CHAPTER III

CONCEPT OF GOD FROM INDIAN AND WESTERN PERSPECTIVES

3.1 INTRODUCTION:

There exists considerable ambiguity concerning the term God in religious philosophy. The history of man reveals that man always has had a belief in something super natural usually called God. From the religious records we also come to know that there had been discords concerning God. Quite often we again used to find that the concept of God acts as a stumbling block to the unity of mankind. But in spite of that man could not avoid using this concept. The word ‘God’ is unique and as Swami Vivekananda says, “………all the hopes, aspirations and happiness of humanity have been centred in that word.”¹ We find a negative attitude towards God among the atheists like Feurerback, Marx, the Lokayatikas- the Indian materialists who say that the very idea of God must be rejected as it is a product of human imagination or an illusion. But against this view devout theists maintain that God being the highest object of religious devotion, He can neither be explained as construction of the mind nor as an illusion.

The belief in God is as old as man’s relation to the world. In his transactions with the world he often finds himself so placed that his wishes, desires and activities, his coming into being and passing out of it, his good fortunes and ill fortunes, his health and disease, are often beyond his control. Happiness in nature like the wind and rains, floods and famines and seasons of the year, also appear to him puzzling and mysterious. They create in him the conviction that he is too small and helpless. He thus comes to believe in a power or powers which seem to control the destiny not only of his own but also of the world at large. “The idea of God is associated with exaltedness, sublimity, ineffable majesty, holiness( in the original Hebrew sense of “apartness”), transcendence, superhuman power – what theologians
have called God’s ‘Metaphysical’ as distinguished from His ‘ethical’ attributes.” In the higher religions God is regarded as the ultimate source not only of values but of power, not only of right, but of might and the relation of God to man is thought of not only as that of son to Father, but as that of creature to the uncreated.

Though the idea of God is universally present in man it must be granted that there is no universally accepted idea of God for all the time to come. Different meanings have been attached to every use of the word ‘God’ throughout the human history and thus making the word more and more complex. In different religious traditions God is conceived variously. Even within a given tradition the conception of God has a tendency to evolve and blossom with the development of religion. There has been no single determinate concept of God shared by all. Some ascribe timelessness to God. Others think of God as temporal. Again some theologians maintain that the concept of God is the concept of the most perfect. In Hinduism God is regarded by some as Antaryāmi, the indweller the inner soul of the universe. Just as some Christian theologians hold that the concept of God is that of an almighty triune creator, redeemer, sustainer of all, - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so too some Hindu theologians hold that the one Supreme Lord has three aspects – creative, preservative and destructive which are often taken as the three deities Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

3.2 NATURE OF GOD:

God is basically a religious concept. It is the ultimate reality from the religious standpoints. The general conception of God may be said to be that of an infinite being who is supremely good, who created the world, who knows all and can do all, who is transcendent over and immanent in the world and who loves humanity. God is often conceived as the Supreme Being and principal object of faith. The concept of God as described by theologians commonly includes the attributes of omniscience (infinite knowledge), omnipotence
(unlimited power), omnipresence (present everywhere), omnibenevolence (perfect goodness),
divine simplicity and eternal and necessary existence. In theism God is the creator and
sustainer of the universe, while in deism God is the creator, but not the sustainer of the
universe. Monotheism is the belief in the existence of one God or in the oneness of God. In
pantheism God is the universe itself. In atheism, God is purported not to exist, while deemed
unknown or unknowable within the context of agnosticism. God has also been conceived as
being incorporeal, a personal being, the source of all moral obligations and the greatest
conceivable existent.

Whatever may be the nature of God, He is commonly termed as Infinite, Eternal, and
Absolute. He is not infinite in the sense that he embraces all existence within Himself. He is
infinite in the sense that he is subject to no limitation which do not issue from His own will
and that He is himself the sufficient ground of all finite existences. He does not depend upon
any other reality. He is the Supreme Infinite Being. God is an infinite or inexhaustible power,
which is partially expressed in the world of finite objects and finite minds. He is the prius and
presupposition of the finite beings. He is non-spatial and non-temporal and yet expressed in
the spatio-temporal world. God is both transcendent and immanent in the universe. He is the
indwelling spirit of the world, permeating it everywhere. He transcends it as a spirit. The
spatio-temporal world is the object of divine consciousness. It cannot exhaust the infinite or
inexhaustible power of God. God is infinite, non-spatial, non-temporal and uncaused.

God is regarded as unconditioned and Absolute. God is unconditioned in the sense of
not conditioned by anything outside Himself. He is not related to any being beyond Himself,
but He is related to the finite objects and finite spirits within Himself, which are His
differentiations. God comprehends all relations and conditions within Himself. He is the
presupposition and ground of all rational thought. God is also regarded as the creator and the
ultimate reason of the world. God would be an abstract power without being expressed in the
world. God is the immanent spirit of the world and the world is the outward expression of God. The world is inexplicable without a sufficient cause. All things in it are produced by their causes. Effects are modifications of causal energies or powers which are directed to produce their specific effects. In their essential nature they are the energy of God directed by Him to produce their specific effects. The world is created by God and it is the expression of divine power. It is created and maintained by God as an object of divine thought, an expression of His power and means through which He realizes His cosmic purpose. God and the world are inseparable from each other. In this sense God is the creator of the world. He is its material cause, efficient cause and final cause. God is the ground and ultimate reason of the world.

God is morally perfect and holy. He is the living embodiment of our moral idea. He has supreme righteousness. God is the Moral Governor and in this sense He guides the destiny of humanity. He realizes his cosmic purpose through cosmic evolution and history of humanity. God leads men to life eternal through the agony of death. Philosophers of present day are put greater emphasis on God as the source of intellectual, aesthetic, moral and religious values. God is the source of Truth, Good, Beauty and the Holy. Truth is the intellectual ideal, Good is the moral ideal, Beauty is the aesthetic ideal and Holy is the religious ideal. These are the supreme norms or ideals. Ideal values exist in God. He is not merely an infinite, omniscient and omnipotent power, but the source of ideal values. We can sum up that at the root of the very consciousness that there is a Supreme Being which not only evolves the world but turns the individual self towards the attainment of his fuller being, there is that internal urge under which the human mind feels that it has to rise above the ordinary levels of experience and reason to the realm of faith in which God as the Supreme objective truth reveals Himself. God is the one absolute spiritual reality, the ultimate principle of individuality and value, which immanently works out the evolution of the world.
of things and selves, and tends it to realize the absolute spiritual values whose unity He Himself is.

3.3 THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE VEDAS, THE UPANISHADS AND THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

From the most ancient times man all over the world has conceived of a powerful being or being, supernatural or quasi supernatural, controlling the affairs of the world. These conceptions have varied from time to time, but the basic idea of a powerful controller has remained. It was man’s inherent curiosity to understand himself and his environment and his need for physical and benevolent environment that gave rise to a conception of God. These are the factors again which have stimulated his enquiry into the nature of God and His relationship to the universe and its being. These conceptions of God have evolved over the ages simultaneously with the growth in the knowledge of man about himself and the surrounding nature and influenced by social and political developments.

3.3.1 GOD IN THE VEDAS

The Vedas are the oldest scriptures of India as well as the world. Vedas are revealed knowledge; seers of the Truth visualized the mantras or the text of the Vedas and stored for the benefit of the world by oral and latter written tradition through the tradition of Guru and disciples. Vedas are not written by anyone, but they are the knowledge of God, they are the personification of Brahman as words. The Veda is a collection of whole literature which arose in long journey of intellectual brain of our ancestors and through oral transmission it was handed down from generation to generation. Veda means knowledge; however this knowledge is not an object of sense – perception. It concerns the Supreme Truth or the Absolute Being which is hidden as a source of inexhaustible energy within the outer world. The Supreme Truth is beautiful and joyful and is a perceptual entity regarded as the creator,
protector and destroyer of the animate world. The main function of the Veda is to illuminate this sort of knowledge. Vedas are chiefly divided into two portions (kāṇḍas) - karma kāṇḍa and Jñāna kāṇḍa. Samhitās, Brahmanas and Āranyakas form the karma portion, while Upanishads form the knowledge portion of the Vedas that is Jñāna kāṇḍa. The essence of the knowledge of the Vedas is called by the name Vedānta, which comprises the Upanishads.

The Vedic vision of God is unique. The Vedic literature reveals the origin, progress, and culmination of man’s concept of God or the ultimate reality. The philosophical teaching of the Vedic religion gradually developed from the Mantras and the Brahmanas, is generally regarded as a transition from the polytheism to monotheism and then to monism. This the early Vedic Aryans, began to wonder at the charming and tempting natural phenomena and to fear the terrible and destructive aspect of nature, personified them in an anthropomorphic fashion and called the Gods and Goddesses and began to worship them. In most Vedic Suktas the gods are depicted as the controlling and presiding powers behind natural phenomena such as rain, storm, and thunder. Very often the same characteristics are attributed to various deities. The Vedic seers saw the moon, the stars, the sea, the sky, the dawn and night fall as divine phenomena and not as integral parts of life less nature.

The different gods are personifications of the different powers of nature. They are sometimes worshipped individually. Varuna is the God of the sky. Varuna is the God to whom man and nature, this world and the other world belong. He cares not only for external conduct but also for inner purity of life. Mitra is his constant companion. Varuna and Mitra when used together express night and day, darkness and light. Varuna’s figure is steadily transformed and idealized till he becomes the most moral God of the Vedas. Varuna is one of the greatest and certainly the most impressive of the Vedic gods. Varuna’s power is so great that neither the birds as they fly, nor the rivers as they flow can reach the limit of his dominion, his might and wrath. He upholds the physical and moral order. He is no capricious
god, but a ‘dhṛtvṛata’ one of fixed resolve. Other gods obey his order. He is omniscient and as such knows the flight of the birds in the sky, the path of the ships on the ocean and the course of wind. He is supreme God, the God of gods, harsh to the guilty, and gracious to the patient.

The moral law of which Varuna is the custodian is called the Rta. He adheres to the right and punishes sins. Rta is the inviolable law by which Varuna maintains the uniformity of nature. It is said that heaven and earth are what they are because of this Rta. Literally Rta means ‘the course of things.’ It stands for law in general and the immanence of justice. Rta denotes the order of the world and it is the principle for everything that is ordered in the universe. The world of experience is a shadow or reflection of the Rta, the permanent reality which remains unchanged in all the welter of mutation. The gods cannot transgress it. In the conception of Rta we see a development from the physical to the divine. Rta governs the uniformities of nature. Rta reigns everywhere, in the sky, in the sun, in the mountain, in the sacrifices and in truth. Originally Rta meant the established route of the world, of the sun, moon, and stars, morning and evening, day and night. Gradually it becomes the path of morality to be followed by man and this law of righteousness is observed even by gods. Varuna, who was first the keeper of the physical order, becomes the custodian of the moral order, Rtasya gopa and the punisher of sin. In many cases the prayer to the gods is necessary for keeping us in the right path. The conception of Rta further harmonizes the gods with one another and paves the way for monotheism, though it is an impersonal order which upholds the gods and the world. When the conception of Rta was recognized there was a change in the nature of gods. Whatever might happen we feel that there is a law of righteousness in the moral world answering to the beautiful order of nature.

Mitra is the companion of Varuna and invoked generally along with him. Sometimes he represents sun and sometimes the light. Mitra is an all seeing and truth loving god. Mitra
and Varuna are joint keepers of the Rta and forgivers of sin. In the Rg Veda, Mitra is regarded as the Aditya or the son of Aditi who rouses men to action. Like Varuna, Mitra supports both Earth and Heaven and watches the people with steady eye. Mitra also protects worshippers from death and defeat. In the hymns of the Rg Veda there is the mention of Surya, the sun. The worship of the sun is natural to the human mind. He is described as the far–seeing, all observing spy of the whole world. It is an essential part of the Greek religion. Surya becomes the creator of the world and its governor. Savitr, which is celebrated in eleven whole hymns, is also a solar deity. He is preeminently a golden deity and described as golden eyed, golden handed, and golden tongued. Sometimes he is distinguished from the sun, although often identified with .Savitr represents not only the bright sun of the golden day, but also the invisible sun of night. Savitr is the god of mighty splendour (āmati) with which he illumines the air, heaven and earth.

Among the sun-gods of the Rg Veda, Vishnu occupies a subordinate position though he has a great future before him. Vishnu is the god of three strides. He covers the earth, heaven and the highest worlds visible to mortals. None can reach the limits of his greatness. Pusān is another solar god. Being the pastoral god and the guardian of cattle he is evidently a friend of man. He is the god who looks after the cattle and brings them back when gone astray; he protects and guards the steeds. Along with these conceptions of god in masculine terminology, we also find in the Vedas God conceived in feminine terminology. The conception of Aditi, the Mother of gods, as the all pervasive Infinite is significant. Aditi is the mother of the Adityas. Aditi literally means ‘unbound or unlimited.’ It seems to be a name for the invisible, the infinite which surrounds us on all sides, and also stands for the endless expanse beyond the earth, the clouds and the sky. It is the substratum of all that is here and also beyond. An important phenomenon of nature which raised to a deity is Fire (Agni). The idea of Agni arose from the scorching sun, which by its heat kindled
inflammable stuff. It came from the clouds as lightning. Agni shines like the sun dispelling the darkness of night. He becomes the mediator between gods and men and the helper of all.

All the gods mentioned in the Vedas are personifications of the different powers of nature. The gods are supernatural and superhuman powers and endowed with spiritual qualities. They preside over particular phenomena of nature, but they are not confined to them. They pervade the whole of nature and beyond or a considerable part of it, and are endowed with some qualities of the Supreme god-head. This is the element of polytheism in the Vedas. Sometimes the gods are invoked and worshiped in groups. Sometimes two gods, sometimes three, four or more gods are invoked. Sometimes all gods are worshipped together, who are implicitly believed to be partial aspects of one Supreme God. This phase of religious thought may be called organized polytheism. This stage may be regarded as the naturalistic and anthropomorphic polytheism. In this stage we can see a tendency of God making in the factory of human brain.

Their next problem was how to deal with the multitude of Gods and Goddess. Various attempts were made to reduce the number of deities under various occasions. Among the multitude of gods any one is treated as the Supreme God for the time being when he is worshipped. Thus at one time Indra was placed as the head of the Gods, but at another time they dethroned him and placed Varuna in his place. In this way polytheism gradually yielded place to monotheism and latter to monism. The Vedic seers who were dissatisfied with the old mythology, gradually started upon seeking after not only the cause of natural phenomena, but also their first or ultimate cause. Max Muller introduces the word “Henotheism”: a belief in single God, each in turn standing out of the highest.” But it is evident that this stage can neither be properly called polytheistic or monotheistic. But it may be regarded as one which had a tendency towards both polytheism and monotheism, although it was not sufficiently developed to be identified with either of them.
At the later stage there develops a clear conception of one God looked upon as the
greatest and highest of all gods and as the supreme lord of all beings. To this supreme lord
even all gods like Indra and Varuna are subordinated. In the later part of the Rg-Veda,
Viswakarman, the world-builder is praised as the highest god. He is regarded as an eternal
being and as the creator of heaven and earth. Further he is said to be the knower of all,
although he himself cannot be known by any mortal being. Prajāpati, identified with
Viswakarman is also regarded as the creator and governor of the world and as the repository
of the highest moral and physical powers. Brhaspati or Brahmanaspati also occupies such a
position. Again sometimes Hiranyagarbha is regarded as the Supreme Lord and as the
ultimate cause of the world.

Pantheistic and monistic ideas creep in at the next stage. At this stage, the Vedic seers
come to realize the Universal Soul permeating the universe and forming its ground. This
universal principle is denoted in the Rg-Veda by the term ‘Sat’—the existent.’ This idea is
beautifully expressed in out of the mantra of Rg-Veda that “Reality is one and that sages
call it by many names as Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, Guratam, Yama and Matarisvam.”6 In
the Purusa-Sukta, this idea has been further developed. The Purusa—Sukta says that all the
being constitute one quarter of Purusa, “Purusa pervades the whole world by one fourth of
himself.”7 The idea of Upanishadic monism is most clearly expressed in the ‘Nāsadiya—
Sukta’ of the Rg-Veda. Here the Vedic seer traces the whole universe to a single source
which lies beyond being and non-being and reconciles them both. Here the highest principle
is described as ‘Tadekam’ (that one). In the Satapatha—Brahmana, the term ‘Brahman’ has
been used to denote the Absolute. Here Brahman has been regarded as the supreme principle
and as the basic force behind the gods. It is the source of all the names and forms of the
world. The monism that is invoked in the Rg-Veda is developed into idealistic monism in
the Upanishads which regard Brahman, the infinite, eternal, omnipresent, omniscient and
pure spirit as the ultimate reality. The Vedas are often regarded as polytheistic but henotheism, not polytheism should be the appropriate name for Vedic belief in many gods. As in the Rg- Veda we come across passages where it is explicitly stated that the different gods are only manifestations of one underlying reality. In the Purusa Sukta, all existence is conceived as parts of one great person (Purusa), not only who pervades the world, but remains beyond it. In another hymn Nasādiya Sukta we are introduced to the conception of the Impersonal Absolute. This reality cannot be described either as non-existent or as existent. It is the Indeterminate Absolute, which is the reality underlying all things, but in itself indescribable.

