PART TWO

ADVATTA VEDANTA AND TEOHARD DE CHARDIN
CHAPTER SIX

ADVATITA VEDANTA AND THE PROBLEM OF ILLUSIONISM

While in the previous chapters we have tried to explain the meaning of Vedanta on the basis of scientific, phenomenological, and spiritual study, and also admitted that there is a common human interiority prevailing beyond all diversity, we shall now study whether the Vedantic school of the East with its concept of universality will have any significance to the humanistic account of life. It appears that the doctrine of non-dualism of religious humanism of Vedanta has a strong appeal to the concept of human nature. In this connection, as we mentioned (it seems to me), the Indian system of non-dualism is a humanist but also essentialist. This idea may hold good if we have already accepted that the term humanism does not represent the manifest of essentialism, which, of course, is not, as we have seen,

The present discussion will be focused considerably on some of Vedanta of Indian philosophy. But, since there are two expressions of non-dualism, of which the Advaita doctrine advocates non-duality or non-being, on the one hand, and the advaita doctrine puts its dominant emphasis upon formlessness. Being, in either case we encounter certain difficulty which in consideration by closer knowledge of the meaning of non-dualism, we shall therefore devote ourselves to the study.
CHAPTER SIX

ADVAINA VEDANTA AND THE PROBLEM OF "ILLUSIONISM"

While in the previous chapters we have tried to explain the meaning of Humanism on the basis of scientific, phenomenological, and spiritual enquiry, and also admitted that there is a common human interiority prevailing beyond all diversity, we shall now study whether the nondualistic school of the East with its concept of universality will have any significance to the humanistic account of life. It appears that the doctrine of nondualism of the East, like that of religious humanism of the West, gives another interesting and even more embracing concept of human nature. In this connection, as perhaps adventure (it seems to me), the Indian system of non-dualism is a humanism par excellence. This idea may hold good if we have already accepted that the term humanism does not represent the manifesto of materialism, which, of course, is not, as we have seen.

The present discussion will be focussed considerably at length on Vedanta of Indian philosophy. But, since there are two exponents of non-dualism, of which the Buddhist doctrine advocates non-dualism of non-Being, on the one hand, and the Advaita doctrine puts its dominant emphasis upon formless-Being, in either case we encounter certain difficulty which is, however, surmountable by deeper knowledge of the meaning of non-dualism. We shall therefore devote ourselves to the Advaita
doctrine. However, while this will be our objective, our attention is also drawn to see that there is another breakaway school within Advaita Vedānta, represented by Sri Aurobindo and his evolutionary or integral non-dualism. The new development deserves a brief mention in the light of its transcendental evolutionary theory and how it differs from the Advaita doctrine. But before we do so it may well be said that evolutionary non-dualism appears like a wandering son who always feels the presence of his mother in him, and yet he speaks as if he is of an independent origin. To advance our study in this regard, we shall refer to Haridas Chaudhari's book The Philosophy of Integralism: The Metaphysical Synthesis in Sri Aurobindo's Teaching, which gives an impressive outline of Aurobindo's system as well as how it differs from other oriental non-dualism. The author consistently begins by degrading 'specific symbols of Divine Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Moses, etc., with all their historical particularities,' and that the non-dualistic tenet 'I am in essence one with Formless Being' alone can claim 'the ultimate unity of all prophets, and all religions, resulting in a genuine universality of outlook'. This argument, out and out, conforms to the Advaita doctrine.

Immediately, in the next place the author points out the difference between integral non-dualism and 'ancient non-dualism' of Sankara and Buddha. To quote him:
Integral non-dualism transforms ancient non-dualism into an affirmative and dynamic attitude to life by incorporating into it the evolutionary perspective. Ancient non-dualism aims at ecstatic union with the eternal. Integral non-dualism is dynamic and creative with the eternal.

Secondly, integral non-dualism affirms Being as the undivided unity of the formless and multiple forms. According to ancient non-dualism, ultimate reality is the formless, the indeterminable. Forms and determinations are unreal from the ultimate standpoint. In the view of integral non-dualism, forms and determinations also are very real from the ultimate standpoint. They are the glory of the creative urge inherent in Being. They provide meaning and reality to the self-expressive impulse of Being.

