nitya*).¹⁶³ Hence, Being as Pure Consciousness has the supreme axiological value.

¹⁶² vijñaptimātratāsiddhiḥ svaśaktisadyaśī maya | kṛteyaṁ sarvathā sat u na cintyā-buddhagocaraḥ ||
Vimśatikā, Kārikā, 22.

¹⁶³ ...sukho vimuktikāyoasau dharmākhyoayaṁ mahāmuneḥ.
Trīṁśikā, Kārikā, 30

Chapter - 3

Comparison

In our treatment of the two texts, namely Māṇḍūkyakārikā and Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi, we noticed many doctrinal and methodological similarities along with shared terminologies, arguments, analogies, and examples. However, any apparent commonality is not well founded unless we closely examine them. In this pursuit, we also actively look for vital differences by virtue of which we can categorize these texts as belonging to two different traditions. Our aim, in this chapter, is to critically compare and contrast these two texts, avoiding the pitfalls of the two extremes of finding absolute commonality and absolute dissimilarity.

Further, the pivot of comparison is Māṇḍūkyakārikā because it is this text that has received noticeable attention among the scholars of the recent past regarding its Buddhist nature.¹⁶⁴ Some of those issues are taken up in this chapter to gain a better understanding of Māṇḍūkyakārikā and its relation with Buddhism in general and with Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi in particular. Therefore, this chapter has been divided into three sections- the first, dealing with similarities; the second with dissimilarities; and the third and the last with some issues and observations on some ambiguous expressions of GK, especially in the last Prakaraṇa (Alātaśānti), which have gained the attention of recent scholars.

-I-

Similarities

A comparative study often begins with a primary sense of doctrinal or methodological commonality between the texts or thinkers under consideration, otherwise, what is the need of comparison? Though coming from different traditions, the two texts in our study reveal a lot of similar concepts. The following is a philosophical reflection on those similarities:

1- The Aim of the Texts

Both the texts seem to have one ultimate common purpose, i.e., the alleviation of human suffering. The term for suffering is *duḥkha* in Māṇḍūkyakārikā (GK) and *kleśa* in Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi (VMS) and all the concepts floated in the texts have the one ultimate aim of overcoming human suffering. Suffering involves at least two aspects, viz., a sufferer and an object or person with whom the sufferer has attachment (*rāga*) or aversion (*dveṣa*). Both the texts maintain that such a dualistic experience is based on illusion (*avidyā*) and with the

¹⁶⁴ See *supra* pp. 5-8.

realization of the non-dual Absolute, both the aspects of suffering are negated. Hence, ignorance is the cause of suffering and knowledge is the remedy.

Śaṅkara, in his introductory remark on Āgama Prakaraṇa, describes the aim (*prayojana*) of the text as follows –

“... what then, is that end (*prayojana*) in view? It is thus explained: As a man stricken with disease, so the self labouring under misapprehension, owing to identification of itself with misery, recovers its normal state with the cessation of duality (of the illusion), which manifests itself as the phenomenal universe. This realization of non-duality is the end to be achieved.”¹⁶⁵

Similarly, Sthiramati in his *bhāṣya* on *Triṁśikā* declares the aim of the text as in providing the true knowledge of *pudgalanairātmya* and *dharmanairātmya*.¹⁶⁶ The former removes the veil of suffering (*kleśāvaraṇa*), and the latter removes the veil of knowledge (*jñeyāvaraṇa*).¹⁶⁷ Hence, we can say that both the texts have the common aim of providing metaphysical knowledge of the Absolute which has the capacity of ending sufferings forever.

2- *Māyā / Avidyā*

Māyā or *avidyā* is the transcendental illusion of objectivity. In both the texts, it sows the seeds of self-determination and objectification of the Pure Consciousness. *Avidyā* and *ajñāna* are the shared terms in the texts. *Māyā* is the peculiar term used in GK where it is the principle of self-delusion¹⁶⁸ exerting the beginningless veil of ignorance on *jīva*. In VMS also, *avidyā* is the beginningless veil of ignorance and suffering and *vikalpa* (imagination)¹⁶⁹. GK uses *vikalpa*, *kalpanā*, and *anyathāgrahaṇa* for the imposition of the unreal elements. In VMS, *upcāra* is the term used for the wrong imposition.¹⁷⁰ Hence, the principle of the transcendental illusion of objectivity is also common in both the texts.

¹⁶⁵ kiṁ punastatprayojanamityucyate, rogārtasyeva roganivṛttau svasthatā tathā duḥkhāmakasyātmano dvaitaprapaṅcopaśame svasthatā | advaita bhāvaḥ prayojanam |

Śaṅkara’s introductory remark on Āgama Prakaraṇa.
(Trans. by Swami Nikhilananda)

¹⁶⁶ pudagaladharmanairātmyorapratipannavipratipannānāmaviparita pudagaldharmanairātmyapratipādanārtham triṁśikāviṅṅnaptiprakarṇārambhaḥ |

Sthiramati’s introductory Bhāṣya on *Triṁśikā*.

¹⁶⁷ kleśajñeyāvaraṇaprahāṇamapi mokṣasarvajñatvādhiḡamanārtham |
Sthiramati’s introductory Bhāṣya on *Triṁśikā*.

¹⁶⁸ ... māyaiṣā tasya devasya yayā saṁmohitaḥ svayam ||
GK II, 16.

¹⁶⁹ ... rūpādidharmopacārascānādikalikḡaḥ pravartate...
Sthiramati’s Bhāṣya on *Triṁśikā*, Kārikā, 1.

¹⁷⁰ ... yanca yatra nāsti tat tatop Caryate...
Sthiramati’s Bhāṣya on *Triṁśikā*, Kārikā, 1.

3- Refutation of Realism

Both the texts refute the realistic view that objects have a real existence apart from Consciousness. Both raise some (not all) common objections such as of efficiency and spatiotemporal determinations and counter the objections on the basis of the dream-state.¹⁷¹ It can be said that *Vimśatikā* is solely devoted to the refutation of realism. Similarly, *Vaitathya*¹⁷² and *Advaita*¹⁷³ *Prakaraṇa* also refute duality, *vaitathya* (becoming/essencelessness), and realistic difference of any kind. GK, III, *Kārikā*, 31 clearly says that all the movable and immovable world of duality (*carācara jagata*) is merely mind oriented.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, the famous illustration of *alāta* (the firebrand) also suggests that all the names and forms are nothing but the appearance (*ābhāsa*) of mind. In agreement to VMS, GK also says that whatever is seen as originating, movable, and disappearing is nothing but the non-dual, immovable, and peaceful *Vijñāna*.¹⁷⁵ Hence, in both the texts, the realistic world of plurality is merely phenomenal, and not absolute.

4- *Īśvara* and *Ālaya*

Īśvara and *ālaya* are the first manifestations of the Pure Consciousness where no duality has arisen explicitly, but it is latent there in its seed form. The sixth mantra of *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* exclusively describes the nature and status of *Īśvara*. It is the basis of all knowledge, the inner controller of all beings, and the seat of origination and dissolution of all empirical elements (*bhūta*).¹⁷⁶ Similarly, *ālaya* is also the seed of all phenomena (*sarvabījakam*). It is also *vipākaḥ*—the storehouse of all karmas. It is *ālaya* which further manifests into *kliṣṭa manas* and *pravṛtti vijñāna*. The *vyāvṛtti* (rolling back) of *ālaya* takes place when one attains *arhatva*.¹⁷⁷ Hence, *yonih* (cause), *sarveśvara* (the controller of all), *prabhava* (origin) and *apyaya* (dissolution) of *Īśvara* can be compared to *sarvabījakam*, *vipākaḥ*, *pravṛtti* and *vyāvṛtti* of *ālaya* respectively.