3.3.2 GOD IN THE UPAnishADS:

The Upanishads occupy a unique place in the development of Indian thought. The Upanishads are the natural thoughts germinated from the Vedic ideas. Like the Vedas, the Upanishads also speak of the Supreme as One, but the term employed for the Supreme is Brahma. There are two ways of looking at the Supreme Brahma, Brahma in its Absolute self-existence is the Absolute or Para Brahma and as the creator, preserver and inner controller of the world is Īśvara (God) or Apara Brahma. Brahma when viewed in its Absolute self-existence is inexplicable. It would be contradictory to explain Brahma in positive terms. The Absolute viewed in relation to the spatial temporal world is God. Some passages in the Upanishads however highlight this personal aspect of Brahma describing him as the Creator, Ruler and Inner controller of the world. The Upanishadic thinkers speak to us of the one Reality behind the flux of the world. The highest conception reached in the Vedic hymns was that of the One Reality (Ekam Sat), which realizes itself in all the variety of existence. In the philosophical analysis of the nature of the self the Upanishadic thinkers used the word Ātman. The word ‘Ātman’ is derived from ‘to breathe’. It is the breathe of life. Gradually its meaning is extended to cover life, soul, self or essential being of the individual.
In the early Upanishads Atman, is the principle of the individual consciousness and Brahman is the super personal ground of the cosmos. When the Ultimate Reality is defined from the objective side, it is called Brahman. But the distinction diminishes and the two are identified. God is not merely the transcendent numinous other, but is also the universal spirit, which is the basis of human personality and its ever renewing vitalizing power. Brahman the first principle of the universe is known through Atman, the inner self of man.

The conception of God as found in the Rg - Veda is here changed into an immanent one. God is both the wholly other, transcendent and utterly beyond the world and man and yet he enters into man and lives in him and becomes the inmost content of very existence. When the Atman is identified with the self-conscious individual, then the Brahman is viewed as the self-conscious Isvara. When the Atman is identified with the mental and vital self of man (manas and prana) Brahman is diminished to the Hiranyagarbha or the cosmic soul, and it comes between the Isvara and the soul of man. As the individual soul is related to its body, so also Hiranyagarbha is related to the universe. Here we find influence of the Rg Veda in the Upanishads.

Brahman of the Upanishads is no metaphysical abstraction, no indeterminate identity, no void of silence. The concept of Brahman as found in the Upanishads is the fullest and the most real being. The syllable ‘AUM’ is usually used to represent the nature of Brahman which also brings out its concrete character. It is the symbol of the Absolute Spirit, the ‘emblem of the most high.’ “‘AUM’ is the symbol of concreteness as well as completeness. It stands for three principal qualities of the Supreme Spirit personified as Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva in later literature. ‘A’ is Brahma the creator, ‘U’ is Vishnu the preserver and ‘M’ is Siva the destroyer.”

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According to the Upanishads the world is the creation of God, the active lord. The finite is the self-limitation of the infinite. No finite can exist in and by itself. It exists by the infinite. The dependence of the world on God is explained in different ways. In the Chandogya Upanishad Brahman is described as Tajjālan. “Sarvam Khalu idam Brahma Tajjalam santa upasit” i.e. “All that is Brahman. (This) is born from, dissolves in and exists in that. Therefore one should meditate by becoming calm.”9 According to the Upanishads the creation is the expression. It is not a making of something out of nothing. It is the self-projection of the Supreme. The Svetasvatara Upanishad describes God as mayin, the wonder–working powerful Being, who creates the world by His powers. Māyā is the power of Isvara from which the world arises. While the world is treated as an appearance in regard to Pure Being, which is invisible and immutable, it is the creation of Īśvara, who has the power of manifestation.

Paul Deussen holds that the idealistic monism of Yājnavalkya is the main teaching of the Upanishads and the other doctrines of theism and cosmogonism are derivation from it, caused by the inability of man to remain on the heights of pure speculative thought. Deussen says out that there are four different theories of creation that occur in the Upanishads. These are – (1) first, matter exists from eternity independently of God, which He fashions, but does not create; (2) secondly, God creates the universe out of nothing and the universe is independent of God, although it is His creation; (3) thirdly, God creates the universe by transforming Himself into it; and (4) lastly God alone is real, and there is no creation at all. According to Deussen the last view is the fundamental view of the Upanishads. The world is an appearance, an illusion, a shadow of God. In order to know God, we have to reject the world of appearance. This view of Deussen follows from his own belief that the essence of every true religion is the repudiation of the reality of the world.
The Upanishadic thinkers express that the individual self has the highest reality. Although it is not the Absolute itself, still it comes nearest to the Absolute. According to the Taittriya Upanishad the several elements of the cosmos are found in the nature of the individual. According to Chāndogya Upanishad (vi. II 3 and 4) fire, water and earth are said to constitute the jivātman or the individual soul, together with the principle of the infinite. The insistence on the unity of the Supreme Self as the constitutive reality of the world and of the individual souls does not negate the empirical reality of the latter. Upanishads admitted the plurality of the individual soul. The individual do not resolve themselves in the universal Absolute so long as the world of manifestation is functioning. The individual is in a sense created by God after His own image and in His own likeness, but he has his creaturely form. The individual ego is subject to avidyā or ignorance when it believes itself to be separate and different from all other egos. When the individual shakes off this avidyā he becomes free from all selfishness, posses all and enjoys all.

Brahman is not described in the early Upanishads in sufficiently personal terms, but the later ones like the Kathopanishad and Svetasvatara Upanishads look upon the Supreme as personal God who bestows grace. Devotion to the personal God is recommended as a means for attaining spiritual enlightenment. According to Kathopanishad God is the personal aspect of the Absolute and hence there is not any distinction between God and Absolute in Kathopanishad. The Upanishads undoubtedly have great historical and cooperative value, but they are also of great present day value. Taking the Upanishads as a whole we find that there are at least two different ways of looking at the infinite. One of the trends describe Brahman as a homogeneous non-composite consciousness that its, perfection without a second. It is negatively described as neti-neti and the finite has no place in it. It is described as unlike all that we know. The world of matter and souls are described as its appearance. There is no other reality than Brahman. The relation between Brahman and other appearances is one
sided. The appearance is dependent on Brahman, but Brahman is in no way touched by the impurities of appearance. The Upanishadic seers trace all that exist to Brahman. They do not admit that the existence of the world of things or human experience is an inexplicable datum. The Upanishadic thinkers hold that, plurality, succession in time, co-existence in space, relations of cause and effect, as well as oppositions of subject and object, are not to be regarded as the highest reality. But they cannot be regarded as non-existent. The Upanishads accept the doctrine of Māyā only in the sense that there is an underlying reality containing all elements from the personal God to the objects of the world.

According to the Upanishads the Absolute is not a metaphysical abstraction or a void of silence. It is the Absolute of this relative world of manifestation. The central principle of the Upanishadic philosophy is that there is one Supreme Reality that manifests itself in the universe. Man as a finite self is incapable of grasping the Absolute Reality. The Absolute becomes a personal God. God is said to be the Supreme Person (Purusottam). Although God is regarded as the limited expression of the Absolute, still God is not a mere imaginative presentation. According to the Upanishads, the Absolute and God are one. We call it the Supreme Brahman to emphasize Its transcendence of the finite, Its knowability, Its all comprehensiveness; we call it Īśvara to emphasize the personal aspect so necessary for religious devotion. According to the Upanishadic seers the relationship between the Absolute Brahman and the personal Īśvara is like that of the true Lord to the idol. Still the two are one. The Absolute is both personal and impersonal.

3.3.3 GOD IN THE BHAGAVAD GITĀ:

The Bhagavad Gitā literally means “the Lord’s song”. It is contained in the Bhīṣma–Parva of the Mahābhārata, the great Sanskrit epic written by Vyāsa. The Bhagavad Gitā is more a theistic work or religious classic, than a philosophical treatise. It is not a metaphysical
thinking; rather it is a theistic treatise that has emerged from the religious life of mankind. The Upanishads are the source of the teaching of the Bhagavad Gitā. The theistic teachings that are developed in the Bhagavad Gitā are the understanding of Brahman as God, as the creator and sustainer of the universe, God as both immanent and transcendent of the world, as there is nothing other than God, everything in this world even the non-living are only His parts are etc. In the Gitā, the Upanishadic concept of Absolutism is tinged with theism as Lord Krishna is a personal God. Lord Krishna is eternal, imperishable, and the creator and sustainer of the world. God takes birth in a human body for the establishment of righteousness and to destroy the vicious. But ultimately theism culminates in absolutism; the world including the Atman is only a part of him for, Krishna transcends the world.

Like the Upanishads the problem of Ultimate Reality is analyzed in the Gitā also in two ways- the objective and subjective. The objective analysis proceeds on the distinction between the real and unreal, the aksara and kasara, substance and shadow, the immortal and the perishable. Rāmānuja for his own philosophical purpose states that Krishna stands for the principle of prakriti and aksara for the individual soul and regards Purusottama, or the Supreme Self, as superior to both these. By nature the world is transitory, limited and finite. So, there must be something in the background of all these, which is eternal. And that is the Supreme Reality who is the substratum of both perishable and imperishable things. So Gitā believes in an Ultimate Reality who is Eternal existence, Consciousness and Bliss, the lord of whole universe, the sustainer of the world, the master of everything, the witness, the shelter and the source of everything here and hereafter.

The Gitā distinguishes between the finite or the impermanent and infinite or permanent. Whatever is limited or transitory is not real. All becoming is an untenable contradiction. That which becomes is not being. If it were being, it would not become. Transitoriness marks all things on earth. In the background of our consciousness there is the
conviction that there is something that does not pass away. For nothing can come out of
nothing. That ultimate being of reality is not the ever changing Prakriti. It is the Supreme
Brahman. The Gitā believes in the reality of an infinite being underlying and animating all
finite existence. The Ultimate Reality has been called imperishable, omniscient, the ultimate
source of universe, the eternal Purusa, the first God and beginning less. The Supreme self is
quality less, without action and does not undergo changes, though present in the body. The
subject and object, self and not self being necessarily related to each other and always found
together. Subject is the basis of the object and no object can exist without being known by a
subject; so subject is superior to the object. The body, mind, senses, the object of knowledge
may change, the body is dust returning into dust but the pure subject remains unchanged,
unaffected and is not destroyed.

Like the Upanishads the Gitā identifies the two principles of the Ātman and the
Brahman. The two are one being of identical nature. The Gitā asserts the truth of an advaita
or non-dualism in philosophy. It states the oneness of Atman and paramatma. Supreme
Reality is Atman at the level of individual being and Brahman at the universal level. So,
finite and infinite are not mutually excluded from each other. Any attempt to make a
distinction between the finite and the infinite, will make the infinite finite converted into
something limited. There is only the infinite and the finite is nothing more than the
finitisation of the infinite. The Gitā reiterates the Upanisadic principle that the real is the
immutable self-existence behind the cosmic world with its space, time and causality.

The Supreme has two kinds of Prakṛti; Para or higher and Apara or lower prakṛti. The
lower Prakṛti or Apara Prakṛti produces effects and modifications in the world of nature or of
causes, where as Para or higher prakṛti gives rise to the purusas or the intelligent souls in the
world of ends or values. The two belong to one spiritual whole. Prakṛti evolves the world
when it comes into relation with Purusa. The evolution of the world starts with the contact
between the Purusa and Prakṛti. The Gitā accepts the Sāṁkhya theory of the evolution of the manifold from the homogeneous indeterminate matter, determined by the presence of spirit or Purusa. The Apara Prakṛti is unconscious and Para Prakṛti is conscious. Lower Prakṛti is constituted of the three gunas, i.e. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. These three gunas separate themselves from one another. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas act and react upon one another and produce the world of plurality. Para and Apara Prakṛti both are God’s power. Hence ultimately God is the material as well as efficient cause of the world. God is not affected by the change of the world. But at the same time it is also true that God is unknowable without the constitution of the world, because the world is a portion of his endless glory. Krishna says to Arjuna that He seats in the heart of all creatures. He is the beginning, the middle and the very end of beings. The world of moving and unmoving things is the manifested form of God. The imperishable, immobile, unchanging, unmanifested, spiritual being with energy, is one form of Brahman and perishable, mobile, changing, manifold world is another aspect of the same Ultimate Reality. The whole world is said to be sustained by one part of God, ‘ekamsena’¹⁰ [X 42 Gitā]. Krishna declares that He is manifesting only a portion of His endless glory. The immutability of the Absolute and the activity of Īśvara are both taken over in the conception of Purusottama.

From the religious point of view personal Purusottama is higher than the immutable self existence untouched by the subjective and the objective appearances of the universe. The impersonal Absolute is envisaged as Purusottama for the purposes of religion. The idea of Purusottama is not a willful self deception. Spiritual intuition reveals to us a God who is both personal and impersonal. The Gitā tries to make a synthesis of the imperishable self and the changing experience. The spiritual being with energy is Purusottama; whereas the same in a state of eternal rest is Brahman. The Supreme has two aspects of the manifested and the unmanifested. The similar view is expressed in the Gitā when Krishna says, “Whatever is
glorious, good, beautiful and mighty, understand that it all proceeds from a fragment of my
splendor.\textsuperscript{11} Again when Krishna calls upon us to become his devotees, when he shows the
viswarupa or the world-form, wherever he uses the first person, we have references to the
manifested aspect of the Supreme. This side of divine nature is involved in the work of
creation, where it loses itself in the succession of time and waves of becoming. Beyond it all
his another status, the silent and the immutable, than which there is nothing higher. These
two together form the Purusottama. On the ultimate analysis the assumption of the form of
Purusottama by the absolute becomes less than real. According to Gitā it is therefore wrong
to argue that the impersonal self is lower in reality than the personal Īśvara, although it is true
that the Gitā considers the conception of a personal God to be more useful for religious
purposes.

Gitā believes in the theory of incarnation or avatars. The avatars are generally limited
manifestations of the Supreme though the Bhagavata makes an exception in favour of
Krishna and makes him a full manifestation. An avatar is a descent of God into man. It does
not mean the ascent of the man to the level of God. Though every conscious being is such a
descent, it is not only a veiled manifestation. As Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gitā (iv-6)
though He is unborn and His self is imperishable He is the lord of all creatures and comes
into being through His power Māyā. Evil-doers sometimes set the social process in a wrong
direction. The Lord then comes to protect the worthiest and to destroy the evil power and by
that establishes the process of right again. The human being is as good as an avatar, provided
he crosses the Māyā of the world and transcends his imperfection. The creator Purusottama is
not separated from his creatures. The two do not exist apart. He is always fulfilling himself in
the world. Yet an avatar generally means a God who limits Himself for some purpose on
earth and possesses even in His limited form the fullness of knowledge.
Individual selves are also manifestation of God. But though the conscious beings are descent of God, they are shrouded in ignorance. Self realization is possible through the process of self-surrender. The soul is beyond gunas and modifications. Due to self-realization by going beyond the gunas the man is not touched by pleasure and pain and becomes a mere detached witness. This is the stage of Sthita-Prajña. By controlling senses through the mind, mind through the intellect and the intellect through the spirit one can realize the self and ultimately the God. God is present everywhere in the universe in subtle form. God creates the world out of his own being. Creation does not mean the new creation of worldly objects, but only manifestation of God. According to Gitā the world is real since it is a manifestation of the Apara-Prakriti of Purusottama and since it is created and sustained by him. There is no indication in the Gitā that the world is imaginary or unreal from the transcendental point of view. In the view of the Gitā when one acquires Brahma- knowledge the world does not disappear; it simply changes its significance, as it is then revealed as Brahman. In dissolution also, the world including the empirical selves exists in God in a subtle form.

Thus the Bhagavad Gitā advocates a monistic view of reality like the Upanishads. The Advaitavāda of Gitā is with the same spirit of Sruti as ‘Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma.” Thus the Lord says, “Mattah parataram mayat kincidasti Dhananjaya,”¹² that means “There is nothing other than me, O Dhananjaya. Again the verse like, “Vasudevah sarvamiti” i.e. Vasudeva is all in all”¹³ says the Lord is all in all.

This very Paramatman assumed the various forms in order to protect the good and punish the wicked, to establish Dharma and to guide the masses towards the right path. Thus the Lord is not only the creator but also the protector of the created being. Thus the Lord says-
“Yada- yada hi dharmasya

Glanir bhavati bharata

Abyuthanam adharmasya

Tadat manam srjamyaham.”

Meaning – whenever there is a decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, O Bharata, then I send forth (create incarnate) Myself”: Again –

Paritranaya Sadhunam

Vinasaya ca duskrtam

Dharma Samstha panarthaya

Sambhavami yuge- yuge”

Meaning – “For the protection of good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being from age to age”. Thus the conception of Vasudeva or Purusottama of the Gita is more akin to theistic interpretation of “Bhagavata Sampradaya.”

3.4 CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE ADVAITA VEDĀNTA, VISISTADAITA VEDĀNTA, NYĀYA AND YOGA SYSTEMS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY:

3.4.1 GOD IN ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

The thoughts of the early Upanishads got a systematic form in the philosophy of the Vedānta. The Absolutism of Śaṅkara is the most reputed philosophical system of India which is known as Advaita Vedānta. Śaṅkara gave a final shape to it. Almost all the important
germs of the Upanishadic philosophy is contained in the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara. The monism of Śaṅkara is based on his interpretation of the Brahma sutra and the Upanishads.

The doctrine of Brahman plays the central role in the orthodox religions of India and it is the life line of the Vedāntic thought. According to Śaṅkara, there is only one Supreme Reality and that Supreme Reality is Brahman, the most perfect reality. It is devoid of any quality and action and is a self contained reality without any difference. The world of manifoldness exists only from the phenomenal point of view, while from the transcendental point of view, it is without any existence. The key notion ‘Brahman’ has been derived from the Sanskrit root ‘brh’ which means ‘to grow’ or ‘to evolve.’ Śaṅkara regarded the Brahman as the cause of the origination, subsistence and dissolution of the world.

