DIVINE PERSONALITY IN INDIAN SYSTEMS OF PHILOSOPHY

The conception of God as the Supreme Person is not, however, confined to the Purāṇas only. It is also expounded in considerable detail in Sūtra literature. Sūtras are cryptic expressions grouped together in orderly fashion to express some comprehensive view of reality or some discipline of action. There are six basic Sūtra collections of philosophical-theological traditions which exist in Hinduism and which have dominated Hindu thought from the pre-Christian period up to the present: the Sānkhyā, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, and Vedānta. Among these six systems the Sānkhyā and Mīmāṃsā are atheistic in the sense that they do not find necessity of positing a God in their systems.

According to Sānkhyā, there is no proof for the existence of God. Therefore, God does not exist. There are, however, passages in the scriptures in which the word Īśvara occurs and presents itself as a problem to the Sānkhyā philosophers. But they try to explain it away by saying that the word Īśvara there is employed to represent the souls which have attained realisation or liberation.

1 Prajñābhāvāt na tatsiddhiḥ, Sānkhyā Sūtra, V.10.
2 Muktatmanah prāṇamānupāsāsiddhasya vā, Sānkhyā Sūtra, 1.95.
Later Sāṅkhya philosophers, however, hold that the Sāṅkhya is not antagonistic to theism. They concede a place of God in the system. Vijnānabhikṣu, for example, thinks that Kapila's denial of God is a regulative principle which he insists on to induce men to withdraw themselves from the excessive contemplation of God which will obstruct the rise of discriminative knowledge (Vivekābhīṣaṇa pratibandha).\(^1\) He sometimes explains the atheism of Sāṅkhya as a concession to popular views\(^2\) and suggests that it is propounded with the object of preventing evil man from attaining true knowledge.

Apart from this later innovation the Sāṅkhya system does not believe in the existence of God. That is why it has been called 'Nirīśvāra' (atheistic) Sāṅkhya in contrast with the system of Patañjali, which is called 'Śvārā' (theistic) Sāṅkhya.\(^3\)

Mīmāṃsā is atheistic in its outlook. It denies a creator and Lord of the Universe. There is no reason to suppose that God created the world at a particular point in time, since the world has not any beginning in time. Neither is it necessary that dharma and adharma should have a supervisor, for these belong to the performer. Moreover, there cannot be any contact (samyoga) or inherence (samavāya) of dharma and adharma with God that He might supervise them. The rewards of sacrifices are not

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2 'Abhyupagamavādapravahvādādinaiva' - Introduction, Sāṅkhya Pravacabhāṣya.
3 Tattvavaiśārddhi, iv. 3; Yogavārtika i.24; Sāṅkhya-Pravacabhāṣya, v.1-12; and Dr. S. N. Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy (1963) Vol. II, p. 259.
due to any beneficent God. Even when the results do not appear at once, the supersensuous principle of apūrva is produced, and in time it helps the sacrificer to his reward. There is no reliable evidence to prove the existence of a personal Being. Perception, inference and scripture are all unavailing. The succession of works and the consequent effects go on from eternity to eternity like seed and plant. It is idle to assume that the Supreme Lord brings to a stand at one time the potencies of all the souls and then awakens them all when a new creation starts.

Some scholars like Max Müller and others maintain that Mīmāṃsā does not disprove God as such, it only rejects God as the creator of differences in the lots of men. But this view does not seem to be tenable, because the early Mīmāṃsakas are silent about the existence of God while the later ones reject the proofs of God. It must be noted, however, that the Mīmāṃsakas of a later period introduced God into the system. Venkatesa, the author of Saeva Mīmāṃsā grafted the Vedānta doctrine on Mīmāṃsā. Āpadeva and Lālāgūḍī Bhāskara maintain that if sacrifices are dedicated to God, they will lead to the highest good (niḥśreyasa). But it is not clear whether these philosophers conceive God as the divine Person.

In the Cārvāka, Bādūka and Jaina systems of philosophy there is no mention of God, not to speak of God as the divine Person. Therefore, there is no need to discuss them in this context.

2 Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol. ii, p. 424.
3 The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy, pp. 210-213.
4 The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. iii, p. 539.
We of course find the mention of personal God in the Yoga system. But God does not come in there as the necessity of working out the system. Patanjali does not explain the Yoga discipline in specially religious terms. His insertion of a doctrine of Isvara into his work is clearly an addition from outside the basic structure of his thought. Later writers saw better than Patanjali just where the doctrine of a personal God should be placed. Patanjali was himself working within a context that was itself too limited for an adequate development of Yoga teaching. What can be said of the Yoga sūtras is that they contain simply the recognition that there must be a place for Isvara in any adequate vision of reality. But we must recognise that God as presented in the work of Patanjali is not conceived as the ultimate reality. The basic difficulty can be found in the world outlook of the Sānkhya tradition in which the Yoga philosophy developed. The Sānkhya tradition represents the naturalistic tradition in Indian thought and Yoga developed in close relationship with Sānkhya. Thus Yoga has the same dualism of Puruṣa and Prakṛti that is found in Sānkhya. Yet despite this background, the followers of Yoga from the beginning were more responsive to religious developments than were the followers of Sānkhya. Yoga recognises that God must somehow be given a place in metaphysics.

According to Patanjali, God is one of many spiritual beings known as puruṣas. The first statement concerning God reads: "The Lord is a special kind of spiritual being not affected by earthly sorrow,

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1 Garbe, Philosophy of Ancient India, p. 15; also Bruce, Religious of India.
action or pleasure. This indicates that the Lord is a being never involved in the life agonies of other spiritual beings. He has existed in the state of perfect self-possession with no such dependence or limitation as are found within the world of time and change: "In Him omniscience attains its highest expression." Here an effort is made to establish the Lord as supreme in the order of wisdom: "He was teacher and master even of the wise men of antiquity." The authority of the scriptures is acknowledged only because they have proceeded from Isvara. The objection that this is an argument in a circle has no place here, since the connection of the scriptures with Isvara is beginningless. There is no other divinity equal to Isvara, because in the case of such equality there might be opposition between them and such opposition might result in the lowering in degree of any of them. Epithets like 'omniscient', 'omnipotent', 'Teacher of all wise men', 'source of the scriptures' etc. are given to Isvara which are generally given to the highest reality. But Isvara in Yoga is not the Lord of the Universe. The goal of human endeavour is not union with God, but the absolute separation of Purusa and Prakrti. By devotion Isvara is drawn towards the devotee and by His grace He removes all obstructions to Yoga. But He does not grant liberation.