He continues to argue that with the Advaita doctrine (from now on we shall avoid mention of Buddhism, although it was also incorporated in the work referred to above) 'names and forms (nāma-rūpa) are unreal (mithya),' because they are only temporal. Defending transcendental evolutionism, the author maintains: 'Integral non-dualism holds that the non-temporal and the evolutionary are two inseparable aspects of Being. The evolutionary is the creative energy (sakti) inherent in Being. So by enlargi
the concept of energy (Sakti) or determinate Being (Saguna Brahman), which is already there in Vedānta, mysticism and evolutionism can be perfectly reconciled. Thus according to this system we are led to admit man's twofold nature: on the one hand he has the formless and timeless depth dimension of his existence. He needs to realize that in order to attain peace, wisdom, freedom and love in their perfection. But, on the other hand, he has the historical dimension of his being. He is born in a specific historical context and part of his ultimate goal of life lies in playing an active role in the march of history.

Now, if one conceives all forms and names as unreal, and the other thinks them real; if one rejects all historical occurrences and particularities of the phenomenal world, while the other accepts them as true, then certainly we can conclude that the former maintains an unrelational concept of the world, while the latter relational. This difference does not, however, pose such as illogical reason for any breaking point within a system. But encountering some of these practical difficulties which seem to be inherent in the Advaita doctrine, Sri Aurobindo turns to find fault with the Advaita system, and he calls it "Illusionism" whose self-defeating, as he puts it, attitude of life cannot save India and her people.
We have seen with Teilhard whose evolutionary theory has a striking similarity with that of Aurobindo's, that although his views often appear to clash with the ecclesiastical tradition, not because he thought of establishing his own theological philosophy, but because the Christian tradition seemed to have chosen a closed outlook of life, and so he wanted to rejuvenate Christianity by bringing it into the open. And so if there was any rupture in his relation to the Church, it remained only doctrinal. Thus, as expected, we finally saw him reinforcing with all his modern resources to prove the relevance of the fundamental concepts inherent in the traditional teaching. The problem with Sri Aurobindo is relatively different from that. We shall touch on this problem very shortly.

What must concern us here is the difference between integral non-dualism and Advaita Vedānta as set out by Haridas Chaudhuri. Integral non-dualism seems to be perfectly right when it tries to incorporate prominent value with human progress. Progress, if it means consciousness rising higher and higher state, is a good sign of triumphing over heaviness of the physical world, that does not mean an indifferent attitude to empirical aspects, but it means participating in and purifying them, as we have considered, which equally applies to Aurobindo's evolutionary system too.
Apart from this, integral non-dualism seems to be rather short-sighted, unfair, and even inconsistent in its treatment of the Advaita doctrine. Integral non-dualism argues in the first place, that Advaita Vedānta 'aims at ecstatic union with the eternal'. The term 'ecstacy' has, however, a wide range of controversy involving psychological, philosophical, religious, and mystic a question into which we do not enter. But what is apparent here is that ecstacy does not have any prominent role in Advaita Vedānta. And even if the Advaitin arrives at ecstatic experience, he may do so not by means of magic potion, or witchcraft, or hypnotic trance, or drugs, but through the pursuit of true knowledge by means of rational enquiry. Secondly, integral non-dualism opposes the Advaita doctrine by maintaining that, according to it, names and forms are 'very real from the ultimate standpoint' as against the latter's position that they are 'unreal from the ultimate standpoint'. Here we are faced with the difficulty as to what does the word 'ultimate' signify. We normally understand its purport to mean something beyond which nothing exists.

