The enquiry into the concept of appearance arises as a natural consequence of the enquiry into the concept of ultimate reality. Ultimate reality means the primary form of being in which everything in the world can be resolved. It is a search for the first principle or the ultimate cause of this universe. In the history of philosophy, we find various attempts to explain the ultimate reality, such as monism, dualism and pluralism, which try to explain the ultimate reality as one or two or many. And all these ontological questions have engaged the mind of the philosophers from the time immemorial. In India, the different systems of philosophy explain the concept differently. The Nyāya-vaiśeṣika explain the universe due to some padarthas and they have given a pluralistic view of this world. Similarly, the Sāṁkhya-yoga give a dualistic explanation as that the ultimate stuff is Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Again Advaita vādins like Śaṅkara and his followers and Rāmānuja, the viśistādvaiteśvādin, regard Brahman as the only reality.

Another question, engaged the philosophers, is, regarding the question of the relation between appearance and reality is, how the world-appearance is related
to the ultimate reality, is a problem, which occupies an important place in all the philosopher's mind. Thus they engaged themselves as to whether the world is a real creation or an aspect of God or it is an illusory appearance of God or Brahman. In our empirical life, the appearance arises depending on our perception which is different from the original object. Thus we perceive a stick emerged in water as bent. Actually it is not so and the conception of stick as straight is its reality.

In our enquiry into the ultimate reality, generally we start with the notion of appearance rather than with the real. For the notion of appearance and reality are not two distinct entity. Appearance is the superficial or the surface aspect of reality. Thus in the order of existence reality is the first, but in the order of knowledge, appearance is the first, through which the knowledge of reality comes. Thus the appearance and reality are not two things but only two stages or aspects. The relation between the appearance and reality is of one-sided dependence, i.e., the real can exist without the appearance, but the appearance can not exist without the real. The rope can exist without being the appearance of snake. Similarly, Brahman can exist without the world-appearance. But the world-appearance can not exist without Brahman, just like
the appearance of snakes cannot exist without the rope. So a study of the world appearance is really the study of the ultimate reality i.e. Brahman as it appears to our knowledge.

The aim of Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta is the achievement of the philosophical speculation of ancient Indian thought. We find in Śaṅkara's philosophy, the display of various trends of philosophy. As says by V.H. Date in his book 'Vedānta Explained', that there arises various ideas in Śaṅkara's philosophy. Some consider him to be a commentator only, and conclude that he has neither a point of view nor a philosophy of his own. Others consider him to be a mere theologian than a professional philosopher and therefore think that it would be too great an honour to compare with him with Plato, Hegel or Bradley. Some others find in him a religious preacher who is more often than not, dogmatic, and who, therefore, sacrifices reason and logic to tradition and authority. Some others go to the extent of confusing him with the atheist, the sceptic and the nihilist in disguise.

All these views are however, due to hasty conclusion. They are partial views raised against him due to prejudices or imperfect knowledge of his writings as a whole. The aim of Śaṅkara's philosophy is really moral and
spiritual. We find in it the idea of theistic and also mystical idea in it. The idea of pessimism, asceticism, renunciation and illusionism, which are necessarily found in his philosophy are to be regarded as the step reaching towards the highest aim of Brahmanabhava.

Śaṅkara's philosophy is closely associated with two concepts - the Advaitavāda and the Māyāvāda. He explains in his Advaitavāda that Brahma is the only reality without a second. And in order to establish his first principle i.e. the Advaita concept of Brahma, he introduced the second concept which is known as Māyāvāda. Thus his Māyāvāda is only another name of his theory of non-dualism or Advaitism. The theory of appearance is in fact, the theory of māyā which Śaṅkara introduces as a necessary doctrine to explain the Advaita Vedānta.

It would be a mistake to suppose that Śaṅkara was the first to propound the view of advaita vedānta and hence a founder of the system. As has already been mentioned, Śaṅkara himself never claimed the glory of the founder of the system. In his commentary on the Mādūkya-Kārikā, Śaṅkara freely admitted that he was greatly influenced by the teaching of Gaudapāda. The doctrine of Advaitavāda and the Māyāvāda, were already there in Gaudapāda's Mādūkya-Kārikā. The credit of Śaṅkara, is that he provides
for the reconciliation of dualistic theism of the Upanisads with non-dualistic absolutism, in his philosophy. He thus, gives us a two-fold conception of the Absolute, as Nirguna ie. Brahman devoid of attributes and as Saguna ie. as endowed with attributes. He does not however place these two conceptions on the same level. Rather he regards one as higher and the other as lower views of existences. Thus in his philosophy, we find two views of Absolute. One is Brahman devoid of all attributes and the other is Brahman with all the best qualities of this universe ever known. And both these views are compatible with each other in his philosophy.