One can find in all this an effort to incorporate God as a functional part of the Yoga spiritual programme. But at no time is there an indication that religious devotion is strictly necessary to arrive at

1 Y.S. i. 24  
2 Y.S. i. 25  
3 Y.S. i. 26  
4 J.B. i. 24; —  
5 Y.S. i. 30, 31

"Etayoh sastrotkarshayo Isvara-tattve
vartamanyorанādiḥ sambandhah"
complete spiritual fulfillment. Nor is there any effort to establish the
Lord Himself as the creator, ordainer or ultimate destiny of the world.
Thus theism is not an integral part of the Yoga system. A personal God
serves the practical purposes of Patañjali who does not concern himself
much with the speculative interests of theism. The Lord is an
extrinsic aid to the process of Yoga and is not the goal of it.

In the Nyāsūtra of Gautama God has not been mentioned as one
of the twelve prameyas. From this it has been concluded by some scholars
that the Nyāyasūtra originally was not theistic. The Nyāyaviśeṣika
philosophers accept the supreme authority of the Vedas in the matter of
religion. Though they do not believe either in the eternity of word-essence
or the uncreated character of the Vedas as the Mīmāṃsāka does, there is no
explicit statement of God as the author of the Vedic revelation in the
Sūtra. The theory of divine causality is, however, referred to in three
apporisms of the Nyāyasūtra. The first apophism speaks of the inadequacy
of the individual's moral actions as the causal principle and makes God
as the creator of the world. But this is treated as the prima facie view,
which is rejected in the next apophism. The third apophism in the present
context is interpreted by Vātsāyana as establishing the necessity of God's
agency. The whole discourse may be summed up in the following words:
The actions (karmas) of men are not the self-sufficient cause of the
world, and so for the creation of the world we must postulate the agency
of God. But this is not the only interpretation. The Vṛttikāra has

1 Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol. II, p. 369.
2 Garbe, Philosophy of Ancient India, p. 23; Muir, Original Sanskrit Texts,
Vol. III, p. 133.
3 Nyāya Sūtra iv. 1. 19-21.
given an alternative explanation which entirely dispenses with God's agency and seeks to explain that the failure of man's actions for producing their fruits is due to the absence of adīśa (previous merit).

The divergence of interpretation leave room for doubt whether the admission of God into the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika System is demanded by a logical necessity. But in spite of this non-committal attitude of the Sūtra literature on this vital issue, the later Nyāya Vaiśeṣika literature beginning with Vatsayana and Prasastapada down to the latest development of the system accepts the concept of God and defends it against the attacks of atheistic schools.1 Vatsayana supports theism when he says that the self sees all, feels all and knows all.2 This description loses all significance if it refers to the imperfect individual self. Ānāmabhaṭṭa, the author of Tarkasangraha classifies souls into two kinds, supreme (Paramātman) and human (jīvātman). The supreme self is God, one, omniscient while the human souls are infinite in number, different in each body.3

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers put forward several arguments for the existence of God. It is necessary to discuss some of them, because they depict God as the creator and moral governor of the world and consequently the divine Person.

Vatsayana offers the moral proof for God's existence. According to him, God favours free volitions of the finite souls with success, which are fruitless without His favour.4 Uddyotkara and others advance the

2 Nyāya Bhasya, i. 1.9; iv. 1.21
3 Tarkasangraha, 17.
cosmological argument for the existence of God. Uddyotkara argues that God exists as the efficient cause of the world. He directs the atoms, which are its material cause and brings about their conjunction, which is its non-inherent cause. The movements of atoms are supervised by an intelligent agent God, because they are unconscious like an axe.¹

Vācaspati Miśra, the author of Nyāya-Vārtika Tātparyatikā combines the cosmological argument with the moral argument. His argument may be briefly stated as follows: The world is produced by omniscient agent or God, who knows the atoms and merits and demerits of finite individuals. God is conjoined with atoms which are again conjoined with souls in which merits and demerits inhere. So God is related to the merits and demerits of the finite selves. He guides them and the atoms, and adjusts the physical objects to the unseen potencies of actions. It cannot be supposed that the atoms and unseen potencies of actions are guided by the finite souls, because they are ignorant of them.²

Jayanta, the author of Nyāya-Manjarī offered the teleological augment for the existence of God. As he says, whatever objects are arranged in an order are produced by an intelligent agent.³ Just as the arrangement, order and unity in jars, cloths and the like are not accidental, but produced by human agents endowed with Knowledge, desire and volition, so the arrangements of mountains, trees and other natural objects are not accidental, but produced by God who is omniscient and omnipotent.

¹ Nyāya-Vārtika, iv. 1. 21
² Nyāya-Vārtika Tātparyatikā, iv. 1. 21.
³ Nyāyamanjarī, Vīśnunāma Samskrīt Series, Benaras, 1895, p. 197. Yat Tat sannivesa-viśiṣṭam tat tat buddhimakartṛkam; also pp. 194, 196.
It may be objected that the arrangements of parts in the natural objects differ from those of human productions. Therefore, we cannot infer the existence of God as the creator from the specific arrangements (Sannivesāviśeṣa) of the natural objects. To this objection Jayanta replies that there is an invariable concomitance between arrangement in general and the existence of a creator, just as there is an invariable concomitance between smoke in general and fire in general. The smoke and the fire in a kitchen differ from those in a forest; and yet we regard their specific differences, and infer the existence of fire from the existence of smoke on the strength of the invariable concomitance between smoke in general and fire in general. Similarly, we infer the existence of God from the arrangement of the world as its creator on the strength of the invariable concomitance between arrangement in general and the existence of a creator.  

Udayana's Nyāya Kusumānjali is the classic statement of the Nyāya proofs for God's existence. This treatise is one of the most outstanding works on Indian theism. In this work, the attack is made against the Mīmāṃsakas who hold that there is a settled order of things in this world, which needs no God either for its establishment or for its maintenance. Udayana attempts to prove that there is a personal God who is the creator of the Universe and who is also the regulator of moral order. The gist of his arguments may be stated as follows:

1 Nyāyanājanjali, p. 195
2 Kāryayojana-dhārtityādeḥ padat pratyataḥ śruteḥ.
   Vākyāt sāṁhyāvisēṣeṣadaśa adhyo visvavid avyayah.
   N.K.S. Verse 1.
(1) Every effect must have a cause. If this be so, then this world with all its order and arrangement must be due to some cause and this cause is Isvara. It may be objected that shoots come out of seeds and they are not produced by any agent. To this it is replied that they are also created by God, for they are effects. That we do not see any one to fashion them is not because there is no maker of them, but because the creator cannot be seen. If the objector distinctly proves that there is no invisible creator of these shoots, then only he can point it out as a case of contradiction. But so long as this is not done it is still only a doubtful case of inquiry. It is, therefore, legitimate for us to infer that the shoots as well as the manifest world being effects must have a cause. This cause is God.