If the integral non-dualism thinks, as it should be in that way, that it is trying to establish the reality of the phenomenal world and so to this purpose the sense of 'ultimate' is applied, then as soon as it does so it cannot claim anything beyond that sphere. But to say this is thoroughly a contradiction of its own system, as it appears clear that Aurobindo has
not constructed any theory in the ultimate sense which is spacio-temporal bound. But, on the other hand, if it thinks that names and forms are assumed in the ultimate sense as these are incorporated into the non-dual Being, hence the phrase integral non-dualism, then there cannot be two ultimates. Therefore, names and forms cannot be anything higher than temporal elements, meaning, in the Advaitic sense of the term, non-real in the ultimate sense.

The Advaitins see and affirm the existence of the phenomenal world, but in a limited sense that it is not utterly unreal as the nihilist claims. Thus according to Advaita Vedānta, as declared by the Brhadāraṇyaka Upanisad, 'this world of names and forms,' in T.M.P. Mahadevan's words, 'has its roots in Brahman. Prior to creation, the world was unmanifested and there was only Brahman. All the percepts of our present experience are posterior to creation.' This statement clarifies the problem that with the Advaita doctrine the empirical world is neither meaningless nor altogether real in the ultimate sense of the term. To insist that external objects have no profitable relation to the Absolute does not, however, mean the 'equivalent to the negation to their existence.' (About the realistic stand of Advaita Vedānta, we shall have opportunity to discuss in the immediate chapter that follows). Thirdly, integral non-dualism shows its predominant interest in the evolutionary perspective. Its aim in this sense is to 'reconcil...
the timeless perfection of Being with the temporal process of the world,' through the medium of evolutionary theory. Hence it adopts the measure that evolutionary concept can offer. It affirms that evolutionary theory alone explains the material world. In this sense, evolution is a means by which the Supreme Being manifests itself in the world of matter. Thus it is the involutionary aspect. 'So in the stuff of matter which constitutes the starting-point of terrestrial evolution there must be involved from the very beginning all the other component principles of ultimate reality. Having descended through gradual self-alienation into the inconscience of matter, the Spirit gets involved therein with all other elements of its nature. It is this involution of all in one which constitutes the necessity of evolution and imparts a specific direction to the cosmic drift.'

Evolution, as far as it is of the nature of immanent and transcendent, is not out of the Advaitic system. We shall, therefore, make a brief survey of evolution in Advaita Vedānta. The evidence towards the scope of evolution that strikes us first in Advaita is its reaction against the nihilist's claim of the effect comes out of nothing or that space is a vacuum. Commenting on the Madhava Upanisad, Sankara maintains, in the words of an Advaita scholar, 'that space is positive entity and an active agent of further creation. The very fact that ether is made into divisions by material objects, shows that
it is, transformable. It also undergoes change and decay. This point automatically involves spatio-temporal evolution, and hence the significance of time is not excluded in the Advaita doctrine. But it is strictly attributed to a series of phenomenal nature. With Advaita Vedānta, as it is with Aurobindo, evolution is both immanent and transcendent.

While the Vaiśeṣika theory contends that creation was done out of atoms, the Sāṅkhya holds prakṛti (primal nature) to be the primary condition of evolution. In this sense both of them seek to demonstrate purely naturalistic account of evolution. Śaṅkara refutes them on the ground that mere insentient nature cannot be conceived of as rising to higher levels of pure consciousness. Hence there must be in the nature sentient element inherent. It follows from this, that the Advaitins contend this Brahman is both immanent and transcendent. 'The source of the universe,' comments T.M.P. Mahadevan, 'is not a category of matter, but the supreme Spirit ... Time (kāla), nature (svabhāva), necessity (nivāti), chance (vadrecha), the elements (bhūta), the womb (yoni), or the male (purusa) cannot serve as the first cause. The Upanishad discovers that over all these, which may be regarded only as the secondary causes, there rules the self-power (ātma-sakti) of God (deva), hidden in his own qualities (guna). The perspective of evolution in Advaita Vedānta is thus of the nature of involution
of the acosmic substance in the cosmic appearance of Brahman. In this connection, we must also be clear enough to see that the Advaita approach is not same thing as that of the Sankhya's whose doctrine is the self-evolution of prakṛti (parināmasvāda). The Advaita doctrine as expounded by Śankara is that of the pre-existence of the effect in the cause (satkārvavāda). This explanation further affirms that Brahman is both immanent as well as transcendent.

