INTRODUCTORY ;-

A common-sense view of the world tells us that it can be classified into two divisions: Mind or consciousness and Matter. Matter could further be classified into Solid, Liquid and Gaseous or Substance, Quality, Action, etc. (as the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system has attempted to do). On deeper thought it is felt that the worldly Phenomena could be traced back to just one final or Ultimate Principle - either Matter or Consciousness. Philosophical thinkers have exercised their thinking in both these directions. Most thinkers having an idealistic tendency have felt that Matter could emerge from consciousness if its potencies are suppressed, but consciousness could certainly not emerge from Matter which has no innate potency for it. Moreover, Matter can never be established a part from consciousness. We know the existence of material things only through our knowledge of them; whereas knowledge or consciousness is self-established or self-luminous. Two totally diverse things can have no relation, so it is consciousness that is the prime thing from which all Matter gradually emerges, and is illuminated by it. This
consciousness is a transcendental Universal Entity of which our apprehensions are diverse modes.

Another question that arises in regard to consciousness is whether this consciousness is one, or there are as many consciousness-units as there are living beings, and if there be innumerable such units, whether these are integrally related to the Supreme consciousness or the supreme consciousness does not exist at all. These consciousness-units being the sole factors manipulating Matter and its numerous modifications which have evolved in dependence on them.

Philosophers all over the world have deeply thought about such problems. In India, vedic thought passing through gradual stages got stabilised in the concept of one Eternal-Transcendental-consciousness as the Ultimate Reality and explained the emergence of the worldly phenomena from it. The Sāṃkhya thought recognised a plurality of ubiquitous principles (Puruṣas) and along with it ubiquitous Matter (prakṛti) which undergoes modification as Mahat (Intellect), Ahaṁkāra (Ego-principle) and so on up to the five mahābhūtas.
The Buddhists like other thinkers, accepted this to some extent. But they started thinking on a different line. If a thing is modified how could it still retain its original identity? Either there is no change or there is total change and a new entity comes into existence every moment, of course depending on the previous one and also on supporting conditions. Only thus could change be accounted for. Thus if any eternal thing is to be recognised, it is just the continuum that is eternal and not any substance, sentient or non-sentient. There is no eternal soul but an eternal continuum of consciousness- (vijñāna). But as thought progressed some felt that such consciousness exists by itself and there is no need to hypostatise the existence of any Matter along with it as apart from consciousness there is no proof of its existence. In a dream we see things outside us without there really being any external objects. The same could be the truth about the external world. The things we feel outside are nothing but projections of our own ideas and have no existence apart from them.

The only distinguishing factor here is the common experience of the world that people have. A table is a table for
all. How could it be said to be a construct of an individual mind? This the Buddhists explained in numerous ways - all by chance having the same idea, or one mind influencing other minds and so on. This they had to resort to as they did not recognise Transcendental Universal consciousness.

Another line of approach of the Buddhists was that no means of knowledge or proof can be said to be valid and to yield true knowledge as all our concepts and definitions are faulty and suffer from the faults of self-dependence, interdependence, argument in a circle and so on. Thus our knowledge cannot vouchsafe for the existence of anything. Put to the test of Reason, everything including time, space, causality and every concept including that of bondage and liberation topples down like a house of cards. These Mādhyamikas are called Śūnyavādins as according to them all empirically recognised entities are void of essence. But they were not Nihilists, for Śūnyavāda also signified that what is beyond the realm of all empirical proof is devoid of what we know as empirical realities. Only they did not stress this sufficiently as it is beyond empirical proof and verbal usage.
The Vedāntins with their firm belief in Advaita—an Ultimate—non-dual sentient Principle; regarded consciousness as evolving in two different directions—individual souls and Matter, both these being non-different from the Ultimate and yet having some identity of their own. This could be regarded as some type of bhedabheda but some among the Vedāntins, who were very open in their outlook and could appreciate the reasoning of others and even imbibe their views, felt that this was not in the true spirit of Upaniṣadic thought which recognised one—non-dual, eternally immutable sentient principle as the Ultimate Reality.

The Buddhist argument that an ubiquitous entity cannot undergo any change or perform any successful activity, and that change or activity is possible only if things are recognised as momentary—must have appealed to these thinkers, so also the argument that the external world need not be accepted as real on account of its knowledge. Some Absolutist Vedāntins therefore felt that the world has to be looked upon as unreal even as a mental construct like the dream-world.

The authors of the Yoga-Vāsistha and the Gaudapādakārikā...
adopted this line of thought in conformity with the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the non-dual Absolute principle.