<i>Īśvara</i>	<i>Ālaya</i>
<i>yonih</i>	<i>sarvabījakam</i>
<i>sarveśvara</i>	<i>vipākaḥ</i>
<i>prabhava</i>	<i>pravṛtti</i>
<i>apyaya</i>	<i>vyāvṛtti</i>

¹⁷¹ See *supra* pp. 26-29, 45-47.

¹⁷² GK, II, *Kārikās*, 1-10.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, III, *Kārikās*, 25-31.

¹⁷⁴ *manodṛśyamidaṁ dvaitaṁ yatkiñcitasacarācaram | ...*

Ibid., III, 31.

¹⁷⁵ *jatyābhāsam calābhāsam vastvābhāsam tathaiva ca | ajācalamavastutvaṁ vijñānam śāntamadvayaṁ ||*

Ibid., IV, 45.

¹⁷⁶ *eṣa sarveśvara eṣa sarvajñaḥ eṣoantaryāmyeṣa yonih sarvasya prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām ||*

Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, Mantra, 6.

¹⁷⁷ *tasya vyāvṛttiarhatve... |*

Trīṁśikā, *Kārikā*, 5.

Noticing the difference between *Īśvara* and *ālaya*, Prof. C.D. Sharma points out- “*Ālaya* is momentary and has no personality; *Īśvara* is a personal God in whose supreme personality, knowledge, will and emotion are fully integrated.”¹⁷⁸ *Ālaya* has no personality- true; but in GK, *Īśvara* is not presented as a theistic personal God but as the cosmic form of the deep sleep state (*susupti*). However, *Īśvara* and *Ālaya* can be contrasted in the sense that partial non-dual experience of *Īśvara* is revealed in every individual *susupti* while regarding *ālaya* there is no such experiential way indicated in VMS.

5- *Jīva* and *Kliṣṭa Mano-vijñāna*

Kliṣṭa mano vijñāna of VMS can be compared with *jīva*, the individual ego or knowing consciousness (*pramātā*), of GK. Both are the manifestations of a transcendental source, *Īśvara* in GK and *ālaya* in VMS¹⁷⁹. *Jīva* is the first *kalpanā* (imposition) on *Ātman*.¹⁸⁰ *Kliṣṭa mano-vijñāna* is the also the first *upacāra* (imposition) based on *ālaya*.¹⁸¹ Further, *manovijñāna* functions with the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ (*ahaṁ* and *mama*).¹⁸² Moreover, this *vijñāna* is *kliṣṭa* because this ego-ness gives rise to various *kleśas*.¹⁸³ Similarly, *jīva* is also the seat of the sensation of ‘I am the doer, I am suffering, I am enjoying, etc.’¹⁸⁴ Hence, both of them are the basis of all the categorizations (*manana*).

However, in GK, we find *jīva* and its relation between *Ātman* as that of a pot-space and the universal space.¹⁸⁵ They are considered to be different due to various adjuncts (*upādhi*), but in essence, they are non-different. In VMS, *manas* is not there in *arhatva* and higher states of *samādhi*, yet it is not understood in VMS with the *advaita* analogy of space.

6- Absolute

Both the texts depict a form of Absolutism. There are profound similarities regarding their description of the Absolute. GK uses *Ātman*, *Brahman*, *Turīya*, *Vijñapti*, *Vijñāna*, *Paramārtha*, *Advaita*, etc. for the Absolute. VMS uses *Cit*, *Vijñāna*, *Vijñaptimātra*, *Nirvāṇa*, *Pariniṣpanna*, *Tathatā*, etc. for the Absolute. Interestingly, GK employs the Buddhist terms- *Nirvāṇa*¹⁸⁶,

¹⁷⁸ Sharma, C.D., *The Advaita Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, p. 98.

¹⁷⁹ tadālambarṁ manonāma vijñāna mananātmakam ||
Trimśikā, Kārikā, 5.

¹⁸⁰ jīvaṁ kalpyate pūrvaṁ tato bhāvanpṛthakvidhān |...
GK, II, Kārikā, 16.

¹⁸¹ tadāśritya pravartata iti... |
Sthiramati’s *Bhāṣya* on Trimśikā, Kārikā, 5.

¹⁸² ... ahaṁ mamaetyālaya-vijñānālambanavāt |
Ibid.

¹⁸³ See *supra* p. 50.

¹⁸⁴ ahaṁ karomi mama sukhaduḥkhe ityevamlakṣaṇam; ...
Śāṅkara’s *Bhāṣya* on GK, II, Kārikā, 16.

¹⁸⁵ GK, III, Kārikās, 3-8.

¹⁸⁶ svasthaṁ śāntaṁ sanirvāṇamkathyaṁ... ||

*Vijñāna*¹⁸⁷, and *Vijñaptimātratā*¹⁸⁸ to refer to *Ātman*; and as we noted earlier, VMS employs the Upaniṣadic terms such as *advaya*, *nityam*, *sukham*, and *dhruvaḥ* to refer to *Vijñaptimātratā*.

Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, in its seventh mantra, cryptically attempts to define the indefinable as a state neither extrovert, nor introvert, nor both, beyond all means of knowledge, ungraspable, peaceful, blissful, and non-dual.¹⁸⁹ Similarly, *Vimśatikā*, Kārikā, 21, describes the Absolute *svabhāva* (*pariniṣpanna*) as that which is devoid of phenomenal states- imaginary (*parikalpita*) and causally dependent (*paratantra*), and hence free from *grāhya-grāhaka bhāva*.¹⁹⁰ *Trimśikā*, Kārikā, 25, describes *Vijñaptimātratā* or *Tathatā* as that which retains its suchness forever. Interestingly, in terms of GK, *Tathatā* is that which lacks *vaitathya* (becoming as it is not). Hence, we clearly observe that *Tathatā* or *Vijñaptimātratā* and *Advaita* or the changeless *Ātman* can hardly be differentiated.

It is also evident that GK employs both the ways of expressing the Absolute- viz., *via negativa* and *via positiva*.¹⁹¹ Similarly, VMS also uses the cataphatic way of description when the *pariniṣpanna* is described as devoid of *parikalpita* and *paratantra*. GK also gives some positive description of the Absolute. *Turīyātman* is *śāntam* (peaceful) and *śivam* (Good). Similarly, VMS, at the very end, also attempts to render some positive description of the Absolute such as *nitya*, *dhruvaḥ*, and *sukham*, *Tathatā*, and *dharmatā*.¹⁹² Hence, both *via positiva* and *via negativa*, the Absolute of GK and that of VMS, bear foundational similarities.

7- *Mokṣa* and *Nirvāṇa*

Mokṣa or *Nirvāṇa* is the direct, unique, and mystical experience of the Absolute. Its experience or knowledge is not discursive but unitary where there is no *grāhya-grāhaka bhāva* (knower-known relation). Both the texts share these terms. The bondage lies in not knowing the Absolute while its unitary experience is *mokṣa*. In GK, *mokṣa* is the overcoming of all the impositions (*vikalpa*) on *Ātman*. In VMS, *mokṣa* is the *prahāṇa* (destruction) of the two transcendental impositions of *dharmānairātmya* and *pudgalanairātmya*. Both are *advaya* (non-dual), *sukham* (beatific), and *nityam* (eternal).