Brahman, the Absolute is opposed to all empirical entities. It is non-spacial and non-temporal. Though it exists at all time and in all space, it is not conditioned by space or time. Brahman is pure identity. It is one and non-dual and transcends all types of oppositions. The Absolute of Śaṅkara is rigid, motionless and beyond any changes. It is the unchanging underling unity behind all the changes. In fact, change, cannot take place unless there is some unchanging unity. Brahman is therefore called ‘kutasthanitya,’ unchanging self sufficient, unconditional and perfect. It is the ground in which the changing world makes its appearances. It is self-sufficient and perfect. It is the unconditioned principle and may be called the noumenal back ground of the phenomenal world. It is something, which does not need the help of anything else. It is thus self sufficient and perfect. Brahman is incomprehensible by our thought, beyond the reach of mind and is perfectly immanent in the world. As immanent, it is knowable per excellence but as non relational it cannot be known, through rational knowledge.
Śaṅkara’s Brahman has been approached negatively. We are told by Śaṅkara what it is not. It is we are told that which is not limited, not finite, eternal, unconditioned beyond space and time, beyond cause. Nothing positive can be said about it as that will either limit the unlimited and or be a mere tautology. Therefore, Brahman is existence only as not non-existence, it is knowledge only as not non-knowledge; it is bliss only as not non-bliss. Brahman is thus beyond all predication, all description, by any known word in any known language; indescribable in language and inconceivable in thought, beyond reason, beyond relation and beyond the sense.

According to Śaṅkara Brahman is absolutistically non-dualistic “One without a second, ekam evadvitiyam.”16 This Absolute Brahman is the Ultimate Reality. He is beyond cause and effect. The spatio-temporal phenomena are contained in him. To say that Brahman is reality is to say that it is different from the phenomenal, the spatial, the temporal and the sensible. Brahman is what is assumed as foundational, though it is in no sense substance. For Śaṅkara, Ultimate Reality is pure intelligence, cin-matra, devoid of all forms. Brahman is devoid of qualities whatever qualities are conceivable can only be denied of it: eko brahma dvitiyo, nāsti. The differences of knower, known and knowledge are imposed on it. When the reality is known, these differences which hide the true nature of reality disappear. Scriptures describe Brahman as reality, consciousness and infinity, satyam, jñānam, anatam brahma. These are not qualities which belong to Brahman, but are one with Brahman. They constitute the very nature of Brahman.

The Higher Brahman who is unrelated to anything else, without internal differentiation, a very abstract though perhaps not austere reality. It is one without a second. But then whence all this world of distinction? What does it have to do with Brahman? Again another question arises here that what is the significance of God in Advaita philosophy if the Brahman is the only reality? The answer is that the lower Brahman, God (Īśvara), is the cause
of all the diversity. Śaṅkara describes God as the omniscient, omnipotent cause from which proceed the origin, subsistence and dissolution of this world. According Śaṅkara Brahman is said to be personal God Ṣāvara. Ṣāvara is the personal aspect of the impersonal Brahman (transcendental) and Ṣāvara (empirical) are both vital forms of reality. The world is created and sustained by God. Along with other qualities God possesses knowledge, power and goodness surpassing all others. It is therefore transparently clear that in Advaita philosophy God has a very significant place.

Śaṅkara distinguishes two stages of Brahman, namely the Higher or Para Brahman and the Lower or Apara Brahman. The Nirguna Brahman or Brahman devoid of qualities and actions and lying beyond the world process is the Para Brahman, while the Saguna Brahman or Brahman endowed with qualities and actions and concerned with the world process is the Apara Brahman or Ṣāvara, who is the highest reality to the man of religion. God is as Real and Supreme to the devotee or the Upāsaka as the Nirguna Brahman is to the Brahmajñāni. Those who are not able to climb to the abstract heights of contemplation and realization of the Nirguna Brahman are the worshipper of the Saguna Brahman. Thus according to Śaṅkara there are two orders of Brahman, the Nirguna and Saguna. It is a fact that except the gifted few, endowed with divine personality the path leading to the realization of the Nirguna Brahman is through the Saguna Brahman. The aspirant, who has earned the divine grace of God by unwavering devotion to Him, can attain the Nirguna Brahman by Jñāna, born of instruction (upadesa). Ṣāvara is the highest preceptor of the Supreme truth and it trained the devotee to develop an attitude of detachment towards the world, freed it of its entanglements and habituates it to unfitting concentration so necessary for Brahman realization.

According to Śaṅkara God is the non-dual spirit beyond all possible conceptualization in association with Māyā, the dynamic principle of becoming. Through the power of becoming God become the source, the ground and the goal of the world. By a fraction of His
power of becoming He manifests the world which is full of truth and error, good and evil, beauty and ugliness. God is the essence of values whose description and cultivation at various levels may be said to constitute the spiritual evolution of the human mind. God may be approached as the abode of all conceivable forms of value. In the discussion of Advaitic Absolute, it is pointed out that Nirguna Brahman is other than asat, acit and ānanda. This negative description serves to highlight the fact that the non-dual Absolute is beyond all conceptualization. On the other hand God or Saguna Brahman is not beyond the sphere of conceptualization. In fact, to the pure human mind, God makes Himself accessible as asat, cit and ānanda. This is another way of saying that God in Advaita is Saccidānanda, the Existence, Consciousness -Bliss. He is the perfect personality. He is the Lord of Māyā.

To Śaṅkara Īśvara is the determinate Brahman (Saguna). Śaṅkara believes that the question of God’s existence is an absurd one. If God exists, then he must exist as other objects do, which would be to reduce God to the level of the finite. And this would make him simply a unit in the indefinite multiplicity of objects, distinct from them all, even as they are distinct from each other or again merging him in the totality of existence in a pantheism which will be practically distinguishable from atheism. “Śaṅkara takes up the so called proofs for the existence of God, the epistemological, the cosmological and the physio-teleological and shows their futility as Kant did at a much later day.”¹⁷ A complete apprehension of reality as a whole can justify the hypothesis as a whole that God is and He is the creator of all. Our human experience is incapable of apprehending the world in its entirety achieves a harmony of pure being with restless infinitude. The cosmological argument which applies the concept of cause in the empirical world is not adequate and turns out altogether useless when we try to relate the world of experience to the ultimate reality which is said to manifest itself through it. We cannot admit within the world of phenomena an uncaused cause. We infer a finite creator from a finite world. The first cause must be a
unity of the same order of being as the objects of experience, since the latter are brought into relation with it. If Īśvara is the cause of the world, he must be within the space-time framework. According to Śaṅkara such a God working through instruments analogous to the human ones, is neither infinite nor omnipotent. The moral argument which shows that the context of things is adapted to the soul of man and shows the workmanship of benevolent God is a part of God. God must feel the pain of the soul. But it is found that the sufferings of God are much greater than those of the individual souls and it is better for us to remain self-enclosed individuals, with our limited sufferings and take upon ourselves the burden of the whole world. A perfect God does not require the world for its satisfaction. If it is said that the world is for his enjoyment, then God is no God but only a samsārin.

Now we can say that to set aside the logical proof, is not to deny the existence of Īśvara. According to Śaṅkara no purely rational argument, for the existence of God as a personal supreme being, is finally acceptable. The proofs only tell us that God is a possibility. The reality of God transcends our rational powers of conceiving as well as comprehending. Śaṅkara takes great pains to prove that the reality of Īśvara, when once it is ascertained from the scripture, can be reconciled with the demands of reason. Reason and experience are two different approaches in man’s guest for God. Both are responses of the human soul to God’s self-disclosure through nature and history and spiritual experience. Reason reveals to us God as a matter of speculation, in experience it ceases to be an object of speculation but becomes a permanent reality. Spiritual experience offers a valid proof for the existence of God.

The concept of Saguna Brahman is more or less an empirical postulate which is practically useful. Īśvara is not metaphysically real. He creates the manifold work through His own power (Sakti) which is called Māyā (cosmic appearance). God becomes the material as well as the efficient cause of creation. The concept of Īśvara is essentially mingled with
the concept of Māyā because it is in association with Māyā that Brahman reveals itself as Īśvara. Māyā is the magical power of God. Māyā is the origin of the world of name and form. The world has in reality, no existence apart from Brahman, but the potency of Māyā gives to it the sense of otherness. Māyā is neither ‘sat’ or eternally existent like Brahman nor ‘asat’ or totally non-existent like a sky-flower; it is different from both the existent and non-existent and is called anirvacaniya or indefinable. Māyā being the power of Īśvara is indistinguishable from Him, just as the burning power is indistinguishable from fire. The relation of Māyā and Brahman is unique and is called tadatmya. The world is merely a play or Lilā of Īśvara. It is due to Avidyā or Māyā that one God is seen in many forms. So Śaṅkara says that all human experiences are appearances of the Absolute, as name and form manifestation, of Brahman. This name and form manifestation is another name for Māyā.

God, in Advaita Vedānta occupies at once both an immanent and a transcendent status. The immanent character of God is best expressed of saying that He is the real Self of man. He is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker, the misunderstood understander. Other than God there is no seer, hearer, thinker, understander in man. God’s immanence in man explains the latter’s unconquerable yarning for perfection, his ceaseless search for truth. The Upanishadic aspirations, from the unreal lead us to the real, from darkness to light and from death to immortality, spring from the divinely fertilized soil of human nature. Another implication of divine immanence in man is the certitude of eventual success in man’s progress to perfection.

In the Advaita Vedānta system there is an insistence on God as the both efficient and material cause of the world. At the beginning of the Brahmasutras there is a mention of God as the material and efficient cause of the world, the entire sphere of objective experience. The Advaitin affirms that the world- cause is identical with the Upanishadic spirit. God as the world cause has to be characterized as sarvajñam sarvavasakti mahāmāyam ca Brahma.
meaning omnipotent, omniscient endowed with Māyā. The omniscient God is the material cause of the world. The world once produced is controlled and maintained in being by God, just as a magician controls and maintains the magical show put forth by him. God also terminates the show of the world put forth by him and gets it reabsorbed in his own being just as the bodies of different kinds of creatures at their death get disintegrated into the material substance out of which they were created. The very same God is the self of us all. To use theological language, He is both the efficient and the material cause of the world; though different from his effects- being omnipotent and omniscient where those effects are not - He is yet within the world as inner controller (antaryāmin). If God were only the efficient cause then he would have to depend on some primeval matter which is an independent reality. Such an independent reality would detract from Īśvara’s omnipotence. Matter has resistance and Īśvara would not be free to fashion the world according to his own will and desire. His will, will be limited by the constitution of matter. Śaṅkara in his commentary on Vedānta-Sutra 11.ii – 37-41 criticizes the view of Nyāya system that of God as only the efficient cause of the world. Since Īśvara is the material and efficient cause rolled up into one, He is both immanent and transcendent. He is in the world and also above it.

In this context God’s role in creation is often compared to that of a magician. In fact, God is called the Great Magician. This comparison is significant in two respects. First, a magician produces magical objects out of his own sleeves and is both the efficient and material cause of his magical creations. Second important point is that the magician is not deceived by his own magic, the onlookers are. God remains free from delusion and will consequent to it, where as the beings in the universe fall prey to it. Nevertheless, God as qualified Brahman is not identical with the Absolute. Both the Absolute and God are infinite. But the Absolute is infinite in the sense of being all comprehensive, where as God possesses infinity. Similarly both the Absolute and God are self existent, but God is self existent from
the point of view of the universe. According to Radhakrishnan, “Since nothing superior to Īśvara can be conceived, therefore Īśvara exists uncaused.”

Īśvara is all comprehensive and contains within Himself all that exist potentially in pralaya and actually in creation. There does not seem to be much point in Deussen’s observation that Śaṅkara did not carefully distinguish Brahman, the undifferentiated, from phenomenal world on the one hand and Īśvara on the other. “This undifferentiated Brahman, we may briefly call it has however two characters: first the forms of the phenomenal world, as which Brahman, conditioned by Upādhis appear then the imperfect figurative ideas, which we form of the Godhead, in order to bring it nearer to our understanding and our worship. It is strange that between these two contraries of the undifferentiated Brahman, however wide apart they naturally are, Śaṅkara draws no sharp distinction.

God occupies an important place in the metaphysical system of Śaṅkara Vedānta. God is not only the creator of the world, but He is also the support and controller of the world and the dispenser of justice. Śaṅkara appeals to our faith in God as the creator, maintainer and destroyer of the universe. He is the immanent principle, the upholder of morality and justice. God is to be regarded as internal or immanent truth. Scriptures state that Īśvara is the cause of the world. Rather it is Brahman in association with Māyā that is the creator, preserver and ruler of the world. Īśvara is superior to the world, to the objects and things of world. It is from, the phenomenal point of view that Śaṅkara postulates the reality of Īśvara. Of course the interest of the Advaita is not in establishing the theistic position as the final truth. His interest is in the non-dual Absolute whose realization will mark the termination of the bondage of empirical existence.
3.4.2 GOD IN VISISTADVAITA VEDĀNTA:

The philosophy of Rāmānuja is known as the Visistadvaita - vāda or Qualified Non-dualism, because it accepts Brahman as the only fundamental reality and the abode of eternal attributes which again within its own being, consists of visesya and visesana, i.e. the substance and attribute. The Absolute is an organic unity, an identity which is qualified by diversity. “The highest person (Purusottama), who is essentially free from all imperfections and possesses numberless classes of auspicious qualities of unsurpassable excellence.”21 Thus the attributes that we generally ascribe to the God of Religion has been ascribed to the Absolute of Rāmānuja. From the various writings of Rāmānuja it is seen that he discards the distinction that is usually drawn between the Absolute of Philosophy and God of Religion and he regards both of them as identical. Rāmānuja uses the words Brahman and Īśvara or God interchangeably.

Rāmānuja is the exponent of the theistic school of Vedānta. He sets forth the doctrine of determinate and qualified Brahman, where God is identified with the Supreme Brahman. Rāmānuja propounds his doctrine of Saguna and savisesa Brahman, a quite distinct and contradictory concept that is totally opposed to that of Śaṅkara’s doctrine of unqualified, indeterminate Brahman or Nirguna Brahman. Śaṅkara’s doctrine of unqualified Brahman, according to Rāmānuja, leads him to a void which Śaṅkara tries to conceal by a futile play of concepts. Indeterminate Brahman of Śaṅkara is a blank, suggesting to us the famous mare of Orlando, which had every perfection except the one small defect of being dead.22 Such a Brahman cannot be known by any means, perfection, inference or scripture. Further Rāmānuja tries to prove that Brahman is not characterless, but He is full of characters. Rāmānuja does not make any distinction between the Nirguna or characterless Brahman and the Saguna or qualified Brahman, i.e. Īśvara. For him the characterless and difference less Brahman accepted by Śaṅkara is a fiction and Īśvara endowed with all the best qualities is the
Ultimate. According to him Brahman is said to be real, pure consciousness and infinite. It means these are the characters of Brahman and it is meaningless to say that they do not indicate some character. The scriptures cannot speak of any characterless Brahman, since it is here characterized as all knowing, all pervading, all powerful, the lord of all, the illuminator of all and so on. The scriptures therefore are by nature unable to yield any meaning which signifies anything that is characterless.

Rāmānuja’s Brahman is an organic whole qualified by diversity. According to Rāmānuja the ultimate reality which is called God, we have in it the determination; limitation, difference of other being which is at the same time dissolved, contained and gathered together in the one. Finitude is in the infinite itself. The two integral parts of Brahman, matter (acit) and finite spirits (cit) are equally real. The individual self (Jiva) evolves out of cit and the physical world out of acit. Matter and souls are integral parts of Brahman. Brahman is devoid of heterogeneous and homogeneous distinction, but Brahman is possessed of internal difference (Svagatabhedha). It is a synthetic whole, with souls and matter as his moments (cidacidvisista).23 According to Rāmānuja existence, knowledge, infinite is Brahman. God is the soul of souls, He is immanent and transcendent both. He is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. He is the Supreme soul. All the elements and all the souls are bound together within this Brahman. The God of Rāmānuja is identified with the Absolute. He is Brahman and according to Rāmānuja Brahman is savisesa or qualified unity. God stands for the whole universe. Matter and souls may be called either attributes or modes of Brahman. They are absolutely dependent on God and are inseparable from Him. They are His body and He is their soul. Body is that which is controlled, supported and utilized for its purposes by a soul.

God is the unchanging controller of all changes and the limitations of matter as well as of the miseries and imperfections of the finite souls which do not affect the essence of
God. God as the perfect personality is devoid of all demerits and possesses all merits. He has
infinite knowledge and bliss. The qualities of Being (Sat), Consciousness (Cit) and Bliss
(Ānanda) give to Brahman a character and personality. Brahman is the Supreme Personality
while the individuals are personal in an imperfect way. Personality implies the power to plan
and realize one’s purposes. God is perfect personality since He contains all experiences
within Himself and is dependent on nothing external to Him. The differences necessary for
personality are contained within Himself.

Rāmānuja concentrates his attention on the relation of the world to God. He maintains
that God is real and independent. The souls and matter are real but their reality is utterly
dependent on the reality of God. Though the world of matter and the individual selves have a
real existence of their own still neither of them is eternally free from imperfections, but
matter is unconscious and the individual selves are subject to ignorance and suffering. Yet
they all form a unity, because matter and souls have existence only within Brahman. Apart
from Brahman they are nothing.

According to Rāmānuja Brahman is not attribute less, as He possesses innumerable
good qualities. He is omnipresent, omnipotent, all knower. According to Rāmānuja, God is
the sole cause of the universe. God is both the material as well as efficient cause of the world.
God associated with the subtle forms of the selves and matter is the material cause. God
endowed with the desire of being many is the efficient cause. God is not only the ground of
the universe but also the active governor- the creator, preserver and destroyer of it. At the
time of creation, God impels his material attribute i.e. acit or non conscious Prakriti, to
evolve in accordance with the merits and demerits of the jivas, as a result of which whole
material universe emerges. At the time of dissolution, He suspends by His free will the
evolutionary process of Prakriti and takes everything back into his bosom. The world of
material bodies and individual selves are the modification of Brahman. They are the real
effects but Brahman is untouched by the imperfections of the world.