In the Introductory chapter, we have made a historical note about the origin of the idea of Advaita Vedanta from the time of Veda, specially in the Rg Veda, which can be regarded as the first philosophy of India. In the Rg Veda, there occur so many passages which show that the ancient Indo-Aryans were forming belief in an ineffable unity laying behind all the apparent multiplicity of the phenomenal world and they form that idea as God which is really one and that the sages call it by many names. In the Vedic period, people wondered at the various powers of nature and worshipped them. Thus the impulse of first philosophy of India finds expression in mythology and religion
of Vedic period. Then comes the Upaniṣadic period. The philosophical idea takes a definite shape in the Upaniṣadic literature. The Upaniṣads clearly explain that the world-appearance is due to Māyā and that the empirical knowledge does not give true knowledge of reality, but only belongs to the realm of ignorance or avidyā. Śaṅkara has written Bhāṣyas on ten principal Upaniṣads. In his philosophy, there is plenty of evidence that he is a strict follower of Upaniṣadic philosophy. The various philosophical ideas are scattered in various Upaniṣads and there are other interpreter also, over and above Śaṅkara. The Upaniṣads are just like the 'Kalpataru', and the different commentators starting with particular belief from their particular point of view, can take refuge in the Upaniṣads. Thus the various ideas as monism, pluralism, dualism, anātma-vāda, ātma-vāda and others, all are found in the vast literature of Upaniṣads. Of these, the greatest expositor of the philosophy of the Upaniṣads must be honoured to Ācārya Śaṅkara only. Śaṅkara had developed his non-dualistic metaphysics with the idea of the Upaniṣads, the theistic philosophy of the Bhāgavadgītā and the vedānta-sūtra of Bādarāyana. All these three are therefore regarded as 'Prasthāna-tāraya' of his Advaita philosophy. I have discussed about all these three prasthānas in my Introductory chapter.
The vedānta philosophy takes a new shape in the hand of Gauḍapāda. Gauḍapāda in his Māndukya-kārikā, clearly establishes the theory of Ajātivāda that the world has no origination, no creation and therefore no destruction. It is only an illusory manifestation of Brahma due to our avidyā. In the four prakaraṇa of Māndukya-kārikā, Gauḍapāda, systematically arranged the cream of the Advaita metaphysics. Gauḍapāda supports the idea, of vedānta philosophy as it is depicted in the Upaniṣads and vedānta-sūtra, but he fashioned it into a new non-dualistic shape in which theological aspects are evaluated from the phenomenal level. In his philosophy, there is clear evidence of Buddhistic influence, specially the sunyavāda doctrine of Nāgārjuna. It is only due to the influence of Nāgārjuna on Gauḍapāda that Śaṅkara is also indirectly influenced by Buddhistic ideas. It will be better for us to give a brief description of Nāgārjuna's philosophy.

Nāgārjuna's philosophy is known as sunyavāda, which is almost same with Advaita-vāda of Śaṅkara. Nāgārjuna states that Reality can be directly realised. It is a state of calm and blissful state where all plurality is merged, which is the non-dual absolute. Nāgārjuna's philosophy can be traced to the original teachings of Buddha.

Dr. T.R.V. Murty has rightly expressed that "though all the
Brahmanical systems are derived from the Upaniṣads, there is justification to hold that only the Advaita Vedānta represents the real heart of the Upaniṣad, similarly though all the Buddhistic systems (Theravāda, Vaibhāsika etc.) embody the teachings of Buddha, it is the Mādhyamika system that represents the real heart of Buddhism”.¹ Nāgārjuna, by accepting the Pratītya-samutpāda, explains the world-appearance as sunya, in his famous book 'Mādhyamika-Kārikā'. But sunya is not used by him as meaning void or nothingness. It is used in Nāgārjuna's philosophy in two senses. In the first sense, it means that appearances are devoid of ultimate reality. It is pratītyasamutpāda or world of relativity. Nāgārjuna with the help of dialectic, express that all appearances can not be said to possess any essences of their own. But it does not mean that the world is totally non-existent, which is contradicted with our world experience. Hence it is said by Nāgārjuna that as the world is neither real nor different from reality, so the world is treated as sunya. This sunya conception is similar with Śaṅkara's view of the world as anirvacaniya. Sunya, in the second sense, means Reality itself, where all plurality, all appearances are merged, which transcends all intellectual knowledge. It is

the state of Nirvāṇa, which is revealed to Prajñā only. It is just like the state of the Brahmānubhava of Śāṅkara.