Ibid., Kārikā, 47.

¹⁸⁷ jatyābhāsam calābhāsam vastvābhāsam tathaiva ca | ajācalamavastutvaṁ vijñānam śāntamadvayaṁ ||
Ibid., 45.

¹⁸⁸ viśuddha vijñaptimātratā sattādvayarūpeṇa... |
Śāṅkara's Bhāṣya on GK, II, Kārikā, 17.

¹⁸⁹ See *supra* p. 22.

¹⁹⁰ ...niṣpannastasya pūrveṇa sadā rahitata tu ya ||
Trimśatikā, Kārikā, 21.
Also, see *supra* pp. 52-54.

¹⁹¹ See *supra* pp. 22-25.

¹⁹² dhruvo nityatvāt akṣaya tathā | sukho nityāvādeva | yadanityaṁ tadduḥkham I ayaṁ ca nitya iti, asmāta sukhaḥ |
Sthiramati's Bhāṣya on *Trimśikā*, Kārikā, 30.

Hence, as similar is the Absolute, so is its experience depicted in both the texts. GK, however, goes a step ahead and boldly declares that even bondage and liberation are imaginary in the ultimate sense.¹⁹³ VMS is hesitant in making such a bold declaration, possibly because of its emphasis on the *yogic* discipline where bondage and liberation have to be accounted as real. But, Gauḍapāda, with his extreme form of non-origination, is ready to take such risks to present an unalloyed description of Truth.

8- Reality and Language

Both the texts hold the view that language fails to comprehend the reality completely.¹⁹⁴ It can at most describe something about the phenomenal consciousness, and that too is full of contradictions. Both the texts declare that the Truth is beyond reason (*tarkātīta*) or any other *pramāṇa*.¹⁹⁵ Its experience is mystically ineffable (*anirvacanīya*).

9- Śruti Pramāṇa (Verbal Testimony)

All the metaphysical speculations must have some source for they cannot float merely as fancy imaginations. In our texts, the fundamental source of inspiration for their critical and constructive works is the *śruti*. In addition, what *śruti* claims is further verified by individual seekers. *Śruti* means *āptavākya*- the statements of contended people of the highest realization. In this sense, both the texts accept the *śruti pramāṇa*. The supremacy of the *śruti pramāṇa* (the Vedas) is unanimously accepted by all the Vedānta schools. GK itself is based on Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad which is a *śruti*. Śaṅkara also, in his commentary heavily draws from *śrutis*. Hence, GK undoubtedly relies on the great statements of *ṛṣis* (the mystic knowers of the Vedas).

Buddha's famous motto was *appa dīpo bhava*- be your own light. Though Buddha did not accept any authority of *śruti* (particularly *vedic*) over direct experience, yet we can plausibly say that the teachings of Buddha himself served as *śruti pramāṇa* for his followers. *Śruti* literally means 'what is heard' and it is a well-known fact that Buddha wrote nothing and we have only heard about what he taught. Now, all the Buddhist schools had different interpretations of the central teachings of Buddha, but all claimed to be the most logical and the truest representation of Buddha's sayings. Similarly, VMS also regards Buddha and his words with utmost veneration. In any scholarly dispute, *buddhavacanas* are the ultimate.

Whatever doctrine these two texts are propounding, they try to support them with their respective verbal testimony. We have seen how GK interprets the Vedic statements on duality and creation merely as a means for the final proclamation of non-duality.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, VMS also

¹⁹³ GK, II, 32.

¹⁹⁴ See *supra* pp. 39, 58.

¹⁹⁵ ... acintyam, agrāhyam, alakṣaṇam... ||
Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, Mantra, 6.
... dhāturacityah kuṣalo dhruvah |
Trīṃśikā, Kārikā, 30.

regards *buddhavacanas* regarding the reality of *āyatana* for the *śrāvakas* of lower intellect.¹⁹⁷ Hence, both the texts rely primarily on some verbal testimony and the accounts of the conflicting claims of their respective authority were due to the different dispositions of the *śravakas* (disciples); and whatever these texts taught were claimed to be the true import of their respective *śruti vākyas*.

-II-

Dissimilarities

Apart from the aforesaid similarities, there are some vital differences between Gauḍapāda and Vasubandhu in general and between the texts in particular. Though scholars have pointed out many differences, yet a close investigation of the texts forces us to be skeptical regarding various points of difference. Some of them are elucidated here along with the possible differences that can be plausibly put forward.

1- *Nairātmyavāda*

The scholars, such as T.R.V. Murti, maintain that there are two distinct traditions in Indian philosophy. He writes-

“There are two main currents of Indian philosophy- one having its origin in the *atmā*-doctrine of the Upaniṣads and the other in the *anātma*-doctrine of Buddha. They conceive reality on two different and exclusive patterns.”¹⁹⁸

In a footnote there, he also quotes Śāntarakṣita who says that it is *nairātmyavāda* which is the distinguishing aspect of Buddha from all others.¹⁹⁹ There are, however, certain problems in his contentions. First, he is judging the Buddhism in general based on Śāntarakṣita’s philosophy, which represents only a school of Buddhism. Second and the important one, the theory of *nairātmyavāda* can have multiple interpretations. *Nairātmyavāda* literally means that there is no *ātman*. But what is this *ātman*? If *ātman* here means the *Ātman* of Upaniṣads, the immutable and eternal Absolute, then Prof. Mūrti is right. However, if *ātman* means ‘ego’ or the individual *jīvātmā* of Upaniṣads (as Prof. CD Sharmā also points out),²⁰⁰ then Prof. Mūrti’s conclusions are based on a partial understanding of the term ‘*ātman*’. Now, our study of the present texts, suggests that *ātmā* in *nairātmyavāda* means the ego consciousness or individual *jīvātmā* rather than *Paramātmā*. We have already noticed the core similarity between *Ātman* of GK and *Vijñaptimātratā* of VMS. Taking that view into consideration, *nairātmyavāda* does not mean the

¹⁹⁶ See *supra* p. 26.

¹⁹⁷ See *supra* p. 47.

¹⁹⁸ Murti, T.R.V., *The Central Conception of Buddhism*, p. 10.

¹⁹⁹ Loc. cit.

²⁰⁰ Sharma, C.D., *The Advaita Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, pp. 24-5.

denial of *Ātman*, the Absolute, but the denial of individual ego consciousness and its objects (*kliṣṭa manas* and *pravṛtti vijñāna*). In the Hīnayāna tradition, *nairātmyavāda* meant denial of a permanent ego (*puḍgalanairātmya*). The Mahāyāna tradition pointed out the relativity of thought and hence the objects of such individual subject also were only deemed *prajñapti-sat* (apparently real) not *vastu-sat* (ontologically real). Similarly, in VMS, *nairātmyavāda* denotes *puḍgalanairātmya* and *dharmanairātmya* both. To apply the category of *nairātmya* to *Vijñaptimātratā* or *Tathatā* would be a serious misunderstanding. In both the texts, ego-consciousness is the source of suffering which ought to be get rid of, but there is no necessity of the denial of *Ātman*, the Absolute. Rather, the Pure Consciousness is the ultimate solace of both the metaphysical systems. Hence, on the basis of *nairātmyavāda*, it is not plausible to distinguish the two texts in particular, and the Upaniṣadic and Buddhist tradition in general.