Śaṅkarācārya realised that even then a number of difficulties would have to be faced, as the common-sense view compels us to admit the existence of the external objects, of a plurality of souls, and of God who can be regarded as the cause of the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world. He recognised all this from the empirical point of view, and propounded the view that from the transcendental point of view, the Ultimate Reality—Brahman is eternally unchanging sentiency, and it is due to Avidyā that the world-phenomenon is brought about. Brahman conditioned by Avidyā can be said to be the cause of the phenomenal world, which is experienced by the individual souls, which themselves are really non-different from Brahman but seem to be different due to the functioning of Avidyā in its various capacities. Thus the external world was recognised as something superimposed upon Brahman by virtue of cosmic Avidyā and this could justify the common experiences of living beings. This theory was later more precisely systematised by the followers
of Śaṅkara and given the name of “Srṣṭi-Drṣṭi vāda” the doctrine that held that there is perception of things that have already been created. That is to say, things can exist even when not apprehended by individual views, as they are the creation of God.

Other followers of Śaṅkara, notable among them Prakāśananda seemed to hold that this could not be regarded as a faithful representation of Śaṅkara’s philosophy. Things could be either real (Brahman) or unreal (dream). There could not be something that is, in addition to these, empirically real but transcendentally false, and there is no need to distinguish between ephemeral existence and empirical existence which are both equally unreal. In a way these thinkers were right, because the early Śūnyavādins and even Śaṅkara seem to admit two grades of existence, of course the unreal one can be further subdivided into empirical and ephemeral, to account for universal illusion (the outer world) and illusions that are there only in the case of individual views (e.g., rope-serpent, dream). But these are both unreal. The Buddhist theory of Sahopalaṁbha (that a thing and its knowledge
are always apprehended simultaneously; and so knowledge which is self-luminous and self-established is alone real, and not also its object which cannot be established independently of its apprehension), greatly influenced such thinkers and Drśṭi-Sṛstivāda came to have a footing in Saṅkara Vedānta.

The term 'Drśṭi-Sṛsti' signifies that the creation is a product of the perception. This would mean that existence consists in being perceived; and there are no durable things existing independently of the conscious being. Things do not exist while unperceived.

Obviously this theory seems shocking as we are very sure of the existence of the things which are perceived by our sense organs, of course, to a lay man this seems absurd to consider a thing as existing only when it is perceived.

But Philosophers all over the world have deeply thought about this problem; whether things, independently of mind or not? Some have arrived on conclusion that things of the world are in some sense dependent on the mind or consciousness which perceives them. On the other
hand some do believe that things exist independently of
the mind or consciousness. The former who hold that percep-
tions are in some sense dependent upon the mind of the
perceiver may be broadly called Idealists.

Idealism and its different shades

What is meant by the term "Idealism"? As there are two
words namely - Idea and Ideal, it can be assumed that
"Idealism" must be a theory or doctrine related to Idea.
This term is so variedly applied that it is very difficult
to present a precise definition. In The chief currents of
contemporary philosophy D.M. Datta writes, "Idealism, in
the metaphysical sense is the theory that ultimate reality
is spiritual, and it is thus opposed to materialism and
even neutralism. In its epistemological sense, Idealism is the
view that objects of knowledge are not independent of the
knower, and it is thus opposed to epistemological realism."¹

Thus, Idealism and Realism are rival trends of philosophy,
which have developed in opposition to each other. On the one

¹ Datta D.M. The Chief Currents of Contemporary Philosophy.
- ch.I, p.1, Second edition (1961), The University of
Calcutta.
hand, Idealism denies the independent existence of the world from its percipi, and on the other, Realism propounds the independent existence of the world from its percipi. The Dictionary of philosophy and psychology gives the definition of Idealism as follows:

"In metaphysics any theory which maintains the universe to be throughout the network or the embodiment of reason or mind. In epistemology, the view which holds in opposition to Realism, that the reality of the external world is perceptibility."

In short, Idealism considers the mind or idea or the spiritual entity as the projector of this worldly phenomenon, and emphasizes that it does not exist independently of the mind or idea.

We find different shades of Idealism defined in the 'Dictionary of Philosophy' edited by Dagobert Runes, of which mention may be made of some that are relevant to our discussion.

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Metaphysics: Pure Idealism or Immaterialism identifies ontological reality (substance, substantives, concrete individuality) exclusively with the ideal, i.e., Mind, Spirit, Soul, Person, Archetypal Ideas, Thought.

Impersonalistic Idealism: identifies ontological reality essentially with non-conscious spiritual principle, unconscious physical agency, pure thought, impersonal or "pure" consciousness, pure Ego, Subconscious will, impersonal logical Mind, etc.

Monistic Idealism: (Pantheistic Idealism) teaches that the finite self is a part, mode, aspect, moment, appearance or projection of the one.

With respect of cosmology, pure Idealism is either subjective or objective.

Subjective Idealism (Acosmism) - holds that Nature is merely the projection of the finite mind, and has no external, real existence.