(2) God is the creator of motion which is the cause of conjunction of the atoms into dyads. The atoms are unconscious and inactive in themselves. They can be set in motion and conjoined with each other only when they are guided by an intelligent agent like an axe. The finite souls which are unconscious of the atoms and incapable of acting upon them cannot conjoin them into dyads. The merits and demerits of the individuals also cannot bring about the activity, for they are unconscious. Therefore, God who is omniscient and omnipotent creates motion in the atoms and combines them into dyads, triads and gross physical objects.

1  Kṣityādi kṛṣṭpurvyakam kāryatvat. N.K.S. p.l
2  Paramāṇādayo hi cetanāyojitāḥ pravartante acetanatvat vāsyādivat. N.K.S. p. 54-55.
(3) God is the cause of preservation (dhrti) and destruction (sanchāra) of the world. The whole world, it is argued, directly or indirectly depends on the volition of God which prevents it from falling. Again, the whole universe including the dyads is destroyed by the will of God because it is destructible. God destroys it by disjoining the dyads and the like. Since atoms are unconscious they cannot disjoin themselves from one another. Nor can the merits and demerits of the individuals bring about their disjunction, because they are unconscious. Destruction of the Universe is also beyond the power of the finite souls because they are limited in knowledge and will. Hence it must be admitted that God is the destroyer of the world.

(4) God is the originator of language (pada) and creator of convention (sanketa). He connects different words with different objects, and first acquaints people with the meanings of the different words. The denotative power of words depends upon connection created by God. He is the founder of language.

(5) God is the creator of the Moral Law (vidhi). A moral law is a command (niyoga) which impels a person to act with a view to realising his good. It is not a property of a person who is under moral obligation to obey it. Nor is it an impersonal imperative as Prabhākara thinks, or a physical action as Kumārila maintains. It is the property of a reliable person who imposes the moral law upon persons. In other words,
it is the command of God, which impels men to perform virtuous actions and abstain from vicious actions. This is the famous moral argument for the existence of God.

(6) God is the creator of the Vedas. The scriptures are not created by human agents, because their intellect is tainted with error. They are not originated from tradition, because they are destroyed at the time of dissolution of the universe. Therefore, they are created by God.  

(7) God is the cause of the authoritativeness of the Vedas. According to Nyāya, knowledge has no intrinsic validity. It has extrinsic validity due to the excellence (guna) of its cause. The validity of knowledge by testimony is due to the reliability of its speaker (vaktrañuṇa). Similarly, the validity of the Vedas which is accepted as authoritative by great seers and saints is due to the veracity of God. God guarantees the validity of the knowledge of the Vedas.

(8) God also arranges the sentences of the scriptures. Just as threads cannot arrange themselves into a cloth, so the words of the Vedas are not arranged into sentences by themselves. Just as a weaver arranges threads into a cloth, so God arranges the words of the Vedas into sentences. Just as the arrangement of a mountain differs from that of a jar, so the arrangement of the Vedas differs from that of a human composition. The sentences in them praising virtuous actions and condemning vicious ones are composed by omniscient God who knows their moral values.

2 N. K. S., op. 62-63.
3 N. K. S., p. 63.
(9) God is the creator of particular numbers (sankhya-visesa). The magnitude of a dyad is an effect, for it is the quality of a caused substance. The magnitude of an atom is eternal and atomic, and cannot be the cause of the magnitude of a dyad. If the former were the cause of the latter, the latter would be a large magnitude (mahattva), like that of a triad which also is produced by the magnitudes of atoms. The magnitude of dyad is not due to the atomic magnitudes, but to the number of duality which depends upon discriminative intellect (apekṣā buddhi). It is not the creation of human discriminative intellect, because human intellect has no knowledge of atoms. Therefore, it must be due to the discriminative intellect of God. The Nyāya-Vaiṣeṣikas regard that the number 'one' only is perceptible while the higher numbers are conceptual products. This argument rests on a peculiar view that duality and other higher numbers are products of the discriminative intellect.

All these arguments mentioned above attempt to show that God as the creator and ordainer of the universe must be the divine Person. The Absolute being indeterminate and impersonal cannot create. If an Absolute is that which is out of and beyond all relations, there can be no creation. A creator must be the divine Person, for He must be related to that which He creates.

Īśvara of Nyāya-Vaiṣeṣika is a personal being, possessing existence, consciousness and bliss. Vātsyāyana regards God as a particular self endowed with the qualities of merit, knowledge and sovereignty.

1 Guṇaviśistam ātmāntaram Īśvarah, Nyāya Bhāṣya, iv. 1.21.
Uddyotkara invests God with eternal knowledge, number, magnitude, distinctness, conjunction and disjunction.¹ His knowledge, desire and volition are untainted by afflictions and unrestricted in regard to their objects.² Like other ancient Naiyāyikas Uddyotkara maintains that God possesses direct cognition and will ( aparokṣa-jñānacikīrti-vattva ). But he does not find any necessity of postulating God's volitional effort. He simply asserts that God has unimpeded desire. Like Uddyotkara, Praśastapāda also admits the existence of knowledge and will in God. According to him, God's creativity means His direct knowledge and will. Vācaspati and Udayana, on the other hand, maintain that creativity ( kārtṛtva ) on the part of God is nothing but volitional activity ( kṛtimatva ) generated by direct cognition and desire. It is important to note here that later philosophers of this school have almost unanimously accepted this view.

Śrīdhara, the author of Nyāyakandali maintains that God is not an indeterminate, impersonal being devoid of attributes. He refers to the view of some early Vaiśeṣika philosophers which hold that God as the divine Person possesses six attributes: number ( saṃkhyā ), magnitude ( parimāṇa ), separateness ( prthakatva ), conjunction ( sanyoga ), disjunction ( vibhāga ) and knowledge ( jñāna ). Of these attributes the first five are considered the general attributes ( saṃmānya guṇa ) of God and the last one His special attribute ( visēṣa guṇa ). These Vaiśeṣika philosophers do not ascribe desire ( icchā ) and volition ( prayatna ) to the divine personality. They argue that God's intuition is His unrestricted creativity and the purpose of desire and volition is served by it. Raghunātha Śiromaṇi adds a novel attribute, i.e. bliss to God. God as the divine Person is the repository of eternal bliss.