2- Ontological and Epistemological Idealism

Scholars, like A.K. Chatterjee, T.M.P. Mahādevan, C.D. Sharmā, S.L. Pāndey, have pointed out that the difference between Gauḍapāḍian (or Advaita Vedānta in general) and Vijñānavāda philosophy as that the former advocates ontological idealism and epistemic realism while the latter is ontological *par excellence*, i.e., to say it accepts both ontological idealism as well as empirical idealism.²⁰¹ Again, this view cannot be supported by our analysis of the two texts. Prof. Sharma points out-

“The object in Vijñānavāda includes all external objects, all mental states (as mental objects) and all individual subjects which constitute our normal worldly experience. And all this is declared in utterly unreal like a sky-flower or a barren woman's son.”

However, in VMS, we do not find the appearing world to be declared as utterly unreal like a sky-flower or a barren woman's son. Such examples, which can exist neither logically nor empirically, would technically be counted as ‘*asat*’ in Vedānta. But when, for instance, *Vimśatikā* uses the term ‘*asat*’ in its opening Kārikā, it does not mean the Vedāntic category of *asat*.

“All this is perception-only, because of the appearance of non-existent objects, just as there may be the seeing of non-existent nets of hair by someone afflicted with an optical disorder.”²⁰²

Here, non-existent (*asat*) does not mean utterly unreal but that which appears but is ultimately unreal. Moreover, all the objects are in *Vijñaptimātratā* (Absolute), not in individual

²⁰¹ Sharma, C.D., *The Advaita Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, pp. 129-31.
Chatterjee, A.K., *The Yogācāra Idealism*, pp. 179-92.
Pandey, S.L., *Pre-Śaṅkara Advaita Philosophy*, pp. 321-24.

²⁰² *Vimśatikā*, Kārikā, 1.
(Trans. by Stefan Anacker)

subjective *vijñāna*. To a subjective *vijñāna*, objects definitely appear as external as in the case of hair-nets. Similarly in GK also everything is in *Turīya*, and that which is appearing (*ābhāsita*) can neither be called real (*sat*) nor unreal (*asat*). Indeed, both the texts assume the theory of sublation of the levels of consciousness and hence, both epistemic realism and epistemic idealism can be true in different contexts. Ultimately, nothing is real, neither, the epistemic knower nor the object nor the process. As long as the dream state lasts, the appearing objects are seen as real but with the dawn of the waking state, dream accounts are termed as epistemically ideal. Similar is the case with the *jāgrat* state and when it is sublated by the knowledge of *Turīya*. Comparing this nature of *jāgrat* and *svapna*, Gauḍapāda says-

“In dream also, what is imagined within by the mind is illusory and what is cognized outside appears to be real. But (in truth) both these are known to be unreal. Similarly, in the waking state, also, what is imagined within by the mind is illusory; and what is experienced outside (by the mind) appears to be real. But, in fact both should be rationally held to be unreal.”²⁰³

Similarly in *Vimśatikā* also, Vasubandhu holds the view that man is sleeping under the influence of various *vikalpa* (impositions) and the real *jāgrti* (awakening) happens in the transic states of meditations (*lokottaranirvikalpa jñāna*).²⁰⁴

Hence, the philosophy of both the texts are ontologically idealistic definitely, and epistemically they both are idealistic as well as realistic in different contexts.

3- Is *Vijñāna* eternal or momentary?

Some scholars, like Mahādevan and S.L. Pāndey, have noticed another difference regarding the conception of the Absolute of Gauḍapāda and *Vijñānavāda* as follows-

“The Atman or Brahman of the Upaniṣad is *nitya* or *sāsvata* (eternal), while the *vijñāna* of Bauddhas is momentary (*kṣaṇika*), as it changes every moment... While the Self is eternal ever the same, in the view of the Advaitin, the *cita* of *vijñāna* of the Bauddha idealist is a series of momentary cognitions.”²⁰⁵

“In Advaita *Ātman* is eternal (*nitya*) and devoid of all transformation (*Kūṭastha*). But in Buddhist *Vijñānavāda*, *Vijñaptimātratā* or *Ālayavijñāna* is momentary and serial.”²⁰⁶

Furthermore, Prof. Mahādevan also equates *ālāya* with the absolute (*Tathatā*), which is definitely wrong as per VMS. He writes-

²⁰³ GK, II, 9-10.

²⁰⁴ *yadā tu tatprṣṭhalabdhasuddhalaukika jñānasamukhībhāvādviṣayāābhāvaṃ yathāvadvagacchatīti samānametat | Vasubandhu's Vṛtti on Vimśatikā, Kārikā, 17.*

²⁰⁵ Mahādevan, T.M.P., *Gauḍapāda: A Study in Early Advaita*, pp. 200-1.

²⁰⁶ Pandey, S.L., *Pre-Śaṅkara Advaita Philosophy*, pp. 321-2.

“The ālayavijñāna is even conceived as the absolute background of all phenomena, technically called tathatā or suchness.”²⁰⁷

Given the fundamental doctrines of VMS, it is difficult to arrive at such conclusions. The Absolute is not the *ālaya*, *cita* or *manas* or *vijñāna* in its ordinary sense. Rather, in their purest form, they identify with the Absolute. Therefore, we have terms like *mātratā* and *pariniṣpanna*. VMS does not say that the momentary is the Ultimate Reality. Rather, that which is momentary is the cause of misery and that which is permanent (*nitya*) is *sukham* and *Vijñaptimātratā* is that eternal Being. VMS clearly defines *Tathatā* as that which is as it is in all times.²⁰⁸ Hence, eternity cannot be the distinguishing criteria of Buddhist Idealist’s Absolute and that of Upaniṣads’.

4- Śruti Traditions

As we have seen above, both the texts accept some *śruti* tradition, but they are represented by different sages. The GK, coming from Brahmanical tradition relies on the *vākyas* of *ṛsis* who intuited the sacred knowledge of the Vedas. VMS, on the other hand, has Buddha *vākyas* as the fountain source of all their systematizations. Hence, though there may be various overlapping concepts in the two traditions, yet the founding personality of these two *śruti* traditions are different.

5- The Way (*sādhana/yoga*)

Both the texts posit some ideal for those who are under illusion or bondage. It is the pure direct realization of the Absolute. But GK, unlike VMS, provides some ways (*sādhana*) also for *mokṣa*. The second half of Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad is chiefly devoted to the description of the mystical syllable *AUM*. *AUM* is described as the object of meditation which can reveal the true nature of Brahman. In *Alātaśānti Prakaraṇa* also we find the discipline of *asparśa yoga* which leads to *advaitaśāntabhāva*. On the other hand, though VMS is a text of Yogacāra discipline yet, we do not find any *yogic* practices therein. It focused on metaphysical speculations instead of *yogic* practices.

6- The Vyaṣṭi-Samaṣṭi Relation

One distinguishing feature of Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad and GK from VMS is its method of the part and whole analysis and the way it is applied by Vedāntins to comprehend the nature of *advaita Turīya*.²⁰⁹ It follows the Upaniṣadic method of holism and tries to comprehend the universe in

²⁰⁷ Mahādevan, T.M.P., *Gauḍapāda: A Study in Early Advaita*, p. 201.

²⁰⁸ ... sarvakālaṃ tathābhāvāt saiva vijñaptimātratā ||
Trimśikā, Kārikā, 25.

²⁰⁹ See *supra* pp. 13-14.

its totality. In the *avasthātraya*, there is a movement from gross to subtle and to that which is beyond the both. Using the analogy of space, GK shows the *advaita* of part and whole by analyzing *avasthātraya* in their *vyaṣṭi* and *samaṣṭi* aspects.²¹⁰ In VMS, also we find the negation of all modifications in the Vijñaptimātratā state but there the part is not merging in the whole. In VMS also, we find considerable analysis of *jāgrat*, *svapna*, and the transcendental (*pariniṣpanna*) state. But unlike GK, the analysis of *suṣupti* is not there in VMS.