From the standpoint of immanence, we have the supreme Spirit embracing all the cosmic dimensions such as perceptibility, divisibility, and transformability. And it should be remembered that all these elements are only the effects conditioned by the immanence. Therefore, in so far as they are dependent on their immanent principle, they are real, but in so far as they are assumed to be outside the immanent principle, they are untrue. Explaining Chāndogya Upanisad, affirming that the cause alone is real and that all other modifications are unreal, Śankara says: 'In so far as they (effects) are names, they are untrue; in so far as they are clay (cause), they are true.' This position is affirmed by the principle of ev nibilo nibili, as Śankara says 'that a positive effect which is produced takes place only when there is a cause and does not take place where there is no cause'. Interpreting this, it is known that external objects of psycho-physical
world do not have independent existence, but their existence is dependent on the primal cause. The Advaitins seek to explain this problem by explaining the mysterious energy called Prakṛti which is composed of three constituents (gunas), namely sattva (good), rajas (active agitative), and tamas (inert). It is very clear with the Advaita doctrine that this Prakṛti is not an independent entity. Vidyāranya explains it thus:

Prakṛti is, in its unmanifested condition, the union of opposites. It is a 'string of three strands.' The three gunas, sattva, rajas and tamas, when they are in a state of equipoise united with the reflection of Brahman, are called prakṛti.

When the equilibrium is disturbed there is prakṛti-nāga (destruction of prakṛti), and the empirical world is produced. Prakṛti is the prīris of creation, the womb of manyness.

Points to be noted in this regard are, that Prakṛti reflects Brahman, that it is the womb which gives birth to multiplicity. But it is impossible to conceive that a womb can give birth to anything without an entity to stir its potential, and the potential is impossible to be stirred without itself previously having latent within it the quality of the stirrer.

Thus although Prakṛti is known as the womb of creation and
evolution, out of which we have the subsequent emergence of lower and higher categories of being according to the proportionate predomination of these three qualities, yet the seed or the source is Brahman.

Now that we have been trying to see is that names and forms (nāma-rūpa) are not void, because they exist through the power of primary source; but since they are already names and forms wearing their outfits of the cosmic body, they cannot be known as ultimately real. The Self is already imprisoned by their outer nature. And to release the Self the cosmic phenomenon inclines to transcendental evolutionary process. Hence, evolution, in this sense, may be understood as a cosmic process of releasing the Self.

With regard to transcendental aspect of evolution, the Advaitains, like the Sāṅkhya, refer to the individual dimension and not the species. That is to say, according to the Advaita doctrine, the individual soul (jīva), which is caught under the illusory attributes of the avidvā, has to transcend those psycho-physical barriers. This may be possible because the reality of jīva is the Brahman itself. But if the jīva is the Brahman, why the question of transcendence? Transcendent is prime necessity because jīva, though it bears within it the supreme Reality, is superimposed on by the five sheaths. The five sheaths
mentioned by the Advaitins are namely, the *annamaya*, the physical body made of food; *pranamaya*, the sheath of the vital air and the energizer of the body; *manomaya*, the sheath of mind; *vijnanamaya*, the sheath of intellect and cognitive activity; and *anandamaya*, the sheath of enjoyment still enveloped in ignorance, and which is the subtlest of all other sheaths. These five sheaths seem to be the derivatives of the action and reaction within the psycho-physical domain. And here we also seem to have the glimpse of the continuity of the Reality that 'underlies and transcends both the subject and object.'

This idea of evolution further carries us to see that Advaita Vedānta neither asserts that the effect is altogether new from its cause, as the Nyaya-Vaiśeṣikas' *asatkāryavāda* shows, nor does it affirm its reality. The Advaitains demonstrate that evolution is non-eternal as it is ultimately withdrawn to its original fold, that its movement from bottom to the top, pure Ātman, also is an evidence of the causal principle immanent in the progress.