¹ Sankhyāparināmāpṛthakatvasaṃyogavibhāgabuddhayaḥ, N.V., iv. 1.21.
² Icchā tu vidyate skliṣṭāvyāhaṭā sarvārthesa yathā buddhiḥ, N.V., iv. 1.21.
It may be objected that if God possesses knowledge, desire and volition, He must be an embodied being, because a physical organism is necessary for the emergence of these attributes. To this the Naiyāyika replies that a physical body may be a necessary condition for the emergence of knowledge, desire, volition, etc., in the case of finite beings. But this is not the same in the case of God. For intelligence, volition and desire of God are eternal and therefore there is no ground for postulating a divine body. God's omniscience is not incompatible with the absence of a divine body.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of God has been the subject of great discussion in the history of Indian philosophy. The causal argument of this school reminds us the cosmological and teleological proofs for the existence of God in Western philosophy. Some Western theists like Paul Janet, Hermann Lotze and James Martineau hold that the first cause of the universe must be an intelligent agent. But while these scholars think that God is the cause not only of order of things in the world but also the existence of these things, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers hold that God is the cause of the order of nature, and not of the existence of its ultimate elements.

It must be noted, however, that the Nyāya concept of God is not free from difficulties. The critic observes that the Naiyāyika resorts to adṛṣṭa whenever natural explain fails. The causal argument is made much of

1 Sridhara's Nyayakausūlī, pp. 55-58.
by Udayana and other Naiyāyikas. But here too they commit a serious mistake. By assuming that the world is an effect they take for granted what is to be proved. Even if we grant the validity of this argument for the existence of God, the Īśvara of Nyāya is not a creator of the world in the strict sense of the term. He is the world-architect, who fashioned the world from outside. The world is a gigantic piece of clock set in motion by its maker and guaranteed to go without any interference. Theism maintains that God is immanent as well as transcendent in relation to the world. But here we find that God transcends the world, however much He may be said to cause, govern and destroy it. Thus the Nyāya conception of God is deistic.

The Nyāya starts with the dualism of matter and spirits, and then mitigates it by conceiving God as the controller and harmonizer of the realm of matter and that of spirits, who imposes His plan upon the world, and adapts it to the moral demands of the finite souls. But God should not be conceived as a deus ex machina, who relates the world and the finite souls in a mechanical manner. The Naiyāyika must either give up his notion of God as creator or admit that the atoms and the souls are the expressions of the constant causality of God, though this causality ought not to be conceived in a mechanical sense. This seems to be the implication of the Nyāya suggestion that the nature of things is the body of God. In other words, the deism of Nyāya may be logically developed into a concrete monism which regards God as an identity-in-difference, an idea developed with great care in Kāśīnuja's system.
Now let us consider the problem of divine personality dealt with in Vedanta philosophy. The term 'Vedanta' means literally 'the end of the Veda', or the doctrines set forth in the closing chapter of the Vedas, which are the Upanisads. The Vedanta Sutra is called Brahma Sutra, because it is an exposition of the doctrine of Brahman. It was composed by Badarayana and is of exceptional significance in the history of Indian thought. This Sutra collection was the first effort to bring the great intuitions of the Upanisads into some orderly presentation. It showed an exceptional power of synthesis and provided the impetus for the intellectual clarification so much needed by Hinduism at that time. Without this work and the commentaries that have been written on it there would be much greater difficulty in understanding the entire Hindu tradition.

The central idea of the Vedanta Sutra is that Brahman is absolutely real and spiritually realisable. Different Vedanta teachers expound the sutras in a coherent way, though they represent different systems of philosophy. Thus five major divisions are developed within the Vedanta tradition: (1) Kesastava of Sankara, (2) Visistadva of Ramanuja, (3) Dvaitadva of Madhava, and (5) Sudhadvaita of Vallabha.

Sankara lived in the eighth century A.D. For a few centuries his philosophy swayed the minds of the intellectuals and the seekers after truth. Sankara, as we know, in his explanation of the nature of Brahman, draws a distinction between the higher (Para) or attributeless (Nirguna), Brahman and the lower (Apara) or qualitative (Saguna) Brahman. In the scriptures
we find two descriptions of Brahman. Some texts describe it as qualified and some as unqualified. Śankara argues that both cannot be predicated of one and the same Brahman, for it is against experience. One and the same thing cannot have two contradictory natures at the same time. Nor does the mere connection of a thing with another change its nature, even as the redness of a flower reflected in a crystal does not change the nature of the crystal, which is colourless. The imputation of redness is due to ignorance and not real. Neither can a thing change its real nature: it means destruction. Even so in the case of Brahman, its connection with adjuncts like earth, etc., is a product of Nescience. Hence between the two aspects of Brahman we have to accept that which is attributeless as its true nature, for throughout the scriptures we find Brahman so described to the exclusion of its qualified aspects. The other description of Brahman is only for the sake of worship (upāsanā) and is not its real nature.¹

It may be argued by the opponent that in some scriptural texts Brahman is described as having four feet, in some as of sixteen digits (kalās) or again as having for its body the three worlds of being called Valāśākara. So we have to understand on the scriptural authority that Brahman is also qualified. Śankara refutes the objection and says that every such form due to Upādhi is denied of Brahman in texts like, "The shining, immortal being who is in this earth, and the shining, immortal corporeal being in the body are but the Self."² Such texts show that in all Upādhis like earth, etc., the same Self is present, and hence there is only

¹ Śankara’s Commentary on the Brahma-sūtra iii. 2.11
² Brhad Up. ii. 3.1
non-difference, oneness. It is not true that the Vedas inculcate the connection of Brahman with various forms. With regard to what we take as different, the scripture explains at every instance that the form is not true, and that in reality there is only one formless principle. Moreover, some recensions of the Vedas directly teach that manifoldness is not true, by passing strictures on those who see difference: "He goes from death to death, who sees difference, as it were, in it".

Thus according to Sankara, Brahman is only formless; for all the texts that aim at teaching Brahman describe it as formless. If Brahman be understood to have a form, then texts which describe it as formless would become purportless, and such a contingency with respect to the scriptures is unimaginable, for the scriptures throughout have a purport. On the other hand, texts dealing with qualified Brahman seek not to establish it, but rather to enjoin meditations on Brahman. Therefore, Brahman is formless.

