Brahmasiddhi and Ślokavārtika

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The Brahmasiddhi of Maṇḍanamiśra is well known to have been one of the most important and representative works in the history of Vedānta. Like Śaṁkara Maṇḍana expounds the Advaitavāda in his Brahmasiddhi. He can not, however, be included in the Śaṁkaraprasthāna. From this we know that there must have been another stream of Advaita apart from Śaṁkara.

From where the stream of Advaita expounded by Maṇḍana comes? The question can not be answered definitely, but here I would like to point out that the Advaita of Maṇḍana must have been intimately connected with the Vedānta-theory refuted in the Ślokavārtika of Kumārila. This would give us a material to elucidate the Maṇḍana’s school of Advaita.

The reason why Maṇḍana is thought to have a close connection with

Abbreviations:

BS: Brahmasiddhi by Ācārya Maṇḍanamiśra with Commentary by Śankhapāṇi, edited with Introduction, Appendices and Indexes by S. Kuppuswami Sastri (Madras Government Oriental Manuscripts Series, No. 4) (Madras, 1937).

ŚV: The Mīmāṃsā Ślokavārtika of Kumārilabhaṭṭa.


(2) For instance what is said as for avidyā, one of the central ideas of Advaitavāda, in BS and Śaṁkarabhāṣya ad Brahmasūtra is almost the same, although there is a difference that theoretical problems are more discussed in detail in the former than in the latter. See also P. Hacker, “Eigentümlichkeiten der Lehre und Terminologie Śaṅkaras: Avidya, Namarūpa, Maya, Īśvara” (ZDMG, Bd. 100, 1950) pp. 254 ff.


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the Vedāntin mentioned in the Ślokavārtika of Kumārila is as follows:

I. Kumārila mentions a Vedánta-theory as a pūrva-pakṣa in the Ślokavārtika (pratyakṣa-sūtra, vv. 114–116).

A) Commenting on the Vedánta-theory Sucaritamiśra describes the theory of Mañḍana. In another words the Vedánta-theory mentioned

(4) Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, No. XC. p. 250 II. 7–19. The explanation given by Sucarita is nothing but a summary of the pratyakṣa-theory of Mañḍana in the Tarkakāṇḍa of BS. The passages parallel to the statements of Sucarita, which can be found in BS, are as follows:

(I) evam hi manyante—nirvikalpakaṁ pratyaksam vastusvarūpaṁ vidaññāṁ na vastvantarebhyaṁ vivinakti. (Sucarita)

(II) apī ca gavāṣvayoritaravaravacchaddo viññāñāṁ. (Sucarita)

(III) na hi vyavacchaddārye bheda-siddhāṁ. (BS, Tarkakāṇḍa p. 44, II. 14–15)

(IV) tadiha kimekavyavacchadapūrvaṁ ‘parasya vidhiḥ, āhosvidekavidhi-pūrvaṁ ‘nyasya vyavacchadaḥ, atha yugapadubhayam. (Sucarita)

(V) na tāvad vyavacchadapūrvaṁ vidhiḥ sambhavati, nirāśrayavyavachchadi-dānumapatteḥ. nirjanātasvarūpaṁ kutaścid vyavacchadatvam. anavagato tu kim kuto vyavacchadatvam. ata eva yugapadyānamapyanupapannam. (Sucarita)

(VI) vijhīpūrvaṁ kṣanantare jñānegatvam. nāpi vyavacchdārye. atah samgacchate. (Sucarita)

(VII) pūrvaṁ kṣanantare jñānegatvam. nāpi vyavacchdārye. atah samgacchate. kṣaṇāntare ‘nyam vyavacchettum utsahate. (Sucarita)

(VIII) pūrvaṁ kṣanantare jñānegatvam. nāpi vyavacchdārye. atah samgacchate. kṣaṇāntare ‘nyam vyavacchdārye. atah samgacchate. (Sucarita)

(IX) api ca itaretarabhāvo viññāñāṁ. sa katham pratyakṣavisayō bhaviṣyatī, śaṣṭhapramāṇaviṣayatvāt. atah sanmātram āryaḥ pratyakṣaṁ. (Sucarita)

cf. Above, (I) and (III).
in the Ślokavārtika belongs to Maṇḍana according to Sucaritamiśra. This shows that the Vedānta-theory in the Ślokavārtika must have some connections with Maṇḍana.

B) The objections of Kumārila against this Vedānta-theory are again refuted in the Brahmasiddhi. This gives us an impression that Maṇḍana tries to defend the Vedānta-theory in the Ślokavārtika against Kumārila.

2. In the sambandhākṣepa-pariḥara of the Ślokavārtika Kumārila offers many objections against the Advaita. And some of them are quoted in the

(5) It is improbable that the Vedānta-theory in ŚV belongs to Maṇḍana, because
(1) first so many quotations from ŚV in BS mean that Maṇḍana is later than, or at least a younger contemporary of, Kumārila, and (2) secondly the argument that the object of pratyakṣa is mahāsāmānyā or sāmānyā—the argument which Kumārila mentions as a Vedānta-theory—can not be Maṇḍana’s one as far as BS is consulted.

(6) There are two argumentations of Kumārila against the Vedānta as follows:
(1) In the nirvikalpakajñāna the difference (bheda, viśeṣa) is grasped. (ŚV, pratyakṣasūtra v. 117)
(2) In the nirvikalpakajñāna one perceives the object containing two aspects, generality (sāmānyā) and difference (viśeṣa). (ŚV, pratyakṣasūtra v. 118)

Out of these the first argument is rejected in BS as under:

"prageva pratyuktah. (BS, p. 58, ll. 6-9)"
"prageva" means "āhurvidhāt pratyakṣam (BS, Tarkakanda v. 1 a) ityatra" according to Śankhapāṇi (Brahmasiddhivyākhyā, BS, p. 160, ll. 9-10).

The second argument is mentioned as the anekāntavādin’s one in BS:

"api ca jñaṇānvaye ’smiṃścataśrāḥ kalpanāḥ sambhavanti……. ekāṃ vā sāmānyaviśeṣātmakaṁ vastu, yathāhurancernkāntavādinah. (BS, p. 60, ll. 10-12)

"yathāhurancernkāntavādino bhāṭṭāḥ, ye jātiyakyorekāntena na bhedo nāpyabheda ityāhuḥ.)
And the anekāntavāda is refuted in BS, Tarkakaṇḍa vv. 18-25 (BS, p. 64, l. 4-p. 70, l. 4)
Brahmasiddhi and answered from the point of view of the Advaita. This shows us that as a leading objector Kumārila could not be ignored by the followers of Advaita to whom Maṇḍana belongs.

From these references we may safely conclude that the Advaita of Maṇḍana is closely connected with, or comes from, the Vedānta refuted in the Ślokavārtika of Kumārila.

(7) They are as follows:

(I) The verse 55 (a and b) of s(ambandhakṣepa)p(arihāra) is quoted and the import of verses 52 and 56 (a and b) of the same section is given as an objector’s view in BS, p. 10, ll. 15-18, and they are refuted in BS, p. 10, ll. 19-20 & ll. 22-24.

(II) The verse 82 (c and d) of sp is quoted in BS, p. 10, l. 21, and refuted in BS, p. 10, ll. 21-22 & p. 11, ll. 6-9.

(III) The verse 84 (c and d) of sp is quoted in BS, p. 11, l. 16, and refuted in BS, p. 11, ll. 15-16.

(IV) The verses 85 (c and d) and 86 of sp are quoted in BS, p. 11, l. 25-p. 12, l. 1, and refuted in BS, p. 11, ll. 17-19 & p. 12, ll. 2 ff.