7- *Vijñāna Pariṇāma*- Real or Apparent?

One of the most important differences between the texts is regarding their notion of causality or the relation between the Absolute and its modifications. In GK, we found that the *avasthātraya* and the all its elements are the apparent transformation of *Turiyātman*. *Jivātman* and its universe only appears from the empirical point of view. Ultimately nothing is born (*ajātavāda*)- neither the Absolute nor its modifications just like the name and form of a firebrand is neither born as something nor it goes away somewhere. It only appeared due to the *spandan* (vibration) of *cit*. We have seen the logical contradictions inherent in the notion of causality which led Gauḍapāda to proclaim the truth of *ajātavāda*.²¹¹

But what about VMS? Is the *vijñāna pariṇāma* real or apparent modification of the pure *Vijñāna*? Sthiramati in his introductory remark on Trimśikā points out that the imposition (*upacāra*) of *ātmā* and *dharma* cannot be baseless and hence the reality of *vijñāna pariṇāma* (based on causality) must be accepted.²¹² Later in the text, this *vijñāna pariṇāma*- the basis of all the impositions is termed as *paratantra svabhāva*. But the problem is that the Absolute state (*pariniṣpanna*) is stripped of both *parikalpita* and *paratantra*²¹³. Hence, the *vijñāna pariṇāma* is not real which is a contradiction to the above theses. Vasubandhu does not point out this contradiction involved in the notion of a real causation in the Absolute. On the one hand, *Vijñāna*, being creative, undergoes real transformation and on the other hand, the pure *Vijñāna* somehow gets defiled by *avidyā* of *grāhya-grahaṇa-vāsanā*, and that which is based on *avidyā* is grounded in illusion. An absolute which is really defiled by *avidyā* is not a real Absolute. In Gauḍapādan term, it is *kripaṇa* (miserable). To save the Absolute from any defilement, Gauḍapāda propounded *ajātavāda* irrespective of the consequences. Akin to the Mādhyamikas, Gauḍapāda negated all thought constructions. He radically states that even to say the Absolute as *aja* is a phenomenal truth (*saṁvṛtti*), not *paramārthika satya*.²¹⁴ Only the silence (like *amātra* of

²¹⁰ GK, III, Kārikās 3-8.

²¹¹ See *supra* pp. 30-35.

²¹² *pacārasya ca nirādhārasya sambhavāt avashyaṁ vijñānapariṇāmo vastuto'astītyuparātavyo yatrātmadharmopacāraḥ pravartate |*

Sthiramati's Bhāṣyaon Trimśikā, Kārikā, 1.

²¹³ ... niṣpannastasya pūrveṇa sadā rahitata tu yā ||
Trimśikā, Kārikā, 25.

²¹⁴ *ajaḥ kalpitasaṁvṛtyā paramārthena nāpyajah...||*
GK, IV, Kārikā, 74.

AUM) can be the exact expression of the Absolute Truth. In VMS, though the *Vijñaptimātratā* is the Absolute reality yet the real causation is imagined, and it does not take the bold step of refuting causality like Gauḍapāda does. It is this aspect which Śaṅkara also criticizes in his *Bhāṣya* on GK, IV, Kārikā, 28, where he states that just as the object of *citta* is not born, in the same way *ciita* is also not born.²¹⁵ Those who see the origination of such a *citta* see the footprints of birds in the sky.²¹⁶

Hence, **Gauḍapāda radically negates all kinds of causation, while VMS is not radical to that extent and therein we observe that a moderate relatively real causation finds a place.** It is this point which distinguishes Gauḍapāda from Vasubandhu and brings him closer to Mādhyamika and Upaniṣads which refute the category of causation due to its inherent insoluble antinomies.

-III-

Some Ambiguous Expressions of Māṇḍūkya-kārikā

There are many ambiguous expressions in GK, especially in the Alātaśānti Prakaraṇa, which may literally suggest the Buddhist nature of GK. Critics have hurled various allegations based on them while the staunch proponents of Advaita have tried to defend Gauḍapāda for being mistaken as a Buddhist. It is important to critically examine some (here three) of those expressions given our understanding of the two texts.

1- *vande dvipadām varam*

At the outset of the Alātaśānti Prakaraṇa, Gauḍapāda pays homage (*vandanā*) to someone which has been interpreted variously. The Kārikā reads as-

jñānenaākāśakalpena dharmānyo gaganopamān |
jñeyābhinnena sambuddhastam vande dvipadām varam ||²¹⁷

The first *carana* lays down the truth of the unitary knowledge of the Absolute with the analogy of space. The last *carana* pays homage (*vande*) to some biped (*dvi padām varam*). But, in the last *carana*, who is this biped? It can be, at least, interpreted in the following three ways:

²¹⁵ bhavitumityato na jāyate cittam, yathā cittadṛśyam na jāyate |...
Śaṅkara's Bhāṣya on GK, IV, Kārikā, 28.

²¹⁶ tasmāna jāyate cittam cittadṛśyam na jāyate | tasya paśyanti ye jātim khe vai paśyanti te padam ||
GK, IV, Kārikā, 28.

²¹⁷ GK, IV, Kārikā, 1.

- 1- He was Nārāyaṇa, the first propounder of Vedānta.
- 2- He was Gautama, the Buddha.
- 3- He was simply the teacher of Gauḍapāda, be it Śukadeva, Nārāyaṇa, or anyone else.

Scholars like V. Bhattāchārya is of the view that he was none other than Buddha;²¹⁸ the reason being that the analogy and the view that the first stanza propounds (*jñeya*, *jñāna*, and *dharmas* being like space) is exclusively Buddhist. This view can be objected for the non-duality explained on the analogy of space is applied by Gauḍapāda to interpret the Māṇḍūkya verses. In the third Prakaraṇa (*advaita*)²¹⁹ also, Gauḍapāda did use the analogy of space. Then, is he venerating himself? Obviously, not. It must be the one who taught the truth of *Advaita* propounded in Maṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.

Śaṅkarāchārya and his followers have interpreted ‘*dvi padām*’ as Nārāyaṇa, the symbol of *Īśvara*, the *Puruṣottama* (the greatest among all beings). It was Nārāyaṇa who taught the *paramārtha* (the supreme Truth) of Pure Knowledge where there is no difference of *jñāta*, *jñeya*, and *jñāna*. There is no inherent objection here for Nārāyaṇa being the first teacher of the Advaita tradition and also if Gauḍapāda lived and performed his *tapas* (penance) in Badrikāśrama (Badrīnātha region of Uttarākhand) whose presiding deity is Lord Nārāyaṇa. But, unfortunately, we do not have any definite historical record; neither of Gauḍapāda being in Badrikāśrama nor of Nārāyaṇa himself.

However, another objection can be raised against this interpretation if we carefully analyze the term ‘*sambuddhastam*’ which occurs just before ‘*vande dvīpadām varam*’. The term ‘*sambuddhastam*’ signifies ‘to the one who has known’. It presupposes the state of ignorance which has been overcome. Hence, the term ‘*sambuddha*’ hints at the transition from ignorance to enlightenment. Now, Nārāyaṇa as *Īśvara*, the *Puruṣottama*, is the greatest among all beings. He is omniscient. The categories of bondage and liberation, or ignorance and enlightenment do not apply to Nārāyaṇa.²²⁰ Hence, the object of veneration cannot be Nārāyaṇa.