According to Rāmānuja, God is both the transcendent and immanent ground of the
world. God is a person and not a mere totality of other persons and so He cannot be confused
with the thinking individuals and the objects of their thought. As an immanent inner
controller God is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. God is changeless though
his body undergoes modification. Matter, soul, the qualities of God are subject to change but
God remains unchanged in the midst of all changes. God is also transcendent. God is the
supreme person and the limitations or imperfections of the world cannot exhaust him.

Rāmānuja believed in One God, he was by no means a polytheist. We do not find any
influence of Henotheism in his writings according to which some one God or the other is
supreme over the rest. Neither he was a deist, nor a pantheist. Rāmānuja holds that God is not
exhausted in the universe but transcends it. Strictly speaking Rāmānuja was a theist holding
the belief that there is one God who made this world and who governs us. This Supreme
Spirit is identified with Vishnu by Rāmānuja and the highest attributes are ascribed to him.
He is free from imperfection and possesses infinite qualities.

Rāmānuja is highly influenced by Bhagavad Gitā and the Upanishads. Brahman and
God are non-different. For Rāmānuja God or Brahman is the Absolute or Ontological reality.
Rāmānuja justifies his doctrine of Saguna Brahman from the extant formulation of
Upanishadic verses. The Svetasvatara Upanishad (1-9 and 1-12) says that the individual soul,
the personal God and Prakriti or nature are all contained in Brahman. The same Upanishad
further says that the individual soul, the object of enjoyment, Prakriti and the Supreme Lord
Īśvara are all forms of Brahman. The nature of God is described in the same Upanishad
(Svetasvatara 111.1) in this way, “The One who spreads the net, who rules with his ruling
powers, who rules all the worlds with his ruling powers, who remains one (identical) while (things or works) arise and continue to exist, they who know that become immortal.”

Thus God is the inner controller of all. He is the soul of souls. He is present in matter and yet he is different from matter. Brahman is the Supreme Personality. Brahman is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. The knowledge of Brahman is not dependent on the organs of sense because Brahman’s knowledge is immediate. With the help of Gitā Rāmānuja supports his stand of qualified Brahman. Gitā says – “The Highest Spirit called the Supreme Self who as the undying Lord, enters the three worlds and sustains them.” Again Gitā says – “I surpass the perishable and I am higher even than the imperishable, I am celebrated as the Supreme Person in the world and in the Veda”

Brahman has the qualities of knowledge, power and love. Brahman has created the world and established law and helps all the devotees to realize the Brahman out of His love.

Rāmānuja holds that Brahman creates the world of material objects and individual selves by a gracious act of will. Creation is as much as real as Brahman; because the finite springs from the infinite Brahman and includes Himself the finite spirits (cit) and unconscious matter (acit). The cit is the source of embodied souls (jivas) and acit is the source of the world of material objects. The acit is called Prakriti, which is real and eternal. Prakriti is the unconscious element present in Īśvara. It exists in subtle seed form and it is with this that Īśvara creates the universe. Rāmānuja believes in the theory of parināmavāda, which explains that the effect necessarily pre-exists in its material causes. The all powerful Īśvara creates the universe of diverse objects out of Himself of His independent volition. Both conscious and unconscious elements are present in Brahman.

Rāmānuja believes that the worldly changes are not apparent but a real creation of God. This view is known as Brahma - parināmavāda because according to it the entire universe including the material world and individual souls is a real modification of Brahman.
According to Rāmānuja the worldly things and selves are embodiments of God. The material world and souls are absolutely real and fully dependent upon God. Substances in themselves are merely attributes or modes of God. They have their organic relation with God and thus are not external to Him. They are also different from God though they are not external to Him. God neither creates them nor destroys them. They are co-eternal with Him.

Rāmānuja holds that Jiva is as real as Brahman. The individual self is an integral part of Brahman and is eternal, real and unique. Rāmānuja states that the individual soul is a quality of the Highest Self, stands in relation as part to whole. The Highest Self is different from the individual soul in its nature. As the luminous body is not of the same nature of its light, so the Highest Self differs from the individual soul which is a part of it. As the attribute is different from its substance, both of them are not same. The soul and Brahman are also not identical. The Jiva is not one with God, since it differs in essential character from His. It is said to be a part of Brahman. The individual selves are related with Brahman as visesanas are related with substance, as body with substance. The part cannot exist apart from the whole, the modes from substance and the living body from soul. The relation subsisting between the individual souls and Brahman is termed by Rāmānuja as apartha-k – siddhi, which means inseparability. Since Rāmānuja identifies the relation here involved with that between the body and the soul, his conception of the Absolute may be described as that of an organic unity in which as in a living organism, one element predominates over and controls the rest. The subordinate elements are termed visesanas and the pre-dominant one, visesya. Because the visesanas cannot by hypothesis exist by themselves or separately, the complex whole (visista) in which they were included is described as a unity.”

By the theory of the relation of visesya and visesana, or substance and attribute, Rāmānuja attempts to bring out the reality of one and one existence only and assimilate the others to it. God is the underlying substratum in which infinite attributes inhere. But beyond the fact that the Absolute
characterized by Sat, Cit and Ānanda is a concrete one possessing these distinctive attributes, Rāmānuja does tell us how exactly these attributes are found organically related in the Absolute itself.

Rāmānuja’s conception of God is a kind of theism. Theism in this narrow sense means belief in God who is both immanent and transcendent and is also a person, i.e. a self conscious being possessed of will. All these characters are present in Rāmānuja’s conception of God. He tries his best to reconcile the demands of the religious feeling with the claims of logical thinking. Rāmānuja firmly attributes reality to God. According to him a real conformity is composed by the unity of God, world and finite being. Like that of Śaṅkara’s God Rāmānuja in his different explanations does not express God to be unreal. Even there are remarks that there is no difference between Nirguna and Saguna Brahman. Rāmānuja also insists that there is both the presence and absence of characteristic qualities in Supreme Reality. By characteristics qualities he means the presence of propitious attributes. Rāmānuja holds that the Supreme Reality which he considers as God though not capable of understanding yet is perceptible by intellect. But Śaṅkara’s Brahman is neither capable of understanding nor perceptible by intellect. Interchangeably using the term Brahman or God Rāmānuja has made an effort to raise a synoptic idea of reality. It is obvious from Rāmānuja’s view that the Supreme reality is one.

3.4.3 GOD IN NYĀYA SYSTEM:

Nyāya system is a realistic and pluralistic school of philosophy which holds that all the objects known by valid knowledge have got their ontological reality and that every entity is different from every other entity of the universe. Thus according to the Nyāya system Īśvara, the selves and matter are all ontological realities, because they are known by valid
knowledge and each of these realities is distinct from the selves and matter. He is the Absolute in the sense that all the selves and material objects are under His full control.

In the Nyāya – Sutra of Gotama there is a brief but explicit reference to God. Though in the Vaisesika Sutra there is no explicit mention of God by name, yet the commentators interpret some of the sutras referring to God. But the latter Nyāyayikas and Vaisesikas give us an elaborate theory of God and enter into a discussion of the nature of God in considering the theory of Atman. Annam Bhatta classified souls into two kinds, supreme and human. The Supreme is God, one omniscient whereas the human souls are infinite in number, different in each body. God is looked upon as a special soul, possessing the attributes of omnipotence and omniscience by which he guides and regulates the universe.

The Nyāyayikas regard God as the ultimate cause of the creation, maintenance and destruction of the world. God creates the world out of eternal atoms, space, time, ether, minds (manas) and souls. The creation of the world means the ordering of the eternal entities, which are co-existent God into a moral world. According to the Nyāyayikas Īśvara, the Lord of the universe is Saguna or qualified. They deny the existence of Nirguna or characterless Brahman accepted as the Absolute in Śaṅkara Vedānta. Īśvara is endowed with the attributes of existence, knowledge and bliss. God has the quality of all powerfulness or omnipotence by which he performs the cosmic activities. He is endowed with omniscience that is pure, unimpeded and eternal knowledge by which he knows all events. His knowledge is direct or immediate; he does not acquire any knowledge through memory, inference or any other source of knowledge. God is endowed with eternal bliss or bliss which does not depend upon any other condition. God is Sarva Vyāptin i.e. all pervading or omnipresent, and Sarvajña, i.e. all knowledge or omniscient. With his all surpassing power Īśvara creates, sustains and destroys the universe and guides the selves in all their states of existence, whether in bondage or in liberation.
In Udayana’s book Kusumanjali we find the classic formulation of Nyāya proofs for the existence of God. Udayana’s arguments for the existence of God have become classical for theism. Every effect depends on a cause. The world is an effect and hence it must have an efficient cause. Every cause is an effect in relation to its preceding cause, which in its turn is the effect of some other cause. As the world has no beginning this succession of cause and effect has also no beginning. The world with all its order and arrangement must also be due to the agency of some other cause and this intelligent agent is God. The order, design, coordination between different phenomena comes from God.

The trace of a good action is called merit (punya) and that of a bad action is called demerit (papa) and the two together forms the Adṛṣṭa, the unseen power or the desert which resides in the soul of the person who performs the acts and not in the thing from which he derives happiness and misery. This Adṛṣṭa causes happiness and misery. The persistence of merit and demerit is accounted for by the transcendent agency of Adṛṣṭa. Udayana argues that a non-intelligent cause like Adṛṣṭa cannot produce its effect without the guidance of an intelligent spirit. God is said to supervise the work of Adṛṣṭa. The world cannot be explained by the atoms or the force of karma. The atoms being essentially inactive cannot form the different combinations unless God gives motion to them. The Unseen power, the Adṛṣṭa requires the intelligence of God. Without God it cannot supply motion to the atoms. Again the individual soul cannot be the controller of Adṛṣṭa. In that case it would be able to avert unwished for miseries, which it is not. Therefore the unintelligent principle of Adṛṣṭa, which governs the fate of being, acts under the direction of God. The world is sustained by God’s will. Unintelligent Adṛṣṭa cannot do this. Again the world is destroyed by God’s will. God is thus the giver of the fruits of our deeds (Karmaphalapradah). Further Udayana states that the God is the author of the infallible Veda. The Veda testifies the existence of God. The Vedic sentences deal with moral injunctions and prohibitions. The Vedic commands are the Divine
commands. God is the creator and promulgator of moral laws. Udayana holds that the Vedas are non eternal, like the other things of the world subject to creation and destruction. If they are the sources of right knowledge, it is because God is their author. Again since the Vedas consist of sentences they require an author who can only be God.

God, in the Nyāya system is a personal being possessing existence, knowledge and bliss. According to the Nyāya system God is endowed with the qualities like the absence of demerit, wrong knowledge and negligence and presence of merit, knowledge and equanimity. He is omnipotent in regard to his creation, though he is influenced by the results of acts done by the beings he creates. God is omniscient since he possesses right knowledge, which is an independent apprehension of reality. He has eternal intelligence and since his cognitions are everlasting, there is no need for memory and inferential knowledge. God has pure unimpeded intelligence as well as eternal bliss.

According to the Nyāyaikas God is the author of the creation, preservation and dissolution of the world. The question is raised here by the opponents whether God creates the world to realize any desire of his own, or for the sake of others. But God being self-contained and self-satisfied has nothing to gain and nothing to lose. It is therefore not necessary for God to engage in creation. The only possible reply to this question is, according to Uddayotakara and Jayanta Bhatta is that the creative urge of Īśvara is without any motive, as this urge is innate to his very nature. The creation of the world cannot thus be regarded as an expression of the sportive mood of Īśvara.

Īśvara is one for being omniscient and omnipotent; He alone can bring about the world order. God is omnipotent although He is guided in His activities by moral considerations of the merit and demerit of human actions. He is omniscient in so far as He possesses right knowledge of all things and events. He has eternal consciousness as a power
of direct and steadfast cognition of all objects. Eternal consciousness is only an inseparable attribute of God and not His very essence. God possesses to the full all the six perfection and is majestic, almighty, all glorious, infinitely beautiful and possessed of infinite knowledge and perfect freedom from attachment.

God accepted in the Nyāya system is transcendent of the selves and matter and not immanent in them. God transcends the atoms, time, space and ether which are co-eternal with Him. God is not the material cause of the world; he is merely the nimitta karana or the efficient cause of the world. Like a potter, he creates the world out of the eternal atoms, sustains it after creation and annihilates it after sustenance. And just as a potter is different from the jar and also from its material clay, so also God is different from the material world and from the atoms out of which he produces this world. But God creates the world of manifold objects in accordance with the merits and demerits of the finite souls for their enjoyments and sufferings. He adjusts the world to their moral deserts and makes it a proper sphere of their moral life. God’s freedom is limited by the Law of Karma, which emanates from His moral will. God’s freedom is not independent of the Law of karma, but it consists in directing the merits and demerits of the individual souls. Though He is omnipotent, He cannot alter the nature of things. God is quite distinct from the world. While God is spiritual and eternal, world is material and non-eternal. Yet the world is under full control of God. It is God who creates, sustains and destroys the world in consonance with the merits and demerits of the Jivas. The world is neither a manifestation of God, nor is it a part or attribute of Him; it is different from his under all circumstances.

Again God is quite distinct from the selves also, as He is the guide of the selves in all their activities and attainments. The selves and matter are neither identical with Īśvara, nor do they form parts of his being. Thus Īśvara lies completely beyond the selves and matter. The knowledge, will and action of the Jiva are non-eternal and limited, while those of Īśvara are
eternal and unlimited. God is endowed with eternal bliss whereas the individual self is subject to joys and sorrows. Īśvara is the Supreme who rules over the selves in all their activities, associates them with the fruits of their actions and finally leads them to liberation in harmony with their spiritual practices. Accordingly, the self is not identical with Īśvara, nor does it form a part of Him, it is quite distinct from Him under all circumstances. In liberation also the self retains its individuality as distinct from God. God is like the father to the individual souls and treats them as a father treats his children. He teaches them the moral Law, rewards them for their virtues and punishes them for their vices. God is the moral guide of the individual souls, and the dispenser of the fruits of their actions. God lays down moral injunctions and prohibitions for the good of mankind and favour their free actions with their fruits.

But the Nyāya doctrine of theism has been criticized on various grounds. The critics observe that the Nyāyayika resorts to Adṛṣṭa whenever natural explanation fails. Adṛṣṭa constitutes only a limit of explanation. It is supposed to call an intelligent controller, Īśvara, for the remarkable regularity with which events happen cannot be explained apart from God. The Nyāyayikas uses casual argument to proof the existence of God. By assuming that the world is an effect, the Nyāyayikas takes for granted what is to be proved. But the law of causality as interpreted by the Nyāyayika has not universal validity. Other than uniformity and concomitant variation it has no other signification. Since its evidence is derived from the phenomenal world, it is wrong to extend its scope beyond it. To know the cause of the world is not within the power of the human understanding. The impossibility of an infinite regress of infinite causes leads the Nyaiyayikas to assert the reality of a cause outside the series, an uncaused cause.

The Nyāya anthropomorphism creates other difficulties also. A question arises, whether the maker of the world, God has a body or not. If he has a body, then he is subject to
Adrsta, since bodies are all determined by it. Embodied beings are created and are not capable of exercising control over subtle atoms and merit and demerit. The Nyaiyayikas sometimes say that God creates without the aid of any body, while it is also suggested that God becomes endowed with a body, on account of Adrsta. Sometimes the atoms are made the body of God, while ākasa is assigned this status on other occasions.

God is outside of us and the world too, however much He may be said to cause, govern and destroy it. Reality is composed of a great number of particulars, linked together by an external bond. God is not the creator of atoms, but only their fashioner. The conception of God as beyond the world, as outside the entire frame of space as dwelling apart in eternal self-centered isolation is empty. We cannot maintain the dualism of an infinite creator on the one side and the infinite world on the other. The two limit each other. Things which are defined each against the other cannot but be finite. With the liberation of all, samsāra disappears. The lordship of Īśvara will also come to an end. What has an end has a beginning. The Nyaiyayika must either give up the notion of God as creator or admit that the atoms and souls are the expressions of the eternal and constant causality of God, though this causality ought not to be conceived in a mechanical way. According to the Nyaiyayikas, finite beings know only thought and the bare fact that the real is not a thought. Only an infinite mind conceived as identical with the finite mind is capable of knowing whether and how thought and reality are related to each other. The souls and atoms are co-eternal with God.

It may perhaps appear that the Nyāya system by insisting on the devotion to God helps the religious life of mankind. But, certainly the Nyāya system cannot hold up the ideal of communion or identity with God, for by the nature of the hypothesis, God is outside man and the universe.
3.4.4 GOD IN THE YOGA SYSTEM:

As distinguished from the Sāṁkhya system, the Yoga system is theistic. The Yoga adopts Sāṁkhya metaphysics and engraves the existence of God on both practical and theoretical grounds. The Yoga recognizes the reality of Prakṛti and its evolutes, countless individual souls (Purusa) and God. Prakṛti is the material cause of the world and God is the efficient cause. It seems that Patanjali, the first profundier of this system, does not feel the necessity of accepting God for the explanation of any theoretical problem of philosophy. For him God has more practical value than a theoretical one. Patanjali makes devotion to God as one of the aids to Yoga. God is not the only object of meditation, but is also said to help the realization of the goal by the removal of obstacles. Patanjali accepts Īśvara simply because Īśvara- Pranidhāna or meditation on God is one of the means for the attainment or Samādhi, a state in which all the modifications of the mind are restrained. But he does not regard God as integral part of his system. However the commentators and interpreters of Yoga of the subsequent times feel the necessity of postulating God for the explanation of metaphysical problems also. They argue that the association between the Purusa and Prakṛti, which gives a start to the evolutionary process, the strict harmony and order of the world, the consonance between the acts of individual selves and the respective effects and the dissociation of the Purusas from Prakṛti which brings about the dissolution of the world- all these will remain unexplained, unless we assume an intelligent agent or Īśvara behind them.