If Brahman is formless, what about the texts which describe it as having form? Are they superfluous? If Brahman is without form then all worships ( upāsanās ) of Brahman with form would be futile, for how can the worship of such a false Brahman lead to Brahmaloka and other spheres? Sankara explains that they are not without a purpose. Just as light, which has no form, appears to be great or small according to the aperture through which it enters a room and yet has the virtue of removing the darkness in

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1 Sankara's Commentary on the Brahmasūtra, iii. 2,13.
2 Katha Up. 1. 4.11 ; Brhad Up. iv. 4. 19
3 Sankara's Commentary on the Brahmasūtra, iii. 2.14.
the room so the formless Brahman appears to have a form, as being limited by adjuncts like earth, etc.; and the worship of such an illusory Brahman can help one to attain Brahma-loka, etc., which are also illusory from the ultimate standpoint. This, however, does not contradict the position already established, viz. that Brahman though connected with limiting adjuncts, is not dual in character because the effects of these cannot constitute attributes of a substance, and moreover, these limiting adjuncts are all due to Nescience.¹

Now what is the nature of that formless Brahman? Sankara says that it is mere Intelligence, self-effulgent, homogeneous, and without attributes.² In this connection Sankara quotes a passage from the Brihadāranyaka Upaniṣad: "As a lump of salt is without interior or exterior, entire and purely in taste, even so is the Self without interior or exterior, entire and Pure Intelligence alone."³ That Brahman is without any attributes is also proved by the fact that the scripture teaches about it by denying all characteristics to it: "Now therefore the description (of Brahman) -- 'Not this, not this', because there is no other and more appropriate description than this 'Not this'."⁴ If Brahman had form, then it would be established by such texts, and there would be no necessity to deny everything and say 'Not this, not this'.⁵ So also the Smṛtis teach about Brahman: "The highest Brahman without either beginning or end, which cannot be said either to be or not to be".⁶ "It is unmanifest, unthinkable, and without modification, thus it is spoken of."⁷

¹ Sankara's Commentary on the Brahma-Śūtra, iii. 2.15
² Ibid, iii. 2.16
³ Brihad Up. iv. 5.13.
⁴ Ibid. ii. 3.6
⁵ Sankara's Commentary on the Brahma-Śūtra, iii. 2.17
⁶ Bhagavadgītā xiii. 12.
⁷ Ibid. ii. 25.
That Brahma is formless is further established from the similes used with respect to it. Since Brahma is mere intelligence, homogeneous, and formless, and everything else denied in it, therefore we find that the scriptures explain the fact of its having forms by saying that they are like reflections in water of the one sun, meaning thereby that these forms are unreal, being due only to limiting adjuncts.¹

It may be objected that the comparison made above is not correct. In the cage of the sun which has a form, water which is different and at a distance from it, catches its image. But Brahma is formless and all-pervading, and there can be nothing else different and at a distance from it, to serve as an Upādhi, that can catch its reflection. So the comparison is defective.²

In reply Śankara argues that the comparison with the reflection of the sun is not to be taken literally but only with respect to a particular feature. Just as the reflected sun is distorted, trembles, or varies in size as the water shakes, expands or contracts, while the real sun remains unchanged; so also Brahma participates, as it were, in the attributes of the Upādhis; it grows with them, decreases with them, suffers with them, and so on, but not in reality. Hence on account of this similarity in the two cases the comparison is not defective.³ The scripture also teaches that Brahma enters into the body and other limiting adjuncts: "He made bodies with two feet and bodies with four feet. That Supreme Being first entered the bodies as a bird. He on account of His dwelling in all bodies is called Puruṣa".⁴ Here also the comparison is not defective.⁵

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¹ Śaṅkara's Commentary on the Brāhma Sūtra, iii. 2.18.
² Ibid. iii. 2.19
³ Ibid. iii. 2.20
⁴ Brhad Up. ii. 2.18
⁵ Śaṅkara's Commentary on the Brāhma Sūtra iii. 2.19.
Thus Śankara establishes that Brahman is impersonal, formless, indeterminate, homogeneous and without any difference.

The distinction Śankara makes between two Brahmans is controverted and rejected by Rāmānuja\(^1\) and other theistic Vedāntins. For Rāmānuja there are not higher and lower Brahmans. According to him, Brahman is the divine Person and as such is the ultimate reality. As he puts it, "The word 'Brahman' denotes the highest Person (Puruṣottama), who is essentially free from all imperfections and possesses infinite number of auspicious qualities."\(^2\) According to him, the scriptural text - 'Here there is no diversity' means the unification of the attributes and the denial of any source of power other than Brahman.

Rāmānuja protests against those who maintain the doctrine of a substance devoid of all difference. These philosophers, he argues, cannot assert that this or that is a proof of such a substance, for all means of right knowledge involve things affected with difference.\(^3\) As to sabda (testimony) it is specially apparent that it possesses the power of denoting only such things as are affected with difference. Sabda operates with words and sentences. And a word originates from the combination of a radical element and a suffix, and as these two elements have different meanings it necessarily follows that the word itself can convey only a sense affected with difference. Further, the plurality of words is based on plurality of

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1 F. N. Srinivasachari, Philosophy of Visistadvaita, Madras, 1943, p. 61; cf. Dr. A. C. Das, A Modern Incarnation of God, 1958, p. 269.
2 Rāmānuja's Commentary on the Brahma-sūtra, i. 1.1.
meanings. The sentence, therefore, which is an aggregate of words expresses some special combination of things, and hence has no power to denote a thing devoid of all difference.

Perception also with its two subdivisions, indeterminate and determinate cannot be a means of knowledge of things devoid of difference. Determinate perception clearly has for its objects things affected with difference; for it relates to that which is distinguished by generic difference and so on. But indeterminate perception has also for its object only what is worked with difference; for it is on the basis of indeterminate perception that the object distinguished by generic character and so on is recognised in the act of determinate perception. It may be objected by to the Advaitin that perception refers to pure being alone (sannātgrāhi). But Rāmānuja says that this is not true, for perception refers to generic character and thus necessarily involves difference. Moreover, if perception reveals only pure being, judgment referring to different objects, such as, 'Here is a jar', 'There is a piece of cloth' would be devoid of all meaning.