Again, if he is not Nārāyaṇa, then he could be the Buddha, but this view is only an inference based on apparent similarity of the Buddhist teaching in the first *carana*. Furthermore, the Kārikā does not mention any proper noun- neither Buddha nor Nārāyaṇa. It only mentions ‘the biped’ who has known the truth of *Advaita*. It leaves the third interpretation to be the most convincing one. Gauḍapāda must have received this truth from someone. He might be Nārāyaṇa, Śukadeva or simply his mentor. The next Kārikā is also a salutation- but not to a person, but to the doctrine of *asparśayoga*-

²¹⁸ Bhattacharya, V., *The Āgamasāstra of Gauḍapāda*, pp. 83-84.

²¹⁹ GK, IV, Kārikā, 3-9.

²²⁰ Similarly, Yoga Sūtra, I, 24, also defines *Īśvara* as – *kleśakarmavipākāśayara parāmṛṣṭaḥ puruṣaviśeṣa īśvaraḥ*, i.e., the one who is never touched by afflictions and actions.

asparśayogo vai nama sarvasattvasukho hitaḥ |
avivādoaviruddhaśca deśitastaṁ namāmyaham || ²²¹

Therefore, we cannot conclude that the person was Nārāyaṇa. We can also be largely skeptical about the Buddha. However, it can be certainly concluded that Gauḍapāda was paying homage to the *yoga* of *asparśa* and to the teacher who rendered him the insight of that *yoga*.

2- *naitadbuddhena bhāṣitam*

In the Alātaśanti Prakaraṇa, Gauḍapāda proclaimed the theory of non-origination of *Ātman*. It is never born and never comes in contact with various name and forms (*viśayas*), and vice versa is also not possible. *Ātman* is always *asaṅga* (unattached). At the end, Gauḍapāda says ‘*naitadbuddhena bhāṣitam*’- this was not said by Buddha. The Kārikā reads as-

kramate na hi buddhasya jñānaṁ dharmeṣu tāyinaḥ |
sarve dharmāstathā jñānaṁ naitadbuddhena bhāṣitam || ²²²

Again the expression *naitadbuddhena bhāṣitam* can have at least three possible interpretations:

- 1- The truth taught by the Buddha is beyond thought and thus preached by silence rather than language. Hence, the Buddha did not say anything.
- 2- Buddhist theory is distinct from that of the teachings of GK in general and hence, whatever the text says was not said by the Buddha.
- 3- The Absolute Truth of the Buddha was nothing but Upaniṣadic.

V. Bhattacharya endorses the first view.²²³ He maintains that the Buddhist texts hold that the Buddha taught nothing. He never uttered even a single word.²²⁴ His speech was non-speech.²²⁵ But, the Kārikā, as pointed by T.M.P. Mahādevan, is not interested whether the Buddha said anything or not.²²⁶ Here, the attention must be paid to ‘*na etad*’, which clarifies that this (the Truth of GK) was not spoken by the Buddha.

²²¹ GK, IV, Kārikā, 2.

²²² GK, IV, Kārikā, 99.

²²³ Bhattacharya, V., *The Āgamaśāstra of Gauḍapāda*, pp. 212-17.

²²⁴ sarvopalambhopaśamaḥ prapañcōpaśamaḥ śivaḥ |
na kvacit kasyācit kaścid dharmo buddhena deśitaḥ ||
MK, XXV, Kārikā, 24.

²²⁵ avacanaṁ buddha-vacanam...
Tathāgataguhyasūtra quoted in Madhyamaka-vṛtti on MK, XX, Kārika, 25.
Lankāvatārasūtra, pp. 142-43.
(As quoted in Mahadevan, T.M.P., *Gauḍapāda: A Study in Early Advaita*, pp. 215).

²²⁶ Mahadevan, T.M.P., *Gauḍapāda: A Study in Early Advaita*, pp. 216.

But, the problem still persists and ‘*naitadbuddhena bhāṣitam*’ remains ambiguous. If we simply translate it as “this was not spoken by the Buddha”, then it may have at least three meanings- first, the Buddha knew about the Truth (of GK) yet he did not say anything ; second, the Buddha did not know anything of the GK teachings, therefore this was not spoken by him; and third, the Buddha knew and perhaps spoke also, but he was not the first to speak so.

Śaṅkara in his Bhāṣya on the above expression seems to hold the second interpretation. Commenting on ‘*naitadbuddhena bhāṣitam*’, he says-

"This Supreme non-dual Reality which is devoid of the distinctions of knowledge, object known, and knower, was not taught by the Buddha, though the denial (by him) of external objects and the postulation of pure knowledge seems to be close to the non-dual Reality. This supreme non-dual Reality, however, is to be known from the Vedāntas alone."²²⁷

To him, the Buddha or his disciples (especially Vijñānavādins) were very close to the realization of *Advaita*, yet they could not grasp it. Hence, this (the truth of GK) was not spoken by Buddha- *naitadbuddhena bhāṣitam*.

Interestingly our analysis of VMS revealed that Buddha or Vasubandhu or Sthiramati had an idea of *Vijñapti mātra advaita tatva* free of all distinctions. Therefore, Śaṅkara’s interpretation may be objected.

It leaves us with the third alternate interpretation- that the Buddha knew and perhaps spoke also, but he was not the first to speak so. This truth was Upaniṣadic. Now, this view can be plausibly held because so far we have observed that Gauḍapāda was a Vedāntist and GK has no sign of bitter antagonism with Buddha or Buddhism. In GK, he admits that his intention is not to argue with any school but to let them clarify their mutual differences and rise to the supreme state of non-duality.²²⁸

But the above analysis rests on a particular interpretation of the word *buddhena* itself. The *pada* (word) ‘*buddhena*’ is the instrumental case (*ṭṛtīya vibhakti*) of the root ‘*buddha*’ which can be understood both either as a common noun (in its original sense) or as a proper noun (as *the Buddha*). The above interpretation assumes the second sense as *the Buddha* (Gautama). However, if we understand the word as it is presented in the first *carana* (*buddhasya*) of the same Kārikā, i.e., as the knower of the Truth, then we have a novel interpretation of ‘*naitadbuddhena bhāṣitam*’. The Truth was so profound that it has not been spoken by the knower of the Truth. The next and the penultimate Kārikā of GK justifies it where Gauḍapāda reaffirms that the ultimate unborn *advaita* reality is profound and extremely difficult to grasp.²²⁹

²²⁷ Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on GK, IV, Kārikā, 99.

²²⁸ GK, III, Kārikā, 16-17

²²⁹ durdaśamatiganbīramajam sāmyam viṣāradam |
buddhvā padamnāntvam namaskurmo yathābalaṃ ||

Gaudapāda's key concern is Truth. In this pursuit, he negates plurality on the basis of Upaniṣads and declares the Truth to be *aja*- unborn. But he also admits that to say the reality as *aja* is also based on imagination (*kalpanā*).²³⁰ Thus, in pursuit of Truth, he is ready to sacrifice himself also. Ultimately, *bandhan*, *mukti*, *utpatti*, *nirodha*, everything, even Gaudapada, is not true.²³¹ Hence, Gaudapāda is strongly attached to the spirit of Upaniṣadic idea that the Truth is ineffable²³² and the expression *naitadbuddhena bhāṣitam* might hint at that idea.