Patanjali describes God as the Supreme Person who is above all individual selves and is free from all defects. He is the Perfect Being who is eternal and all pervading. Patanjali regarded God as a special kind of Purusa who is always free from pains, actions, effects and impressions. He is eternally free and was never bound nor has any possibility of being bound. It is God alone who is eternally free from all defects. God is above the law of karma. He is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. God possesses a perfect nature, the like of which is
not to be met with anywhere else. He has also the fullest possible knowledge of all facts and is therefore capable of maintaining the whole world by His mere wish or thought. God is the Supreme Ruler of the world and has infinite knowledge, unlimited power and wisest desires, which distinguish Him from all other selves. God is perfection incarnate. He is purest knowledge. He is the teacher of the risis and the teacher of the Veda. Being free from all entanglement in worldly existence, God lives in eternal bliss, without merit or element, unaffected by the weight of suffering with which living beings are burdened.

God in Yoga system is endowed with eternal and supreme knowledge, perfect righteousness, complete and perfect detachment and infinite and eternal power. God is unlimited by time and all merciful Īśvara in the Yoga system is that special Purusa who is distinguished from all others by the fact of His being untouched by the afflictions or the fruits of karma. God lies above the law of karma and for that reason he is untouched by the fruits of karma. Other purusas are also in reality untouched by the afflictions, but they seemingly at least, have to undergo the afflictions and consequently birth and rebirth, etc. until they are again finally released. But God, though he is a Purusa, yet does not suffer in any way any sort of bondage. He is always free and ever the Lord. He never had nor will have any relation to these bonds. His sattva nature of perfect quality, which is devoid of any imperfection due to rajas or tamas, is the means of his self-expression and it is completely under his control. God is ever free and so cannot be confused with freed souls who were once bound, or those absorbed in Prakrti, who may incur bondage in the further. Unlike the liberated souls who have no further relation with the world, God is everlastingly in connection with it. It is assumed that God stands in an eternal and dissoluble connection with the purest side of matter, sattva and so God is forever endowed with supreme power, wisdom and goodness. The mystic syllable ‘AUM’ represents God and by meditating on it, the mind rests in the true
vision of God. God is never influenced by the three gunas of Prakrti – sattva, rajas and tamas and is never entangled in the empirical life.

The personal God of Yoga philosophy is very loosely connected with the entire system. According to the Yoga system, the goal of human aspiration is not union with God, but the absolute separation of Purusa from Prakrti. Devotion to God is one of the several other ways of reaching ultimate freedom. God is only a special Purusa and not the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. He does not reward or punish the actions of men. Innumerable Purusas and Prakrti, all eternals and absolutes are there to limit Him. God cannot grant liberation. He can only remove the obstacles in the upward progress of the devotees. Directly he has nothing to do with the bondage and liberation of the Purusas.

God of the Yoga system is greatest of all and is therefore, one. He is infinite as he is not limited or conditioned by time and space. The pre-eminence of God lies in the fact that there is no other divinity greater than or equal to him. The Yogists maintained that God excels all other beings in knowledge and power. He is neither equal to nor surpassed by any other being. The conception of God in Yoga is a monotheistic one according to which God is one and lord of all. The Yoga system regarded God as the guide of the Law of karma. Vacaspati holds that by removing the obstacles of Prakrti God enables all beings to perform their good or bad deeds according to their dispositions and also to get the legitimate fruits of their Adrstas or merits and demerits occurring from those deeds. It is because of the superintendence of Iśvara that the evolutionary process is actualized in a harmonious way and the darnas and adharmas of the Purusas fructify. Performance of good or bad actions by the worldly beings and the acquisition of the fruits of the merits and demerits resulting from those actions are also guided by God.
God is all merciful and has full compassion for all the creatures. He is involved in the world process not for the fulfillment of any desire of his own, but for the good of the jivas. He removes the obstacles standing in the way of the evolution of Prakrti and thereby helps Prakrti evolve into the multi-various objects of the world for the enjoyment and liberation of the Purusas. Again it is because of His mercy towards the jivas that God manifests himself at the beginning of every creation and reveals the Vedas with a view to imparting right knowledge to the bound selves and thereby helping them attain liberation. God in the Yoga system is neither immanent in the selves nor in the physical world. He transcends them both. Of course God helps Prakrti evolve the manifold world and assists the selves to get the fruits of their actions and to attain liberation at the end. But God performed these actions either in connection with Prakrti or with the selves from without, and not from within. He somehow associates the Prakrti with the Purusas and adapts the process of the world to the needs of the Purusas, but He is not organically related to Prakrti and the Purusas.

God is regarded in the Yoga system as a particular self or Purusa-visesa. He is not immanent in the selves. On the contrary, he transcends them. The relation between God and the Purusas is therefore, not an inseparable or organic one. The Purusas are eternally existing and all pervading realities quite distinct from God. They are not identical with God; nor are they related to Him as His parts or qualities. Again God does not govern the selves nor does he grant them the fruits of their actions. God is not the moral governor of the Purusas. God as accepted in the Yoga system being inactive is not the author of the creation, sustenance and destruction of the world. He is quite distinct from Prakrti, the primal material cause of the world. He does not create any motion in Prakrti, nor does he actively cause the subsequent evolution to follow. It is merely by his passive presence that God removes all the obstacles which hinder the evolution of Prakrti. God is thus not directly involved in the world process;
he is only the inactive agent of the world. The world like Prakṛti is therefore, quite distinct from and external to God.

In the Yoga system devotion to God is regarded as not only a part of the practice of yoga, but the best means for the attainment of concentration and restraint of mind. (Samādhi Yoga). The reason is that God is not only an object of meditation (dhyāna) like other objects, but He is the Supreme Lord who, by His grace purges away the sins and evils in the life of His devotee and makes the attainment of yoga easier for him. When God is moved by the one pointed devotion of a particular devotee, He confers His grace upon him. He removes the elements like illness and others which stand in the way of the devotee’s spiritual pursuit and grants him all powers and qualities necessary for self realization. On such a devoted person God bestows His choicest gifts namely purity of the heart and enlightenment of the intellect. Īśvara Pranidhāna, i.e. love and devotion to Īśvara or submission of the fruits of all actions to Him has therefore, been regarded him in the yoga system as a means for the attainment of Samādhi - a stage in which the self realizes its real nature. An aspirant can purify his mind by offering the fruits of all his actions to God and can attain liberation by firm and cone pointed devotion to him. Thus, God is not merely an inactive object of meditation. He actively helps the devotees to attain liberation by removing all the obstacles and by facilitating self realization. According to the Yoga system while the grace of God can work wonders in our life, we on our part must make ourselves deserving recipients of it through love and charity, truthfulness and purity, constant meditation of and complete resignation to God. The severe discipline of the Yoga with its strenuous physical hardships and grave moral perils, demands a guide and help, a deliverer from darkness and pain, the teacher of truth and the inspirer of strength. Soon union with God becomes the goal of human endeavour. In Samādhi the soul sees and possesses God. By the separation of the self from every object of sense and thought, by the suppression of all desire and passion and the elimination of all personal sense, we
became reunited with God. The end may be gained as the result of intense contemplation of God.

3.5. CONCEPT OF GOD IN SOME MODERN PHILOSOPHERS (SPINOZA, BRADLEY, RASHDALL,)

The idea of God is associated with exaltedness, sublimity, ineffable majesty, holiness, transcendence, super human power. In the higher religions God is regarded as the ultimate source not only of values, but of power, not only of right but of might and the relation of God to man is thought of not only as that of son to father, but as that of creature to the uncreated. God, the Supreme Reality occupies a unique position in the modern period also.

3.5.1 GOD IN SPINOZA’S PHILOSOPHY

Spinoza was among the most important of the post Cartesian philosopher who flourished in the second half of the 17th century. He made significant contributions in virtually every area of philosophy. Spinoza was the idealistic philosopher. He was the prince among the early modern western absolutists. The doctrinal contribution of Spinoza to philosophy may be summarized in one word that is the concept of Absolute. Spinoza may be said to have made this concept complete and consistent. The problem which exercised Spinoza’s mind was the problem of purifying the concept of God.

In the philosophy of Spinoza, the substance is one and he named it God. For Spinoza substance is the being which is dependent on nothing and on which everything depends; which itself uncaused, effects all else; which presupposes nothing, but itself constitutes the presupposition of all that is. It is a pure being, primal being, the cause of itself and of all. Out of the many definitions of God, Spinoza selects one which seems to satisfy all the conditions of the definition of an uncreated thing. The essence of a thing is that from which all its
properties can be deduced. The three special characteristics of a thing uncreated are – (i) that the thing must not need explanation by anything outside itself, i.e. should exclude the idea of a cause, (ii) that the definition should leave no room for doubt as to whether the thing exists or not, (iii) that the definition must not contain abstraction. Keeping all these view in mind according to Spinoza, the only correct definition of substance is that which is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e. that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed.\textsuperscript{27} This means essentially that substance is just whatever can be thought of without relating it to any other idea or thing. It is to be conceived by itself, without understanding it as a particular kind of thing.

Substance is a self evident being and this sense prior to modes both epistemologically and ontologically. Modes are conceived or known through God or substance which is self conceived. Modes are dependent on God. Substance must be one and universal as it is self conceived i.e. absolutely unrelated. Since all determination is negation, substance cannot be finite or determinate. It must be absolutely infinite and indeterminate,\textsuperscript{28} capable of being infinitely determined, i.e. it has infinite attributes.\textsuperscript{29} Since there is nothing else beside substance all determinations will be subjective and false. Since substance is absolutely infinite nothing can be outside it.\textsuperscript{30} Substance is the sole and universal reality.\textsuperscript{31} The appearance of plurality does not mean that substance is divided\textsuperscript{32} for if the parts retain the nature of substance, then there will be many substance and if they do not, substance would cease to be.\textsuperscript{33} For Spinoza, God is the beginning and the end of our whole being, God is one alone. God alone is a free cause. Spinoza’s idea of God has striking resemblance to Upanishadic conception of Brahman. In the Upanishads, Brahman is essentially self existent being and hence must be apprehended through its essence only and not by any other means. Spinoza also holds the same view when he says that God or substance can be conceived through itself. Spinoza relied the inner contradiction of the philosophy of Descartes lies in his
attribution of substantiality to the two entities namely matter and mind. Spinoza was not satisfied by this dualism. Therefore he thought it wise to discard the conception of both as substance and took them as manifestation of a single substance. In the philosophy of Spinoza substance is one and he named it God and the conception of which can be formed without the aid of the conception of any other thing.

The concept of substance is the central point in the philosophy of Spinoza. Spinoza conceives substance in three different ways. First, Spinoza’s substance is the pure being existing in itself and capable of being conceived in itself. Substance is not dependent on any other thing in any way. The substance cannot be characterized also, as any characterization will negate the contrary character of substance. It is regarded as indeterminate and absolute. Secondly, substance is the ultimate cause of everything that there is. It may be mentioned here that Spinoza does not regard the substance as a cause in any temporal sense. Spinoza conceives of God as the eternal cause of all that is phenomenal or temporary. This is the conception of God as ‘natura naturans.’ Thirdly, substance is conceived as identical with all objects of the world. Thus substance is not only the cause of all but it is itself everything. This conception of God as identical with world plurality is technically known as ‘natura naturata’. By natura viewed as active (natura naturans) Spinoza meant that which is itself and is conceived through itself or those attributes of substance which express eternal and infinite essence. Here God is considered as a free cause. Again by nature viewed as passive (natura naturata), he understood all the things which are in God and which without God cannot exist or be conceived.

From Spinoza’s conception of God it clearly reveals that his object was not to abolish the materiality of the world, but to show that God is not immaterial but material also. According to Spinoza, the matter itself is God and God himself is matter. Spinoza’s God is all being, that besides which there is no being. God does not mean for him a transcendent
personal spirit but the absolute infinitum the essential heart of things. Spinoza was an ardent religious believer to whom God is all in all because he holds that whatever is, is in God and only through God everything can be conceived. He assigned no independent existence to the particular finite things. It follows that everything, every event, every mind and every mental function; all are God and nothing else. Substance transcends appearance. Even though substance is indivisible, infinite things and infinite modes follow from it, because God being the sole reality. God is the immanent and not the transcendent cause of things, because there is nothing outside Him. He is not only the efficient cause of the existence of things, but also their essence. All that is possible is actual because there is nothing to prevent God from creating. It is seen that Spinoza’s description of the properties of substance generally agrees with the traditional conception of God. That is why he does not hesitate to call his substance God. The only change he introduces is regarding the causality of God. Spinoza was of the opinion that in the philosophic pursuit of truth religious sentiment should be kept at a distance.

In the philosophy of Spinoza, God is not a transcendental being. His God does not exclude the possibility of the existence of the individuals. Spinoza gave to the finite individuals an independent reality and the infinite as an aggregate of finite things. For him, whatever is, is in God and without God nothing can be or be conceived. In nature everything is real and everything is the part of the one real organized whole. In the Spinozistic system Nature is resolved into the universal power. In his philosophy God is immanent and not the extraneous cause of all things. All is in God and all live and move on God. Again when Spinoza speaks of substance or God as absolutely infinite, he means that which surpasses of all other things of the same kind. Absolute infinite means an absolute negation of finitude, determination and description. The world is finite and God is Absolute Infinite. Therefore there can be no relation and comparison between the infinite substance and the finite world.
For Spinoza there is nothing like a finite substance. The finite substance is that which is not in itself and is conceived through something other than itself. Spinoza denies the application of the term ‘substance’ to finite things of the universe. He also asserts that there is only one substance which is simple and unique unity.

If the world is finite and God is Absolute Infinite then a question arises - how do finite things proceed from God? Spinoza says that, that which is finite and has conditioned existence, cannot be produced by the absolute nature of any attributes of God. The finite things therefore do not proceed directly from God but indirectly through some intermediaries. These intermediaries are called infinite modes and their purpose is to explain individuation. A mode is according to Spinoza, the affections or modifications of substance or that which exists in and conceived through something other than itself. Thus a mode is absolutely dependent both in its essence as well as existence. The modes are the modification of substance and not something over and above substance. A mode is empirically conditioned by other finite modes and transcendentally conditioned by the Infinite. Infinite numbers of modes follow from God and they follow necessarily. This does not mean that God is compelled in any manner, but He creates freely though necessarily. God is the cause of modes not only in so far as they simply exist but also in so far as they are conditioned for operating in a particular manner.

Modes are both infinite and finite. Infinite modes are eternal and finite modes are temporal. The two together constitute the face of the universe. Infinite modes have a double aspect. They are the connecting links between the two different worlds - the world of infinitude and the world of finitude. These infinite modes are of two types: the immediate infinite modes and the mediate infinite modes. Spinoza pointed out that infinite understanding and motion and rest, are the immediate infinite modes of Thought and Extension respectively. The mediate infinite mode is the face of the whole universe, which
although it varies in infinite modes, yet remains always the same. It is true that there must be an identity between cause and effect according to Spinoza, but this does not meant that only the infinite can proceed from the infinite. This is true only of the Absolute which is the immediate cause of only the infinite modes.

But the gap between finite and infinite remains unbridged in Spinoza’s philosophy. Though Spinoza tried to overcome this conflict yet he has not succeeded in doing so. When he sees difficulty that the finite cannot come out of the absolute infinite and indivisible substance, he introduces the conception of infinite finite modes in his system. At one time he conceives the finite world as a modification of God and at another time he reduces the finite individuals to unreality and illusion. Again in Spinoza’s philosophy there are two irreconcilable elements. The first is the subordination of the infinite modes to God and the second is the equality of infinite modes with God. The conception of infinite modes involves contradiction. On the one hand, it is related to God through His attributes and thereby remains in the sphere of infinitude and on the other hand it is related to finite individual which are modifications of God. The conflict which has its origin to Spinoza’s conception of infinite substance and finite individual is really insoluble. But Spinoza tried to solve it by introducing the conception of ‘infinite modes.’

As indeterminate Being, substance cannot be said to be self differentiating or dynamic because that would mean that it has in it the seeds of difference. In that case this would evidently goes against the conception of substance as pure being. Self determination implies negation also and substance is free from all kinds of negation. In the philosophy of Spinoza, substance is conceived as the negation of all differences and hence it is not possible to retrace our steps from substance to the world. Spinoza introduces the doctrine of attributes as he was fully aware of this difficulty. The doctrine of Attributes makes the abstract unity of substance a concrete unity capable of self differentiation. By ‘‘Attribute’’ Spinoza means that
which the intellect perceives as consisting the essence of substance”\textsuperscript{34} Each of the two attributes is conceived without the other, hence in itself, they are distinct from each other and independent. The more reality a substance contains, the more reality it has. Therefore the infinite substance possesses an infinite number of attributes. Since substance is absolutely indeterminate, the attributes cannot be found in it. For the same reason the attributes cannot be of the same status as substance. Again since there is nothing determinate in substance it can land itself to infinite determination. It is only determination that resists further determination. The indeterminate cannot resist determination. Thus we have infinite number of determinations or attributes. The attributes are only the different ways of determining or conceiving the self-conceived or the conceivable. Such attributes must be infinite because it is supposed to express the essence of infinite substance and it is relatively infinite because only substance is Absolute Infinite. Again each attribute must be exclusive of the real because each attribute is independently conceived to express the essence of substance. The concept of substance as indeterminate pure being requires that the attributes must be regarded only as ascriptions. The attributes may best be understood as the Upadhis of substance. An Upadhi does not add anything to substance; it only limits it or determines it in a particular way.