Of all the animate beings, man alone seems to represent best the immanent and transcendent aspects of evolution, because he alone seems to combine all the constituents of evolution. 'In insentient things,' says Aitareya Āranyaka, 'such as stones, only the *sattā*, the quality of mere being, manifests itself, in
plants and animals and men the self through the vital sap; in animals and men there is understanding; higher thought in man alone. Therefore, there cannot be denial of animal instinct present in man. This does not deny the higher order of rational element in man. At this point, we seem to be confronted with certain unclarity about the Upanishadic texts. In Taittiriya Upanishad, we hear: 'There has been a steady ascent from the inorganic to the organic, from the organic to the sentient, from the sentient to the rational life. The rational life has to grow into the spiritual which is as far above the purely rational as the rational is above the purely sentient.' Man is the product of evolution. The Advaitins even go to the extent of declaring that even mind is material, it is 'a superfine and subtle product of the five elements.' Despite his relation to lower aspect of life, man occupies truly a superior place in the evolutionary perspective. While admitting that man is not outside the material evolution, as the Taittiriya has, in Radhakrishnan's words, explained, Sankara gives the following observation: 'When all things without distinction are modifications of matter (anena-rasa) and lineal descendents of Brahman, why should man alone be singled out here? The reason is he is the principal. Why is he the principal? Because he has the eligibility for action and knowledge.' Sankara's observation here unfolds two fundamental points to be taken note of in studying Advaita's approach to
evolutionary theory, that (a) so far as the psycho-physical organism is concerned, man evolves from matter in the same way as any other organic substance, but (b) man is different from the rest of beings, because through him alone the manifestation of the supreme Spirit is immediately established.

It follows from this, that the pure 'Self is not a psycho-physical organism, that the sight of the Ātman is not to be lost in the sheaths that seem to encase it.' This statement amounts to mean that the Self does not evolve, though psycho-physical organism is conditioned to do so. This statement, however, appears to have been contradicted by what is said in the Aitaresva-āranyaka: 'The Ātman is expanded only in man.' Perhaps this problem may be understood in this way. Ātman expansion cannot mean self-evolution. There is inconsistency in thinking that the Self was at first imperfect, and in the next stage it becomes a perfect Self. This way to explain the nature of the Ātman would not only have the Advaita doctrine but the whole theistic philosophy shaken. What may be relevant with the idea that the Ātman expands only in man is, that the jīva, as has been said, is already caught in the psycho-physical web, and it is only when its Ātman takes a growing domination over the growth of the psycho-physical complex and functionings, does the jīva attain its release. In this, it is clearly the jīva who is benefitted, but in no way
does this involve the Atman which is eternal. Hence the Atman expansion may be understood in terms of its reflective aspect to illumine the growing complex of the external outfits, and not an expansion in and upon itself. 'Although one and the same self is hidden in all beings, movable as well as immovable,' says Sankara, 'yet owing to the gradual rise in the excellence of the minds which form the limiting condition of the self, scripture declares that the Self, although eternally unchanging, reveals itself in a gradual series of being and so appears in forms of various dignity and power.'

In view of this, it may be pointed out that Sri Aurobindo's idea of Supersoul is not far remote from the nature of a releasable soul. In The Life Divine, Sri Aurobindo says: 'Man has been that there can be a higher status of consciousness than his own; the evolutionary instinct is there in his parts of life and mind, the aspiration to exceed himself is delivered and articulate within him ... In him, then, the substitution of a conscious for a subconscious evolution has become conceivable and practicable, and it may well be concluded that the aspiration, the urge, the persistent endeavour immanent is a surge sign of Nature's will for a higher way to fulfilment, the emergence of a greater status.' Although Sri Aurobindo seeks to claim higher-consciousness, or Supermind as an emergent, the new higher status of evolution, at the same time he asserts...
that it was latent, operative, in man. One may be easily
tempted to say, in this sense, that Advaita Vedānta and its
young shoot, the evolutionary non-dualism, are basically not
opposing each other. If the new terminology in Sri Aurobindo's
philosophy were removed, it might be found that its whole
basic structure is still very close to typical Advaita Vedānta.

Nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo's account for historical
dimension, its necessity in the phenomenal context, and his
ardent feeling to raise the spatio-temporal condition into
higher level, in order to establish a heaven on the earth, is
creditable and so unparallelled among Oriental systems. To
this extent Advaita Vedānta cannot come out readily to sacrifice
its unquestionably consistent system.

To the Advaitins, 'non-contradiction is the criterion
of truth.' Two is contradiction, 'One' alone is real. This
is the Advaitic principle. It is true, in its loftiest and
profoundly dialectical method, Advaita Vedānta may be lacking
the feeling for aesthetic form. And its adversary may even
think that humanity gets its status lost in its (Advaitic)
subtle logic. This notion may be proved wrong. However, from
this argument, a question is inevitable. Has the Advaita
document any scope for the study of man? The Advaitins would
certainly give a positive answer. Now, to support the Advaiti
claim, we may establish the following arguments: First, the
permanent principle on account of which we try to establish universal humanism is, according to the Advaitins, the non-dual supreme Spirit. Secondly, the Spirit is no other than Brahman itself, one without the second. Thirdly, the supreme Spirit dwells within the empirical outfit of the jīva. Fourthly, the jivahood attains liberation while still embodied. Finally, the Brahman reflection in the jīva associated with mind and as an agent of Isvāra (God) who is also Brahman itself with attributes associated with māyā, together illuminates and transforms the world. 'Know mayā to be prakṛti (prime cause) and God to be the māvin (arch-juggler). By the jīvas who are his limbs the whole earth is pervaded.' The jīva has a distinct role in the world. It is the subject as well as the object. It is the knower and the known. And it is the Absolute as well as the attribute. It is 'the absolute limit', as Tillich contends. The Absolute and its attributes constitute something like a mysterious ring with the mysterious sound 'Om'. 'That which is the sound Om is verily the higher and lower Brahman.' 'Om is all this — what was, what is, and what will be.'

It follows from this, that if Advaita Vedānta is to be called a system, it is, according to T.M.P. Nabadavan, all embracing system, for the Advaita doctrine cannot be equated with any doctrine which is of the nature of "closed" one. 'Its primary aim is to break through all limited views of reality
and lead the aspirant to the plenary experience of the Absolute which is limitless.' From the above consideration, it may be said that an outlook like Sri Aurobindo's is more or less a cultural and national breed, whereas Advaita Vedānta appears to be cosmic in its view in the ultimate sense of the term. But any lofty ideal is suspected, and so is the Advaita doctrine.

With the Advaita doctrine two aspects are highly important, 'the sole reality of the non-dual self and the illusoriness of the pluralistic universe.' The latter loses its identity in favour of the former. But if we fix our eyes on the pluralistic aspect, and shut them against the beyond, we would certainly see that plurality is real, and the doctrine which tells that it is illusory is illusionism. But if the issue is reversed, the problem is altogether different.

The Advaitins maintain that Reality is one, the world is illusory appearance. We shall now consider as to how Advaita Vedānta, while affirming that the world is illusory appearance, defends itself against the opinion that it is illusionism.

Contemplating on the homogeneity of the universal meaning, Advaita Vedānta arrives at the conclusion that the appearance is "non-real". The phrase non-real denoting the
world of appearance is very prudently chosen. To say that the world is 'unreal' would amount to complete negation of the world which is not justified by empirical experience, whereas to say that the world is real would be prone to internal contradiction as can be illustrated by snake-robe illusion. Hence the Advaitins apply indefinite category to explain the illusoriness of the world, that it neither "is" (sat) nor "is not" (asat). Since we cannot totally deny our empirical life which feels the contact with the world of appearance, it is sat (is), therefore it cannot be asat (is not); but as we cannot also admit that empirical experience will have continual domination over the life, even when the latter is absorbed by the knowledge of the Absolute, resulting that it gradually tends to be asat (is not), hence it can neither be sat (is). The category of time plays significant role between the state of ignorance and dawning of true knowledge. And within this category (domain), illusion is either removed by transcending it, or the dualistic notion of the sat-asat effected by illusoriness continues to encircle life indefinitely.