Objective Idealism - identifies an externally real Nature with the thought or activity of the world Mind.
Epistemological Idealism - derives metaphysical idealism from the identification of objects with ideas. In its nominalistic form the claim is made that "To be is to be perceived". From the standpoint of rationalism it is argued that there can be no object without subjects, relations, sensations, and feelings are mental, and since no other type of Analogy remains by which to characterize a non-mental thing in itself, pure Idealism follows as the only possible view of being. Epistemological Idealism teaches that all entities other than egos or subjects of experience are exclusively noetic objects; i.e. have no existence or reality apart from the relation of being perceived or thought.

It is difficult to show through parallelism between the views of Indian philosophers and western philosophers having an Idealistic trend. But it may be pointed out that while Idealism developed in its different shades after the 16th Century in the West, we find philosophers in India, who from very early times adduced sound reasons in support of Idealism of some sort.
The Idealism of the Upaniṣads can be said to be Realistic Deism at places, but more characteristically mystical or Impersonal Idealism. The world substratum Brahma is identified with the universal soul (Ātman) which is the core of each individual living being. As a matter of fact, according to the Upaniṣads, the whole universe is the product of the Absolute. All things are therefore the final modes of the non-dual Ultimate Reality and have no independent existence.

The Realistic Buddhists even while admitting the reality of the external world regarded everything as momentary. According to the Sautrāntikas among them, there is a similarity (Sārūpya) between the form of an object and its cognition, for a formless cognition cannot apprehend an external object. The external objects can only be inferred from impressions. The Vijnānavādins put the external world on a par. with the dreaming world, as in a dream perceptual cognitions are possible without any external object. They hold that sensations arise from within the mind, due to the variety of subconscious impressions. Thus the Vijnānavādin is a thorough going subjectivist. This Idealism is very near to Berkeley's Idealism, but unlike Berkeley it does not
believe in God.

The Mādhyaṃkika Buddhism (Śūnyavāda) negated the reality of all empirical objects, as they are relative and essenceless by nature.

Influenced by the Mādhyaṃkika and the Vijnānavāda Buddhism, the author of the Yoga-Vāsistha seems to be emphasizing subjective Idealism. But at the same time owing to his Brahmancial affiliation admits the Ultimate Reality of the non-dual consciousness. His philosophy can be termed subjective-Monistic Idealism.

Gauḍapāda, also perhaps influenced by the Buddhist logic put forth Acosmism (Ajātivāda) in the Gauḍapādakārikā. An eternal cosmic entity could not change its nature and yet eternally remain what it was, with the result that it could not do anything, or it should be momentary. Impressed by such logic of Buddhist thought Gauḍapāda established the doctrine of non-origination. Nothing is ever produced. Whatever is perceived, is merely a projection of the mind. At the same time, adhering to the Upaniṣadic philosophy, he propounded Absolute, Non-dual, unchanging Brahman as the
Ultimate Reality. Hence, Gauḍapāda's philosophy is also Subjectivistic Monistic Idealism like that of the Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha.

Śaṅkara's philosophy is a wonderful combination of objective and Absolute Idealism. From the transcendental standpoint he holds that nothing exists besides non-dual unchanging eternal Brahman. But from the empirical point of view he positively establishes the objective reality of the phenomenal world.

The same can be said of his followers who are directly concerned with establishing the sole reality of the non-dual unchanging eternal consciousness, and put forth their own explanations of the world appearance, locus of Avidyā, concept of jīva and īśvara and so on in consonance with this final teaching of theirs. Most of them recognise the reality of the external world from the empirical point of view and thus they can be said to be adherents of Srstiti-Drśtiti vāda, which may be labelled as objective Idealism.

On the other hand Prakāśānanda, the only exception amongst the Śaṅkaraiteś has established Drśtiti-Srstiti vāda, the culmination of Idealistic thought. According to it,
perception itself is creation, or creation is simultaneous with perception, and a thing cannot exist unapprehended. This is allied to subjective Idealism.

This theory is afterall Upaniṣadic, so being an adherent of the Vedāntic thought it propounds Eka-jīva vāda. That is to say, the one soul due to Avidyā imagines itself and the whole universe. This would border on solipsism, which has been admitted as the logical development of the theory of subjective Idealism. Solipsism may be described as the view that since all our knowledge is of our own mental states, nothing other than it can be known to exist. But according to Kevalādvaita Vedānta, the individual consciousness has its genesis and decay. Moreover, it can exist only in dependence on the Absolute consciousness. Hence Drṣṭi-Sṛṣṭi vāda cannot be said to be Solipsism, as it is established as the culmination of the Vedāntic Idealism.

It can only be said that Drṣṭi-Sṛṣṭi vāda is a theory solving the puzzle of the world appearance in its unique way. According to it Ultimate Spiritual Reality is the non-dual entity, while everything else is just an illusion. The universe consisting of individual beings after all
disappears in the serene Bliss of the eternal unchanging Absolute Sentiency! This huge dream of the phenomenal world dissolves in the Ultimate Sentiency proving itself as illusory (prātibhāsika).

With these brief introductory remarks, I now proceed to trace the history and development of Drṣṭi-Srṣṭi vāda.