God or Nature consists of attributes. God as the complete system of attributes is absolutely infinite or complete. Each attribute is only infinite in its kind. By attribute Spinoza means an ultimate or irreducible quality or energy. He names two such attributes, namely Extension and Thought. But he allows for the possibility of infinity of attributes. The attributes do not belong to, but are identical with substance. Reality is essentially dynamic, not static - to be is to be doing. Thus the attribute extension is really the whole of material energy and the attribute thought is the whole of mind energy. All material things and events are changing modes or states of Extension and all mental events or experiences are similarly
modifications or states of Thought. Each attribute exhausts its kind of reality, in an ultimate
caracter and gives rise to its entire series of objects and events in accordance with its own
laws.

Substance and attributes, the two moments in Spinoza’s conception of God, involve
the fusion of absolute unity and complete variety of characters. Spinoza merely states the
togetherness of the attributes in God as a fact; and again he merely states as a fact that God
comprehends in unbroken unity, infinite variety of ultimate characters. Again Spinoza’s
conception of attributes or of substance renders the intelligible coherence of the two
moments of his complete conception of God impossible. There is an inner contradiction in
his conception of God as at once excluding all determinations and comprehending an infinite
diversity of ultimate characters.

Spinoza’s God is the essence or indwelling cause of the universe and is the most
perfect Being. According to Spinoza, everything can be vague and illusory but there cannot
be any question about the validity of the most perfect Being. Spinoza holds that God, who is
necessarily infinite, is a transcendental reality. Thus regarding infinitude of God Spinoza was
led to accept the theistic conception. Though Spinoza fails to give a satisfactory explanation
of the relation between the ‘infinite’ and ‘finite’ yet he maintains that the mind’s highest
good is the knowledge of God and minds highest virtue is to know God. To know God is to
become one with God is his most hopeful declaration. Permanent happiness can only flow
from the thing which is itself permanent and eternal. The realization of God, who is
permanent, unchangeable, eternal and infinite and alone can yield the supreme satisfaction of
life. The highest realization of truth is only possible from the intellectual love of God which
will surely enable us to enjoy the highest and permanent satisfaction of human nature and
thereby we will come to realize that we are one with whole of nature.
3.5.2 GOD IN BRADLEY’S PHILOSOPHY

Bradley is essentially a Hegelian Philosopher. Following the Hegelian terminology Bradley calls the ultimate reality as ‘Spirit.’ Bradley’s Spirit is an organic whole, where the whole is immanent in each of its parts. The vision which generates Bradley’s philosophy is the vision of Reality as a harmonious undivided whole of experience, in which all aspects of infinite experience are included, but are not parted and related. Bradley’s concept of ultimate reality is akin to the root concept of Spirit on which the Hegelian outlook has been seen to be based. But there are two important points of difference between their views. First, Bradley’s experience is a whole which is not simply reason or thought but also feeling and willing, all of which remain merged in one undifferentiated Absolute. Secondly, this Absolute is not conceived by him in a relational form; though it contains all thoughts and things, they are not split up into different elements. Bradley’s Absolute is above relational form and it has absorbed the bewildering mass of phenomenal diversity in a higher unity. Bradley observes, “Fully to realize the existence of the Absolute is for finite beings impossible; but a limited idea of the Absolute “seems fully attainable by the finite intellect.” In mere feeling or immediate presentation, we have the experience of a whole. The whole contains diversity and on the other hand, is not parted by relations. Such an experience “serves to suggest to us the general idea of a total experience, where will and thought and feeling may all once more be one.”

Reality for Bradley is one supra-relational whole. Bradley takes immediate experience as a starting point for knowing the Absolute Reality. He states, “As a fact and given we have in feeling diversity and unity in one whole, a whole implicit and not yet broken up into terms and relations. This immediate union of the one and many is an ‘ultimate fact’ from which we start.” Bradley considers all finite objects as appearances of reality and maintains that all appearances are not equally imperfect. According to him this reality can be
realized theoretically. Bradley does not accept an individual with perfection is the Absolute. It implies that Absolute cannot be regarded as a perfect individual.

Bradley arrives at the absolute standard of reality by a dialectical examination of all the notions commonly accepted as valid. He examines all the categories such as primary and secondary qualities, substantive and objective relation and quality, space and time, motion and change, causation and activity with which our intellect or thought interprets the world and finds them all self contradictory. So Bradley condemns all these contradictory notions as appearances because according to Bradley, “Ultimate reality is such that it does not contradict itself.” Therefore non-contradictions must be the criterion of reality. Non-contradiction also means consistency. Reality is not only self-consistent, it must be self-subsistent. The self consistency of reality demands that, “All appearances must belong to reality. For what appears is and whatever is cannot fall outside the real. And we may now combine this result with the conclusion just reached. We may say that everything, which appears, is somehow real in such a way as to be self consistent. The character of the real is to possess everything phenomenal in a harmonious form.”

Bradley conceives the God of religion as an appearance and holds that God and religion are equally lost in the Absolute. He maintains that as religion demands relations, so the object of religion cannot be infinite. Religion naturally implies a relation between God and man. As both God and man are relative, so both are finite. They are the adjectives of a whole. As they are relata or adjectives so they have no independent existence apart from the whole. Although God is conceived of as independent of all relations, yet he has no existence apart from his worshippers. If there is no worshipper who stands in relation to God, then he will become an empty being. But a relation is always self-contradictory. It implies always two terms which are finite and which claim independence. Again there is no meaning on a relation unless both itself and the related are the adjective of a whole. And to find a solution
of this indiscrepancy would be to pass entirely beyond the relational point of view. On the one hand man is a finite object, merely standing in relation with God. And yet, on the other hand, apart from God man is merely an abstraction. God again is a finite object, standing above and apart from man, and is something independent of all relations to his will and intelligence. Hence God taken as thinking and feeling being has a private personality. God wills and knows himself and he finds his reality and self consciousness, in union with man. Religion is a process with inseparable factors, each appearing on either side. It is the unity of man and God, which in various stages and forms, wills and knows itself throughout. We may say that in religion God tends always to pass beyond himself. He is necessarily led to end in the Absolute which for religion is not God.

For Bradley the essence of religion lies in having communion with God, who is the embodiment of all values. In religious experience one becomes one with God and so in that moment of union, we seem to attain to divine perfection. In that moment of union we feel as perfect as God. But a question arises here - do we attain a perfect unity? If the union with God is not complete the finite self does not become the Absolute reality; and if the union is complete, then the possibility of devotion also disappears since the individuality of the worshipper is lost in the reality of God. Therefore in religious experience also either we do not attain perfection or else we go beyond religion in to a stage of supra-religion. Religious relationship demands that God should understand will and love the worshipper. In other words, God is supposed to have personality. But in that case God, having personality becomes a finite being. Besides God’s personality will repel the impact of other finite personalities of worshippers, with the result that the total union with God and the religious experience remain incomplete, inconsistent and so ultimately they have appearances and not the Absolute. In the words of Bradley, “If you identify the Absolute with God, that is not the God of religion. If you again separate them, God becomes a finite factor in the whole. And
the effort of religion is to put to an end to, and break down, this relation - a relation which
none the less, it essentially presupposes. Hence short of the Absolute, God cannot rest, and
having reached that goal, he is lost and religion with him.40 By saying that the Absolute is
one Bradley means to say that the differences exist within the Absolute in a harmonious way.
There is nothing beyond the Absolute. The whole is such that all the appearances exist as
distinct entity but there is no division among them. According to Bradley this Absolute
cannot be fully known. Because when one knows Him, He will not remain as the Absolute.
The falling apart of idea and existence is at once essential to goodness and negated by
Reality. And the process which moves within Reality is not Reality itself. We may say that
God is not God, till He has become all in all, and that a God which is all in all is not the God
of religion. God is but an aspect, and that must mean but an appearance of the Absolute.
Bradley states that it is a confused attempt to seize and hold in religion that Absolute, which
if it really were attained would destroy religion. And this attempt by its own inconsistency
and its own failure and unrest, reveals to us once more that religion is not final and ultimate.

Bradley maintains that God has no meaning outside of the religious consciousness
and that essentially is practical. The Absolute for him cannot be God because in the end the
Absolute is related to nothing, and there cannot be a practical relation between it and the
finite will. When we begin to worship the Absolute or the Universe and make it the object of
religion we in that moment have transformed it. It has become something forthwith which is
less than the Universe. Bradley states that a personal God is not the ultimate truth about the
Universe. But this does not mean that the idea of God’s personality is not relatively true.
Whatever ideas really are required in practice by the highest religion are true.

Bradley did not lack religious conviction, but he did not share religious belief called
popular Christianity.41 For Bradley the highest reality is the Absolute and the Absolute means
that which in the end is related to nothing. But in religion the worshipper is related to God.
So the Absolute cannot be the God of religion. Nor can God be the highest reality, for God has will and personality and these are marks of imperfection and finitude for Bradley. Therefore according to Bradley God cannot be the highest reality. Bradley again holds that God of religion is a lower category as it involves want of comprehensiveness of the whole of experience which is truth. As Bradley puts it, “For if God is perfect, we saw that religion must contain inconsistency and it was by seeking consistency that we were driven to a limited God.”  

Here Bradley raises the familiar question of personality and discusses its applicability to the God of religion. Bradley thinks that our religious consciousness involves both antithesis and union between the human will and the divine. So he is not categorical in his assertion as to whether God of religion must be a person. All that he says is that in this double relation between the divine and the human will, one way apply personality to God. But he adds that there is a far more essential truth in religious consciousness in the fact that we feel the presence of God’s will in ours and all of us in our religious communion feel a feeling of satisfaction in common which should not be denied by us. In fact, for Bradley, the God of religion is a finite reality and therefore different from the Absolute reality which is the universe.

Bradley wrote, “The highest Reality so far as I see, must be super/personal. At the same time to many minds practical religion seems to call for the belief in God as a separate individual. And where truly that belief is so required, I can accept it as justified and true, but only if it is supplemented by other beliefs which really contradict it. And these other beliefs, I must add are more vital for religion. A God who has made this strange and glorious nature outside of which He remains is an idea at best one sided.”  

The reality of God means his own actual presence within individual souls, and apart from this presence, both He and we are no more than abstractions. Hence in genuine religion we have a ‘pantheism’ which is not less there because it expresses itself by what in fact is an inconsistent polytheism. And we
can break with this only by an individualism which reduces God to one finite person among others, a person whose influence remains utterly external. If, in short for religion we need a personal God we must accept also creed which is not consistent. Religious activities like worship, prayer etc implies person. There is relation between finite beings and God. But relation makes God imperfect. Bradley’s Absolute, therefore neither a self conscious spirit, nor a person. Selfhood and will are marks of imperfection. So, God cannot be the perfect real or the all inclusive whole of Bradley. The Absolute is not personal, it is supra-personal. So, in Bradley’s philosophy the God of religion is not identified with the Absolute of metaphysics or philosophy. For Bradley God is different from Absolute. In both of them personality, whether of man or of God is an impossible category. Bradley repudiates personality in a different way, as he says that in religion the presence in us of the Supreme will dissolves all distinctions between self and self and there is no room left for that consciousness of individuality and distinction which is the root of personality.

Bradley establishes the reality of his Absolute purely and entirely on speculative grounds. It is an inference from the contingent and contradictory character of the world of appearance. It does not interpret our actual experience where all that we have is appearance. It is only when all appearances are blended and fused together that we can get the Absolute, and as this all inclusive totality is beyond the experience of man, it remains ever inaccessible to him and the details of its being are ever beyond the grasp of his intellect. Bradley can give us only a speculative certainty about his Absolute and his soft repeated ascertain that we have a positive knowledge of the Absolute can mean nothing beyond that. On the other hand Bradley holds that the God of religion is an appearance and in the Absolute, God and religion are equally lost. Bradley concludes that, “God is but an aspect and that must mean but an appearance of the Absolute.”
3.5.3 GOD IN RASHDALL’S PHILOSOPHY:

Hastings Rashdall was an English philosopher, theologian and historian. His writings are always in close contact with the thoughts and religion of the modern world. In a paper on “Personality, Human and Divine”, which Rashdall contributed to the Oxford Essays on Personal Idealism and in his ‘Theory of Good and Evil’ he supports the conception of God as finite and personal. Rashdall’s theology was characterized throughout by the conviction that nothing is so unquestionably real in and for itself as a personal consciousness. The necessity of “assuming the existence of a mind in which and for which everything that is not mind has its being,” was to him the grand argument for the existence of God. And such a mind he found himself unable to conceive except as personal in the sense as that in which our minds are personal, however immeasurably superior to ours in the range of its activity. Rashdall states that God is a person since he possesses the characteristics essential to personality. A ‘person’ should distinguish himself not merely from objects we class as things but also from other subjects. God is a supreme self to which the world of persons and things is an object.

According to Rashdall, belief in God is the postulate of morality. We may be able to give some meaning to morality without the postulate of God, but not its true meaning. If the existence of God is not a postulate of all morality, it is a postulate of a sound morality; as it is essential to that belief which vaguely and implicitly underlies all moral beliefs and which forms the very heart of morality in its highest, more developed, more explicit forms. Belief in God involves something more than the belief that there is a universal mind for which and in which the moral ideal exists. There can be no meaning in the idea of morality for a Being who is mere thought and not will. If human morality is a revelation, however imperfect of the ultimate nature of Reality, it must represent not merely an ideal existing in and for the mind which is the ultimate source or ground of Reality, but also the nature of the end towards which that Reality is moving.
God is the Supreme self to which the world of persons and things is an object. In proving the existence of God, Rashdall adopts the traditional argument of idealism. By a two-fold argument he proves the existence of God as the unity of self consciousness. According to the first argument the world that we know exists in our experience and we cannot say that the world that we know exhausts all possible worlds. For long before we were born and long after we shall be dead, there must have been and will be other worlds which far transcend the world of our knowledge. Now to unify all these worlds, the present world of ours and the larger world of which our world is a fraction, there must be a consciousness inclusive of, but indefinitely larger than any of our finite selves and that consciousness is God. Secondly our moral consciousness certifies to the existence of an Absolute moral ideal contrasted with our ideals which are relative. And that Absolute moral ideal presupposes for its existence a supremely moral self who is God. Now from these metaphysical and moral grounds we conclude that God as the unity of consciousness unifying individual consciousness must exist. Rashdall establishes the reality of a spiritual self who is the subject of the world. In this sense the world is not outside God. But simply because the world of the finite individual is a part of the world of God, we cannot conclude that the finite individual is a part of the Supreme Spirit in the Absolutistic sense. Because in that case it would be to make a confusion between content and the consciousness which knows the content. The content of knowledge which exists in fragments and ‘finite centres’ must be supposed to exist entire and distinct in the ‘perfect experience’. We cannot assume that the finite centres which have these fragmentary experiences exist in and form part of the Being, which has the ‘perfect experience’. Identity of content does not prove identity of existence. The Supreme consciousness may have identity of content with finite selves, but the experiences of the finite selves as unique and particular fall outside the consciousness of God existentially. The Supreme Spirit is not the whole since it is limited by other finite selves. The Absolute is the
whole, which is God and the finite spirits. Reality is not a single self-consciousness, but a community of selves.

Though our idea of God cannot be built upon the basis of the moral consciousness taken by itself, the moral consciousness does contribute one most important element to that idea. That the universe has its ultimate ground in a spirit who must be thought of as will, reason and feeling is a view which a rational ethics pre-supposes, but which it cannot by itself be held to establish. According to Rashdall, it is established by metaphysical considerations. The belief in God was found to be essential to the logical justification of that idea of objective validity which is implicit in the moral consciousness, at least in the higher stages of development. The idea of God may, no doubt, in particular persons of strong moral convictions not only be explicit, but may lie formally denied. The tendency of its denial is and must be in the long run to weaken or destroy belief in objective morality and so the influence of all higher morality in the world.

There are some individual for whom the view which has been taken of the relation between religion and morality will seem to concede too little to religion and too much to morality and the sphere of religion are wholly distinct, the sphere of religion being the higher of the two. The sphere of morality includes human action. Morality cannot reasonably be attributed to God. It implies the co-existence of evil and good. It implies that something happen which ought not to happen; whereas from the religious point of view nothing can happen but that which God wills and what God’s will is what ought to happen. The good and the bad alike contributed to the fulfillment of the divine will. It is merely due to the limitations of human nature that we present some things to ourselves as bad and others as good.
To regard every soul as equally part of God puts an end to the possibility of regarding God as a moral being. Of course the present philosophers who were prepared to follow out the logic of their own pantheism recognize that every soul is equally a part of God and therefore has as much right as any other to be taken as revealing the character of the Absolute or whole of which they are parts or appearances. If that is so, from the point of view of whole, good and evil must be essential to the perfection or good of the whole. Due to the limitations of human thought, the idea that the good ought to be and the bad ought not to be suppressed must be put down to a mere error or prejudice. It is therefore not without ground that conservative theologians insist upon the tendency of a pantheising theology to lower our practical estimate of sin and moral evil. After all, it needs no every elaborate demonstration to show that if all souls are equally part of God, God cannot be an object of moral reverence.

The idea that every human being is a part of God is very widely diffused among the professed philosophers. When it is expressed in the language of poetry or edification it is one which finds a ready acceptance with a certain class of minds not spatially conversant with technical metaphysics. If God be defined first as ‘the Ultimate Reality’, or the Absolute, as “the infinite”, it is easy to show that the individual minds, if they are real at all must be parts of the Ultimate Reality, the Absolute or the Infinite. Of course there are philosophers who are maintaining that we are parts of God simply mean that God is a name for the sum of individual minds. But Rashdall approaching the subject from the point of view of there who are not satisfied by such a conception of God, and who believes that God is a conscious spirit who wills, thinks, feels or at least has a consciousness which can only be understood by us as something analogous to the experiences which we all thinking, willing and feeling in ourselves. From this point of view a question arises here- whether any meaning can be attached to the assertion that the Divine mind includes a number of different consciousnesses? The contention that such an inclusion is unmeaning and unthinkable.
Rashdall wrote, “To me, it appears quite clear—clearer than almost any other truth in the whole universe of knowledge—that every moment of consciousness is in its own nature absolutely unique. My thoughts, feelings, emotions are forever mine and not another’s; or rather (to avoid all difficult questions about the nature of personality), I would say, they are far ever themselves and not anything else. Another person may feel or think that I feel or think; but when there are two thoughts or feeling not one. Even my own knowledge of them, after they are gone is not the same feeling and thought which I once experienced.”

