INTRODUCTION
The twentieth century has witnessed revolutionary changes in the concepts and ideas pertaining to every branch of learning. No faculty of knowledge can stand isolated from another. The different peoples of the world are getting closer today than ever before owing to the fast growth and development of the systems of communication. All-pervasive schools of thought have assumed a new significance in the present context.

The convergence of Science and Philosophy is becoming real in an ever increasing dimension. The intimate relation between these two is more and more emphasised year after year. While special science probe into the properties of things and the
natural laws that govern the material world, nature and society, philosophy is concerned with the universe in its totality. Their possible convergence is therefore, in many ways, beneficial to the seekers of truth.

Philosophy ought to solve the intellectual problems of the day and it ought to be relevant to everyday human situation. It enlarges the ideas of awareness to become more alive, more discerning, more critical and more intelligent. Philosophy accepts the hard and hazardous task of dealing with problems not yet open to the methods of science - problems like good and evil, beauty and ugliness, order and freedom, life and death. Every science begins as a philosophy and ends as an art; it springs up as hypothesis and flows into achievement. Philosophy aims at the hypothetical interpretation of the unknown or the inexactly known.
It is the front trench in the seige of truth. Science without philosophy and perspective cannot save humanity from havoc and despair.

The universality of the tradition of philosophy is being realised by more and more nations recently. The so called parochial approach in philosophy are loosing ground. The complexity of the modern society demands broadening of the base for the understanding of the truths by which men ought to live. The imperativeness of philosophy is ever-increasing, and it has now really become a confluence where the East and the West merge harmoniously.

During the recent centuries Western scholars have been constantly concentrating on studies pertaining to the different systems of Indian philosophy. The great Indian heritage of ideas has ever been the key to the better understanding of mankind. India's contribution to the 3000 year old history
of the world philosophy is in no way insignificant.

A study of Indian Philosophy should reveal the rich and varied philosophical heritage of India. Since the vedic period a large number of philosophical views have sprung up from the various systems of thought. Indian Philosophy represents an abundance of contradictory view points which served as the chief motive forces in its development.

The initial sprouts of Indian philosophy can be traced in the Vedas the first literary documents of human thought. The later portions of the vedic literature are fully philosophical in character. These ideas contained in the Upaniṣads were developed into various systems of philosophy. Ideas marked for profundity and impressiveness were expounded in the important classics of original thought.
Philosophy in India is termed as dārsana. In his Arthasastra, though Kauṭalya refers to only three dārsanas viz., Śamkhya, Yoga and Lokayata. Madhava in his Sarvadarsanasamgraha enumerates sixteen systems of philosophy. But only nine of them have got universal approval. They are Śamkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaisešika, Pūrva-mīmāṃsā, Uttaramīmāṃsā, Ārābhika, Jaina and Baudhāḍa. The first six form the Orthodox systems or āstika dārsanas while the last three constitute the heterodox systems or nāstika dārsanas. Later due to differences in doctrinal interpretations, many schools and sub-schools came up within each system.

Uttaramīmāṃsā or Vedānta is one of the most popular orthodox systems of philosophy. It still carries a contemporary significance since it has helped man in his attempt to solve the riddle of existence. Vedānta as a system of living thought
and mode of conduct must strive to go beyond its existing frontiers by enlarging and re-orienting itself.

Of the three major three branches of Vedanta viz., Advaita, Dvaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita, Advaita Vedānta formulated by Śaṅkara is the most prominent one. Modern thinkers like Swamy Vivekananda also attach great importance to this philosophy. Nobody can set aside Advaita as a dead weight of the past since it possesses a living significance. Advaita Vedānta as formulated in the Upaniṣads, Brahma-sūtras and Bhagavadgītā and as accomplished on the commentary on them by Saṅkara is one of the most valuable products of the human genius in its search for eternal truth.

The term Upaniṣad suggests Brahmavidyā, destroying avidyā, leads one to Brahman, having destroyed all bonds of worldly life. The Upaniṣads
reveal a period of chaotic thought, half practical and half religious. However, Upanisads are instinct with a spirit of enquiry of mental adventure, of a thirst for finding out the truth about things.

The Śūtras of Bādarāyaṇa (2nd c. B.C.) represent an attempt to harmonise the Upaniṣadic doctrines and evolve a consistent philosophy out of them. The vagueness in Upaniṣadic phraseology has provided room for later commentators to formulate their theories in these cryptic śūtras. Advaita of Śaṅkara, Dvaita of Madhva, Viśiṣṭadvaita of Ramanuja and many other minor thoughts are based on these Śūtras.