Inference too proves difference. Inference is based on perception and as such must necessarily reveal a thing with difference.

Thus Rāmānuja contends that a thing devoid of difference cannot be established by any one of the instruments of knowledge. No scriptural texts, he argues, speak of characterless and differenceless reality. The texts referring to Brahmān as pure being¹ or as transcendent², or where Brahmān is apparently identified with truth and knowledge,³ actually refer

1 Chāluk. vi. 2.1  2 Mund. Up. 1.1.5
3 Taitt. Up. ii. 1.1
to Brahman not as qualitiless, but as possessing diverse excellent qualities of omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, imperishableness, creativeness and the like. If, on occasion, it is said that He is without qualities, the intention is only to negate undesirable qualities and nothing more. When Brahman is referred to as One, all that is meant is that Brahman is the sole cause of the world. It does not mean that Brahman has no qualities at all. Those texts which conceive Brahman as knowledge convey the idea that knowledge is the essential nature of Brahman, but this does not indicate that knowledge constitutes the fundamental reality. For knowledge constitutes the nature of a knowing subject which is the substrate of knowledge, in the same way as the sun is the substrate of light. The texts referring to Brahman as free from qualities, and those which describe Him as possessing qualities have really one and the same object; the former deny of Brahman all evil qualities, while the latter assert that He has certain excellent qualities. Hence there is no contradiction between the two sets of texts and there is no reason whatever to assume that either of them has for its object something that is false. Rāmānuja thus concludes: "The authoritative books do not teach that the Universe of things is false; and they do not deny the distinction of intelligent beings, non-intelligent beings and the Lord." 1

Now we have to determine whether the view of Śankara or that of Rāmānuja represents the spirit of the Vedānta as a whole. Śankara, as we know, in his explanation of the nature of Brahman attaches primary importance

1 Rāmānuja's Commentary on the Brahma-sūtra, i. 1.1, Sacred Books of the East, xlviii, p. 85.
to those passages in the Upaniṣads which speak of its nature as indeterminate, partless and attributeless (nirguna texts) against those which describe its character as full of infinite attributes, infinite knowledge, power and action, as a Being that is the source of origination, sustenance and destruction of world-order (the saguna texts). Throughout his commentaries on the Upaniṣads he seems to be obsessed with the idea that it is the nirguna texts that reveal the true nature of the ultimate reality and the saguna texts are only secondary. It is this obsession that is at the back of his conceptions of Para and Apara Brahman, and the distinction between svarupa and tatastha definitions of Brahman which he introduces in order to reconcile the apparent contradiction between the nirguna and the saguna texts. Similarly, for him the scriptural texts that describe the unity without difference are superior to those that describe the manifold character of the world.

This synthesis of the Upaniṣadic texts, which he borrows from his predecessor, Gaudapada, Sankara endeavours to justify through logic and builds up a system of metaphysics. For a few centuries this interpretation of the Upaniṣads was taken by many as the last word of philosophy. This was probably due to the remarkable speculative genius and the polemical acumen of the Post-Sanskrites who contributed immensely to the development of pure Advaita. Yet the inherent weakness of this system began to show itself up to many who were not completely under its sway. To those who were of a theistic bent of mind Sankara's philosophy appeared as a dark night in which nothing could be distinguished, differentiated and cognised. Theistic temperament has always a strong abhorrence for a philosophy that seeks to remove the difference between the devotee and the Deity, between man and God.
by merging the individuality of the former into the latter and this emotional abhorrence in the end led to a revolt against the Absolutism of Śaṅkara and his followers.

To a philosopher of the theistic tradition Śaṅkara’s emphasis of the nirguna passages of the scripture is completely unwarranted and is inspired by his love of abstract identity. The saguna texts which describe Brahman as personal, full of infinite attributes are as valid as nirguna texts and there is no justification for differentiating them as primary and secondary. In interpreting the scriptural texts we have to take into account the basic fact that both nirguna and saguna texts are equally important. The same may be said of the texts that describe the reality as one and many. It is not true to say, as Śaṅkara does, that the text which refers to identity is superior to the one that speaks of the manifold. The distinction Śaṅkara makes between the higher (Para) and the lower (Apara) Brahman is equally meaningless in the light of the above discussion.

It thus appears that Rāmānuja’s conception of the ultimate reality is more satisfactory and convincing than that of Śaṅkara. Rāmānuja was not, however, alone in his protest against Śaṅkara’s theory of impersonal, attributeless Brahman as the highest Reality. Among the critics of Śaṅkara was Nimbārka, a Telegu Brāhmin of Vaiṣṇava cult. A brief commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra was ascribed to him, and in ten verses entitled the ‘Jewel of Siddhānta’ (Siddhānta Ratna) he summed up his teaching. In the beginning of his commentary on the first sūtra Nimbārka emphatically asserts that the ultimate reality is the Supreme Person. As he puts it: "An enquiry is to be instituted at all times, into the Highest Person, .......... denoted by the
term Brahman, the greatest of all because of His infinite, inconceivable and innate nature, qualities, powers and so on.\footnote{Vedānta Pāñjāta - Saurabha of Nimbērka and Vedānta Kaustubha of Śrīnivāsa, Translated and Annotated by Dr. Roma Chaudhury (Bose), Bibliothica Indica, Work No. 259, Calcutta, 1940, p. 1.} Brahman is impersonal in the sense that He is beyond the influence of the three guṇas---sattva, rajas and tāmas. He is the substrate of all that is good, the giver of final emancipation. He is infinite, unthinkable, omnipresent and omnipotent, both unmanifest and manifest. He is the Lord of all, the cause of the world, the source of all creations. He is the subtlest of the subtle, the greatest of the great, the eternal amongst the eternals. As the divine Person He possesses six attributes by means of which He creates the universe. Through knowledge (jñāna) He directly perceives everything past, present and future in an eternal now; through Power (śakti) He makes possible what is impossible; through Strength (bala) He supports the entire universe; through Supracy (Aīvarya) He controls everything; through Energy (tejas) He never feels tired; and lastly through Power (vīrya) He can subdue everything without being suppressed. He is the inner soul of all beings, the support of all lokas, the object of our objection. He is the cause of all causes,\footnote{Kaustubha, X. ii, 14.} present in everything conscious and unconscious, but is absolutely unaffected by the merits and demerits of anything. The distinction between nirguna Brahman and saguṇa Brahman does not arise at all in the system of Nimbērka, for the Absolute, according to him, is the Universal self which is both noumenal and phenomenal, nirguna and saguṇa, indeterminate and determinate. The Advaita conception of Brahman as differenceless pure consciousness is untenable for him, since such a reality is not amenable to perception, inference or testimony. Its existence is not demonstrated by...
perception, since it is supersensible; nor by inference, since it is supersensible; nor by inference, since it is devoid of any distinctive marks which form the ground of inference; nor by testimony, since no words of scripture indicate such a reality. The texts that refer to Brahmān by negations signify how Brahmān is different from matter and the souls which are limited by material conditions.¹