3- *durdaśa viśāradam*

As we noticed above that the last Kārikā of the Alātaśānti Prakaraṇa declares the ultimate unborn Truth to be profound (*ati gambīram*) and extremely difficult to grasp (*durdaśa*). The Kārikā reads as –

durdaśamatiganbīramajam sāmyam viśāradam |
buddhvā padamnānātvam namaskurmo yathābalam ||²³³

Prof. Bhattacharya is of the opinion that the epithets like *durdaśa* and *gambhīra* belong to Buddhist *Nirvāṇa* and it is that which is being saluted here. Advaitins, on the other hand, understand the *pada* (the state) only as *Brahma Nirvāṇa*. Now, the same epithets are there in Upaniṣads for *Ātman* also.²³⁴ Moreover, in Mandukya Upaniṣad itself, in the seventh mantra which encapsulates the *Truīya* state, one can see how profound it can be, being beyond senses, action, thought, reasoning, and all our epistemological categories. Hence, the view that *durdaśa* and *ati gambhīra*, exclusively refer to *Nirvāṇa* is untenable.

Both are the polarized views of their respective ideals being the most difficult. But it cannot be possibly proved that which one is more profound and difficult to be realized. In fact, both the ideals can be equally *gambhīra* and *durdaśa*.

Ibid., IV, Kārikā, 100.

²³⁰ ajaḥ kalpitasamvṛtyā paramārthena nāpyajaḥ...||
Ibid., IV, Kārikā, 74.

²³¹ na nirodho nacotpattirna baddho na ca sādhaḥ | na mumukṣurna vai mukta ityeṣā paramārthatā ||
GK, II, Kārikā, 32.

²³² *Amātra*, the silence, of *AUM* is the best expression of *Advaita* according to Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.

²³³ GK, IV, 100.

²³⁴ tam durdaśam gūḍham anupraviṣtam guhāhitam gahvareṣṭham purānam...
Kathopaniṣad, 1, II, 12.

Conclusion

In the present study, an extensive analysis of the notion of Consciousness in both the texts was observed. It was also sought to critically compare and contrast the two texts from various angles. Here, in this concluding chapter, it remains for us only to summarize them and to present some possible concluding remarks, avoiding repetitions as far as possible.

In GK, the Upaniṣadic truth of *advaita*, is established through a holistic analysis of the states of consciousness. The *avasthātraya* presents a unique analysis of the various levels of Consciousness. Through *adhyāropa* and *apavāda*, *via negativa*, Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad indicates at *Turīya*, the Pure Consciousness. Hence, Consciousness is the most fundamental aspect of Being which encompasses all becoming. That is unborn, non-dual, and the ultimate ideal of human life. The Pure Consciousness is both immanent and transcendent to the *avasthātraya*. Mathematically, it can be presented in the following way:

$$Turīya + avidyā + manas + indriyas = jāgrat$$

$$Turīya + avidyā + manas = svapna$$

$$Turīya + avidyā = suṣupti$$

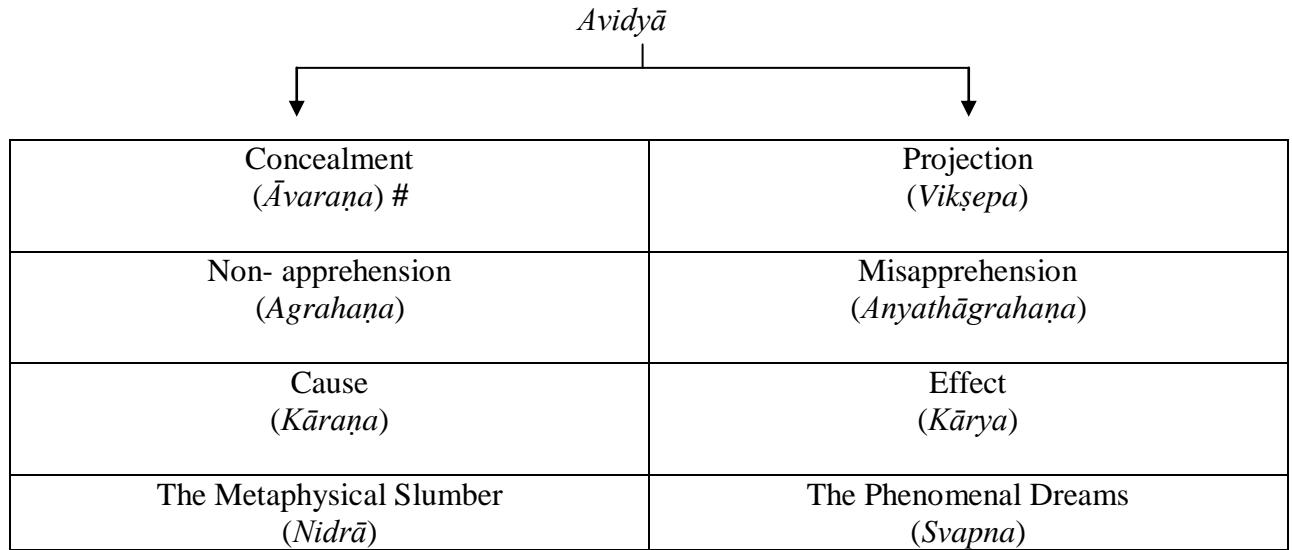
$$Turīya = Ātman = Brahman = Sat = Pure Being = Cit = Pure Consciousness = Ānanda = Pure Bliss$$

Further, the three levels of consciousness were also analyzed with their both, micro and macro aspects with the approach of establishing non-duality between them. To substantiate this, the analogy of space (*ākāśa*) was also drawn. Consciousness at different levels functions differently. Corresponding to different micro and macro aspects, modes of consciousness, objects of enjoyment, the places of meditation, the bodies, and the sheaths, the notion of *avasthātraya* can be synoptically presented through the following table-

<i>Mātrās Of AUM</i>	<i>Microsasm (Vyaṣṭi)</i>	<i>Macrosom (Samaṣṭi)</i>	<i>States (Avasthā)</i>	<i>Consciousness (Prājña)</i>	<i>Enjoyment (Bhoga)</i>	<i>Places of Meditation (Sthānatraya)</i>	<i>Body (Śarīratraya)</i>	<i>Sheath (Pañcakōṣa)</i>
A	Individual Waker (Viśva)	Total Waker (Vaiśvānarā)	Waking (Jāgrata)	Outer (bahīsprajñā)	Gross (Sthūla)	Right Eye (Dakṣiṇākṣa)	Gross Body (Sthūla śarīra)	Annamaya
U	Individual Waker (Taijasa)	Total Waker (Hiranyagarbha)	Dream (Svapna)	Inner (antahprajñā)	Subtle (Sūkṣma)	Mind (Manas)	Subtle Body (Sūkṣma śarīra)	Prāṇamaya + Manomaya + Vijñānamaya
M	Individual Sleeper (Prājña)	Total Sleeper (Īśvara)	Sleep (Suṣupti)	Homogenous (Prajñānaghaṇa)	Happiness (Ānandamaya)	Heart-Space (Hṛdayākāśa)	Causal Body (Kāraṇa śarīra)	Ānandamaya

Amātra = Silence = *Turīya* = *Ātman* = *Brahman*

Gauḍapāda endorses these fundamental notions in Āgama Prakaraṇa and amplifies further the relation among the three states in terms of *avidyā*, the transcendental illusion. *Avidyā* functions in two ways- *agrahāṇa* and *anyathāgrahāṇa*. The complex process can be illustrated through the following diagram-



Adhyāsa = The wrong understanding based on *avidyā*.