In an illusory perception, a conch-shell no longer remains silver when the perception is corrected by the true knowledge. In other words, the silver which was thought to be existing at certain time does no longer discharge its
deception (illusion) when the true knowledge finds it that it is not silver but a conch-shell. Hence, according to the Advaitins, only true knowledge can dismiss error by revealing the reality. When the Reality is realized, the world of appearance no longer deceives but dissolves. Again, the negation, such as illusoriness in silver, does not have a separate existence, for its existence is dependent on the substratum "this". Instead of saying 'This is conch-shell', under illusory perception, we say 'This is silver.' Although silver is wrongly perceived, the 'this' continues to be its substance. The 'this' is realized when the 'that' is sublated by the pursuit of true knowledge.

Is the world appearance nothing else than the mere silver in the conch-shell? The World is not as mere illusion as the silver in the conch-shell. Since our perception of silver is possible only because of the existence of the conch-shell, though in the superimposed form, so also the world of appearance is possible because of the supreme Being. The projection of silver is the expression of the conch-shell, but because of intervention of external agency the latter is shown as different. Otherwise, silver is nothing else than the conch-shell itself. Māṇḍūkya Upanishad declares: 'All this is Brahman.' Sri Aurobindo also affirms this declaration.
He also asserts that the Divine Being is immanent in the cosmic sphere, and that the universe is the 'self-expression' of the Divine Being. Everything is but 'terms and stuff of the divine existence.' We cannot differentiate the Divine Being from the Brahman in the absolute sense.

The above explanation concerning the world of appearance does not, however, meet the aspiration of the common man. In order to solve this problem, we see that in Advaita Vedānta, Śāṅkara postulates two standpoints in the scheme of his system, the absolute standpoint (paramārthika) and the relative standpoint (vāvabārīka). The former stands for the formless Being, relationless, the Supreme, the attributeless (nirguna Brahman). Since the relationless or formless Being cannot be the direct cause of the world, it remains an Absolute, without a second. But to explain the world, Brahman is further known as the saguna, with attributes. Thus Brahman appears here as God having relative character attached to the empirical world. We shall discuss in the next chapter these two aspects of Brahman and their significance in the world.

As has been mentioned above, there is no duality between Brahman, God and the jīva, as the former is conditioned Brahman. According to the Advaitins, this conditioning principle is māvā. It may appear that māvā is the saving principle in the Advaita doctrine, and so, as to argue, it must be something
of its own apart from Brahman. The Advaitins reply that, though māyā is a principle responsible for the appearance of the phenomenal world, it is not of its own reality. The etymological signification shows that māyā is that which (vā) is not (ma). The effect of māyā can be dispelled by knowledge. But the dispelling of māyā-effect is not like that of dispelling illusory perception involved in snake-rope illusion. Dispelling māyā-effect is subject to a single instant. The contagion effect of māyā persists in the world. It continues to veil the reality and project the fictitious. Thus in the individual case māyā does not persist on its hold, but in the cosmic scale its influence persists. It is not the Reality as Brahman is, because an individual attains victory over it, but it is not altogether nothing because it cloaks the cosmic process. Its existence is therefore mysterious. The Advaitins maintain that its existence is neither real nor unreal. This doctrine is known as indeterminable principle (anirvāchanīva). The only solution is for the individuals to transcend it through the path of knowledge.

Concluding this portion, we may assert that the Advaita doctrine is not illusionism. The way Advaita Vedānta tries to point out the illusoriness of the world appearance so that the Reality may be known cannot be mistaken as illusionism. There is vast difference between the two meanings: while illusoriness is directed against the external
objects that are deceptive in their nature, the term
illusionism means a doctrine of void. A simple thing to
understand this complex is: Illusionism as a system in
itself cannot discriminate the real from the unreal, the
truth from the untruth. In other words, if ever there be
Illusionism, it cannot disclose the illusory nature of
things, and ask men to rise above them.