There are sufficient evidence of influence of Buddhism on Vedānta. Gauḍapāda, the upholder of Advaita Vedānta appears to reformulate the Upaniṣadic idea in the light of Mādhyamika and the vijñānavāda dialectic. It seems, that there is much borrowing of the technique of dialectic in the Gauḍapāda's philosophy, then its main doctrine. "The Vedānta philosophy did not and could not accept the Buddhist metaphysics - its denial of the self, momentariness etc., but, they did press into service the Mādhyamika dialectic and the vijñānavāda analysis of illusion". Dr. Murty had rightly admitted that no absolutism could be established without the dialectic and a theory of illusion.

It is no doubt true that the Sāṁkhya was the first philosophy, which tried to remove certain inconsistencies in the teachings of Upaniṣads by introducing a dualistic metaphysics which was ofcourse failed in the long run. The idealistic Vedānta re-establishes the monistic idea through a rigorous criticism of the Sāṁkhya dualism. The older Vedānta of the author of Brāhma-Ūttra and the

pre-Śaṅkara commentator, specially Gaudapāda, while accepting the monistic idea of Upaniṣads, conceived Brahman as both unity and difference. Thus Gaudapāda and his grand pupil Śaṅkara revolutionize the vedānta by introducing the theory of appearance as (vivartavāda) by rejecting the earlier theory of causation as real transformation of the Absolute into the world-appearance (Brahma-parināma-vāda) and thus re-established the non-dualistic philosophy (Advaitavāda) as the true teaching of Upaniṣads. Thus Gaudapāda and Śaṅkara asserts the Advaita vedānta which comes directly from the Upaniṣadic philosophy which is depicted with a new colour with the technique of dialectical method of Nāgārjuna and Viśṇuṇaṇa. There is thus a direct evidence of this influence in Gaudapāda, of course in Śaṅkara, the traces are found in indirect manner. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has rightly remarked that there are certain points of similarity between sunyavāda and advaita. Both the system regard the world-appearance as subject to change and therefore unreal. Both the system regard the reality as that which transcends all distinction of experience and knowledge. The only difference as Dr. Radhakrishnan pointed out is that while Nāgārjuna suggests the Reality and does not explain it in its fulness, Advaita vedānta clearly explains it in its philosophy. In the
Advaita Vedānta, the doctrine of māyā and avidyā are taken up and developed in full fledged form by Śaṅkara. The indebtedness of Advaita Vedānta to Māgārjuna is clearly stated by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan as, "in giving a rational, as distinct from scriptural, foundation for the Advaita Vedānta, Gauḍapāda finds nothing so useful as the Mādhyamika theory. Many of his kārikās reminds us of Māgārjuna's work."

In conformity with the Upaniṣads Śaṅkara declare that Brahman is the ultimate reality without a second. So he cannot give equal status to the world-appearance. We have seen, he solved the problem of the relation of world appearance with Brahman by introducing two views of realities. Thus from the transcendental level, there is only Brahman and there is no world, no appearance, all knowledge merge in the Brahman. The famous saying (Mahāvākya) of Śaṅkara is 'That Thou art'.

In such a situation, how the world-appearance is possible ? Śaṅkara explained that the appearance is due to ignorance of the ultimate reality. It cannot be any individual ignorance. The world-appearance is not limited to any individual person but it is experienced by all human being as a whole. It is thus a cosmic ignorance. In

the 'Adhyāsābbhāsya', Śaṅkara, successfully explained that the world-appearance is possible due to innate ignorance of human being, that we know the things under the subject-object relation which is really beyond any knowledge relation. And due to this ignorance that we have the knowledge of world in place of Brahman. This point is clearly explained in the second chapter of this topic.