Adhyāropa = The complexity of superimpositions.

Apavāda = Negation of the superimpositions via *neti neti*.

Suṣṭpi = *Āvaraṇa* / *Agrahaṇa* / *Kāraṇa* / *Nidrā*

Svapna = *Suṣṭpi* + *Vikṣepa* / *Anyathāgrahaṇa* / *Kārya* / *Svapna*

Jāgrat = *Suṣṭpi* + *Svapna*

Though the idea of non-duality is explicit in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad itself²³⁵ yet, Gauḍapāda employs reasoning to establish the same and to negate duality in the chapters, Advaita and Vaitathya respectively. Duality is negated on the ground of being *vitatha* (not being as such). First, the dream world is declared as *vaitathya* with the *hetu* (reason) of being inside (*antahsthānāttu*), being in an inappropriate place (*saṁr̥tatvena*), being seen (*dr̥śyatva*), and being unreal (*asatyatva*). The same *hetus* are extended to the *jāgrat* realm also which is thus ultimately equated with dream. Both are not only non-existent in the beginning and at the end, but also in the middle. Thus, the phenomenal world of *jāgrat*, *svapna*, and *suṣṭpi* is unreal and unborn negatively. On the other hand, *Ātman*, the Pure Consciousness, which is the substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the *avasthātraya* is also never born, but positively It is always as ‘It is’. *Ajātavāda* negated both the creationist views of *satkāryavāda* and *asatkāryavāda* and placed *Turīya* beyond causation. Both *Turīya* and *avasthātraya* are unborn and untouched. GK ends with this idea of *asparśatva* (being untouched) which is extremely difficult to realize as well as to articulate within the language.

In VMS also, *Vijñaptimātratā*, the Consciousness free from the defiled will of subject-object differentiation (*grāhya-grāhaka vāsanā*), enjoys the status of the Ultimate Reality. The world (inner and outer) is a manifestation of this fundamental Consciousness, and the former cannot escape the latter. It is in *Vijñaptimātratā*, where all the impositions (*upacāra*) of *ātman* (the ego consciousness) and *dharmas* (the elements of existence) take place. Hence, against Sarvāstivādins, Viṁśatikā is entirely devoted to the refutation of realistic categories such as externality, objectivity, and atomism. In this respect, though VMS is akin to the Mādhyamika school yet in Trīṁśikā, we found the constructive aspect of VMS for which the Ultimate Reality is not *śūnya* but *Vijñaptimātratā*.

Further, *ālaya* is the primordial modification of *Vijñāna* followed by *kliṣṭa manas* (the ego consciousness) and *pravṛtti vijñāna*. *Ālaya* is the seed of all. *Kliṣṭa manovijñāna* (the subjective) and *pravṛtti-vijñāna* (the objective) are the indeterminate contents of *ālaya*. Further, *kliṣṭa* gives rise to the ego consciousness which along with the complete experience in the form

²³⁵ omityetadakṣaramidaṁ sarvaṁ ... ||

Māṇḍ Up, 1.

sarvaṁ hyetad brahmāyamātmā brahma ... ||

Māṇḍ Up, 2

... śāntaṁ śivamadvaitaṁ caturthaṁ manyante sa ātmā sa vijñeyaḥ ||

Māṇḍ Up, 7.

<i>Svabhāva</i>	<i>Niḥsvabhāvatā</i>
↓	↓
1- <i>Parikalpita</i> (Mere Imaginations)	<i>Lakṣana niḥsvabhāvatā</i>
2- <i>Paratantra</i> (The Substratum of <i>parikalpita</i> , viz., <i>ālaya</i> , <i>kliṣṭa</i> , and <i>pravṛtti vijñāna</i>)	<i>Uttpati niḥsvabhāvatā</i>
3- <i>Pariniṣpanna</i> (Negation of <i>parikalpita</i> and <i>paratantra</i>)	<i>Paramārtha niḥsvabhāvatā</i>

The comparative analysis of the two texts revealed **great similarities** and **slight differences**. Similarities are ontological, soteriological, and axiological. Differences are slight and founded on the phenomenal, methodological, traditional basis of the texts. In a nutshell, we can say that **the similarities lie in Being, and the differences pertain to the Becoming**.

Finally, there can be two extreme concluding positions regarding the nature of GK, and its author in relation to Buddhism. One extreme view is that Gauḍapāda was a Buddhist because there are substantial Buddhist contents in GK, especially in the last Prakaraṇa. It is not a tenable view for it is evident from our investigation of GK, that it unfolds the doctrine of *Advaita* on the Upaniṣadic basis (and here Māṇḍūkya itself is the basis). The other extreme conclusion can be that he was a staunch Vedāntist and criticized the Buddha and the Buddhist schools. This view is also untenable for in our comparative analysis we found massive similarities between GK and VMS. We do not find GK directly criticizing Buddha. Instead, Gauḍapāda has immense respect for all the knowers of Truth. He repeatedly venerated them using titles such as *manīṣinah*, *vicakṣinah*, *buddhaḥ*, *veda pārangataḥ*, etc. There is no sufficient reason for why Gautama, the Buddha or any of his follower who realized the Truth should not find a place in the Gauḍapādan list of the venerable ones.

It was perhaps an intuitive fact for Gauḍapāda that nothing can be said about Buddha or Buddhism for he, like Socrates, wrote nothing; one can only criticize or endorse the certain doctrines of the schools of Buddhism. In this respect, he rejects realism (*bahyārthavadins*) but partiality accepts the absolutism of Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda. However, it must not be forgotten that this acceptance was only because those teaching tallied with the Upaniṣadic doctrines which were deemed as *paramārtha satya* by Gauḍapāda. Hence, **he was a Vedāntist (Upaniṣadic), and he also used the Buddhist dialectic to refute the doctrines of realism and**

causation. Hence, he **supported the Buddhist schools partially** and perhaps venerated *the* Buddha also.

Notwithstanding the differences, GK or Gauḍapāda is close to VMS, but the latter, in turn, is closer to the fundamental doctrines of Upaniṣads. **Upaniṣads influenced both Gauḍapāda and Buddhism (and in our context, VMS). It is in their description of the phenomenal or modified consciousness that they differ, and it is the ontological nature of the Absolute as the pure non-dual ineffable Consciousness, which ties them together.**

Lastly, few limitations of the study require mention. The present study is largely limited to the two texts only. Vasubandhu and Gauḍapāda had other writings also which may bear significant impact on our understanding of their ideas. Within our two texts also, few areas remained unexplored. For instance, GK contains both the elements of Śūnyavāda as well as Vijñānavāda, but the present study focuses on the latter only. In VMS also, various ethical issues were taken up such as of violence. The present study could not deal with them. Further, the schools to which the two texts belonged also kept on evolving in many phases, hence it becomes a challenging task to trace this development.

Nevertheless, the limitations also give rise to many other questions for future research such as- how to comprehend Gauḍapāda and Vasubandhu with respect to their other prominent texts? Vasubandhu is well known for the distinct ideas of his early and later life. Similarly, there are some texts attributed to Gauḍapāda, such as a Bhāṣya on Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, Nṛsimhatāpanīya Upaniṣad, and Uttara Gītā; and a Tīkā on Durgā Saptasatī. These texts exhibit a theistic attitude, and their study may prove fruitful in a broader context. Further, how did various schools of Vijñānavāda and Advaita Vedānta evolve? How to understand their dialectic criticism of each other? Hence, the limitations of the present study pave the way for future research which can help us in understanding Indian philosophy in an entirely new paradigm.

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