It is to be noted that the Bhagavatgītā also served as a basic text in the formulation of various schools of vedantic thought. The Gītā furnished the one scriptural source which could be used without violence to the accepted Brāhmin methodology to
draw inspiration and to arrive at justifications for social actions which were disagreeable in some way to a section of the ruling class upon whose mercy the Brahmins depended.

During 8th century A.D. Gauḍāpāda wrote a commentary in verse on the Maṇḍūkyopaniṣad called Maṇḍūkyakarikā. In it he tries to establish the advaitic doctrine of identity of jīva and the Brahman. A consistent and logical philosophy of Advaita Vedanta is clearly interwoven in these karikās. However, Advaita Vedanta found its Zenith in the works of Śaṅkara (788-820 A.D.)

Śaṅkara wrote commentaries on the ten principal Upaniṣads, Brahmasūtras, Bhagavadgītā and logically established Advaita. Many independent works were also written by him in order to highlight the basic propositions of Advaita Vedanta. Śaṅkara substantiated that Brahman alone is the supreme reality
and everything else including the cosmos itself, is false and is superimposed on it by avidyā. Liberation is the realization of Brahman and is to be attained by the means of knowledge.

For about three centuries Śaṅkara's theory stood unquestioned. But the first theistic reaction against Advaita came from Ramanuja during 12th and 13th centuries. Ramanuja also admitted the falsity of the world. The sole reality according to him includes all the diversities of the material world. Brahman is the substance and the world is its attribute. Hence his system come to be called Viśiṣṭādvaita. He upheld bhakti as the only means of liberation.

Madhva (13th c.) also directed a strong theistic protest against the absolutistic theory of Śaṅkara. According to Madhva, both Brahman and the
material world are real. Hence his line of thinking came to be called Dualism or Dvaita Vedānta. Madhva established the reality of the world with the help of the above mentioned triple texts. He discarded Advaita as Buddhism in disguise. He also considered bhakti as the sole means of liberation, which can be attained through the grace of Keśava. Thus he offered an uncompromising resistance against Advaita of Śaṅkara.

Following Śaṅkara, Rāmanuja and Madhva several other philosophers such as Srikanṭha, Nimbārka, Vallabha, Bhaskara, Yaḍava, Baladeva also introduced their own particular schools of thought within the Vedānta system. Each such school strengthened its philosophical standpoint by opposing other schools of the Vedānta and other systems of philosophy. However, these schools did not come into prominence for want of popular support. In short, it is clear that diversity and contradictions have always
constituted the dynamic force behind the development of Indian Philosophy as well as Vedānta. At the same time, the concept of synthesis also played a prominent role in the later developments of Indian Philosophy.

In the 16th century, the influence of the bhakti movement became very decisive among the scholars and laymen alike. The absolutistic philosophy of Saṅkara did not satisfy the theistic thirst of the people. Some sort of philosophic compromise was the need of the hour to uphold Absolute Monism. Madhusūdana Sarasvati comes to the scene in this historical juncture. With his subtle reasoning and logical arguments he resisted the theistic attack on Advaita of Saṅkara effectively. But to keep up the absolutistic theory intact without deviating from the main track, Madhusūdana boldly introduced the element of bhakti within the monistic
thinking. It is not at all a surrender to the theistic schools, but a bold attempt to uphold the individuality of Advaita-Vedānta. The concept of bhakti introduced by Madhusūdana is also different from the one propogated by Rāmanuja, Madhva and Caitanya. It has its roots in the theoretical Advaita. Here lies the relevance of the study of Madhusūdana's Philosophy, not been much explored. Vedāntakalpalatikā, which incorporates in itself all the cardinal doctrines of Advaita-Vedānta, especially the concept of liberation, is an initial work of Madhusūdana Sarasvati. The Neo-logic method of presentation employed in the delineation of the topic of discussion attaches a remarkable significance to the work. Vedāntakalpalatikā, being a manual of Advaita-Vedānta, has paved the way for his theoretical warfare with Dvaitins and other opponents. A close study of Vedāntakalpalatikā becomes relevant in this context.
Besides Madhusūdana's contribution to Advaita Vedānta deserves to be critically examined and evaluated. During the scholastic period, the polemical debates between monistic and theistic schools of philosophy continued for several centuries. But no new ideas and ideals were come out as a result of these theoretical wrangles. Here rests the importance of Madhusūdana who had cut a new path within Advaita, the path of jñāna-bhakti synthesis. Thus a close study of Vedāntakalpalatikā becomes quite relevant in the present context.