In the third chapter, we have tried to explain that the idea of māyā is not Śaṅkara's own creation. He has developed it from the Upaniṣads with the help of so many suitable quotations. Here a brief description of the nature of appearance has been explained in the Upaniṣads and also in the philosophy of Gaudapāda and Śaṅkara. The idea of Māyā is used in the various Upaniṣads in various senses and it is Śaṅkara, who boldly announces the name of Māyā to explain the world-appearances. As Śaṅkara is mostly indebted to Gaudapāda, so we are discussing about the nature of appearance in the philosophy of Gaudapāda also. Gaudapāda is not using openly, the concept of Māyā to explain the appearance. He tries to explain the world-appearance from the standpoint of Brahman and declare it as unreal. But Śaṅkara is trying to view the appearance from the phenomenal point of view and declare it neither real nor unreal and the best word suitable for explaining the
nature of appearance is anirvacaniya.

For Śaṅkara, the world-appearance is due to superimposition i.e., it is due to the false cognition of one thing as another thing. It is just like the perception of snake in the rope. The rope is not the snake, yet the rope is perceived as snake and people behave it like a snake. Here the quality of snake is imposed on rope, due to ignorance. Similarly, the world is not really existing but it is imposed on Brahman due to ignorance, and people behave it as real.

In order to have a clear idea of the theory of 'Adhyāsabhāsya', we are giving the various theories of error and find that though the various subjects have given various explanation of error, yet there is one common element in them that superimposition is the apparent presentation of the attributes of one thing in another thing. It is on the basis of superimposition that the subject is ascribed on the object and the object is ascribed on the subject. That the world-appearance is ascribed on the Brahman which is not really so. And this happens due to the innate ignorance, rooted in the very nature of human being.

Śaṅkara introduces the doctrine of māyā, in order to explain how Brahman is related with the world-appearance. As has already been said, he borrowed the idea
of Maya from the Upanisads and has given it a new shape. One thing, we may say here that Śaṅkara boldly and loudly proclaimed the doctrine of Maya in his philosophy, but he never tried to prove it. In his philosophy, we find him quite taking it for granted, but never attempting to prove it. Here Śaṅkara seems to be dogmatically accepting the view of Gauḍapāda who had unhesitatingly accepted the world as an illusion under the influence of Sunyavāda of Nāgārjuna. Again he seems to draw such a conclusion by twisting the main doctrine of the Upaniṣads that since Brahman is the ultimate reality, so everything else must be the work of illusion.

Now, the question is what is the real status of this world-appearance. Whether they have any objective basis or whether they are merely the mental products? In the 4th chapter, we are trying to draw the picture that the world-appearance is not absolutely false like the barren woman's child, or that it is not absolutely real like Brahman. It has some practical value which we may designate as vyavahārika satya. For Śaṅkara, non-contradiction and novelty are the real criterion of truth. And by applying this method, we may say that all phenomenal knowledge is false as it is sublated by higher knowledge of Brahman. A
stick appears bent when emerged in water. But this knowledge is contradicted by the mere touch. But so long as the appearance of the stick lasts, it continues to be bent for the perceiver. So though the stick is really straight its bentness, is continue to be true, so long as it is not sublated by its real character. The case is the same with world-appearance also. It is really false. But it continues to be real till the Brahmanubhava is not arised. Thus the world-appearance is not ultimately true but it is relatively true.

For Śāṅkara, knowledge is self-valid but its invalidity is extrinsic. Thus it accepts the svetaḥprāmāṇya-yevāda theory of truth. Thus, Brahman is ultimately truth. The world-appearance is its extrinsic character, which is ascribed by us due to avidyā. When we realise Brahman, there is no world-appearance, but only the Brahman itself. The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman and this is beautifully expressed by the Mahāvākyā 'Ahom Brahmosmi' etc.

The real status of the world is expressed by Śāṅkara by introducing the degree of realities as Prāti-bhāṣīka, Vyavahārika and the Paramārthika level. The absolutely non-existing things like sky-flower, barren woman's child etc. are in the level of Prāti-bhāṣīka level and the world is surely not of this kind, as we have an experience.
of this world appearance. Again it is not ultimately real like Brahman; otherwise, Śaṅkara's Advaitavāda will suffer from dualism. Thus Śaṅkara attributed the Vyavahārika level of reality to the world-appearance. This fact is established by him with the analogy of dream experience. The dream is true to the perceiver so long as it lasts. But it turns into fertility after waking. Likewise, so long as we are under the grip of māyā, the world-appearance is continue to be real. But when there arise the Brahmanubhava or Brahmajñāna, there is no longer the world-appearances it becomes illusory. It is just like the child who behave the hundred rupees note like an ordinary paper. But when he realise its value, he will no longer behave it in that manner. When man realise Brahman, he will no longer evaluate the world-appearance, his attitude will be changed.