The Philosophy of Nimbārka is popularly called Bhedabhādavāda, since it represents reality as both bheda and abheda, both identity and difference.² It is an identity that persists in difference and sustains it.³ Absolute identity is unthinkable as absolute difference and both are opposed to the Upaniṣadic spirit which predicates the equal reality of difference and non-difference. Reality is the absolute per se, which exists in itself as the self-complete and self-determined. Though out of relation to the world it still enters into relation with it, but it is not a relative absolute. The Absolute constitutes the relative and is its logical prīta. Being is the one in the many like fire and its sparks or like water and its ripples; the relation between unity and plurality is one of coexistence and not of contradiction.⁴ Sāṅkara's doctrine of māyā explains away the manyness of reality. Bhāskara’s theory of Upādhis predicates imperfections to the Absolute. The Dvaita theory posits eternal distinctions and presuppose their externality. The philosophy of Nimbārka avoids the perils of radical monism and pluralism and preserves the integral

2 Sarva-bhinnabhīmo Bhagavān Vātsadevo Viśāṣṭmaiva jiṣṭāsāvīgayaḥ—, I. 1.4.
3 Brahma-abhinopī kastrajñāḥ svavarrupato bhima iva, II. 1.22.
4 Aviṣhegepi Sambhara-tarangayorīva sūryatat prabhoyorīva tayorvibhāgah syāt—II. 1.13.
experience of lepestabheda. The Universal or the whole is immanent in the particular and yet remains beyond, without losing its wholeness.

The philosophical debate on the personality of God is not closed by Nimbarka's modification of the qualified monism of Ramanuja. It is carried further by another philosopher called Madhva. Madhva was a great believer in personal God. His reality is called 'Purṇa Brahman', the most beautiful and pregnant word which he has repeatedly used in his works. At the outset of the Bhasya he asserts that the Para Brahman of the Vedântins is no other than Viṣṇu who has been proclaimed in the Vedas as the Highest Deity. "Fullness in all qualities, and in all his multiplications, absolutely free from defects and everything else under Viṣṇu's will and government" — this is the main proposition of Madhva's philosophy.¹

Madhva has combined in this proposition all that he wants to say about God. This proposition contains three clauses namely, (1) Gunapūrṇatva i.e. fullness of qualities, (2) Absolute freedom from faults, and (3) everything else besides Himself being under the direct will and control of the Lord. By 'Gunapūrṇatva' Madhva means that God is the fountainhead of all auspicious qualities and excellences. These qualities are not material or physical or mental like our own good qualities but purely spiritual. Hence He is called Aprakta.

There is, however, no difference in Him as regards His qualities (guna) and qualified (gunā). Dharma and Dharma are the same.² With regard to finite objects it is not so; qualities are always different from

¹ Anu Vyakhyanam, III. 1.82.
² Madhva's Brhadâranyaka Upanishad Bhasya IV. 1.
the qualified. It is the paramount consideration of the Madhva school that the status of the reality of quality is commensurate with the status of the reality of the qualified. According to this school, no relation between quality and qualified is imaginable if the quality belongs to a different order of reality from that of the qualified. For example, the characters and qualifications of snake in the illusion of snake in the rope do not qualify the rope which is the ground of illusion. The rope in this illustration can be qualified only by the qualities of the rope which belong to the same order of reality and not by the attributes of the snake which is illusory in character. The qualities of the snake are conceivable only in relation to the snake which too is illusory. The determination of an entity is therefore possible, according to the Madhavites, only through the presence of attributes that enjoy an equal rank with it. The importance of such a thesis would not have been so considerable had the scope of its application been limited only to the order of empirical phenomena in which case it would have hardly created a contrast with Sankara's assumptions. But because the Madhavites emphatically asserted the truth of such a concept as a postulate of all attributes, even of the transcended Being, its significance became more pronounced as it justified the presence of absolute and non-contradicted qualities in Brahman and thereby overthrew Sankara's position that Brahman is beyond all determinations and qualifications.

Madhva rejects Sankara's conception of Brahman as impersonal and attributeless reality beyond description and human understanding. He also abhors the idea of lower Brahman (Apara Brahman) for satisfying the ethico-religious requirements of man. In the Upanisads, we find so many
passages which have been interpreted by Madhva as proving God as the divine Person and endowed with infinite attributes. In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad we find such expressions as Brahman is 'Udgītha'\(^1\) i.e. the 'Most High', God is 'Sāman',\(^2\) God is all 'good',\(^3\) God is all 'Madhu' i.e. sweet and beautiful.\(^4\) In another place of the same Upaniṣad Brahman is described as "All action, all desire, all odour, all taste, pervading over all this, without speech, without perturbation --- such is myself within the heart; it is Brahman".\(^5\) Again the Ānanda Upaniṣad makes a reference to the attributes of the Ultimate Reality in such words: "He is Great, Divine, and as such a form that is incomprehensible (acintya-rūpam) He is subtler than the subtlest, far from the farthest and is nearest in this body".\(^6\) The Īśopaniṣad says, "That is Perfect, this is Perfect, the Perfect comes out of the Perfect; having taken the perfection of the Perfect there remains only the Perfect".\(^7\) All these famous citations of the scriptures, according to Madhva, establish the doctrine of Brahman as having infinite attributes and perfect personality. As he writes in one place in his commentary on the Chāndogya Upaniṣad: "I meditate upon that Hari, whose bliss is pure, infinite and unmixed with evil, whose knowledge (jnāna-sakti) is infinite and great and all-embracing, whose light of thought is steady, who is Almighty in His Lordly energy and enjoyment, whose power of will (icchāsakti) and power of action (kriyāsakti) are supreme, who is all-powerful, whose strength (balasakti) is also infinite, .......... and who is the essence of all other forms. He is the Creator, Preserver and the