Rashdall emphasizes the unity of God and the finite selves and says that “the Ultimate Being is a single power, if we like we may even say a single being, who is manifested in a plurality of consciousness, one consciousness which is omniscient and eternal and many consciousness which are of limited knowledge, which have a beginning, and some of which it is possible or probable, have an end.” Thus God is regarded as one of the eaches, a separate appearance of the Absolute. He has all the limitations of personality. He is finite and limited by other selves, but this limitation is not an arbitrary one from outside but a necessary one springing from his very nature. The limitation of God by finite spirits, which are knowing subjects with their own individualities, is a self imposed one. Rashdall of course does not mean that God was once ‘Almighty’ and then limits himself by an act of will. Rashdall want to say that the other spiritual beings derive their being from God and are willed to exist in order to bring about the greatest attainable good. There is only one mind which gave rise to the many that through their mutual interaction a supreme blessing otherwise inconceivable may be attained. Rashdall holds that even though all finite selves are created, still they are regarded as self existent and mutually independent units. He never says that the Supreme power is working under limits imposed upon it by an intractable environment under conditions which he cannot or does not wholly control. Rather Rashdall holds that God limited himself by his own act of will. Rashdall contends that God made the
human will free with the idea of realizing a higher purpose, which it would have been impossible to realize apart from human freedom. God created the best world that could be had.

Rashdall observes that if we are to speak of the Absolute at all we must understand by it God and created spirits taken together. That these last should be in God and God in them in any but a figurative sense. Hence he had no sympathy whatever with mysticism, and looked upon any approach to it as a threat to truly ethical religion, just because mysticism seemed to simply the possibility of transcending the distinction between the personal consciousness of God and the personal consciousness of men. And thus to be danger of including with the former, the evil which was often unquestionably present in the latter.

Rashdall insisted on the freedom of the human will from determination by the divine. The belief in such determination has served to express for minds of a certain cast that passion for self-identification with the one Ultimate Reality, which underlines also the aspirations of the mystics properly so called. Rashdall was enabled to reconcile this determination with his denial that the evil present in human will and actions had its source in God by his refused to regard God as in the strict sense of the word omnipotent. The will of God was wholly good; and all other beings with wills owed their existence to His will; but there were “eternal necessities which are part of his own eternal nature” which rendered it impossible for him to accomplish all the good which would be in the abstract desirable. The actual world is presumably the best world possible, the necessities being what they are, but it is not the best that God or even we ourselves could and do desire. “I could wish,” Rashdall says, in many words, “the universe were better than it is, and if God be the God who is revealed to us by our moral consciousness, He wishes that too.”
According to Rashdall if the ‘reality’ be taken to mean self-sufficing reality, a being underived from and independent of all other beings, we may admit that such reality cannot be ascribed to the finite self, and can only be ascribed to the whole. Again it can be ascribed to the whole kingdom of selves taken in their relation to one another and to God, who is one of the selves and source of them. We do not get to any fuller or deeper reality by supposing an existence in which God or the Absolute no longer distinguishes Himself from the selves, or the selves from God. Without any such unintelligible confusion there will remain a very real sense in which the being of the originated souls may be regarded as derived from, and therefore in the sense of forming objects of the divine thought, included in the Divine Being. The knowledge of the finite self by God does not exhaust its being as is the case with the mere object. It is the knowledge of them that is in God. God must know the self, as a self which has a consciousness, an experience, a will which is its own - that is as a being which is not identical with the knowledge that He has of it. Undoubtedly, God must have an infinitely deeper and complete knowledge of every one of us than any one of us has of another. Each of us is but imperfectly personal. God alone fully realizes the ideal of personality. That higher personality, the complete knowledge of self must carry with it more knowledge of other selves by the clumsy processes of inference or analogy by which we imperfectly enter into the consciousness of others. It is doubtless that pleasure, pain, colour, sound, volition must be God something different from what they are to us. God must be thought of as having feeling, pleasure and pain also, or something like pain as loving persons and hating evil, as willing the good and so on. God’s thought can as little be exactly what our thought is as our joys and sorrows can be exactly what his are. But we should have to confess that we know nothing at all as our knowledge is imperfect. And it is arbitrary out of three distinguishable but inseparable and mutually dependent aspects or activities of self conscious being as spoken to us- will, thought, feeling, to select one, namely thought and to call that God.
The notion that God includes in Himself all the individual selves of the universe seems to have arisen chiefly from a forgetfulness of the essential difference between our knowledge of a thing and our knowledge of other selves. A thing is simply what it is for the mind that knows it; it exists for the other, nor for itself. What it is for the experience of a mind is therefore its total being. The essential characteristic of a conscious self is that it exists for itself, but not for others only. Its true being is not merely what it is for another mind that knows it, but what it is for itself. Uniqueness belongs to the very essence of consciousness. The ‘content’ of the consciousness may be common to many minds, but this is only because a ‘content’ consists of abstract universal qualities taken apart from the being whose experience they describe.

According to Rashdall, “The Absolute cannot be identified with God, so long as God is thought of as a self conscious Being. The Absolute must include God and all other consciousness not as isolated and unrelated beings, but as intimately related (in whatever way) to Him and to another and as forming with Him a system or unity. And in so far as God is not any of these spirits (when once they have come into being), however, they may be ultimately related to Him, He is not, in the most obvious sense of the world, infinite. We may, if we like, call God infinite in the sense that there is no other being but what proceeds ultimately from His will and has its source or ground in Him; and this seems to be all that is meant by many of those who are attached to the term; but the term infinite would seem more properly to belong to that Absolute which includes God and other spirits.” It may even be doubted whether it is well to apply the term infinite to anything but space and time (which are not real beings) and whether it is possible to apply it to anything that has real being without being more or less misled in our interpretation of the term by the analogy of space and time. There must be a different amount of Being in the world. According to Rashdall, metaphysical and ethical consideration alike requires us to recognize a real distinction
between God and the lesser spirits who derive their being from him, yet remain in intimate relation to and dependence upon Him, and with Him make up totality of real beings in the world. “If we must use a word which might will be dispensed with, God and the spirits are the Absolute not God alone. Together, they form a unity, but that unity is not the unity of self-consciousness; nor can it, without serious danger of misunderstanding, be thought of as even analogous to that personal unity which is characteristic of consciousness in the highest form in which we know it.”

The Ultimate Being is one, a single power, a single Being which is manifested in a plurality of consciousness. One consciousness which is omniscient and eternal and many consciousnesses which are of limited knowledge, which have a beginning and some of which, it is possible to have an end. We may, if we like, regard all separate content of consciousness as the particulars. Rashdall is interested in attributing personality to God. He thinks that personality involves contrast between the selfhood of the person and the other selves, and therefore he makes a distinction between the Absolute and God as a person. The ground of his separation between God and the Absolute is that, while God is to be regarded as a self conscious unity of selves or spirits, the Absolute is the unity of God and the selves, but that unity is not the mere unity of self conscious spirit.

3.6 CONCEPT OF GOD IN RADHAKRISHNAN’S PHILOSOPHY:

Radhakrishnan is an eminent expositor and interpreter of Indian traditional philosophy, which carries with it the actual reflection of Indian culture. He is highly influenced by the Vedāntic Absolute Idealism. Radhakrishnan was fascinated by the deep philosophical insight of Śaṅkara and his commentary on Brahma sutra took the role of guide in the early life of Radhakrishnan. His philosophy is an assimilation of Eastern spiritualism and Western humanism. Radhakrishnan was successful in his representation of the modern
Vedānta in front of the world. He may be regarded as the outstanding representative of the modern Vedāntic thought which may be characterized as Neo-Vedāntism. In connection with the question of Ultimate Reality Radhakrishnan is particularly interested in the Upanishadic term ‘Brahman,’ the use of which is so overwhelming and comprehensive that the very utterance of the same makes one think that he is nearer to reality and the reality is within himself. He interprets the other Vedāntic concepts like God, self, the world etc. and in doing so he imports many ideas of Western Absolute idealism fitting them to the traditional Indian concepts.

When it is said that Brahman is the only reality naturally a thought comes to our mind. What about other realities like God, self and the world? Do they have no reality at all? What will Radhakrishnan say about their reality? As a philosopher guided with a religious spirit Radhakrishnan cannot deny God, the object of devotion. So, he spends his considerable time and energy in discussing this concept. He says that although empirically God has an independent position, transcendentally He does not have such a position. He is identical with the Absolute, which is nothing but Brahman. When we deem Ultimate Reality without the world it is Brahman and when we do so with the world it is God. So God is the very Absolute from the cosmic standpoint.

Thus over and above the principle of the Absolute or Brahman Radhakrishnan also talks about the principle of God. We come across a similar account also in the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara. But there these two principles are conceived as basically one, as different ways of apprehending the same reality. Śaṅkara makes a distinction between Pāramārthika Drṣṭi and Vyavāharika Drṣṭi and the difference between the two principles of Absolute and God is ultimately reduced to these two points of view. Radhakrishnan feels that in order to explain the universe it is necessary to think of a principle that would account for the order and purpose of the universe. Like Whitehead Radhakrishnan also believes that one
cannot account for the dynamic and creative character of the universe if the primary Being is also not conceived as creative. Again he feels that there has to be a principle, a God – a non-temporal and actual being- by which the indeterminateness of creativity can be transmuted into a determinate principle. This shows that the Divine Intelligence- The creative power- has to be conceived as the Intermediary between the Absolute being and the cosmic process. This is how the principle of God appears in the philosophy of Radhakrishnan. The Supreme has been conceived as revealing itself in two ways- Absolute and Īśvara. God is the Absolute in action; it is God, the creator. The real in relation to itself is the Absolute and the real in relation to the creation is God. Radhakrishnan feels that the demands of reason have to be reconciled with the demands of experience. Metaphysical as well as religious aspirations have to be satisfied. The Absolute is the object of metaphysical aspiration whereas God is the object of religious aspiration. This shows that unlike Śaṅkara Radhakrishnan is not prepared to reduce God to unreality by making it a product of Māyā and ignorance. God is real in so far as creation is real. God is an aspect of the Absolute. The real as infinite possibility is the Absolute, but when we limit the Absolute to its relation with that possibility which has actually been realized in the form of creation then the Absolute appears as the creator, as wisdom, love and goodness, as God.

Radhakrishnan introduces the concept of God in order to explain the order and harmony of the world. Radhakrishnan’s idea of God has germinated in Indian soil. Therefore his concept of God should have more relevance to present day Indian society. Radhakrishnan very emphatically says that God is not an idea that is conceived but a reality that is experienced. God is the deepest consciousness from which ideas derive. So the idea of God is the interpretation of experience. Radhakrishnan admits that his thinking proceeded from his own experience, which of course different from empiricist’s experience or those acquired by mere study and reading. He wrote, “It is born of spiritual experience nature than deduced
from logically ascertained premises.”  

To Radhakrishnan the highest idea namely God is found in the secret places of the soul and is not acquired through sense or proved by logic.

Radhakrishnan’s philosophy reveals his deep faith in God or a Supreme Spiritual Reality. According to him human mind has an ever-lasting longing which cannot be satisfied even after the fulfillment of all worldly desires. This longing is an urge to come in terms with the unseen reality which is believed to be behind this cosmic process. Unless we presuppose the existence of a supreme consciousness behind this cosmic process the scientific theory of evolution cannot be explained properly. However the process of evolution as it has been held by Radhakrishnan cannot create the conditions for its own possibility. It assumes something behind all evolution which is not the product of evolution but its ultimate ground and driving power. Otherwise it seems to be difficult to explain properly the transition from the non-living to living, from life to mind. Radhakrishnan argues that in order to account for the unity and continuity of the universe which undergoes an unceasing procession of change it is necessary for us to presuppose the existence of a creative power as a “supreme superentelechy” which cannot be regarded as an unconscious force. It seems that we have no other alternatives than to assume an inner directing principle in order to explain the convergence of effects. We have to assume the reality of a single supreme spirit which functions throughout the whole course of evolution though in different ways in different stages of the cosmic process. Again Radhakrishnan maintains that the relation of this spirit with the cosmic process is mysterious. God is infinite and universal self. According to Radhakrishnan, “This Supreme Reality is difficult to grasp and impossible to define. We can be sure of what God is not, but not of what God is.”

The idea of God which we human beings have is only a symbol of the ultimate, a suggestion of the ineffable. The human soul is infinite in character in the sense that it has unlimited possibilities in it. The God sought by him is equally infinite. God is, on Radhakrishnan’s view a conditioning factor of our being.
In this connection he offers an argument which runs as follows: “The possession of a faculty implies the existence of conditions that permit the exercise of the faculty. The presence of eyes means that there is light; the existence of lung means that there is air. If the human life is a constant quest for God, then God is conditioning factor of our being. The ineradicable religious instinct in human nature finds fulfillment in the consciousness of a spiritual reality at the back of the cosmic process.”

Radhakrishnan’s interpretation of life and the universe is spiritualistic in nature. In his various writings he asserts the supremacy of Spirit and envisages this Spirit as God. His spiritualistic interpretation evidently comes into conflict with naturalism, materialism, agnosticism and determinism. For Radhakrishnan, the Divine Reality is behind, beyond and within the shifting panorama of nature and history. Radhakrishnan thinks that the Divine Reality creates, sustains and inspires the cosmic process. The Divine Reality of Radhakrishnan is the source and ground of all existent things, the one who sustains and inspires the process.

All the usual attributes of the God can be attributed to Radhakrishnan’s conception of God also and the proofs for God’s existence assume validity and significance. Although Radhakrishnan seems to be inclined to give credence to all forms of traditional proofs for God’s existence, the teleological proof, the Moral proof and the one based on intuitive experience appear to be his most favourite arguments in God’s favour. At times he talks of the casual proofs also. But his version of the casual proof is similar to Descartes’ version of the proof. Like Descartes, Radhakrishnan also says that in order to explain ourselves- our existence, we have to think of a cause, a creative capacity which could create beings like us. Of course, such a cause will not be an ordinary cause in so far as ordinary causes depend upon some prior causes. This divine cause, therefore, has to be a self dependent cause.
Radhakrishnan attaches great value to the teleological proof for God’s existence. The teleological proof finds a frequent mention in his writings. Radhakrishnan infers the existence of a Supreme Mind, from the order prevalent in the world. He says there is order in the universe and all order is the expression of a mind and so the universe is the expression of a Supreme Mind. The adaption of means to ends which we find in the world cannot be due to change. It suggests an ordering and organizing mind. Radhakrishnan also takes the help of casual proof for the existence of God. He says that the finite universe demands a principal beyond itself to explain it. Science cannot describe the world adequately and hence the existence of God is posited to account for the universe. Radhakrishnan states that the cause of the creation of the world lies in a sense outside itself. God is the logical prius of the world.

Radhakrishnan mention the importance of moral proof for the existence of God also. He thinks that the argument based on the nature of conscience and objective morality is capable of generating a faith that the world is being governed by a Moral Being. He feels that the inner voice in man has an innate awareness of the distinction between the good and the bad. The sanctity of this voice or the adherence to the good can never be justified unless one believes that this voice has the sanction of a higher being who keeps an eye on everything good or bad. He observes, “Our moral life tells us that God is not only the goal but the spring and sustainer of moral effort.” Radhakrishnan also tries to demonstrate the existence of God, on the basis of the objectivity of values. He is aware that certain values like truth, beauty and goodness are believed to be the highest values regulating conduct and behaviour. Radhakrishnan further states, “Truth, beauty and goodness cease to be the supreme realities and become a part of the being and essence of God. From the eternal values we pass to a supporting mind in which they dwell.”

But Radhakrishnan holds that all these proofs for the existence of God have only a secondary importance. They merely serve the function of generating initial faith. But the
most important basis, Radhakrishnan states, for having faith in God is, what can be called the intuitional evidence in favour of God’s existence. According to him, it is possible to have a glimpse of Divine nature in some intuitive experience. Radhakrishnan says, “When the individual withdraws his soul from all outward events, gathers himself together inwardly, strives for concentration, there breaks upon him an experience sacred, strange, wondrous, which quickness within him, lays hold on him, becomes his very being. The possibility of this experience constitutes the most conclusive proof of the reality of God.”

Moreover, Radhakrishnan also relies on the testimony of some of the seers of truth and feels that there can be no better argument in favour of God’s existence than this- because it is a case of direct apprehension.

Radhakrishnan believes that the so called proofs for the existence of God cannot logically demonstrate the existence of God. Those proofs conceive God as an objective reality. But, God is not an object like other objects in nature. God is Spirit that is distinct from the knowing subject and the known object. According to Radhakrishnan these proofs for the existence of God are merely descriptions of God and do not afford any evidence for His existence. Radhakrishnan says, “We cannot prove the reality of God in the same way in which we prove the existence of a chair or a table. For God is not an object like other objects in nature. God is spirit which is distinct from the knowing subject or the known object. All proofs for the existence of God fail because they conceive of God as an objective reality. Spirit is life, not thing, energy, not immobility, something real in itself and by itself cannot be compared to any substance subjective-objective.”

Those proofs show the inadequacy of naturalistic explanations. According to Radhakrishnan the casual and teleological arguments fail to prove the ultimate reality of God. Though the arguments for the existence of God are not logically conclusive, yet when the conviction arises otherwise- those arguments can help in understanding its rationality. The most important evidence for the existence of God is the
possibility of spiritual experience which is present in man. Radhakrishnan maintains “To say that God exists means that spiritual experience is attainable. The possibility of the experience constitutes the most conclusive proofs of the reality of God.”