It seems that the level of truth and the analogy of dream experience are already explained in details by Buddhists philosophers. Gauḍapāda also introduced it in his philosophy and Śaṅkara seems to borrowed it from Gauḍapāda.

Thus we have come in a position to conclude that the study of appearance is nothing but the study of māyāvāda. As has already been pointed out, that Śaṅkara
explained his Advaitavāda from two point of views - One is from transcendental and the other is from phenomenal point. From the transcendental level everything is Brahman and from the phenomenal level only Brahman associated with māyā appears as God and the world-appearance is a real creation of God. So the appearance is there only from the phenomenal level and it is nothing but Brahman on the transcendental point of view. Only the mystic can have such realisation, where he feels his oneness with Brahman. So long as we are not attaining such a state, we are viewing this world as an existing fact and there needs the study of the nature, status and the other aspects of the world-appearance. Thus all possible knowledge relation are applicable to the world-appearance, but after the attainment of Brahmanubhava, there is no knowledge, no subject-object distinction, no world-appearance and no operation of māyā. The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman itself. It is Śaṅkara, who has successfully explained the mystery of this world-appearance.

We can sum up our conclusions in the following manner :-

1) Śaṅkara is not the originator of the doctrine of Advaitavāda. We can trace it from Rg veda. Śaṅkara has developed his philosophy from the three Prasthānas - the Upaniṣads, the Vedāntasūtra and the Bhāgavadgītā.
2) Śaṅkara is highly influenced by the philosophy of Gauḍapāda.

3) Brahman is the only reality, according to Śaṅkara and the world is only an illusory appearance of Brahman.

4) The world-appearance is a fact that happens in our experience, due to the innate ignorance of embodied human being and it continues to exist, so long as the ignorance lasts.

5) As to the nature of Appearance, Śaṅkara's opinion is that it is due to superimposition, which means the apparent presentation of the attributes of one thing as those of another thing. Superimposition is designated by Śaṅkara as adhyāsa (māyā). It has the two-fold function of the concealment or envelopment (Āvaraṇa) of the real and the projection of the unreal (Vikṣepana). Thus the first one covers the real nature of Brahman and the second one, projects the world appearance, in its place.

6) Śaṅkara explains the real status of the world-appearance with the analogy of three levels of truth. They are the Prātibhāsika, the Vyavahārika and the Pāramārthika level of truth. The world-appearance has only a relative reality i.e. the Vyavahārika level of truth; as different from Pāramārthika level, which is the
level of ultimate reality and also the Prātibhāsika
level which is absolutely non-existent like sky-
flower, barren woman's child etc.

7) The world-experience is comparable with the dream-
experience. The dream-experience are continued to be
real, so long as the dream lasts. Its falsity is
realised at the attainment of waking state. Similarly,
the world-appearance continues to be a real world till
the ultimate reality is not realised. But after the
attainment of Brahman, we can realise the falsity of
the world-appearance.

8) From the ontological point, Śaṅkara accepts the doc­
trine of Ajñātavāda of Gauḍapāda, but on the phenomenal
level, he advocates the theory of Satkāryavāda which
is more or less similar to the Sāmkhya view. Thus from
the phenomenal point of view, the world causality is
Parināma i.e. it is a real creation of God. And from the
ontological point of view, the world is a vivarta i.e.
the illusory appearance of Brahman which is due to
Māyā.

Hence, the appearance and reality are not two
distinct entities, rather they are two aspects or stages
of the same principle. In the order of existences, Brahman
is the first, but in the order of knowledge, the world-appearance is the first. So the world-appearance is not an independent entity, it is only that aspect of Brahman through which Brahman makes its expression. So when there arises the Brahmanubhava, there is no world-appearance, no knowledge-situation; the knower of Brahman becomes the Brahman itself. And it is the highest knowledge that the petitioner urges to the Lord -

"Aum asato mā sadgamaya
Tamaso mā jyotirgamaya
Mṛtyormā amṛitam gamaya" (Brh.Up. 1.3.28)

Aum Śantiḥ, Śantiḥ, Śantiḥ.

Of course, it is not a new ontological achievement: it is only shifting of standpoint. For there was no time when the person was not Brahman.