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1. Ch. Up. I. 1
2. Ch. Up. II. 1
3. Ch. Up. II. 1
4. Ch. Up. III. 1
6. Īṣa Up, Santipatha
Destroyer. He is the Ruler of the Eternals. He is the liberator from ignorance, darkness and bondage. He is Unborn and Eternal. I worship that Hari alone". In the same way if we go through commentaries of the other Upanisads we find there the personality of God is the central principle of Madhva's philosophy. All other ideas such as the reality of the world, the five-fold bheda theory, the three-fold jiva theory, in short every other proposition of Madhva's philosophy centres round this main proposition. In several places Madhva cites the evidence from the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa also in favour of a reality endowed with perfect personality. The texts that refer to Brahma as nirguna, the attributeless, involve the idea that Brahma is not associated with the three guṇas of Prakṛti viz., sattva, rajas and tamas. Further, Brahma cannot be devoid of all determination, viśeṣa, for the denial of determination is itself a determination and as such would have to be denied by the Advaitins, and this would necessarily lead to the affirmation of the determination. Madhva, however, admits that Brahma may be said to be impersonal only in the sense that His whole nature being infinite cannot be fully grasped by any finite intellect.

The doctrine of the real existence of attributes in Brahma is also explicable on logical grounds. The followers of Madhva employ the following inferential arguments to justify the contention of his school:

(1) Brahma cannot exist without any positive attribute because He, like a pot, is a substance, i.e. a positive existent.

1 Vyāsatīrtha, Nyāya-cārtā.
(2) Brahman has the character of not being contradicted because He, like a conch-shell, is the substratum or the ground of illusion.

(3) Brahman possesses the character of being the object of knowledge imparted in Vedanta because He is the object of the Vedanta inquiry. Whatever is an object of an inquiry must be the object of knowledge. For example, Dharma (Duty) in the Purva Mimamsa system.

The above reasonings are some of the inferences that have been employed to exhibit the importance of the conception that differentiation and presence of characters can hardly be dissociated from any idea of Brahman without jeopardising His very existence.

Madhva's philosophy is generally called dualism (Daitavada) as it rests on five-fold distinction between (1) God and souls, (2) God and the world, (3) souls and the world, (4) souls towards each other, and (5) objects to each other. But it is a misnomer to call Madhva a dualist. Dualism stands for a theory which seeks to explain the world by the assumption of "two radically independent and absolute elements". But Madhva's two principles are not absolutely independent and irreconcilable entities, one being the Highest, the other two, soul and matter being completely dependent upon Him. Such a relation cannot be properly called.

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'Dvaita'. No doubt Madhva has used in some places the word Dvaita as against Sankara. But that is intended to compel Sankara for admitting one more principle, besides Brahman on the irrefutable grounds advanced by him (Madhva). Moreover, the 'Dvaita' has no historical basis at all. It appears that Madhva has a definite contempt for the word, for in the Nândukya Bhâsya he has repeatedly stated that 'Dvaita' means false knowledge, perverted knowledge. Certainly Madhva would never like that such a word should be applied to his philosophy as a whole.\(^1\)

According to Vallabha, Brahman is one, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, possessed of an infinite number of attributes, and essentially of the nature of sat (existence), cit (intelligence) and ānanda (bliss). He is the Absolute, the Perfect Person, the Purushottama. God is real because there is no other reality besides Him. The second and third aphorisms of Bādarāyana's Brahma-sūtra, according to Vallabha, establish the nature of Brahman as Sat; the next adhikārana establishes His nature as Cit; and the ānandāmaya-adhikārana which follows establishes the nature of Brahman as ānanda so that all the adhikāranas put together establish God as Being Consciousness and Bliss. God is pure (suddha) i.e., never contaminated by connection with mâyā. He is possessed of aisvarya (marvellous powers) which makes everything possible for Him and even things mutually opposed can coexist in His case. Thus both kinds of passages, those which describe Brahman as qualified (savisēṣa) and those which describe Him as non-qualified (nirvisēṣa) are equally true.

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\(^1\) B.A, Krishnaswamy Rao, Philosophy of Sri Madhvacarya, Mysore, 1951.
with regard to Him. Or, the denial of attributes refers to the attributes of the non-intelligent world (prakṛta) from which Brahman is free, while the affirmation of attributes refers to the infinite number of marvellous powers which He possesses and thus establishes that Brahman is extraordinary (jagadvilakṣaṇa). Brahman manifests Himself at His own will, a jīva or jāda, simply for the purpose of sport, without undergoing any change in essence as when, for instance, a serpent forms itself into coils (cf. Sūtra III. 2.27). Thus Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe.

According to Vallabha Brahman as the divine Person has three forms, (i) the highest divine form (ādīdāivīka) as Kṛṣṇa or Puruṣottama, possessing an infinite number of auspicious attributes, attainable by a devotee (bhakta), (ii) the antaryāmin form as seen in the different incarnations or avatāras of Viṣṇu, and (iii) the aksara form (ādhyātmīka), in which all the attributes have become non-manifest and which alone is attainable by the enlightened (jñānī). In the form in which the enlightened realises Him all the positive qualities are hidden or rendered imperceptible by the inscrutable power of the Lord, and therefore they are not to be regarded as non-existing. Vallabha, however, admits that all that has been said of the Lord does not describe Him fully. He is Himself, God is fully Himself in His bliss, the other two qualities namely, existence and intelligence serving as a foundation of it. Brahman is also called Rasa which includes the idea of realisation of this bliss as something objective.
The philosophy of Vallabha is based on the Upanisads, the Bhagavadgītā and the Brahmastra, and so far as his conception of God as the divine Person is concerned he supplements it from the teachings of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. He offers a theistic interpretation of the Vedānta which differs from those of Śankaṇa and Rāmānuja. His monism is called Suddhādvaita or pure non-dualism since it regards the individual souls and the inanimate world as in essence one with Brahman. We cannot say that Vallabha has an independent system of philosophy in the sense in which we understand the term as applied to the thought of Plato or Aristotle, Kant or Hegel. He was purely a religious teacher who thought it blasphemous to go beyond the authority of the scriptures. In this matter he was with Śankaṇa, Rāmānuja and other theists. His philosophy was formulated mainly in antagonism to the Māyāvāda of Śankaṇa. It is now a well-established fact that there is an advance in thought in both the Bhagavadgītā and the Brahmastra beyond the Upaniṣads. Vallabha's greatness lies in the fact that he developed his system along the theistic lines conceiving God as the perfect personality and creation as His sport or līlā.

1 Parekh, Sri Vallabhacharya, Life, Teachings and Movement, P. 223.