God, for Radhakrishnan is the creator of the universe, but He is not only the creator in the beginning like the Christian God. He is one who creates continuously. The world is in the making and is being created constantly. He believes that a God who has arranged everything at the beginning of the world and can change nothing, create nothing new is not a God at all. Again Radhakrishnan regards God as a person, personality involves self-consciousness and self-regulation. By clarifying this point Radhakrishnan says that the personality of God is possible only with reference to a world with its imperfections and capacity for progress. In other words the being of a personal God is dependent on the existence of a created order. Personality is being ascribed to God since there can be communion with God only if He is regarded as a person. That is why Radhakrishnan says, “God is conceived as a personal being towards whom the individual stands in a relation of co-operation and dependence.” Even though God is a person, he is not personal in the ordinary sense of the term. By emphasizing this point Radhakrishnan states “God is regarded as a Supreme Person. He is higher than anything he has created. He is personal, but not in the sense in which we define personality.” We are persons (purusas) and God is perfect personality.

Thus Radhakrishnan in his description of God leans on Theism, and not on Deism. According to him, God is not an indifferent creator. He is the principle behind creation and therefore, lives and grows with creation. He is the store house of all the possibilities that are to be actualized in this creation. God is constantly in the creative process. Therefore, He is immanent in the world. But there always remains some unrealized possibility in God and therefore God transcends the world to that extent. God is the infinite mind who is the consciousness of self and also what is other than self. In worship, an otherness of God is felt.
But God cannot be wholly other. Hence there is an element of non-otherness. He originates, sustains, sets limits to his community of being with the world and transcends it. As light is a necessary condition of darkness, the darkness and passivity of God is as real as His light and activity. God transcends all opposites and also includes them.

God is not absolutely timeless. But He is not in time in the sense that His whole being is subject to succession and change. God is a self determining principle that manifests in a temporal development. God is conceived as the Supreme Mind. God performs his acts according with his own laws. He is the self conscious personality. Radhakrishnan says, “God pours forth the whole wealth of his love to actualize his intentions for us. He takes up the burden of helping us to resist the force of evil, error and ugliness and transmute them into truth, beauty and goodness.”

God is the maintainer and friend of all. God does not leave us in the wilderness to find our way back to him. Following Gandhi Radhakrishnan maintains that God is truth. Like Tagore, he says that God is love. But he again adds that God is not only truth and love, but also justice. God is the Uttama Purusa or perfect personality as well as the highest moral being. God is conceived of as a personal being. Man finds final satisfaction self completion in God.

In the light of Hindu mythology Radhakrishnan looks upon Gods as an eternal beggar waiting for the opening of the door so that he may enter into the darkness and illumine the whole of our being as with lighting flash. In communicating His nature to us He makes us share in his creative power. It is not so much man seeking God as God seeking man. God so loves the world that He gives Himself to it. Crucifixion of Jesus, the only begotten son of God is the influential example of God’s love for mankind. In Christianity it is mentioned that the relationship between God and man is ultimately based on love which is regarded as the redemptive love. God’s love means a life of sacrifice. The Bible asserts that greatest proof of God’s love for mankind is sending His son Jesus to the world so that Christ may die on the
cross and thereby sins of mankind may be atoned for. God loves man so much that He gave His only Son for being sacrificed on the Cross for the ransom of the sins of the world. Even though man has strayed away from the path of Godliness yet God is ever ready as a loving father to well come any one who has come back to him often having requested for forgiveness. Therefore, sin, Radhakrishnan says, “consist in disturbing God in refusing to recognize his purpose and respond to His demand.”

Our virtue consists in assimilating the divine content and participating in His purpose. God is forever saving the world.

According to Radhakrishnan, the theory of Avatara is an eloquent expression of the law of the spiritual world. As the saviour of man, God manifests Himself whenever the forces of evil threaten to destroy human values. An Avatara is a descent of God into man, and an ascent of man into God occurs in the case of a liberated soul. The Avatara is a self being of the Divine whereas every conscious being is a veiled manifestation shrouded in ignorance. The Gita also describes the eternal Avatara, the God in man, the Divine consciousness always present in the human being. The popular view holds that whenever darkness of sin and ignorance ground the world, there is a threat to the order of the worlds; then in a unique way God Himself becomes personally incarnate.

God is conceived as the Supreme mind. As supreme intelligence and wisdom He actualizes the possibility of creation. He is also love and goodness. Radhakrishnan insists upon the ultimate unity of Hindu trinity. He says, “The one God create as Brahma, redeems as Vishnu and judges as Siva.” These three represent the three stages of the plan, the process and the perfection. God loves us, creates us and rules us. According to Radhakrishnan, “Creation, redemption and judgment are different names for the fact of God.”
In clarifying the relation between God and creation, Radhakrishnan appears to be greatly influenced by Whitehead’s philosophy of God. Like Whitehead he holds the view that so far the world is concerned God is organic with it. God cannot be detached from the world. Rāmānuja holds that the relation between God and the world is like that of the soul to body. God is the sustainer of the body as well as its inner guide. According to Radhakrishnan it is not that God arranges everything in the beginning and leaves the world to grow under the control of the secondary causes as the Deist thinks. A God, who has arranged everything at the beginning of the world and can change nothing and create nothing new, is not a God at all. If the universe is regarded as truly creative then God must also remain constantly creative. God also grows with the universe by giving it a constant direction towards the goal which it ever seeks to attain. It is true that though God is immanent, it is not wholly identical with the universe; it is transcendent in so far as it cannot be identical with the universe which constantly lacks something and which is a steady progression towards perfection. Throughout the process of creation there remains an ‘unrealized residuum’ in God, which makes him transcend the universe. Perhaps in the end this unrealized residuum would vanish, but then the purpose of this creation would also to complete. God who is organic with it recedes into the back ground of the Absolute. “The beginning and the end are limiting conceptions and the great interest of the world centers in the intermediate process from the beginning to the end.”

Radhakrishnan emphasizes on both the jñāna side of Ultimate reality and the karma side of it. Brahman signifies the jñāna side of Ultimate Reality while God signifies the karma side of the same. Brahman being the essential transcendent reality can be attained only through jñāna, while God who is free activity is attained through devotion and karma. God is the conscious active delight who is creatively pouring out His powers and qualities. God chooses one of the infinite possibilities of the Absolute and transforms it into the world with
His creative spirit involved in action. Both Brahman and God have the qualifications of being ultimate realities. They are not distinct entities but different aspects of the same reality. While Brahman is the Supreme as spirit, God is the Supreme as person. Brahman is ‘God as he is’ and Īśvara is ‘God as he seems to us. The difference between Brahman and God “is one of standpoint and not of essence.” So there is no essential difference between Brahman and God. We cannot say that one is real and the other is unreal. Both are real. The difference is that Brahman is the logical prius of God.”

Radhakrishnan repeatedly asserts that God is not an appearance. He maintains that God with whom the worshipper stands in personal relation is the very Absolute in the world context and is not a mere appearance of the Absolute. For him an apparent God cannot arouse devotion in man. But it is true that God has no reality independent of Brahman. God is there because Brahman is there. God without the concept of the Absolute is no God at all. The Absolute deepens the very reality of God instead of taking it away. God’s reality becomes much richer by the existence of the Absolute.

Like Rāmānuja, Radhakrishnan also seems to impart sometimes greater importance to God. In the Gitā also we have higher concept of God. Supporting the view of Bhagavad Gitā, Radhakrishnan says, “The impersonality of the Absolute is not its whole significance.” The Gitā says, “There is nothing whatever that is higher than I …………” Clarifying this point Radhakrishnan says that there is no other principle than Īśvara who affects everything. Although Radhakrishnan does not deny metaphysical dialectic, his interest in religious experience is more prominent. He opines that philosophy and religion cannot be separated. The Vedānta philosophy itself is insisted on the oneness of the two. By religion however, Radhakrishnan does not mean any specific religion, but a religion with a universal appeal. Such a religious attitude leads him sometimes to ascribe more importance to God.
In theism the overall importance is given only to God. In it behind God there is no Absolute. Some critics remark that Radhakrishnan has a theistic bias. But Radhakrishnan himself criticizes theism. He says that theism leads to a finite God and thereby to pessimism and despair. Radhakrishnan is an absolutist and not a theist. There is however every possibility that a careless reader may think him to be a theist. It is so because whenever he discusses Ultimate Reality the concept of God introduces into it. In his philosophy the determination of the nature of Ultimate Reality is equivalent to the determination of the nature of God. Radhakrishnan does not opt for theism as he knows that it cannot sustain critical examination. The God of theism often lapses into a limited being. Moreover theism cannot solve the problem of will. Again theism’s concept of a personal God cannot be justified metaphysically, for being a person He is to share in all the limitations of personality. Therefore Radhakrishnan opts for Absolutism.

Radhakrishnan holds that the reality of God as experience by the mystic is quite compatible with scientific truth. Radhakrishnan wrote, “We have certain experiences which we try to account for by the assumption of God. The God of our imagination may be as real as the electron but it is not necessarily the reality which we immediately apprehend. The idea of God is an interpretation of experience.” God is not an ethical principle, nor an intellectual concept, or a logical idea but a perceived reality present in each man. Man expresses his very intuition of reality through concrete forms, he responds to the eternal reality. Radhakrishnan holds, “By reference to things that are seen we give concrete form to the intuition of the reality that is unseen. Symbolism is an essential part of human life, the only possible response of a creature conditioned by time and space to the timeless and space less reality.” Radhakrishnan thinks that to use concrete symbolism for unseen reality is to impoverish the Absolute. God is a symbol in and through which religion sees the Absolute.
Radhakrishnan was of the opinion that the world is the free determination of God. The power of self determination, self expression belongs to God. In Īśvara we have the two elements of wisdom and power, Siva and Sakti. By the latter the Supreme that is unmeasured and immeasurable becomese measured and defined. Immutable being becomes infinite fecundity, pure being, which is the free basis and support. Between the Absolute and the world soul there is creative consciousness. Thus according to Radhakrishnan God is the creative consciousness by which world springs into existence. God is the ground of the world.

**3.7 CONCLUSION:**

Thus we find that the concept of God occupies an important position from the Vedas to the modern period. The belief in God is as old as man’s relation to the world. Without the concept of God, religious experience cannot be explained. In religion we stand in personal relation to some higher entity.

The Vedic Aryans worshipped many of Gods- Indra, Agni, Varuna and others. But each is in turn worshipped as the highest God, the creator and sustainer of the world, the giver of happiness to man and his protector from evils. In many places of the Rg-Veda, Indra is spoken of as the sole lord of the universe; he alone is the lord of man and wealth. So also is Hiranyagarbha, the sole lord and Agni, like Varuna, the sole lord of wealth. Indra supported and spread the earth, while Soma is called the supporter of heaven. Nearly all the gods are endowed with every great divine attribute. However, the so called Vedic polytheism is only an aspect of the monism and monotheism of the Rg-Veda. The foundation of Indian monism may be seen in the 46th verse of the hymn of Dirghatamas (1.164), “Ekam sad- vipra bahudhā vadanti” meaning “Truth is one; sages call it by various names.” Yaksa, while dealing with the gods of the Vedas says that there is only one God. On earth (Prthivi:- sthāna) He appears
as the fire, in the mid-region (antariksa-sthāna) as Indra, and in the celestial region (dya-
sthāna), as Savitr. The various gods in each of these three planes are only aspects of these
tree manifestations of the one God.\(^7\) (Nirukta, VII.5)

The highest conception mentioned in the Vedic hymns was that of the One Reality.
(Ekam Sat). In the Rg-Veda and Purusa sukta hymn for the first time we come across the
concept of a universal being as a creation and sustainer of this world. According to the one
hymn of Atharva Veda all is God, but God is above all. The Vedic conception of reality as-
that one-is sought to replace in the Upanishads by the Absolute unity of only the one without
the other. The Ultimate Reality may be viewed from two aspects. From the subjective side
this Ultimate Reality is called Atman and viewed from the objective aspect it is Brahman.
Atman and Brahman are identical. Absolute manifests itself as subject and object and
transcends both.

The theistic teaching of Bhagavad Gitā mainly centres round the understanding of
Brahman as God, as the creator and sustainer of the universe, God as both immanent and
transcendent of the world, as there is nothing other than God as everything in this world,
even the non-living are only His parts. In the Gitā, the Upanishadic concept of Absolutism is
tinged with theism as Lord Krishna is a personal God. Lord Krishna is eternal, imperishable
and the creator and sustainer of the world. God takes birth in a human body for the
establishment of righteousness and to destroy the vicious.

Śaṅkara’s monism is based on his interpretation of the Brahma-sutras and the
Upanishads. According to Śaṅkara Brahman is the Ultimate Reality. In an Absolute view
point there is no place for God. From the practical point of view, Īśvara is the first cause of
the world. But from the Absolute point of view, Brahman is the cause of the origination,
subsistence and dissolution of the world. Śaṅkara brings the concept of God in order to
explain the world. To say that the infinite Brahman is the cause of the finite world is to admit that the infinite is subject to the limitation of time. Śaṅkara describes God as the omnipotent, omniscient cause from which proceed the origin, subsistence and dissolution of the world. The world is created and sustained by God. God who also controls the world is Saguna. According to Śaṅkara God has no independent reality. God is not identical with Brahman. Though he does not consider God to be identical with Brahman, yet he thinks that God is associated with the creative power of the all knowing Lord. This creative power according to Śaṅkara is Māyā. So from the Vedāntic point of view behind the creation of the world God may be considered both as material and efficient cause. Therefore it is clear that in Advaita Philosophy God occupies a very significant place.

Rāmānuja, the exponent of the theistic school of Vedānta sets forth the doctrine of determinate and qualified Brahman where God is identified with the Supreme Brahman. For Rāmānuja Brahman is an organic whole qualified by diversity. God is the highest reality, though not the only reality. He argues that God is real and independent. The souls and matter are real but their reality is dependent on the reality of God. Rāmānuja’s Brahman is what is Īśvara (God) in Śaṅkara’s philosophy. But for Rāmānuja God or Brahman is the Absolute or ontological reality. Likewise in Nyāya and Yoga systems also God occupies a very unique position.

For Spinoza the Ultimate Reality is the substance which he identified with God. Spinoza conceived God as one Substance devoid of intelligence, will and personality. According to him, thought and extension are the attributes of God which are known to us. God is an infinite substance. Everything follows necessarily from the nature of God. God is self conceived and self existent. God must be admitted to be the universal reality. Being universal God must be absolutely indeterminate and infinite, because there is nothing which makes him determinate. Spinoza’s idea of God has a striking resemblance to the Upanishadic
conception of Brahman. In the Upanishads Brahman is regarded as essentially self-existent being and hence must be apprehended through its essence and not by any other means. In the same way Spinoza also holds the view that the substance can be conceived through itself.

Bradley says that the highest reality is the Absolute and it is supra-personal. For him God of religion is an appearance and in the Absolute, God and religion are equally lost. God taken as thinking and feeling being has a private personality. The highest reality is the Absolute and the Absolute means that which in the end is related to God. Rashdall holds that the belief in God is the postulate of morality. The belief in God is essential to the logical justification of the idea of objective validity which is implicit in the world of consciousness. Objective morality implies the belief in God. The Absolute must include God and the created spirit taken together.

Radhakrishnan has been rightly described as a Neo Vedāntin philosopher as he is constantly tries to give a philosophic justification of Vedānta. But he did not merely reiterate the metaphysics of Śaṅkara, the most prominent and enduring figure of Vedānta, but sought to reinterpret Advaita for present need. The idealism of Radhakrishnan assimilates Śaṅkara’s Absolute and Rāmānuja’s God in one dynamic conception. For him the Absolute is transcendental, nameless, formless, indeterminate being. It is unchangeable, beginning less and endless. God is the projected power of the Absolute. God is immanent, omniscient, omnipotent, creator, destroyer and maintainer of the cosmos. The Absolute and God both are real. The former is transcendent while the latter is immanent.

Unlike Śaṅkara Radhakrishnan gives special emphasis upon God. As a philosopher guided with a religious spirit Radhakrishnan cannot deny God, the object of devotion. Śaṅkara in his Advaita Vedānta neither identifies God with the Ultimate Reality, nor says that it is different from it. Śaṅkara ascribes the term Māyā to associates the term Absolute
with the term God. According to him God appears to be real as long as one is under the influence of Māyā, but God disappears when the lid of ignorance is uncovered. But Radhakrishnan is not in favour of deducing God to nothingness by making it a product of Māyā or nescience. For Radhakrishnan both the Absolute and personal God are real, only the former is the logical prius of the latter. For Śaṅkara appearance and ultimate disappearance of God are associated with Māyā. Radhakrishnan too acknowledges Māyā, but for him God is real and does not disappear like that in Śaṅkara’s system. At the end of the cosmic process God recedes into the background of the Absolute.

The philosophy of Radhakrishnan is spiritualistic. Spiritualism is a religious outlook of the world. God or the ultimate reality is the object of man’s religious experience. Radhakrishnan observes that we may not know the ultimate meaning of God, though we may know something about God through religious experience. Philosophers may contend that God, the holy one that is worshipped is different from the Absolute, the reality demonstrated by reason. But Radhakrishnan says that the religious consciousness has felt that the two are one. God is the symbol in which religion cognizes the Absolute. Radhakrishnan’s concept of God has an identity as a creator- a God though involved in the work of creation stands as a permanent Reality behind this world of change. God is conceived as the Supreme Spirit with all good qualities. But even though Radhakrishnan attributes God with all ideal predicates, the glory of God is so vast that it eludes the grasp of human mind. God can mainly be apprehended and thought of but this nature cannot be fully comprehended.
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